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# Informed and Empowered: Guyana Sex Workers Mobilize for Effective HIV Prevention for loggers and surrounding communities

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# Issues

The HIV prevalence rate among sex workers in Guyana is 16.6%. Sex workers in Guyana have traditionally been trained to protect themselves and their clients from infection.

In addition to reducing vulnerability by training sex workers on how to protect themselves and their partners, they are empowered to form partnerships for community change, thereby reducing further their vulnerability to HIV/AIDS.

Loggers are a significant segment of the migrant workers' population in Guyana. They tend to engage in transactional sex with local sex workers. Moreover, regular access to condoms is difficult in these communities, increasing the risk of HIV transmission.



# Description

In 2009, the Government of Guyana, the International Labour Organization, the US Department of Labour and the PEPFAR HIV/AIDS Workplace Education Programme partnered with the One Love Organization, a national NGO which addresses needs and concerns of sex workers in relation to HIV/AIDS.

The ILO assisted One Love in strengthening its capacity in programme development and implementation with the objective of promoting HIV prevention among loggers in riverain communities with a core package of services including condom promotion, VCT and STI referrals.

Through this partnership, 15 of One Love's members and affiliates were trained in peer education, peer counselling and community mobilization skills, thereby enabling them to actively engage their communities in HIV prevention education.



# Lessons learned

This successful partnership demonstrates that sex workers can be powerful advocates for HIV prevention.

In addition, when sex workers have information on risk reduction and building partnerships for community change, they contribute significantly to the reduction of HIV vulnerabilities for their own benefit and that of their clients, and for the larger local community.



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# Next steps

The ILO will replicate this successful partnership with other sex workers' groups/organizations to reach different groups of workers in Guyana.