Five Principles for Undertaking an Effective Legislative Campaign

A new proposed law or piece of legislation concerning the criminalisation of clients is often a complex process and it is easy to feel overwhelmed when it lands on your doorstep. Fighting against the implementation of the law and running a campaign can be a challenge, especially if time is limited. If you can’t run a full advocacy campaign, there are five key principles to keep in mind.

1 **Intelligence**
In order to mount the best campaign opposing the new law or regulation, you need to make sure you know about the process that government or officials will be following to implement the law. Make a timeline of each stage of the process. You can find out about new laws or proposed bills by:
- Checking the council, state or national web sites where proposed laws are announced
- Talk to your local politicians or local NGO’s who have experience in campaigning against legislation.

2 **Making Good Relationships**
It pays to be on good terms with as many local and national politicians and policy officers that you can get access to. Always try to meet government and policy officers face-to-face to make them aware of your concerns. They will also be able to explain processes, rules and policies to you. It is also worth building links with other organisations in your community who might be concerned. However, don’t assume that the community will automatically support your campaign, you need to build trust and good working relationships with people before they will join you in your campaign.

3 **Good Communications**
Make sure you have got a clear message for the media and public about the negative impacts the new laws will have. For example, the people who are advocating for the Swedish Model say they want to end violence against women but the evidence suggests that criminalising any aspect of sex work is more likely to make sex workers vulnerable to abuse and exploitation.

4 **Get Them on Their Weakest Points**
It is important to concentrate your attention and campaigning efforts in complex legislative campaigns. Rather than trying to say something about everything, you need to work out the key areas of objection and make them into killer arguments. For example, most proposed laws about criminalisation of clients will impact on the health and safety of sex workers.

5 **Danger Points**
Look out for your opponent’s killer response. They may employ a public relations (PR) firm and will try and sell the message of how prostitution is violence against women. Prepare your counter attack, get information about the effect of the Swedish Model and make the case that attempts to rescue and help sex workers have the opposite effect and do more harm than good.

Use stunts, protest, spread awareness, use local media, generate local feeling, use power of numbers!
**FIGHT FOR YOUR RIGHT TO BE HEARD!**
Building Your Case Against the Swedish Model

This worksheet is designed to get you started with your case against the Swedish Model. The questions have been grouped thematically around a number of frameworks for approaching the issue. Most cases against the Swedish Model will draw on a few, or even all, of these frameworks. The section has been grouped in this way to help you develop your case in a systematic way and to hone in on particular areas depending upon the way discussions and debates about sex work and criminalisation are framed in your country or region.

When answering the questions, try and be as specific as you can about the changes you think the laws will make and why. You can strengthen your case using the arguments in the second part of the worksheet and evidence in Worksheet 3.

1. Develop Your Case

SAFETY AND PROTECTION FROM VIOLENCE AND STIGMA

- Will it result in sex work being carried out in riskier situations? Give examples of how you think it may affect sex workers in this way.
- Will it displace sex workers from safer workplaces and work practices?
- Does it contribute to stigmatisation?

EXPLOITATION AND TRAFFICKING

- Is the law being advanced as a way to combat trafficking?
- Will it make sex workers more reliant on criminal networks to work?
- Does it affect the relationship between sex workers and police/others in authority in a way that could be detrimental, i.e. would it prevent sex workers from reporting crimes against them?

PUBLIC HEALTH

- How will the proposed law affect sex workers’ access to health and other services?
- Will it result in more unsafe practices, e.g. condom use, regular health check-ups?

ECONOMIC/WORK

- Will it affect sex worker’s ability to make a living? For example will it have a negative impact on sex workers’ business and income?
- Will it displace sex workers from safer workplaces and work practices?
- Does it take away sex worker’s power and autonomy in the sex industry?
- Will it affect their ability to organise for better conditions at work?

POLITICAL

Think about how the law fits into a broader political framework and whether it is linked to other issues that are on the political agenda in your country or region, e.g. migration, austerity agendas.

- Does the law have broad public support?
- Do most people want to see the eradication of sex work?
- Will it affect the social and political inclusion of sex workers?
- Do the arguments made for the Swedish Model promote an ideologically-based understanding of sex work, for example, all sex work is violence against women; or that all sex work is harmful to women and therefore harmful to society.
• Are there hidden agendas behind the introduction of the law, e.g. is it being used as a way to address a panic about migration; to justify public spending cuts; or to promote another cause.

PARTICIPATION
• Has the government; department; working group consulted with sex workers and their representative bodies at any time, before, during or after adopting and enforcing the new law [or promoting it elsewhere]?
• Did they get any first-hand information from sex workers or immigrants about their views on the law, their needs or concerns or their ideas on how to improve the situation of sex worker?
• Were sex workers intentionally excluded or marginalised from the process?

PRAGMATIC/IMPLEMENTATION
• How would the law be implemented realistically; would it even be possible to implement the law?
• How would the costs compare against the seriousness of the crime?
• Are there likely to be any unintended consequences or loopholes caused by the offence?

GENDER EQUALITY AND DISCRIMINATION
• Will the law affect all sex workers or will some groups be more affected than others, e.g. street sex workers; migrant sex workers; male or trans* workers

HUMAN RIGHTS
Most of the negative impacts of the Swedish Model has on sex workers will affect our rights in some way. Rights arguments are often important to make because they view sex workers as active agents who deserve equal treatment, rather than as problems to be solved or victims to be rescued. Human rights arguments often have strong appeal for those you want to convince.

The Open Society Foundation has produced an excellent guide that outlines Common Human Rights Violations experienced by Sex Workers. It also provides a key that advocates can use to help them determine if certain rights protected by international law have been violated, making clear the connection between abusive acts commonly experienced by sex workers and international rights guarantees. The document can be downloaded in English and Russian at: http://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/reports/common-human-rights-violations-experienced-sex-workers

2 Arguments Against Swedish Model

SAFETY AND PROTECTION
VIOLENCE AND STIGMA
In Sweden, sex workers report increased violence after the introduction of the Sexköpslag:
• Although there is no reliable study on the issue, sex workers “express fear of increased violence, as well as an actual increase” [Dodillet and Östergren 2011, 23; see also Scoular 2010, 20; Hubbard 2008, 147; Norwegian Ministry 2004,12–14; Östergren 2004, 2, 5].
• To avoid arrest for solicitation, sex buyers negotiate quickly, which prevents the sex workers from taking time to screen the client. Sex workers report that clients are often more stressed and scared and negotiation outdoors must be done in a more rapid manner. The likelihood of ending up with a dangerous client is greater.

Many street based sex workers fear that laws that criminalise clients will change the kind of clients they see; leaving more aggressive clients who are not deterred by the laws.

Indoor sex workers may be more apprehensive about seeking help from the police when they have had problems with an abusive customer. They fear that the police, once their personal address or work location is known, will target all their clients.
Sex workers report that criminalisation of clients in Sweden has reinforced and increased the social stigma about prostitution (Skarhed 2010, 34; Dodillet and Östergren 2011).

EXPLOITATION AND TRAFFICKING

Laws that criminalise sex work or any aspect of sex work tend to make sex workers more reliant on third parties to continue working. This can often make them vulnerable to abuse and exploitation:

- As sex workers move into more hidden locations to avoid the police, they may end up in the hands of third parties to keep the police away and help find clients (Dodillet and Östergren 2011, 22; Swedish National Board of Health and Welfare 2007, 4–48; Bernstein 2008, 154, 163).

The Swedish Model is not an effective response to trafficking or violence and abuse against sex workers:

- There is no evidence to suggest that the Swedish Model reduces trafficking.
- It relies upon the conflation of trafficking with all sex work, seeing all migrant sex workers to be victims who need to be saved or rescued and, more than likely, deported.

Clients often play an important role in reporting cases of abuse and exploitation, sometimes bringing them to the attention of law enforcement:

- Men who will criminally prosecuted for soliciting prostitution will not be willing to report crimes or assist in prosecutions of crimes of violence against sex workers. In Turkey, International Organisation on Migration reported that the highest percentage of calls to an anti-trafficking hotline came from Turkish clients of victims. Cf United States Department of State, Trafficking in Persons Report 2010 – Turkey, 14 June 2010.

Many sex workers, academics, campaigning groups and allied organisations argue that criminalisation of clients will further marginalise and increase the vulnerability of migrant sex workers.

PUBLIC HEALTH

In general laws the criminalise sex work limit sex workers’ access to health and other services:

- Laws that criminalise aspects of sex work have tended to make it harder for health and specialist outreach services to be accessed by sex workers or for those services to find sex workers. UN study into HIV and the Law found that the invisibility of sex workers constitutes the biggest obstacle to outreach workers in terms of HIV/AIDS and STI education and prevention [UNAIDS 2002, 13].
- A 2012 report by the Global Commission on HIV and the Law – made up of former heads of state and leading legal, human rights and HIV experts, and supported by the UN Development Programme (UNDP) on behalf of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) found that laws that criminalise and dehumanise populations at highest risk of HIV – including sex workers; drive people underground, away from essential health services and heighten their risk of HIV. The legal environment in many countries exposes sex workers to violence and results in their economic and social exclusion. It also prevents them from accessing essential HIV prevention and care services. It recommended decriminalising voluntary sex work.
- Anand Grover, the UN Special Rapporteur to promote the right to physical and mental health, stated that “the criminalization of private, consensual sexual behavior between adults” prevents sex workers from accessing services, therapies and treatments, “leading to poorer health outcomes for sex workers, as they may fear legal consequences or harassment and judgement” [UN Special Rapporteur 2010, 10, 12–13].

A law criminalising clients that reduce the amount of work and money for sex workers could lead them to engage in unsafe sex and sexual activity they usually would not perform.
ECONOMIC

Criminalisation of clients is likely to disrupt the work of indoor and street-based sex workers and affect their ability to earn a living.

The law is likely to lower prices on the streets since there will be less customers and more competition.

Disruption caused to their work by this law can result in unsafe working conditions for sex workers:

- Informal networks among sex workers are likely to weaken due to dispersal and the need to work in more isolated ways to avoid detection. This could affect their ability to warn each other about dangerous clients or give each other the same support.

Criminalisation of sex work means that sex workers do not have access to the protections afforded to other workers in other industries. It makes it more difficult for them to take action – individually or collectively, to challenge or resist unfavourable working conditions.

HUMAN RIGHTS

The laws could limit sex workers’ access to justice:

- Laws that criminalise sex work force sex workers to choose between their liberty and security when they are apprehensive about reporting abuse to the police.

- A Canadian trial court ruled that laws criminalising [1] the acts of living on the earnings of prostitution, [2] keeping a brothel, and [3] communicating in public for the purpose of prostitution [soliciting] are unconstitutional because they prevent sex workers from taking actions to make their work safer (Bedford 2010, 5–6). The Court found that “the laws, individually and together, force prostitutes to choose between their liberty interest and their right to security of the persons” (Bedford 2010, 5).

Sex workers have the right to consent and have that consent respected.

POLITICAL

These laws take power and autonomy away from people working in the sex industry.

They are often pushed by small interest groups who have ideological agendas that are at odds with public opinion.

There is a worrying link between laws that criminalise and attempt to limit sex work and moral panics about migration and migrants.

In recent years punitive laws claiming to benefit women and marginalised groups in society have been introduced often at the expense or in place of health and welfare services that would actually benefit them.

PRAGMATIC/IMPLEMENTATION

The enforcement of a law against sex purchase would be difficult and costly (reflected in low level of convictions).

It would most likely involve violating the Right to Privacy between two adults involved in a consensual sex act.

Scarce police and other public resources should be used in a focused way to target clients who are abusive, violent and commit other crimes against sex workers – not those who are respectful and have positive working relationships with sex workers.

PARTICIPATION

Sex workers should be involved in decisions about policies that will affect them:

- Sex workers have a right [Right to Participation] to be consulted about laws and policies that affect them;

- Democracies should marginalised groups should participate;

- Participation is a fundamental part of a democratic political process;

- When advocates and governments intentionally exclude the voices of sex workers or other persons who might disagree with them, they are claiming a monopoly on public dialogue and political decision-making.


**BUILT ON FALSE PRETENSES**

Most pushes for a client criminalisation model are constructed upon the theory that sex workers are passive ‘victims’:

- They attribute the existence of sex work to unequal power relations between men (clients) and women (sex workers) and equate all commercial sexual transactions with male violence;

- They understand sex work as a “serious harm both to individuals and to society”

In response, we can say: it is true that sex work is firmly situated within patriarchy (as is most work in patriarchal societies) and that violence exists within sex work – particularly in street-based sex work – but sex work is not, *per se*, violence against women. In most countries, laws exist that disempower sex workers and prevent them from taking reasonable steps to ensure their safety.

**OTHER ARGUMENTS**

Laws that criminalise clients will not eradicate sex work:

- Reports produced by the Swedish government and other researchers reveal that the government’s claims of success are not supported by facts. There is no evidence that fewer men are purchasing sex, that fewer women are selling sex or that fewer people are being trafficked into forced prostitution. At most, the government can demonstrate that there has been a drop in street-based prostitution but cannot explain the cause of the drop. Comprehensive services and assistance to ensure the health and safety of the victims.
The Evidence

1 Responses from Swedish Academics/Activists

Dodillet S., and Östergren P. 2011. The Swedish Sex Purchase Act: Claimed Success and Documented Effects

**EVIDENCE:** There is no evidence that the criminalisation of clients reduces the number of sex workers, or trafficked sex workers.

**QUOTE:** “The Sex Purchase Act cannot be said to have decreased prostitution, trafficking for sexual purposes, or had a deterrent effect on clients to the extent claimed”

**EVIDENCE:** Since the criminalisation of the purchase of sex street workers are being displaced, which makes it harder to know how many workers there are.

**QUOTE:** “According to social workers interviewed by the National Council for Crime Prevention [in Sweden] it has become more difficult to count the number of sex workers, since they have moved to side streets and cover a larger area than before.”

**EVIDENCE:** Any potential decrease in street based sex workers can be attributed to other factors, such as the growing use of new technologies.

**QUOTE:** “This shift from street to indoor is believed not to be necessarily a result of the Sex Purchase Act, but part of the general trend of decreasing street-based prostitution. The Board of Health and Welfare writes that prostitution has developed along with society in that new technology is being used, and that buyers and sellers of sexual services now make contact with each other by multifarious means.”

**EVIDENCE:** The Ban on the Purchase of Sex does not have the support of the general population, nor has it changed the views of the population.

**QUOTE:** “Newsmill, a much-read on-line debating forum, routinely lets its readers express their feelings (‘mill’) on the topics of the articles. As we write this article, 49 articles have been posted on the topic of the Sex Purchase Act where 13,855 people have voted on the question ‘How do you feel about: The Sex Purchase Act’, out of whom 81 percent are ‘angry’ with the ban, 12 percent are ‘happy’ with it, 4 percent are ‘bored’ and 1 percent are ‘curious’.

**EVIDENCE:** The law has negative effects for sex workers, including increased stigmatisation.

**QUOTE:** “The most common and perhaps most serious complaint regarding sex workers themselves is that they experienced an increased stigmatisation after the introduction of the Sex Purchase Act. Some also state that the ban is a violation of their human rights, and many say that they don’t feel fairly or respectfully treated: they are not regarded as fully worthy members of society. Sex workers object to the fact that they were not consulted in the making of the law. Since sex workers feel they are not able to influence their legal or societal situation, they feel powerless. And since the ban builds on the idea that women who sell sex are victims, weak and exploited, many claim that the law propagates stereotypical notions about sex workers.”

**EVIDENCE:** Sex workers have less trust in the police and the legal system.

**QUOTE:** “The National Board of Health and Welfare report that due to the ban sex workers feel less trust in social authorities, police and the legal system, and half of the respondents in the RFSL 22 study say that the current legislation prevents people seeking help. Instead of the police being a source of protection, sex workers feel hunted by them, and are subjected to invasive searches and questioning.”
**EVIDENCE:** Sex workers increasingly rely on third parties or ‘pimps’ to find clients.

**QUOTE:** “Some report that there is an increased dependency on third parties. Now that it is difficult to make direct contact with clients, sellers must rely on agents/pimps/helpers to find clients.”

**EVIDENCE:** General working conditions have worsened.

**QUOTE:** “When the negotiating has to be done in a more rapid way (due to the clients' fear of being caught) it increases the risk of the sex worker making a faulty assessment of the client. And when clients are more stressed and frightened of being exposed, it is also more difficult for the seller to assess whether the client might be dangerous. On top of this, services have to be carried out in even more hidden, and therefore more unprotected, areas. There has not been any specific research done on levels of violence, but several sex workers express fear of increased violence, as well as an actual increase. This situation is summarised by one of the informants in the Norwegian Inquiry:

“The Swedish street prostitutes experience a tougher time. They are more frequently exposed to dangerous clients, while the serious clients are afraid of being arrested. Prohibition will never be able to stop the purchase and sale of sex. It could only make conditions worse for the prostitutes. They have less time to assess the client as the deal takes place very hurriedly due to fear on the part of the client. They [the prostitutes] are exposed to violence and sexually transmitted diseases. If the client demands unprotected sex, many of the prostitutes cannot afford to say no. Harassment by the police has increased and the clients no longer provide tip-offs about pimps, for fear of being arrested themselves. The social workers working on the streets have problems reaching them. They [the prostitutes] use pimps for protection.” – The Norwegian Ministry of Justice

**LINK:** http://www.plri.org/resource/swedish-sex-purchase-act-claimed-success-and-documentedeffects
2 Responses from International Academics / Activists

Jordan, A. 2012. The Swedish Law to Criminalize Clients: A Failed Experiment In Social Engineering

**Evidence:** There is no evidence that the criminalisation of clients reduce the number of sex workers.

**Quote:** “In the thirteen years since the law was enacted, the Swedish government has been unable to prove that the law has reduced the number of sex buyers or sellers or stopped trafficking.”


Mai, N. 2009. Migrant Workers in the UK Sex Industry

**Evidence:** Criminalisation of clients drives the sex industry underground and leaves sex workers vulnerable to exploitation.

**Quote:** “The research evidence strongly suggests that current attempts to curb trafficking and exploitation by criminalising clients and closing down commercial sex establishments will not be effective because as a result the sex industry will be pushed further underground and people working in it will be further marginalised and vulnerable to exploitation. This would discourage both migrants and UK citizens working in the sex industry, as well as clients, from co-operating with the police and sex work support projects in the fight against actual cases of trafficking and exploitation.”

**Evidence:** The majority of migrant sex workers are not victims of trafficking, but consciously decide to work in the sex industry

**Quote:** “Interviews with 100 migrant women, men and transgender people working in all of the main jobs available within the sex industry and from the most relevant areas of origin [South America, Eastern Europe, EU and South East Asia] indicate that approximately 13 per cent of female interviewees felt that they had been subject to different perceptions and experiences of exploitation, ranging from extreme cases of trafficking to relatively more consensual arrangements. Only a minority, amounting approximately to 6 per cent of female interviewees, felt that they had been deceived and forced into selling sex in circumstances within which they had no share of control or consent.”

“Contrary to the emphasis given in current public debates about cases of trafficking and exploitation, the evidence gathered in the context of this project shows a great variety of life and work trajectories within the sex industry. Almost all interviewees felt that the most advantageous aspects of their involvement in the sex industry were the possibility of earning considerably more money than in other sectors, the availability of time and the possibility of meeting interesting people, travelling and experiencing new and challenging situations. In most cases by working in the sex industry migrants were able to bridge an important gap in their aspirations to social mobility and felt that they were able to enjoy better living and working conditions.”

“Most interviewees underlined that they enjoyed respectful and friendly relations with colleagues and clients and that by working in the sex industry they had better working and living conditions than those they encountered in other sectors of employment [mainly in the hospitality and care sectors]. The research shows that most interviewees consciously decided to work in the sex industry and that only a minority felt that they had been forced to.”

**Link:** [http://www.londonmet.ac.uk/research-units/iset/projects/esrc-migrant-workers.cfm](http://www.londonmet.ac.uk/research-units/iset/projects/esrc-migrant-workers.cfm)
3 Responses from the International Community

Ham, J. 2011. Moving Beyond ‘Supply and Demand’ Catchphrases (Global Alliance Against Trafficking in Women)

“Evidence has shown that ‘end demand for prostitution’ approaches:

- Don’t reduce trafficking;
- Ignores trafficking into other sectors;
- Tends to rely more on ideology rather than sound evidence;
- Confuses trafficking with sex work;
- Increases stigma against sex workers; and
- Is more focused on punishing men who pay for sexual services, rather than protecting women’s rights.”

EVIDENCE: The term ‘tackling demand’ does not take into account the diverse trajectories into the sex industry for migrant workers, nor does it consider sex workers’ agency.

QUOTE: “Defining trafficking as a simplistic ‘supply and demand’ equation can miss other nuances that could help clarify anti-trafficking strategies. Commodifying workers through demand-based discourses ignores the very real fact that trafficked persons, migrants and workers are people who are trying to access labour and migration opportunities for themselves and their families, and who often try to resist or escape exploitative situations.

EVIDENCE: The ‘supply/demand’ framework, which reduces sex work and trafficking to the ‘demand’ of ‘men’ does not reflect the complex interplay of supply and demand in contemporary sexual labour markets.

QUOTE: “Many casual references to supply/demand and trafficking seem to assume that demand creates the supply, particularly in debates about prostitution. However, supply and demand can impact each other in various ways; for example, supply can shape demand. For example, studies have found that a supply of cheap domestic workers can create a ‘need’ that wasn’t otherwise there.”


EVIDENCE: In a decriminalised environment sex workers face reduced levels of exploitation and better working conditions. Outreach is also made easier, facilitating the identification of those potentially trafficked or exploited.

QUOTE: “The state government of New South Wales [which encompasses Sydney] has reported that the decriminalisation of sex work has reduced levels of exploitation of women who had previously worked for illegal and organised crime syndicates. As a result, the government reports that migrant women working in the sex industry enjoy safer working conditions and increased access to health services (...) Decriminalisation and legalisation of the sex industry in Australia has meant sex worker outreach groups are able to provide advice on issues to migrant women in the sex industry much more easily, such as information about laws, health and safety. As a result, it is easier to identify and assist those in trafficking or exploitative situations. Those who wish to move out of the sex industry can obtain information about their options and be linked with support groups, education courses or skills training programmes.”

LINK: http://www.gaatw.org/Collateral%20Damage_Final/singlefile_CollateralDamagefinal.pdf
Global Commission on HIV and the Law. 2012 Risks, Rights and Health

**EVIDENCE:** The Swedish Model displaces street workers and increase vulnerability to violence of all sex workers.

**QUOTE:** “Street-based sex work is halved in Sweden, according to the police, but the sex trade remains at pre-law levels. It has simply moved further underground, to hotels and restaurants, as well as the Internet-and to Denmark. The Swedish State Criminal Department warns that the sex trade may now be more violent. Especially worrying is the trade in foreign women, who often fall entirely under the control of pimps.”

**EVIDENCE:** The implementation of the law is not workable

**QUOTE:** “Sweden’s Alliance of Counties says that resources for social work are scarce, as the money has been siphoned to policing. In spite of over 2,000 arrests, only 59 clients have been reported suspected of buying occasional sex. Only two have been convicted, after pleading guilty. No one has been jailed, and only low fines have been imposed, as per the law. Evidence to prove a crime is nearly unattainable. Workers do not consider themselves to be victims and are almost always unwilling to testify against their clients.”


UNAIDS Guidance Note on HIV and Sex Work. 2012

**EVIDENCE:** Criminalisation of sex work, including criminalisation of clients drives the sex industry underground and limit sex workers access to health and other services,

**QUOTE:** “In many countries, laws, policies, discriminatory practices, and stigmatising social attitudes drive sex work underground, impeding efforts to reach sex workers and their clients with HIV prevention, treatment, care and support programme.”

**EVIDENCE:** Criminalisation of sex work, including criminalisation of clients, does not reduce the number of sex workers.

**QUOTE:** “There is very little evidence to suggest that any criminal laws related to sex work stop demand for sex or reduce the number of sex workers. Rather, all of them create an environment of fear and marginalisation for sex workers, who often have to work in remote and unsafe locations to avoid arrest of themselves or their clients. These laws can undermine sex workers’ ability to work together to identify potentially violent clients and their capacity to demand condom use of clients. The approach of criminalising the client has been shown to backfire on sex workers. In Sweden, sex workers who were unable to work indoors were left on the street with the most dangerous clients and little choice but to accept them. Where sex work is criminalised, sex workers are very vulnerable to abuse and extortion by police, in detention facilities and elsewhere.”

# Template for a Workplan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GOALS</th>
<th>STRATEGY</th>
<th>ACTIONS</th>
<th>OUTCOMES</th>
<th>TIMEFRAME</th>
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</thead>
</table>
| SHORT-TERM  | STOP CRIMINALISATION OF CLIENTS BILL PASSING INTO LAW | • Lobby Government through open letter  
• Discussions with political actors/police/other stakeholders  
• Public pressure – media and direct action | • Circulate letter and again large number of signatories from key stakeholders  
• Gain audience with mayoral office/key cops/officials  
• Run media campaign including coverage/comment in national press and stunts | • Bill does not pass into law  
• Prominent stakeholders speak publicly against law  
• Better relationships between sex workers and police/local services/local communities | May – June  
June |
| | BUILDING ALLIANCES | • Approaching organisations and individuals to sign open letter  
• Establishing campaign committee | • Ongoing outreach  
• Address Trade Union branches/meetings/conferences | • Visible/vocal support for sex worker rights among organisations/individuals outside usual suspects | May – September  
May & June  
June |
| MEDIUM-TERM | SHARE/DEVELOP PRACTICES FOR OTHER SEX WORKER ORGANISATIONS | • Post-campaign review and report | • Copies of report to other sex worker organisations internationally | September |
| LONG-TERM | BUILD FOUNDATIONS FOR A DECRIMINALISATION CAMPAIGN | • Alliance building and awareness raising through campaign | • A decriminalisation campaign supported by a wide range of actors | |

### TIP

You will need to return regularly to your work plan to monitor whether you are meeting your milestones (and if not, you need to think about what might be preventing you). You may also need to revise your goals and/or strategy as new debates and arguments arise, new players enter the policy field or new knowledge changes the nature of the debate.
[Your Address]

[Recipient Address]

Date

Dear [Name of Ally Individual/Organisation]

[My organisation] is concerned that the [name of law] that is due to be debated in parliament in [Month] will have damaging consequences for sex workers health, rights and living conditions.

We are currently making contact with organisations who we believe have an interest in defending sex workers against laws that are likely to undermine their safety and autonomy and lead to arrests, detainments and deportations.

There is no conclusive evidence to suggest that legal measures criminalising clients, brothel-owners, managers and support staff within the sex industry eliminate or significantly reduce sex work. The available evidence suggests instead that such measures increase repression, violence and discrimination against sex workers. This diminishes sex workers’ access to health care, housing and social services.

In Sweden, where laws to criminalise the clients of sex workers have been in place since 1999, street-based sex workers have reported greater competition, declining prices and harsher conditions. To compensate for fewer clients, women accept clients who are drunk, aggressive or refuse condom use. Studies have also shown that since client criminalisation in Sweden, sex workers are at greater risk of violence and infectious diseases.

We attach/enclose [delete as appropriate] a briefing paper that outlines our case against the [name of law] and we invite you to join us [our campaign / in lobbying the government – what is it you would like them to do?]

Should you wish to know more about our campaign, a member of [my organisation] is happy to come and speak with you or at a meeting of [your organisation].

[We would also like to invite you to our next campaign organising meeting on:]

DATE: 
TIME: 
PLACE: 
ADDRESS: 

[nearest transport: XX]]

Please let us know whether you would like to work with us on this issue.

In unity

[Name]

[My organisation]

[contact detail]
In Canada, two cases have been making their way through courts in Ontario and in British Columbia, challenging provisions of the Criminal Code that deal with sex work. While sex worker activists who promote the human rights of sex workers argue for the complete removal of prostitution laws that criminalize sex workers (known as decriminalization), others propose alternative models of criminalization. Known as the “Swedish” or “Nordic” model of regulating sex work, this model has been proposed as an alternative to the current regime of criminalization. This model — adopted in Sweden, Norway and Iceland — criminalizes the purchase of sexual services, most indoor sex work and promoting and “living on the avails of” sex work.

Given the strong prospect that at least some of the challenged provisions of the Criminal Code may soon no longer form part of Canadian law, it is important to consider the impact of the Swedish model on sex workers and whether it is a constitutional — and therefore legal — alternative, or if it merely replaces one unconstitutional set of laws with another.

This policy brief considers the impact of the Swedish model on sex workers and, in light of its harmful effects, argues that this approach would not withstand constitutional scrutiny in Canada.

What is the “Swedish” or “Nordic” model?

In 1999, the Swedish government passed the law Prohibiting the Purchase of Sexual Services (Sex Purchase Act). This law, now part of Sweden’s Penal Code, punishes those who purchase sex with a fine or imprisonment for up to one year. The stated objective of the law is to “end demand” for prostitution because sex workers are deemed to be “victims” and sex work is considered to cause serious harm to individuals and to society as a whole.

Sweden’s Penal Code also punishes those who “promote” sex work or “improperly financially exploit” someone’s engagement in sex work with imprisonment of up to four years (or up to eight years if the crime is “gross,” i.e., involving large-scale exploitation). In effect,
this provision punishes:

1. those who “promote” sex work — including sex workers themselves — by permitting individuals to use their premises for sex work; and
2. sex workers working collectively, who are all deemed to be financially “exploiting” one another.³

Impacts of the Swedish model

Despite its stated intentions, the Swedish model is not effective at reducing prostitution. While the number of sex workers working on the street appeared to decline following the passage of the law, sex workers have merely moved indoors, online and to neighbouring countries.

As a result of this law, most sex workers who work indoors are criminalized, and they are unable to work or live with others, including their partners, since it is illegal to share in any income derived from sex work.³ More broadly, sex workers are unable to access social security benefits that are available to all other workers in legal labour activities.⁴

Also reported are the following:

INCREASED RISKS OF AND EXPERIENCES OF VIOLENCE

Street sex workers have reported increased risks of and experiences of violence. Regular clients have avoided them for fear of police harassment and arrest, instead turning to the internet and to indoor venues. There are fewer clients on strolls, and those that remain are more likely to be drunk or violent and to request unprotected sex.

DECREASED NEGOTIATING POWER FOR SAFER SEX PRACTICES

There is greater competition for clients and lower prices for services. This means that sex workers accept clients they would have otherwise refused and there is more pressure on them to see clients who insist on unsafe sex practices. When safer sex practices are being negotiated, both clients and sex workers must do so rapidly and often with unclear communication and in more secluded locales, to avoid lingering for fear of arrest for purchasing sex.

SAFETY NETWORKS AND WARNING SYSTEMS AMONG SEX WORKERS ARE THREATENED

Since police surveillance has driven sex workers to more isolated locations, informal support networks among sex workers have weakened and it has become more difficult for sex workers to warn each other about abusive or violent aggressors posing as clients.

CLIENTS ARE MORE RELUCTANT TO REPORT VIOLENCE THEY WITNESS AGAINST SEX WORKERS

Clients who would have previously reported violence, coercion or other abuse towards a sex worker are now more reluctant to go to the police for fear of their own arrest.

AGGRESSIVE POLICING

Sex workers who work on the street in Sweden have reported aggressive policing, police harassment, police persecution and overall mistrust of police.

STRONG LEGAL INCENTIVES TO AVOID CONDOM USE

Police have confiscated belongings to use as evidence against clients, providing sex workers with a strong incentive to avoid carrying condoms.

INCREASED DISCRIMINATION FROM HEALTH SERVICE PROVIDERS

Sex workers report an increase in discrimination from health service providers and from the general population. Rampant stigma around sex work and fear of discrimination prevents sex workers from talking about their sex work experiences when testing for HIV and other sexually transmitted infections and when accessing health services for their overall health.

INCREASED DIFFICULTIES IN ACCESSING AND MAINTAINING HOUSING

Sex workers frequently face difficulties accessing and maintaining housing as a result of discrimination and associated stigma. Sex workers’ increased mobility and displacement to hidden venues also impede their access to and ability to maintain housing.

INADEQUATE SOCIAL SERVICES

In Sweden, most social service providers oppose condom provision as it is perceived to render them complicit in prostitution-related offences. After the passage of the Swedish model, HIV prevention projects aimed at clients of sex workers also ceased.

ERASURE OF MALE AND TRANS SEX WORKERS

Government evaluations of the law often ignore its impact on male and trans sex workers, so very little is known about their risks of and experiences of violence, access to health care, sexual behaviour and sexual health.
Comparison of the laws regarding sex work in Canada and in Sweden

The Swedish model is very similar to the current legislative model for sex work in Canada. Canada already has core elements of a Nordic model in place, including parallel provisions which have been demonstrated (and accepted in court) to have detrimental effects. The following chart compares key laws governing sex work in Canada and in Sweden, illustrating that the legislative frameworks in each country are more similar than they are different.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Canada</th>
<th>Sweden</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Keeping a bawdy house</td>
<td>Illegal, including for sex workers who work out of their own homes</td>
<td>Illegal, unless the sex worker owns the space that she or he uses for sex work and works alone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>S. 210 of the Criminal Code makes it an offence to keep, be found in, own, or be a landlord, lessor, tenant, occupier, agent or otherwise have charge or control of any place that is used regularly for the purpose of prostitution.</td>
<td>Ch. 6, s. 12 of the Penal Code makes it an offence for a person to grant the right to use his or her premises to another when it is “wholly or to a substantial extent used for casual sexual relations in return for payment” because that person is “considered to have promoted the activity ….”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procuring, working collectively, and living on the avails of prostitution</td>
<td>Illegal</td>
<td>Illegal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>S. 212 of the Criminal Code makes it an offence to procure a person to become a prostitute and to live wholly or in part on the avails of prostitution, including for sex workers who live wholly or in part on the avails of another sex worker’s prostitution.</td>
<td>Ch. 6, s. 12 of the Penal Code makes it an offence to promote or improperly financially exploit “a person’s engagement in casual sexual relations in return for payment.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selling sexual services</td>
<td>Technically legal — as long as it happens in a private place</td>
<td>Legal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>If any related communication happens in public (e.g., a conversation or an ad in the paper or online), s. 213(1)(c) of the Criminal Code has been violated.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buying sexual services</td>
<td>Technically legal — as long as it happens in a private place</td>
<td>Illegal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>If any related communication happens in public, s. 213(1)(c) of the Criminal Code has been violated.</td>
<td>Ch. 6, s. 12 of the Penal Code makes it an offence for a person to obtain “a casual sexual relation in return for payment.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Would the Swedish model be considered constitutional in Canada?

Comparing the Swedish model with Canada's approach to sex work illustrates their similarities, including the fact that the Swedish model would not make any headway in addressing violence against sex workers and the violation of sex workers’ rights. Many of the reasons underpinning the Ontario courts’ invalidation of the challenged provisions in Canada’s Criminal Code would seem to apply under a Swedish model (see footnote 1 for a more detailed description of the cases). The table below compares the documented impact of key provisions of the Swedish model with the closest analogy in Canadian law, and assesses whether a hypothetical Swedish model would withstand constitutional scrutiny in Canada. The analysis is largely based on the Ontario courts’ findings in the Bedford case, many of which could be applied to the Swedish model.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Canada's approach</th>
<th>Sweden's approach</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Prohibition on keeping a common bawdy house</td>
<td>VIOLATES RIGHT TO SECURITY OF THE PERSON</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the <em>Bedford</em> case, the Ontario Court of Appeal found that the prohibition on “common bawdy-houses” limited sex workers’ security of the person.</td>
<td>In Sweden, sex workers are forced to lie in order to rent premises, pressured to pay exorbitant rent and banned from hotels and other venues after police inform management of sex work on their property.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The court said: “The bawdy-house provisions prevent prostitutes from taking the basic safety precaution of moving indoors to locations under their control, which the application judge held is the safest way to sell sex. In this way, as the application judge found, the provisions dramatically impact on prostitutes’ security of the person.”</td>
<td>The limited exception in Sweden’s Penal Code for sex workers working <em>alone out of property they own</em> does not assist those sex workers who wish to work collectively or who do not own the property in which they work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>As in Canada, criminalizing indoor work undermines sex workers’ safety because it inhibits the screening of clients, who may not wish to disclose any identifying information for fear of criminal liability.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Prohibition on procuring, working collectively, and living on the avails of prostitution</td>
<td>VIOLATES RIGHT TO SECURITY OF THE PERSON</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the <em>Bedford</em> case, the Ontario Court of Appeal held that criminalizing activities that force sex workers to work in isolation materially contribute to a deprivation of their security of the person.</td>
<td>Swedish law criminalizes those who “improperly financially exploit” sex workers, but makes no distinction between relationships that involve exploitation and those that do not. As a result, sex workers work in isolation and cannot work together, recommend customers to each other, advertise, or work from property they rent or where they cohabit with a partner, since that partner is likely to share part of any income derived from sex work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The court said that the prohibition on “living on the avails” of prostitution prevents sex workers from hiring staff who could keep them safe, and it could conversely increase the likelihood that sex workers would be exploited by “forcing them to seek protection from those who are willing to risk a charge under this provision.”</td>
<td>By preventing sex workers from working for or with or employing third parties, the prohibition denies sex workers control over their working conditions, limits their options on how they work and ultimately makes their work less safe.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Prohibition on buying sexual services</td>
<td>VIOLATES RIGHT TO SECURITY OF THE PERSON</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The purchase of sex is not in itself illegal in Canada, but laws targeting clients have dangerous implications for sex workers. In Montréal, police sweeps targeting clients have led to dramatic increases in violence experienced by street sex workers, whose regular clients turn to sex workers working indoors where the risk of criminalization is lower. Street sex workers have less choice of clients as a result, are unable to assess if someone is a client or an aggressor, and are pressured to accept clients whom they would otherwise reject. In Ottawa, a police trend of targeting clients has resulted in sex workers’ increased feelings of risk to personal security and of being unable to trust or turn to the police for help.</td>
<td>When clients are criminalized by the prohibition on buying sex, sex workers face threats of violence and poor health because they are prevented from screening their clients, who are exposed to police scrutiny for such communication.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>While a majority of the Ontario Court of Appeal in the <em>Bedford</em> case upheld the constitutionality of the prohibition on communicating in public for the purpose of prostitution, it also recognized that the provision violates sex workers’ security of the person by preventing them from screening potential customers for fear of arrest.</td>
<td>Since the passage of the <em>Sex Purchase Act</em>, sex workers who work on the street have less time and power to negotiate safer sex or to assess potential danger. They have also been displaced to more isolated locations. The provision renders sex workers more susceptible to violence by preventing them from taking basic safety precautions while they work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Whereas one rationale of the majority of the Ontario Court of Appeal for upholding the communication provision in the <em>Bedford</em> case was that sex workers could move indoors (since the court struck down the prohibition on common bawdy-houses) and thus avoid many of the harms sex workers on the street face, this would not be applicable to the Swedish model because the majority of indoor sex work is still criminalized under that model.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Rights and Reason: The Way Forward

In Canada and in Sweden, both approaches for regulating sex work violate sex workers’ security of the person (Section 7 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms). The Swedish model is harmful for sex workers because it denies them control over their working conditions and impedes their ability to practise their profession safely and without risk to their bodily integrity. This was recognized by the Global Commission on HIV and the Law, which released a report in 2012 denouncing the Swedish model. In the report, the Global Commission found that “[s]ince its enactment in 1999, the law has not improved — indeed, it has worsened — the lives of sex workers” and noted that “the sex trade may now be more violent.”1 There is also increasing evidence in Canada of the vicious consequences of client sweeps on sex workers, a foreseeable consequence should the Swedish model be applied in Canada.

Both approaches also entrench and exacerbate stigma against sex workers and constrain their access to legal recourse by institutionalizing an adversarial relationship between sex workers and the police. Sex workers who report a violent experience risk incriminating not only themselves but their employer, colleagues and clients, leading to a loss of work, income and potentially child custody. Reporting a violent incident may also mean that police harass and target a sex worker and the men she is in personal relationships with for arrest, because they assume that those men are her clients. Sex workers are consequently dissuaded from reporting violence against them, creating a climate of impunity which fosters and fuels further violence. This is especially true for sex workers who work on the street, and who already face horrific violence, stigma and disproportionate criminalization. Introducing the Swedish model in Canada would force sex workers on the street to continue to work in isolation in order to avoid their clients’ arrest.

The dangerous and potentially fatal consequences of criminalizing the purchase of sex outweigh any questionable benefits that might arise. The courts and Parliament owe a responsibility to sex workers to ensure that one deadly — and unconstitutional — regime is not replaced with another. Rather than imposing the Swedish model on sex workers in Canada, Parliament should meaningfully consult with sex workers about the best ways to protect their human rights and promote secure working conditions, which necessarily includes the repeal of the prostitution-related offences of the Criminal Code. This approach is a far more effective way of addressing exploitation in the sex industry than one already proven not to work.

Recommendations

• Parliament should repeal the section of the Criminal Code that makes it an offence to communicate in a public place for the purposes of prostitution (section 213).

• Parliament should repeal the bawdy-house sections of the Criminal Code (sections 210 and 211).

• Parliament should repeal the subsections of the procuring sections of the Criminal Code that relate to bawdy-houses (subsections 212(1)(b),(c), (e), and (f)) and to procuring more generally (subsections 212(1) (a), (d) and (h)).

• Parliament should repeal the section of the Criminal Code that makes it an offence to live on the avails of prostitution (subsection 212(1)(j)).

• Parliament should repeal the reverse-onus subsection of the Criminal Code as it applies to living on the avails of prostitution (subsection 212(3)).

References

1 In Ontario (Bedford v. Canada, 2010 ONSC 4264), the Superior Court of Justice struck down three provisions of the Criminal Code in 2010 which make it illegal for anyone to keep a common bawdy-house (s. 210); live on the avails of prostitution (s. 212(1)(j)); and communicate for the purpose of prostitution in public (s. 213(1)(c)). The Court held that these provisions infringe sex workers’ rights to liberty, security of the person and freedom of expression pursuant to the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Two years later, the Ontario Court of Appeal partially upheld this ruling (Canada (Attorney General) v. Bedford, 2012 ONCA 186) by invalidating the prohibition on common bawdy-houses; qualifying the prohibition on living on the avails of prostitution by limiting it to “circumstances of exploitation”; and maintaining the prohibition on communicating in a public place for purposes of prostitution. In British Columbia (B.C.), an organization of sex workers (SWUAV) and a former sex worker (Sheri Kiselbach) are challenging the constitutionality of Criminal Code provisions dealing with sex work. The case was dismissed at trial because the judge held that the group did not have “public interest standing” to bring the case to court. However, B.C.’s Court of Appeal overturned this decision and in 2012, the Supreme Court of Canada
affirmed the group’s right to challenge those laws (Canada (Attorney General) v. Downtown Eastside Sex Workers United Against Violence Society, 2012 SCC 45).


3 Penal Code of Sweden (Law 1998:393), Ch. 6, Section 8, accessible at www.sweden.gov.se/content/1/c6/15/14/61/e97ee975.pdf.


7 This chart is adapted from one developed by Katrina Pacey, Litigation Director at Pivot Legal Society.


9 Bedford v. Canada (Attorney General), 2012 ONCA 186 at para 244.

10 Émilie Laliberté, Executive Director of Stella, personal communication, August 1, 2012.

11 Frédérique Chabot, POWER Board of Directors, personal communication, August 2, 2012.

12 This decision is being challenged before the Supreme Court of Canada in 2013.

13 The Global Commission on HIV and the Law was tasked with analyzing the interaction among the legal environment, human rights and HIV, and with making recommendations for rights-based law and policy in the context of HIV. See Global Commission on HIV and the Law, Risks, Rights, and Health, July 2012, p. 38.

Acknowledgements

Thanks to Jenn Clamen for reviewing and providing input on this policy brief; and to Pye Jakobsson for reviewing the documented impacts of the Swedish model in a longer essay on which this policy brief is based.
The criminalisation of clients: a summary
The criminalisation of clients: a summary

The criminalisation of sex workers’ clients is often claimed to be part of a new legal framework to eradicate sex work and trafficking by ‘ending demand’. In 1999, Sweden criminalised sex workers’ clients and maintained the criminalisation of third parties such as brothel-owners, managers, security and support staff. The individual selling of sex remained legal. This model is frequently referred to as the ‘Swedish’, ‘Nordic’ or ‘End Demand’ model. There is great pressure in many countries to advance such legal and policy measures. The damaging consequences of this model on sex workers’ health, rights and living conditions are rarely discussed.

Impact on sex workers of ‘end demand’ laws

The premise of criminalising buying sex is that clients’ demand for sex is responsible for women entering and remaining in sex work. While male and transgender sex workers are overlooked in this analysis, female sex workers are frequently conflated with children or ‘pimps’ and traffickers in what are often anti-migrant narratives. Female sex workers are construed as victims with no agency – and as harmful to all women, family and the nation at large. The resulting agenda is summed up by Pye Jakobsson, a Swedish sex worker: “We want to save you. And if you don’t appreciate it, we will punish you.”

In many countries, legal measures aiming to eliminate sex work have been implemented for well over a century. Though their theoretical framework and justification is different than in Sweden, sex workers’ experiences of the criminalisation of clients in these different contexts add to the growing body of data about the lived consequences of such measures. Laws advanced to end demand impact upon sex workers in the following ways:

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1 This is the case in Sweden where sex workers were not criminalised before the criminalisation of clients. This is the case in Sweden where sex workers were not criminalised before the criminalisation of clients. Clients are criminalised under the Swedish Penal Code Chapter 11 (previously under the Sex Purchase Act, 1999). Laws requiring a landlord to terminate the lease of a tenant (or others) uses the premises for sex work include: Penal Code chapter 6 s.12.2; Land Code 12 s. 42.1.9; Condominium Act 7 s. 28.8. Brothelkeepers and procurers are criminalised under the Penal Code chapter 12 s. 12. In S. Dodillet & P. Östergren (2011), The Swedish Sex Purchase Act: Claimed Success and Documented Effects, paper presented at Decriminalizing Prostitution and Beyond: Practical Experience and Challenges International Conference, The Hague.


3 See D. Hughes (2004), The Demand: Where Sex Trafficking Begins, presentation at the US Embassy of the Holy See, Rome. Hughes, affiliated with Coalition Against Trafficking in Women (CATW) states that: “The exploiters, including traffickers, pimps, brothel owners, organized crime members, and corrupt officials make-up what is known as the sex industry.”


5 Kulick, sp. cit.

6 HCLU (2010), Interview with Pye Jakobsson, SWAN, Retrieved from www.swannet.org/node/1512
Increased repression of sex workers

Most countries that have introduced legislation criminalising clients have maintained or increased the criminalisation of sex workers. For example,

- This is true of South Korea, South Africa and Lithuania. In Illinois (US), the ‘end demand’ coalition successfully lobbied for legislation that both criminalises clients and elevates the selling of sex to a felony offence, punishable by imprisonment up to a year.
- Even in countries where selling sex is decriminalised, sex workers can be criminalised under laws against brothel keeping and profiting from prostitution if they work together indoors and pay each other for rent or any part of the expenses.
- In some countries, sex workers are disproportionately targeted for arrest under unrelated laws. For example, in Sweden and Norway, though selling sex is not illegal, significant numbers of sex workers are arrested and deported for illegal immigration.
- The policing of clients on the street subjects sex workers to invasive searches, surveillance and high levels of harassment in their homes and work places.

Increased violence and discrimination

- Police surveillance patrols aimed at locating clients drive sex workers on the street into less public areas where they are more vulnerable to violence. Since client criminalisation, sex workers on the streets in Sweden have reported greater competition, declining prices and harsher conditions.
- Fewer clients on the street can force sex workers to accept aggressive or drunken clients. Violence against sex workers has increased following anti-client measures.
- Since exposing oneself as a sex worker often leads to harassment, sex workers seldom report incidents of violence or coercion. Norwegian police report that the Swedish model has made it harder to gather evidence – from sex workers and clients – against people who have coerced or exploited sex workers.
- Sex workers in Sweden who took part in a government sponsored study reported a significant increase in stigma and discrimination after the passing of anti-client measures.
The criminalisation of clients: a summary

Decreased access to health and social services

- Due to fewer clients as a result of client criminalisation, many street-based sex workers compensate for loss of earnings by not using condoms.\(^{18}\) Indoor venues, such as massage parlours refuse to keep condoms on the premises since they can be used as evidence of sex work.\(^{19}\)
- Increased mobility and the displacement of sex workers to hidden venues impedes provision of health and services to sex workers. In Korea and Sweden, health authorities have expressed concern about the negative outcomes of laws on sex workers’ health and safety.\(^{20}\)
- There is strong evidence to suggest that peer-driven and rights-based programmes aimed at sex workers are the most effective HIV prevention strategy.\(^{21}\) A framework that equates sex work with violence against women prevents state support for such programmes and excludes specific health and social services for male and transgender sex workers.

Decreased access to housing and shelter

- Laws against buying sex, profiting from sex work or renting space for sex work render landlords and hotel owners liable if they rent rooms to sex workers. In many countries, police order landlords to evict suspected sex workers without notice. This compromises sex workers’ access to safe housing, which is crucial to preventing violence and protecting their health.\(^{22}\)

In sum, there is no conclusive evidence to suggest that legal measures criminalising clients, brothel-owners, managers and support staff within the sex industry eliminate or significantly reduce sex work. The available evidence suggests instead that such measures increase repression, violence and discrimination against sex workers. This diminishes sex workers’ access to health care, housing and social services. The criminalisation of clients is not a human rights-based response to sex work.

Global Network of Sex Work Projects

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\(^{18}\) Norwegian Ministry of Justice and Police Affairs, op. cit.


\(^{20}\) Schwartzmann, op. cit.; Dodillet & Östergren, op. cit.


\(^{22}\) This is documented for Sweden, Norway and Canada. Rendland & Jacobsson, op. cit.; Crago, op. cit.; Written communication from Astrid Rendland, Director of PION, a sex worker support centre in Oslo, 2011, July 12.
The Swedish Model of criminalising sex work since 1999 – Briefing Paper

What has changed and what has stayed the same since the Swedish Government criminalised sex work over a decade ago?

This briefing paper resulted from a visit by Pye Jacobsson, sex worker representative, Rose Alliance, (Sweden) to Scarlet Alliance, National Office, Redfern, 10th June 2011

Sweden sees itself as the perfect society and decided over a decade ago that they no longer tolerated sex work, drug taking or HIV transmission. They criminalised everything associated with the behaviours of sex workers and drug users, and the non-disclosure of HIV status. In addition to the laws against the possession and sale of drugs, it is also a criminal offence to take drugs or have them in your system, as a result the jailing of people who take drugs is common. Sex workers in Sweden face systemic and extreme social marginalisation, and people living with HIV face arrest and jail.

The following are outcomes of the zero tolerance policies in Sweden:

- There is only one needle and syringe program in Sweden, run by the Swedish Drug User Union. It has to operate in a grey area of the law. Doctors are not allowed to prescribe injecting equipment to people who are suspected of using drugs.

- The Government funded condom distribution programmes in Sweden only target men who have sex with men. Local councils are meant to distribute condoms to sex workers, but in reality it only happens in the City of Malmo.

- Sweden has the highest rate of HIV-related convictions per capita in the world (as measured by UNAIDS). This means Sweden jails more people living with HIV than any other country in the world.

- There is no anonymous STI testing for sex workers in Sweden.

- Health care is meant to be universal in Sweden; however sex workers are treated very differently to other people.

- Sweden's pimping laws target everyone. Even the son of a sex worker has been charged with pimping because he was not paying rent to his mother.

- Sex workers choose to work alone in order to avoid the pimping laws. This marginalises sex workers from their families, friends and colleagues.

- The anti-client laws are used maliciously against sex workers. For example ex-partners, neighbours and others who may wish to harass a sex worker will use the laws to do so.

- The estimated number of clients in Sweden is the same now as it was prior to the criminalisation of behaviours related to sex work.

- The estimated number of sex workers in Sweden is the same now as it was prior to the criminalisation of behaviours related to sex work.

- There is a claim that street based sex work numbers dropped in Sweden after the introduction of the laws in 1999.
- However it coincided with the rise in the use of social networking to contact clients, something popular among street based sex workers in the cold country of Sweden.

- Sex workers have lost their children as a result of the law. They are seen as unfit to be parents if they do not repent and leave sex work.

- Newspapers won’t take advertisements from sex workers.

- Locally run sex worker advertising websites in Sweden have been closed down.

- A locally run website owner has gone to jail for two years simply for running a website for sex workers.

- A Thai sex worker working with a visiting friend was charged for 1.5 years in prison for pimping.

- Isolated sex workers don’t come forward to services.

- Social work services for sex workers are contingent on sex workers breaking down and saying that they dislike their work, they don’t want to do sex work, and they are willing to enter therapy to stop doing sex work.

- When sex workers do not denounce their profession they are seen as having mental health issues. They are viewed as mentally unstable because they view sex work as a job that does not victimise them.

- The laws view sex work as a 100% victimising profession.

- The law sends a message that no sex worker can ever choose to do sex work.

- Sex workers have been fired from the health sector (i.e. from being nurses or public health officials), from the education sector (i.e. from being teachers) and from the police force.

- Police resources are spent on following clients to sex workers homes, staking out such homes, and waiting for the “event” to take place so that the client can be charged.

- Police call landlords and urge them to evict the sex worker or else the landlord will be charged with pimping.

- Police tell neighbours about them having a sex worker in their building.

- Police see sex workers as undesirable criminals, and sex workers are the target of heavy surveillance.

- Human trafficking is actually impossible to identify in Sweden, because it is seen as the same as sex work.

- There is a massive amount of stigma and discrimination affecting sex workers lives as a result of the laws, the policies, the pervasive idea that no sex workers could actually want to do sex work, and the treatment of those who do want to do sex work as having a “false consciousness.”

- There have been no beneficial outcomes for sex workers, drug users or people living with HIV as a result of the Swedish approaches to any of these populations.

**Sex workers in Sweden oppose the laws that have criminalised their workplaces. Sex workers in Australia oppose such laws being implemented in Australia.**
Sample Communications Strategy

Objectives

- To strengthen pro-sex worker rights alliances
- To influence policing and Border Agency practice during the Olympics
- To influence policy debates on issues that affect sex workers
- To provide migrants rights/human rights/ feminists organisations and activists with a critical discourse around sex worker rights and trafficking
- To challenge popular perceptions about sex work and trafficking

Key Messages

- It is a myth that large sporting events like the Olympics result in an increase in trafficking
- Anti-trafficking measures target migrant sex workers and
  » make them more vulnerable
  » undermine their autonomy
  » undermine their human rights
  » are being used as immigration controls
- Criminalising sex workers:
  » doesn’t reflect public opinion
  » runs counter to evidence about how to stop exploitation
- Criminalising clients is just another way to criminalise sex work and sex workers

Audiences and Targeted Messages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AUDIENCE</th>
<th>WHAT THEY NEED TO KNOW</th>
<th>KEY COMMUNICATIONS MESSAGES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MAYOR</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>That it will be politically expedient to enact the moratorium</td>
<td>That there is a strong civil; policing; human rights case for the Moratorium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What we want to see changed in policing terms</td>
<td>That it would be easily achievable and cost-neutral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Our strong evidence base and supporter base</td>
<td>The evidence suggests that suspension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>There is broad, cross-party support and support in civil society for this campaign</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>If you ignore us, we will make your life hell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MET/ SCD9</td>
<td>What we want to see changed in policing terms</td>
<td>Outline of the laws we are requesting suspension of; that this is a limited set and should not be difficult.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Our rationale and strong evidence base is in line with policing objectives</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AUDIENCE</td>
<td>WHAT THEY NEED TO KNOW</td>
<td>KEY COMMUNICATIONS MESSAGES</td>
</tr>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **HOME SECRETARY/ BORDER AGENCY** | • What we want to see changed in UKBA terms  
• Our strong evidence base | • *We are not really engaging on this level at this stage* |
| **EXISTING ALLIES**  
(MPs; councillors; NGOs; activist groups) | • We have the ability to make change if we garner all the support we can | • We need you to support our campaign by:  
  » signing the letter  
  » publicising our campaign through your networks  
  » speaking on platforms/in media for Moratorium 2012 |
| **POTENTIAL ALLIES**  
(MPs; councillors; NGOs; activist groups) | • Sex worker rights are in line with their political/ideological/human rights etc objectives (may need targeted materials/arguments/discussions here)  
• Our strong evidence base and supporter base | • We need you to support our campaign by:  
  » signing the letter  
  » publicising our campaign through your networks  
  » speaking on platforms/in media for Moratorium 2012 |
| **SEX WORKERS** | • That we can challenge criminalisation and the related threats/ stigma  
• That there is strong and vocal support for sex workers among civil society | • A broad cross-section of civil society have signed up to our campaign  
• The campaign is prompting debate around the issue and forcing some people/organisations/sectors to think about different approaches |
| **GENERAL PUBLIC** | • Trafficking is not a helpful discourse to work through problems with sex work or migration | • Sex work is not the same as trafficking  
• Sex workers are being put at risk and having their rights and autonomy undermined by current laws and policing/Border Agency practices  
• There needs to be a new discussion around these questions  
• The Swedish Model/criminalising clients does not resolve these issues |
**TOOLS AND ACTIVITIES**

- Press campaign, including sending out releases; contacting journalists with stories; trying to get a CIF piece
- Social media; facebook; twitter; blogosphere
- Getting high-profile signatories to campaign
- Media stunts and direct actions
- Meetings with organisations; police/officials; addressing conferences/etc
- Updates to signatories (internal to campaign; progress reports)

**RESOURCES**

- Do you have relationships with any journalists, editors, etc?
- Do you have people with media skills (writing press releases/contacting journalists/organising press events, photographers, etc) and who are prepared to give interviews, write articles for blogs and social media? If not, can you hold a training session on some of these skills?
- Link to Media Training Guide: [www.redumbrellaproject.org/educate/resources/](http://www.redumbrellaproject.org/educate/resources/)

**TIMESCALES**

- Are there any dates or events you need to take into account when planning your communication strategy? Some things that may affect these decision include:
  - Events that might shape your campaign;
  - Parliamentary sitting dates or formal committees that may be discussing your issue;
  - The release of official reports or calls for submissions, etc.
  - Think of amount of advance notice different type of media require: is it one day, 2 weeks, more?

**GROUP EXERCISE: STORYTELLING**

**WHAT STORIES/ CASE STUDIES DO YOU HAVE?**

Do you have sex workers who are prepared to speak about their experiences or concerns about laws that criminalise clients or criminalise sex work in some way?

**CAN YOU FIND SOME POWERFUL EXAMPLES?**

Examples can be taken from the stories you have collected or evidence you have gathered in your research about the affect of criminalisation in your country or region; in other countries;

**WHAT IMAGERY DO WE WANT TO USE?**

Think about the way sex work and sex workers are presently represented in the media and whether you want to replicate this or whether you want to find another way for sex workers to be represented. For example, are the sex workers you are talking about indoor or outdoor workers are they women or are they also men and trans* workers? Do you want sex workers represented through images of the body? Silhouettes? In most cases you won’t have total control over how sex work and sex workers are represented in the media but you can add your own logos, artwork and photography to press releases that you send out and discuss these issues if you think a journalist is sympathetic.

**POST-CAMPAIGN EVALUATION AND AMENDMENT**

Things to think about after campaign:

- Media archive; where/how was the campaign picked up?
- What worked/didn’t work?
Planning a Campaign

1 Set Your Goals
What do you want to achieve in the short-term?
1
2
3
4
What do you want to achieve in the long-term?
1
2
3
4

2 Do Your Homework
You need to know:
• the nature and extent of the problem;
• who it affects (or will affect) and how;
• who might work with you on this campaign and how the problem affects them; and
• who has the power/to do what?

You might need to do some further research before you start your campaign. What else do you need to find out:
1
2
3
4

3 Engage Your Opponent
This is your chance to put your problem and your solution before your opponent in a clear, fair and public way – and give them a chance to do the right thing. You need to decide what a victory will entail – a victory may fall short of your overall stated goal, it could be withdrawal of a proposed piece of legislation; a public statement against the legislation; a commitment to put funds or resources into a particular programme or project.

Who will you negotiate with? How?
1
2
3
4
4 Get Your Message Out

This is about letting the sex worker community, other allies and the public know what you are campaigning about and why. In making your message and your position public, you are trying to get support for the campaign while also putting pressure on your opponent.

Sex Workers have a rich history of campaigning (see Section One: Sex Workers Take Action) and there are many ways of getting your message out. Any effective campaign will involve an online presence but don’t neglect face-to-face messaging.

Messaging can be: Leafleting sex worker outreach centres and red-light districts, leaving newsletters or brochures in lacs you think your supporters might collect them, letters to the editor, street theatre, press conferences, media events, going out and talking to groups, holding teach-in’s, posters, banners, model motions for trade union branches, petitions, letter-writing to officials.

Online: webpages or pages on social networking sites, banners and click-throughs on your supporters’ pages, e-petitions, short videos.

How will you educate the public?

1

2

3

4

5 Take Action!

You want your action to get noticed and help you get the message out. So think carefully about where you will hold your action – who will see you and who do you want to see you? Is it important to get the media to your action? And when – will you coincide it with a significant date or another event in order to maximise your impact?

Rallies in public spaces, arches, street theatre, vigils,

How will you demonstrate?

1

2

3

4

6 Direct Action

When you decide to take direct action, you are trying to raise the stakes and create a crisis situation that your opponent has to deal with. You action should make sense to your supporters – so your target and your message need to be carefully thought through – and help to get your message out.

Direct action can include strikes, sit-ins and die-ins, blockades and pickets, occupation, boycotts, creating positive alternatives, banner drops.

How will you take direct action?

1

2

3

4
7 Protracted Struggle

You may take action, then up the ante with direct action and still not get the result you want. In this case, you will need to find ways to sustain your campaign – to keep activists motivated and maintain interest in the campaign more generally in an ongoing way. You may have to rethink or redirect your strategy.

The methods of protracted struggle are the same as those used earlier in the campaign (education, demonstration and direct action) but if you are engaged in a protracted struggle, you need to think about how you sustain your activism, root your activism in strong communities of support.

Are there ways you can escalate your tactics and broaden your support?

1

2

3

4

Are there ways that would help to strengthen your activist community and ensure your campaign is sustainable in the long-term?

1

2

3

4
Planning an Action

This is a fairly comprehensive list of the things you want to talk about and decide in your collective or group about in the lead-up to your action.

**Strategy**

**GOALS:** What are you trying to accomplish? Create a goal or goals that are concrete, tangible and winnable.

**TARGET:** Who are you trying to get to act?

**MESSAGE/DEMANDS:** What is your message? You may have more than one message directed at different audiences for the action. Think about:

- What do we want them to know;
- What do we want them to do;
- Can it be summed up in a slogan;
- Are your demands clear and simple; (you may want to think about having a few ‘fallback demands’).
- Will you use the media to publicise your message/demands before or during the action?

**WHAT:** What is going to happen at your action and what will it look like? Ask:

- Is the action symbolic or disruptive? Public or secret?
- How does it begin, middle and end?
- Does the action communicate your message? How? (speakers [who?], song, dance, performance, participatory activities)
- How will you demonstrate your power?

**WHERE:** The place you decide to hold your action is key. Most actions are about space in some way – about taking over space, disrupting the usual flow of a space, being visible in a certain space, etc.

- How does your action site relate to target?
- Think about size, visibility, access, proximity to roads, security, sidewalks, public space nearby, transport, parking, tenants

**WHEN:** The timing of your action will dictate who can take part; who will see and hear you; the level of impact you can have. How can you maximise these things?

**BUILDING YOUR ACTION:** AKA getting people there. Think about who might join you on your action:

- Will you publicise your action to the public or people outside your group?
- How will you contact them? [Think about: fliers; postcards; webpages; emails; posters; ads]
- How will you convince them to come?
- How much time will you need to build your action? How much notice will people taking part (or who you hope will take part)
- Do you have a plan if it’s a good turn out?
- How will you change the plan if you don’t have enough people?

**TIP**

It’s a good idea to send out a reminder (email, text, etc.) about your action the day before. You should also call key people and get them to confirm that they are coming and they know what the plan is/what they are responsible for.

**THE AFTERMATH:** Do you have a recruitment, reminder, follow-up plan for after the action? This is important and often gets forgotten in all the excitement and activity of planning and preparing for an action.
Preparation

**RESEARCH:** Get some handy facts and figures on your action, to be used in news releases, leaflets and briefings.

**LEAFLET/PAMPHLETS:** You’ll probably need to find or write one. Who are you aiming it at – you might write different text for a member of the public than you would for other sex workers, for example. Make sure you use your message!

**ACTION SCHEDULE:** Break it down, what needs to happen and when/ by who? Plan the detail from set up to clean-up.

**PROPS AND BANNERS:** What do you need? (puppets, costumes, masks, candles, etc) Where will you get them? How will you pay for them? Do you need to make them? How long will you need to make them?

**ACTION SITE:** Have you scouted the site? Do you need to make a floor plan? (Think about: elevators and stairs, bathrooms, access, your opponent’s office. Can the site accommodate disabled members? Do you need to get permits [Do you want to get permits?]

**SECURITY PLAN:** Will you inform the Police of your action? Do you know what police plans and contingencies are? Think about how to protect participants? How will you deal with provocateurs?

**THE LAW:** Know your legal rights. There are many activist and civil liberty organisations who produce materials about rights for demonstrators; what to do if you’re stopped and questioned/arrested, etc.

**ACTIVIST BRIEFING:** Ensure that people on the action know what it’s about and have a good idea what to expect. You could arrange a speaker meeting the week before, send a briefing by email, or meet in the pub beforehand to talk or read through it.

- Is everyone in your group comfortable with the plan?
- Are people prepared for their roles?
- How will you communicate with each other during the action?
- How will you make decisions on the day?
- Do you need to allocate tasks to people
- Is there a possibility of arrests? Do you have a plan if people get arrested?

**TIP**

**DECISION-MAKING** – It’s important that activists can agree upon a decision-making structure to use during the action. For example, how will you respond to police requests to move on; what if your opponents try to negotiate with you? Will you use a spokes-council, will you have a Tactical Team in charge of making-decisions, will you hold a mass meeting?

**TIP**

Appoint an action co-ordinator who will act as a point of contact before, during and after the action, and who will make sure it all happens. Nominate someone who will be responsible for each task. E.g. Do you need: set-up crew; drivers; people to bring and collect props; negotiator/s; media spokesperson; marshall/s; police liaisons?
**MEDIA CHECKLIST**

**ONE WEEK TO GO:**

- Send a press release including notice of any photo opportunity and highlighting your gimmick.
- Call the daybook a week ahead of time.
- Calls to reporters to pitch your story and give them background.
- Prepare a press pack (including briefing and background materials and contact details) for distribution on the day of the action.

**ONE DAY TO GO:**

- Send a press release.
- Call assignment editors the day before the action.
- Prepare spokespeople to talk with the media during the action.

**TIP**

Make sure there's a good photo opportunity, with the right visual image you can almost guarantee a photo in your local newspaper.

**THINGS TO BRING ON THE DAY**

Some ideas for things you might want to bring on the day:

- Signs
- Banners
- Flags
- Sound system
- Megaphone
- Sign up sheets
- Clipboards
- Pens
- Noisemakers
- Whistles
- Drums
- Puppets
- Props
- Masks
- Costumes
- Rights cards
- Bust cards
- Chant sheets
- Cameras
- Food
- Drinks
- Transport
- Set up crew
- Clean up crew
- Press packs
- Placards
- Balloons
- Kites

**Debriefing**

Review the action afterwards, to learn from what went well and what could have been improved. Apply your learning to your next action! Do this as soon as possible, ideally on the same day.

- What happened to each person? How did people feel during the action? Was everyone supported by the group? How did the group interact?
- What was achieved? What could be improved?
- Does the group want to stay together for further actions?
- Do people need any continuing support, for example because they have a court case as a result of the action?
Tips for Organisers

The successes of campaigns and advocacy efforts depend a lot on the strength and commitment of the community behind it. As a ‘team leader’ or ‘community organiser’, an important part of your work is to assure that the group works together in both effective and democratic ways.

Keep in mind that for many people getting involved in the campaign, it might be the first time that they participate in a collective project. The lack of experience in organising and working collectively is balanced by the commitment to resist a policy that directly affect them, their family or their, for example sex workers organising against the implementation of the criminalisation of their clients.

Here are some tips for facilitating meetings and workshops, as well as information on group process and active listening.

Facilitating Meetings and Workshops

“Tell me, and I will forget. Show me, and I may remember. Involve me, and I will understand.”

CONFUCIUS 450 BC

There are many resources available online. For example you can check: http://www.seedsforchange.org.uk/facilwsh.pdf which includes free and downloadable resources on facilitation, minute taking or how to include new people and on which some of this resource is based.

Facilitation can transform a fastidious, ‘one person dominated’ meeting where no decisions are being taken into a collective, empowering experience which will move your campaigns and projects forward.

Here are some tips for you to facilitate meetings and workshops:

- Be sure that the role of facilitator is taken by different people, as well as the role the ‘secretary’ for minute taking. Accurate minute taking is an important process, and sharing minutes rapidly to all group members will ensure that actions take place swiftly.

- Help the group plan the meeting agenda. Think about timing and order of agenda items, and how to tackle each point.

- Keep the group to the agenda and decision-making process.

- Keep the meeting focussed on one item at a time.

- Help everyone to participate. Keep track of who wants to speak. Draw out quiet people and limit those who talk a lot.

- Challenge aggressive or discriminatory behaviour and put-downs.

- Introduce techniques such as ideastorming, go-rounds and working groups to make the meeting more efficient and participatory.

- Test for agreement and get clear decisions made.

- Ensure that action points and decisions are recorded.

- Keep the meeting to time.

- Help the group deal with conflict.

- Listen for underlying issues, concerns or emotions. Help bring them out so they can be dealt with.
Group Process/Group Dynamic

The dynamic of your group will have a strong impact on the development of your campaign, advocacy and project. A powerful group should involve all its members, be structured and efficient whilst allowing creativity and spontaneity. Members should feel that their contributions are appreciated by the rest of the groups and that they are making a difference.

It is easy to observe your group, take notes of group dynamics, and then collectively challenge some of these dynamics for a more successful group. Be careful, that ‘processing’ doesn’t overtake the initials objectives of your group!

(taken from website: http://getinvolved.rutgers.edu/documents/organizations/ScarletSourceGroupDynamics.pdf)

Observation

One of the easiest aspects of group process to observe is the pattern of communication:

• Who talks? For how long? How often?
• At whom do people look when they speak?
• Who talks after whom? Who interrupts whom?
• What style of communication is used (assertions, questions, tone of voice, gestures, etc.)?
• Who sits where? Do the same people always sit in the same place?

The kinds of observations we make give us clues to other important things which may be going on in the group (e.g., such as who leads whom or who influences whom).

Participation

One indication of involvement is verbal participation. Look for differences in the amount of participation among members.

• Who are the high participants? Who are the low participants?
• Do you see any shift in participation [e.g., highs become quiet; lows suddenly become talkative]? What are possible reasons for this in the group’s interaction?
• How are the silent people treated? How is their silence interpreted? Consent? Disagreement? Disinterest? Fear? Etc.?
• Who talks to whom? Do you see any reason for this in the group’s interactions?
• Who keeps the ball rolling? Why? Do you see any reason for this in the group’s interactions?

Decision Making

Many kinds of decisions are made in groups without considering the effects that these decisions will have on other members. Some people try to impose their own decisions on the group, while others want all members to participate or share in the decision making process.

• Does anyone make a decision and carry it out without checking with other group members [self-authorised]? For example, one person decides on the topic to be discussed and immediately begins to talk about it. What effect does this have on other group members?
• Does the group drift from topic to topic? Who topic-jumps? Do you see any reason for this in the group’s interactions?
• Who supports other members’ suggestions or decisions? Does this support result in the two members deciding the topic or activity for the group? How does this affect the other group members?

• Is there any evidence of a majority pushing a decision through over other member’s objections? Do they call for a vote (majority support)?

• Is there any attempt to get all members participating in a decision (consensus)? What effect does this seem to have on the group?

• Does anyone make any contributions which do not receive any kind of response or recognition? What effect does this have on the member?

Active Listening

Active listening is a crucial facilitation skill that all organiser should develop. It involves pro-actively listening for what your community member is trying to communicate, without projecting our own thoughts and expectations on them. When facilitating a workshop, meeting or discussion, active listening is needed to figure out what the participants know and what they want to learn.

As sex workers, it is important to pro-actively listen to each other so that we can learn about our different working conditions, issues linked to other forms of social stigma such as racism or transphobia. Experiencing similar stigma does not negate our other forms of oppression.