



Peer Education

The growing network of Peer Educators lies at the heart of the *Sisters with a Voice* programme. The first Peer Educators were hired and trained in 2009, and there are now over 220 throughout Zimbabwe. The role of Peer Educators is to reach out into local communities of sex workers to learn about their problems, promote healthy behaviours, and encourage visits to the Sisters clinics and participation in community mobilisation activities. They act as a bridge between clinic and outreach staff and sex workers, facilitating communication between them and fostering mutual respect. They help organise events and inform local sex workers if there are any changes to the programme.

Peer Educators are also responsible for facilitating monthly participatory activities as part of the Sisters programme's community mobilisation. They can select one of the sessions from the Peer Educators' Manual or create their own. In between monthly meetings, each peer educator regularly visits local venues where sex workers spend time to register new women with the programme, distribute condoms, and informally discuss health and other problems.

Recruiting Peer Educators

Peer Educators should represent the local community of sex workers, but they should also be committed to building support networks and believe that sex workers have the potential to cooperate to improve their health, work, and lives. A Peer Educator should therefore be a person who is planning to stay in the area for the foreseeable future, has an outgoing personality, and is willing to engage with sex workers from a range of different backgrounds.

They are usually identified and recruited by Outreach Workers, who are staff allied to Sisters programme clinics. When Sisters expands into a new site, Outreach Workers will visit the location and conduct "social mapping" to identify the geographical areas where sex workers spend time, and learn about the organisation of sex work, such as where sex is sold, what types of people are selling and buying sex, current prices, and sex workers' levels of risk, vulnerability, and existing use of health services. In addition to talking to sex workers, Outreach Workers discuss the local sex work environment with other key informants and stakeholders in the community.

The next step is for Outreach Workers to reach out to sex workers in search of those who might be interested in working with the Sisters programme. Any sex worker expressing an interest in becoming a Peer Educator need to meet some basic criteria as follows:

- Shows enthusiasm for becoming a Peer Educator and helping other sex workers
- Has basic functional literacy
- Demonstrates leadership skills
- Knows many other sex workers and is willing to interact with those not yet known
- Willing to encourage sex workers to attend the clinic and other activities

Sex workers who appear to meet the criteria are then invited to participate in a 5-day training workshop, during which they are further assessed. Prior to taking up the role, they must agree to sign a contract with the Sisters programme, which provides a formal Job Description, and sets out their roles and responsibilities and the remuneration and support they will receive from Sisters. They also sign a confidentiality oath. A sample contract and confidentiality oath are included at the end of this document.

Supervision and Management of Peer Educators

Peer Educators report to local Outreach Workers, who arrange regular meetings with Peer Educators to check on progress, provide on-the-job mentoring, and restock their supplies of condoms, record keeping forms, etc. Peer Educators are expected to spend approximately 12 hours every work on peer education activities; the standard peer education role involves meeting with local sex workers, distributing condoms and other supplies, and encouraging sex workers to register with the clinic and attend regular appointments, including routine HIV testing. Peer Educators should also facilitate an interactive session at least once a month although they are also encouraged to organise smaller, less formal sessions whenever possible such as on an *ad hoc* basis in a bar/ club during quiet off-work hours. They liaise with Outreach Workers and clinic staff to help address problems as they come up, and to inform the sex worker community about upcoming programme changes or events, i.e. changes to hours of clinic operation, periods of time when no services are offered during breaks between funding cycles, and any research studies in which sex workers can participate.

The Peer Educator role was designed as a volunteer position, with a monthly stipend of \$15. Due to increasing costs of goods and services, and to better reflect the important role of Peer Educators as the programme matures, the monthly stipend is regularly reviewed and increased. Professional development opportunities are also included, for example, Peer Educators can apply for short-term internships within programme administration, and are invited to additional trainings when these are offered (on legal issues, child protection, microplanning etc).

Although the initial contract stipulates a 1-year commitment, many Peer Educators stay in this role for many years, developing strong links to the local community. When a Peer Educator leaves the programme, a replacement can usually be found through social networks of the other local Peer Educators or through the clinic, once it has been established and has regular contact with many local sex workers. Occasionally a Peer Educator has to be dismissed due to poor performance or infraction of one of the rules in the contract. Close contact with Outreach Workers, who can provide feedback, guidance and warnings as required, usually prevents the need for outright dismissal. In most cases, Peer Educators leave the programme when they move out of the area, leave sex work, or want to reduce their time commitments.

Peer Educator Training

New Peer Educators receive 5 days of initial training, followed by an annual refresher course of 3 days. The trainings are critical to ensure Peer Educators have up-to-date knowledge, understand the breadth of services offered in clinics and the community, and increase their group facilitation and interpersonal skills. The initial and refresher trainings also provide an opportunity for Outreach Workers to assess each Peer Educator's strengths and weaknesses, and to identify areas of where additional supervision may be required. They are also very important for team building; Peer Educators are brought together from across the sites, and can share experiences, learn from each other, and develop friendships. Trainings are enjoyable, combine social interaction with educational aims, and provide a welcome break from daily routines.

Outreach Workers conduct Peer Educator training, with additional contributions from Sisters staff and occasionally guest speakers (such as from Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights, or Policy Victim Friendly Units). They are residential, so are held in hotels or other establishments that offer both conference facilities and accommodation (e.g. the ZESA training centre in Harare). The residential component is important as it encourages interactions outside of the formal sessions, and having all trainees on site increases the chances that they will attend all the sessions.

The trainings are very interactive and participatory. Sisters' experience shows that long powerpoint presentations and classroom-style didactic learning bore participants. The session immediately after

lunch requires extra energy! Starting and ending sessions with songs and dance keep Peer Educators alert and motivated, and over the years they have created Sisters-themed songs about safe sex, adherence and other work-related themes!

One of the most important objectives of the initial training is to provide an opportunity for Peer Educators to practice what they will be doing in the field – this means trying out the different community mobilisation activities, role-playing counselling sessions with sex workers, and acting out different situations they think they might encounter (with feedback and suggestions from others). During refresher training, Peer Educators can discuss challenges they face in their work, and these problems can form the basis for role plays and sharing strategies.

The role of the Outreach Workers is to convey new information, correct any misconceptions, remind Peer Educators of Sisters' activities and available services, offer advice on how to handle difficult situations, and guide Peer Educators toward good outreach practices. Outreach Workers need to be familiar and comfortable with all the training materials, including the Peer Education Manual and other activities that Peer Educators are asked to deliver, so that they can offer accurate and up-to-date information during training. In addition to formal training, Outreach Workers can provide on-the-job mentorship and capacity building through their regular supervision meetings; Peer Educators should also know whom to contact if they confront difficulties in the course of their work.

The materials for conducting Peer Education consist of the following:

- *Sisters with a Voice* Peer Education Manual
- Peer Education Training Manual
- 4 supplementary participatory activities
- 13 Training PowerPoint Presentations embedded into the Peer Education Training Manual

Sample Peer Educator Job Description & Contract

The Parties

The Sisters Programme and _____ of address _____ (hereafter referred to as the volunteer).

The above parties hereby agree that the volunteer shall supply the services specified below, and meet the required deliveries o the organization.

Roles and Obligation of the Volunteer Peer Educator

- Work with women who practise sex work in the communities where they live and work
- Ensure that women starting out in sex work know how to protect themselves and practise safely
- Provide, distribute and Improve the supply of condoms to SWs
- Work with SW to improve consistency of condom use
- Encourage women to use the SW clinic to get sexual and reproductive health care
- Support women to stand up for their rights
- Work with the programme staff to update the programme activities and approach as required
- Disseminate accurate information on reproductive health, HIV and AIDS and other social issues to the target groups through various means.
- Educate and influence the community in general and peers in particular on issues of SW in face of HIV and AIDS.
- Be visible in community through community mobilization or events, participation at important social events and facilitation community services meant to benefit SWs
- Support women going for VCT or accessing HIV care or STI diagnosis and treatment
- Support women going to the police / lawyers / rape crisis centre
- Provide a link between programme staff and SWs working in the community (can give feedback)
- Helping women keep safe
- Refer women to the drop in centre where they can get services (including for their children) or information
- Complete program monitoring and evaluation forms

Roles and Obligation of the Organisation

The organization shall:-

- Train the volunteer on the tasks to be undertaken.
- Equip the volunteer with necessary information and education materials.
- Provide support services to enable the volunteer to carryout task smoothly.

Remuneration and Payment Terms

Volunteerism is unpaid hence the organization shall not be obliged to pay wage or salary to the volunteer for the work done. However the organization shall provide the following incentives to the volunteer as and when resources permit:-

- Volunteer upkeep monthly allowances of \$XX.00
- Identification materials in the form of T-shirts, hats and bags

Duration of Contract

The contract shall run for one year beginning on the date of signing the contract.

Termination o Contract

The contract may be terminated by either party giving the other not less than one week's written notice.

Reasons of terminating the contract by Volunteer

1. Lost interest in the activities initially hired for.
2. Increased commitments to other activities.
3. Unmet expectations by the organization.

Reasons of terminating the contract by Organization

1. Failure to undertake volunteer role as expected by the organization and the community being served
2. Failure to act as role model in accordance with the expected qualities of a good peer educator.
3. Misuse of organization's resources and assets.
4. Misrepresentation of the organization.
5. End of programme due to circumstances beyond the organisation's control.
6. Falling pregnant: If a peer educator falls pregnant, the organization has the right to relieve the peer educator of her duties, terminate the contract and allow her to resume her voluntary work 6 months after giving birth
7. If a peer educator cannot be located for 3 consecutive months

Contract Alterations

This agreement constitutes the entire contract between the parties and no variations or additions to the agreement will be valid unless in writing and signed by the two parties.

Settlement of Dispute

This agreement is made in Zimbabwe and its construction, validity and performance shall be governed in all aspects by the laws of Zimbabwe. Each party consents and submits to the exclusive jurisdiction of the Courts of Zimbabwe in any matters arising or disputes arising from this agreement.

Oath of Confidentiality

By signing this agreement, I confirm that I will not disclose any personal information shared with me in confidence during the course of my duties as a Peer Educator with other community members, the police, representatives of the media, or any other persons. I will seek permission first before I discuss any private or personal issues raised with me with Sisters staff. The only exception to this is if I learn of a person being harmed or under threat of harm, in which case I will seek assistance from Sisters management. In all other cases, I will not give names or identifying situations when discussing my work with my local peers.

Declaration by the Volunteer

I _____ hereby acknowledges that I have read, understanding and accepted the contents of this contract between the Sisters Programme and myself. I therefore commit myself to abide by the provisions of this contract.

Signature

Date

Name of Peer Educator/ Volunteer

Witness/Guardian of Peer Educator /Volunteer

Organisation Representative

Witness