

Sex Work Association of Jamaica (SWAJ): Promoting sexual health and human rights

Overview

The Sex Work Association of Jamaica (SWAJ) received three CVC/COIN Mini-Grants of US\$20,000 each in 2012, 2013 and 2014. In 2014, SWAJ also received a Robert Carr Network Fund Grant (RCNF) of US\$8,000 to reach 180 male sex workers with peer education in HIV and AIDS and human rights.

With its three CVC/COIN grants, SWAJ established and strengthened its organizational structures and procedures, built its registered membership from 0 to 600 and became well known as the go-to organization representing and serving sex workers in Jamaica. In addition, it made significant contributions to building the capacity of the Caribbean Sex Worker Collective and strengthening the international sex worker movement, in part by facilitating and otherwise contributing to training. Along the way, SWAJ developed methods and tools for: 1) improving dialogue between sex workers and police; 2) educating other authorities and the media about sex workers, their rights and the harassment, bullying, violence and exclusion they often experience; 3) empowering sex workers with knowledge about their human rights and with skills to defend themselves against violations of their rights; 4) empowering sex workers with life skills training; 5) helping sex workers transition into less risky work with better prospects for secure and rewarding employment.

The three CVC/COIN grants and the RCNF grant have all helped SWAJ strengthen the peer education it delivers to sex workers under the Jamaican AIDS Support for Life (JASL) umbrella and to reach ever more sex workers with information, supplies, counselling, testing and referrals. These aim to prevent HIV and AIDS among sex workers and their clients and to otherwise protect and improve sex workers' health and well-being. To support all of its work, SWAJ has also made important contributions to research that greatly enriches knowledge about Jamaican sex workers and the realities they face in their daily lives.

History of SWAJ

Founded in 1991, Jamaica AIDS Support for Life (JASL) is the oldest and largest Jamaican civil society organization dedicated to responding to HIV and AIDS and creating an enabling human rights environment. Starting with a few untrained volunteers, it gradually built up a team of well-trained peer educators. These included sex workers who reached out to their peers on the streets and in the bars and clubs of Jamaica's most popular tourism and entertainment centres: Kingston, Montego Bay and Ocho Rios.

Among JASL's peer educators were Princess Brown, a female sex worker, and Marlon Taylor, a male sex worker. In 2008, they were instrumental in founding the Sex Work Association of Jamaica (SWAJ) as an informal group under the umbrella of JASL. Princess became the first President, Marlon became the first Secretary and the two of them spearheaded efforts (still ongoing) to get SWAJ established as an independent, legally recognized not-for-profit organization.

SWAJ had few resources of its own until 2011 when the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) gave it a grant of US\$68,355. JASL administered the grant while UNFPA provided technical support and guidance. The ultimate goal was to roll out effective sexual and reproductive health

services to one thousand sex workers in the four parishes that constituted SWAJ's three chapters: Kingston and St. Andrew (i.e., Kingston's city centre and its most populous suburb), St. Ann (including Ocho Rios) and St. James (including Montego Bay). This was achieved within nine months, from April through December 2011.

To achieve its ultimate goal under its UNFPA grant, SWAJ also achieved:

- Recruitment and training of a Project Assistant, three Sex Worker Coordinators (one per chapter) and nine Peer Educators (three per chapter)
- A situation analysis providing basic information to which SWAJ has since added new information to provide an ever more comprehensive understanding of Jamaican sex workers and their many health, human rights and other challenges
- Design and delivery of a package of services covering prevention, counselling, testing and treatment for HIV and AIDS and other STIs
- Design and set-up of a monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system
- Recruitment and training of additional sex workers to deliver the package of services and do monitoring and evaluation. Ten were trained in voluntary counselling and testing (VCT), 24 in the use of Ora Quick rapid HIV testing kits, 24 in programme design and implementation, 24 in monitoring and evaluation, and 15 in peer education.
- Basic training in sexual and reproductive health, human rights, gender equality, prevention of violence, countering stigma and discrimination, and advocacy
- Establishment of a database of sex workers, sex work venues and contacts in all three chapters.

In 2012, SWAJ used its first CVC/COIN Mini-Grant in part to carry on with that work and get itself established as a well-functioning organization with good potential to become independent from JASL. It developed formal procedures for recognizing and registering qualified individuals as members and by the end of that year 135 sex workers (116 women and 19 men) had filled out membership forms stating their names, addresses and numbers of children and identifying their next of kin for contact in case of emergency. Of the Members, 35 (including 13 males) were in Kingston and St. Andrew, 60 (including 2 males) were in St. James and 40 (including 4 males) were in St. Ann.

It developed a Governance and Procedures Manual and, at its 2012 Annual General Meeting, it elected an Executive Committee consisting of a President (Marlon Taylor), Vice President (Princess Brown), Secretary, Assistant Secretary, Treasurer, Assistant Treasurer, and Public Relations Officer. All but two were active or former sex workers. The two exceptions were the Secretary and Treasurer, who were recruited for nomination and election because of their expertise in procedural, legal and accounting matters and fund-raising.

Also during 2012, SWAJ formed a technical working group with nine members including representatives of the Ministry of Health, UNFPA, CVC, JASL, C-Change and other partner organizations. Upon its recommendation, the Executive Committee developed a vision, mission statement and work plan for 2013. The work plan called for: advocacy within and outside the sex worker community; co-hosting (with the Caribbean Sex Worker Collective) of a Caribbean regional conference of sex workers; additional training of sex workers in human rights and advocacy; and three rallies for sex workers' rights. It also called for strengthening the association's M&E system

and supporting the system with more training, all with the assistance of the Caribbean Health Research Council.

Since 2012, SWAJ has used its second and third CVC/COIN grants in part to continue building its membership and strengthen its staff, volunteers and organizational systems as well as supporting the new initiatives discussed in the following pages. In late 2014, SWAJ hired Patrick Lalor as its first Programme Development Officer and Patrick was Project Coordinator of its third CVC/COIN-funded project. Patrick has a Bachelor of Science degree in Business Administration and many years of experience teaching and working with marginalized groups, including men who have sex with men (MSM) and prisoners. He has been trained as a Peer Educator by JASL; has provided Children First with training on HIV and AIDS interventions; has served as Project Coordinator for a CVC/COIN-funded Stand Up for Jamaica (SUFJ) project delivering HIV-related education to MSM isolated from other prisoners in cell blocks at Jamaica's two maximum security prisoners for men. Patrick is currently studying Law with the intention of helping marginalized Jamaicans realize their human rights and fight against violations of those rights.

As of November 2015, SWAJ had increased its membership to 600 and had paid particular attention to ensuring that 20 percent of its members were male, since its research has found that roughly 20 percent of all Jamaican sex workers are male. Seventy-six (76) people, including 71 sex workers, showed up at SWAJ's Annual General Meeting in May 2015, far surpassing the maximum of 20 who had showed up at previous Annual General Meetings.

Also as of November 2015, SWAJ President Marlon Taylor felt confident that their application for legal recognition as a not-for-profit society will soon be approved. In anticipation, SWAJ is preparing a proposal for submission to potential funders that will seek financing for a full-time Executive Director, Programme Development Officer and Administrator plus a part-time Accountant, M&E Officer and Field Officers.

SWAJ contributions to knowledge about Jamaican sex workers

Oral testimonies

In 2010, SWAJ worked with Eve for Life and PANOS Caribbean to produce "Oral Testimonies of Jamaican Sex Workers", a book of stories told in their own words by 14 female sex workers and one male sex worker. In 2011, PANOS released a video promoting the book and showing sex workers soliciting clients on Kingston's dark streets while speaking of their experiences. This video can be viewed at www.youtube.com/watch?v=sTfmA1cSvdI.

The sex workers' stories speak of poverty and verbal, physical and sexual abuse at home that drives adolescents into the streets. As sex workers they suffer further abuse by the police, their clients, their regular partners and members of the general public. They often experience unplanned pregnancy and acquire STIs and HIV. The stories also explain why sex workers tolerate the abuse and related risks: because they have next to no formal education, next to no other options for employment and often have children in need of food, shelter, clothing, and education.

National HIV/STI Programme survey

In 2012, Jamaica's National HIV/STI Programme published estimates, based on epidemic modelling, that 1.7 percent of the country's adult population was infected with HIV in 2011 but half of those did not know their HIV-status. It also published estimates, based on surveys among vulnerable groups, that HIV prevalence was 32.8 percent among MSM, 4.1 percent among sex workers and 12 percent among homeless people (who are often drug users). These surveys used

the snowballing method and, in the case of sex workers, that meant using SWAJ's peer educators (working under the JASL umbrella) to find sex workers willing to participate and help find other sex workers willing to participate.

The surveys among all three vulnerable groups found consistently high levels of risky behaviour that included having first sex at a very young age, having many sex partners and engaging in transactional sex. In the case of sex workers, commercial sex was an add-on. In all three groups contributing factors to HIV infection included poverty, illiteracy, gender inequality and social exclusion, all of which reduced access to preventive information, supplies and services.¹

CVC/COIN Vulnerabilised Groups Project survey

Also in 2012, the CVC/COIN Vulnerabilised Groups Project published the results of quantitative and qualitative studies that included a survey of Jamaican sex workers. This survey used SWAJ's peer educators (working under the JASL umbrella) and the snowballing method to recruit and interview 70 sex workers on the streets and in the clubs of Kingston. The findings included:

- The sex workers' were an average of 21 years old; 78 percent were female and 22 percent were male; 97 percent were born in Jamaica; only 12 percent had enough years of schooling to give them good literacy and numeracy skills.
- They had high rates of alcohol and drug consumption with 44 percent saying they had had at least 5 drinks within the past five hours; 25 percent saying they drank every day; 63 percent saying they had used illegal drugs; 19 percent saying they had used combinations of alcohol and/or several drugs, including ecstasy and crack cocaine.
- They were, on average, 15 years old when they first had sex and 17 years old when they became sex workers. They had an average of 8 sex partners in the past month.
- They had an average of two regular partners in the past year; 65 percent had at least one regular partner in the past year; of those, only 37 percent reported the regular use of condoms with that partner and only 34 percent had used a condom on the last occasion.
- Ninety-four (94) percent had used a condom the last time they had sex with a client; 78 percent said they always used condoms with clients; 18 percent said almost always and 4 percent said sometimes.
- Thirty-five (35) percent said they had difficulty negotiating safe sex and 65 percent said they had experienced condom breakage.
- Eighty-five (85) percent had received a talk about HIV in the past six months; 81 percent believed or did not know whether or not HIV can be transmitted through oral sex; 7 percent believed or did not know whether or not HIV can be transmitted by mosquito bites; 7 percent believed or did not know whether or not HIV can be transmitted by sharing food.
- Fifty-seven (57) percent said they had experienced no symptoms of STIs in the past year; 31 percent had sought help for STIs during the past year and, of those, 64 percent had sought help at public clinics or hospitals and 46 percent had continued to have sex with clients while still having symptoms; of the latter, 93 percent had used a condom on the last occasion.
- Ninety-one (91) percent knew where to seek medical help but only 19 percent did so every six months; 13 percent had never been tested for HIV; of those who had been tested, 83 percent had been tested within the past year and, of those, 97 percent had returned for

¹National HIV/STI Programme (2012). Country Progress Report, 30 March 2012. Kingston, National HIV/STI Programme, Ministry of Health, Government of Jamaica.

the results; 75 percent said they were treated with respect when they got tested; the most frequently stated reason for not getting tested was that they had no time.

- Twenty-five (25) percent had experienced sexual violence; of those, 38 percent had experienced it on the streets while 29 percent had experienced it from an intimate partner.
- Thirty-one (31) percent said fights between sex workers were frequent; 68 percent said they could not trust their sex worker peers and competitors.

The many categories of sex worker identified by SWAJ

With its limited resources, SWAJ has focussed much of its attention on those sex workers potential clients know can be found on certain streets and in other public places every night and, sometimes, during the day. Its Field Officers also go into clubs where “go-go girls” (who work the same club every night) or “club hoppers” (who move from club to club) hook up with clients but they more often approach these two types of sex worker on the streets outside of clubs.

With its expanding membership and more resources, SWAJ hopes to reach out to people engaged in less conspicuous types of sex work but knows this will not be easy because many of these people do not self-identify as sex workers and fear being exposed as such. They include:

- Escorts who advertise their availability for companionship but are known to negotiate prices for sexual services
- Masseuses and masseurs who advertise their availability for massages but are also known to negotiate prices for sexual services
- Exotic dancers, strippers and lap dancers who function mainly as entertainers but are often willing to sell sexual services
- “Glamour models” who pose naked or scantily clad for online sites, publications and posters that provide sufficient information for potential sexual clients to contact them
- Online and home-based sex workers who do out-calls or entertain clients in their own homes
- Migrants from other Caribbean countries who may travel to do sex work for cash partly so they can avoid being exposed as sex workers in their home countries. Often seen as unwelcome competition by Jamaican sex workers, migrant sex workers may find their own places to do sex work. They are further isolated by language barriers and their fear of immigration authorities because they lack documentation authorizing their extended stays and work in Jamaica.
- A range of males including:
 - Gigolos who may appear to be boyfriends but are in it for the money and may be apparent boyfriends to several women or men at once.
 - Homeless MSM who self-identify as gay, feel rejected by their families and communities, are too young and unskilled to find legal work and turn to sex work and petty crime just to survive.
 - “Sofa surfers” who may not self-identify as gay but need somewhere to stay for a night or a few nights and are willing to exchange sex for room, food and a little cash.
 - Private dancers and strippers who do out-calls to private parties and may earn additional money by selling sexual services to people at the parties.
 - “Gay for pay” heterosexual males who often cater to the sexual needs of men “on the down low”, afraid of being exposed as anything but the heterosexual men they

pretend to be. SWAJ believes this is a potent formula that often leads to violence between men equally averse to having anyone think they might be gay. They also believe it is often accompanied by other crimes, including muggings and thefts where the victims are afraid to report anything to the police.

- Young females and males associated with the tourism industry in various ways. These include house managers, desk clerks, bellboys, restaurant and bar staff, lifeguards, and entertainers who sometimes have sexual encounters or vacation-long affairs with tourists in exchange for cash or gifts and favours. They also include “beach boys” who cruise the beaches and “rent-a-dreads” who run stalls or shops in resort areas and cater to tourists’ fantasies of stereotypical Jamaican men. Among them, too, are young women from across the Caribbean who arrange to be guests in the same hotels favoured by American college students during their spring breaks. The sex work all of these do is about opportunity for extra cash to support their families, luxuries they cannot otherwise afford and possibly even emigration to join their North American or European boyfriends or girlfriends in their home countries.

Tailoring interventions to fit sex workers’ realities

SWAJ President Marlon Taylor explains that, with its limited resources, SWAJ does not want to duplicate what others are already doing reasonably well. Instead, it wants to work with them on improving what they do and, also, to fill gaps with its own unique programmes. For example, JASL does peer education well and SWAJ’s peer educators are happy to continue training and working under the JASL umbrella.

A reason a small group of sex workers decided to found SWAJ back in 2008, however, was that sex workers were being so inundated by people from various organizations informing them about HIV and how to prevent it that they were no longer listening. The problem was that the messages were seldom tailored to fit the stark realities of sex workers’ daily lives. Female sex workers, for example, are often single mothers willing to take almost any risk if it gets them the money they need to buy their children food and other necessities.

Often where SWAJ can be most useful is in helping its partners reach a deeper understanding of how the world looks from the perspectives of sex workers and how best to help sex workers cope with their own realities. Here is one reality for many female sex workers: they have met their regular partners on the streets or in the bars where they work. Their partners continue going to those places and connecting with other women. To avoid emotional turmoil and drama, they stop going to the places where they know their regular partners still go. SWAJ is doing its best to drive home the message that this pattern of behaviour is even more risky than sex work itself, since it often means that two people with multiple partners are having unprotected sex with each other. (See the above discussion of the CVC/COIN survey and its findings that only 37 percent of sex workers used a condom the last time they had sex with their regular partner.)

Here is another example. A few years ago, the Ministry of Labour gave more than 50 sex workers opportunities to take courses offered by the Jamaican Foundation for Lifelong Learning and many of them only showed up once, to collect their weekly stipends for travel and lunch. Many sex workers have grade one levels of literacy, at best, and tend to operate on the basis of their own past experience or word of mouth from other sex workers. These tell them they will have to give up sex work if they want to qualify for job training, jobs or help starting up their own businesses. Again and again, they will do things like start to take advantage of offers for help with starting their own businesses only to see the help withdrawn when organizations making the offer find out they are continuing to engage in sex work. These organizations do not to fully appreciate that most

sex workers are poor and, again, will do anything necessary to get the money they need to support their children. If you require them to forego that money, your efforts to help them will fail.

In 2011, UNFPA collaborated with SWAJ on a project that supported sex workers in taking up offers of training, employment and business start-up opportunities while also continuing to do sex work. It was so successful that half the participating sex workers gave up sex work anyway. The project worked because it allowed them to do things at their own pace, including giving up sex work only *after* alternative ways of earning income had proven successful.

Improving sex workers' dialogue with the police

An objective of the first CVC/COIN grant to SWAJ

Casual conversations among sex workers reveal that uppermost on their minds is safety in the extremely dangerous places where they do their work: on the streets, in cars or homes, and in alleys and bushes and other places shielded from public scrutiny. Far from trusting police officers to protect them, they fear police officers not because they enforce laws against sex work but because they share widespread prejudice against sex workers. Police officers often express their prejudice with verbal, physical and sexual abuse and, even more seriously, by not responding in timely and effective manner when sex workers call for help because they are under threat of assault or are being or have been assaulted.

SWAJ's work with Eve for Life and PANOS Caribbean on "Oral Testimonies of Jamaican Sex Workers" underscored the fact that, while Section 23 of Jamaica's penal code makes some kinds of sex work illegal and drives much of it underground, it in no way authorizes verbal, physical and sexual violence against sex workers' by their clients, regular partners, the general public or the police. As follow-up to that work, the first recommendation arising from SWAJ's 2011 strategic planning exercise was to launch a campaign sensitizing police officers as to how the world looks from sex workers' perspectives and encouraging them to investigate complaints in an unbiased manner.

The first objective stated in SWAJ's proposal for its first grant from CVC/COIN was to improve dialogue between sex workers and police officers so they could put themselves in each other's shoes, reach mutual understanding of issues related to human rights, the law, law enforcement, safety in public and private spaces, and the needs of both sex workers and police to be treated with respect and consideration.

Results achieved

SWAJ planned and held two two-day workshops, one in July and one in September 2012. These were both hosted by its St. Ann (Ocho Rios) chapter and went as follows:

- Each workshop was attended by six sex workers from its three chapters, all chosen for their ability to share typical sex worker experiences and perspectives.
- Each workshop was also attended by three JASL allies, one from each of the three chapters. The allies were chosen for their extensive experience working among sex workers and their abilities to provide unbiased perspectives and insights and to mediate if discussions got too heated.
- Each workshop was facilitated by a behaviour change communications (BCC) specialist from the Ministry of Health. (Marlon explains that SWAJ has enjoyed good relations with Ministry of Health staff in all the Ministry's four regions.)
- SWAJ asked station commanders to select police officers they would like to attend the workshops and the commanders sent 11 police officers to the first workshop.

- The second workshop was held in September, earlier than had been planned. This was at the request of commanders and police officers who felt the first workshop had gone well and had some new issues they wanted to discuss with sex workers. The tide had turned and it was now the police and not the sex workers who were initiating dialogue. Nine police officers attended the second workshop.
- Sex worker and police feedback from the two workshops was very positive, as shown in the box below.
- With its first CVC/COIN grant, SWAJ was able to hold only two workshops, both in Ocho Rios, but police who had been unable to attend those workshops asked for additional workshops in their own regions and the demand for more workshops informed SWAJ's proposal for its second CVC/COIN grant.

How successful were the workshops?

In separate interviews on 4 and 5 December 2012, representatives of SWAJ and three police officers from the Jamaican Constabulary Force (JCF) gave their assessments of the workshops.

The SWAJ representatives said the workshops bridged a large gap between sex workers and the police and, as a result, there were significant improvements in the way they related to each other in the streets. For the first time, some sex workers were saying they trusted the police enough that they called them in emergencies and found they could get the assistance they needed. For example, one sex worker got into a situation with a client where she was beginning to fear for her life. When she had an opportunity, she called the police on her cell phone. The police soon arrived on the scene and arrested the man.

The three police officers interviewed were from three different JCF police stations and had three different areas of responsibility. One was from the JCF's Training Branch, which provides on-the-job training to recent graduates from the training academy; one was from the Community Safety and Security Branch; one (the only male) was from the Centre for Investigation of Sexual Offences and Child Abuse. They explained that the JCF has been committed to Community Policing since 1992. It has gradually developed and refined a set of policies (available on the JCF website at www.jcf.gov.jm) to guide and reinforce this approach and these include a Diversity Policy calling for equal treatment of everyone regardless of their social status or personal characteristics and beliefs.

They said their participation in the SWAJ workshops was part of JCF's on-going efforts to build partnerships with different elements of the Jamaican community and they described the workshops as "eye openers". One said the workshops had helped them "stand on the other side of the fence" and look at police officers and their attitudes and behaviours from sex workers' perspectives. "We talked about how everyone has feelings. People are hurt when the police treat them disrespectfully, use bad words to refer to them and do not appreciate their circumstances, what they have to do just to sustain their lives."

At the same time, the workshops had helped sex workers understand that their attitudes and behaviours in the presence of the police are not always respectful and considerate either. For example, when one gay male sex worker comes to a police station he is often accompanied by others who have no good reason for being there other than to create a ruckus that alarms other members of the public who happen to be at the police station at the same time.

The workshops had given the police officers opportunities to explain the laws and the standard enforcement procedures the police are obliged to follow. It had also given them

opportunities to advise the sex workers on how they can conduct themselves in the streets in ways that do not draw public complaints or police attention.

The three officers said their regular training focuses mainly on laws and enforcement procedures and covers their community policing, diversity and other policies in general ways but does not usually bring them face-to-face with different groups in the community in the way these workshops had done. As for spreading the lessons they learned in the workshops to other members of the JCF, this had not been done in any structured way. However, they were required to submit reports to their commanding officers and the commanding officers discussed these at the weekly tasking meetings attended by commanders from all stations.

The three police officers agreed they would like to see a lot more of this kind of training, covering more police officers and with sessions that focus on particular issues including: how to prevent HIV and AIDS among sex workers and their clients; why there seem to be so many more young people going into sex work; the plight of boys rejected by their families because they are suspected of being gay and who end up homeless and earning money in sex work; the connections between the sex work, gun running and drug dealing that often take place in the same venues and involve the same people; theft and violence among sex workers and between them and their clients; human trafficking. One said that she would like to see a lot more attention paid to verbal and physical violence within families, including the violence mothers inflict on their sons and how this produces men who inflict violence on women, whether or not they are sex workers.

As for police-sex worker liaison, these three officers were all doing it in informal ways but there was apparent need more to be done in conjunction with more training.

Empowering sex workers to assert and defend their human rights

With its second grant from CVC/COIN, SWAJ aimed to continue building up its membership base, to continue strengthening itself as an organization that can represent and serve Jamaican sex workers as effectively as possible, and to hold two more two-day workshops to improve dialogue between the police and sex workers.

It also added a new focus, on empowering sex workers with the knowledge and skills they need to assert and defend their human rights and with creating an environment where their human rights are recognized and respected by policymakers, police, courts, health care providers, and staff and customers of clubs and passers-by on streets where sex workers ply their trade.

Developing a Human Rights and Sex Work training manual

A key component of this work was developing and refining a Human Rights and Sex Work training manual through a process that included:

- A three day workshop in which 20 members of SWAJ were trained in the basics of human rights, the human rights issues of particular concern to sex workers, and skills at intervention and mediation where human rights violations are occurring.
- Selection of six of the best-performing participants to act as supervisor and fieldworkers over an eleven month period stretching from August 2013 to July 2014.
- These six were assigned the task of attempting to reach out to a collective total of 100 sex workers and 20 “duty bearers” (e.g., police officers, health care providers, club owners and staff) per month, with considerable flexibility as to how each of them might contribute

to this total. The aim was to reach as many sex workers, police officers, club owners and others as they could and provide them with basic training on human rights and how those rights apply in real life situations and, where appropriate, to intervene and mediate.

Towards the end of this process, a Jamaican legal and human rights advisor (Vivian A. Gray Jr.) wrote a Manual providing guidance and material for one-day workshops designed to teach sex workers the basics of human rights law, their rights in specific situations, and how best to make sure their rights are recognized and respected in those situations. It also provides guidance and material for debate on the pros and cons of legalizing sex work or regulating it in other ways that might better serve the interests of sex workers and everyone else concerned.

Establishing procedures for addressing cases of human rights violation

With its second grant, SWAJ also made a start on establishing itself as a mechanism for gathering and reporting information on particular cases of human rights violation and for helping victims pursue their cases to satisfactory resolution.

Specifically, during the final three months of the grant period SWAJ recruited and trained four Field Officers and a Field Monitor and gave them the tasks of: 1) delivering human rights literacy and skills to sex workers in Kingston and St. Andrew, St. Ann and St. James; 2) gathering and recording information on specific cases of human rights violation, using a form developed by SWAJ and the Jamaican Forum of Lesbians, All-sexuals and Gays (J-FLAG). Lessons learned while doing these things were that: 1) to be more effective, the Field Workers would need more training than they had been given; 2) sex workers resist having information on their specific cases recorded if they are not entirely sure how this information will be used. Some see it as just another intrusion on their privacy by people they are not sure they can trust.

Another challenge that arose during implementation of the second grant was lower turn-out and some signs of resistance by police officers invited to attend the two two-day sex worker-police dialogue workshops. Possibilities included: only a few police officers were interested in attending such workshops and many of those had already attended; future workshops needed to be enriched with some of the material contained in the Human Rights and Sex Work Manual; there was need for a rethink of how to engage with the police day to day and through occasional events such as the workshops.

Notwithstanding such challenges, a significant achievement under the second CVC/COIN grant was to expand SWAJ's membership base from the 135 registered with the first grant to a total of 300. SWAJ representatives believe this expansion was due in large part to more focus on human rights and other issues of more immediate concern to many sex workers than HIV and AIDS and other health issues. In addition, they believe SWAJ made substantial progress on its efforts to turn the police, health care providers, club owners and others into allies.

Building on achievements while adding life skills training

With its third CVC/COIN grant, SWAJ aimed to build on its successes, learn from its failures, remain flexible and adaptable, and continue strengthening itself as an organization, strengthening its partnerships, and strengthening its ways of empowering sex workers. It also aimed to continue adding to its registered membership while developing membership exit strategies— or, in other words, helping its members transition into less risky work with better prospects for secure and rewarding employment. Towards that end, it added a life skills training component to its programme.

As a first step towards strengthening itself, SWAJ searched for an experienced programme developer and manager as its third grant Project Coordinator in the hopes that this person would

become its permanent Programme Development Officer. They delayed starting the eight-month project until December 2014 because it took them that long to find and hire a suitable candidate in the form of Patrick Lalor.

Results achieved over the eight month (December 2014 to August 2015) duration of the third CVC/COIN grant project included:

- The four Field Officers and the Field Monitor trained and deployed towards the end of the second CVC/COIN grant project continued to deliver human rights literacy and skills to sex workers in Kingston and St. Andrew, St. Ann and St. James. With instructions that each Field Officer should reach at least 30 sex workers per month and that at least 15 of those should be new contacts, the team surpassed its target of 1200 and reached 1306 sex workers.
- In January 2015, six people including the four Field Officers and the Field Monitor participated in a two-day training workshop guided by the Human Rights and Sex Work manual, with several presentations and exercises in dealing with a range of typical real life situations. In addition, they received further instruction and practice at gathering information on specific cases of human rights violation and filling out the form developed by SWAJ and J-FLAG.
- The Project Coordinator held monthly team meetings and one-on-one Field Officer and Field Monitor sessions. These resulted in month by month improvements in the quantity and quality of interactions with sex workers. They also resulted in more focus on identifying and following up on issues such as, for example, sex workers washing their genitals with bleach that corroded condoms and caused them to break.
- In March 2015, completion of a Human Rights brochure with basic information in language easily understood by sex workers with no more than basic levels of literacy. This brochure was printed and distributed to hundreds of sex workers.
- In May 2015, 25 sex workers attended a one-day life skills training workshop in Kingston. This workshop focussed on self-esteem, deportment, personal hygiene and financial management with emphasis on saving money since they do not have regular jobs with pensions and other benefits. – Beyond the work covered by the CVC/COIN grant, SWAJ held additional life skills training workshops in Montego Bay and Ocho Rios. For these and future life skills workshops it developed a presentation called “Product Enhancement” on how taking care of their health and personal hygiene and presenting themselves as attractive, courteous and responsible business-like people would serve their best interests as sex workers.
- Later in May, thanks to the team’s vigorous efforts to promote attendance, 76 people including 71 sex workers attended SWAJ’s Annual General Meeting in Ocho Rios. Sex workers were invited to challenge members of the project team with questions, criticisms and suggestions and did so very actively. Conclusions included:
 - There needs to be more work on educating sex workers on how to report and otherwise pursue cases of human rights violations.
 - Individual sex workers need to take more responsibility for getting involved in advocacy on behalf of all sex workers.
 - There needs to be more work on developing user-friendly health services.
 - The team of Field Workers needs to be expanded to reach more sex workers across Jamaica including people engaged in some of the less conspicuous types of sex work.

- SWAJ needs to make itself more visible.
- SWAJ needs to establish itself as a separate legal entity run by and for sex workers.
- In August 2015, the Field Officers and Field Monitor participated in another two-day training workshop. Again, this was guided by the Human Rights and Sex Work manual and consisted of a number of presentations and exercises in dealing with a range of typical real life situations. The idea is that these training workshops will be held periodically to train new personnel and refresh, up-date and strengthen the training of existing personnel.

Looking ahead

In its applications for all three of its CVC/COIN grants, SWAJ set itself ambitious objectives and targets. It has achieved all of its targets as they pertain to numbers of sex workers reached with its proposed interventions but it has not always been able to achieve every objective. It has proven itself flexible and able to change course when it has run into unforeseen roadblocks. For example, when it proved impractical to establish the text messaging service proposed in its first grant application, it established a SWAJ-members-only Facebook page instead. In other cases, it has done its own frank assessments at the end of each grant period pointing to needs to strengthen its organizational structures, to recruit more qualified staff, to provide more training to its existing staff and volunteers, to strengthen its M&E systems and procedures, and so on.

SWAJ has done a remarkably good job of putting its limited resources to work and establishing itself as a highly credible organization that represents a rapidly growing number of sex workers with services that significantly enhance their health and well-being. It has also gone a long way towards establishing itself as an effective vehicle for improving dialogue between sex workers and the police and other “duty bearers” whose attitudes and actions impact on sex workers for better or worse every day.

SWAJ recognizes that it is now at a critical point in its history. While it now manages its own programmes, it continues to operate under the JASL umbrella and to rely on JASL for financial management and for spaces and other resources for its workshops and other events. This situation causes confusion on the part of sex workers, the police and others who are not always sure which of the two organizations they are dealing with.

At the May 2015 Annual General Meeting, its members made it clear that they want SWAJ to distinguish itself as a fully competent and independent, legal not-for-profit organization dedicated to representing and serving Jamaican sex workers. They would like this organization to:

- Continue doing research, independently or in partnership with other organizations, that adds to knowledge about all types of Jamaican sex worker and the many complex issues surrounding sex work.
- Sustain, strengthen and scale up the successful programmes SWAJ has launched during its short history and to continue adding to those programmes.
- Focus more attention on sex workers’ needs for user-friendly and easily accessible health services
- Pay particular attention to: understanding factors that drive people into sex work and trap them in sex work; strengthening and scaling up the new life skills training programme and; developing other education, job training and business financing, planning and management programmes that can help sex workers transition to less risky and more rewarding work.

- Reach towards consensus among sex workers on where they stand on legal reforms that might benefit sex workers and then to plan and launch legal reform campaigns.

The CVC/COIN Profiles of Good Practice Collection

All projects covered in this series of CVC/COIN Profiles of Good Practice were supported by the CVC/COIN Vulnerabilised Groups Project, a component of the PANCAP Round 9 Global Fund Project (January 2011-March 2016). They include a variety of projects from the six countries covered by the CVC/COIN Project and at least one demonstrating an effective approach to sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) among each of the Project's six target populations: men who have sex with men (MSM), transgender women, sex workers, drug users, prisoners, and marginalized youth. A project's exclusion from coverage in this series in no way implies it was not good practice.

Stuart Adams, the consultant who did the final evaluation of Phase One of the CVC/COIN Project (January 2011-March 2013), participated in the selection and then researched and wrote each Profile. To be approved for selection, a project had to meet or come close to meeting all five of the criteria for good practice recommended by the OECD's Development Assistance Committee (DAC) plus three additional criteria used by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) when it selects projects worthy of being covered by publications in the German Health Practices Collection. The eight criteria are:

- **Relevant:** For example, based on sound behavioural, serological or other evidence of need for the intervention.
- **Effective:** For example, indicated by reliable evidence of results measured against objectives and targets established at the outset.
- **Efficient:** For example, makes good use of whatever human, financial and other resources may be available, including collaboration with partners that add value.
- **Impactful:** For example, reaches or demonstrates potential to reach large numbers of target populations with effective HIV prevention, treatment and care; creates safe environments where human rights are recognized and respected.
- **Sustainable:** For example, is sufficiently relevant, effective and efficient to merit continuing support from existing partners and to merit support from potential new partners.
- **Empowering:** For example, provides people from at-risk groups with knowledge, skills and tools to engage in responsible sexual behaviour or to assert their right to essential health care.
- **Transferable:** For example, develops and demonstrates the use of methods and tools that can be adapted for use by other organizations in other locales.
- **Well monitored:** Regularly gathers, analyses and reports data to measure results against objectives and targets and to identify any problems that may require corrective action; records events and personal stories to preserve qualitative information that may enrich knowledge and be useful for educational or advocacy purposes.

Collectively, the projects and programmes profiled in this series have made significant contributions to knowledge about HIV and how to respond to it among vulnerabilised groups in the Caribbean.