Research Centre for Health Economics and Evaluation
Faculty of Public Health, Mahidol University, Thailand
WWW.ReCHEE.org

From Competitors to Partners for Turning the Tide to Fight against HIV/AIDS among Sex workers

Sukhum Jiamton[1], Sukhontha Kongsin[2], Benjaporn Youngvises[2], Kulyisa Tachapetpaiboon[2]
Nootchawan Boonruang[2], Saranya Boonyai[2], Kitiya Prom-On[2], Sittikorn Rongsumlee[2], Kyaw Min Soe[2]

1. Faculty of Medicine Siriraj Hospital, Mahidol University,Thailand
2. Research Centre for Health Economics and Evaluation, Faculty of Public health, Mahidol University, Thailand

Background:

Sexual risk behaviors are important factors attribute to transmission of STI particularly among sex workers (SWs) who are not accepted socially or legally. SWs have difficulties on access to health education and services. The purpose of this study was to define the steps of behavior change of SWs from competitors to partners for HIV/AIDS prevention.

Method:

Qualitative study were conducted using interview and focus group discussion among 57 SW leaders and 160 target service SWs who were working under those leaders in Bangkok, Chiang Mai, Ubonratchathani and Phuket provinces.

Results:

The first step

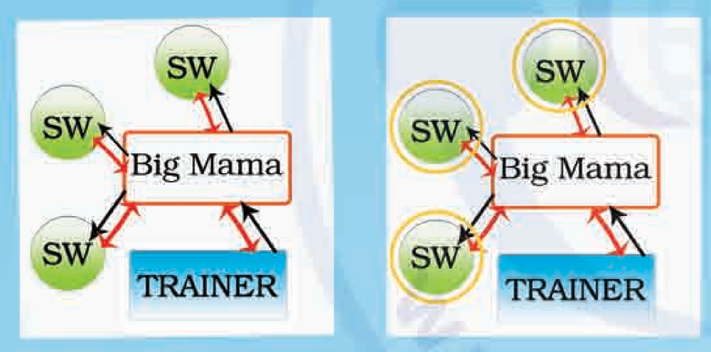
the leaders (as being called "big mama"), who are respected, trusted and depended on by sex workers, were trained. The "big mama" had awareness of occupational safety and health and opened their mind to AIDS/Sex Education for SWs.

The second step

the SWs who received knowledge from the "big mama" persuaded their colleagues from other sites/networks to learn and change their attitude towards HIV/AIDS prevention. Peer pressure has leaded to more attention and cooperation among SWs.

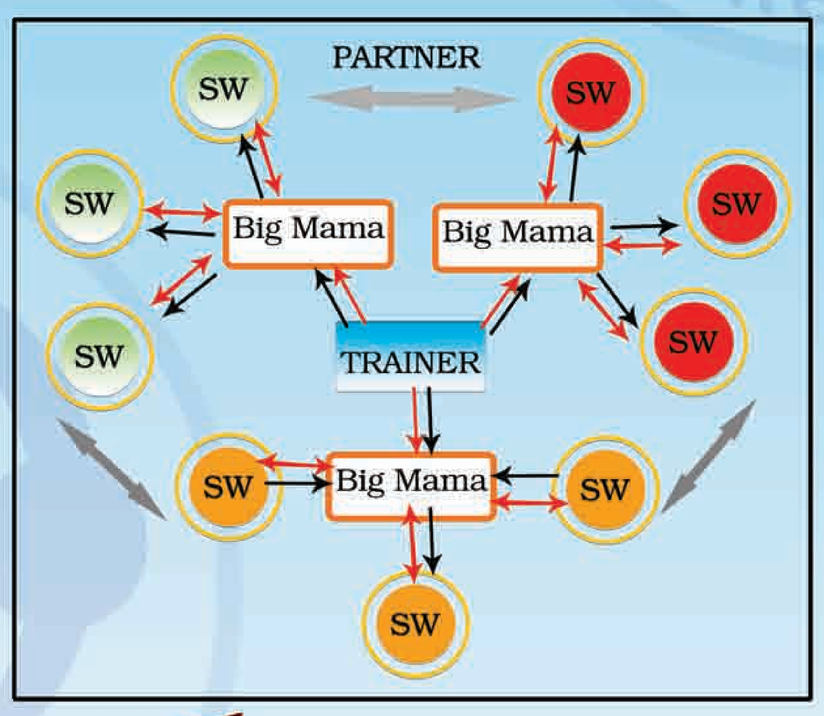
The integration of partnership between sex industries/workers and as a consultant of each other has solved the problems and difficulties (due to the nature of competition) in fighting against HIV/AIDS. They gained knowledge, changed attitude and behavior, established confidence, trust, social and health believe on each other.

The second step



Then the last step

change of formerly competitors to partners who can help, share, and learn knowledge and skills for HIV/AIDS prevention in community service.



Conclusions:

Changing from competitors to partners was an important approach for behavior change for fighting against HIV/AIDS among SWs. The steps indentified could be transferred and applied to other SWs community. More studies among SWs in this issue are needed in particular area and could be useful to find more approach for turning the tide to fight against HIV.

Key Words: Sex workers, HIV/AIDS, STI, Partnership, Turning the tide together

HIV/AIDS knowledge → Health knowledge → HIV/AIDS knowledge from trainer
SWs Community Boundary
Area A Area B Area C