**ISSUES**

Sex workers are recognised as particularly vulnerable to HIV. But the specificities of their vulnerabilities remain under-researched and under-theorised.

Prevalence rates in South Africa were between 45% - 69% in 1998. At present they are probably much higher.

On-going criminalisation of the sex work industry may well fuel the AIDS epidemic by precluding effective prevention and education strategies, and infringes human rights.

The 19th FIFA World Cup™ was held in South Africa in June – July 2010 and was expected to attract 450 000 visitors. Intense attention is focused on HIV transmission and public health in a country that has the highest number of people with HIV/AIDS in the world. The soccer bonanza offers a rich opportunity for advocacy and education.

**DESCRIPTION**

Members of civil society and the South African National AIDS Council (SANAC) have engaged government, FIFA organisers and the media on strategies to ensure the safety and rights of sex workers and international tourists. FIFA organisers and the South African government have implemented none of the strategies recommended.

Strategies forged at a Consultation meeting on “HIV/AIDS, Sex Work and the 2010 Soccer World Cup: Human rights, Public health, Soccer and beyond” (November 2009)

- A public health campaign targeting spaces where soccer-lovers congregate to watch the games and sex worker “hot spots” in host cities;
- Calling for a moratorium on sex work-related arrests;
- Monitoring sex worker harassment and recourse;
- Enhancing the media skills of sex workers;
- Create a sex worker helpline; and
- Generating research on the demand/supply of paid sex during international sporting events.

**LESSONS LEARNED**

- Sex workers have generally been overlooked in South Africa and research and advocacy on HIV/AIDS and sex work is severely limited.
- The publicity and excitement generated by the World Cup have been harnessed strategically to focus on the vulnerable position of sex workers in South African society and to highlight the negative consequences of outdated criminal laws on public health and human rights.
- Regrettably the World Cup hype has also lead to unnecessary fear-mongering over the prevalence of sex trafficking and the dangerous conflation of trafficking and sex work.

**NEXT STEPS**

Strategies on sex work, HIV and the World Cup have directed attention on the untoward delay of the South African Law Reform Commission in recommending modernisation of South Africa’s criminal laws on sex work. This momentum will be utilised for advocacy to the decriminalisation of sex work in South Africa and to implement long-term health and social programmes that are sex work-specific and properly tailored.

---

**Notes:**

5. Members of civil society and the South African National AIDS Council (SANAC) have engaged government, FIFA, and the media on strategies to ensure the safety and rights of sex workers and international tourists. FIFA organisers and the South African government have implemented none of the strategies recommended.