2008 - A Year in Review...

Communication is key to creating positive change for sex workers. Since establishing the ICRSE network we know our ability to make an impact more effectively is because of our ability to communicate and collaborate better, faster and to a broader audience.

In 2008 ICRSE Network members shared news of the rights advocacy work they were involved in locally, regionally and globally. Sex worker voices are no longer totally absent from debates that affect them. We are talking on email listserves, blogs, in social network spaces and on websites and internet forums and what we are saying is being heard by those who only a few years ago would not have found us so easily. We are increasingly occupying those spaces that we have long been excluded from and now there is less “talking about us, without us.”

This past year the ICRSE network successfully lobbied European Parliament Members in opposing a proposal that would have negatively impacted on our rights and freedoms. We also collaborated with our colleagues across the globe to oppose the violent state repression sex workers in Cambodia and we continued our efforts to increase participation in international conferences and policy meetings. 2008 was also the most successful year for 17 December "Day to End Violence Against Sex Workers". You will read more about our efforts in this newsletter.

The ICRSE Network community is growing! In the past year two new sex worker groups joined our network and we hope that this trend continues. With the increasing focus on criminalising clients it will be more important than ever for sex workers to speak out and get involved. Sex workers are the experts! We know that violence is a big issue, that workers' rights are a long way off and that many of us are denied even the most basic human. We also know what good working conditions look like, what respect feels like and what we need from society to stay healthy and strong in our lives and relationships. All reasons why in 2009 we will keep on doing what we do best, make change happen, and we will do this as strong, creative, sexy and smart sex worker rights advocates!
ICRSE supports sex work advocacy campaigns!

In 2008 the ICRSE listserv and website was buzzing with action. Member organisations, allies, and our global colleagues took on a number of campaigns to promote the rights of sex workers and to challenge the repression they are facing. Here are a few highlights.

March 8, member organisation LEFÖ (Austria) launched the second annual "SexarbeiterInnen haben Lust... auf ihre Rechte!" ["Sex Workers Lust For... Their Rights!"] A pre-event action took advantage of a TAMPEP network meeting in Vienna involving more than 60 representatives from sex work projects working with migrants, sex workers and other experts from around Europe, many of whom are also ICRSE members.

With red umbrellas in hand the group braved the wind and cold to rally outside the Austrian Parliament in Vienna on Saturday 1 March, 2008.

“Sex Workers Lust For... Their Rights!” is a three month campaign promoting the rights of sex workers in Austria. Regular updates made their way to the front page of sexwerkeurope.org. Petra Timmermans, coordinator of the ICRSE, was also able to attend the closing celebrations and we reported regularly as this campaign progressed.

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Austria:
Around the celebration of March 3rd, International Day of Sex Workers and International Women's Day on

The resources selected by the ICRSE represent only a small part of the rights work being done and include materials that focus on sex worker empowerment and on combating violence. All of the ICRSE resources materials are translated into French and they available for download from the website. The

Special Projects

Resources for Sex Workers Health & Rights (website and CD-rom)

In December 2008 the ICRSE launched a new resource website along with our partner organisation TAMPEP International. This is a project made possible through the generous support by a grant from Foundation Open Society Institute and it began already in early 2007. The project involved the collection, translation and presentation of actions and tools developed across Europe which have been used in sex workers' rights advocacy campaigns.
resources gathered by TAMPEP are translated into Russian. You can also order a CD-rom version to use as inspiration in your advocacy work by emailing the ICRSE or TAMPEP.

This project is now completed but there is potential to expand on the available resources.

**SWAN and ICRSE in Belgrade, Serbia**

Since 2005 the ICRSE has played a support role to the Sex Work Advocacy Network (SWAN) of Central Europe and Central Asia. In 2008 our cooperation continued and included holding a workshop with sex workers in Belgrade, Serbia. Participants were from both Macedonia and Serbia and included 3 male sex workers.

At the workshop, Petra Timmermans presented visual materials to the group showing the inspirational ideas other sex workers around the world were using to promote their issues. The group talked about this with great interest and excitement. There was concern about how to get political without putting people in danger so we talked about ways this can be done through, art, humour and performance.

Part of the workshop focused on a discussion about what kind of small first actions might be possible and we looked at how the development of a newsletter might be a way to communicate easily with other sex workers in their communities. At the end of this day we spent some time developing collages for a newsletter. Everyone was pretty enthusiastic about this.

As a result of this workshop and with the support of SWAN and HOPS Macedonia, STAR, a sex worker group from Macedonia, published a first a newsletter "From us to us" and have since published a second and third issue (one a 17 December 2008 special)! STAR also created an exhibition and a song "Sex Workers Army" for this day!

The ICRSE had the opportunity to support the EU-Greens by commenting on the extensive list of amendments being tabled by their FEMM committee member. A collaborative statement of protest, signed by The ICRSE, TAMPEP International, Correlation and SWAN was issued and sent to all FEMM committee members. Member organisations in Denmark, Germany and Italy also issued statements to their national MEPS and individual members sent messages of protest from as far away as the USA.

Member organisations in Germany, sexworker.at, Dona Carmen and Madonna also initiated an online petition protesting this report and networks meant that information quickly reached our colleagues around the globe.

**ICRSE Supports Political Action!**

In May of 2008 the ICRSE was alerted by the EU-Green Party to a draft document that was being discuss at the European Parliament by the FEMM) Committee on Women’s Rights and Gender Equality; it had been submitted for discussion by Swedish member Maria Carlsjame. The report, originally submitted in March of 2008 and entitled "On prostitution and its health consequences on women in Member States", was seen to be highly discriminatory and damaging to sex workers rights.

Through our website and listserve we were immediately able to notify our network of this development. Our links to the NSWP, IUSW and APNSW
achieved more than 600 signatures and comments between 20 May and 25 August 2008.

Updates about the proceedings and outcomes were communicated through our network listserv and website and our collaboration efforts paid off. On 6 November we learned that the report was defeated by 26 votes to 3 with 2 abstentions! We also learned that "The arguments that were submitted by sex worker and other organisations were very helpful and enabled FEMM committee members to make an informed decision."

Plenty to protest about in 2008 and we were there to lend a hand!

Sex workers and allies in the United Kingdom initiated a series of petitions and actions protesting government plans to clamp down on various forms of sex work and criminalising some clients.

In Germany 60 individuals and organisations, sex workers and allies issued the "St. Pauli Protocol on sex work and Migration" and demand the recognition and the implementation of the Human, Labour and Migration Rights of Sex Workers as formulated in the Brussels Declaration of 2005.

In June we rallied ICRSE member organisations to sign onto the "Now More Than Ever" declaration initiated by the OSI’s Law and Health Initiative (LAHI) in time for presentation at the World AIDS Conference, Mexico 2008.

The exciting news of sex worker and ally activism around the US elections and Proposition K was shared through our network and website.

In October, at the request of the Coalition for Sexworkers and Sexual Minorities (a coming together of social movements and human rights groups in Bengaluru to resist police violence and to defend sexual minority human rights) we collaborated with international colleagues in a letter/fax campaign demanding the end of police violence toward the Hijra community and activists.

In November the International community, including the ICRSE Network, protested the human rights abuses against sex workers in Macedonia. Along with sending letters to officials in Macedonia we also endorsed the Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network letter of protest along with 35 other international organisations.

A message from APNSW alerted us in December to an action to Support Female Condoms at U.S. FDA Review. Along with our international colleagues we promoted this call to action and endorsed the letter.

On the occasion of 17 December the ICRSE endorsed the Sex Workers Outreach Project USA letter to President-Elect Obama.
Cambodia:

The extreme measures of closing down hundreds of brothels in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, violently attacking sex workers and forcing them into detention centres caused an uproar among sex worker and ally organisations internationally. The ICRSE was there and our ability to support the actions of sex worker resistance in Cambodia included informing our members about the events, letting them know how they could contribute to protest actions and informing the wider public about the human rights abuses faced by sex workers in Cambodia.

In collaboration with our international colleagues we were able to make an impact and this led to the closure of two of the detention centres and the call for government investigations into police actions.

In December of 2008 the ICRSE uploaded the messages of sex workers to MTV in support of their protest of the MTV Exit anti-trafficking concerts. The successful protest led to a meeting between MTV, the Asia Pacific Network Of Sex Workers and the Women's Network of Unity. "MTV Exit agreed to consult with sex worker organisations in future when they are going into a country to do their campaign and also to work with them to ensure TV broadcasts don’t contain messages that can make the situation on the ground worse for sex workers."

Sex workers in Cambodia still struggle to improve their situation and they do it with the support of a global network of sex work activists.

Focus Italy - 17 December 2008:

17 December is marked as the Day to End Violence Against Sex Workers. ICRSE members engage in many different activities on this day along with sex worker and ally groups around the world. [link to round-up]

When we learned about the level of police violence toward mostly migrant and transgender sex workers in Italy as a result of recent prohibition on sex work on the street and in public places the ICRSE Advisory Group choose to highlight Italy for the 2008 17 December and to provide as much support as possible to the organisations resisting discrimination and violence in Italy.

The ICRSE used the sexworkeurope.org website and listserv as a platform to alert our network and the broader public about what was happening in Italy and what sex worker organisations and allies were doing in response. 2008 was the first year that the ICRSE has created a 'focus' campaign for 17 December.

People Care - 17 December 2009:

In 2009 we plan to collaborate with network members around the theme "People Care" to raise awareness about relationships and the people

17 December, 2008 - History
The ICRSE sharing news

One of the main coordination tasks of the ICRSE is making sure that our members get information that is being sent from sources within and outside of our network. We do this through our network listserve and our website. Some of our members are on many different lists but not all. We try not to overlap the information going out on the ICRSE Network list if we can but some news is important to receive several times. We also encourage emails to be short and simple to help with translation and we encourage contributors to use links to information and documents whenever possible to help those with slower internet connections. These are a few of the types of communications that go out to the ICRSE and other networks.

Announcements of newsletter publications of the SWAN Network newsletter, the

SHARP Sexual Health and Rights Note and the La Strada International newsletter are shared with ICRSE Network members.

Direct appeals for support, questions or concerns raised on the NSWP, IUSW or SWAN list serves are also sent to our members.

We also love sharing positive news of the achievements of sex workers anywhere, whether that is the launch of a new book, a blog, video releases or other cultural projects.

Finally there is nothing more exciting than sharing the news of new sex worker groups starting up and in 2008 we shared news of the birth of STAR in Macedonia, SiO in Denmark, and POWER in Canada!

Promotion of International events

The ICRSE likes getting together and we like sharing that news with the world. In 2008 ICRSE Network members participated in the IHRA conference in Barcelona; we were at Pute Pride in Paris and many of our members were in Mexico for the 2008 World Aids Conference. Several organisations also celebrated either the 3rd March and/or the June 2nd Sex Workers Rights Day. One ICRSE member group from Denmark (SiO) bravely demonstrated at the European

Advisory Group News

In October of 2008 the Advisory Group of the ICRSE (AG) met in Amsterdam for an organisation review and strategy planning meeting. Attending the meeting was Ruth Morgan Thomas (Chair), Licia Brussa, Gulnara Kurmanova, Thierry Schaffauser, Marianne Jonker (Treasurer), Marjan Wijers and Petra Timmermans (Coordinator).

At that meeting the AG identified 5 main aims for the coming years: to oppose the criminalisation of clients as a means of reducing demand for sexual services or as an effective anti-trafficking measure and challenging the conflation of trafficking and sex work; to raise awareness about the violence experienced by sex workers; to promote the recognition of sex work as a means of generating income; to promote a positive and realistic image of sex work and sex workers and our right to self-determination; and to raise awareness about inequality in accessing services and the impact on health and rights of sex workers.
From these aims the AG identified two priorities or focus areas over the next two years - opposing the criminalising of clients and the conflation of trafficking and sex work and building on our anti-violence campaigns around 17 December, International Day to End Violence Against Sex Workers, in solidarity with our colleagues from global networks.

There was also discussion around the need for network building in order to achieve our priorities. The AG wants to enable effective communication within our network and between networks and to strengthen our membership. This will be a major focus of the coordinators role over the next year.

We are pleased to let our members know that the ICRSE has been awarded two grants from the Open Society Institute for the 2009 period. The first, ($30,000), is a core operating funds grant which will cover the coordinators salary, general overheads, and to enable the AG to meet in 2009. The second, ($20,000), is a grant to improve our website and use of internet communication technologies (ICTs). These funds will help pay for technical support, developing online 'how-to' support for network members to increase their capabilities and confidence to use the interactive components of the sexworkeurope.org website and one training meeting for a small number of volunteers to enable them to act as local resource and support people.

The members of the AG look back on the achievements of the ICRSE Network in 2008 with pride and anticipate a busy and successful 2009.

**SEXWORKEUROPE.ORG WEBSITE**

sexworkeurope.org wants to hear from you! Write an article about what you or your organisation are doing in your advocacy work with sex workers. Share your achievements for sex workers rights with the ICRSE Network. Submitted articles may be in languages other than English (if possible with a short English summary) but should be short and simple. Include links to information where possible.

Send in your images! A Red Umbrella event, a workshop or even artwork; we would love to include more images of sex worker activism in action on our website. Images can be sent to us as .jpg, .bmp or .png files and should be saved at 72 dots per inch (dpi) and around 600x400 pixels.

**Tech Tip!**
Most image programs allow you to resize your pictures but resizing a few images is easy to do online through the websites such as http://webresizer.com/ (EN, ES, FR) or http://pixenate.com/ (EN, ES). Just upload the image from your computer, change the size and then save it again to your computer. It is super simple! Pixenate also allows you to make other simple changes to your pictures.
Still Available for Purchase!


"Sex Workers Rights" (incl. shipping)
Within Europe: 15 EUR
Outside Europe: 20 EUR

"Ni Coupables, Ni Victimes" DVD
Everywhere 10 EUR

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The ICRSE is a registered foundation in the Netherlands (2004).