COVID-19 and HIV: Adapting community-based HIV services during a pandemic

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Community Responses to COVID-19 Pandemic and Impacts on Sex Workers in Thailand

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A few days after the closure of entertainment places nationwide, SWING got phone calls from our sex worker member asking for helps, especially food for them just to survive.
Humanitarian help can’t wait

- SWING started searching for SWs in need of helps in Bangkok and Pattaya and providing foods for them and their families just to survive.
- More SWs founded in difficulties, SWING decided to call for donations and set up the “Funds for Sex Workers” to pay for daily food, and essentials stuff for SWs in needed
Humanitarian help can’t wait

Every Monday, Wednesday and Fridays, our staff prepare 250-300 food boxes and distribute to sex workers in Bangkok and Pattaya.
Humanitarian help can’t wait

A lot of SWs were found homeless during COVID19 situation. SWING helped them moved to safe shelters, while some who wanted to go back to their hometown would be helped to do so.
Then, we’ve got more supporters

When hates faded, we can provide more helps to sex workers
Donation increased, well and transparently managed

SWING keeps posted on our Facebook on how we the donations for SWs. From April 11 to 22 May 2020, SWING received almost 2 million THB (≈62,500USD) from individuals and various industries
In the meantime, HIV services can’t stop

SWING keeps HIV services – including PrEP, HIV testing – provided at our clinics in Bangkok and Pattaya as well as mobile clinics, while ensure the protection COVID-19 transmission for both our staff and our clients.

Over 800 SWs living with HIV in Bangkok and over 700 in Pattaya have been contacted to ensure their accessibility and adherence to ARV treatment. Home delivery of ARV are managed.

Online communication is essential in this situation
Plus immediate responses to COVID19

COVID Screening for SWs in Bangkok and Pattaya as well as all SWING staff

Distributing alcohol gel and face masks
Plus immediate responses to COVID19

Community-led Rapid assessment of COVID19 Impact on Sex workers
(supported by UNAIDS)

91% Becoming unemployed and lost their income
16% No place to stay
42% Cannot go back hometown
75% Do not have money for daily living

SWING has call for help from government and changes in law that make SWs become ineligible for any government’s help
What we learned

• Responses to other situations affected by key populations need to be quick
• KPs could become more vulnerable as they could be left-behind or not accessible to government remedies
• Ending AIDS measure should consider means to recover KPs from impact of COVID

• Anyway, problems could turn to be opportunities – like this COVID19 that helps us see the changes in social attitudes towards sex workers. We may be able to do more things during or after this COVID19
Our plan and next steps

**Fund raising activities** to continue the Fund for SWs to help those who may have some long term impact.

In addition, we need **plan B** for many SWs who cannot work during this COVID-19 lock down situation.

Bluebird Jazz Bar Live on FB to raise fund for SWING

Owner of Meat & Bone restaurant discussing how to create jobs for SWs

SWING T-Shirts for SW Fund
Thank you for not leaving *SEX WORKERS* behind