

HIV-MARPs Project Success Story: SKSG



Photo by Doltan Bonatsi

Participants in SKSG's life skills training workshop

"I am able to take care of myself and my child, have painted my parents' home, and have connected electricity at our home with the money I make on nail decoration. I also have developed high self-esteem and always make sure I get what I want and can reach any office and seek for any assistance without hesitation."

**– Former Sex Worker, SKSG
Peer Educator and Small
Business Owner**

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Telling Our Story
U.S. Agency for International Development
Washington, DC 20523-1000
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Through the support of RTI International's USAID-funded HIV-Most-at-Risk Populations (MARPs) project, Silence Kills Support Group (SKSG) identifies and trains sex workers to work as peer educators who reach out to other sex workers to provide risk reduction information, health education, and referrals to health services. Following a site visit to a sister project in Zambia, SKSG senior staff realized that addressing the issues of HIV prevention among sex workers was not enough. In order to have a significant impact, they also needed to focus on the root reasons women engage in sex work by addressing issues pertaining to their welfare and their children.

Life Skills Training Workshop

In response to requests from beneficiaries, SKSG designed and conducted a life skills training workshop for those interested in attending. Although the curriculum focused on skills building and included topics requested by the beneficiaries in advance, all modules were developed with assertiveness training and personal skill building as central themes. The workshop also provided a relaxed atmosphere and platform for discussion of issues that affected sex workers' lives, including decision making, risk reduction, and health-seeking behavior. Modules were facilitated by skilled volunteers from the community and included bookkeeping, crafts, sewing, and basic cosmetology.

Life after Sex Work

Of the 14 participants who completed the training, 6 have moved on to new professions. One woman opened a small stall in the market where she decorates fingernails, a trade she learned through the life skills workshop. She has become a voice for other sex workers and for youth and is frequently engaged in events such as the women's exposition in Francistown, where she speaks to youth about running a small business. As for her colleagues, two now hold posts in government offices; one is attending technical college studying fashion and fabrics; one is employed by the department of animal production; and one works in a day care center.

SKSG continues to encourage the principles of meaningful involvement of and respect for people living with HIV (PLHIV). Through collaborations with local, national, and international partners and donor agencies, the support group continues to advocate for the rights of all PLHIV and to educate the community on preventing the spread of HIV.