1
Community Empowerment
1 Community Empowerment

Starting, managing, monitoring and scaling up a programme—from both a centralized and community perspective

2 Addressing Violence against Sex Workers

Community mobilization and structural interventions

3 Community-led Services

4 Condom and Lubricant Programming

Fundamental prevention, care and treatment interventions

5 Clinical and Support Services

6 Programme Management and Organizational Capacity-building
What’s in this chapter?

Community empowerment is the foundation for all of the interventions and approaches described in this tool. This chapter:

- defines community empowerment and explains why it is fundamental to addressing HIV and STIs among sex workers in an effective and sustainable way (Section 1.1)
- describes eight elements of community empowerment, with examples from a number of programmes (Section 1.2).

The chapter also presents:

- examples of indicators to measure the empowerment of sex worker organizations (Section 1.3)
- a list of resources and further reading (Section 1.4).
1.1 Introduction

2012 Recommendations: Evidence-based Recommendation 1
Offer a package of interventions to enhance community empowerment among sex workers.

In the context of sex work and HIV programming, community empowerment is a process whereby sex workers take individual and collective ownership of programmes in order to achieve the most effective HIV responses, and take concrete action to address social and structural barriers to their broader health and human rights.\(^1\)

The interventions delivered through a community empowerment model include sustained engagement with local sex workers to raise awareness about sex worker rights, the establishment of community-led safe spaces (drop-in centres),\(^3\) the formation of collectives that determine the range of services to be provided, as well as outreach and advocacy.

The 2012 Recommendations state that community empowerment is a necessary component of sex worker interventions and should be led by sex workers. The benefits are high, there are no harms and the required resources are relatively low. The values and preferences survey\(^4\) found that sex workers see community empowerment as an “absolutely necessary component” of health interventions for improving their living and working conditions, developing strategies for health and rights interventions, and redressing human rights violations.

Sex workers take charge of the community empowerment process by mobilizing with other sex workers to develop solutions to the issues they face as a group, and by advocating for their rights as sex workers and as human beings.

Community empowerment is also a broader social movement that supports the self-determination of sex workers. It requires governmental, nongovernmental, public, private, political and religious institutions and organizations to address and remove the social exclusion, stigma, discrimination and violence that violate the human rights of sex workers and heighten associated HIV risk and vulnerability.

Community empowerment includes working towards the decriminalization of sex work and the elimination of the unjust application of non-criminal laws and regulations against sex workers, and recognizing and respecting sex work as a legitimate occupation or livelihood.

Investing in community empowerment is not only the right thing to do but makes good sense. Female, male and transgender sex workers are disproportionately affected by HIV. Strategies for

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2. In most contexts in this tool, “community” refers to populations of sex workers rather than the broader geographic, social or cultural groupings of which they may be a part. Thus, “outreach to the community” means outreach to sex workers, “community-led interventions” are interventions led by sex workers, and “community members” are sex workers.

3. A safe space or drop-in centre is a place where sex workers may gather to relax, meet other community members and hold social events, meetings or training. See Chapter 3, Section 3.3 for details.

4. A global consultation conducted with sex workers by NSWP as part of the process of developing the 2012 Recommendations.
Community Empowerment

HIV prevention among sex workers (such as peer-led education and control of sexually transmitted infections) are more effective and sustainable when conducted within a community empowerment framework. From Kenya to Ukraine, Brazil to Thailand, India to the Dominican Republic, investment in community-led organizations of sex workers has resulted in improved reach, access, service quality, service uptake, condom use and engagement by sex workers in national policies and programmes. Scaling up comprehensive, community empowerment-based HIV interventions helps prevent significant numbers of new HIV infections, particularly in settings with high rates of HIV.

Community empowerment for sex workers means:
- sex workers coming together for mutual assistance
- removing barriers to full participation
- strengthening partnerships among sex worker communities, government, civil society and local allies
- addressing collective needs in a supportive environment
- leading the process themselves: sex workers know best how to identify their priorities and the context-appropriate strategies to address those priorities
- meaningful participation of sex workers in all aspects of programme design, implementation, management and evaluation
- providing money and resources directly to sex worker organizations and communities, which become responsible for determining priorities, activities, staffing, and the nature and content of service provision. Ultimately, sex worker-led organizations may become the employers of relevant staff (doctors, nurses, social workers, outreach workers), rather than sex workers being solely volunteers, community outreach workers or employees.

Community empowerment is more than a set of activities; it is an approach that should be integrated into all aspects of health and HIV programming. It is the cornerstone of a human-rights-based approach to HIV and sex work and, as such, underpins all the recommendations and components presented in this tool.

1.2 Key elements of community empowerment

The process of community empowerment is, by definition, driven by sex workers themselves. It is therefore impractical to adopt a prescriptive, inflexible approach to implementing community empowerment initiatives. However, various sex worker groups throughout the world have identified some key elements of community empowerment (Figure 1.1).

The approach is flexible and adaptable to individual community needs. There is no fixed order in which the elements should be addressed; the process may flow from working with communities of sex workers to community-led outreach, the development and strengthening of collectives (sex worker-led organizations and networks) and, consistent with local needs and contexts, shaping human rights-based policies and creating an enabling environment for a sustainable movement.

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5 In this tool, “community outreach worker” is used to mean a sex worker who conducts outreach to other sex workers, and who is not generally full-time staff of an HIV prevention intervention (full-time staff might be called “staff outreach workers” or also simply “outreach workers”). Community outreach workers may also be known by other terms, including “peer educators”, “peer outreach workers” or simply “outreach workers”. The terms “community” or “peer” should not, however, be understood or used to imply that they are less qualified or less capable than staff outreach workers.

6 Particular acknowledgement for some of these elements is made to Veshya Anyay Mukti Parishad (VAMP—Sex Workers Collective against Injustice) and Sampada Grameen Mahila Sanstha (SANGRAM—Rural Women’s Organization: Meena Seshu, General Secretary) in India.
This process represents a paradigm shift, from sex workers being recipients of services to the self-determination of sex worker communities. Community empowerment builds a social movement where the community—sex workers—collectively exercise their rights, are recognized as an authority, and are equal partners in the planning, implementation and monitoring of health services.

**Figure 1.1** Key elements of community empowerment among sex workers

- Community Empowerment
- Working with communities of sex workers
- Fostering sex worker-led outreach
- Developing sex worker collectives
- Adapting to local needs and contexts
- Promoting a human-rights framework
- Strengthening the collective
- Shaping policy and creating enabling environments
- Sustaining the movement
1.2.1 Working with communities of sex workers

Community empowerment is a process that takes significant time and effort, especially since in many contexts sex work is stigmatized and criminalized. Trust, empathy and respect are important for all partners. Building trust involves treating sex workers with dignity and respect, listening to and addressing their concerns, and working with them throughout the process of developing and implementing an intervention. The goal is to cultivate a programme that is eventually run entirely by sex workers, and where sex worker-led organizations are respected as partners by officials and service providers in health, law enforcement and social services.

Box 1.1

Meaningful participation

Meaningful participation means that sex workers:

• choose how they are represented, and by whom
• choose how they are engaged in the process
• choose whether to participate
• have an equal voice in how partnerships are managed.

The meaningful participation of sex workers is essential to building trust and establishing relationships and partnerships that have integrity and are sustainable (see Box 1.1). This may be challenging for service providers who are more accustomed to establishing the parameters within which services are provided, and prescribing how relationships or partnerships are to be conducted. As sex workers and sex worker organizations become more empowered, there will be greater expectations of power-sharing and power-shifting (see Chapter 6, Section 6.2.8). In the initial stages of community empowerment, sex workers may have less experience in organizing as a group. National, regional and global sex worker-led networks are able to provide essential technical assistance and support (see Chapter 6, Section 6.6). Allies also have an important role in facilitating meaningful participation of sex workers, with community self-management the shared goal.

Partnerships are crucial but must be built and maintained in a way that does no harm to sex workers. Social exclusion, punitive laws and the normalization of violence, stigma and discrimination not only impact the daily lives of sex workers but influence policy-makers and affect the attitudes of officials and service providers. All partners should share the responsibility for supporting the shift from sex worker disempowerment to sex worker empowerment. Given that 116 countries criminalize some aspects of sex work, and the vast majority of countries have other punitive laws that are used against sex workers, safeguards need to be built into partnerships to ensure that sex workers do not face a backlash for organizing, do not fear that identifying themselves as sex workers will lead to arrest and harassment, and do not experience further stigmatization from health-care providers.
1.2.2 Fostering sex worker-led outreach

There is a difference between programmes that are done for sex workers and those led by sex workers (Table 1.1). This element in the community empowerment process requires service providers to reflect on how they can support a move from providing services to sex workers to sex worker organizations themselves ultimately becoming the employers of service providers.

Sex worker-led initiatives operate under the principle that sex workers are best equipped to help each other learn not only to protect themselves from risks to their health and safety, but also to promote and protect their human rights.

Sex workers should be the driving force in targeted programmes addressing HIV and sex work. It is not enough to “consult” with sex workers before creating a programme. Rather, programmes should be based on sex workers’ needs, perceptions and experiences.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Done for sex workers</th>
<th>Done with/Led by sex workers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Programmes sometimes focus on how sex workers can protect others from disease, and how society can be protected from sex workers. Often assume that knowledge and power reside with the programme staff and managers.</td>
<td>Programmes focus on sex workers’ collectively identified needs and develop appropriate solutions. Community discusses its needs before developing a programme, and sex workers are engaged in all stages of planning and implementation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involve sex workers in programme implementation commonly as volunteers, not as equal partners.</td>
<td>Involve sex workers as equal partners in programme implementation, more commonly as paid employees or as community outreach workers working with the community, not for an external organization.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monitoring focuses on goods and services delivered and targets to be achieved.</td>
<td>Monitoring focuses on quality of services and programmes, community engagement, community cohesion and community acceptance, as well as adequacy of service coverage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus on building relationships within the health system with health-care providers. Less emphasis is placed on building relationships among sex worker groups.</td>
<td>Focus on building relationships within sex worker communities as well as between sex workers and other organizations, service providers, human rights institutions and similar groups.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sex worker-led outreach programmes

Sex worker-led outreach programmes focus on:

- the needs and experiences of sex workers themselves, not what programmers think sex workers need
- the sex worker-led outreach process itself, with an emphasis on ways of protecting sex workers, rather than an emphasis on process indicators (for example, counting the number of condoms distributed is part of a programme, but should not be seen as an end in itself)
- stimulating community empowerment and creating a collective identity among sex workers.

In order to ensure the trust and confidence of sex workers, it is important to employ educators and outreach workers who are themselves sex workers. This is because sex workers:

- share a common experience that may decrease internalized stigma and increase self-worth and collective solidarity
- are likely to be more comfortable discussing intimate details associated with sex work with someone who is experienced and knowledgeable
- are more likely to follow up on referrals to services, adhere to treatments and engage in health-seeking and health-protective behaviours if they trust the person providing the advice
- have knowledge of the sex work industry that can inform outreach activities to clients, managers, law enforcement and health-care providers.

However, sex workers should not be limited to these roles in community-led programmes. Rather, they should be given the opportunity to participate in all other levels of the programme, including decision-making on programme implementation, management and governance. Capacity-building and mentoring should be a priority to enable sex workers to take up these positions.

1.2.3 Developing sex worker collectives

Forming any type of sex worker group or organization will only be successful if the process is initiated and led by the community. A common first step in developing community cohesion is providing a safe space (drop-in centre) where sex workers can come together to socialize and discuss issues. This can be an empowering exercise in and of itself (see Box 1.3) and helps sex workers identify common issues and a sense of purpose and connectedness. However, safe spaces are only one way to initiate group processes. Sex workers may also come together over key issues that affect them individually but that require a group response, such as addressing violence, bribes and harassment; or they may identify common needs such as child care; or seek information as new (and frequently undocumented) migrants.

The recommended kind of sex worker organization is a collective. This means that sex workers organize themselves together as a group. They jointly (collectively) decide on priorities for the whole group, agree on a group process for making decisions, and on a common set of rules for being together as a group. Ultimately a collective (i.e. a sex worker-led organization or network) acts in the interest of the whole group rather than for individual benefit. It is up to sex workers to decide when a collective should be formed, and there is no standard timeframe for doing so.
It is crucial to note that community-led (i.e. sex worker-led) processes and organizations are not synonymous with generic community-based organizations (CBOs). In community-led organizations, power and decision-making lie in the hands of community members (sex workers), whereas in a CBO, power may reside only with some members of the community, or with non-community members who act as administrators. It is the self-determining and self-governing nature of an organization, and its commitment to pursue the goals that its own members have agreed upon, that make it a collective.

### Box 1.3

**Bringing sex workers together**

- Organize group activities at safe spaces (drop-in centres) based on the interests of the group members.
- Plan activities for special occasions, such as the International Day to End Violence against Sex Workers (17 December).
- Invite sex worker activists or community outreach workers from neighbouring areas to speak at a gathering of local sex workers.

Sex worker organizations come into being in various ways. Two primary ones are:

- growing out of a community empowerment process or other process supported by another organization, including national, regional or global sex worker-led networks
- sex workers independently forming an organization.

The advantage of the first is that the partner organization may be able to support the process through funding, the provision of space, assistance with activities and advocacy to remove any barriers. This support is often necessary and welcome and should include connecting the local group to existing national and regional sex worker-led networks. However, if a sex worker organization is to be a true collective, ownership must rest with the community, and its form and function should be based on the needs and priorities identified by its members. It is crucial that the outside partner understand that the organization needs to be given the freedom to find its own way.

In some cases, sex worker groups hire consultants to lead them through the process of forming an organization, or receive crucial support from one or two nongovernmental organization (NGO) employees. Alternatively, they may do it themselves with the help of a partner NGO’s lawyer, or with support from national or regional sex worker-led networks. An organization experienced in project management, financial management, monitoring and reporting, communication and fundraising can help build the capacity of sex workers by providing training and opportunities to practise skills.

### 1.2.4 Adapting to local needs and contexts

Sex workers face diverse legal, political, social and health environments. Sex work may be criminalized or an accepted occupation; it may be predominantly establishment-based or street-based. Sex workers may be undocumented migrants, highly mobile or selling sex in their own locality. HIV programmes need to be sensitive to the diversity of cultures of people working in the sex industry. What it means to be part of a sex work “community” varies depending on the culture, ethnicity, language, location and socioeconomic position of the particular sex workers. As a result of these different contexts,
different sex work communities have different needs and challenges that may be addressed through community empowerment initiatives.

Flexibility, responsiveness and adaptability are essential in implementing community empowerment initiatives. Intervention goals need to be aligned with and address sex workers’ needs, even if these change over time. Box 1.4 shows how sex worker organizations in India and Kenya have adapted their programming to local needs and contexts.

**Box 1.4**

**Case example: Local needs and contexts in India and Kenya**

VAMP (Veshya Anyay Mukti Parishad), a sex worker organization in southern India supported by SANGRAM (Sampada Grameen Mahila Sanstha, an HIV organization), has adapted its programmes to directly address the needs of sex workers, who face financial exclusion and significant stigma and discrimination from health authorities. Community-led processes have resulted in sex workers being trained to support community members’ access to non-stigmatizing, subsidized health care. This is done by negotiating access to a range of government service providers and providing support for sex workers in financial difficulty. The result is strong collectives of sex workers empowered to claim and exercise their rights, improving the health and welfare of individual sex workers, their communities and their families.

In Kenya, frequent problems with law enforcement officers became an issue for collective action by sex workers. The Bar Hostess Empowerment and Support Programme (BHESP) developed a programme in Nairobi to train local sex workers as paralegals. They studied local and national laws that affect sex work and the human rights of sex workers. The paralegals now educate other sex workers about their rights, help those who need legal advice and document human-rights violations, such as arbitrary arrest. Each paralegal works as an advocate responsible for 10–15 other sex workers. They are trained to identify the specific issues group members may have and to request additional resources from BHESP staff when needed. The result is strong and empowered sex workers who know the law and the rights of sex workers and are able to mount straightforward challenges to arbitrary arrest and detention. Similar paralegal systems are being implemented by the Women’s Legal Centre, which is funded by the Open Society Foundations in Cape Town, South Africa, among others. Such programmes addressing local needs and contexts build individual competencies and community resilience.

1.2.5 Promoting a human-rights framework

Promoting and protecting the human rights of sex workers is central to all community empowerment processes. The 2012 Recommendations specifically address the human rights of sex workers.

**2012 Recommendations: Good Practice Recommendation 2**

Governments should establish antidiscrimination and other rights-respecting laws to protect against discrimination and violence, and other violations of rights faced by sex workers in order to realize their human rights and reduce their vulnerability to HIV infection and the impact of AIDS. Antidiscrimination laws and regulations should guarantee sex workers’ right to social, health and financial services.
The strength of the collective and the partnerships that have been built are crucial to promoting a human-rights framework. Challenging stigma and discrimination, mobilizing support, educating community members on the universality of human rights, and changing the attitudes of the wider (non-sex worker) community are activities that test the most robust of organizations and networks. Two examples (Box 1.5) illustrate the importance of partnerships and the centrality of community empowerment in achieving structural shifts.

**Box 1.5**

**Case example: Promoting human rights and social entitlements with police and government in Thailand and Brazil**

Criminalizing the possession of condoms violates sex workers’ right to health, but in Thailand it is a common practice of local law enforcement, despite a government directive intended to prevent it. Sex Workers in Group (SWING), a community-led organization, has developed an innovative and pragmatic partnership to involve police cadets in its outreach programme. Cadets are offered three-week internships working alongside SWING volunteers to promote condom use. At the end of the internship, the cadets give a presentation to all 1,200 police academy students. As a result of this programme, sex workers have experienced less police harassment and fewer arrests. Furthermore, the police interns have become promoters and protectors of the human rights of sex workers, changing police culture from the inside.

In Brazil, the sex worker-led organization Davida—Prostituição, Direitos Civis, Saúde has for years fought stigma and discrimination surrounding sex work. It has partnered with the Brazilian government to establish policy committees, run mass media campaigns to change community attitudes and has been instrumental in shaping the government’s response to AIDS. One of Davida’s most important successes has been its advocacy with the government to recognize sex work as a profession, guaranteeing sex workers the same rights as all other workers, including receiving a pension upon retirement.

**1.2.6 Community systems strengthening (strengthening the collective)**

Forming any collective is challenging, but maintaining and strengthening it is even more difficult. Community-led movements around the world face significant barriers, including inadequate funding, too few paid staff, complex community needs, political opposition to their existence, competition for resources from within and outside their communities and lack of recognition of the importance of their populations. Sex worker organizations and networks, as collectives, face all of these challenges and more. The marginalization and lack of visibility of sex workers within legal, social and economic structures at all levels of society means that their organizations and networks are typically underfunded and undervalued.

A strong community-led organization is characterized by vibrant membership, increasing financial independence, greater political power and wider social engagement. There are several ways this is achieved (see Box 1.6). When implementing an HIV response, governments, donors, the broader civil society movement, local organizations and multilateral agencies have a responsibility to provide sustainable support to sex worker organizations and networks. Such support should not be tied to particular donor-driven ideologies that conflict with the needs and priorities determined by the community. This risk can be mitigated—and more productive funding strategies negotiated—if the community empowerment process has progressed to the stage where decision-making power is vested within the community-led organization.
Community systems strengthening is a mechanism to ensure meaningful participation of community-led organizations within the wider policy and programmatic systems of the state, and to address and resolve internal issues and conflicts. At the local level, this means sex worker organizations and networks participate as members on planning, funding and implementation committees and other relevant bodies, ensuring that the needs of the sex worker community are addressed. It may also mean that within a sex worker organization, or across a number of organizations, community-led structures are put in place to monitor, decide upon or otherwise address key issues of concern to the community. These may include violence-reduction strategies, allocation of community housing or functioning of community financial cooperatives.

**Strengthening management and organizational capacity**

- Create a fair and transparent method for making decisions within the organization.
- Ensure that the process for carrying out and managing activities is participatory, transparent and has accountability.
- Establish a transparent operational system for managing human and financial resources.
- Sex workers should be in control of the planning, implementation and monitoring of the collective and its activities, including identifying indicators for monitoring.
- Support the growth of group membership and advancing of the group’s goals and objectives.
- Encourage cooperation and learning from other sex worker-led organizations and networks nationally and internationally.

To help achieve sustainability, it is important to invest time and resources into building leadership among sex workers through their involvement in trainings, conferences, project design, implementation, evaluation, research and fundraising activities, and their participation in the wider sex worker rights movement. (See also Chapter 3, Section 3.2.2, part D.)

It is also essential to develop the organizational skills and capabilities of the collective as a whole. This may involve enhancing business and management skills among group members, strengthening leadership and management or developing resource mobilization activities (Box 1.7). The guidance of allies and partners, as well as other sex worker-led organizations, may assist with the process.

**Case example: Generating income as a collective**

Enhancing business and management skills among group members may lead to income-generating activities for the collective:

- Sex workers from Ashodaya Samithi in Mysore, India used World Bank funding to start a restaurant staffed by sex workers, which helps challenge the stigma and discrimination they face. Profits support a home-care programme for sex workers living with HIV.
- In Brazil, the sex worker organization Davida created its own fashion line, Dapsu, whose proceeds help fund the organization’s social, cultural and HIV prevention activities.
- In India, leaders of the Sonagachi Project registered a consumer cooperative to increase sex workers’ economic security through access to credit and savings programmes, handicraft production, condom social marketing and evening child-care centres.
Financial management is another key component of organizational sustainability. It can be developed in a number of ways depending on the potential capacity of the organization, its resources and the complexity of its finances. An organization may manage its finances in-house or may outsource the work to another local organization. Regardless of the size of the organization, important components of a strong financial management system include:

- well-documented financial systems and financial controls
- financial files documented and audit-ready
- financial reporting procedures known and understood by members
- an adequate number of qualified financial staff, depending upon the complexity and size of the organization.

Community systems strengthening—strengthening the collective—also involves developing procedures to sustain group operations, including a transparent and democratic process to elect leaders, as well as the mentoring of new leaders and planning for succession. Sex worker organizations are often started by a small number of dynamic individuals. However, to be sustainable, these organizations must ensure strong leadership and organizational management and invest in developing future leaders. This requires resources for leadership training and capacity-building as well as connections with national, sub-regional, regional and global networks of sex workers to exchange knowledge, experience and support. Organizational leadership and management activities include:

- strategic planning that reflects the organization’s vision and mission
- leadership that includes a broad range of staff and other community members in organizational decision-making and ensures sharing of information across the organization
- processes in place to manage change and seek new opportunities.

Developing a wider base of skills and leadership within the collective and linking with other organizations can help ensure the sustainability of a sex worker organization in the face of changing donor funding or changing leadership in other governmental or nongovernmental organizations.

### 1.2.7 Shaping policy and creating enabling environments

#### 2012 Recommendations: Good Practice Recommendation 3

Health services should be made available, accessible and acceptable to sex workers based on the principles of avoidance of stigma, non-discrimination and the right to health.

Community empowerment processes reach beyond the community to influence policy and create enabling environments. For example:

- HIV programmes should take affirmative steps to promote the universality of human rights for sex workers, including their rights to health, dignity and lives free from violence, discrimination and stigma. (For details on addressing violence, see Chapter 2.)
- National strategic health plans should recognize sex workers’ heightened HIV risk and vulnerability and ensure that integrated, high-quality health services are available, affordable and accessible for female, male and transgender sex workers.
• Law enforcement authorities must be involved in the promotion and protection of the human rights of sex workers, and programmes to create enabling legal and policy environments should be funded and supported.

• Economic empowerment of sex workers is essential: sex workers should be accorded the same rights as all other informal workers\(^7\) to safe and fair working conditions, with skills training and education for life, access to bank accounts and fair credit programmes, and the same potential to support their families and plan for their future as all other members of the wider community.

• Donor organizations may support the process of sex worker empowerment by funding initiatives to increase capacity among sex workers and support organizational development. It is important to note that international agreements and policies at a global level may either facilitate or hinder community empowerment among sex workers by allowing or restricting access to financial resources by sex worker groups and collectives.

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**Box 1.8**

**Case example: South-South partnerships between sex worker-led organizations**

The Global Network of Sex Work Projects has spearheaded initiatives to strengthen South-South cooperation among sex worker-led organizations. The rationale is to partner stronger, longer-established sex worker-led organizations and networks with those in the process of strengthening their movement. This enables sharing of experiences, learning new ideas and forming new alliances.

Following the Kolkata Sex Worker Freedom Festival in India in 2012, African sex workers undertook a study tour to the Ashodaya Academy in Mysore, and the programmes of SANGRAM and VAMP in Sangli. This study tour was followed up by a return visit by the Indian organizations to Kenya to discuss the establishment of a learning site there and to participate in the African Sex Workers Alliance Strategic Planning Meeting.

Similarly, Bridging the Gaps, an international HIV programme, provides opportunities for sharing lessons from HIV-related projects in Asia and Africa, including on community empowerment, capacity-building of programme managers and identification of examples of good practice.

Such partnerships connect the local with the global, stimulating important knowledge-sharing and contributing to strengthening the sex worker rights movement.

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### 1.2.8 Sustaining the movement

To sustain themselves, sex worker-led movements should operate in solidarity with other social movements, particularly those that also advocate for human rights. This may include movements of other key populations who have similar experiences of heightened HIV risk and social exclusion, such as men who have sex with men, people who use drugs and transgender people, some of whom are sex workers, as well as organizations and networks of people living with HIV. Collaboration between movements strengthens the collective response and ensures that communities are at the centre of that response.

It is essential that development partners in lower- and middle-income countries, and governments and national partners in all countries, actively support the sustainability of sex worker-led organizations and networks. It is unreasonable to expect any group to grow from a small collection of individuals to a movement whose members actively contribute to the national HIV response unless it receives

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\(^7\) The International Labour Organization’s Recommendation concerning HIV and AIDS and the World of Work, 2010 (No. 200) covers “all workers working under all forms or arrangements, and at all workplaces, including: (i) persons in any employment or occupation” (Paragraph 2(a)).
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sustained support. The marginalization of sex workers within the broader economic and social discourse makes sustainability of sex worker-led organizations and networks more challenging. It is essential that, at this point in the community empowerment process, power has been transferred to the community and that community advocates are respected partners in policy-making, irrespective of the legal status of sex work.

A strong, healthy and vibrant civil society working in genuine partnership has been the backbone of the HIV response for 30 years. As we move forward, sex worker organizations and networks should be core members of that partnership.

1.3 Monitoring progress

It is important that communities monitor progress to improve the services they provide and shape the services they receive. HIV programmes based on human rights and community empowerment require that sex worker-led organizations set the parameters for monitoring and evaluation of programmes across all stages of development, including the monitoring and evaluation of the sex worker movement itself.

Short- and long-term objectives and goals need to be established that specifically address the community empowerment process. As an example, monitoring community empowerment in relation to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support and health services would measure sex worker involvement in each of the following: how services are run, quality assurance, funding allocations, training of health personnel to address stigma, and advocacy to address discrimination; rather than simply whether a target percentage of sex workers has accessed a particular service.

In a community empowerment-based programme, monitoring and evaluation should not only include services provided and health outcomes achieved, but should also attempt to monitor and evaluate whether and to what extent the community empowerment process is occurring. Frequently, programme indicators measure quantitative outputs, such as sex workers contacted and condoms distributed, rather than documenting sex worker-led organizational progress and social inclusion. Box 1.9 and Table 1.2 describe approaches to monitoring community empowerment.

Case example: Monitoring community empowerment of sex worker organizations in India

Monitoring empowerment is challenging because numbers alone do not convey the complex interaction of factors that define empowerment. In the Avahan India AIDS Initiative, where NGOs worked with community leaders to establish formally registered CBOs, it was found that simply reporting the number of community groups or meetings held was inadequate, because these data did not capture the quality of the capacity-building and the functioning and autonomy of the groups. To address this, special surveys were developed to capture the various aspects of community empowerment, using an index with multiple groups of indicators. The surveys were administered over a period of several days by trained facilitators with leaders and members of each CBO as well as staff of the NGO implementing the programme, using a small-group discussion format. Initial survey results were immediately reported to the CBO and NGO and discussed with them, with a detailed analysis following later. It was found that a combination of qualitative and quantitative indicators and approaches to monitoring and evaluation was needed to document the complex process of community group formation and the development and sustainability of each collective.
### Table 1.2 Monitoring indicators for sex worker empowerment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Empowerment activities</th>
<th>Empowerment indicators</th>
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| Central              | • Strengthen and expand sex-worker-rights networks to promote sex workers’ rights at a global level  
                        |   • Prioritize and invest in community-led HIV prevention approaches                  | • Inclusion of sex worker movement in national policies and programmes                 |
|                      |   • Include sex workers in policy, programming and funding decisions                   | • Amount of funding allocated to sex worker-led groups                                  |
|                      |                                                                                       | • Inclusion of sex worker-led groups in policy-making on such issues as HIV prevention  |
|                      |                                                                                       | • Recognition of sex worker-led organizations at the national level                     |
| State/province/district/county | • Recognize sex work as work  
                              |   • Incorporate sex worker participation in formation of local/district/state-level policies and programmes  
                              |   • Train health-care providers, police and social service agencies in sex worker rights and needs  
                              |   • Involve sex workers in planning, implementation and service delivery of health, legal and social services  | • Inclusion of sex worker movement in state/district policies and programmes |
|                      |                                                                                       | • Number of health-care providers, police and social service agents trained in sex worker rights and needs  |
|                      |                                                                                       | • Level of sex worker involvement in service design and delivery, including health care, legal services and social services  |
|                      |                                                                                       | • Changes in attitudes and practices of health-care providers, police and social service agents towards sex workers  |
|                      |                                                                                       | • Changes in degree of discrimination perceived by sex workers from health-care providers, police and social service agents  |
| Municipality/Sub-municipality | • Raise awareness of sex worker rights in communities  
                          |   • Forge relationships with sex worker-led organizations and other community groups | • Amount of participation of sex workers in public life                            |
|                      |                                                                                       | • Degree of social acceptance of sex workers by members of the general community         |
|                      |                                                                                       | • Number of outside organizations that report contact and partnering with sex worker-led organizations  |
| Frontline worker     | • Create safe communal spaces                                                         | • Amount of safe spaces created                                                        |
|                      | • Identify common priorities, needs and goals                                         | • Degree of social cohesion among sex worker groups                                      |
|                      | • Establish and sustain sex worker-led organizations                                   | • Number of sex worker-led organizations/collectives established                         |
|                      | • Hold meetings, marches and rallies for sex worker rights, to the extent the legal context allows | • Number of meetings, marches or rallies held to promote sex worker rights              |
|                      | • Train legal advocates to document and challenge human-rights violations              | • Percentage of sex workers who report participation in a sex worker-led group/collective |
|                      |                                                                                       | • Number of sex workers trained as legal advocates                                     |
|                      |                                                                                       | • Documentation of human-rights abuses                                                 |
1.4 Resources and further reading


