



# Implementing Comprehensive HIV/STI Programmes with Sex Workers

## PRACTICAL APPROACHES FROM COLLABORATIVE INTERVENTIONS

Sex workers have been among the populations most affected by HIV since the beginning of the epidemic, for reasons that include the number of sexual partners, unsafe working conditions, barriers to the negotiation of consistent condom use, and unequal access to health services. Laws, regulations and policies that criminalize sex work and discriminate against sex workers also increase their vulnerability and risk, as do violence, alcohol and drug use in some settings.

In 2012 the World Health Organization (WHO) together with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and the Global Network of Sex Work Projects (NSWP) developed a guidance document on *Prevention and treatment of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections for sex workers in low- and middle-income countries*.<sup>1</sup> This set out technical recommendations on effective interventions for the prevention and treatment of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs) among sex workers.

Dissemination of the recommendations led to requests for detailed information on how to implement them. *Implementing Comprehensive HIV/STI Programmes with Sex Workers: Practical Approaches from Collaborative Interventions* has been developed in response as a tool aligned with the 2012 guidance document that offers practical advice on implementing HIV and STI programmes for and with sex workers. It contains examples of good practice from around the world that may support efforts in planning programmes and services, and describes what issues to consider and how to overcome challenges. The tool is designed for use by public-health officials and managers of AIDS and STI programmes; nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), including community and civil-society organizations; and health workers. It will also be of use to international funding agencies, health policy-makers and advocates.

The purpose of this tool is to describe approaches and principles to building programmes. Guidance is provided on how to implement the recommended health-care interventions for HIV prevention, treatment and care, how to manage programmes and how to build the capacity of sex worker organizations. Throughout the document are case examples from programmes around the world, highlighting specific aspects related to sex worker programming that have worked well in their contexts. These case examples illustrate how an issue or challenge has been addressed, and to inspire ideas about approaches that could work in the reader's own context.

This tool is the product of collaboration among sex workers, service providers, researchers, government officials and NGOs from around the world. Its development was guided by WHO, UNFPA, UNAIDS, NSWP, the World Bank and development partners from the US, including the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

<sup>1</sup> WHO, UNFPA, UNAIDS, NSWP. *Prevention and treatment of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections for sex workers in low- and middle-income countries: recommendations for a public health approach*. Geneva, World Health Organization, 2012.

## Structure and content

**Chapter 1** Community Empowerment describes how empowerment of the sex worker community is both an intervention in itself, and also essential to effective planning, implementation and monitoring of all aspects of HIV and STI prevention, treatment and care.

**Chapter 2** Addressing Violence against Sex Workers focuses on the urgent need of sex workers to be protected from violence, discrimination, abuse and other forms of human-rights violation. The effectiveness of HIV/STI prevention interventions is often compromised when interventions to address violence are not implemented concurrently.

**Chapter 3** Community-led services: A community-led approach to planning, delivering and monitoring services for sex workers is essential to make programmes more effective and sustainable. This chapter describes the principles of community-led services and shows how they are applied to outreach, safe spaces (drop-in centres) and programme oversight.

**Chapter 4** Condom and Lubricant Programming presents a detailed description of how to plan and implement the provision of male and female condoms and lubricants, including planning for and managing adequate supplies, multi-level promotion of the commodities, and creating an enabling environment.

**Chapter 5** Clinical and Support Services presents detailed descriptions of fundamental prevention, treatment and care interventions. The services described include voluntary HIV testing and counselling, antiretroviral therapy, prevention and management of STIs and co-infections, such as tuberculosis and viral hepatitis, and additional services, such as for sexual and reproductive health, harm reduction for sex workers who inject drugs, post-rape care and mental health.

**Chapter 6** Programme Management and Organizational Capacity-Building provides practical guidance on planning, starting, scaling up, managing and monitoring an effective programme from two perspectives: (1) a large multi-site programme with centralized management and multiple implementing organizations, and (2) local community groups seeking to start or expand services.



### For more information, contact:

World Health Organization  
Department of HIV/AIDS  
20, avenue Appia  
1211 Geneva 27  
Switzerland  
E-mail: [hiv-aids@who.int](mailto:hiv-aids@who.int)  
[http://www.who.int/hiv/topics/sex\\_work](http://www.who.int/hiv/topics/sex_work)

© World Health Organization 2013  
Cover photography courtesy of PJ Starr  
WHO/HIV/2013.144