

UNFPA/UNHCR

Literature review sex work in  
humanitarian situations

# Countries included

- Reports were submitted from 25 countries
  - Conflict affected internally displaced situations
  - Refugee situations
  - Mixed situations
  - Post conflict and return situations
  - No reports have been received from natural disaster situations

Not known whether the type (e.g. natural disaster versus conflict) of humanitarian situation results in a different form and scale of sex work

# Focus

- Most reports focus on:
  - determining the scope of the problem i.e. conducting research on sex work in humanitarian situations
  - assessing the knowledge of HIV and their capacity to protect themselves against HIV.
- Few projects refer to initiatives targeted to people selling sex in humanitarian situations to reduce their vulnerability and increase their access to RH and HIV or to reduce stigma and discrimination towards them.

# Characteristics

- Women who sell sex but do not self-identify as sex workers are likely to be:
  - Young – this has particular implications in regard to the sexual exploitation of children – and can include orphans and separated children
  - Female heads of household - divorced or widowed (often related to the conflict)
  - Sell sex work to meet the immediate economic needs of their family
  - Less well educated
  - Willing to cease selling sex if viable economic alternatives are available to them (up to 90% in Burundi)
  - Subjected to high levels of violence

# Findings

- Risk and vulnerability to HIV, STI's and unwanted pregnancies
- Fundamental abuse of human rights through violence from clients, law enforcement
- Stigma and discrimination affecting access to services for themselves and their families

# Further work....

- Need for more in-depth work to identify good practices based on the different phases in the humanitarian crisis
- Development of programmatic response in RH and HIV

# Next steps

- Review and collect information on sex work in natural disaster situations
- Additional information on conflict situations
- Send draft document out to IAWG Working Group for comment and agreement on the way forward in first quarter in 2009