



Remembering the most vulnerable: a multi-sectoral, multi-strategy approach to address violence against sex-workers in Eswatini

Bheki Sithole

Kingdom of Eswatini

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Presentation Outline

- Background
- What works
- Eswatini's approach
- Interventions
- Results
- Lesson learned



The Landscape – some background



- SW in Eswatini experience social and legal issues, including:
 - violence from society, clients, intimate partners, and service providers (police, health care providers)
 - punitive laws criminalizing sex work (Crimes act of 1889)
 - human rights abuses and violations
 - Stigma and discrimination from society and service providers;
 - Police arbitrary arrests of SW often resulting in secondary violations (police violence and rape).
- The physical, emotional, sexual, and economic abuse violates their human rights while increasing their vulnerability to HIV infection and impeding access to HIV services.
- Such violence is not reported given SWs' marginal social status, limited access to information on their rights.
- Social and legal status of SW allow these abuses to continue with impunity.



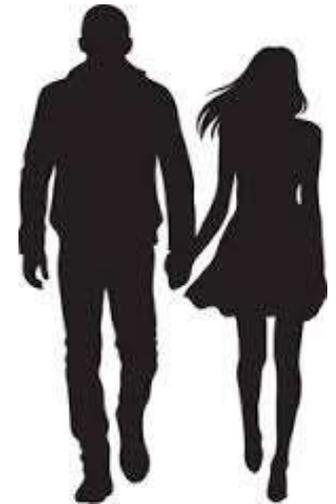
What works

- The ministry of health is committed to universal access to health services for all citizens;
- Research: information from conducted research utilized advocating for change;
- A public health approach is used to address these barriers which are human rights violations.

Our Approach

- Working with as many stakeholders as possible to sensitize and engage to respond on violence against SW and other KP;
- A multi-sectorial national TWG was set up in 2012 under the MoH:
 - All these stakeholders are part of decision-making and contribute in addressing KP structural issues.

Multiple-sectoral strategy in Eswatini



Interventions

- ❑ **Creating forums for KP stakeholders to plan and implement activities**
 - Formed the KP technical working group.
 - Multisectoral VPR forum: civil society, law enforcement, KP, and law makers and judiciary
- ❑ **Stigma reduction in health facilities**
 - Conduct pre-service trainings for nursing students in tertiary institutions.
 - In collaboration with KP ambassadors conducted in-service trainings for HCWs.
- ❑ **Police training and sensitization**
 - Conducted trainings and sensitizations from executive, senior management to station-based police
 - Trained focal police in unit responding to violence and HR violations.
 - Developed a HR training manual for pre- and in-service police
- ❑ **Community engagement:**
 - Created forums where SW networks meet to discuss issues affecting them and plan advocacy;
 - Assisted the development, registration and operation of the first SW-led organization
- ❑ **Engaged human-rights lawyers and the Human Rights commission on SW interventions**

Interventions continues...

- ❑ **Collaboration with local, international organizations:**
 - Local organizations for referring cases.
 - International bodies for policy and technical issues: some UN agencies, AMSHeR.

- ❑ **Created channels of responding to violence:**
 - Trained OVs workers as front-liners in responding at community level
 - Education on violence and HR issues to SW
 - Channels of reporting and support through OVs and social workers at community level

Results

- More SW are educated about violence and their rights
- SWs' reports of violence to ORWs and the social workers have increased by 40%
- SW led organisation is actively responding on HR and violence experiences of SW
 - They are able to assist other SW through partnerships with other stakeholders they have created.

Results continue...



- Senior-ranking law enforcement officials have publicly committed to improving services for SWs
 - They have actively participated in development of their training manual
 - Have appointed focal police for KP in some stations
 - Have led sensitizations for their junior officers after themselves have been sensitized.



- Raids targeted to SW has dropped – at least none in 2019, dropping drastically from 2018;
- Police report an increase of SW who report violence to them;
- Increasing interaction between SW and police at different forums

Lesson Learned

- Stakeholders' collaboration
- Top-bottom approach for police works: it's a command institution.
- Constant engagement, at all levels, is key, memory can be lost.
- Pre-service training for both police and HCWs.
- Community empowerment important: vulnerable populations should know their rights.
- Engagement of legal fraternity and judiciary can be a game changer for both the REPS response and the KP individual perception

'Sex workers also protected by Constitution'

MBABANE – Lawyers for Human Rights' Siphon Gamedze said sex workers were protected by the country's Constitution, by virtue of being Swazis.

Gamedze said the Constitution stated clearly in Section 18 that every person has a right to dignity. He said when talking

about dignity, it is treating any person with respect, care and concern. "From the moment you subject any person to an act that seeks to humiliate them or an act against their will, it is violation of their rights. It does not matter whether the person is a sex worker or a thief," he said.

Gamedze said in this case, because the alleged violator was

a man, it did not mean he had capacity to use force over the woman and that the woman had no rights.

Further, he said the country had laws and it was only the regulation that stipulated that sex work was prohibited.

"But simply because the trade is prohibited does not mean that the people practising it had no

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News

Arrest men found with sex workers – lawyers

BY WILSON MCHUNU

MBABANE – "The arrest of ladies on the basis that they are luffing and leaving the men who are found with them is discriminatory and in conflict with Section 20 of the Constitution."

Lawyers for Human Rights in Swaziland say the men should also be arrested. Section 20(1) of the Constitution provides that: "All persons are equal before and under the law in all spheres of political, economic, social and cultural life and in every other respect and shall enjoy equal

... say it's discriminatory for cops to target women only



in including prostitution. It says that the arrest of people like you was not committing a crime to anyone who has been charged with the offence on the provisions.

"The other thing going with arresting a person a prostitute is that, such as he is demanding. The Constitution Section 18 provides that: "The dignity of a person is sacrosanct." O'Kanye J, a judge of the Constitutional Court of the Republic of South Africa, once said: "Recognising a right to dignity is an acknowledgement of the person as a person of value, worthy of respect."

Acknowledgments



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