

SWAN News, Issue 1, Year 1, May 2006

Welcome to the SWAN News!

Introduction and greetings from Mr. Balázs Dénes, the Executive Director of the Hungarian Civil Liberties Union (HCLU), the organization that launched and technically coordinates the Sex Workers' Rights Advocacy Network (SWAN) and issues the SWAN News. [More](#)

Founding Principles of the SWAN Network

The Sex Workers' Rights Advocacy Network (SWAN) wishes to approach sex work issues in accordance with the following basic principles developed by the Central and Eastern European Harm Reduction Network (CEEHRN). [More](#)

About us

SWAN newsletter is the voice of the Sex Workers' Rights Advocacy Network, a network of civil society organizations engaged in advocating the Human Rights of the sex workers in Central and Eastern Europe, CIS and South-East Europe. [More](#)

Subscription:

We are sending this first issue of the SWAN News to the addresses we received from the SWAN Members as well as to those HCLU contacts and journalists we believed would be interested in receiving it. If you would not like to receive any further copies we apologize for inconvenience and kindly ask you to unsubscribe by following the easy steps described below. Thank you!

In the same time we would be very thankful if you could recommend the SWAN News to those interested in the topics we are covering: human rights advocates, sex workers, donors, harm reduction and public health experts, government, private sector or civil society organizations, and others. Thank you!

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SWAN Members:

Aksion Plus, Albania

Aksion Plus is engaged in advocacy and public awareness rising on AIDS prevention in Albania. It supports people living with HIV/AIDS, drug users and other vulnerable groups to be integrated into the society, and recruits intellectuals, youngsters, doctors, social workers, teachers and others in order to broaden support for new policy initiatives in the area of AIDS/STI prevention and treatment.

Aksion Plus is active in provision of services to people at risk of HIV infection. Although the organization got engaged with sex workers when working with at-risk groups, participation in SWAN network will be for them the first focused approach to

the issues of human rights and access to public health services particular to this marginalized group. [More](#)

Contact person: Genci Mucollari
E-mail: gencaxionp@albmail.com
Website: www.aksionplus.net

Health and Social Development Foundation (HESED), Bulgaria

The mission of HESED is to carry out health promotion activities and to stimulate social development of underprivileged groups and communities on the territory of Bulgaria. The main target groups are sex workers, Roma people and men having sex with men.

In 1997, HESED was the first Bulgarian organization to start focusing on problems of sex workers in the country. Outreach work is based on accessibility, anonymity, confidentiality, and professionalism. The members of the team are professional psychologists and social workers. They offer free services such as health education and consultations; dissemination of specially designed educational materials, of condoms and lubricants; referral and accompanying to health and social services; harm reduction, needles and syringes exchange and training of peer educators. [More](#)

Contact person: Anastas Mihaylov
E-mail: prohealth@hesed.bg
Website: www.hesed.bg

Bliss without Risk, Czech Republic

Bliss without Risk was founded in Prague in 1992, as an answer to the boom in the number of sex workers after the change of regime of 1989. The main aims of the NGO are HIV&STI prevention among female sex workers, providing basic health care (HIV&STI testing, diagnosis and for some infections, treatment), linking sex workers to relevant health services, and providing psychosocial support. In 2005, Bliss without Risk opened its second centre (in Brno), but together with their Prague centre and their Mobile Ambulance, they are able to cover sex workers' needs at national level.

The NGO is open to experience-sharing, and has developed a mobile unit project for sex workers in Zimbabwe (the unit was funded by the Czech Government). [More](#)

Contact person: Hana Malinová
E-mail: rozkos@volny.cz
Website: http://www.rozkosbezrizika.cz/01_htm/100_ENGLISH.htm

Hungarian Prostitutes' Interest Protection Association, Hungary

The Hungarian Prostitutes' Interest Protection Association (HPIPA) was founded in 2000, soon after prostitution became legal in Hungary. The NGO started to work first as an interest representation of women sex workers at disadvantage, and in 2002,

homo- and transsexual sex workers joined also the association. HPIPA aims at protecting sex workers' rights and helping sex workers willing to quit to spend as little time in prostitution as possible. In order to achieve these aims, HPIPA runs a free legal aid service and a 24-hours hot-line, provides assistance and counselling in health and social issues, promotes safer sex, implements training projects for unqualified sex workers and advocates for respect for sex workers' rights. Recently, HPIPA (with state support and cooperation) started to operate a mobile HIV & STI testing unit. [More](#)

Contact person: Marta Gergovics
E-mail: gergovics.marta@freemail.hu
Website: www.prostitualtak.hu

Women's Right Centre, Kazakhstan

Mission of the Women's Right Centre is to assist legislative reform in the Republic of Kazakhstan, develop constitutional state and civil society, improve the level of population's legal literacy, advocate legal knowledge, protect legal rights and interests of the population, protect human rights, as well as to offer counselling and other legal help to the citizens and legal entities.

The organization's priorities are:

- Protection of women's rights;
- Protection of child's rights and interests;
- Protection of rights of socially vulnerable groups of population, including people living with AIDS, sex workers, gays, drug users, convicted, etc.;
- Analysis of existing legislation of the Republic of Kazakhstan on the above mentioned issues in terms of its compliance with the norms of international law and development of improvement recommendations of the existing legislation and mechanisms of its implementation;
- Advocacy and promotion of target group's interests, their mobility and inclusion into decision-making processes concerning their issues;
- Monitoring of human rights implementation, as well as monitoring of mass media. [More](#)

Contact person : Vera Sergunina
E-mail: vs Sergunina@mail.ru, womenright@os.kz, womenright@mail.ru

Tais Plus, Kyrgyzstan

Weak participation of communities is one of the main problems in curbing the HIV/AIDS epidemics in Central Asia. Nongovernmental organization Tais Plus was established in 1997 to address that problem. It was founded upon an initiative and financial support from sex workers.

The NGO is doing a lot to raise the awareness of the Kyrgyz population through various seminars, training, and fieldwork - which consists not only of distribution of the information materials and condoms, but of provision of education sessions as well. PR activity with national and international mass media played a significant role

in their work, so they could develop unique materials on protection of human rights of persons with HIV/AIDS.

The main objective of Tais Plus is to develop a community organization capable to advocate for the interests of sex workers and for the rights of people living with HIV/AIDS. [More](#)

Contact person: Gulnara Kurmanova
Email: gkurmanova@yandex.ru

DIA+LOGS, Latvia

DIA+LOGS is the first low-threshold [1] drop-in centre in Latvia, created to help and support people living with HIV and AIDS and at-risk groups. It is a contact and support centre for people living with HIV/AIDS and their families. It provides them information, spiritual, psychological and social welfare support. In addition to that, it is an informational and resource centre for people interested in and working in the HIV/ AIDS sector.

DIA+LOGS is a non-governmental and not-for-profit organisation founded in 2002 as a joint endeavour between the Latvia NGOs AGIHAS (Latvian self support group for people living with HIV/AIDS) and LCG (Latvian Contact Group on Urban, Industrial and Rural Mission). Its Board is comprised of key stakeholders and actors in the HIV/AIDS field in Latvia. [More](#)

Contact person: Ruta Kaupe, Director
Email: dialogs@diacentrs.lv

[1] The low-threshold approach aims to reach more addicts with problematic use patterns earlier and to remain in contact with a highly problematic group of drug users in order to prevent health damage while not requesting abstinence. Low-threshold services represent a unique opportunity for the provision of specific health services, such as safer use education, vaccination campaigns, and increasingly also the treatment of infectious diseases. See <http://www.emcdda.eu.int/?nNodeID=5778>

I Can Live Coalition, Lithuania

NGO coalition "I Can Live" advocates for a rational state policy in the field of human rights of the vulnerable groups in Lithuania, among them dependency patients, sex workers, people living with HIV/AIDS, and formerly incarcerated persons. In order to reduce stigma and discrimination of the marginalized groups, the coalition educates policy makers and general public on the problems and rights of the vulnerable groups through public discussions, conferences and media outreach. The coalition also engages in policy initiatives by analysing existing legislation, organizing surveys and research, and developing and promoting new policy initiatives. [More](#)

Contact person: Lina Verseckaite
Email: lina_verseckaite@yahoo.com
Website: www.galiugyventi.lt

Healthy Options Project Skopje (HOPS), Macedonia

HOPS is a non-governmental, non-profit and non-partisan organization that started operating as a project supported by The Lindesmith Center and The Open Society Institute Macedonia in 1997. During this period it has successfully implemented programs for reduction of drug related harm, prevention of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted and blood-borne diseases, as well as programs for social reintegration and re-socialization targeting young people and vulnerable groups (drug users and their families and sex workers and their families). HOPS works closely with various government ministries and agencies, other civil society groups and media and is funded among others by OSI, UNDCP, WHO, UNICEF, UNHCR, the World Bank, OSCE, DFID, and USAID. [More](#)

Contact person: Marija Tosheva
Email: marijat@hops.org.mk
Website: www.hops.org.mk

TADA, Poland

TADA implements a harm reduction program addressed to commercial sex workers in four Polish cities and regions - Szczecin, Gdańsk, Zielona Góra, and Warszawa. Its target groups are male and female sex workers, pimps, and their customers.

TADA promotes health and provides risks prevention and harm reduction services through street outreach, free distribution of leaflets, condoms and lubricants. The organization is active in public education and advocacy on HIV/AIDS/STI issues. In its programs it collaborates with local government, state institutions, and the European Commission. [More](#)

Contact person: Justyna Sobeyko
Email: justynasobejko@poczta.fm
Website: www.tada.pl

Romanian Association Against AIDS (ARAS), Romania

ARAS is a non-governmental, apolitical, voluntary-based, not for profit organization, founded in Bucharest in 1992 by a group of people, most of them students, worried about big number of HIV cases discovered among children and about total lack of prevention services.

Since 1999 ARAS has been running the first program targeting sex workers in Romania. Its Night-by-Night Program is based on outreach activities targeting vulnerable and hidden populations involved in sex trade in Bucharest. Since 2001 a harm reduction component for the intravenous drug users and sex workers has been developed within the program, so the needles exchange, alcohol swabs, vaccination, etc. become available on the streets of Bucharest. [More](#)

Contact person: Marian Ursan, Project Coordinator
E-mail: marian.ursan@arasnet.ro
Web site: www.arasnet.ro

Humanitarian Action, Russia

People living with HIV/AIDS, street children and teenagers, substance abusers and sex workers – these are the disadvantaged groups that the Humanitarian Action has been successfully working with since 2001. The organization aims to reduce the pace of spread of HIV/AIDS, and assist those in need in access to health services, legal, social and psychological help, and in their integration into the mainstream society.

The St. Petersburg-based organization partners with NGOs, government and public health institutions so to provide the targeted communities with maximally simplified service access. It appreciates freedom of choice of lifestyle and includes the target groups' representatives into the program management. [More](#)

Contact person: Ludmila Yakhontova
Email: yakhontoval@peterlink.ru
Website: www.humanitarianaction.org

Siberian Initiative, Barnaul, Russia

Siberian Initiative has been active for more than 10 years. Today, the organization works in three main directions: primary prevention of HIV and drug use (primarily among the youth); cooperation with the specialists in charge of monitoring and treatment of socially significant epidemic diseases; and development of non-commercial sector and civil initiatives. In ten years time various foundations and organizations have funded some 40 projects. During the last six years the organization has been carrying out the harm reduction program for the injection drug users and sex users, first such program in the Altai region. [More](#)

Contact person: Alexey Starostenko
E-mail: sibin@alt.ru
Website: <http://www.sibin.ru>

Association Against AIDS - JAZAS, Serbia

Established in 1991 in Belgrade, JAZAS was the first NGO active in AIDS prevention in former Yugoslavia. Since 2002 it included sex workers among its target groups.

JAZAS focuses its activities on prevention, advocacy and services provision. It runs Mobile Support Unit offering counselling, testing, and treatment to sex workers, develops policies for working with people with HIV/AIDS, and organizes national campaigns to change risky behaviour and fight stigma and discrimination of people with HIV/AIDS.

JAZAS is an active member of UNAIDS team group for Serbia - Montenegro, actively participates in HIV Prevention Among Vulnerable Groups of Population Initiative network in Serbia - Montenegro and is an active partner in Youth Peer Network. It is actively involved in Interagency Technical Group for HIV/AIDS/STI Prevention and Reproductive Health of Young People (UNICEF, UNFPA, UNAIDS), and is a member of European Commission Civil Society Forum on HIV/AIDS. [More](#)

Contact person: Ana Krajnc
Email: krajnca@hotmail.com
Website: www.jazas.org.yu

C.A. Odysseus, Slovakia

C.A. Odysseus renders „low threshold services“ by a professional and expert team of workers. Prevaingly, these services target drug users, individuals offering sex services on the streets and young people. Established in 1997, the organization provides services in the field of harm reduction, carries out outreach work, encourages self-help, arranges contacts between the mainstream society and communities under threat and stands for and represents the interests of its target groups. Among the main projects are a club for sex workers, harm reduction outreach and services provision program, Community Center Kopčany and various street festivals. [More](#)

Contact person: Lubica Tornoczyova
Email address: podchod@ozodyseus.sk
Web site: www.ozodyseus.sk (Under reconstruction, expected re-launch in end June 2006)

All-Ukrainian Association on Harm Reduction, Ukraine

All-Ukrainian Association on Harm Reduction is a non-for-profit, charitable organization founded in June 2002.

The Association offers support to the institutions and organizations working in the sphere of harm reduction strategy, and develops, promotes and implements new approaches in the prevention of HIV/AIDS. In its work it emphasizes human rights and dignity and follows the principles set in international conventions and other documents on human rights.

Today the association has 46 member-organizations from around the country. [More](#)

Contact person: Oleksandr Ostapov
E-mail: harm_red@ukr.net
Website: www.uhra.org.ua