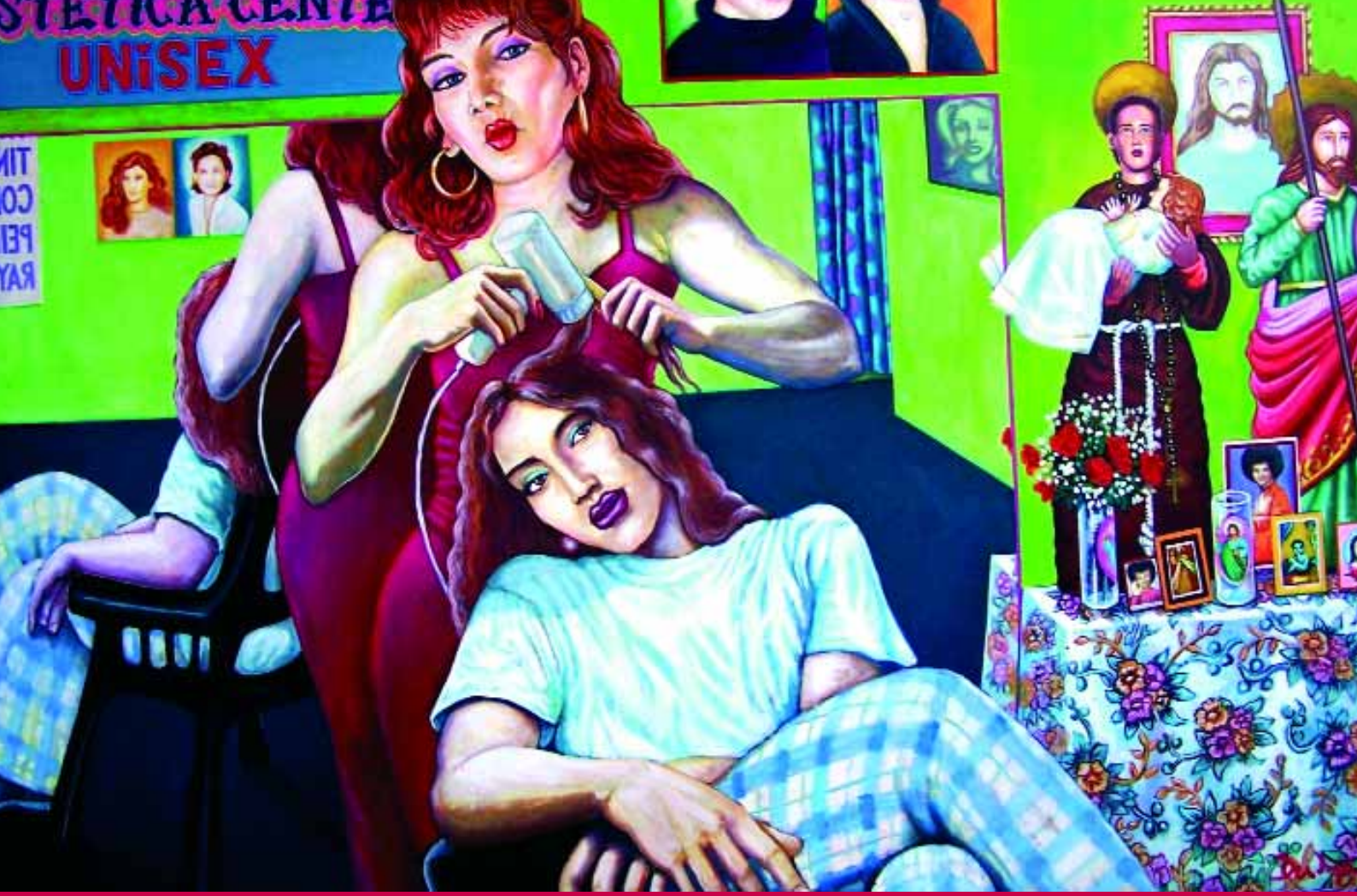

Realising Sexual Rights

In late September 2005, an unusual combination of people gathered together with considerable excitement at the (generally rather sober) Institute of Development Studies in Brighton. They included two Beijing lesbian activists; a civil servant from the Swedish Foreign Ministry; a Gambian woman mobilising against female genital mutilation; a South African feminist researcher; two Brazilian men who promote more egalitarian masculinities; a transgender artist from Peru; an Egyptian advocate for the right to privacy; and a former sex worker/masseur who now works for a development NGO.

During the course of the three-day workshop participants talked, laughed, danced and bonded. Many gained new friends, new ideas and renewed energy for action. This publication attempts to capture some of the inspiration arising from this exploration of sexuality and development connections.

Realising Sexual Rights

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IDS Sexuality and Development Programme 2007

Introduction

In late September 2005, an unusual combination of people gathered together with considerable excitement at the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) in Brighton. They included two Beijing lesbian activists; a civil servant from the Swedish Foreign Ministry; a Gambian woman mobilising against female genital mutilation; a South African feminist researcher; two Brazilian men who promote more egalitarian masculinities; a transgender artist from Peru; an Egyptian advocate for the right to privacy; and a former sex worker/masseur who now works for a development non-governmental organisation (NGO). Participants talked, laughed, danced and bonded. When we left the forum three days later, many of us had gained new friends, new ideas and renewed energy for action.

Out of this event came new connections, inspiration and energy, as well as several publications, including this one.

Why did the workshop happen? or 'How a moustache led to my enlightenment'

Andrea Cornwall and Susie Jolly, researchers at IDS, led the Realising Sexual Rights workshop. What gave them the idea for the workshop? And why did they decide to hold it at IDS?

Andrea I first came to IDS, in 1998, to work on participation and development. For all the talk about inclusion and involvement, about getting in touch with people's own realities and experiences, participatory practices can be deeply exclusionary. I began to come across examples of where 'participatory' processes simply reinforced normativities – marriage normativity, heteronormativity, prejudice against sex workers, and non-married women and men for having sexualities that weren't the norm. As participatory development

morphed into a concern with rights, accountability and democracy, it became clear to me that these contradictions needed to be made more visible – and that sexual rights were in some respects fundamental to any other rights, including the right to participate.

Over the years, I'd got to know and to supervise a series of inspiring students working on sexuality. One was Susie, who had been a driving force behind setting up a ground-breaking seminar series at IDS, Queering Development. We would meet every now and again and talk about how good it would be to take things further. Two experiences spurred me into action. One was another inspiring former student, Jo Doezema, showing me a report from a 'participatory' workshop in which 'the community' had come up with a 'solution' to the 'problem' of sex work, which featured without any commentary in the report 'eliminate sex workers'. And then I heard the story of a gay colleague who was attending a gathering of participatory practitioners having felt forced to conceal his sexuality for fear of ostracism.

Andrea Cornwall and Susie Jolly, the organisers of the Realising Sexual Rights workshop at IDS.

As convenor of a sub-programme on rights and inclusion in the Participation Group, I mooted the idea of exploring the dilemmas of participation from a rights perspective through a focus on sexuality and sexual rights. This grew, in discussions with Susie, into the idea of an event that would bring together activists, practitioners and academics to explore connections between sexuality, rights and participation – and into this workshop.

Susie Since my teenage years in the UK and USA, I've been involved in struggles around sexual rights with local women's groups and bisexual groups. I've also been involved in 'development' since joining UNDP Beijing as a United Nations Volunteer in 1994. It was in Beijing that I started to notice both the parallels and contradictions between my sex rights activism and my development job.

I remember one day running a gender training day for women's federation officials. We started with a game where people say whatever words they think of to do with men and women – such as 'handsome, strong, father, moustache' and 'pretty, tender, menstruation'. We then discussed and divided these words into what was biological (e.g. 'menstruation', 'moustache') and what was social (e.g. 'tender', 'strong'), to introduce the new and Western concepts of 'sex' and 'gender'. But I kept getting stuck on the moustache. Lots of women have facial hair, and only due to social pressure and commercial hair removal products do we manage to stay moustache-free. I began to doubt myself, and the whole gender and development approach I was trying to import into this environment.

I wondered what would happen if instead of me, a 'Western expert' bringing in these rather dubious ideas, we all just went to the gay bar downtown and hung out with the gay boys who called each other sisters, and the girls who knew that you can play a man's role in or out of bed, whether or not you have a moustache or a willy.

Since then I've tried to do less promotion of gender and development orthodoxies, and more of supporting get-togethers between lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) activists, women's rights people, and others who might learn from each other and come up with something new. That's why I wanted to organise the Realising Sexual Rights workshop at IDS.

Transforming IDS, transforming development

The Institute of Development Studies (IDS) is a leading development research and policy institute based at the University of Sussex, Brighton, UK. Founded 40 years ago, it is very much in the mainstream of development studies.

Giuseppe Campuzano *DNI (De Natura Incertus)*, 2004 – portrait by César Delgado Wixan: Giuseppe Campuzano's identity card transformed to propose that everyone should choose their own gender and sexuality. Museo Travesti del Perú

Part of the Vaginal Wall Exhibition displayed at IDS during the workshop. Anne Philpott, The Pleasure Project

For a few days in September 2005, the normally low-key IDS workplace was transformed. Staff and students walked in to posters, images and brightly coloured declarations of sexual rights. The main corridors of the building were lined with vivid and provocative art from the Museo Travesti del Perú (transgender museum in Peru), as well as other exciting images.

The displays generated interest throughout the institution.

> 'I'd never seen anything like it in IDS. It took me aback a bit when I actually stood there and read the posters. It certainly provoked a lot of discussion.' – Martin Newson, IDS porter, commenting on the Vaginal Wall Exhibition

But the Realising Sexual Rights workshop aimed to transform more than the IDS building. Bringing together sexual rights activists from the global South to share their experiences and expertise, it made the case that sexuality is a development issue, and aimed to build bridges between the two.

Who was there?

The Realising Sexual Rights workshop brought together 56 activists, academics, information professionals, practitioners, policymakers and donors grappling with issues of sexuality, rights and development. They came from 20 countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America, the Middle East, North America and Eastern and Western Europe.

Full list of participants

Micheline Americo	Centro das Mulheres do Cabo	Brazil
Henry Armas	GRUPAL (The Working Group for Participation)	Peru
Roberto Arriada Lorea	ESMA/AJURIS – NUPACS/UFRGS (the Nucleus of Research in Anthropology of the Body and Health, at Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul)	Brazil
Hossam Baghat	Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights	Egypt
Sumit Baudh	South and Southeast Asia Resource Centre on Sexuality	India
Deevia Bhana	University of Kwazulu-Natal	South Africa
Xu Bin	Institute for Tongzhi Studies	China
Katherine Browne	University of Brighton	UK
Giuseppe Campuzano	Museo Travesti del Perú	Peru
Sergio Carrara	Latin American Center on Sexuality and Human Rights	Brazil
Andrea Cornwall	IDS	UK
Sonia Correa	ABIA (Brazilian Interdisciplinary Association on AIDS)	Brazil
Joanna Crichton	IDS (now with the African Population and Health Research Council, Kenya)	UK
Jelena Djordjevic	ATC (Anti-Trafficking Center)	Serbia

Jerker Edstrom	International HIV/AIDS Alliance (now with IDS)	UK
Sabina Faiz Rashid	James P. Grant School of Public Health, BRAC University	Bangladesh
Gill Gordon	International HIV/AIDS Alliance	UK
Hanna Hacker	University of Vienna	Austria
Mary Hames	Gender Equity Unit, University of the Western Cape	South Africa
Anupam Hazra	Solidarity and Action Against the HIV Infection in India (SAATHI)	India
Xiaopei He	Pink Space Queer Research Centre	China
Angela Heimburger	International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF), Western Hemisphere Region	USA
Jessica Horn	Sigrid Rausing Trust	UK
Shireen Huq	Naripokkho	Bangladesh
Susie Jolly	IDS	UK
Nighat Kamdar	AWARD (All Women Advancement and Resource Development)	Pakistan
Barbara Klugman	The Ford Foundation	USA
Wendy Knerr	The Pleasure Project	UK
Desiree Lewis	Independent	South Africa
Jill Lewis	Living for Tomorrow Project, Hampshire College, Amherst	USA
Sandra Ljubinkovic	ATC (Anti-Trafficking Center)	Serbia
Jorge Lyra	Institute Papai	Brazil
Veronica Magar	CARE International	Thailand
Benedito Medrado	University Federal of Penambuco (UPFE)	Brazil
Promise Mthembu	International Community of Women Living with HIV/AIDS	South Africa
Marcos Nascimento	Instituto Promundo	Brazil
Karen Newman	International Development Consultant	UK

Arit Oku-Egbas	Africa Regional Sexuality Resource Centre	Nigeria
Grace Osakue	Girl Power Initiative (GPI), EDO/Delta States	Nigeria
Phan Thi Le Mai	United Nations Population Fund (UNPFA)	Vietnam
Oliver Phillips	School of Law, University of Westminster	UK
Anne Philpott	The Pleasure Project	UK
Zoly Rakotoniera	University of Antananarivo	Madagascar
Roger Raupp Rios	Federal Judge	Brazil
Karin Ronge	Women for Women's Human Rights (WWHR) – New Ways	Turkey
Julia Schalk	Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs (now with RFSU)	Sweden
Jaya Sharma	PRISM	India
Kate Shiell	Amnesty International	UK
Song Sufeng	The Sex/Gender Education Forum	China
Sylvia Tamale	Makerere University	Uganda
Isatou Touray	The Gambia Committee on Traditional Practices (GAMCOTRAP)/ Management Development Institute	The Gambia
Carolyn Williams	Gender Institute, London School of Economics	UK
Fiona Williams	IDS (now part freelance, part farmer)	UK
Everjoice Win	ActionAid	South Africa
Ingrid Young	IDS	UK
Carmen Sepulveda Zelaya	IDS (now with ActionAid)	UK

Profiles of six participants

Six participants tell their stories here.

Sonia Correa (Brazil) I have been working with women's sexuality issues since the late 1970s in Brazil. Since the 1990s I have been mostly involved with the global policy process such as Cairo, Beijing, the Brazilian Resolution on Human Rights and Sexual Orientation, to mention a few examples.

Sonia Correa

I participated in the workshop with two different hats: DAWN and SPW. Since 2003, both these projects have been under my coordination and are based in Rio de Janeiro at the Brazilian Interdisciplinary Association on AIDS (ABIA), which is one of the oldest Brazilian NGOs working with HIV/AIDS and has a strong focus on human rights and sexuality.

DAWN (Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era)

A network of women scholars and activists from the economic South who are committed to working for economic justice, gender justice and democracy. Key areas of work include:

- Political economy of globalisation
- Political restructuring and social transformation
- Sustainable livelihoods
- Sexual and reproductive health and rights.

www.dawnnet.org

(SPW) Sexuality Policy Watch

SPW started in 2002 as a global forum composed of researchers and activists from a wide range of countries and regions of the world. The SPW mandate is twofold:

- Contributing to global policy debates on sexuality and related issues through research and analysis
- Promoting effective links between local, regional and global initiatives.

The project is based at ABIA (Brazilian Interdisciplinary Association on AIDS) in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.
www.sxpolitics.org

'A challenge sexuality and development thinkers must tackle is to consolidate sexual rights as a foundation of erotic justice. Erotic justice endorses principles of pleasure, fulfilment and delight in sexuality, consent in sexual practices between partners, and a public climate that restricts violence, stigma and discrimination. This concept is inspired by Gayle Rubin (1984). Erotic justice should have the same policy legitimacy as the long-standing and widely accepted principle of social justice and the more recently recognised premise of gender justice.' – Sonia Correa

Julia Schalk (Sweden) When I did my master's thesis in Zambia in the spring of 2002, my focus was women's organisations' participation in the Zambian national HIV/AIDS policy process. During the interviews, which involved both civil society and government, it became obvious that realising women's sexual rights was necessary – not only to prevent the spread of HIV but also in order to increase women's political participation on an equal footing with men. I believe it was my own understanding of ... how sexuality is used as a positive force as well as a source of defining power, whether in Zambia or in my own surroundings in Sweden, that made me continue working with these issues.

Since then I have learnt the hard way about the inability among the movements that should be pushing for the realisation of sexual rights to understand each other. As a feminist, it took a long time before I got over the personal disappointment I felt when discovering what I recognised as homophobia, transphobia and moralistic attitudes towards sex among some Swedish feminist movements. That realisation did of course also start a positive and necessary process of questioning my own values, privileges and positions within the hierarchy of sexuality, gender and ethnicity. A continuing progress I have to say!

Julia Schalk

At the time of the Realising Sexual Rights workshop I worked for the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs. Today however I work for a Swedish NGO, RFSU (the Swedish Association for Sexuality Education). My work at RFSU is focused on advocacy of sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) as a political global issue, targeting the Swedish government and parliament, EU and UN.

RFSU (the Swedish Association for Sexuality Education)

Founded in 1933, RFSU is a member association of the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF). Today it is the leading organisation in Sweden in the field of sexual and reproductive health and rights. RFSU focuses on ensuring access to sexual and reproductive health information and services from a rights-based perspective.

Its work is based on recognition of three different freedoms, which are fundamental preconditions for a person's ability to experience self-worth and self-esteem:

- Freedom to choose
- Freedom to enjoy
- Freedom to be oneself.

An important condition to these freedoms is that one person's freedom may not result in someone else's lack of freedom.

www.rfsu.se/default_en-us.asp

'I define poverty not only as lack of money but lack of opportunities. Freedom to express one's own sexuality is a human right. Discrimination and oppression on the basis of sexuality is insulting, threatening and painful to the person affected and prevents them from participating in social, political and work life. When looking at power structures in a society ... you can be sure that the ones who have the power to express and define their sexuality have the power in political and economic decision-making. That's why HIV and AIDS is such a controversial topic.' – Julia Schalk

Sumit Baudh (India) I work on sexuality and law, and am an Advocate (Delhi Bar) and a non-practising solicitor (England and Wales). My areas of interest include the human rights of queers, *dalits*, and undocumented migrant workers in India. I am currently the Senior Programme Associate at the South and Southeast Asia Resource Centre on Sexuality, in Delhi. In addition, I am closely involved with the Voices Against 377, a coalition of NGO and progressive groups based in Delhi. It is a point of intersection and dialogue between various social movements united in opposition to Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code which criminalises private consensual sexual acts deemed to be 'against the order of nature' (www.voicesagainst377.org).

The South and Southeast Asia Resource Centre on Sexuality

The organisation aims to increase knowledge and scholarship on issues of sexuality, sexual health and sexual wellbeing in the region. A regional Advisory Committee provides inputs on country-specific needs. Similar centres are located in Africa, Latin America and the USA. The centre serves as a space for activists, advocates, practitioners and researchers to better understand, examine and expand upon the complex issues surrounding debates on sexuality.
www.asiasrc.org


Sumit Baudh

'Manifestation of sexuality might depend on a range of factors: personal temperament, conservative or liberal values, a sense of propriety or impropriety, and so on and so forth. Regardless of its manifestation, dormant or otherwise, sexuality remains an integral component of human experience. Why must it then have to recourse to rights ranging from privacy, equality, to human dignity? Given its integral nature it calls for a distinct human right, namely Right to Sexual Autonomy.' – Sumit Baudh

Jelena Djordjevic (Serbia) My main area of activism is combating trafficking in women through supporting the rights of migrants and sex workers, as well as supporting women's rights more broadly, and anti-militarist organising through the International Network of 'Women in Black'. In 2003, together with Sandra Ljubinkovic, I co-founded the Anti-Trafficking Center (ATC), a feminist NGO working to eradicate trafficking in human beings, with a special emphasis on women and girls.

Jelena Djordjevic (fourth from right) at an International Women in Black vigil in Jerusalem.

Anti-Trafficking Center (ATC), Serbia

ATC focuses on the causes of trafficking, such as gender-based violence, poverty, unemployment and lack of opportunities. It runs public advocacy and media campaigns, and trains professionals who work with groups at risk. ATC also runs outreach programmes for sex workers to support them in defending themselves against police violence, risks of being trafficked, and other insecurities.
www.atc.org.yu

'As an activist within the feminist movement, I have had the opportunity to participate in various women's mobilising around trafficking. In the course of this I have become highly critical of the work of the majority of women's organisations working on trafficking as [they] started "cooperating" with state institutions under the insistence of international organisations. Yet state institutions – such as police – are often themselves inflicting violence against particular groups of women such as sex workers and migrant women. And states are often more interested in controlling migration than creating opportunities for women to migrate safely.' – Jelena Djordjevic

Henry Armas (Peru) I work for GRUPAL, which aims to promote citizens' participation in government through identifying, developing and interiorising democratic values in order to promote a democratic political culture. My main areas of activism are health, social

participation and higher education as a space for social transformation. Sexuality crosses all of them.

Working in citizen participation created the opportunity to work with different groups that were claiming more inclusion. However, we noticed that few people were paying attention to sexuality issues as part of human rights work and felt that it was an important area at the heart of rights and social change.

We started to participate in some sexuality-related networks, such as the working group for the law against discrimination based on sexual orientation, and to include some elements of sexual rights in our workshops with people from other networks, such as Afro-descendant grassroots, popular health advisers, civil society groups, etc. We felt that there were thematic ghettos in the work of human rights groups and we wanted to create linkages between them.

GRUPAL – The Working Group for Participation

GRUPAL is a group of Peruvian young professionals with academic, NGO and government institution experience working on participation at the local level (Grupo de Trabajo para la Participación en el Ámbito Local). Its mission is to promote citizen participation in democratic processes that can benefit both the individuals and the community.
www.grupal.org/inicio.htm (Spanish only)

'I think the question should be why professionals in the past thought that sexuality was not a development issue. Sexuality and sexual rights have undeniable linkages with human rights and development. I am very surprised about the fact that this relationship has not been developed and taken into consideration already, beyond HIV and birth control. Human rights realisation depends also on sexual rights realisation. Violations of sexual rights affect people's access to education, employment, health, political participation, food, etc.'
– Henry Armas

Henry Armas

Isatou Touray

Isatou Touray (The Gambia) I work for GAMCOTRAP/Management Development Institute, a women's rights NGO established in 1984 and affiliated to the Inter-Africa Committee (IAC) on Traditional Practices. Its main focus is on sexual and reproductive health rights of women and girl-children and advocacy on harmful traditional practices such as female genital mutilation (FGM), early marriage, wife inheritance, and cross-generational marriage that contribute negatively to female sexuality. At the same time, GAMCOTRAP seeks to identify and support beneficial traditional practices such as breastfeeding.

My experience of working in rural areas placed me in a position to observe the maternal and infant mortality deaths occurring on a daily basis over the years. With my gender lens I see things differently. Being a victim of FGM, I am also aware of its effects on women's sexual and reproductive health. And I realise that there is a 'culture of silence' around female sexuality. Being in a privileged position I feel that I have a duty and responsibility to the constituency of women and girl-children.

The Gambia Committee on Traditional Practices (GAMCOTRAP)/Management Development Institute

GAMCOTRAP's mission is to create awareness of men and women about traditional practices in The Gambia. It aims to preserve beneficial practices as well as to eliminate harmful traditional practices. It also aims to create awareness of women by involving them in the decision-making processes regarding their sexuality.

GAMCOTRAP is committed to promotion and protection of women and girl-children's sexual and reproductive health and rights. It supports national and international declarations protecting these rights, in particular the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. GAMCOTRAP's objectives include:

- To carry out research into traditional practices that affect the sexual and reproductive health of women and girl-children in The Gambia

- To identify and promote traditional practices that improve the status of girl-children and women
- To create awareness of the effects of FGM, nutritional taboos, child/early marriages and wife inheritance
- To sensitise and lobby decision-makers and policymakers, about sociocultural practices that are harmful to the health of girl-children and women
- To create awareness on international and national instruments that address discrimination and violence against girl-children and women.

'Sexuality is a development issue because it touches on the core of human reproductive rights and existence. Sexual rights is about sexual autonomy and the right to make decisions over one's sexual identity, health and overall wellbeing.' – Isatou Touray

Sexuality and development: making the connections

What is sexuality anyway?

Discussions at the Realising Sexual Rights workshop brought out the participants' different understandings of sexuality. How far is sexuality biological, an inner force, a life force, and part of the essence of being human? How far is sexuality constructed by our environments, and by all the power relations that surround us?

The World Health Organization (WHO), through a process of consultation, came up with a working definition of sexuality that includes biology, psychology, society, economics, politics and many other factors.

Sexuality is a central aspect of being human throughout life and encompasses sex, gender identities and roles, sexual orientation, eroticism, pleasure, intimacy and reproduction. Sexuality is experienced and expressed in thoughts, fantasies, desires, beliefs, attitudes, values, behaviours, practices, roles and relationships. While sexuality can include all of these dimensions, not all of them are always experienced or expressed. Sexuality is influenced by the interaction of biological, psychological, social, economic, political, cultural, ethical, legal, historical, religious and spiritual factors. (WHO, Working Definitions of Sexual Health www.who.int/reproductive-health/gender/sexual_health.html#2)

Conceptions of sexuality vary over time. For example, in early twentieth-century China, when women consulted a doctor they would cover themselves with a sheet, exposing only their hand and wrist so the doctor could measure their pulse (one of the key diagnostic methods in Chinese medicine). A woman's body was deemed so sexual that the doctor could not even touch or view her beyond her wrist. Yet in contemporary China, women visit gynaecologists, some of whom are male. When the doctor looks inside a woman's vagina, or inserts his fingers for an internal examination, this interaction is not generally seen as sexual but is simply accepted as part of medical treatment. It is not the act itself that determines whether the interaction is sexual but the context, and the meaning given by that historical and social context.

Conceptions of sexuality vary within and between cultures. In some contexts, there is no conception of sexuality as a distinct domain at all.

Ethnographic discussion of the Huaoroni people in Amazonian Ecuador: Sensuality in this culture is not centred on genitalia, nor is it the exclusive domain of adult heterosexuality; it should not, therefore, be assimilated to 'sexual pleasure' ... No distinction is made between the pleasure and contentment felt during intercourse, the pleasure

> and contentment of a three-year-old caressing the breast of the woman from whom she or he is feeding, the merry feeling of someone stroking gently the body of a caressing companion, the gratification caused by the action of delousing someone's head, or the pleasure of being deloused by someone's expert hands ... Sexuality as an objectified domain referring to the physical relations between the sexes does not exist as such. (Rival *et al*. 1998)

While workshop participants differed on our understandings of sexuality, there was agreement on the following:

> Sexual meanings are not universal absolutes, but ambiguous and problematic categories. (Plummer 2002)

How should we connect sexuality and development?

This was a question for discussion at the workshop. Development has always had an awkward relationship with issues of sexuality. There are those who believe that sexuality has nothing to do with development. Some see sexuality as part of the 'private sphere', and therefore not something that concerns development. And for some, talking about sexuality is just embarrassing.

> 'We need to enable people to be as comfortable in talking about sexuality as they have become about gender.' – Robert Chambers, IDS

Sex can be seen as a side issue to the more serious and pressing concerns of economic growth and poverty reduction. Some see sexuality as frivolous compared to the seriousness of poverty, or may assume that poor people are too preoccupied with survival to be concerned about sexual pleasure.

Yet development agencies have always dealt with sexuality, albeit in an unrecognised and usually negative way, whether through population control, or tackling sexual violence or sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Sex has been treated primarily as a problem that needs to be contained, something that presents risks to individuals or society, rather than as a potential source of happiness, intimacy, fulfilment and pleasure. And the significance of sexuality has rarely been acknowledged for employment, livelihoods, security, housing, education, governance and social protection.

Sexuality affects the very things that many think of as constituting 'development'. The right to have intimate relationships of our own choosing and to have those choices respected, without being victim to violence, ostracism or discrimination, is fundamental to our lives and livelihoods. If women's, men's and transgender people's bodies can be violated by others, and if our very existence is threatened, how can we ever enjoy the kind of development imagined by writers like Amartya Sen (1999)?

Challenging development paradigms

'By treating poor people as if they were children, it remains possible to keep their sexuality invisible.' – Henry Armas, GRUPAL, Peru

'[I note] Henry's metaphor – seeing poor people as children and therefore as not sexual. But in Africa, African people are seen as over-sexed and policies are geared to controlling their sexuality.' – Sylvia Tamale, Makerere University, Uganda

While participants saw sexuality, poverty and development as integrally related, they did not want to restrict themselves to the framework of poverty. Some were unwilling to engage with what they saw as the limitations of the development industry. During the workshop, Susie Jolly and Andrea Cornwall suggested looking at the links between sexuality and poverty, and how to make the case to the

development industry that sexuality is a key issue. This discussion failed to excite the majority. Many were involved in 'development' – whether through changing societies, promoting rights, NGO organising, lobbying and consulting at local, national or UN level, or spending or distributing development funding. However, several participants were uncomfortable with development paradigms and reluctant to frame their thinking in relation to these, finding them constraining rather than constructive.

> Women in Bangladesh were of interest to ... development agencies only in our roles as mothers and carers of families and households ... Our concerns were subsidiary to the more 'important' issues ... of poverty 'alleviation'. Fundamental inequalities in the formal rights and freedoms and in the reality of everyday life were not addressed. Above all there was no understanding of the need to alter the embedded meanings of what it is to be a man or a woman in our world. (Huq 2004)

Sexuality and economics

We did consider the economics of sexuality, and how sexuality can be commodified. We agreed that more work needs to be done on this. In particular, there is a missing economic dimension to thinking and policymaking around sex work, which can be an income-generation measure and means for economic survival.

> 'Economists cannot deny, by their own definitions, the centrality of sexuality to human wellbeing. The problem is, because they can't measure it, they have chosen to ignore it.' – Martin Greeley, IDS Economist

Poster from the Catholics for a Free Choice Condoms4Life Campaign.

Development with a body

One clear message that came out of the discussion was that we need the kind of 'development' that affirms the centrality of human dignity, freedom and wellbeing. Above all, we need to move towards an 'embodied development'. Rights-based approaches which take on sexual rights issues could be part of this process.

> 'We used to talk about development with a human face. We should be talking about development with a body.' – Arit Oku-Egbas, Africa Regional Sexuality Resource Centre, Nigeria

Resisting US conditionalities on HIV/AIDS funding

As sexual rights activists, a key question during the workshop was how do we resist and counter US conditionalities on their HIV/AIDS funding? These consist of:

- ABC strategies (Abstinence, Be faithful, use Condoms), with 33 per cent of prevention funds having to be spent on the promotion of abstinence until marriage. (The 33 per cent condition was revoked by the US senate in September 2007 but abstinence is still being promoted.)
- A shift in condom funding and distribution
- A loyalty oath condemning prostitution
- Global gag rule (organisations providing abortion services or even providing information about abortion services cannot receive funding)
- Rejection of harm reduction strategies for drug users.

This presents a serious dilemma for many organisations. They need the funding; staff and communities depend on it. Without it, they can't continue their work and people will suffer. Brazil refused to sign the clause condemning prostitution and consequently forfeited $40 million – so far no country or donor has come to their rescue.

'A global campaign against PEPFAR is needed. We need to use all this energy and diversity to start something now!' – Sonia Correa, ABIA, Brazil

Strategies for action

Participants agreed the need to disseminate correct information about US policy, to make the issues public and to find methods for lobbying against the policy restrictions.

- Refuse US aid money: this may push the US government to change their policies because they do want to spend their funds. Form alliances to act as pressure groups and make lists of organisations which have refused to take US funds – then engage them as allies
- Move towards European donors (particularly the Nordic countries which have more progressive policies) and Japan. Find out what local funds are available
- Collect and disseminate hard evidence about the impact of US restrictions on different groups in specific contexts
- Strengthen our own work on HIV prevention with young people, sharing good practice and building on our own rights-based, evidence-based and community work
- Support groups on the ground which are resisting US policy, for example youth groups opposing abstinence-only campaigns in Zambia.

Sexual rights

What are sexual rights?

So what exactly is a sexual right? There are many definitions and understandings of sexual rights. For the duration of the Realising Sexual Rights workshop, the walls of the IDS building were adorned with extracts from sexual rights charters and declarations, some of which are reproduced here.

Gender and reproductive rights

Sexual rights embrace human rights that are already recognised in national laws, international human rights documents and other consensus documents. These include the right of all persons, free of coercion, discrimination and violence, to:

- the highest attainable standard of health in relation to sexuality, including access to sexual and reproductive healthcare services
- seek, receive and impart information in relation to sexuality
- sexuality education
- respect for bodily integrity
- choice of partner
- decide to be sexually active or not
- consensual sexual relations
- consensual marriage
- decide whether or not, and when to have children
- pursue a satisfying, safe and pleasurable sexual life.

The responsible exercise of human rights requires that all persons respect the rights of others.

'Gender and reproductive rights', Department of Reproductive Health and Research, WHO, www.who.int/reproductive-health/gender/sexual_health.htm

Sexual Rights Charter [extracts]
Women's Health Project South Africa

If we follow the sexual rights and responsibilities in this Charter, our country will be less violent, safer, and happier for all.

The right to enjoy sex in sexual relationships, you have the right to:

- enjoy sex just for the pleasure of it
- enjoy sex right up into old age
- be treated as an equal sexual partner
- be treated with dignity and respect
- express your desires, needs and concerns – and be listened to
- be the one to initiate sex
- choose your sexual partner, whether they are the same or the opposite sex.

You too have the responsibility to respect the rights of your sexual partner.

The right to safer sex

Safer sex is a way of having sex that protects you from sexually transmitted infections, including HIV/AIDS, and from unwanted pregnancy. It is therefore your right to:

- have a clinic or healthcare centre nearby that can offer you safe and reliable ways to protect yourself from unwanted pregnancy
- be given the correct information about safer sex, so that you can choose how you want to have sex
- have access to affordable healthcare
- be treated by healthcare workers in a respectful, caring and sensitive way
- use male or female condoms to protect yourself from sexually transmitted infections, including HIV.

You have the responsibility to protect yourself and your partner.

The right to say 'no'

You have the right to:

- say 'no' and 'stop' if you do not want to go ahead with sex
- be listened to and respected.

(Women's Health Project 2001)

Organisations such as the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) have created a charter of sexual rights, and are now working on an update. Such charters need to be useful across different cultures and legal systems. This requires engaging not only with lawyers and legal scholars but also with those involved in grassroots struggles.

IPPF Charter on Sexual and Reproductive Rights, 1995

1.The right to life should be invoked to protect women whose lives are currently endangered by pregnancy.

2. The right to liberty and security of the person ... to protect women currently at risk from genital mutilation, or subject to forced pregnancy, sterilisation or abortion.

3. The right to equality and to be free from all forms of discrimination ... to protect the right of all people, regardless of race, colour, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, family position, age, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status, to equal access to information, education and services related to development, and to sexual and reproductive health.

4. The right to privacy ... to protect the right of all clients of sexual and reproductive healthcare information, education and services to a degree of privacy, and to confidentiality with regard to personal information given to service providers.

5. The right to freedom of thought ... to protect the right of all persons to access to education and information related to their sexual and reproductive health free from restrictions on grounds of thought, conscience and religion.

6. The right to information and education … to protect the right of all persons to access to full information on the benefits, risks and effectiveness of all methods of fertility regulation, in order that any decisions they take on such matters are made with full, free and informed consent.

7. The right to choose whether or not to marry and to found and plan a family … to protect all persons against any marriage entered into without the full, free and informed consent of both partners.

8. The right to decide whether or when to have children … to protect the right of all persons to reproductive healthcare services which offer the widest possible range of safe, effective and acceptable methods of fertility regulation, and are accessible, affordable, acceptable and convenient to all users.

9. The right to healthcare and health protection … to protect the right of all persons to the highest possible quality of healthcare, and the right to be free from traditional practices which are harmful to health.

10. The right to the benefits of scientific progress …to protect the right of all persons to access to available reproductive healthcare technology which independent studies have shown to have an acceptable risk/benefit profile, and where to withhold such technology would have harmful effects on health and wellbeing.

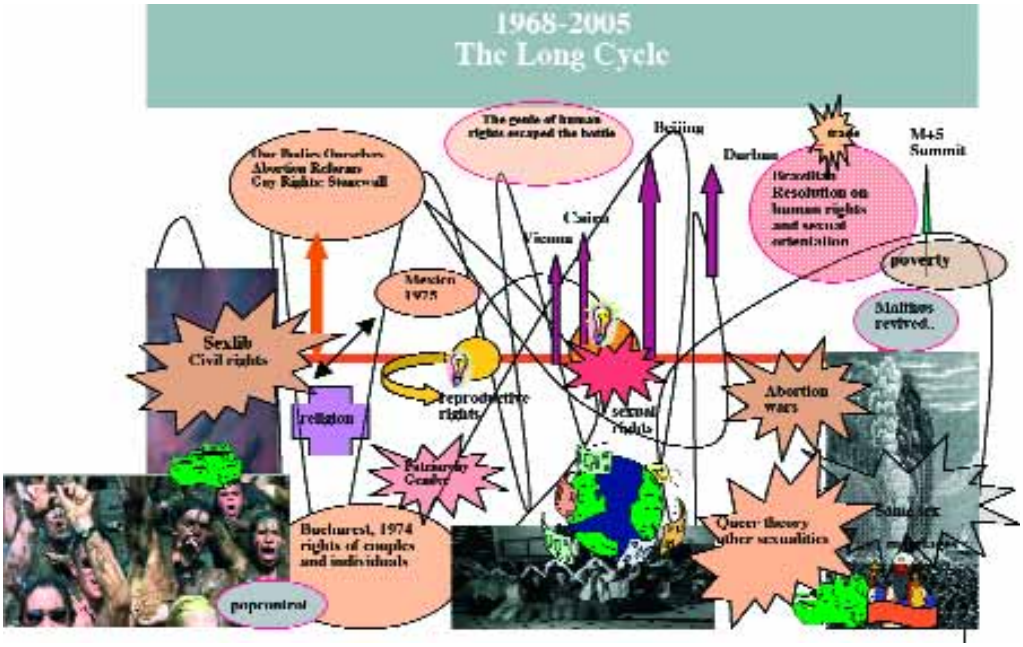
11. The right to freedom of assembly and political participation … to protect the right to form an association which aims to promote sexual and reproductive health and rights.

12. The right to be free from torture and ill treatment … to protect children, women and men from all forms of sexual violence, exploitation and abuse.

www.ippf.org

Sonia Correa on sexual rights – then and now

Sonia Correa, one of the world's leading authorities on sexual rights, opened the workshop with her presentation 'Sexuality rights and development: making the connections'. She traced debates about sexuality back to 1968, highlighting landmark moments and key shifts in thinking and talking about sexual rights.



Some landmarks

- 1968 – sexual liberation and civil rights movements mobilise
- Bucharest, 1974 – at the World Population Conference the rights of couples and individuals began to be talked about

- Mexico City, 1975 – at the First World Conference on Women the concept of bodily integrity was invented
- Vienna, 1993 – the World Conference on Human Rights called for the elimination of sexual- and gender-based violence, and recognised rape as a weapon of war
- Cairo, 1994 – the International Conference on Population and Development recognised that people should be able to have a 'satisfying and safe sex life'
- Beijing, 1995 – United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women

> The human rights of women include their right to have control over and decide freely and responsibly on matters related to their sexuality, including sexual and reproductive health, free of coercion, discrimination and violence. Equal relationships between women and men in matters of sexual relations and reproduction, including full respect for the integrity of the person, require mutual respect, consent and shared responsibility for sexual behaviour and its consequences. (Beijing Platform for Action, Paragraph 96)

- Durban, 2001 – at the World Conference Against Racism sexual rights activists framed their claims as part of the struggle against racism
- 2003 – the Brazilian delegation introduced a resolution condemning discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation to the United Nations Commission on Human Rights. Conservative Muslim and Christian states, including the Vatican, united in opposition and succeeded in deferring the resolution.

What has changed?

Sonia drew attention to the ways in which certain themes have reappeared over the decades. She argued that in recent years, struggles over sexual rights have become more intense and interconnected.

The AIDS pandemic has meant that sexuality can no longer be ignored. People have become more willing to talk about sex, and have found new ways to explore questions of desire, power and pleasure.

Laws permitting same-sex partners the same legal rights as heterosexuals and banning discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation are taking root in the global South (e.g. South Africa, Brazil) as well as in the North.

Movements of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people, of sex workers, and people living with HIV/AIDS have become more visible. They are increasingly building alliances with other social movements in the fight for rights and citizenship.

But at the same time, new forms of conservatism in both north and south are threatening people's very right to exist, let alone to love. For example, abstinence-only policies supported by the USA mean that in countries such as Uganda, which once impressed the world with its HIV prevention strategies, condoms are becoming less and less available.

How far are sexual rights a useful framework?

Understandings of sexual rights and of sexuality itself vary across cultures, as well as within and between different cultures in any society. During the workshop, discussions highlighted the difficulties of defining people's experiences of sexuality in terms of rights.

'Rights are never neutral; they come to be filled with cultural content as they are negotiated in practice.' – Sergio Carrara, Latin American Center on Sexuality and Human Rights, Brazil

Human rights frameworks present their own challenges, not least the balance between protection and freedom. Many working in the field of rights may not be concerned with sexuality, or may find it problematic.

> 'Human rights is about saving the innocent. As soon as you sexualise them, everyone has a problem.' – Kate Shiell, Amnesty International, UK

In contexts such as China, Xu Bin pointed out, advocating sexual *rights* can attract the charge of being too Western, too radical. Framing claims around sexuality as a gender or health issue, or in terms of social harmony, may create more space to speak and act.

One contested area was how happy participants were with the existing language of sexual rights. It was agreed that an awareness was needed of when it helps us, and when it limits us by the way we use it.

> 'The subversive potential of queer sexuality is ... restrained by the fact that the rights language, in the manner in which it is deployed, is often limited to violations ... We find that it is sometimes easier for us as queer activists to restrict the discourse to violations, and to generate a more limited consensus around these. There is also the danger of our trying to frame ourselves as being "like everyone else", in the process of trying to seek fair treatment. On the part of others too there is a preference for limiting the engagement to violations of human rights. There is a reluctance to recognise and concede to the subversive potential that queer desire holds. The resistance comes from the structures and ideologies that are threatened.'
> – Jaya Sharma, PRISM, India (Sharma 2006)

The majority of participants found sexual rights a useful framework to work with, despite its limitations.

Sexual rights for minorities and majorities too?

Demanding new laws or rights using categories such as 'gay', 'bisexual', 'heterosexual' or 'transgender' may, as Henry Armas pointed out, be counterproductive. These categories are cultural constructions that may fail to make either cultural or political sense of local expressions and experiences of sexuality. Sumit Baudh highlighted the wide spectrum of gender and sexual identity in India. This includes 'men who have sex with men' (MSM) who do not identify themselves as gay; *hijras* who may feel that they are a third sex, neither male nor female; and *kothis*, mostly non-English-speaking lower- and middle-class men who feel and act feminine and prefer anal penetration by more masculine men. Then there are the LGBTs (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) who are mostly drawn from the urban, English-speaking middle and upper classes. There are further variations across each region of India based on practices of gender and sexual identity. And in practice, these identities are fluid rather than fixed. People may shift from one to another, or claim more than one identity at the same time.

There is a danger that international LGBT groups may challenge the assumptions of heterosexuality within development, but end up imposing their own models of sexuality and sexual identity. Rights for those with same sex sexualities and transgender identities must be supported, but taking the lead from local movements and contexts.

Presentations at the workshop highlighted the diversity of experience between 'minorities', which may include the denial of sexuality itself, for example in the case of women living with HIV/AIDS.

> 'Women living with HIV are not seen as sexual beings. They are not supposed to get pregnant or have sex. The focus is on saving the babies and screening for STIs. The perception is that they have "retired" from sex and sexuality.' – Promise Mthembu, International Community of Women Living with HIV/AIDS, South Africa

Participants emphasised how 'majorities' such as married people may need sexual rights just as much as minorities, for example women raped by their husbands, or women wanting sex outside marriage in a context where this is not allowed. The question was raised, 'What are straight men's sexual rights?' No one offered any immediate answers but Susie Jolly and Andrea Cornwall commissioned a short reflection on this question for the *IDS Bulletin* on sexuality which came out of this workshop (see Greig 2006).

Sexual rights and the law

The workshop participants debated about how much might be expected from using legal systems and the language of rights. Opinions were divided. However, participants did agree that putting protective legislation in place and removing discriminatory laws were part of the struggle for realising sexual rights.

But as Shireen Huq pointed out, sometimes rights talk could make a difference precisely because it can enable people to gain a sense of their entitlements, even in contexts where there may be little chance of actually being able to press legal claims. However, for Hanna Hacker recourse to legal systems is always problematic.

> 'I like the concept of dissidence but isn't it opposed to the idea of rights? Doesn't it mean subverting and overthrowing the idea of law? What place is there for the idea of being dissident, subversive in the rights-based approach?' – Hanna Hacker, University of Vienna, Austria

Which sexual rights do we want?

What is our agenda and what do we want? Participants agreed that thinking about which rights they want and their own definitions of sexual rights was a good place to start working this out.

'We tend to focus a lot on our enemies because they're very powerful, but if they come to us and say what is a sexual right, we won't be able to answer them.' – Kate Shiell, Amnesty International, UK

'What would the world be like if we really did have the right to choose our sexuality and pleasurable sexual relations?' – Karin Ronge, WWHR – New Ways, Turkey

A small group discussed the question 'Which sexual rights do we want?', but perhaps unsurprisingly found it difficult to come up with a definitive answer. So they decided to look at which frameworks might help answer the question itself:

- Human rights – look at the language of human rights and what it says about sex, sexuality and sexual rights
- The life span approach – what sexual rights would people like to have at the age of 7, 12, 25, 70? Each age group has potentially different issues with regard to sexual rights and pleasure
- Health – what access do people have to sexual health services, and what do they want and need?
- Feminism – look at ideas in feminist theory. The resolutions from the Fourth International Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995 and other conferences are also relevant. However, these have their limitations – for example, the key Paragraph 96 from Beijing implies a focus on heterosexual women.

The group stressed the need to recognise that sexuality itself is influenced by power relations – this has to be integral to sexual rights discussions and policy. Sexual rights need to be put in context, and related to factors such as power and poverty. Whatever frameworks are used, sexual rights identified must be put to the test, to assess their relevance to, for example, migrant populations, people in poverty, as well as people with different sexualities and relationship forms.

Discussion, debates and disagreements

Building alliances

The workshop brought together people who might otherwise never have come into dialogue, and some of its most inspiring stories were those about new coalitions or alliances being built around common concerns.

Who might ally around sexual rights?

Participants started by imagining who/which groups might form alliances around sexual rights, and came up with the following (non-exhaustive!) list:

- Women's movement
- Sex workers' organisations
- Human rights groups
- Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual
- Men's and masculinities groups
- People Living with HIV/AIDS (PLHA) movement
- Progressive religious groups
- Family planning and reproductive health groups
- Peace movements
- Anti-globalisation movement.

Tensions in building alliances – more or less state intervention?

But discussions also brought to the surface some of the dilemmas and challenges of building alliances. There is a tension between those who are pressing for greater state intervention (as feminists have often done) and those whose activism is focused on securing freedom from

state intrusion (as has often been the case for LGBT and sex worker rights movements).

Hossam Baghat (Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights) outlined the history of sexual rights struggles in the Middle East, involving both the women's and LGBT movements. He emphasised the limitations and challenges for alliance-building in a context where Islamic and Christian religious organisations hold such influence. In particular, he highlighted the possible tensions between women's rights to bodily integrity – for example requiring state protection against domestic violence – and the LGBT movement's struggle to claim a 'private space' where they have 'the right to be left alone' by state and society. Likewise sex workers, who face police harassment in most countries, may seek first the right to be free of such harassment, rather than seeking protection from police or other state bodies.

Participants in the workshop: (from right) Carmen Sepulveda Zelaya, Jessica Horn, Giuseppe Campuzano, Xiaopei He, Song Sufeng, Anupam Hazra, Hanna Hacker.

Solidarity between sex workers, transgender and women's rights activists in Bangladesh

Forging alliances across this divide has proved challenging but has been done. Shireen Huq described how in 1999 the Bangladesh government forcefully evicted sex workers from a large cluster of brothels just outside Dhaka. Members of the sex worker organisation, Ulka, immediately sought support from Naripokkho, a country-wide women's NGO. The Naripokkho office was transformed into an impromptu shelter with over 40 women sleeping there, and a few more staying with staff in their homes. This led to a new set of relationships and alliances between the sex workers and staff. Naripokkho and other Bangladeshi women's organisations supported a campaign for the rights of the sex workers and their struggles against illegal evictions.

Media coverage of sex workers' demands – 'We are women, we are workers, we are citizens' – provoked a shift in the way sex work was discussed. For example, instead of using the word 'prostitute', the media began to use the word 'sex worker', with the implication that

sex work is labour rather than illicit behaviour. *Hijras* (transgender) sex workers were among those who participated in the campaign, generating further alliances and new thinking in Naripokkho.

> 'One of the groups that came forward during this campaign was of *hijras* [transgender and inter-sex persons], committing us to a new relationship and adding a whole other dimension to our sexual rights campaign. It challenged our own adoption of the standard sex/gender concepts as fixed categories, and forced us to redefine our notion of what makes a woman. The application for membership of the national women's network by *hijra* groups started for us a process of revisiting the biology *vs* social construction framework that had thus far informed our thinking on gender and social change.' (Huq 2006)

Strategies for action

Participants agreed that there was limited understanding and communication between and across different sexual rights movements. The need was recognised to work together to find common interests and build on existing alliances, and the following strategies for action were identified:

- Use plain language to describe concepts and approaches so that communication is clear between one another; there may also be a need for mediators between the different movements
- Explore the concept of citizenship as a means to overcoming sexuality, class and racial divides
- Challenge each other to deal with any fears of stigma and discrimination, including the fear that by engaging with other 'marginalised' groups individuals will become more marginalised
- Focus on justice rather than identity politics, to support the issues which can and do bring people together

- Understand each other's working cultures (whether participatory or very structured) and challenge each other when this matters
- Where there are conflicting interests and views over sexuality, players need to confront each other constructively and 'battle it out'. It also has to be accepted that alliances don't always work.

Working with women, men and transgender

Alliances between different genders may in itself be a challenge, with the realities of gender inequality and that perpetrators of sexual violence are more often men, and victims more often women and transgender. Yet it is all too easy to talk about men as the 'problem' while failing to pay attention to the fractured identities, fragility and powerlessness that men may experience.

Working with men

During the workshop, there was some division of opinion over whether/how to include (heterosexual) men when working with women on sexual rights.

'Stop making men the enemy and blaming them for asserting their desires ... [We need to] move away from blaming men to examining social constructs that control women but in fact also weigh heavily on men.' – Veronica Magar, CARE International, Thailand

'[Why are we focusing on] men and their problems? The women's movement has not even begun to make a dent in most women's lives.' – Sabina Faiz Rashid, BRAC University, Bangladesh

'In these areas of HIV/AIDS, as in the areas of sexual behaviours and sexual pleasure, men and women are in it together, are part of any

problem just as they have to be part of any solution.'
– Jill Lewis, Hampshire College, USA and Gill Gordon, International HIV/AIDS Alliance, UK

Jorge Lyra and Benedito Medrado (from Institute Papai in Recife, Brazil) and Marcos Nascimento (from Instituto Promundo in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil) spoke of programmes that work with young men to reframe heterosexual male sexual and gender identities in ways that encourage respect, equality and intimacy.

Programme H, Brazil and Mexico

Presented at the workshop by Marcos Nascimento

This programme was developed by Instituto Promundo, based in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, and three other NGOs in Brazil and Mexico. Program H focuses on helping young men to reflect upon and question the traditional norms of what defines 'manhood'. The initiative targets these norms through a focus on gender-equitable norms and behaviours, as defined by four principles:

1. Relationships are based on respect, equality and intimacy rather than sexual conquest
2. A perspective on fatherhood where men should take financial and caregiving responsibility
3. An assumption of some responsibility for their own and their partners' reproductive health and disease prevention issues
4. Opposition towards partner violence.

The initiative identified two factors that made young men in low-income settings more likely to adopt gender-equitable behaviours: having gender-equitable male role models and peer groups, and reflecting on the consequences of violence.

They developed a manual of activities based on these findings. They also discussed and challenged homophobia, which is targeted not only at those with same sex sexualities, but also at non-macho men and independent women.

Poster from the Programme H marketing campaign featuring the slogan 'Accepting, listening, caring – the attitude makes the difference'.

At the same time, a social marketing campaign using radio, billboards, postcards and dances which portrayed being gender equitable as 'cool and hip' was run in partnership with SSL International plc, the makers of Durex condoms. A two-year impact evaluation study showed a positive impact on the young men's attitudes and stated behaviour.

One young man who participated said: 'I learned to talk more with my girlfriend. Now I worry more about her [worry about what she likes sexually and how she feels]. Our sex life is better … it's important to know what the other person wants, listen to them. Before I just worried about myself' (Marcelo, age 19, African Brazilian, Rio de Janeiro, in Barker 2005, p132).

Nighat Kamdar of the Pakistan-based organisation AWARD (All Women Advancement and Resource Development) drew attention to the double standards of men in her province having multiple partners (often male) and practising unsafe sex but at the same time exerting control over the lives of their wives. Meanwhile, those women were complaining that they did not actually get to have sex with their husbands, who were occupied with their other partners! AWARD used street theatre to explore the making of masculine sexualities and to stimulate reflection and debate on male responsibility.

Working with women

In the experience of some at the workshop, unequal power relations make it impossible for women to participate fully in discussions about sexuality when men are present. Social and cultural taboos mean it is hard enough to get women to talk to one another about sexuality and sexual rights, let alone to men.

Girl Power Initiative (GPI)

Presented at the workshop by Grace Osakue

GPI focuses on women's empowerment through comprehensive sexuality education, including gender, human rights and sexual and reproductive health. Its aim is 'to help women find a space for themselves'. GPI works primarily with girls. 'You have to go in stages: girls have to get somewhere before boys are introduced', Grace says. But GPI does support sexuality education for boys too. Together with other organisations in Nigeria, GPI is working on developing a national sexuality curriculum. They have produced guidelines for NGOs and the ministry of health.

'Men in women's organisations have more power and speak more than women. Surely this defeats the purpose of a participatory approach?' – Promise Mthembu, International Community of Women Living with HIV/AIDS, South Africa

GPI girls on a rally in support of sexuality education.

Phan Thi Le Mai (UNFPA, Vietnam) introduced the Club for Women's Advancement in Vietnam, which brings together women aged 15–49. Through this club, women, especially those in rural areas, have access to information on sexuality issues. They receive reproductive healthcare services, as well as life skills training. She argued that women need to feel comfortable talking about sex to each other first before they can talk to their husbands, particularly in rural areas where there is a taboo around these issues.

Working with transgender

There are sexual rights programmes working with women, with men, and with both together. But what about people who do not fit neatly into the categories of male and female? These people are often excluded.

Giuseppe Campuzano, *travesti* (transgender) activist, noted that in his country, Peru, the transgender movement is often linked to gay groups. However, he felt more of a link with the women's movement.

In his experience, *travestis* 'inherit the worst of both genders'. For example, when a *travesti* is beaten, she is perceived as male enough for policemen, or anyone, to freely hit him. In relationships sometimes masculinity prevails when it comes to working to maintain the family and/or partner; and sometimes femininity prevails, as *travestis* are subjects of violence and victimisation by the same family circle. Then, once again, masculinity takes over when the law arbitrates.

Reclaiming *travesti* (transgender) identities suppressed by development

Giueseppe argues that clear-cut male–female gender identities were imported to Peru by Spanish colonialists and subsequently by the development industry, thus undermining indigenous transgender identities. Transgender communities still exist but now face greater persecution and stigma. Giuseppe has created the '*Travesti* Museum' to celebrate *travesti* identity and history, which is validating for *travesti* themselves and informative for non-*travesti* audiences. The museum's message is not to instate transgender as a separate and contained third gender, but rather to demonstrate the inadequacy and instability of the male–female categorisations themselves. They reclaim the right of all people to choose their own gender – whether male, female or somewhere in between, and to transit between these. (Campuzano 2006)

Transgender activists in Bangladesh ask what space there is for them in the system of male and female sexes.

Battles over culture

Western and globalising influences are a powerful reality. At the same time, the denial of sexual rights is often defended as a matter of 'culture', placing immoral 'Western' culture against 'tradition'. Yet, 'tradition' is constantly changing, often selectively in order to suit the interests of the powerful. So whose tradition or culture is being defended?

Sylvia Tamale showed that the very laws that are used to persecute and prosecute those accused of 'un-African' sexual practices were put in place during the colonial era to regulate and control sexualities that were deemed 'uncivilised'.

> 'In Uganda, the colonialists' constructions and perceptions of Africans as profligate and hypersexual led to intensified surveillance and repression, of African women's sexuality in particular ... Having constructed the hypersexed female body, the case was made for the strict regulation and control of African women's sexuality ... Colonialists worked together with African patriarchs to develop inflexible customary laws that evolved into new structures and forms of domination.' (Tamale 2006)

Sumit Baudh also pointed out that Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code, outlawing gay sex, is in fact a colonial law passed by the British in 1860.

Giuseppe Campuzano gave an account of precolonial Peruvian traditions in which *travestis* were valued rather than vilified, occupying important social roles often involved in shamanism. When the Spanish arrived they started actively persecuting *travestis*. Giuseppe described how in the Central Andes region, *travesti* dancers still perform *Chonguinada*, an ancestral harvest ritual. He notes that this practice survives in areas where 'development' has not been successful. He suggests that perhaps this could represent a bridge between *travestis* of the past and present-day *travestis*, an opportunity to revive a positive transgender role in Peruvian society.

At the same time, there are also some more indigenous elements of culture that need to be changed. The graphic presentation by Isatou Touray from The Gambia showed how 'tradition' is played out in the violation of women's bodies through female circumcision. Isatou explained how female genital mutilation (FGM) takes and ruins lives in the name of 'culture'. Not only are women denied the right to

Mary/*maricón* (queer). The figure of Virgin Mary, which arrived in Peru along with the Spanish colonialists, was subsequently invested with characteristics of Inca gods (androgynous, female and male). Mary's gendered connection with ancient religion transmutes into her contemporary connection with so many *travestis* and *maricones* (queer men) in fiestas and urban contexts. *Travestis* transform the Catholic corporation's marginalisation of queer in order to regain lost social space. Carlos Pereyra *Dolorosa* (portrait of Giuseppe Campuzano as Virgin Mary), 2007

sexual pleasure, she argued, they may risk death at childbirth and suffer urinary leakage and growths which affect their mobility.

'I believe in my culture, I love my culture, but there are some things wrong with my culture.' – Isatou Touray, GAMCOTRAP/Management Development Institute, The Gambia

Religion and spirituality

When struggling for sexual rights in today's globalised world, it is impossible to ignore religion, as Sonia Correa pointed out in her opening remarks (Correa 2006). In visualising the landscape of sexual rights activism, she identified religion as one realm intersecting with the state and markets. Several workshop participants were believers or felt some affinity with various religions and spiritualities, and wanted to explore how to work with particular religious strands.

Religious dogmas are often patriarchal, with god or gods seen as masculine, and religious leadership structures largely male. In some religions such as Christianity, sexual pleasure is seen as a sin. Conservative Islamic and Christian viewpoints are becoming more vocal and powerful in the global arena.

We need to resist the rise of religious fundamentalism, and the manipulation of religious beliefs to further particular political agendas or interests. Yet we must be careful not to treat these viewpoints as representing all those who claim faith as Muslims and Christians. To do so is to give legitimacy to fundamentalism. It also obscures the differences among those who practice these religions.

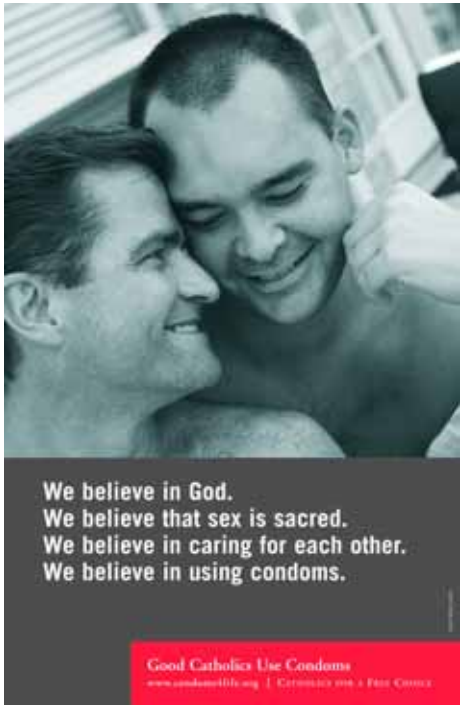
Inspiring examples such as the work of Catholics for a Free Choice and the Coalition of Sexual and Bodily Rights in Muslim Societies show what can be done to build progressive alliances within religious contexts.

'I would like to move forward the documentation of histories. In our own contexts, we can look at songs, poetry, histories, images and how to change the cultural text to promote what we are doing ... In the south, we need to engage more, to look for liberating qualities in religion ... to support and use in our work.' – Arit Oku-Egbas, Africa Regional Sexuality Resource Centre, Nigeria

'A strand in Hinduism is non-duality, universality – where there are no binaries. This refers to oneness at a spiritual level, blending masculine and feminine, for example shown through Hindu mythology and characters. Everyone has the potential to be transgender.' – Jaya Sharma, PRISM, India

Strategies for action

- Look for shared values across religious faiths and engage in dialogue about these
- Explore the potential for working constructively with religious leaders, emphasising the shared values of mutual respect, human dignity and love rather than bigotry, prejudice and hatred
- Make progressive interpretations of religion with regard to sex, gender and sexuality
- Make contact with influential people and celebrities supporting sexual rights who are known to be either very secular or very religious
- Separate religion and the state
- Recognise and respect the importance of spirituality in people's lives.



Poster from the Catholics for a Free Choice Condoms4Life Campaign.

Putting pleasure in the picture

What do we understand by sexual pleasure?

Is sexual pleasure only physical? Is it the same as sexual satisfaction? Participants talked about experiences and cultures of pleasure. Sexual cultures and expectations of pleasure may differ for example between

spouses, sex workers and clients, or between same sex and different sex couples. And individual experiences may differ between people and change over time.

It was concluded that terminology should be as broad and open as possible. What enables pleasure is very broad, and could include non-coercion, safety, access, abstinence by choice as well as a broad range of sensual and sexual interactions and touching.

> 'It seems that sex, and sexuality, has become just an act – I feel it is more than an act, more than just pleasure. We need to talk about it in a broader way ... it is a much broader issue.' – Nighat Kamdar, AWARD, Pakistan

Jill Lewis and Gill Gordon contended that pleasure is not something simple or pure; our experience of pleasure is constructed and constrained by the images and ideas as well as by the material realities of our contexts.

Anupam Hazra stressed the need to 'talk within rather than over' sexual codes, recognising the urgency of desire and its darker sides. For some people, what they experience as pleasurable may be construed by others as harmful or violent. He also pointed out that it's not just sexual acts that people want; there are many other aspects of sexual encounters that they may find pleasurable. Desire can be driven by the wish not to be lonely.

Why talk about pleasure?

> 'Are we idealising pleasure? Violence is at the heart of many sexual practices – how can we talk about pleasure without including that? We need to talk about negative things as well.'
> – Giuseppe Campazano, *travesti* activist, Peru

'I found a lot of laughter and joy at the workshop and I guess that is how it should be when we work and/or talk about sexuality and sexual rights. We should invest some energy in talking about sexuality from the perspective of satisfaction. We have been overwhelmed with stories of violence. I guess this might be the controversy of the workshop as it put a lot of emphasis on pleasure through creating a space where participants could talk positively about sex.' – Jelena Djordjevic, ATC, Serbia

- Working on pleasure is a route to discussing, teaching and experiencing safer sex. We know that sex education based on fear doesn't work. Young people who are sexually active already know about sex, but not always about pleasurable, safe sex
- Working on pleasure is a part of counteracting the fundamentalist 'anti-sex' viewpoint, with its focus on abstinence
- Working on women's pleasure can also be a powerful tool for challenging the positioning of women as objects, particularly within the sex industry as well as in popular culture, the media and on the internet
- Working on pleasure enables us to focus on the positive outcomes of health interventions, the positive experiences, as well as introducing some positive goals for development and anti-violence work.

Whose pleasure?

Whose pleasure are we talking about? The sexual pleasure and satisfaction of people with HIV is also often silenced or negated by health workers and programme designers.

'[Regarding] sexual pleasure as an advocacy issue – there is still a perception that women living with HIV don't have relationships, that they are mothers who should be concerned only about feeding their children.' – Promise Mthembu, International Community of Women Living with HIV/AIDS, South Africa

Representations of pleasure often reflect heterosexual male sexualities. Women are often missing from these representations. The sex industry which makes sex a commodity also objectifies women – they become the objects not the subjects of pleasure.

At the same time, pleasure is not automatically accessible to straight men. Gender norms influence how and where men are supposed to experience their pleasures. For example in many cultures, men are not supposed to enjoy having their nipples or anuses touched. Taking pleasure in tenderness and intimacy may also be discouraged by ideas around what it takes to be a proper man. This also affects if and how men learn about giving pleasure to their sexual partners, and what their lovers' pleasure means for their own enjoyment of sex. Do they learn to enjoy giving pleasure and to understand what their partners like and want? Is giving pleasure turned into another 'masculine' performance about being a stud? Do women have any space to talk to lovers or husbands about their own pleasures?

Sexual Pleasure as a Women's Human Right

Presented at the workshop by Karin Ronge

Since 1993, Women for Women's Human Rights (WWHR) – New Ways in Turkey has run training courses on human rights for women in community centres in the least developed and most conservative areas in Turkey. This four-month training aims to empower women in a broad sense. It includes three modules on sexuality. In one module, women are asked what they associate with their sexuality. Ideas such as 'virginity', 'chastity', 'duty' and 'motherhood' come up, but usually at some point someone also suggests 'pleasure'. This then leads to a discussion on feelings, how to feel pleasure, and whether women have a right to seek such pleasure. At this point the idea of 'sexual pleasure as a women's human right' is introduced.

According to WWHR's director, Pinar Ilkkaracan, 'So far we've trained 5000 women and these modules are among those that

women value most. Not one woman has said she didn't like talking about sexuality. On the contrary, most say they want to spend *more* time talking about it!'

Sexual pleasure and development

The Platform of Action of the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo states that people should be able to have a 'satisfying and safe sex life' as one of the elements of reproductive health. Yet health promotion has generally focused on disease prevention and risk, neglecting the many positive dimensions of sex and sexuality. Desiree Lewis argued that public policy debate is limited by 'technical and biomedical language that ignores what is subversive, imaginative, erotic, human and complex'.

Women participating in the Human Rights' Education programme run by WWHR – New Ways

A positive focus on sexuality means an embrace of the erotic, of desire and of the power of pleasure. Development agencies have been slow to realise this potential because they have started from what they think people ought to know, rather than with the ways people actually learn and communicate about sex.

In her paper, Sylvia Tamale described the *Ssenga*, a tradition of sexual initiation among the Baganda people in Uganda. This initiation involves tutoring young girls and women in a wide range of sexual matters, including instructions about sexual pleasure. Sylvia highlighted the dangers of reading African sexualities through Western eyes and missing these vital, and positive, dimensions of African sexual experience.

The challenge for development practice, Sylvia argued, is to work with women's own ways of communicating about sex – from riddles to songs to games – and to draw on local practices in a culturally sensitive way to promote sexual wellbeing.

Zoly Rakotoniera from the University of Antananarivo, Madagascar, suggested learning from the Mahafaly tribe in Madagascar who have quite open and direct sex education from an early age. For girls, usually the mother or the grandmother passes on this education,

which includes knowledge on how to increase pleasure for both women and men. During the *havoria* ceremony people are free to enjoy sexual interactions with each other without engagement or bonds.

Hanna Hacker also reminded us that desire does not always translate directly into pleasure; and pleasure is not some magic ingredient that can simply be brought in by development.

The pleasures of safer sex

How can we promote condoms? By removing their stigma as being symbolic of illicit sex, and by countering dangerous misinformation promoted by some advocates of abstinence. But condom use also needs to be portrayed as being sexy. In its focus on preventing disease, health promotion has rarely explored the potential pleasures of condom use itself, nor has it sufficiently acknowledged the intense fragility that condoms may provoke in men. We also need to embrace the pleasurable possibilities of non-penetrative sex.

Going beyond the negative approach to HIV/AIDS prevention requires imaginative strategies. Workshops on how to be a better lover, the promotion of condoms as sex toys, and tactics that engage with desire, play and the erotic, stand a much better chance of reaching those who would otherwise remain impervious to safer sex messages. As Jill Lewis and Gill Gordon pointed out, they also open up avenues for reflecting on just how much our gender identities constrain our sexualities and vice versa.

Xiaopei He told of a participatory HIV/AIDS prevention workshop for sex workers in China, in which participants learned safer sex practices by using them on each other.

> 'One day, I was facilitating a session on safer sex . I asked participants to take turns suggesting what kind of sex behaviours they could think of. We would then discuss how safe each one was,

or how to make it safer. The usual ones came up: oral, anal, penetration, touching, etc. Then Mei suggested *tui you* (a kind of massage), but the rest of us could not understand exactly what she meant or how to do it.

In the evening, a few sex workers came to my room still wanting to know what 'massage' meant. So we went to ask Mei. Mei said it was difficult for her to explain in words, you would have to actually see it happen. We all pleaded with her to show us her trick of massage. But Mei said it would be difficult to show without a model. Another young sex worker, Fen, volunteered herself. Mei said, 'it's difficult because you are a woman, you won't be stimulated by what I do', but Fen began moaning in excitement straight away. Mei said, 'OK I am the teacher now. I have to take my clothes off. It is not fair if you, my students, keep your clothes on.' Fen came to me, took off my clothes immediately, and then of the rest of us in the room.

Then came the most amazing participatory learning I have ever experienced. Mei took her clothes off and began to sing sexy songs and perform dirty dances. We laughed and sang with her. She began to put lot of oil on Fen's body and gave her a massage. Mei asked us to massage each other. Six of us all jumped into the hotel bed, copying what Mei did to Fen. Mei began to massage her back, then neck, hair, bottom, and then came to her thigh. Fen's moaning became louder and louder. Mei said, 'Now, if your guests are behaving like this, they are very comfortable, excited and about to come. You are in control, and can do whatever you like. Putting on a condom is not a problem now, guests may not even notice. But you can also use your hand to make them come or give more massage to please them.' – Xiaopei He, Pink Space Queer Research Centre, Beijing

Wendy Knerr and Anne Philpott described The Pleasure Project which they run.

The Pleasure Project: Global Mapping of Pleasure

Presented at the workshop by Anne Philpott and Wendy Knerr

The Pleasure Project builds bridges between the pleasure/sex industry and the safer sex world by ensuring that erotic materials include discussions of safer sex, and that sexual health and training materials include pleasure as a key element.

The Pleasure Project has mapped initiatives around the world which use pleasure as a primary motivation for promoting sexual health. These include programmes which eroticise male and female condoms, sex-positive books for teenagers, work with churches to improve sex among married couples, safer sex erotica designed for HIV-positive people, and pleasure and harm-reduction counselling for sex workers. Twenty-seven initiatives are briefly outlined, along with contact details of the organisations involved, on www.thepleasureproject.org (see 'Sexy Projects').

Strategies for action

- Undertake research that finds evidence on how pleasure can contribute to safer sex
- Engage with the health sector, for example training policymakers and decision-makers in pleasure and satisfaction work, introduce 'pleasure sensitive' quality standards in health services, and train health workers on pleasure information and counselling, such as for people living with HIV/AIDS
- Work with traditional sex educators as well as other institutions involved in sexuality education, for example donors
- Work with the sex industry, for example by undertaking research on how porn audiences react to condoms, as well as research and teaching on the 'eroticising' of condoms
- Develop practical skills-based training on sexual satisfaction for safer sex, for example through workshops on sex toys and peer education models. This training could be done in the places where people go for pleasure.

What happened after the workshop?

When the participants returned home, what did they take away from the workshop? Below are some responses from the participants, on the many ways it informed their work and lives.

'At the time of the IDS meeting I worked for the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA). The purpose of my participation in the meeting was to get new ideas and inspiration for the new Swedish international policy on SRHR. Without a doubt, the main thing that I took away from the workshop, which I think the policy also reflects, is the reminder that sex and sexuality is something positive ... Our goal is not only that people can protect themselves from STIs, unwanted pregnancies and gender-based violence but also that they are able to express their sexuality and have a fabulous sex life. That is something that we (SRHR community) should dare to say more often.'
– Julia Schalk, RFSU (Swedish Association for Sexuality Education)

'I think we are at the beginning of something meaningful that was not considered by traditional development practices and discourses. Not only are new aspects of poor people's lives being taken into consideration in this process but [also] a whole new group of excluded people that [previously] didn't exist for development. Although this is not a clear mainstream issue yet, I have the feeling that something authentic and new is happening.' – Henry Armas, GRUPAL, Peru

'As you know, AWARD is working with different high risk groups. Working with them on sexual health issues and introducing sex and sexuality as pleasure has been an excellent idea for our group. They are enjoying it, especially one group that is PLWHA who used to feel

that if they were not going to produce children then forget about sex. We have introduced sex into their lives as pleasure which has reduced their anxiety and burden.' – Nighat Kamdar, AWARD, Pakistan

'I took away two principal things from the workshop: the positive approach that Susie and Andrea are fighting for to put sexualities, and gender, on development agendas; and the women's stories of empowerment and work as an example for *travesti* to lean on and to keep on with our struggle.' – Giuseppe Campuzano, Museo Travesti del Perú

'Just a quick note to tell you that I met Hanna Hacker at the IDS conference last year. She presented a paper and I was in the audience. We asked her to contribute to the book *Geographies of Sexualities: Theory, Practice and Politics* which is aimed at upper level undergraduates, Masters students and researchers on geographies, sexualities and queer theory. She has written a fantastic chapter which will go into the theory section of the book. We envisage that this book will be highly influential in the discipline of geography and will have impacts beyond this discipline. It adds a "development" critique to the book and I would like to thank you for allowing me to attend the conference!' – Dr Kath Browne, Division of Geography, The School of the Environment, University of Brighton, UK

'In our group, we talked about the need ... to begin to think of sexual wellbeing as a legitimate development goal. With this shift, a lot of other things will follow. I go from here, as an activist ... to create spaces for more activism and consciousness, and to do this proactively.' – Shireen Huq, Naripokkho, Bangladesh

'After the IDS workshop I was inspired to submit a paper similar to the one I presented at IDS but with an HIV focus for the Toronto AIDS conference [XVI International AIDS Conference, 13–18 August 2006].

The paper was accepted. Also, I've since moved to Delhi and maintained a friendship with Sumit Baudh and Jaya Sharma whom I knew earlier. We are talking about how I can be more active in social and activist work related to sexual rights in India and so that is moving along. I've also used what I learned at IDS in a report that I co-authored on integrating sexuality and gender into our RH [reproductive health] and HIV work.' – Veronica Magar, formerly CARE International, Thailand

'The workshop was very inspiring for us at The Pleasure Project. We put together a proposal with Anupam Hazra (SAATHI) for a satellite session at the Toronto AIDS conference [13–18 August 2006] and it was accepted with a fee waiver. We also have a number of posters and a presentation at Toronto. So we are very pleased. That is one positive link up. Another is that I asked some conference participants to support our UK charity status application, as we were turned down for not promoting health enough; the letters of support we got will help our appeal to have charity registration. Lastly we finished an article for the *Lancet*; the conference gave us more energy to finish that, and that got accepted for publication this summer, as part of the SRH [sexual and reproductive health] series.

It was great to talk pleasure in a like-minded group, [and] feel challenged to discuss the theories of our approach rather than argue for the inclusion of pleasure.' – Anne Philpott, The Pleasure Project, UK

'For a long time Andrea and I had fantasised about IDS being taken over by joyful and radical sexuality activists, even just for a few days. This workshop was a realisation of that fantasy. It filled us with the energy and optimism we needed to carry on, to make sexuality a part of the work of IDS, and to contribute to a global sexual rights movement.' – Susie Jolly, IDS

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