

THIS MONTH'S TOPIC:

The 2006 International AIDS Conference in Toronto

The XVI International AIDS Conference, organized by the International AIDS Society (IAS) and the AIDS 2006 Toronto Local Host, was held from 13th to 18th of August this year. The biennial gathering of the global AIDS community featured the presentation of more than 4,500 abstracts and an array of community and cultural activities. Over 26,000 participants from more than 170 countries have attended the event. The conference co-organizers were UNAIDS, Global Network of People Living with HIV/AIDS, International Council of AIDS Service Organizations, International Community of Women Living with HIV/AIDS and the Canadian AIDS Society. Csernus Eszter from HCLU – SWAN participated at the conference. [More](#)

IN SHARP FOCUS:

The 2006 International Aids Conference

"In SHARP Focus at the International AIDS Conference (AIDS 2006)" is an initiative of the Open Society Institute's Sexual Health and Rights Project (SHARP). Its purpose was to provide information about key sexual health and rights issues, activities, and debates (paying particular attention to those addressing sex workers, men who have sex with men and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons—or, in new terminology "same-sex practicing individuals") as these were emerging during AIDS 2006. [More](#)

GUEST CONTRIBUTOR: ROBYN FEW

"Until prostitutes have equal protection under the law and equal rights as human beings, there is no justice. Until prostitutes are no longer criminals why would they come forward and allow themselves to become targets for law enforcement?"

-- Robyn Few

Robyn Few, a native of Kentucky, USA, ran away from home at age thirteen and later became an exotic dancer. After marrying and having a daughter in her twenties, she began to take college courses in the hopes of earning a degree in theater arts. She went to California in 1993 to pursue theater and become an activist. Acting and activism not being the highest paying jobs, Few turned to prostitution to pay the bills in 1996. She has worked tirelessly as an advocate and caregiver for medical marijuana and AIDS patients and has gained quite a reputation in the Bay Area activist community as an effective lobbyist for the issue. In June of 2002, the FBI arrested Few, under the direction of the U.S. Attorney General John Ashcroft. [More](#)

Prostitution – Beyond the Myth by Robyn Few

“It is a great honor to be invited to share a bit of prostitution history with SWAN. I love the newsletter and look forward to exchanging information and working together in creating a better future for all workers in the sex industry.”

- Robin Few

Sex workers exist everywhere, in all societies and in all cultures; we are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and straight. We come to sex work for a variety of reasons from economic necessity to curiosity. Sex workers come from varying socio-economic experiences and our educational experience can be marginal to advanced. Some have ‘straight jobs’, and only occasionally exchange sex for money, housing or other considerations. Still others consider sex work our trade. Sex work itself can be legal, quasi-legal or illegal, as in prostitution, which is either regulated or controlled by some governments or completely prohibited by others. Regardless of where sex workers practice our trade, our work is always a stigmatized occupation. [More](#)

NEWS FROM THE SWAN NETWORK

National Network for Sex Workers’ Rights Established in Lithuania

In July this year, the Coalition I Can Live, the SWAN Network member from Lithuania, initiated establishment of a national contact network of organizations concerned about sex work issues in this Baltic country. The establishment of the network has attracted attention of the leading national media and initiated public discussion about the rights of sex workers. [More](#)

Hungarian Sex Workers Subjected to Tax Audit, Take Legal Action against APEH

Prostitutes working in the southern Hungarian city of Pécs and its surroundings have recently been subjected to tax audits by the Hungarian Tax Authority (APEH). Sex workers were first monitored by the police; data collected about their activities were handed to the APEH, which then started audit. One sex worker sued the APEH. [More](#)

Police Raids Held Against Sex Workers in Bulgaria

The police has strengthened measures against sex workers in most of the big cities in Bulgaria this summer. Targets of the police actions have been street workers, clubs and apartments offering sex services. Sex work is not persecuted by the Bulgarian law, but prostitutes are routinely fined on alternative grounds. Street workers are charged for “breaking public order” or “endangering traffic”. Both street and in-door sex workers are charged for “gaining money in an immoral way”, a clause introduced by the recent Amendment to the Public Order Law (November 2005). [More](#)

The Second Phase of HIV/AIDS Prevention Program in Bulgaria Targets Sex Workers

In collaboration with several local NGOs, the Ministry of Health launched the second phase of the program “Prevention and Control of HIV/AIDS” in Bulgaria. The program is supported by The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria and has eight components. The main target group of one of the components are sex workers. This 15.7-million USD project is a good example of collaboration between the government and civil society on tackling the sex work issues. [More](#)

Regional Voluntary Confidential Counseling and Testing Meeting Held in Kosovo

As the part of the Western Balkans Program to fight HIV/AIDS, Foundation Partnership in Health organized a regional exchange learning meeting on Voluntary Confidential Counseling and Testing (VCCT). The exchange meeting was held in Kosovo on 27 – 28th of July. [More](#)

Most-at-Risk Adolescents Study (MARA) Launched in Macedonia

In order to fill in the gaps in terms of data collection for most-at-risk adolescents to HIV/STIs, UNICEF, the Macedonian Harm Reduction Network - MHRN (an umbrella network of all relevant NGOs working on HIV/AIDS and harm reduction programs in the country), and Institute for Ethnology and Anthropology started in July 2006 implementing research activities related to MARA (Most at Risk Adolescents) project. [More](#)

Experiences of Humanitarian Action Shared With Colleagues From Nine Cities in Russian Federation

Representatives of various organizations supporting sex workers in 9 cities in the Russian Federation (Astrakhan, Lipetsk, Syktyvkary, Tomsk, Izhevsk, Krasnoyarsk, etc.) met in St. Petersburg on July 27-29. The visit was organized by "AIDS Infoshare" (Moscow), within the program "HIV Prevention Activities among Paid Sex Workers", which is a part of the "National Priority Health Project 2006". The meeting was hosted by "Humanitarian Action" and "Stellit".

[More](#)

Volunteer Summer School Held in Barnaul, Russia

During the period between July 24 and 28, a Summer Volunteer School - 2006 was being held. The program comprises a forum for the volunteers who work in the sphere of health care, youth development, disease prevention among representatives of various groups, including those of sex workers. [More](#)

Confidential and Free STI Testing Provided for Sex Workers in Ukraine

In April, 2006 the Charitable Foundation SALUS (Ukraine) launched *ERATO* project. The project is supported by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Greece and with participation of such non-governmental organizations as ACT UP HELLAS (Greece) and ODYSSEUS (Slovakia). SALUS Foundation in its turn provides sex workers with access to confidential and free HIV/ Syphilis testing. [More](#)

PUBLICATIONS

Sex Worker Health and Rights: Where is the Funding?

Commissioned by the Open Society Institute's (www.soros.org) Sexual Health and Rights Project (SHARP), *Sex Worker Health and Rights: Where Is the Funding?* gives an overview of existing funding for sex worker health and rights initiatives, and assesses trends and implications around such support. The purpose is to generate greater awareness about the pressing needs of sex workers (including the right to be free from discrimination and violence, have safe working conditions, and quality health services) and about the opportunities for donors to fund the brave groups who are involved with these issues. [More](#)

IN THE NEWS

Note: For the copyrights reasons, we are unable to place the full text of the selected articles on the SWAN-HCLU website. Instead, we are providing a link to the news source, for which we do not know how long it will be active. We apologize in advance for possible inconveniences.

The Georgian Times, Georgia:

Prostitution- neither legal in Georgia, nor – banned

"As for me, I think it is better to pay to the government than somebody else. I would be the first prostitute to pay taxes"

-- A sex worker, Tbilisi, Georgia

TBILISI, 18 July, 2006 - According to specialists, there is an increasing number of 'street-workers' in Tbilisi. Research indicates that most of these people do the work due to poor economic conditions. Prostitution is neither legal in Georgia, nor is it banned... 'When I worked at Moscow Avenue at a private hotel, one official from the hotel beat me unmercifully... Then I worked at one of the saunas. 'Ministry Day' was announced, and that meant we had to work for them free. If it were legalized the rooms would be divided, there would be a special building, and prostitutes would be protected by doctors, solicitors and guards. The government must stamp out secret operations and prohibit minors. When I grow old I would like to work in such an organization as a regular inspector. As for me, I think it better to pay to the government than somebody else. I would be the first prostitute to pay taxes'. [More](#)

Scotsman.com, Scotland:

Prostitution Bill on table

EDINBURGH, June 22, 2006 - A BILL to change the law on prostitution is to be put to the Scottish Parliament before next year's elections... The new law on prostitution follows recommendations from a specialist working group earlier this year. The offence of soliciting will be replaced by a new offence of causing nuisance or offensive behaviour. This would apply equally to prostitutes and their clients. [More](#)

BBC News, UK:

Finns pass anti-prostitution law

The Finnish parliament has approved new legislation aimed at curbing human trafficking in the sex trade

HELSINKI, 21 June, 2006 - Under the new law, a client paying for sex with a prostitute could face six months in prison if the prostitute is a victim of human trafficking. It is estimated that more than a third of all prostitutes in Finland come from abroad, mainly Russia and the Baltic states, and are controlled by pimps. [More](#)

BBC News, UK:

New plan to permit small brothels

The law could be changed to allow two prostitutes and a receptionist or maid to work together legally in brothels, the government has confirmed

LONDON, 17 January, 2006 - Currently only lone prostitutes can offer sex from flats or other premises without breaking the law. Launching the new prostitution strategy for England and Wales, Minister Fiona Mactaggart said that working in groups would be safer for women. [More](#)

CNN, USA:

Senator seeks tax on pimps, prostitutes

NEW YORK, June 28, 2006 - Republican Sen. Charles Grassley of Iowa is hoping to stamp out the sex trade by taxing pimps and prostitutes, then jailing them when they don't pay.

The Senate Judiciary Committee Wednesday morning approved a bill sponsored by committee chairman Sen. Charles Grassley, R-Iowa, authorizing at least \$2 million toward the establishment of an office in the IRS criminal investigation unit to prosecute unlawful sex workers for violations of tax laws. The bill's approval gives the IRS harsh new criminal penalties for use against those in the underground criminal economy. [More](#)

Jamaica Gleaner News, Jamaica:

Healthy sex: Exotic clubs promote HIV/STV lessons

KINGSTON, Jamaica, 23 July, 2006 - the increasing number of HIV/AIDS cases in Jamaica has forced many exotic clubs to revamp their approach to the sex trade. In fact, an increasing number of these enterprises have partnered with the Ministry of Health to educate their workers, about sexually-transmitted diseases. [More](#)

Medindia, India:

Sex Workers Adopt IT Solutions to Fight AIDS

DELHI, 17 Jul 2006 - About 500 disorganized sex workers in Mysore and Mandya districts of Karnataka are now armed with smart cards that not only prompt them to get regular health check-ups to keep track of their STI (sexually transmitted infections) status but also get discounts on their daily purchases - from grocery to perfumes. This pilot project began in July in the two districts at the initiative of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation in association with the University of Manitoba, Canada. [More](#)

PRO AND CONTRA DECRIMINALIZATION

Re-visioning Prostitution Policy: Creating Space for Sex Worker Rights and Challenging Criminalization – A Conference in Las Vegas

A coalition of sex workers, social scientists, professional sex educators, health professionals and their supporting networks held a conference "Re-visioning Prostitution Policy: Creating Space for Sex Worker Rights and Challenging Criminalization" in Las Vegas, Nevada, on July 9-12, 2006.

[More](#)

SWOP, USA:

American Sex Workers Unite to End Criminalization of Prostitution

"As a sex worker, under criminalization, my rights are violated every day, not just my labor rights and legal rights, but most importantly my basic human rights."

-- Katrina, sex worker from Chicago, IL, USA

LAS VEGAS, July 14, 2006 - Sex workers, academics, advocates, and allies gathered at high noon Thursday, July 13, 2006 at the Regional Justice Center in Las Vegas to fight for occupational rights and equal protection under the law. From July 9-13, 2006, approximately 150 female, transgender, and male participants from around the globe gathered at the Desiree Alliance Conference "Re-visioning Prostitution Policy: Making Space for Sex Worker Rights and Challenging Criminalization" to oppose current policies and attitudes regarding United States prostitution laws & international policy. [More](#)

CALL FOR PROPOSALS

The EC recently launched the Programme of Aid for Policies and Actions on Reproductive and Sexual Health and Rights with the beneficiaries to be "the most vulnerable populations in developing countries." [More](#)

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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](#)

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