



SECTION

#3

Sex Worker Rights Activism

This section is designed to help you build a strong community of sex worker activists and allies.



HANDS OFF OUR CLIENTS!



SECTION **#3** Sex Worker
Rights Activism

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HISTORY OF SEX WORKER MOVEMENT: A BRIEF OVERVIEW

1970: SEEN AND HEARD!

In 1973, American-born Margo St. James founds the activist organisation COYOTE (Call Off Your Old Tired Ethics) in San Francisco. Not only sex workers, but journalists, attorneys, politicians, and even former police officers join St. James in calling for sex workers' rights and for an end to violence against sex workers. Sex workers in other cities across the US are inspired to organise and demand their rights.

1975: BIRTH OF THE EUROPEAN SEX WORKERS' MOVEMENT

The sex workers rights movement in Europe explodes into public view on 2 June 1975 in France. 150 women, men and trans* sex workers stage a multi-day sit-in at the biggest church in Lyons. They are protesting police harassment and failure to prosecute crimes committed against sex workers. The protest quickly spreads to other churches in France. Sex workers in other European countries are inspired to get organised. The Swiss Grisélidis Réal sets up an International Prostitution Documentation Centre in Geneva. They flood the media with charges of inhuman treatment of women in prostitution.

1 Power and Interest

1.1 POWER

What is People Power?

Every chapter in history has seen people power and mass direct action take centre stage to create social change; the abolition of slavery, women's fight for the vote, anti-colonial and independence struggles, workers, civil rights, anti-Vietnam war, anti-nuclear, global justice, and other recent social justice movements. People-power methods arose out the struggles by communities of colour and poor and working class communities. It's more than just a set of civil-disobedience and direct-action tactics. It's based on a different understanding of power.

The traditional view of power sees some people as holding it – the Government, Corporations, CEO's, Army Generals – while the rest of us need to appeal to, influence, pressure or replace if we want to change things. Those in power want us to believe the traditional view of power; that we are powerless because they control the money, police, military and the corporate media.

People-power, in contrast, sees power as a fragile relationship. Those in positions of power are dependent for that power on the compliance of the people they hold power over. When people organise themselves to withdraw their cooperation, the power holders' grasp on power begins to weaken and crumble. If people sustain their resistance we can assert our power, force changes or even topple those in power. People power is true democratic power, providing the basis for all to participate in governing ourselves.

1980: SEX WORKERS ORGANISE INTERNATIONALLY

In the early 80s, German, Italian, Canadian, Australian, Austrian, Ecuadorian, Thai and Swedish sex workers begin to collectively organise and form their own organisations. In Thailand, EMPOWER (Education Means Protection Of Women Engaged in Recreation) advocates for the legalisation of prostitution. The American Gail Pheterson residing in the Netherlands and Margo St. James help to forge connections between sex workers and feminists from the global North and South.

1985: 1ST WORLD WHORES' CONGRESS

In 1985, Leaders from sex worker organisations in the US and Europe, and some feminist activists, meet for the 1st World Whores' Congress in Amsterdam. The International Committee for Prostitutes' Rights (ICPR) is founded during the Congress. The participants draw up and adopt the World Charter for Prostitutes' Rights.

1986: WHORE'S CONGRESS GOES TO BRUSSELS

The Green party in the European Parliament offers the ICPR the use of its meeting rooms and interpreters in Brussels for a second World Whores' Congress. Women sex workers from all the continents, and also a few men, demand the decriminalisation of sex work and an end to the stigmatisation of sex workers.

GROUP EXERCISE

EXPLORING POWER



WHAT: Deepen activists' analysis of the society we live in and to explore different understandings of power.

GOAL: To make visible the structures, policies, institutions and practices in society that operate to keep people from getting the power they need to manifest the world they want. It also teaches us about why we have to start organising from where people are in their thinking and not where we think they should be.

WHAT YOU WILL NEED:

- Facilitator
- Flip Chart Paper
- Pens

FACILITATOR: Your role is to lead the group through a process that starts by asking people why they are active, what they want, why they came. You may need to solicit this – for example see if anyone says to “build power”. If not, after harvesting some reasons from the group, ask if anyone is interested in building power? Write people's answers on the flip chart. For example:

- Change people's ideas about the sex industry
- Because I want to support my friends who are sex workers
- To find out more information about the campaign
- Because what is happening to sex workers is unfair / unnecessary

Next, ask the group who has power in our society. Create a list on the flip chart. For example:

- The Government
- The Media
- Corporations
- Rich people
- Bosses

While people have power and potential power, our power is based on our numbers and our willingness to not cooperate in their unjust systems. The 'Government' and the people who control the money, media, army, etc. do a lot of things to keep us from getting the power we need to manifest the world we want.

Next, ask the group how the people, institutions, etc. in the list above get the power that they have. Brainstorm a list – really explore the issues. You will get all kinds of answers, but make sure you get ideas like TV, consumerism, alcohol, prison, and bad food on the list.

1990'S: HUMAN AND ECONOMIC RIGHTS ON THE GLOBAL AGENDA

In increasingly more countries, sex workers demand recognition of their human rights and acknowledgment of sex work as a legitimate trade. Sex workers' trade organisations are formed in Uruguay (1986), Ecuador, Chile, Argentina, Peru, and the Dominican Republic. In England, the Global Network of Sex Work Projects for women, men, and trans* people is founded in 1992. During the 1990's, there are organisations throughout the world run by and for sex workers.

2000: THE EUROPEAN MOVEMENT TAKES A LEAP FORWARD

In England, a sex workers' trade union is founded: the International Union of Sex Workers. The Union demands employee rights and a safe workplace for sex workers. In that same year, the ICPR organises a discussion on migration, sex work and feminism in the Netherlands. English and Dutch sex workers form the International Committee on the Rights of Sex Workers in Europe (ICRSE) in 2004.

2005: A NEW CHARTER FOR THE RIGHTS OF SEX WORKERS IN EUROPE

In 2005, with funding from Mama Cash, the newly-formed ICRSE convenes a conference on Sex Work, Human Rights, Labour and Migration in Brussels. 120 sex workers and 80 allies from 30 countries attend. A new Charter is drawn up, this time for the rights of sex workers in Europe.

SEX WORKERS AGAINST GLOBALISATION AND VIOLENCE

During the December 2005 meeting of the World Trade Organisation in Hong Kong, sex worker activist organisation Zi Teng and sister organisations from Cambodia, Thailand, Taiwan, Japan, China, Australia and New York march in protest to police headquarters in Hong Kong.

GROUP EXERCISE

EXPLORING FEAR



WHAT YOU WILL NEED:

- Facilitator
- Group working in pairs or small groups

FACILITATOR: Get people to break into small groups or pairs and ask them to talk and discuss **Hopes** and **Fears** around a particular situation or possible action. Then get the groups to report back and see who else has the same fears. You can do this by simply asking for a show of hands of who has the same fears.

CHECKLIST

WORKING THROUGH FEAR COLLECTIVELY



- NOTICE IT –**
express it, make it visible
- EXPLORE IT –**
what is real, what is imaginary
- ASK 'DUMB' QUESTIONS –**
so what if that happens?
- MAKE IT HUGE –**
what is the worst that can happen, then what, agitate to anger
- MAKE A PLAN –**
to deal with it and break it into with simple, small steps
- IDENTIFY –**
what support is needed
- GET COMMITMENT –**
easy, immediate, short-term tasks – focus on action to take
- PROVIDE SUPPORT –**
build collective confidence
- FOLLOW-UP, DEBRIEF, LEARN**

FOR EXAMPLE: Some members of your group may have a fear of being 'outed' in the media as working as a sex worker by being involved in the campaign against criminalising clients. Using the list above you will be able to develop collective questions, answers and solutions to addressing people's fears.

TIP

To remember that courage is not the lack of fear; it is the willingness to take action despite it.



2006: GLOBAL KNOWLEDGE SHARE

The Collective of Sex Workers and Supporters organises the International Conference for Sex Workers in Taipei.

2009: RIGHTS, NOT RESCUE

Along with Hivos, Mama Cash, ICRSE, and the Global Network of Sex Work Projects, the first Rights, Not Rescue public forum is convened in November 2009 in Amsterdam. The widely-reported event brings out the media, donors, politicians and the public to hear what is happening on the front lines of sex worker activism. The Rights not Rescue public event is followed by a two-day meeting of donors and sex workers. This gathering is co-hosted by Mama Cash and the US-based Open Society Institute (OSI). A group of ten grantmakers explicitly agree to collaborate in order to increase funding for sex worker organising. They begin meeting annually in Amsterdam to strategise about how to make more resources available for the sex workers' human rights movement.

Source: Mama Cash

GROUP EXERCISE

EXPLORING POWER AND PRIVILEGE IN OUR ACTIVISM



WHAT: To build strong sex worker rights activism, we have to be open to different life experiences, and perspectives, being able to come together to share ideas, find common ground and collectively work out solutions.

GOAL: Identify how power and privilege play out in the group and then develop practices that can build strong and powerful communities.

WHAT YOU WILL NEED:

- Facilitator
- Group working in pairs or small groups
- Flip Chart Paper
- Pens

FACILITATOR: Get the group to break into pairs and ask participants to talk for one minute about where they feel power in their lives, where they feel powerless. Call everyone back into the big group and get people to call out **where they feel power**. Then **where they feel powerless**.

Power can be exercised in different ways; the system we live in works by imposing 'power over' us. When we organise collectively we are using 'power with'. Every single person has the power to act, which is the 'power within' and when we give up that power, that is 'power under.' Power over works through coercion and fear. We undermine it when we withdraw consent and refuse to cooperate. We also want to strengthen our ability to organise horizontally and increase our 'power with'.

FACILITATOR: Introduce the concept of social power and who has privilege in our society-power men have over women, white people have over people of color, etc.

Ask the group to think about:

- Who has more social power than they do?
- What are some of their identifying characteristics? (Usually the group comes up with a list that includes things like arrogance, denial, confidence, entitlement, etc.)
- Which groups that have less social power than they do.

Call out examples and have someone write down the group's responses for all these questions

GROUP EXERCISE (continued)

Now get the group to look at that list of qualities they associate with people of higher social power. Are there any that they identify with? (A short discussion might follow if time allows.)



Finally, imagine walking into a meeting full of people that have more social power than they do and they want to tell the meeting about their campaign. What would they have to do to make you feel comfortable? Give the group time to experience this, then have them call things out.

Ask people to stand, walk around the room greet each other, and do those things they have mentioned.

TIP

The way we resist is often as important as resisting itself.



Sex workers face particular barriers to activism – from fear of arrest or deportation, to the stigma and social exclusion that we fear if we come out as sex workers or even people who support sex worker rights. But there are some things we can do to minimise the ways people are excluded. One is to be conscious and committed to understanding how systems of oppression (racism, sexism, heteronormativity) affect us and then challenging practices which marginalise, exclude or de-humanise others. Privilege, like power, can be used for positive purposes but should be used with awareness and care.

CHECKLIST

MAKING OUR ACTIVISM INCLUSIVE ACCESSIBLE

- Create spaces where oppressive behaviour is not acceptable and can be challenged, if it does arise.
- Translate organising and campaign materials into the languages of sex workers.
- Establish ground rules about what is and isn't acceptable to ask in meetings (for example some irregular migrant sex workers may not want to give you details of where they are from or how they arrived).
- Make sure any actions or activities you are involved in have an option to participate anonymously, where possible.
- Wear masks.
- Use pseudonyms.
- Identify community leaders or spokespeople who are willing to speak on behalf of your group or action. Make sure your spokespeople have clear instructions about the messages you want to get across.



1.2 INTEREST

Interest is something that benefits a person, group, institution or community. Not every individual or group has the same interests and our interests change over time. In any activist campaign we need to identify our interests and our opponent's interests. Often we find that our problems are a result of our opponents' interests.

Because interests change, there are no permanent allies and no permanent enemies. And through our actions we affect our opponent's interests – we can make our problems their problems, or to formulate it the other way, make our interests their interests.

GROUP EXERCISE

TURNING OUR INTEREST INTO THEIR PROBLEMS



WHAT YOU WILL NEED:


- Facilitator
- Flip Chart Paper
- Pen

FACILITATOR: your role in this exercise is to get the group to think about what your opponent/s interests are. Brainstorm and write these down. Then get the group to think about how you could turn their interests into your interests. For example:

- **MONEY** – think of ways you could cost your opponent money?
- **GOOD IMAGE** – how could you tarnish their image?

Be as creative as you like and, at this stage don't allow feasibility to hold you back. You will end up with a broad range of ways you might engage your opponent.

Part of our work as sex worker activists has to be building common interest within sex worker rights movements. That means drawing together sex workers and sex worker rights allies who are already engaged in organisations, such as the trade unions that represent them, sex worker rights collectives or peer-to-peer support networks, and uniting them around a common goal; in this case, opposing the Swedish Model.



There are many sex worker-led organisations worldwide that can be models for the kind of work and activism you wish to do. Here are links to a few:

European Examples:

- **ICRSE (EUROPE)**
<http://www.sexworkeurope.org/>
- **LEGALIFE (UKRAINE)**
<http://legalife.com.ua/liga-legalife/>
- **ROSE ALLIANCE (SWEDEN)**
www.rosealliance.se/
- **SCOT-PEP (SCOTLAND)**
www.scot-pep.org.uk
- **SEX WORKER OPEN UNIVERSITY (LONDON AND GLASGOW)**
www.swou.org
- **SILVER ROSE (RUSSIA)**
<http://www.silver-rose.org>
- **STAR-STAR (MACEDONIA)**
www.starsexwork.org
- **STRASS (FRANCE)**
<http://site.strass-syndicat.org/>
- **X:TALK (LONDON)**
www.xtalkproject.net

Global Examples:

- **AMMAR (ARGENTINA)**
<http://ammar.org.ar/>
- **DURBAR MAHILA SAMANWAYA COMMITTEE (INDIA)**
<http://www.durbar.org/>
- **EMPOWER (THAILAND)**
<http://www.empowerfoundation.org/>
- **STELLA (CANADA)**
www.chezstella.org
- **TAIS PLUS (KYRGYZSTAN)**
<http://taisplus.com/>

You will also need to create alliances outside the sex worker rights activism, which means identifying which other groups might have an interest in opposing the Swedish Model. For example you might convince feminist organisations that these changes to the law amount to attacks on women's rights or are based on ideas about women that see them only as victims and run counter to feminist ideals. Migrants rights organisations may be convinced to see that stopping the Swedish Model becoming law will prevent harassment, arrest and deportation of the many sex workers who are migrants. You might convince police commissioners that policing the law would not be an effective use of their resources.

2 Strategy and Campaigns

2.1 STRATEGY

Strategy is about directing your energies and resources in such a way as to maximise them towards the goal you want to achieve.

Section Two (Sex Worker Rights Advocacy) contains detail about how to think about strategy for advocacy. The same broad principles can easily be applied to activism, although activism places a greater emphasis on finding the most effective ways to mobilise people power, or 'power from below' towards those goals:

- Looking at the big picture.
- Knowing who has the power to make the decision.
- Concentrating the right resources in the right place(s) at the right time(s)

There's no point planning a campaign, event or action that you don't have the money, time, people, or energy for. But don't be put off by this – even small groups with only a little time and cash can make a big impact. It takes a bit of planning and organisation and a bit of creativity, but it can be done.

CHECKLIST

STRATEGIC PLANNING METHODS



- IDENTIFY PROBLEM** – Clearly define what the problem is and what are the assumptions, source, stories and myths that support the problem.
- ESTABLISH STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE** – this is your goal or what you see as the solution to the problem
- ASSESS RESOURCES AND SITUATION** – look at all factors in your world and your opponents' world
- KNOW YOUR OPPONENT** – what are their strengths, weaknesses, history, interests, resources, plans, vulnerabilities
- KNOW YOUR SUPPORTERS** – strengths, weaknesses, history, interests, resources, plans
- PUBLIC PARTICIPATION** – Make it easy for people to participate. Get them involved in activities that build success and confidence.
- DILEMMA ACTIONS** – can you think of actions that will cause your opponent to look bad if they try to stop what you are doing; where they must either allow an action to continue, meet the demand or act in a way that may lose them their allies and/or credibility?

But remember, even the best laid plans need to be revisited and revised according to changing circumstances.

2.2 CAMPAIGNS

You may have decided to run a campaign against the Swedish Model. The art of the campaigning is to engage your opponent at every step.

At the beginning you inform them of the solutions to the problem and give them the chance to do the right thing. They fix it. If not you escalate and educate and get more people involved and go back. You give them the chance to do the right thing. They fix it. If not, you escalate and engage in demonstrations. You go back and give them the chance to do the right thing. They fix it. If not, you escalate and engage in direct action. You go back and give them the chance to do the right thing. They fix it. If not, you escalate and at some point you determine that our opponent is no longer a responsible member of our community and you seek to close them down while replacing them with another entity.

This may be easier said than done!

A NOTE ON FUNDRAISING

Most grassroots campaigns are run on the back of a lot of hard work, dedication and creativity – but a little money is necessary. You might want to print leaflets and posters, buy a domain name, buy paints and banner material. There are a number of ways you can raise money (and it might be worth making someone in your collective responsible for fundraising). Some ideas include:



- Pass a bucket around at your meetings and events (simple, but it works);
- Approach supportive organisations and individuals for donations;
- Apply for funding through grant projects. This can be time-consuming and may require that you do things like set up your collective, group or organisation in an official capacity and open a bank account.
- Use crowd-sourcing websites such as Kickstarter (kickstarter.com), indiegogo (indiegogo.com) or wefund (wefund.com);
- Set up a paypal 'Donate' button on your website.

WHAT A CAMPAIGN CAN DO

- **WIN** concrete improvements in people's lives.
- **MAKE PEOPLE AWARE** of their own power (by winning victories).
- **CHANGE THE RELATIONSHIP OF POWER** between people, the government, and other institutions by building strong permanent organisations and relationships
- **RAISE PUBLIC AWARENESS** about an institution, program or injustice. Bring hidden wrongs to light. E.g. you may want to use it to draw attention to the way that many proponents of the Swedish Model conflate sex work with trafficking
- **DELEGITIMISE ORGANISATIONS, INSTITUTIONS AND PROGRAMS:** Withdraw consent from the functioning of unjust bodies, laws, programs. Interfere with their operations. Raise their social costs. E.g. You may be able to raise doubt about the reliability of the evidence or the assumptions that your opponents use to make their case.
- **BUILD A MOVEMENT:** Provide opportunities for sex workers and allies to engage in action, experience solidarity and support, take greater risks, deepen commitment. .
- **EDUCATE AND INFORM:** Both those in the movement and those who hear of about the actions.
- **STRENGTHEN VOICES OF REFORM:** It may not be your intention or goal, but when thousands of people are out in the streets, institutions are more likely to listen to 'respectable' critics within. Examples: The more vocal and visible sex worker rights campaigners and their arguments are, the more difficult it is for criminalisation arguments to go unchallenged.



NOW GO TO

- **WORKSHEET #8:** [Planning a Campaign](#)



3 Action

A campaign action simultaneously addresses your issue at your opponent while attempting to draw support from would-be activists and the general public (or other target audiences). A campaign may include the following actions:


- **EDUCATION** – You need to get the word out! Hand out leaflets, hold teach-ins, use social media to discuss and publicise your issue, start a petition, model motions for trade unions or political and activist organisations, offer to write articles for community newspapers and blogs.
- **DEMONSTRATIONS** – This is where you build a public presence and create pressure. Call marches and pickets, have a contingent on a larger march or event.
- **DIRECT ACTION** – create a crisis situation that your opponent must respond to. These include sit-in's, blockades and occupations. Aim for **dilemma actions** (actions which cause your opponent to look bad if they try to stop what you are doing) where possible. Think about how to dramatise the conflict – make it visual; think of where and when you hold your action so you will be noticed. Be prepared to demonstrate your depth of commitment and test the determination of your opponent.

A WORD ABOUT NON-VIOLENT DIRECT ACTION

To take control of your life and stand up for what you believe in is an incredible and powerful feeling. Non-violent direct action (NVDA) is the single most empowering campaigning tool at your disposal.

NVDA is tried and tested in many countries and many campaigns. The modern sex workers' rights movement started with NVDA when sex workers held a sit-in in a church in Lyon. In the past year alone sex workers have occupied a health centre (Bolivia), chained themselves to the parliament building (Turkey) and stopped traffic (Paris) to demand their rights.

Taking direct action may occasionally mean breaking the law. But as sex workers, we know that the law often undermines our rights or is blind to the injustices and exploitation we face and sometimes the law even creates the circumstances for injustice and exploitation to happen. If we wait for a legal solution to all our problems, we may be waiting forever. Do we have that long? Direct action is direct democracy. It's a way of collectively re-asserting control over our destinies.



It's natural to be worried about the consequences of taking action. Those who hold power over us rely on our fear and convince us it's wrong to stand up for our rights. But there is a fine tradition of people creating change through direct action that runs from Ghandi to Martin Luther King to Aung San Suu Kii and includes many sex workers along the way. People who have risked their jobs, imprisonment and occasionally their lives to make our world a better place to live. Behind each of these 'figureheads' are hundreds if not thousands of people just like you and me. They all broke (or are breaking, or will break) the law because they saw that the law was unjust. They recognised higher laws of conscience, compassion and co-operation.

Working together, taking collective, peaceful but dynamic action is no longer an option. It's an imperative. There's support on offer – use the exercises and worksheets in this section to help you explore what it feels like to take action, find out where to get information on your legal rights. Take the support on offer and take action.

Find below a list of videos of direct actions, protests and festivals organised by sex workers in France, Spain, UK and Denmark; as well as an advocacy tool for sex workers rights in Hungary.

- Interview of Pye Jacobson on the Swedish Model:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7D7n0h57-l8>
- Strass and Act Up members disrupt public meeting with Najat Vallaud-Belkacem, Minister of Women's rights after her proposal to criminalise clients of sex workers, Paris 2012. The slogans say: "Clients criminalised = whores murdered!"
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KU7l-56tR1s>
- Strass demonstrate against proposed criminalisation of clients, passive soliciting and for access to rights, Paris June 2013
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FR5UZzo4oTc>
- SWOU Festival, London, October 2011:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ixUeypoSN_I
- 17th International Day to End Violence Against Sex Workers: Sex Worker Open University video:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=95F7G-Gl8sE>
- SZEXE, Association of Hungarian Sex Workers and Hungarian Civil Liberties Union produced an advocacy film together:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-M4zJgWPMSU>
- Spain, unemployment in the crisis-stricken country has reached 23 percent, and sex workers say this is the only way they can earn a living, April 2012. <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/news-video/video-sex-workers-protest-new-law/article4103170/>
- Denmark, sex workers demonstrate against the proposal to criminalise clients, March 2010:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fVXZ6xkz0zs>

NOW GO TO

- **WORKSHEET #9:** [Planning an Action](#)

4 Organising

ORGANISER EXERCISE

WHAT: Convincing a person to act or get active is a series of steps and often a one-to-one conversation. Use this exercise to motivate and inspire or reinvigorate.



GOAL: Get a person angry enough, strong enough and committed enough to take the next step.

Ask yourself:

- What motivates this person?
- What holds this person back?

Then, have a conversation:

- Remind them of what motivates them to be a sex worker activist;
- Acknowledge what they have done as part of this campaign (and others) and their strengths;
- Ask them to recommit to your campaign or action; and
- Ask them what they need to do to win and be true to themselves.

People organise because of solutions, not because of problems. They moan and complain about problems, but organise because they believe or know or see or feel that there is a better way. Organising is about building relationships. People need to feel like they are a part of something. It takes people time to develop trust, learn, move to take risks. Your approach must be positive and affirming. It's about power, participation and community.

Your primary role as an organiser is to create a space in which people can:

- Experience and move through their fear and act with courage
- Experience and build their power and make change

There are many barriers to activism that you will encounter as an organiser. It may be fear – of change, the unknown, repression, job loss, harassment, stigma, being 'outed' as a sex worker; feelings of powerlessness and apathy (really an extension of powerlessness); denial – “the problem will go away”. And many more.

Organising is primarily about relationships and a big part of your role will be to build trust with people and move them step-by-step through these barriers. You want to give people confidence in their ability to act and to convince them of the importance and necessity of your campaign or action in particular. You'll need to engage with people's legitimate concerns and, as a group or individually, address the concrete factors (e.g. fear or losing a job or being outed; worrying that they don't know enough/as much as others about the issue, etc.) as well as the feelings that prevent people from acting or feeling like they can act.

NOW GO TO

- **WORKSHEET #10:** [Tips for Organisers](#)

FACILITATING FOR SUCCESS

TIP

Encourage new members to take on responsibility. Share your skills and talents and encourage others to do the same, even if at first it seems like it would be quicker to do it yourself. You also want to encourage people to feel encouraged to take a initiatives and become leaders of the movement. It will pay off in the longer term and it's the way you build a campaign, network of sex workers or movement that is sustainable in the long-term.



Any successful campaign or action relies on a group of people working together to make it happen. If the work falls on a few, others can feel disempowered and the organisers can feel unsupported. Democratic decision-making is essential for good delegation and for building inclusive campaigns and actions. People will be much more likely to take on roles if they've had a hand in the decision-making of the group. It's much easier to ask someone to work on a project if it was partly their idea.

AND FINALLY... SOME FOOD FOR THOUGHT

CREATE CRISIS – Crisis is the edge where change is possible, where opportunities emerge for our interests to become theirs.



ESCALATION – Start within the experience of your supporters and opponents, take steps increasing in intensity and moving outside the experience of your opponent. Take a step at a time and see the impact. Once you are out of the box you cannot go back!

COMPRESSION – Organise all your escalating activities toward a point of compression, where things become so pressurised the crisis erupts internally and the process of change is underway.

CREDIBLE THREAT – We don't always have to do what we say if our opponent knows we can do what we say.

TELEGRAPHING – Let your opponent know what you plan to do in advance and give them the opportunity to correct the information first

BLAME THE OPPONENT – For everything you possibly can!

MIX IT UP – Be crazy/ Be reasonable, Good Cop/Bad Cop. Try everything.

SURPRISE – Go outside the experience of your opponents. Keep them on moving ground, not knowing what will come next.

EAT YOUR YOUNG – You have to take risks. Every threat is an opportunity.

UNITY, FUN, DISCIPLINE – People don't want to struggle, but at times we must. Unity (collective action), fun and discipline are key because our opponents are going to want to bring us down.

IGNORANCE OFTEN WORKS – “Excuse me, I didn't know that was the code, are you sure?”

FOCUSED AND UNFOCUSED – Sometimes we need a laser beam to shine a light on an issue and sometime we just need to throw shit up against the wall.

MILITANT MINORITY – We can shift the balance of power.



5 Sex Worker Resources

SWEDISH MODEL – ARTICLES AND RESEARCH

Agustin, L. 2010. *Swedish evaluation of law banning purchase of sex: unsupported claims* <http://www.lauraagustin.com/ban-on-purchase-of-sex-helps-prevent-and-combat-prostitution-says-swedish-evaluation>

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Planning a Campaign

1 Set Your Goals

What do you want to achieve in the short-term?

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____
- 4 _____

What do you want to achieve in the long-term?

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____
- 4 _____

2 Do Your Homework

You need to know:

- the nature and extent of the problem;
- who it affects (or will affect) and how;
- who might work with you on this campaign and how the problem affects them; and
- who has the power/to do what?

You might need to do some further research before you start your campaign. What else do you need to find out:

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____
- 4 _____

3 Engage Your Opponent

This is your chance to put your problem and your solution before your opponent in a clear, fair and public way – and give them a chance to do the right thing. You need to decide what a victory will entail – a victory may fall short of your overall stated goal, it could be withdrawal of a proposed piece of legislation; a public statement against the legislation; a commitment to put funds or resources into a particular programme or project.

Who will you negotiate with? How?

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____
- 4 _____

4 Get Your Message Out

This is about letting the sex worker community, other allies and the public know what you are campaigning about and why. In making your message and your position public, you are trying to get support for the campaign while also putting pressure on your opponent.

Sex Workers have a rich history of campaigning (see Section One: Sex Workers Take Action) and there are many ways of getting your message out. Any effective campaign will involve an online presence but don't neglect face-to-face messaging.

Messaging can be: Leafleting sex worker outreach centres and red-light districts, leaving newsletters or brochures in lacs you think your supporters might collect them, letters to the editor, street theatre, press conferences, media events, going out and talking to groups, holding teach-in's, posters, banners, model motions for trade union branches, petitions, letter-writing to officials.

Online: webpages or pages on social networking sites, banners and click-throughs on your supporters' pages, e-petitions, short videos.

How will you educate the public?

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____
- 4 _____

5 Take Action!

You want your action to get noticed and help you get the message out. So think carefully about where you will hold your action – who will see you and who do you want to see you? Is it important to get the media to your action? And when – will you coincide it with a significant date or another event in order to maximise your impact?

Rallies in public spaces, arches, street theatre, vigils,

How will you demonstrate?

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____
- 4 _____

6 Direct Action

When you decide to take direct action, you are trying to raise the stakes and create a crisis situation that your opponent has to deal with. Your action should make sense to your supporters – so your target and your message need to be carefully thought through – and help to get your message out.

Direct action can include strikes, sit-ins and die-ins, blockades and pickets, occupation, boycotts, creating positive alternatives, banner drops.

How will you take direct action?

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____
- 4 _____

7 Protracted Struggle

You may take action, then up the ante with direct action and still not get the result you want. In this case, you will need to find ways to sustain your campaign – to keep activists motivated and maintain interest in the campaign more generally in an ongoing way. You may have to rethink or redirect your strategy.

The methods of protracted struggle are the same as those used earlier in the campaign (education, demonstration and direct action) but if you are engaged in a protracted struggle, you need to think about how you sustain your activism, root your activism in strong communities of support.

Are there ways you can escalate your tactics and broaden your support?

1

2

3

4

Are there ways that would help to strengthen your activist community and ensure your campaign is sustainable in the long-term?

1

2

3

4

Planning an Action

This is a fairly comprehensive list of the things you want to talk about and decide in your collective or group about in the lead-up to your action.

Strategy

GOALS: What are you trying to accomplish? Create a goal or goals that are concrete, tangible and winnable.

TARGET: Who are you trying to get to act?

MESSAGE/DEMANDS: What is your message? You may have more than one message directed at different audiences for the action. Think about:

- What do we want them to know;
- What do we want them to do;
- Can it be summed up in a slogan;
- Are your demands clear and simple; (you may want to think about having a few 'fallback demands'.
- Will you use the media to publicise your message/ demands before or during the action?

WHAT: What is going to happen at your action and what will it look like? Ask:

- Is the action symbolic or disruptive? Public or secret?
- How does it begin, middle and end?
- Does the action communicate your message? How? (speakers (who?), song, dance, performance, participatory activities)
- How you will demonstrate your power?

WHERE: The place you decide to hold your action is key. Most actions are about space in some way – about taking over space, disrupting the usual flow of a space, being visible in a certain space, etc.

- How does your action site relate to target?
- Think about size, visibility, access, proximity to roads, security, sidewalks, public space nearby, transport, parking, tenants

WHEN: The timing of your action will dictate who can take part; who will see and hear you; the level of impact you can have. How can you maximise these things?

BUILDING YOUR ACTION: AKA getting people there. Think about who might join you on your action:

- Will you publicise your action to the public or people outside your group?
- How will you contact them? (Think about: fliers; postcards; webpages; emails; posters; ads)
- How will you convince them to come?
- How much time will you need to build your action? How much notice will people taking part (or who you hope will take part)
- Do you have a plan if it's a good turn out?
- How will you change the plan if you don't have enough people?

TIP

It's a good idea to send out a reminder (email, text, etc.) about your action the day before. You should also call key people and get them to confirm that they are coming and they know what the plan is/ what they are responsible for.



THE AFTERMATH: Do you have a recruitment, reminder, follow-up plan for after the action? This is important and often gets forgotten in all the excitement and activity of planning and preparing for an action.

Preparation

RESEARCH: Get some handy facts and figures on your action, to be used in news releases, leaflets and briefings.

LEAFLET/PAMPHLETS: You'll probably need to find or write one. Who are you aiming it at – you might write different text for a member of the public than you would for other sex workers, for example. Make sure you use your message!

ACTION SCHEDULE: Break it down, what needs to happen and when/ by who? Plan the detail from set up to clean-up.

PROPS AND BANNERS: What do you need? (puppets, costumes, masks, candles, etc) Where will you get them? How will you pay for them? Do you need to make them? How long will you need to make them?

ACTION SITE: Have you scouted the site? Do you need to make a floor plan? (Think about: elevators and stairs, bathrooms, access, your opponent's office. Can the site accommodate disabled members? Do you need to get permits (Do you want to get permits?)

SECURITY PLAN: Will you inform the Police of your action? Do you know what police plans and contingencies are? Think about how to protect participants? How will you deal with provocateurs?

THE LAW: Know your legal rights. There are many activist and civil liberty organisations who produce materials about rights for demonstrators; what to do if you're stopped and questioned/arrested, etc.

ACTIVIST BRIEFING: Ensure that people on the action know what it's about and have a good idea what to expect. You could arrange a speaker meeting the week before, send a briefing by email, or meet in the pub beforehand to talk or read through it.

- Is everyone in your group comfortable with the plan?
- Are people prepared for their roles?
- How will you communicate with each other during the action?
- How will you make decisions on the day?
- Do you need to allocate tasks to people
- Is there a possibility of arrests? Do you have a plan if people get arrested?

TIP

DECISION-MAKING – It's important that activists can agree upon a decision-making structure to use during the action.

For example how will you respond to Police requests to move on; what if your opponents try to negotiate with you? Will you use a spokes-council, will you have a Tactical Team in charge of making-decisions, will you hold a mass meeting?



TIP

Appoint an action co-ordinator who will act as a point of contact before, during and after the action, and who will make

sure it all happens. Nominate someone who will be responsible for each task. E.g. Do you need: set-up crew; drivers; people to bring and collect props; negotiator/s; media spokesperson; marshall/s; police liaisons?



MEDIA CHECKLIST

ONE WEEK TO GO:



- Send a press release including notice of any photo opportunity and highlighting your gimmick.
- Call the daybook a week ahead of time.
- Calls to reporters to pitch your story and give them background.
- Prepare a press pack (including briefing and background materials and contact details) for distribution on the day of the action.

ONE DAY TO GO:

- Send a press release.
- Call assignment editors the day before the action.
- Prepare spokespeople to talk with the media during the action.

TIP

Make sure there's a good photo opportunity, with the right visual image you can almost guarantee a photo in your local newspaper.



THINGS TO BRING ON THE DAY

Some ideas for things you might want to bring on the day:



- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Signs | <input type="checkbox"/> Costumes |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Banners | <input type="checkbox"/> Rights cards |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Flags | <input type="checkbox"/> Bust cards |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sound system | <input type="checkbox"/> Chant sheets |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Megaphone | <input type="checkbox"/> Cameras |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sign up sheets | <input type="checkbox"/> Food |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Clipboards | <input type="checkbox"/> Drinks |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pens | <input type="checkbox"/> Transport |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Noisemakers | <input type="checkbox"/> Set up crew |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Whistles | <input type="checkbox"/> Clean up crew |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Drums | <input type="checkbox"/> Press packs |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Puppets | <input type="checkbox"/> Placards |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Props | <input type="checkbox"/> Balloons |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Masks | <input type="checkbox"/> Kites |

Debriefing

Review the action afterwards, to learn from what went well and what could have been improved. Apply your learning to your next action! Do this as soon as possible, ideally on the same day.

- What happened to each person? How did people feel during the action? Was everyone supported by the group? How did the group interact?
- What was achieved? What could be improved?
- Does the group want to stay together for further actions?
- Do people need any continuing support, for example because they have a court case as a result of the action?

Tips for Organisers

The successes of campaigns and advocacy efforts depend a lot on the strength and commitment of the community behind it. As a 'team leader' or 'community organiser', an important part of your work is to assure that the group works together in both effective and democratic ways.

Keep in mind that for many people getting involved in the campaign, it might be the first time that they participate in a collective project. The lack of experience in organising and working collectively is balanced by the commitment to resist a policy that directly affect them, their family or their, for example sex workers organising against the implementation of the criminalisation of their clients.

Here are some tips for facilitating meetings and workshops, as well as information on group process and active listening.

Facilitating Meetings and Workshops

**“Tell me, and I will forget.
Show me, and I may remember.
Involve me, and I will understand.”**

CONFUCIUS 450 BC

There are many resources available online. For example you can check: <http://www.seedsforchange.org.uk/facilwsh.pdf> which includes free and downloadable resources on facilitation, minute taking or how to include new people and on which some of this resource is based.

Facilitation can transform a fastidious, 'one person dominated' meeting where no decisions are being taken into a collective, empowering experience which will move your campaigns and projects forward.

Here are some tips for you to facilitate meetings and workshops:

- Be sure that the role of facilitator is taken by different people, as well as the role the 'secretary' for minute taking. Accurate minute taking is an important process, and sharing minutes rapidly to all group members will ensure that actions take place swiftly.
- Help the group plan the meeting agenda. Think about timing and order of agenda items, and how to tackle each point.
- Keep the group to the agenda and decision-making process.
- Keep the meeting focussed on one item at a time.
- Help everyone to participate. Keep track of who wants to speak. Draw out quiet people and limit those who talk a lot.
- Challenge aggressive or discriminatory behaviour and put-downs.
- Introduce techniques such as ideastorming, go-rounds and working groups to make the meeting more efficient and participatory.
- Test for agreement and get clear decisions made.
- Ensure that action points and decisions are recorded.
- Keep the meeting to time.
- Help the group deal with conflict.
- Listen for underlying issues, concerns or emotions. Help bring them out so they can be dealt with.

Group Process/Group Dynamic

The dynamic of your group will have a strong impact on the development of your campaign, advocacy and project. A powerful group should involve all its members, be structured and efficient whilst allowing creativity and spontaneity. Members should feel that their contributions are appreciated by the rest of the groups and that they are making a difference.

It is easy to observe your group, take notes of group dynamics, and then collectively challenge some of these dynamics for a more successful group. Be careful, that 'processing' doesn't overtake the initial objectives of your group!

[taken from website:
<http://getinvolved.rutgers.edu/documents/organizations/ScarletSourceGroupDynamics.pdf>]

Observation

One of the easiest aspects of group process to observe is the pattern of communication:

- Who talks? For how long? How often?
- At whom do people look when they speak?
- Who talks after whom? Who interrupts whom?
- What style of communication is used (assertions, questions, tone of voice, gestures, etc.)?
- Who sits where? Do the same people always sit in the same place?

The kinds of observations we make give us clues to other important things which may be going on in the group (e.g., such as who leads whom or who influences whom).

Participation

One indication of involvement is verbal participation. Look for differences in the amount of participation among members.

- Who are the high participants? Who are the low participants?
- Do you see any shift in participation (e.g., highs become quiet; lows suddenly become talkative)? What are possible reasons for this in the group's interaction?
- How are the silent people treated? How is their silence interpreted? Consent? Disagreement? Disinterest? Fear? Etc.?
- Who talks to whom? Do you see any reason for this in the group's interactions?
- Who keeps the ball rolling? Why? Do you see any reason for this in the group's interactions?

Decision Making

Many kinds of decisions are made in groups without considering the effects that these decisions will have on other members. Some people try to impose their own decisions on the group, while others want all members to participate or share in the decision making process.

- Does anyone make a decision and carry it out without checking with other group members (self-authorized)? For example, one person decides on the topic to be discussed and immediately begins to talk about it. What effect does this have on other group members?
- Does the group drift from topic to topic? Who topic-jumps? Do you see any reason for this in the group's interactions?

- Who supports other members' suggestions or decisions? Does this support result in the two members deciding the topic or activity for the group? How does this affect the other group members?
- Is there any evidence of a majority pushing a decision through over other member's objections? Do they call for a vote (majority support)?
- Is there any attempt to get all members participating in a decision (consensus)? What effect does this seem to have on the group?
- Does anyone make any contributions which do not receive any kind of response or recognition? What effect does this have on the member?

Active Listening

Active listening is a crucial facilitation skill that all organisers should develop. It involves pro-actively listening for what your community member is trying to communicate, without projecting our own thoughts and expectations on them. When facilitating a workshop, meeting or discussion, active listening is needed to figure out what the participants know and what they want to learn.

As sex workers, it is important to pro-actively listen to each other so that we can learn about our different working conditions, issues linked to other forms of social stigma such as racism or transphobia. Experiencing similar stigma does not negate our other forms of oppression.