

HIV/AIDS and Prostitution: The Top 25 Resources

It is essential for anyone who works with or studies prostitution in the context of HIV/AIDS, sexually transmitted diseases, drug use, and other health issues, to consider the legal framework within which sex work takes place, and the ethical and human rights issues raised by prostitution and sex-work conditions. This info sheet lists essential resources that provide crucial information and/or recommendations on these issues. The resources were selected by Maria Nengeh Mensah from the Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network and a peer review committee of four experts:

Dan Allman from the HIV Social, Behavioural and Epidemiological Studies Unit at the University of Toronto, Claire Thiboutot from Stella, a Montréal-based prostitutes' rights organization, Sue Metzenrath from the Scarlet Alliance, Australia, and Priscilla Alexander from the North American Task Force on Prostitution, US.

Selected Publications

Achilles R. *The Regulation of Prostitution: Background Paper*. Ottawa: Canadian Public Health Association, 1995. Explores the consequences of different models designed to control prostitution (prostitution-related activities as criminal offences; legalization and formal government regulation; decriminalization and the application of health, tax, or business code standards; combination of regulatory strategies). It is widely consulted by municipal, provincial, and federal policymakers, and includes international examples of regulation.

Aggleton P. *Men Who Sell Sex*. London, UK: Institute of Education, University of London, 1999. Comprehensive account of the reasons men sell sex, the meanings involved, and implications for HIV prevention. Male prostitution is discussed in chapters from England, the Netherlands, France, Canada, United States, Mexico, Dominican Republic, Costa Rica, Brazil, Peru, India, and Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Philippines, and Morocco. Allows for a comparison of international perspectives on male prostitution and AIDS.

Alexander P. Sex work and health: a question of safety in the workplace. *Journal of the American Medical Women's Association* 1998; 53(2): 77-82. This is the first published paper in a medical journal that lays out a baseline for what the occupational safety and health hazards are, not simply sexual and reproductive health issues, and how working conditions affect sex workers' health. Occupational hazards of sex work discussed include repetitive injuries, respiratory infections, dependence on alcohol and other drugs, emotional stress – particularly in relation to managing stigma – and STDs.

Allman D. *M is for Mutual A is for Acts: Male Sex Work and AIDS in Canada*. Health Canada; AIDS Vancouver; the HIV Social, Behavioural and Epidemiological Studies Unit, Faculty of Medicine, University of Toronto; and the Sex Workers Alliance of Vancouver, 1999. This is the first comprehensive review of 25 years of Canadian research on male prostitutes, their clients, street youth, and injection drug users. The literature review is very accessible and combines research with advocacy. Allman uncovers data that challenge misconceptions about male prostitutes and the spread of AIDS, and provides an account of the diverse experiences included in male sex

HIV/AIDS AND PROSTITUTION: THE TOP 25 RESOURCES

work (ie, those of escorts, masseurs, bisexuals, Aboriginal people, and prisoners). Available online (www.mutualacts.com).

Bastow K. Prostitution and HIV/AIDS. *Canadian HIV/AIDS Policy & Law Newsletter* 1996; 2(2): 13-15. Bastow argues that legal, moral, and social censure of prostitutes has increased dramatically since the advent of HIV/AIDS. Focusing on legal and political initiatives, in Canada and the United States, to make prostitution laws tougher, she discusses measures such as imprisonment, mandatory testing, and municipal by-laws (eg, public nuisance regulations) and how these impact on the spread of HIV among prostitutes. According to the author, “the only rational solution is to decriminalize prostitution and provide prostitutes with the same rights and protections with respect to their working conditions as people in other occupations have.” This article provides an excellent overview for policy makers. Available online (www.aidslaw.ca).

Bindman J. *Redefining Prostitution and Sex Work on the International Agenda*. Anti-Slavery International and The Network of Sex Work Projects, 1997. Identifies prostitution as a “human rights violation akin to slavery” in that “the lack of international and local protection renders sex workers vulnerable to exploitation in the workplace, and to harassment or violence at the hands of employers, law enforcement officials, clients, and the public.” The report includes a substantial bibliography and a Survey of Relevant Human Rights and Labour Standards. Available online (www.walnet.org/csis/papers/redefining.html).

Brock D. *Making Work, Making Trouble: Prostitution As a Social Problem*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998. A detailed account of the sexual marketplace in Canada, this book considers not only the actions of the courts and law enforcement, but also economic shifts, the role of media reporting, and the construction of Canada’s often invisible social classes. Occupational safety and feminist theory are discussed throughout.

Brock D. Prostitutes are scapegoats in the AIDS panic. *RFR/DFR* 1989; 18(2): 13-16. One of the earliest Canadian texts to consider legal and ethical issues in regard to HIV and sex work. According to Brock, “[n]ow, as historically, public health initiatives and media accounts emphasize the role of prostitutes as infectors rather than infectees to such

an extent that this view is widely accepted as ‘common sense.’ The ‘public’ appears not to be concerned about whether prostitutes themselves die, but whether they transmit the virus to their male customers, who then pass it on to ‘innocent’ women and children.” The author stresses that by blaming prostitutes for the transmission of AIDS among the heterosexual population, “we forget that they are working women and men who attempt to maintain as much control over their working conditions, including hygiene, as possible.”

Davis S; Shaffer M. Prostitution in Canada. *The Invisible Menace or the Menace of Invisibility?* 1994. Most thorough and well-written essay on decriminalizing prostitution. It outlines why making prostitution a crime has not and will never protect prostitutes from harm, or protect the public from the “effects” of prostitution. It examines the theories behind the main legislative approaches to prostitution in Canada (criminalization, abolition, and regulation) and compares these with the regulatory approach in Australia. Focuses on what alternative reforms are available, which of these would be most effective, and how they might best be implemented. Available online (www.walnet.org/csis/papers/).

de Bruyn T. *HIV/AIDS and Discrimination: A Discussion Paper*. Montréal: Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network & Canadian AIDS Society, 1998. Provides the context within which to understand and compare the HIV/AIDS-related discrimination of prostitutes and other sex workers. It is a policy document that conceptualizes sex workers as people as opposed to victims, and positions prostitution on the continuum of HIV/AIDS discrimination. Available online (www.aidslaw.ca).

Delacose F; Alexander P. *Sex Work: Writings by Women in the Sex Industry*. San Francisco: Cleis Press, 1998. The second edition of the classic that contributed to a major shift in the discourse about sex work, including the use of the term “sex work” itself. This edition includes new introductory material by the editors, reviewing some of the changes in sex work and the sex workers’ rights movement since the book was first published, and a rewriting and combining of Alexander’s papers on prostitution and feminism, and prostitution and HIV/AIDS, an expanded bibliography, and an updated, international list of sex workers’ rights organizations, with internet addresses.

HIV/AIDS AND PROSTITUTION: THE TOP 25 RESOURCES

Ennew J; Gopal K, Heeran J, Montgomery H. *Children and Prostitution: How Can We Measure and Monitor the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children?*. New York: UNICEF Headquarters; Children in Especially Difficult Circumstances Section, Centre for Family Research, University of Cambridge; and Childwatch International, 1996. Second edition of an extensive literature review and annotated bibliography, with additional material prepared for the Congress Against the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in Stockholm, 26-31 August 1996. Useful resource for abolitionists and for developing arguments against sexual exploitation. Available online (<http://childhouse.uio.no/childwatch/cwi/projects/indicators/prostitution>).

Kempadoo K, Doezema J. *Global Sex Workers: Rights, Resistance, and Redefinition*. New York: Routledge, 1998. Challenges conventional ideas about "trafficking in women." The authors question efforts to distinguish forced from voluntary prostitution, because it is used to grant human rights to victims of force and denies human rights to sex workers who say they were not forced. Part Two focuses on Migration and Tourism, Part Three on Sex Workers' Organizations, and Part Four on AIDS Prevention and Sex Workers' Empowerment. Excellent and up to date.

Metzenrath S. To test or not to test. *Social Alternatives* 1999; 18(3): 25-30. Excellent and easily accessible overview of the history of mandatory testing of prostitutes in England and Australia, beginning with the enactment of the Contagious Diseases Acts. Since the question of requiring sex workers to obtain licences and/or to be tested regularly for STDs continues to come up, this recent article is very useful.

Nelson NA. Prostitution and genito-infectious disease control. *Canadian Journal of Public Health* 1943; 34(6): 251-260. A historical piece that advocates anti-promiscuity laws is an essential read because it is explicit about its belief that variations in sexual conduct are a function of differing moral codes. Concludes against forced or mandatory health examinations.

Out From the Shadows: International Summit of Sexually Exploited Youth. *Declaration and Agenda for Action of Sexually Exploited Children and Youth*. Victoria, Canada: The Summit, 1998. On 12 March 1998, 55 child and youth delegates presented this

declaration and agenda for action to representatives from participating governments and international NGOs. This is perhaps the most heartfelt of sources. Available online (<http://sen.parl.gc.ca/lpearson/action-e.htm>).

Overs C; Longo P. *Making Sex Work Safe*. London, UK: Network of Sex Work Projects, Russell Press Ltd, 1997. Outlines principles for designing sex work-related HIV/AIDS prevention projects, with an emphasis on working conditions and the legal context. This handbook is a collaborative effort between the Network of Sex Work Projects and AHRTAG. Available online (www.walnet.org/csis/groups/nswp).

Peterson G. *A Vindication of the Rights of Whores*. Seattle: The Seal Press, 1989. Based on 15 years of activism, this anthology brings together the voices of prostitutes from around the world. Articles provide valuable information and perspectives on sex work, including the demand for full recognition of women's human rights. Although now quite dated, this is an important resource to better understand how human rights are violated in the context of prostitution, why there is a need for decriminalization, and what is at stake with legalization. The World Charter for Prostitutes' Rights, developed in 1985, and the preface by Margo St. James, a long-time activist, are two useful introductions to the complex topics covered. It is sex workers' voices, and it includes at least one Canadian piece.

Prostitutes Collective of Victoria. *Sex Industry and the AIDS Debate '88*. Victoria, Australia: The Collective, 1988. Report and conference papers from the First National Sex Industry Conference in Melbourne recommend that the sex industry "be regulated like any other commercial activity." A milestone document.

Research for Sex Work is a newsletter that functions as a clearinghouse of information on sex work research projects, past and present, and provides a space for the exchange of projects, techniques, ideas, and events. Hardcopies available from p.brinckman.social@med.vu.nl.

Shaver F. Prostitution: a critical approach to three policy approaches. *Canadian Public Policy* 1985; 11(3): 493-503. This early article on prostitution in Canada clearly defines and compares policy approaches and critically foreshadows many of the issues that have become subjects of national debate.

Selected Websites

<http://users.uniserve.com/~lowman/welcome.htm>

John Lowman, at Simon Fraser University, is a criminologist engaged in ongoing prostitution research in Canada. He maintains this extensive resource on the internet, containing a regularly updated bibliography, some of his group's prostitution research, questionnaires, and other useful information. This is definitely the first stop to start researching prostitution in Canada.

<http://www.bayswan.org>

This site offers links to just about every sex workers' rights organization that has a website. These change from time to time, as new ones are created. An amazing hub of international sites.

<http://www.walnet.org>

The Walnut Institute website houses the Commercial Sex Information Service, The Sex Workers Alliance of Vancouver, The Network of Sex Work Projects, Montreal-based Stella, and numerous others. It has been online since 1985 and has served over 3,000,000 pages. Content driven, it receives no public funding but can deliver the goods on legal and ethical issues raised by prostitution in the context of HIV/AIDS.

For More Resources...

Top essential resources should be used in conjunction with our *Legal and Ethical Issues Raised by HIV/AIDS in the Context of Prostitution: Literature Review* and *Legal and Ethical Issues Raised by HIV/AIDS in the Context of Prostitution: Annotated Bibliography*. **Montréal: Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network, 2000.** Available online (www.aidslaw.ca).

This info sheet and the accompanying documents are available on the Network website at www.aidslaw.ca or through the Canadian HIV/AIDS Clearinghouse (tel: 1-877-999-7740, email: aids/sida@cpha.ca). Reproduction of the info sheet is encouraged, but copies may not be sold, and the Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network must be cited as the source of this information. For further information, contact the Network (tel: 514 397-6828; email: info@aidslaw.ca). **Ce feuillet d'information est également disponible en français.**

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