



**Description of the SHARP/Law and Health Gathering:
*Fostering Enabling Legal and Policy Environments for
Sex Workers' Health and Human Rights***

**Johannesburg, South Africa
June 22-24, 2006**

Structure of the gathering

The gathering on **Fostering Enabling Legal Environments for Sex Workers' Health and Human Rights** will take place from June 22-24, 2006 in Johannesburg, South Africa. It will be jointly sponsored by the Open Society Institute's Sexual Health and Rights Project (SHARP) and Law and Health Initiative (LAHI), with additional support from the Open Society Foundation (South Africa) and OSI-Lithuania. The meeting will bring together approximately thirty-five geographically diverse stakeholders from five key groups: sex workers, service providers, researchers, legal and policy experts, and human rights activists (including women's rights, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered rights, and HIV/AIDS rights).

The chief goals of the gathering can be divided into three categories:

Legal context: To reach a common understanding of the key elements (and terminology) that make up the regulations around prostitution and sex work globally; to map, through sharing on-the-ground knowledge and experience, the elements of various regimes of official control and regulation of sex work and prostitution, including criminal prohibition, regulation, de-criminalization, health regulatory regimes, and laws governing morality, health and public conduct.

Analytic framework: To formulate the core principles of public health, human rights, and harm reduction approaches to sex work, and to better understand how these approaches work in practice.

Networking: To explore issues arising both within and between various sex worker-related interest groups, with an eye to reducing barriers and expanding areas of common principles and goals; to develop connections from this meeting as part of building a global network of advocates with expertise on sex work, health and human rights that will facilitate continued dialogue on these issues.

The seminar will be structured to facilitate discussion both within thematic and regional groupings (e.g., a discussion among all researchers, a discussion among all participants from South Asia) and between groups. Case studies of law reform efforts from particular regions will be presented in order to discuss and debate the range of possible strategies and approaches. OSI staff will be present to help facilitate discussion, answer questions

about SHARP and LAHI evolving strategy in this arena and to contribute to plans to leverage funds. While sex workers and their allies have accomplished much in the advocacy arena, it is hoped that participants will leave the seminar better equipped to advocate for legal reforms that advance sex workers health and rights, through having a concrete set of tools and models for local advocacy, a clearer analytic framework with which to understand the issues, and a stronger network of international contacts and allies.

Supporting documentation

The following written products will be prepared in connection with the seminar:

- An annotated chart/ background document (4-6pages) describing the various laws and regulations that can affect sex workers' health and rights, with particular attention to different types of sex work-specific laws and regulations and where they have been adopted;
- A concise document (3-4 pages) outlining the similarities, complementarities and differences between public health, harm reduction, and human rights-based approaches to sex work;
- A series of 8, 2-page case studies of different jurisdictions with specific legal and regulatory environments, and the impact of each environment on sex workers' health and human rights (Case studies will include: Canada; India; South Africa; Australia; the Netherlands; Senegal; Brazil; and Thailand.);
- A mapping and resource guide of donor support for sex worker policy and direct service initiatives;
- A CD of background documents, pertinent to the sex work discussion;
- A final report, containing key recommendations on principles and processes for evaluating various regimes regulating prostitution and sex work, for use by donors, NGO allies, policy advocates, and OSI and affiliated projects.