



## IN FOCUS 3RD OF MARCH, INTERNATIONAL SEX WORKER RIGHTS DAY

The day originated in 2001 when over 25,000 sex workers gathered in India for a sex worker festival. The organizers of the first festival were Durbar Mahila Samanwaya Committee, a Calcutta based group whose membership consists of somewhere upwards of 50,000 sex workers and members of their communities. Sex worker groups across the world have subsequently celebrated 3 March as International Sex Workers' Rights Day.

Visit:

- <http://www.feministe.us/blog/archives/2009/03/03/international-sex-workers-rights-day/>
- [http://womensrights.change.org/blog/view/international\\_sex\\_worker\\_rights\\_day](http://womensrights.change.org/blog/view/international_sex_worker_rights_day)



SWAN newsletter is the voice of the Sex Workers Rights Advocacy Network, a network of civil society organizations engaged in advocating the Human Rights of the sex workers in Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia. Currently SWAN consists of 17 member-countries of the region.

If you wish to learn more about SWAN activities, please visit [WWW.SWANNET.ORG](http://WWW.SWANNET.ORG).

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## Row over Swiss prostitute buried next to Calvin

The Earth Times

Geneva, March 10, 2009, - „A writer, painter and prostitute,” is proudly written on her tomb.

A Swiss prostitute and sex worker campaigner has been buried in a plot next to John Calvin in Geneva's famous Cemetery of the Kings, Swiss media reported Tuesday. Griseldis Real, who died in 2005, rose to fame in Switzerland after she formed a charity in the 1970s to help both male and female prostitutes, after a long career as a sex worker herself. The decision to rebury her body at Geneva's most prestigious graveyard has not been without critics, however. An official from the canton said the decision to move the body to the cemetery was not an approval of the ancient profession but a recognition of her contributions to the region.

Real was born in 1929 in Lausanne, had four children and claimed she only stopped her job as a sex worker at the age of 66. Real also wrote a series of books about her profession.

## Sex workers participate in an exclusive fashion show

Twenty sex workers walked the ramp in the fashion show, jointly organised by the North Bengal Art Academy and Durbar Mohila Samanway Committee' (DMSC), an organisation of sex workers. The show, first of its kind in the state, was aimed at building their confidence, the academy chief Somes Das said. *"We are delighted. We had been watching fashion shows in television channels since long. We have practised for past one week for the show. The only problem for us was to get a respectable audience. The organisers arranged that to our satisfaction"* – said the spokesperson of the sex workers

after the event.



The protesters carried red umbrellas, an internationally used symbol on the day. They demand acceptance of their work as an occupation and the right to organise. Representing around 20 sex workers who had gathered in front of Istanbul's Galatasaray Highschool in Beyoğlu, Eylem Çağdaş reads a statement. *"We want neither discrimination nor privilege. We only want to make use of the constitutional rights we were all given at birth. Respecting sex work is not a favour, it is a constitutional responsibility."* She added: *"Unfortunately, we cannot celebrate International Sex Workers Day, because we are always faced with violence. The police is also practising and reinforcing this violence."* According to the estimates, there are 56 brothels in Turkey with around 3,000 women work as registered sex workers there. In the whole of Turkey, 15,000 women work as registered sex workers. However, many women and men work in this sector unofficially. Refugee and transsexual sex workers are not included in these numbers either. In Ankara, Istanbul and Izmir alone, around 30,000 women are waiting in line to get a license to



## Sex workers protest for more rights in Istanbul

work in a brothel. The initiative estimates that there are up to 100,000 sex workers in Turkey. This year is the first year that the day has been marked in Turkey.



Petition against police harassment was launched together with court application against illegal arrest of sex workers. According to Valda Lucas, the 3rd of March event spokesperson, „about 60 sex workers from the Cape Metropole as well as Beaufort West will look at ways and means in which they can protect themselves from unscrupulous clients and police harassment, be conscientised about their rights and they will have a sense of belonging to a larger community," she says. The aim of the day is to openly celebrate and share amongst themselves the achievements and challenges facing the sex work industry in terms of decriminalising the profession *"When you take away the rights of sex workers you are one step away from taking everybody's human rights – today sex workers, tomorrow any other person! Let us hope that our democracy will embrace the rights of all, else we shall continue to live in the shadow of apartheid. And finally let us remember a simple truth, sex workers are human beings with human rights!"* – declares the court application (the hearings was held two days after March 3rd).

**SWEAT (SEX WORKER EDUCATION AND ADVOCACY TASK FORCE) launched a petition against police harassment as part of International Sex Worker Day, 3rd March in South Africa**





**IN FOCUS  
(continued)**



100 years ago, 15,000 women marched through the streets of New York demanding shorter working hours, better pay and voting rights. This year, the pertinence of this event is being marked by the theme of 'Shaping Progress'.

This date is now observed in nearly every country around the world with a focus on events large and small to remind communities and leaders of the gender inequality that still exists across the world, and to lobby political leaders for progressive policies to promote gender equality and women's rights. International Women's Day (IWD) is now marked as a public holiday in Armenia, Russia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bulgaria, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Macedonia, Moldova, Mongolia, Tajikistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan and Vietnam reflecting the importance given to its observance. (More information you can find at the following websites:

- [2009/iwd2009/international-womens-day-2009](http://2009/iwd2009/international-womens-day-2009),
- <http://www.internationalwomensday.com/about.asp>,
- <http://www.un.org/ecosocdev/geninfo/women/womday97.htm>

**NEWS FROM  
SWAN NETWORK**

This reportage, called „Profession male prostitute” shows the work of male sex workers in a town called Veliko Turnovo, and was broadcasted on one of the most popular national TV in Bulgaria - TV NOVA. (Watch this video here: <http://vbox7.com/play:f2b33498>).



**Bulgaria: A video reportage about male sex workers on TV**

It showed the business and people in it, their problems with police. The principal character in this short movie is a man who offers sex to both men and women. He tells about the diversity of age and diversity of desires of his clients. The journalist says that Viagra for male sex workers is more like a cup of coffee and most of times they need stronger stimulants, like cocaine. The majority of male sex workers have families and "other life". One of their biggest problems, the male sex worker said, is the police. If someone wants to work as a sex worker they have to pay a bribe to the police. That secures them a place. But when the police arrest them they have to pay bribes again, he said that the usual tax is 100lv (around 50 euro). At the end of the conversation the sex worker casually stated that his work is no way different from any other profession. The reportage concludes with arguments of the journalist in favor of legalization and how it could affect sex workers.

**Slovakia: A good media coverage about Odyseus and SWAN**

*„More than 90% of people who are working on the streets are women, according to our latest survey” – said Lubica Tornoczyova, the director of Odyseus in an interview which she gave to the most read weekly paper in Slovakia.*

The article introduces the activity of the Odyseus and SWAN, and emphasize that prostitution is definitely not a dream job for anyone; people usually choose it as a „less evil” solution, instead of stealing or giving children away to childcare.

You can read full article in Slovak here:

- <http://swannet.org/en/node/1383>



**Macedonia: Partnership in Action - Skopje using video to protect sex workers**

HOPS, which works to protect and promote the rights of sex workers, started partnership with WITNES (www.witness.org), human rights organization (based in New York but working globally), who uses and promotes video activism as an effective and supportive tool for promotion of rights of different groups within ongoing human rights campaigns. Concrete partnership between HOPS and WITNESS includes support in developing video advocacy plan about integrating video in this year's 17th December campaign. Video will speak about violence that sex workers are facing and its influence on their everyday life, family etc, and will have appeal to the police to recognize

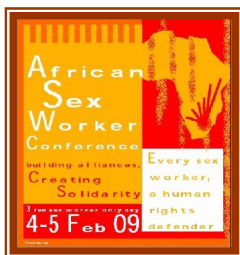
sex workers rights as human rights and to implement the principles of equality and non discrimination when dealing with sex workers.

WITNESS staffers, Ryan Kautz and Violeta Krasnic started to make interviews with sex workers and also, with Marija Tosheva, HOPS Program Director, about the recent raids against sex workers. How the training was going, what they learnt, what techniques they decided to use for concealing identities and more about the concrete video you can see here:

- <http://hub.witness.org/en/node/11929>
- <http://hub.witness.org/en/node/11959>
- <http://hub.witness.org/en/node/11971>
- <http://hub.witness.org/en/node/11993>



## NEWS FROM RIGHTS ADVOCATES



### First Sex Workers Conference in South-Africa

**Every sex worker is a human rights defender** – that was the

conclusion of The First African Sex Worker conference which was held in Johannesburg, South Africa from 3-5 February, 2009 with more than 150 participants, including sex workers, activists and representatives from national and international NGO and Development Agencies.

*"When our governments are campaigning for our votes they say vote for us and we will deliver. We have voted but our governments have not delivered. We try to raise our voices about human rights violations that we face on a daily basis, no one*

*listens. Once we have voted, they forget us. From our government we need law reform and the decriminalisation of sex work so that we have the spaces to access our rights. We demand rights and not rescue.*

*As 153 sex workers from 10 African countries: South Africa, Senegal, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Botswana, Malawi, Uganda, Kenya, Namibia and Nigeria. Today we demand our governments to honour their agreement that every citizen has human rights, and give us the rights that we are entitled to as human beings"* – concluded the press release the participants issued after the first day of the conference.

INFO-ACTIVISM CAMP  
INDIA 2009

### Info-Activism Camp: 150 activists get together to share experience

In February 2009 SWAN coordinator, Aliya Rakhmetova, took part in an Information Activism Camp in Bangalore, India. Read her short report on the event:

The camp brought together 150 activists and IT specialists from different countries, backgrounds and ages. Women rights advocates, advocates for political rights and freedoms, sex worker activists, environment protection advocates, HIV+ community, video activists, bloggers, journalists and representatives of many other spheres believed that successful ideas can cross borders and be utilized in various contexts and that information technology can do miracles in faster organizing and implementing your

campaigns and mobilizing a wider support, local and international. It was amazing and inspiring to learn how many great ideas people generate and how much success depends on the way you package and distribute your message and information! More at

<http://www.swannet.org/en/node/1381>



## Three Lessons Activists and Marketers Can Learn From India's Valentine's Day Pink Panty Campaign

### SEX WORKERS' ADVOCACY SCHOOL

*In this column, SWAN News publishes articles that can help sex workers rights advocates in their daily work: how to challenge the myths surrounding sex work, how to fight abolitionists, how to work with media, communicate, create an effective message and get it across.*

*NOTE: the article has been edited and shortened by SWAN.*

For more info visit: <http://thepinkchaddicampaign.blogspot.com/>



In this Advocacy School section we feature a short analysis of why the Pink Panties campaign was such a huge success by Gaurav Mishra (blog <http://www.gauravonomics.com/blog/three-lessons-activists-and-marketers-can-learn-from-indias-valentines-day-pink-panty-campaign/>).

Even though the campaign is not directly connected to sex work, the tips and strategy can be useful in planning your own actions and campaigns.

*Introduction: The Pink Chaddi Campaign as a case study of online citizen activism in India.*

Managing and organising collaboration in an online community is sometimes a problem. Most collective action does not achieve the desired results for many reasons. So, instead of providing a how-to checklist, we have used a case study of a one-off success story, the Pink Chaddi campaign. These one-off success stories are important because they help us get a sense of the elements and conditions needed for effective collaboration and collective action in online communities. In this post, I'll outline three lessons that activists and marketers can learn from the Pink Chaddi Campaign.

*(Continued on next page)*



**Lesson 1: Build your campaign around the social, cultural and political traditions of your identified target group. Then, give it an interesting, funny or irreverent tweak to help it stick.**

Journalist Nisha Susan set up The Consortium of Pubgoing, Loose, and Forward Women on Facebook and urged women to send pink panties to Pramod Mutalik, the head of the ultra-conservative Hindu group Shri Ram Sena, in order to shame him into backing down from his threats to disrupt Valentine's Day celebrations.

With its unconventional choice of name, The Consortium of Pubgoing, Loose, and Forward Women on Facebook purposely created a strong sense of us versus them. It reached out to the small minority of men and women in India who are amused by the irony of a woman being called 'Pubgoing, Loose, and Forward' in the same sentence. It also purposefully distanced itself from the Indian mainstream which still wants its Bollywood heroines to be virginal.

The Pink Chaddi Campaign tapped into the nationwide outrage against Shri Ram Sena after its activists beat up a group of young women in a Mangalore pub, claiming that the women were violating traditional Indian

values by wearing Western clothes and drinking alcohol with men. It's important to point out however, that this outrage was mostly limited to a small but increasingly out-spoken section of Indian society: young men and women in cities, who tend to be privileged in family background, education, and work. These people most often come from liberal families (or have broken away from family ties), work in the new economy sectors of media, entertainment and technology, and have free time to spend socializing with friends and strangers in online communities and in neighborhood shopping malls.

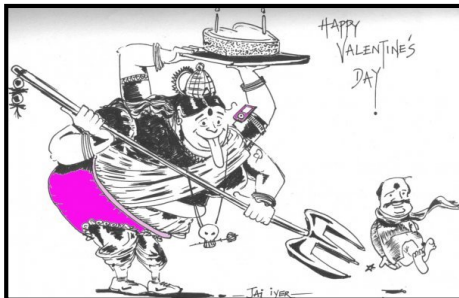
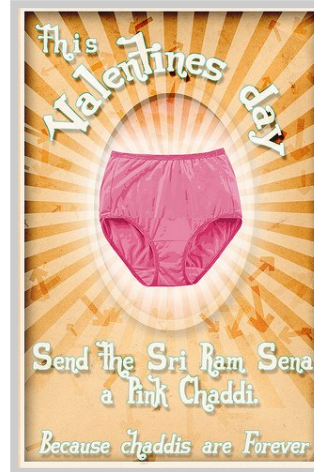
The choice of sending pink panties to Shri Ram Sena was another way for these people to position themselves as different from the more conservative mainstream. Chaddi means 'underwear' in several Indian languages, but combined with the choice of colour — pink — it essentially means pink panties. Some participants in the campaign even suggested that the act of sending pink panties was a strong state-

ment that Indian women are ready to put aside their sense of shame and fight for their rights. At the core of the campaign was the idea of reversing the sense of shame. The Shri Ram Sena wanted to shame Indian women into submission. The

gift of pink panties was not only a defiant statement against being shamed ("we won't be shamed") but also struck at Shri Ram Sena's own sense of maleness ("you should be ashamed because you have in your possession women's pink panties").

Consciously or unconsciously, Nisha Susan had designed the perfect campaign that encourages participants to get their friends involved or to share

it with their friends. The pink chaddi campaign was not only relevant for its target audience - urban, educated and liberal Indians -, it was also funny and irreverent. An ironical inside joke like this can often turn out to be the perfect way for getting individuals to share the campaign with people close to them.



A great viral idea, in itself, isn't enough. It also

needs to be packaged into a compelling and easy to share message. That's where the brilliantly designed Pink Chaddi Campaign Poster comes in. Nisha had first designed the poster herself by photoshopping an image of a chaddiwala and later asked her designer friend to redesign the poster. It was simple both in its design and its symbolism. Take a retro Hindu calendar with an Om, replace the Om with a pink panty, add some retro fonts and you have the perfect poster that triggers Bollywood, Hindutva, and irreverence at the same time.

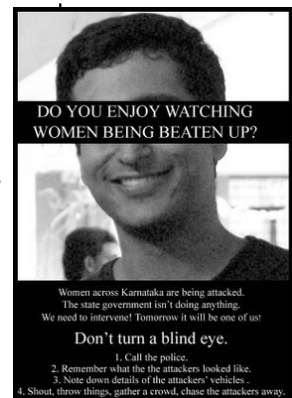
The choice of Facebook, instead of Orkut, as the social networking platform was also purposeful symbolic positioning of "us versus them". Almost two third of active Internet users in India use Orkut, whereas Facebook is primarily used by a more metro-centered elite crowd, who are often introduced to it by friends in US

universities. For the highest outreach, the campaign should have been present on both Orkut and Facebook, but it strengthened message of being against the conservative social majority by exclusively using Facebook.

Facebook is also the perfect viral platform, with its hyperactive news feed. Every time a user joined The Consortium of Pubgoing, Loose, and Forward Women on Facebook, an announcement showed up in the news feeds of all their friends. Members could also actively invite their friends to join the group.

The campaign also asked group members to share pictures of themselves with the pink panties they were gifting, and many did, both on the Facebook group and on their own personal blogs. This was an explicit viral element that also helped the campaign gain popularity. Assuming that the average group member has 200 friends, up to 10 million facebook users were exposed to the campaign. Even if we allow for a high degree of duplication in the friend lists of members, it will be safe to say that millions of Facebook users saw the campaign in their news feeds.

**Lesson 2: Build virality into your campaign - make your campaign easy and fun to spread around. Choose a compelling message that users will want to share. Then, use a platform that makes it easy for them to share the message.**



For more images visit:  
[http://www.facebook.com/photo\\_search.php?oid=49641698651&view=all](http://www.facebook.com/photo_search.php?oid=49641698651&view=all)

**Lesson 3: Design your campaign to translate online engagement into offline action. Make it easy to take collective action by breaking it down into smaller individual actions that can be taken independently, but that work together within the whole campaign.**

The Pink Chaddi campaign was also designed to trigger offline action, gifting pink panties to Shri Ram Sena on Valentine's Day. Finally, almost 2000 panties were sent to Shri Ram Sena, against a target of 5000.

I think that the campaign was able to drive offline action, because it made the action both modular and granular - it broke down the campaign into smaller individual actions that could be easily done by one individual. It simplified the task of getting 5000 pink panties to Shri Ram Sena by asking individual members to do two things: 1) send one panty to the Sena and 2) encourage your friends to do the same by posting a picture of you with your pink panty.

The address of Sena's Hubli office was shared prominently on all campaign messaging and supporters were encouraged to directly mail panties to the address. Alternatively, panties could also be dropped at design-

ated collection centers.

Compare this to the difficulties of organizing a protest march at a specific time and place, and it is plain to see that traditional models of protest cannot always benefit from the possibility of organizing collective online actions that consist of aggregated modular and granular individual tasks.

Finally, Nisha Susan displayed great media savvy by holding a series of press conferences to publicize the campaign. Nisha is a journalist herself with Tehelka and realizes that "participatory media is most effective when it is able to push up important stories into the legacy news media."



*Nothing about us without us is a message repeated more often than ever before by sex workers around the world. This column in the SWAN News provides an opportunity for sex workers to express their opinions, tell us about their lives, problems and dreams. Contributions are welcome: write to swan@tasz.hu*

## SEX WORKERS REPORT

an  
*gonges*  
FILM

## Caught between the tiger and the crocodile



Sex workers in Cambodia (and the APNSW - Asian Pacific Network of Sex Workers) have been fighting abuses within the country's 100% Condom Use Program since it started. In early 2008, a new law against human trafficking was passed in Cambodia, making all sex work illegal. Now there are new types of repression as brothels are closed and sex workers are arrested and forced into rehabilitation centres. The response of the UN organisations and most international NGOs working on HIV has been to support the law but in a way that allows the 100% Condom

Use Program to continue. Sex workers reject both the 100% Condom Use Program and the new anti-trafficking law. This is the story of the abuses they have faced under both systems, and why Cambodian sex workers are stuck between the tiger and the crocodile. The following film was supported by a grant from the Foundation Open Society Institute in association with WITNESS Video Advocacy Institute.

Watch video at <http://swannet.org/en/node/1377>

## CALLS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

### Summer Institute on Sexuality, Culture and Society

#### Application deadline: April 15, 2009

An intensive four-week summer programme will be held at The Summer Institute on Sexuality, Culture and Society at the Graduate School of Social Sciences, at the Universiteit van Amsterdam, between July 7 and 30, 2009, which focuses on the study of sexuality across cultures and is taught by an international faculty team. For further information and application forms, please visit the Summer Institute website:

- <http://www.ishss.uva.nl/SummerInstitute/>

### Sex Worker Film, Arts and Music Festival in early June

#### Application deadline is extended, submit your work!

The 5th San Francisco Sex Worker Film, Arts and Music Festival will be held between May 31 to June 7. The event will highlight works by and about male sex workers. In most of the cases they are socially isolated from one another and from the broader community of sex workers. The organizers hope to provide men space to come together and to integrate their voices into larger discussions. You can volunteer to help. Visit: <http://www.sexworkerfest.com/swfest2009/volunteer.html> Also, read more about the festival program here: <http://www.sexworkersfest.com>

## CALLS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS (continued):

**Victims in Europe -  
23rd Annual  
Conference of Victim  
Support Europe in  
June 25-26**

The Victim Support Europe, the Portuguese Association for Victim Support is promoting Project Victims in Europe, which is co-financed by the European Commission, and currently organizing the Victims in Europe: 23rd Annual Conference of Victim Support

Europe.

The conference will take place in Lisbon and will be held in English. The purpose of this event is to gather experts and professionals in the area of justice, social matters (civil society organisations) and policy-makers from different countries. It will also be an opportunity to present the framework of existing rights, and discuss the efficiency of the implementation of these rights in the European Union. It will thus provide an opportunity to discuss what rights require further implementation measures, in order to meet the needs of victims of crime. More at <http://apav.pt/vine/>

**Sign the  
petition!  
Sheriff Joe**

„Signing this petition will help sex workers in Arizona, in the United States. Sheriff Joe has been awful to sex workers. He

says it is OK for cops to have sex with sex workers then arrest them, because the cops are protecting the wives of business men who are seeing the sex workers on lunch break. With his influence, the Arizona legislature mandated 15 days jail time for first arrest for prostitution, no diversion, and the 4th arrest is a felony with two years prison”.

To sign the petition go to:

[http://salsa.wiredforchange.com/o/2749/t/3925/petition.jsp?petition\\_KEY=530](http://salsa.wiredforchange.com/o/2749/t/3925/petition.jsp?petition_KEY=530)

**Find your partners**

Here is an invitation to register to a European NGO database, the Communication Platform for Non-Governmental Organization, in which you will hopefully be able to find partners for your campaigns.

Visit link <http://www.non-gov.org/>

**Sign the petition against the Pope's  
recent claims that condoms  
distribution aggravates HIV problem!**

On his first visit to Africa, Pope Benedict said that "[AIDS] cannot be overcome through the distribution of condoms, which even aggravates

the problems". The Pope's statement is a huge setback to decades of hard work on AIDS prevention, education and awareness. With powerful influence over more than 1.1 billion Catholics in the world,

and with 22 million HIV positive Africans, these words could dramatically affect the AIDS pandemic and put millions of lives at risk. Worldwide pressure on the Vatican is starting to show results - sign our urgent petition asking the Pope to immediately stop speaking out against condoms:

[http://www.avaaz.org/en/pope\\_benedict\\_petition](http://www.avaaz.org/en/pope_benedict_petition)



To read **International news** please visit SWAN website at <http://swannet.org/en/taxonomy/term/2>

**QUOTE OF THE  
MONTH**

*„Every sex worker is a human rights defender“*  
**„Every sex worker is a human rights defender“**

*From the conclusion of the First  
African Sex Worker Conference*

**Acknowledgements**

SWAN project would not have been possible without the financial and information support of Sexual Health and Rights Project (SHARP) and Health Media of Open Society Institute (OSI).

Public Health Program  
*Sexual Health and Rights Project (SHARP)*

Public Health Program  
*Health Media*