

## The Street-Based Sex Workers' Contribution for a Socio-Educational Model of Intervention

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### Introduction

Sex workers (SW) are rarely involved in the design, implementation and evaluation of projects that concern them. Usually, these are run by NGOs and focus mainly on harm reduction and HIV prevention (Agustin, 2007; Mckeganey & Barnard, 1996; Pitcher, 2006; Sanders, O'Neill, & Pitcher, 2011; Weiner, 1996).

The purpose of this study is to understand the needs of a group of street-based female prostitutes, in terms of the mechanisms of social exclusion, prejudice and stigma that can lead to discrimination. We aim to assess and understand their opinions about the service, and any inherent discrimination, provided by the outreach teams.

Numerous studies have shown a relationship between stigma and sex work and the consequences of this for the wellbeing of SW (Day, 2007; Lazarus et al., 2012; Levin & Peled, 2011; Ross et al., 2011; Scambler, 2007; Weitzer, 2010).

### Methods

- Action research project – Planning (first cycle)
- Descriptive and analytic qualitative methodology
- Research question: What is the prostitutes' opinion about the traditional epidemiological services provided by outreach teams?
- Participants: 49 street-based female SW
- Data were collected from September 2012 to September 2013

- Techniques: informal interviews and participant observation(FN); and 12 - semi-structured interviews
- Inclusion criteria for the interviewees: 1) being a street-based female SW; 2) being available and interested in cooperating with the ongoing research
- Content analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 2007)

### Results

- The service is widely regarded as positive (table 1)

Table 1. Evaluation of outreach services

Evaluation of outreach services	Respondents		Other SW	Total
	Interviews	FN		
<b>Service available</b>				
Positive	11	1	1	13
Negative	0	1	2	3
<b>Adequacy of service</b>				
Meets needs	9	0	0	9
Meets some needs	1	2	1	4
<b>Relationship with staff members</b>				
Positive	11	1	2	14
Depends on the professional	2	1	4	7
<b>Usefulness of various teams</b>				
Overlap	4	3	6	13
Complementarity	4	2	3	9

- The outreach is perceived as a condom delivery service (table 2)

Table 2. Perception of the outreach service

Perception of the outreach service	Respondents		Other SW	Total
	Interviews	FN		
Condom distribution	11	1	7	19
Emotional support	7	1	2	10
Education	3	0	0	3

- Improvements: directly and indirectly benefit the respondent (for yourself/for others) (table 3)

Table 3. Proposals for improving the outreach service

Proposals for improving	Respondents		Other SW	Total
	Interviews	FN		
<b>For yourself</b>				
Increasing team visit frequency	3	0	0	3
Family support	2	0	0	2
Extra support (other context)	2	1	0	3
None	7	0	0	7
<b>For others</b>				
Intervention with drug users	3	0	0	3
More health education	2	0	0	2
Hygiene and health control	1	0	0	1
Outreach hard-to-reach SW	2	0	1	3
Combating pimping	2	0	0	2
Citizenship education	1	0	0	1
<b>Perception about staff limitations</b>				
Imposed	4	0	0	4
Voluntary	1	0	0	1

### Conclusion

- SW are satisfied with the services provided by outreach teams;
- They suggest more intervention with drug addicts; coordination between teams to avoid overlap; more health and citizenship initiatives; combating pimping and violence against prostitutes;
- This study suggests that traditional interventions focused on epidemiology do not make prostitutes feel stigmatized or discriminated against, on the contrary, they consider these essential and emphasize the need for the control of STI;
- We questioned whether this position reflects the enacted stigma (Scambler, 2004) or is a simply health concern.

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