

Introducing the Positive Policing Partnership

The “PPP” Initiative

Sex work and policing in South Africa

March 2018



The Positive Policing Partnership (the PPP) focuses on identifying advocacy opportunities to establish and support innovative civil society, policing and government collaborations to catalyse positive change in the operational policing experience of sex workers through dialogue, policy interventions and actions.



The Rationale for the Positive Policing Partnership

Marginalised and stigmatised groups in society such as migrants, sex workers, homeless people and drug users are at particular risk of human rights violations during policing and security operations because of skewed power relations.

Sex worker rights and health organisations receive a high volume of complaints from sex workers regarding their experiences of human rights violations during operational policing. Sex workers and their advocacy organisations continue to face difficulties in resolving these issues successfully through existing police complaints and oversight processes.

Sonke Gender Justice and SWEAT (Sex Worker Education & Advocacy Taskforce) commissioned research into police practices in 2016. An interim Case Study Report, consolidating witness statements illustrating the operational policing challenges, was published by Sonke Gender Justice in July 2017. This served as a consultation tool to engage police, government and human rights experts on the issues in order to seek a constructive way forward.

On 2 August 2017 the sex work sector convened a meeting in Cape Town to strategise on new advocacy opportunities following the Interim Case Study Report. Questions considered by the group included:

- a) What is the scope of the problem of sex worker human rights violations by the police?
- b) Are there systemic trends?
- c) What actions could the sector take to more effectively engage with, and capacitate, police and government authorities to reduce the level of human rights violations against sex workers and their clients?

The sector thus resolved to form the “Positive Policing Partnership” (PPP) as a vehicle to drive solution-focused engagement on operational policing challenges, to improve the operational policing experience of sex workers and other marginalised groups.

The final research findings were released in March 2018 in a report entitled “The Policing of Sex Work in South Africa: A Research Report on the Human Rights Challenges Across Two South African Provinces”.

The PPP Approach

The PPP aims to reframe advocacy strategies and engagement activities with government and policing authorities. This will be done by moving away from an adversarial approach to a more positive and forward-focused strategy that targets senior levels of government and the South African Police Services (SAPS). This will ultimately be achieved through meaningful collaborative engagements and partnerships between civil society, policing and government entities.

The PPP also seeks to catalyse an understanding across society, government and policing groups of the human rights violations experienced by sex workers, through the publication and dissemination of evidence-based research which identifies challenges and recommends practical solutions to these.

PPP Activities to Date

- ▶ Sonke Gender Justice published the Interim Case Study Report on Policing & Sex Worker Challenges in July 2017. An extensive consultation activity was conducted with policing experts across government and civil society on the possible advocacy strategies and recommendations for the final report.
- ▶ Initial meetings with SAPS have yielded promising dialogues on the draft SAPS 'Standard Operating Procedure for the Policing of Sex Workers' and other potential strategic actions.
- ▶ The PPP has sought to engage with government and policing authorities through high level presentations on sex worker and operational policing human rights challenges at: the South African Human Rights Commission and African Police Civilian Oversight Forum Dialogue on Policing in April 2017; the Advanced Human Rights Course for African Police, hosted by the University of Pretoria in August 2017; the South African Expert Panel on Policing in September 2017; and the International Women in Policing Conference, Cairns (Australia), September 2017.
- ▶ The sex work sector sent a submission to the Civilian Secretariat for Policing on the White Paper for Safety & Security in January 2018, outlining recommendations on the policing of sex work, sector and government engagement and oversight.
- ▶ The publication in March 2018, of the evidence-based research report "The Policing of Sex Work in South Africa: A Research Report on the Human Rights Challenges Across Two South African Provinces". The Research report launch event hosted by the Institute of Security Studies in March 2018, included a panel discussion on rights compliant policing as well as a stakeholder roundtable dialogue.

Next Steps for the PPP

The PPP is committed to capacitating the sex work sector, civil society, government and police to drive measurable change and improve human rights compliance at the service delivery level of this core function of government.

The sex work sector will continue to generate and promote opportunities for positive engagement with police, civil society and government actors on operational and strategic policing issues. It will actively seek out and establish strategic working groups and partnerships across civil society and government to plan, deliver and catalyse strategic actions which deliver a measurable improvement in the experiences of service delivery to the sex work sector.

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