Facts about sex work & violence in Namibia.

SEX WORKERS IN NAMIBIA FACE UNACCEPTABLE LEVELS OF VIOLENCE, STIGMA, DISCRIMINATION AND OTHER HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS. IT PUTS THEM IN SITUATIONS THAT MAKE THEM CONSIDERABLY MORE VULNERABLE TO HIV/AIDS. SUPPORTIVE LAWS AND PROTECTIVE SERVICES, CARE AND SUPPORT ARE NEEDED TO SECURE THE SAFETY AND WELLBEING OF SEX WORKERS.

What the law says:
It is illegal to solicit clients, to sell sex in a public space and keep a brothel. Bylaws on public disorder and loitering are used to prosecute sex workers.

Criminalisation:
Sex workers who operate in settings where prostitution is criminalised face increased risk of violence, police abuses and lack of access to health care and the justice system.

94% of the sex workers in Namibia experienced violence in the past year

Sorts of violence
- physical violence: 83%
- sexual violence: 92%
- economic violence: 92%
- emotional violence: 97%

Risk factors
- being known as a sex worker: 89%
- using a condom: 95%
- working in the streets: 95%
- being HIV positive: 97%
- being arrested: 97%

Who are the perpetrators?
- police: 87%)
- community: 61%
- health worker: 42%
- client: 14%
- health provider: 2%

81% of the sex workers experienced violence by the police upon arrest in the past year

What type of violence are we talking about?
- economic violence: 92%
- sexual violence: 93%
- physical violence: 93%
- discrimination: 97%

Hard facts
- To prevent arrest, 74% of the sex workers had sex with a police officer and/or paid bribes to the police.
- 65% of the sex workers were arrested last year. On average they were arrested twice and most of them were detained for 24 hours per arrest.
- 83% of the sex workers experienced violence by the police upon arrest in the past year.

Reasons for arrest
- being a sex worker: 61%
- carrying a condom: 43%
- being HIV positive: 42%
- working on the streets: 39%
- being interrogated by the police: 37%

The relationship with the police is double-sided
- Sometimes you have police friends. You meet in a club and he takes you or you can die a client. When you’re in trouble you can call him for assistance.

Access to regular HIV medication
- 66% receive regular treatment
- 33% get no regular treatment

Condom use while selling sex:
- never: 48%
- sometimes: 51%
- always: 1%

There is a strong correlation between HIV and violence
In other words: sex workers who face violence are at higher risk of HIV infection and/or sex workers who are positive face higher risk of violence.

Recommendations:
1. Decriminalise sex work and adopt supportive laws, policies and legislation for sex workers
2. Train and sensitize police and foster police accountability
3. Protect, support and empower sex workers

Hands Off! Reduction of violence against sex workers
The Hands Off! programme, coordinated by Aids Fonds, works on the reduction of violence against sex workers in Southern Africa through prevention, care and support. The programme works with sex worker-led groups, law enforcement, health and support services, legal centres and NGOs working on human rights.

Rights not Rescue Trust
Rights not Rescue Trust Namibia is a sex worker-led organisation, which promotes access to health, rights, education and safety for sex workers in Namibia. The organisation is based in Windhoek.

Read the full report or more about Hands Off! at www.aidsfonds.nl/handsoff

HIV prevalence
- 56% in 2012
- 53% in 2013

At the clinic
- 50% has been tested
- 15% has never been tested

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If you can’t go to the health clinic because of the stigma I face there. If I’m having problems or an STI I go to my traditional healer.

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Rights not Rescue Trust Namibia: An overview.
Rights not Rescue Trust Namibia is a sex worker-led organisation, which promotes access to health, rights, education and safety for sex workers in Namibia. The organisation is based in Windhoek. Hands Off! is an NGO that works on the reduction of violence against sex workers in Southern Africa through prevention, care and support. The programme works with sex worker-led groups, law enforcement, health and support services, legal centres and NGOs working on human rights.

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