

Teenage pregnancy virtually eliminated

Teenage pregnancy has been virtually eliminated as a health and social problem in The Netherlands: less than one percent of teenagers aged 15-17 years old get pregnant each year. The steady drop is attributed mainly to a liberal attitude, and comprehensive sexuality education from an early age. Teenagers know all about sexuality and procreation, they know how their bodies work,



In Namibia, almost twenty percent of young women between 15 and 19 years of age have already given birth to at least one child. By the age of twenty many have given birth twice.

Source: *Demographic and Health Survey 1992*

and understand how to avoid unwanted pregnancies. The National Health Fund provides oral contraceptives-free of charge through pharmacies. Nearly 70% of 18-year-olds use birth control pills; 85% use the condom, the pill or both during their first sexual experience. The Dutch also have a much higher rate of virginity amongst young people than in most industrialised countries.

Source: *Health Central*

Commission backs domestic workers

The statutory Commission for Gender Equality in South Africa has come out in support of the inclusion of domestic workers in the Unemployment Insurance Fund Bill, and says it will fight the measure should they be excluded. Commission spokeswoman Fatima Seedat said if the bill was passed without including domestic workers, the commission would use any powers within its mandate to oppose the passage of the legislation. She was speaking at a picket by domestic workers outside Parliament recently to coincide with the first day of public hearings on the UIF bill before Parliament's labour committees. A number of protesters held up placards proclaiming, "Women won't be free, until domestic workers are free", and "Recognise us as workers that contribute to the economy". Domestic workers are excluded in the current draft, which calls for an 18-month period to investigate the issue further. The South African Democratic Service and Allied Workers' Union has added its voice on this issue. Union president Hester Stephens said the union was disturbed because domestic workers would again be excluded from protective labour legislation. "The continual delay of inclusion and request for further investigations regarding domestic workers we find both unconstitutional and directly discriminatory against women."

Source: *SADTU*

ORGANISE OR STARVE



source: SPEAK

NO TO SLAVERY SAY DOMESTIC WORKERS

Sex Workers Conference in India

The first International Sex Workers Conference was held in Calcutta, India, in March 2001. It focused on developing strategies for securing rights for sex workers, including freedom from abuse and exploitation, access to education for their children, the recognition of their families as legitimate, and safe and healthy working conditions for themselves. Participants also discussed strategies for removing the stigma from sex work, and stressed the need to view sex in itself as a healthy human desire, not just an issue to be addressed through the lens of violence, abuse, exploitation and harassment. They demanded the decriminalization of sex work. Addressing the issue of licensing sex workers, participants felt that this would invariably involve payment of a fee or

bribe. The conference stressed that sex workers are also fighting for women's rights: for example by opposing laws that base a woman's eligibility for maintenance on her chastity, or opposing the judicial practice of allowing courts to focus on the sexual history of rape survivors. Transgendered persons and hijra (eunuchs) gave accounts of humiliation and abuse. Many reported that going into sex work was their only option for earning a living. The issue of trafficking was also discussed. The conference concluded that the only way in which the harms and abuses involved in sex work can be addressed, including the problems of trafficking and HIV, is through the leadership and active participation of sex workers.

Source: *The Hindu*