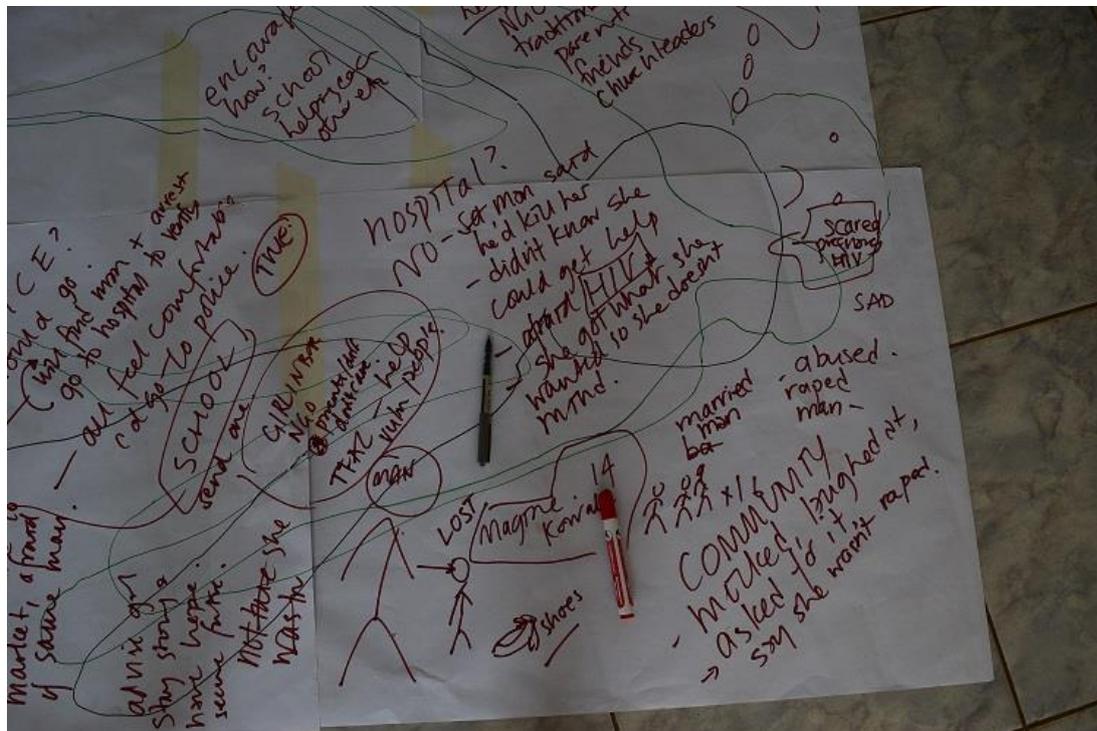


# TfaC Community Programme: Needs Assessment November 2014



Flipcharts resulting from drama activity with sexually exploited girls

## Listening to female sex workers and sexually exploited girls in Malawi

Jane Martin and Siobhan Warrington

12/12/14

## **Listening to female sex workers and sexually exploited girls in Malawi**

*We are held in the police cell for a long time even when not guilty, and to be helped, we are told to have sex with a policeman without a condom. Though we experience this violence in the police, we do not have a place where we can go and report such kind of behaviour. (FSW)*

*Sometimes when they take us to the police, they always want to take the money that we have made from our business; the money which we have made in order to assist our children back at home. And sometimes instead of just taking us to the police station they start beating us, tear gassing us and teargas is so hot and you will find that they are throwing the teargas into the vehicle we they have put us in. (Queen Mother)*

*Sometimes, it happens when maybe the teacher wanted to be in a relationship with you and you have refused, so, what he now does is to make your life harder every time you are in class. (SEG)*

*We do not do prostitution out of fun but we do this in order to find a little something for our children. (FSW)*

*[My hopes for the future?] To stop prostitution because some men prefer giving me higher pay when I have sex with them without a condom, and I am given low pay when I use a condom. So, prostitution is a risky game to do and this is why I want to quit this profession. (FSW)*

*Though I am a sex worker I send my children to school and I encourage them to work hard in school. (FSW)*

*In the future I hope to be independent but not poor. At the moment I do not want to stop prostitution because I do not have resources to start a business. (FSW)*

*I would like TfaC to continue doing what it has been doing, like paying school fees for the vulnerable children, taking them back to their parents so that they can live a normal life. TfaC should also go to those communities and reach out to those kids who don't know about it so that they can also change just like I did. (SEG)*

*As a sex worker I am not proud of my work and I have always wanted to quit but I have no other alternative, so is there any other way possible that you can help me with employment so that I can quit sex work? (FSW)*

*We are willing to change our behaviour if Theatre for a Change is to help us in meeting our day to day needs because we do not do prostitution out of fun but we do this in order to find a little something for our children. (FSW)*

*Sometimes you just have to put yourself in their shoes. If it was me and I had to feed my kids... (FSW staff)*

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The women and girls who participated in the interviews and workshops have provided Theatre for a Change (TfaC) with an opportunity to listen to its programme participants and learn from their experiences and ideas. The consultants are especially grateful to them for sharing their time and knowledge. The consultants would also like to thank all of the TfaC staff who supported the needs assessment both in terms of making arrangements, translation and transcription, as well as participating in interviews and providing input into the needs assessment.

## ABBREVIATIONS

ART	Antiretroviral therapy
CCPT	Community Child Protection Team
FSWs	Female Sex Worker/s
MEL	Monitoring Evaluation and Learning
SEGs	Sexually Exploited Girl/s
SRC	Social Rehabilitation Centre
STIs	Sexually Transmitted Infections
TfaC	Theatre for a Change
VSL	Village Savings and Loans
VSU	Victim Support Unit

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The aim of the needs assessment was to listen to the girls and women that Theatre for a Change Malawi supports and to provide a space where they could share their experiences in relation to what is most challenging in their lives as well as the changes they would like to see. This report is based on semi-structured interviews with Theatre for a Change (TfaC) staff, Queen Mothers and one Community Child Protection Team (CCPT) in Lilongwe and workshops using participatory research approaches with female sex workers (FSW) in Lilongwe and Salima, and sexually exploited girls (SEG) in Lilongwe. During the interviews and workshops FSW, SEG and those who work with or support them also shared their ideas for how TfaC and others can improve the lives of these groups.

This is a qualitative piece of research and this is reflected the presentation of the findings. Recorded responses by individuals and groups to open-ended questions provide detail and meaning. Key issues do emerge in terms of frequency of mention and emphasis, but the data does not provide us with generalisations for all FSW or SEG in Lilongwe and Salima, Malawi.

The process as well as the outcomes of listening to programme participants is important. This kind of listening demonstrates TfaC's commitment to engaging with and learning from its programme participants in order to improve the way it works and to have a greater impact on those it is designed to support.

### Findings

Women are involved in sex work because of the lack of other livelihood options. Sex work carries multiple risks as well as significant stigma. Risks include physical and sexual violence including rape, risk of contracting HIV and other STIs from clients and the police. FSW and SEG face stigma and discrimination from many including the police, health workers, teachers, landlords, community members and the church. The stigma experienced by FSW can expose them to further risks, for example reluctance to access healthcare and difficulty in finding safe accommodation.

#### Violence, stigma and discrimination

The FSW and SEG we talked to share similar risks but have distinct sets of concerns; and there are also differences in priority concerns for the FSW in Lilongwe and FSW in Salima. Throughout the report distinctions are made to acknowledge these differences. A common experience amongst all three groups was the risk of abuse and non-payment by clients.

The consultants' overall impressions from the short time spent visiting and working with TfaC and its programme participants are that interactions with the **police** and **health workers** remain the greatest concerns for FSW. For the SEG who participated in this needs assessment, stigma and discrimination from **teachers** was a major concern.

FSW experience violence, abuse, torture, rape, unprotected sex, and theft from police. The lack of clarity regarding the legality of sex work in Malawi mean FSW frequently face arrest from the police and/or a lack of support when reporting abuse or lack of payment by clients.

FSW are concerned about their health, particularly the risks of contracting HIV and other STIs, yet they face stigma and discrimination from health workers at the government health centres they attend. There was little knowledge or use of the TfaC mobile clinic by the FSW who participated in this research.

Other groups and individuals who stigmatise and discriminate FSW and SEG include community members, landlords and the church. Stigma and discrimination can compound the risks and vulnerability faced by SEG and FSW. Research participants described being forced into situations of providing sex in return for a place to stay and a reluctance to access health care due to stigmatising attitudes of health workers.

It is important for FSW and SEG to be aware of their rights and to feel confident in using and negotiating the use of condoms, but overcoming the risks and stigma faced by FSW and SEG is dependent on behavioural and attitudinal change in others.

### **Support from others**

The FSW and SEG we spoke to referred to receiving support from each other and TfaC. Interviews were carried out with Queen Mothers and a Community Child Protection Team – structures initiated by TfaC to provide support to FSW and SEG. The Queen Mothers interviewed appeared to be clear, confident and passionate about their role supporting FSW, whereas the CCPT appeared less clear about its role. The CCPT did however describe two incidents of successfully bringing older men to prosecution for sexually abusing girls.

### **Support to move out of sex work**

None of the women we spoke to wanted to be in sex work, it is done out of economic necessity and the lack of alternative ways to make an income. All FSW, Queen Mothers and staff supporting FSW had a lot to say about livelihoods and their need for training and support (including loans) to be able establish businesses. Some did refer to employment (as well as entrepreneurship) and going back to school.

### **Reach and engagement (programme participants)**

TfaC's reach is currently FSW and SEG in urban areas, especially those with a high density of bars. FSW, SEG and those working with or supporting FSW and SEG expressed a need for TfaC to reach FSW and SEG in other geographical areas. The needs assessment revealed a number of barriers to reach and engagement of FSW and SEG in TfaC's programmes, some of which are a result of programmatic decisions by TfaC and others which are broader social, economic and geographical.

### **Advocacy**

Evidently the groups identified above who present FSW and SEG with their greatest challenges need to be considered a target for TfaC's future advocacy as well as behaviour change work. Those interviewed felt that TfaC's existing advocacy activities (legislative theatre, radio, and support for the Sex Workers Forum) were effective and staff especially wanted to be able to expand these in terms of scale and scope. A number of FSW expressed concerns about being exposed through association with TfaC activities, indicating that not all FSW would want to be involved in advocacy activities.

### **Financial and Monitoring Processes**

Only staff were asked about financial and monitoring processes and they raised a number of issues relating to allowance amounts and verification processes (for allowances and condoms distributed). FSW and Queen Mothers raised the issue of allowances in relation to their impact on reach and engagement of FSW in TfaC programmes.

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

Changes in the lives of FSW and SEG can only come about by changes in the attitudes and behaviour of others, together with support to find alternative means of livelihood to enable FSW to exit sex work. The changes staff and programme participants want to see include:

- A change in the behaviour and attitudes of police, health workers and teachers
- More support with other livelihood opportunities to enable FSW to exit sex work
- Addressing lack of confidentiality re TfaC and SEG at schools
- Better allowance system to encourage more FSW to take part in TfaC activities

Recommendations by the consultants include:

- Continue to invest in and recognise quality of TfaC staff
- Increase scale and effectiveness of activities with police
- Design programme activities to support attitudinal change amongst health workers and teachers
- Increased awareness of the importance of not being identified as a FSW or SEG for some women and girls taking part in TfaC activities
- Review the role and practice of the CCPT and the individuals' roles within it
- Training for all staff and intermediaries in Child Protection to ensure policy is implemented
- Connect with Enterprise Development agencies to provide FSW with support to develop sustainable enterprises
- Review transportation needs for staff and programme participants (including intermediaries, such as Queen Mothers)
- Develop a comprehensive BCC framework if TfaC does not already have one
- Revise verification processes and communication of allowances to ensure realistic expectations and transparency and respect
- Ensure all FSW are aware of their rights.

### **Note on presentation of recommendations throughout the report**

Within the FINDINGS sections the recommendations presented are those provided by research participants during the interviews and workshops.

The consultants' recommendations are provided at the end of the report in 3. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION AND PROCESS

### 1.1 Purpose of the needs assessment

The purpose of the needs assessment was to enable Theatre for a Change (TfaC) to:

- **Understand** more comprehensively the context in which they work, the key barriers and constraints faced by the women and girls they work with
- **Listen** to their participants and reflect that listening in their programme design
- **Learn** how they could better include participants' voices throughout the programme cycle
- **Analyse** their role in the change process for participants, stakeholders and staff involved in the project, trying to identify where they can contribute to change and identify cause-effect relationships
- **Ensure their systems match their values** by looking at how TfaC can ensure and accountability whilst also ensuring that the systems for doing this are suitable for the vulnerable women and girls we work with

### 1.2 Agreed questions

The consultants worked with TfaC to revise the original Terms of Reference. The final version is attached as Appendix 1. The process of review involved revising and prioritising the assessment questions to ensure that this short Needs Assessment was focused on talking to the vulnerable women and girls whose lives TfaC aim to improve, and asking the questions that fitted within the purpose of a needs assessment. Adjustments were also made to accommodate TfaC's limited budget.

As the consultants worked through the questions further in preparation for the interviews and workshops the following five question areas emerged:

- **Reality** of FSW and SEG's lives and key **challenges** they face
- Influence of **others** on FSW and SEG lives
- TfaC's **reach** and **engagement**
- Ideas and experience for **advocacy**
- Observations re **processes** with programme participants regarding monitoring and verification.

### 1.3 Approach and methods

The approach for this needs assessment was participatory, qualitative and ethical. TfaC's priority was to listen to the voices of women and girls and this priority was reflected in the research participants selected and the methods used. Methods were selected and developed which would engage women and girls, in groups, in meaningful reflection and discussion about the issues affecting their lives.

Methods used include a range of drama methods: human sculpting, improvisation, and elements of the Jo Blagg exercise; PRA-style exercises (ranking, agree/ disagree); and semi-structured interviews. Documentation methods included: video and audio recordings, note-taking, flipcharts, drawings, tables etc. (See appendix 2 for a brief overview of methods used.)

All research participants consented to participate in the research, either verbally or using TfaC's consent form. Consent was given with the understanding that all responses would be anonymised in any report or other communication of this needs assessment, and that all photographs and videos taken were for use solely by the researchers for analysis purposes and were not to be used for illustrative purposes in the report.

The selected groups and individuals who participated in the needs assessment were nearly all Chichewa speaking, and all interviews and workshops were done wholly or partially through translation. Notes were made throughout and after each session, and audio files were handed to TfaC on completion for translation and transcription<sup>1</sup>. Three translators supported the needs assessment during the week; one of whom had previous experience of some of the activities used during the workshops.

## 1.4 Research participants

A total of 48 individuals were involved in the following workshops and interviews:

### **Workshops**

12 Female Sex Workers (Lilongwe): this included two Queen Mothers who were also involved in the semi-structured interview. Nine of the FSW were involved with TfaC, three were friends with no previous involvement.

12 Female Sex Workers (Salima)

12 Sexually Exploited Girls (Lilongwe)

### **Semi-structured small group interviews**

5 Queen Mothers

4 members of one Community Child Protection Team

2 TfaC staff working with SEGs

3 TfaC staff working with FSW

The findings presented in this report are therefore based on a relatively small sample of the women and girls TfaC works with and aims to work with.

Staff were invited to a short debrief in Malawi following the interviews and workshops. Two staff members attended this, including the MEL manager. Some of the comments made by those staff are also included in the report.

A schedule of the week is included as appendix 3.

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<sup>1</sup> Translated transcriptions were prepared for the interviews with Queen Mothers and the CCPT and the Workshop sessions with SEG and FSW in Lilongwe and FSW in Salima. There is a concern that at times the English language in these transcriptions is in more of a "report" style than the spoken word.

## 2.0 FINDINGS

The findings presented consist of the consultants’ analysis of the data collected, together with a selection of extracts directly from the interviews and workshops. The findings are organised into the following sections, starting with a presentation of FSW and SEG’s realities before moving onto the sections which relate to TfaC’s strategy and programming.

**Reality:** divided into 3 sections:

1. Violence, stigma and discrimination: from police, health workers, teachers, and the community
2. Support
3. Livelihoods

**Reach:** reach (and engagement) of female sex workers and sexually exploited girls.

**Advocacy:** presents research participants’ views on current advocacy activities, and ideas for the future.

**Process:** (TfaC’s financial and monitoring processes) presents data from interviews with staff and consultant observations.

### Overview of challenges and concerns facing FSW: “Why is the FSW having a bad day?”

Workshops with FSW began with a sculpting activity when women in pairs posed each other, first as a FSW having a good day, and secondly as a FSW having a bad day. The results of explanatory statements reveal the different areas of concerns or challenges for FSW. The table below indicates the number of times a particular issue or challenge was raised across the discussions around the sculpting of “bad days” in both workshops.

#### “Why is the FSW having a bad day?”

Has not used a <b>condom</b>	6
<b>Health</b> concerns including <b>HIV</b> , other STIs, Tuberculosis	11
Bad experience with clients: <b>abuse/rape</b>	6
Bad experience with <b>clients: not paying</b>	7
Bad experience with the <b>police: abuse</b>	3
Bad experience with <b>police: no support/arrested</b>	4
<b>Isolation or discrimination</b> from friends, family or community	4
Wants to leave sex work but <b>no alternatives</b>	2
She got <b>pregnant</b>	3
<b>Worried about money:</b> “what will her children eat?” “How will she travel back home for a funeral?”	5

## 2.1 REALITY: Violence, stigma and discrimination

The findings presented below indicate clearly that the **police** have a major influence on FSW's lives, along with **health workers**, and, for girls, **teachers**. These three groups, all roles which should be supporting women and girls in need, cause them greatest trouble.

### Police

*We are held in the police cell for a long time even when not guilty, and to be helped, we are told to have sex with a policeman without a condom. (FSW, Lilongwe)*

*Police feel they can do anything. They think sex workers deserve it. They don't think of HIV, they just think of power. (FSW staff)*

*At the Social Rehabilitation Centre a FSW was complaining that the police had arrested her with the Rogues and Vagabonds [law] and asked her for money to be released. She had no money so the police inserted metal into her vagina, tortured her. She didn't report it. Sometimes they ask them to sleep with them – unprotected sex. (FSW staff)*

Overwhelmingly, police were cited as FSW's greatest challenge with nearly all FSW involved in the research talking about police violence and brutality. During the write up of this report a significant programme of work was taking place with police officers in 10 stations across Lilongwe. TfaC's work with police aims to prevent abuse of sex works by clients and police and ensuring that all sex workers are able to report abuse cases and supported by police in that process. The results of this needs assessment suggest that there is still a lot to change before this aim is achieved. The issue of police did not come up in the workshop with SEGs and so the information presented here is mainly in relation to FSW's experience of the police only. However there were several statements made by members of the CCPT in relation to police behaviour with SEG and those are presented below:

*Before TfaC workshops and trainings were conducted the police could use their uniforms and their authority to try and frighten these children but however this conduct is slowly changing as the police are now beginning to understand their roles and responsibilities since they are now being trained by TfaC. (CCPT)*

*The police could even fabricate stories and cases because they found the children in bars with the aim of exploiting them further and what was happening was that they could just have sex with the girls and then release them without charging them any offence. (CCPT)*

*Some of the policemen could catch the girls at night for rogue and vagabond and tell the children that if they want to be released, then they should offer their bodies in exchange with freedom. (CCPT)*

*Most of the times the children are picked from the streets so they ask them to either give them money, sex or is arrested. (CCPT)*

Responses from FSW (and staff who support them) suggest that they face three challenges in relation to the police:

1. Risk of being arrested under the Rogues and Vagabonds law
2. Risk of rape, torture and theft by police once arrested
3. Absence of support from police when reporting abuse by others

The violence and sexual abuse FSW experience from the police is exacerbated by the Rogue Traders and Vagabonds law which gives the police a reason to arrest sex workers. Women report being forced into police vans and taken to the police station. They may have their phones confiscated and any money taken from them, and forced to have sex with the police in order to be released. Women also report being tortured by the police, having tear gas released upon them in the police van, and as stated above raped. Women do not know who to complain to about the police.

*There are a lot of challenges that the girls are facing... sometimes when we are taken up by the police, when we don't have money to pay the police, the policemen force us to have sex with them... And in most cases what happens is that we have unprotected sex with them. And we accept to do this because we do not want to be taken to jail at the same time we are putting our lives at risk of HIV/AIDS.*

(Queen Mothers)

*Sometimes when they take us to the police station, they always want to take the money that we have made from our business; the money which we have made in order to assist our children back at home. And sometimes instead of just taking us to the police station they start beating us, tear gassing us, and tear gas is so hot, and you will find that they are throwing the tear gas into the vehicle we they have put us in. (Queen Mothers)*

There is clearly a huge justice problem when the people who are meant to provide justice are abusing you. As one FSW from Lilongwe states:

*Though we experience this violence from the police, we do not have a place where we can go and report such kind of behaviour.*

One of the improvisations by FSW in Salima resulted in a discussion about the problem of having no one to turn to when abused by the police.

**Scenario:** When police catch us during night patrols, and pick women up because of Rogues and Vagabonds, the policeman wants to rape the girl and has robbed the girl's money.

**What do women do when faced with this situation?**

- *I report to the senior staff at the bar and to the bar owner where the event has occurred, and when I see that I have not been assisted I just have to stay as if nothing has happened to me.*
- *...when we report such cases to the bar owner they ask us questions like; "what were you doing at a time like that outside the bar?" So we answer them that "we are looking for clients who can give us money", and so they tell us that it is our own problem we should not bother them in any way.*

Although there were very few references to the police as a problem in the workshop with SEG and the interview with SEG staff, the CCPT made the following statement about the police: *Some police, especially at night when doing patrols, they grab these children.*

FSW in Salima said that sometimes FSW will have a boyfriend who is a policeman. It is not clear as to whether this is done as a form of protection (from other police). It came out during the Jo Blagg activity, the references to the police being the "ugly" boyfriends, could suggest that they are more for protection, but this is something that would no doubt required further discussion to full understand. We did not explore the definition of "boyfriend" and this could be worth exploring or discussing with the translator or in more detail with FSW.

***"Does she have a boyfriend? A lot of boyfriends***

***How many? 10***

***Does she have a husband? No***

***Do the boyfriends pay her like clients do? Some pay her while others do not***

***Are the boyfriends, some from the police? Yes, 2 of them***

***Are they amongst the handsome ones? No, they are not cute at all***

***Do the police boyfriends hurt her? Yes, especially when they catch her with other boyfriends."***

**Police: Looking ahead and recommendations**

The **Queen Mothers** who were interviewed talked positively about TfaC's work with the police and claimed that the problems had decreased as a result: *The problem is still there but it is at least decreasing. You know it cannot just end overnight but at least it has been reduced [as a result of TfaC's work].*

*Sometimes when Theatre for a Change has organised some meetings they also invite the police to take part in the meetings, so we are open to tell the police all the challenges that we meet and when we have been arrested. So, they always tell us what to do in case we come across some of these problems. They tell us that you can even report the matter to the Officer In-charge.*

During the **staff debrief** it was noted that TfaC still has so much work to do with the police:

*We are working with them, but somehow it's not getting through in terms of behaviour change in reality... I think we work with them at a surface level. They are hard to pin down, always being posted to different places, and so whilst some might start the behavioural change workshops they must swap and change around – we don't get sustained contact with individuals and we need to think about how we can do that. How do we get people to commit to the programme?*

**FSW's in Salima and Lilongwe** outlined the changes they would like to see:

**1. Police to enforce (and abide by) the law for justice and deterrence**

*... when a FSW is beaten, at anytime of the day and even during night hours, the police should do some investigations and when a culprit is found they should be convicted so that other people should refrain from such violent actions.*

**2. Interaction (including arrest/prosecution) with the police without abuse**

*When the policemen catch us loitering in the night, they should not rob our phones, money and any other personal property, rather they should just take us to the appropriate police stations where we can wait for our charges. And the police should not maltreat us because we are like any other human being and we have our rights too.*

*When the police arrest us they ask for sex, sometimes they caress our breasts and even our private parts without our permission, so they should be trained on this and there must be a law in place that will protect us once this happens.*

*The police should stop violating our rights; they should also stop harassing us when they catch us during the night patrols.*

**3. Training and behaviour change for police (on FSW rights and non-abuse)**

*The police should also be trained on issues relating to sex workers so that in the end they can be reformed.*

*TfaC should civic educate the police and the health personnel so that these groups should know what our rights are, and how they should treat us whenever we have a problem that requires help from the above departments.*

## Health Workers

*Medical personnel in public hospitals hide drugs whenever they know that they are to treat a sex worker. (FSW Lilongwe)*

*Most medical personnel think that we are carriers of different sexually transmitted diseases. (FSW Salima)*

*...nurses laugh at us when we have contracted STIs and...call fellow medical staff to have a glance at a sick sex worker. (FSW Lilongwe)*

TfaC recognises that access to health services, especially sexual health services, is vital for FSW. TfaC has two clinics that FSW and SEG can access, a mobile health clinic and a clinic at the Social Rehabilitation Centre, both in Lilongwe.

All of the FSW who took part in the needs assessment use government (public) health services as they cannot afford to access private health care. Only one of the twelve Lilongwe FSW at the workshop had attended the TfaC mobile clinic. During the staff debrief it was mentioned by the MEL manager that the clinic at the Social Rehabilitation Centre is an underused resource.

The FSW in Lilongwe talked about stigma and discrimination from government health workers when attending government hospitals or clinics. Staff working with FSW reinforced this point, stating that FSW experience poor treatment at hospitals. And there were several statements made which link stigma to reluctance or failure to access health services. Women in Salima had less to say about health workers but when prompted several reported similar experiences to FSW in Lilongwe of stigma and discrimination. Access to health services did not come up in the workshop with SEG.

An example of discrimination given by FSW in Lilongwe was not being prescribed the drugs or treatment required:

*We are not given proper medication from public hospitals... when a nurse realises that she is to treat a sex worker, instead of carrying out medical tests on the lady, they hurry in giving us some Panadols or Asprins yet the condition may not need such medication. (FSW Lilongwe)*

*Medical personnel in public hospitals hide drugs whenever they know that they are to treat a sex worker. As a result of this, we (sex workers) are told to get drugs from pharmacies and yet those kinds of drugs are expensive and we cannot afford to purchase them. Such drugs include Gentamicin. (FSW Lilongwe)*

The lack of privacy and discretion was another concern for some FSW, and poor treatment and support generally:

*In addition, I feel there is no privacy when we visit public hospitals for treatment. For example, most nurses laugh at us when we have contracted sexually transmitted infections*

*(STIs) and in most circumstances nurses call fellow medical staff to have a glance on a sick sex worker. (FSW Lilongwe)*

*There is no privacy in most public hospitals especially when it comes to location of departments. For example, I feel that for any person who has contracted an STI... are given some building from where they can get treatment...if a person sees you going that side then the person will definitely know that you are suffering from such disease. (FSW Lilongwe)*

*Hospitals don't treat them well... When they go back with the same complaint they say they are tired of seeing them again and again. (FSW)*

### **Health workers: Looking ahead and recommendations**

FSW report that they want to be able to access good quality treatment, including guidance and counselling without experiencing any discrimination. In the words of one FSW: *Medical personnel should receive us cordially like the way they receive any patient without showing any form of discrimination.* The following are recommendations from FSW in Lilongwe and the Queen Mothers relating to Health services.

#### **1. Training for and involvement of health workers to reduce discrimination towards FSW**

*TfaC should civic educate the police and health personnel so that these groups know what our rights are, and how they should treat us whenever we have a problem that requires help from the above departments. (FSW Lilongwe)*

*...another challenge is that sometimes when we go to the hospitals the sex workers are not assisted and they can let them die. So when we meet different organisations such as TfaC, FPAM we try to explain this to them so that when they have meetings they can talk to the health workers as well as the police on these issues. We have never met the government health workers but we really wish to meet them so that we can explain to them that we meet most of these challenges in government hospitals. (Queen Mothers)*

#### **2. Increased health provision by TfaC**

*TfaC should **expand the number of clinics** it is operating in...most of us would prefer going to a TFAC clinic than a government clinic.*

*I am suggesting that if **TfaC nurses or personnel start operating in such public hospitals** a patient's privacy on health will be met because so far I know that TfaC is handling FSWs health matters in a confidential manner.*

***TfaC medical staff should also be found in government hospitals.** For example, a nurse or a clinical officer working with TfaC should be posted to work in government hospitals because this TfaC nurse can have our previous health records for easy follow up when we are sick.*

***TfaC should establish some community home based care groups** where we can get medical treatment and where we can be diagnosed in a fast way before going to a hospital since most of the public hospitals are at a distance.*

## Teachers: stigma and discrimination at school for sexually exploited girls

*When the teacher is the first one to insult and embarrass you like this, then, the rest of the students follow suit. Whenever you have done something good or bad, all they can do is to bring out the issue of an organisation that pays your school fees. (SEG)*

*Sometimes, it happens when maybe the teacher wanted to be in a relationship with you and you have refused, so, what he now wants is to make your life harder every time you are in class. (SEG)*

*Sexually exploited girls face a lot of discrimination in class. Children laugh at them. (CCPT)*

TfaC supports SEG to return to or continue with school by making arrangements to pay their school fees.

Discrimination and harassment from teachers came out as the biggest issue facing SEG during the workshop. If it is known that TfaC is paying for girls' school fees this results in the girls concerned being stigmatised by teachers. They also talked about teachers asking them out and teasing them in front of other pupils. SEGs reported feeling distressed at school when teachers made, in front of their classmates, belittling remarks about TfaC paying their fees and other remarks that highlighted their marginalised status. Examples of stigmatising remarks or actions by teachers were given by eight out of the ten SEG present in the workshop.

Other barriers affecting SEG's ability to attend school are to do with the expense of notebooks, uniforms and shoes and teachers penalising them for not having correct items<sup>2</sup>.

At the staff debrief, the staff explained that currently, teachers are not supposed to know that TfaC is paying for certain girl's fees, for the very reason that this could result in discrimination towards those girls. However, the discussion with SEG during the needs assessment suggests that teachers do know that the girls are associated with TfaC. During the staff debrief the MEL manager suggested that TfaC could consider whether it would be better to work with a smaller number of schools and to do sufficient behaviour and attitudinal change work with a small group of teachers as a better strategy than working with many schools and presuming that girls whose fees are being paid by TfaC cannot be identified. She also suggested improving the links between the school project and TfaC's Education programme.

The box on the following page shares the discussion around an improvisation performed at the workshop involving an SEG in a classroom situation.

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<sup>2</sup> It was not clear whether teachers particularly penalised SEG only for not having necessary items or whether all pupils lacking essential items were penalised

**Improvisation:** A small group of SEG research participants performed an improvisation where a teacher embarrassed a needy learner (a girl) in class because she failed to answer some questions properly. The teacher told the class that Theatre for a Change pays the school fees of that girl. He chased her from the class for no apparent reason.

**Discussion:**

*This really happens in schools because there are times whereby a student has done something wrong and the teacher comes in to embarrass you in front of the whole class telling them that Theatre for a Change is paying for your school. This is very bad and an infringement on the girls rights because if she was not unable to answer the question, the teacher was not supposed to treat her in that way.*

*Sometimes, it happens when the teacher wanted to be in a relationship with you and you have refused, so, what he does now is to make your life harder every time you are in class.*

*When the teacher is the first one to insult and embarrass you like this, then, the rest of the students follow suit. Whenever you have done something good or bad, all they can do is to bring out the issue of an organization that pays your school fees.*

**Are there other challenges that you face at school?**

*Sometimes the teachers do not only shout at you, they can even slap a student when she has done something wrong.*

*Sometimes when you are late by maybe just a minute instead of letting you in they reach an extent of telling you that you should not enter and wait for the next class.*

**Are there some other moments when you are sent back home because you do not have a school uniform? (mentioned when we were doing the sculptures activity.)**

*Yes. Sometimes even when you don't have school fees they can even send you back.*

*When you don't have a calculator they also send you back.*

*They can also send you back when you don't have school shoes or when you are wearing slippers they dispose of them.*

*Sometimes you use one notebook for many subjects. And the teacher destroys the notebook once she discovers that you have combined two subjects in one notebook.*

**How do the teachers treat you when they discover that you are a sexually exploited girl?**

*Sometimes they talk a lot whenever you do something wrong they always say that they will report you to Theatre for a Change.*

*They do some regular checkups to make sure that you are coming to school each and every day, they sometimes tell you to go to the head teacher's office maybe every morning so that he sees you.*

*Sometimes when Theatre for a Change has delayed to pay the school fees, they do not allow you to attend classes.*

*Sometimes when you are putting on a new shoe they say that so you can manage to buy a new shoe, then why are you not able to pay for your own school fees?*

## Teachers: looking forwards and recommendations

For the Video Vox-Pop activity in the workshop with SEG, the girls responded to the following general questions:

- What makes me happy?
- What makes me sad?
- What should TfaC do in the future?

The responses to the questions “What should TfaC do in in the future?” provide a set of ideas from SEG in relation to TfaC’s work with supporting SEG’s returning to school.

### **What should Theatre for a Change do in the future?**

- *I would like TfaC to continue supporting us and also reach out to the needy in many different areas of the country.*
- *I would like TfaC to continue doing what it has been doing, like paying school fees for the vulnerable children, taking them back to their parents so that they can live a normal life. TfaC should also go to those communities and reach out to those kids who don’t know about it so that they can also change just like I did.*
- *I would like TfaC to continue going to different place such as bars so that it can help to bring back the girls who are fond of frequenting such places.*
- *TfaC should start assisting those children who have passed their Malawi School certificate so that they can have something to do and be role models to some of the vulnerable girls.*
- *I would like TfaC to continue encouraging the youth so that they have a bright future.*
- *I would like TfaC to continue encouraging girls’ education particularly the vulnerable and exploited girls; it should reach out to SEG in different areas across the country.*
- *I would like TfaC to continue paying the school fees for the vulnerable and exploited girls and also to continue providing vocational trainings.*
- *I would like TfaC to make some follow ups on those children who were taken from the bars and sent back to school to see if those children have really changed because otherwise they will be paying school fees for people who have not changed at all.*
- *I would like TfaC to continue helping the needy.*

Staff who work with SEG talked about the need to change the attitudes of the girls’ family members and parents. For example, one said, *Sometimes we try to refer the girls’ families, try to get the child to identify with the risky behaviour. We need to work with the families. We’ve started behaviour change with them but sometimes we’ve only met the parents once. We can’t meet each and every guardian.* For a girl to return to school and stay there clearly requires the support from her family. A staff member pointed out, *We don’t provide food; only provide education, but a child may not be able to go back to school because they have no food, no clothing or transportation to school.*

## Others who stigmatise and abuse: clients, communities and landlords

*Traditional leaders chase us away - they don't want sex workers in their area; landlords don't want sex workers as tenants; sometimes landlords ask if you have family or a husband and ask you to have sex and live rent free. (FSW)*

*They're not allowed to rent in communities so when they go to a bar that has rooms the bar owner wants to have sex, unprotected sex. The bar owners have many sex partners. It's a big risk for HIV. (FSW staff)*

In all interviews and workshops, FSW, SEG and those who work with them or support them referred to other groups who abuse, stigmatise or discriminate; firstly clients, and then landlords, bar owners, other members of the community and the church.

### **Clients**

FSW (and SEG) are subject to risks of physical violence, contracting STIs including HIV, and theft each time they have (or are forced to have) sex with a client. During the workshops with FSW there were also several reports of FSW being taken by clients to distant locations where they were forced to have sex with several men, and then left in those places. The behaviour, knowledge and attitudes of clients matters a lot to the well-being of FSW (and SEG), and this is evident from the interviews and workshops carried out.

One of the FSW in Lilongwe stated: *Some other groups [aside from the police] that are fond of sleeping with us without giving us our payment are soldiers, minibus drivers and conductors. Most of the soldiers also rob us of our money and phones, they bully us and we are not paid. This often happens when we meet them for sex.*

In Salima one of the two improvisations performed by FSW related to a scenario involving a client who does not pay. During the discussion afterwards FSW also talked about abusive clients, and the lack of support from police when they report such physical violence.

**A sex worker was in a bar and a client has picked her, after sex the client is refusing to pay her**

**FSW's comments on the role play**

P1: *when we have agreed with a client to use a condom, sometimes they do not use it when doing sex, and because most of the times we are drunk, and we are in a condition where we just feel that the client has worn a condom, when we sober up usually after sex, we discover that the client did not use any protection and this is a problem to us.*

P2: *after having sex, when the client is to pay us, most clients use abusive words, they shout at us and others hurt us yet they are the ones who approached us first.*

**Are there any other problems faced by FSW**

P1: *bar owners just keep us and use us in their bars and do not pay us. Even food they do not give us yet most of the times we do not have money.*

P2: *when clients beat us in the event of requesting our pay after sex, when we go to the police, policemen do not help us instead they call us all sorts of names and they even say that they cannot help prostitutes because we are in locations and bars to spread HIV/AIDS*

P3: *some men take us from the bars where we operate in, and they take us to a distant place without knowing that the man has invited 2 or 3 friends to wait for 1 sex worker. Upon reaching the place, all the 4 men have sex to 1 sex worker with no condom and no pay.*

P5: *when we are found with STIs bar owners chase us from their bars and they tell us to go back to our houses yet we have stayed in that bar for a long time.*

**A sexually exploited girl in trouble – from Jo Blagg activity with SEG**

**What shall we call our imaginary character?**

*Her name should be Maginini*

**How does she look?**

*She looks unhappy.*

**Why is she sad?**

*She has been abused or treated in a cruel way.*

*She has been abused by a married man who has 16 kids.*

*She did not go to the hospital when she was raped.*

*She did not know that she was supposed to go to the hospital when she was raped.*

*The man threatened her that if she goes to the hospital he will kill her.*

*When she was raped she was supposed to go to the police.*

*The man gave her shoes after having sex with the girl.*

**If you have been raped could you be able to go to the police to report about this?**

*Yes we can*

**What do you think could happen if the people know that the girl had sex with that man and she was given shoes after the sex?**

*People can laugh at her.*

*People can say that the girl and the man agreed because the girl wanted the shoes.*

*People will say that she was raped because she wanted the shoes.*

**Which people do you think can assist the girl when she has been raped?**

NGOs Traditional leaders Parents Friends

**How do you look at the future of this girl?**

*She might be thinking that, that's the end of her because maybe she has been infected with some STIs or even HIV.*

*She could be thinking that she is pregnant.*

**Are there any other places that she cannot go to since she has been raped?**

*Sometimes this happens to the girls in the bars and you will find out that the girls have nowhere to go and no one to talk to and they just leave this unreported.*

**Who do you think could assist this girl?**

*NGOs can assist the girl.*

**What role could TfaC play?**

*TfaC could play a big role here because it can reach out to this girl and bring her back to her parents if she was at a bar.*

**Does this happen?**

*Yes it really happens.*

*When this happens we need to encourage the girl that she should not despair but rather know that, that's not the end of her future and she still have a lot to achieve.*

*She needs to be encouraged to continue working hard in school.*

**Landlords**

The second most commonly mentioned group who FSW face difficulties with are landlords. This stigma makes it difficult for FSW to find accommodation to rent, putting them in a vulnerable situation where they may be forced to provide bar owners or landlords with sex in return for a place to live.

*Sex workers meet a lot of discrimination. Landowners won't let them stay there – they say they are husband snatchers. (FSW staff)*

*They're not allowed to rent in communities so when they go to a bar that has rooms the bar owner wants to have sex, unprotected sex. The bar owners have many sex partners. It's a big risk for HIV. (FSW staff)*

**Communities: Neighbours, the church, and traditional landlords**

FSW experience stigma and discrimination from their communities - from parents, traditional leaders and married women. Staff of FSW stated that the children of FSW are stigmatised within their communities. This was reinforced by one FSW who explained: *they are called all sorts of names, such as 'their mother is a sex worker - don't play with them!' people don't want to talk to us.* The CCPT reinforced this stating: *Most community members think of the girls as prostitutes and that they should be kept away from other children.*

There were several mentions to women considering FSW a threat to their marriages and other women in the community viewing FSW as 'husband snatchers'.

During the interview with staff who work with FSW, one of them gave the following example of discrimination towards FSW at the community-level: *Sometimes there is devolvement into the community [central money to be distributed at community level] and sex workers don't get any benefit from this.*

### **Church**

There were a few references to FSW experiencing stigma and discrimination from the church. One FSW stated: *Sometimes at funerals preachers stop preaching about the funeral and start saying 'you're a sex worker – go to hell; even at our community meetings we get called names; everything depends on the community – some accept and you can go to church, weddings – there are some with no discrimination*

### **Self-stigma**

FSW themselves stated that FSW shouldn't drink or wear short skirts as this can exacerbate the negative attitude of communities, pointing to a certain degree of self-stigma.

### **Looking forward and recommendations**

The concerns above point to the need for advocacy efforts targeted at the public in general alongside targeted activities for police, health workers and teachers. FSW and the staff who work with them provided comment on and further ideas for activities designed for changing public attitudes and these are outlined in the section on **ADVOCACY**.

## 2.2 REALITY: Support (from Queen Mothers and CCPT)

*[As Queen mothers] we reach out to our colleagues who are facing problems, for example when they fall sick, we take them to the hospital so that they can access the medical treatment and we take care of them until they have recovered. Sometimes when they have been detained by the police for rogue and vagabond, we try to follow up until they are released.*

Throughout the interviews and workshops there were references to FSW and SEG receiving support from each other and also TfaC.

The consultant also carried out interviews with a small group of Queen Mothers and the members of one Community Child Protection Team (CCPT), both of whom have an intermediary role to support FSW and SEG (respectively) within their communities. It must be noted that translation during both interviews was difficult which made it impossible to ask any good follow-up questions. It was also observed that it was difficult for the individuals in these intermediary role to talk about the needs of FSW, when they had their own needs as sex workers (queen mothers) or community members in an unpaid role (CCPT members) that they wanted to communicate.

### **Queen Mothers – support for FSW**

Queen Mothers, themselves sex workers who have been through TfaC's behavioural change programme, are an example of FSW providing support to each other. The Queen Mothers interviewed provide support to FSW in the areas most needed - health and police - and they express pride and satisfaction with this role. There are three areas of support provided by Queen Mothers:

- 1. Support in seeking health care**
- 2. Encouragement/guidance in using condoms and negotiating condom use**
- 3. Support in dealing with police**

### **Support in seeking health care**

The Queen Mothers interviewed have a range of ways to support the health of other FSW. They encourage them to seek medical intervention when required but also encourage adherence to ART.

*I like reaching out to people mostly those who are sick and taking them to the hospital so that they can access medical treatment. (Queen Mother)*

*There are some other girls who came from Blantyre and are HIV positive. They are on ART so when they come here they feel embarrassed to disclose their HIV status and as a result they may not be going to receive their ARVs.... we take them to the hospital so that they could be assisted and receive the drugs. (Queen Mother)*

*I like discussing with my friends about health issues whenever I am with them. I ask them how they are firing health wise. For those who are on ART, I always encourage and remind them to go to the hospital so that they can access the treatment and remind them whenever they are supposed to go to the hospital to take the drugs. I advise them that they should*

*always remember to take the drugs at an appropriate time, they should not over drink, they should always eat a balanced diet and I also remind them on the use of protection whenever they are having sex. I always tell them that they should always come to me when they run out of condoms and that they should not wait until all the condoms are depleted but at least when they see that the condoms are about to come to an end. (Queen Mother)*

### **Encouragement/guidance in using condoms and negotiating condom use**

*Sometimes, as Queen Mothers we try to reach out to different groups of sex workers and tell them to tell us the problems that they are facing in relation to the problems that we face ourselves. Because there are other people who fail to be open and express themselves to the extent that they fail to demand the use of protection whenever they are having sex, so we are the ones who try to advise our colleagues to use protection whenever they are having sex... Sometimes we are the ones who train them on how to use a condom so that they remove the shyness they have and in so doing help in fighting against the spread of HIV.*

*Sometimes we thought that HIV is only rampant in urban areas; however this is not the case, because if you go to the rural areas you will find that many people there are suffering from the virus because many people there do not even know how to use a female condom or how important a condom is. So we as Queen Mothers, we are supposed to be responsible and to be on the fore front encouraging these people to follow the proper ways so that they can avoid contracting sexually transmitted infections such as HIV/AIDS.*

### **Support in dealing with police**

*...in our work as queen mothers, we reach out to our friends who are facing different challenges - maybe they fall sick or they have been arrested - we do anything possible so that they are released from the police cell.*

*... as Queen Mothers, there are so many things that we do, sometimes you will find that our colleagues have been harassed, sometimes men beat them up or they are raped and injured by those cruel men, then we take them to the police and there the police give them a letter so that they can go to the hospital to be assisted and we leave the issue in the hands of the police so that they can investigate and the culprit be brought to book. Sometimes, there are other cases whereby the girls might have a fight and they end up getting injured, so in such cases we make sure that we take them to the hospital or to the police so that they can be assisted and find the solution.*

### **Community Child Protection Team – support for SEG**

One child protection team, consisting of 4 members, 1 female and 3 male was interviewed. One of the men and one of the women were former sex workers themselves and another man identified himself as a community police man. The interview was recorded but at the time of preparing the report there was no transcription of the audio; the information presented here is based on the consultant's notes from time of the interview. It could be worthwhile for TfaC staff to review this transcript.

The motivations expressed by the CCPT for getting involved in this work were all in the interests of child protection, and during the interview the CCPT team did describe their

intervention in two case of sexual exploitation both of which resulted in prosecution, highlighting the potential effectiveness of their role.

However, at times in the interview, their descriptions of their role and their experiences raised several serious issues relating to child protection. Several members of the CCPT described their activities as taking children away from their mothers; both if their mothers are sex workers or if the girl is believed to be being sexually exploited. There were references to taking girls to the Social Rehabilitation Centre. Those interviewed referred to their role being one of talking to sexually exploited girls, “counselling” them, and also talking to their parents.

Of most immediate concern, and a concern also expressed by the CCPT themselves was the lack of any ID for the CCPT. Is it appropriate for adult CCPT members, male and female, to be working with SEG without any appropriate ID? How are SEG expected to differentiate between a member of the CCPT and an adult men who wants to abuse her? If TfaC wants to encourage girls to seek support from the CCPT this entity and those working within it needs to have a clear role, be accountable and be identifiable.

There appears to be a lack of clarity around their role in general and specifically in terms of the relationship between the CCPT and community police and the official police. One person stated that, *Community police look at all sorts of crimes, robbery etc. They look at these but they don't have transport. And another added, Community police don't have the power to sit down and find solutions. Just take them to the police.*

It could be worthwhile reviewing the prosecution cases they had described to support greater effectiveness (and clarity of) their role. Even within these examples there was confusion expressed around who was responsible for getting the accused to the police, or vice-versa.

### Looking forward and recommendations

As noted earlier, the Queen Mothers nor the CCPT found it difficult to articulate their needs in relation to their role of providing support to SEG and FSW. However, there were several references to Queen Mothers facing transport difficulties in relation to their outreach and support work, and the members of the CCPT stated their need for a means of identification to support their outreach with SEG.

*We meet a lot of challenges in our work. For instance it is very difficult for us to travel to different places where there are exploited girls... the other thing is that we do not have any identification document so sometimes when we go to some places people mistreat or even disrespect us because they do not recognize us as the CCPT. (CCPT)*

The consultants' recommendations in relation to the CCPTs are presented in the CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS section.

## 2.3 REALITY: Livelihoods

*People aren't doing sex work for fun - they're doing it because they're poor. (FSW staff)*

*...most of us who are in this job are not happy with it because nobody can say that 'I should choose to be on the streets rather than sleep at night.(Queen mother)*

*As a sex worker I am not proud of my work and I have always wanted to quit but I have no other alternative, so is there any other way possible that you can help me with employment so that I can quit sex work? (FSW Salima)*

*What makes us to be involved in this is because we do this because we don't have money so we need money and some basic needs. (Queen mothers)*

The economic necessity of sex work and the desire to leave sex work and find alternative sources of income was expressed loudly and clearly in the interviews with Queen Mothers, FSW staff and FSW themselves. FSW staff explained that it is in the absence of other opportunities women resort to sex work to be able to feed their children every day: *We want them to use condoms consistently and be able to say they can feed their children everyday. They don't have other opportunities.*

FSW's need and desire for support in establishing alternative livelihood opportunities was mentioned repeatedly and emerged as the second key theme alongside the police.

A total of 14 FSW in Salima and Lilongwe video recorded their hopes for the future – 100% expressed their desire to find an alternative source of income and to be able to leave prostitution. A selection of their **Hopes for the future** are listed below:

- *If people can give me money then I can stop prostitution and start a business.*
- *To be independent and I hope my children will also be independent in future*
- *When I find money I should start a business. I should be able to take part in church activities without any burden because prostitution is like a burden to serve God properly. I should stop prostitution*
- *To go back to school when I will find money, and if I will find such money in future I should be able to meet my children's every day to day needs, and then I will stop prostitution so that my children should have a bright future.*
- *To find a job so that I should be able to take care of myself and my children. I have gone to school and I have done some interviews with companies but it seems most companies recruit only those people they know, so I do not have anyone to help me find a job as a result I prefer prostitution because there are no interviews in this profession. However, I need a job than doing prostitution.*
- *I want to stop prostitution because most men I sleep with sometimes give me a low pay, as such I struggle to provide my children with needs such as food and others, and I also struggle to pay house rents.*
- *To stop prostitution because some men prefer giving me a higher pay when I have sex with them without a protection (condom), and I am given a low pay when I use a condom. So, prostitution is a risky game to do and this is why I want to quit this profession.*

Many FSW expressed concern for their children and the reason given for wanting to develop businesses and quit sex work was often for their children. For example,

*To give me the opportunity to do business what I need is capital. If I start business I will be busy with that and I will not find any time for sex work. This could be a good job to us because we don't want our children to be exposed to this (sex work). Already they see us with different men, which is very devastating to them.*

Similar hopes for the future were also given to the imaginary character created during the Jo Blagg activity in Salima:

**What does she hope for the future?** To stop prostitution and to start a business

**What kind of business?** Selling fish, selling tomato, owning a fabric shop, a retail grocery shop, or a cosmetic shop

**Can she manage to run these businesses?** Yes

Most women expressed their desire to leave sex-work<sup>3</sup> and to see alternative forms of income either through establishing their own business or gaining employment. Some FSW expressed their desire for returning to school and completing their education. Others prioritised skills training, whereas other requested capital investment to establish businesses based on their existing skills:

*I would like to quit prostitution and start a small scale business like selling second-hand clothes and groceries, so in this case **I will need capital**. (FSW Salima)*

*As for me **I would like to be trained** first before I find the capital for doing business because I cannot do business without being trained.*

*As for me I wish there is an opportunity that I could **go back to school***

FSW in Lilongwe, when asked at the end of the workshop if they had any other concerns, chose to reiterate their need for support in developing other livelihood options to support their exit from sex work.

*TfaC should help in exposing our skills. For example, some of us have skills in tailoring, cookery, and others are excellent in braiding people's hair (salon work) but we lack resources [to set up a business].*

*We are willing to change our behaviour if Theatre for a Change is to help us in meeting our day to day needs because we do not do prostitution out of fun but we do this in order to find a little something for our children.*

*I wish TfaC should help us with resources such as business capital and scholarships, some of us would want to go back to school but we do not have school fees and we do not have other relatives who can stay with our children as guardians when we return to school.*

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<sup>3</sup> It was not within the scope of this needs assessment to explore women's imagined or actual journeys out of sex work, and how easy or how difficult that is.

### Looking forward and recommendations

FSW are loud and clear in their request for support to develop alternative incomes, whether that be through training, investment or returning to school. Staff who work with FSW also have aspirations for FSW to improve their livelihood opportunities and are keen to provide support in this area.

*FSW do sex work because nobody supports them financially. TfaC helps with a little, but doesn't do enough. Maybe if we could pay school fees or help with business people would stop. People aren't doing sex work for fun - they're doing it because they're poor. (FSW staff)*

The consultants note that the VSL structure/scheme is evidently appropriate and sustainable and provides FSW with access to a savings and loan service that they might otherwise have difficulty accessing. The Queen Mothers made the connection between this and the start-up funding required to develop a business: *As Queen Mother we also try to counsel and advise our friends that let's start doing some other things such as Village Saving Loans or we should make some savings so that we could use these savings to start small scale businesses.*

## 2.4 REACH and ENGAGEMENT

This section is focused on issues related to reach and engagement with primary programme participants - FSW (female sex workers) and SEG (sexually exploited girls). During all interviews and workshops research participants were asked who they felt TfaC was not reaching and also their ideas for increasing the numbers of people TfaC reaches. There were also discussions relating to engagement (FSW and SEG 'staying' with TfaC, completing the programme). Some of the barriers affecting reach are related to TfaC's programmatic choices and other barriers are social, economic or geographical. A table at the end of this section presents a summary of these barriers and suggests ways to address them.

### Who is not being reached?

#### **Sexually Exploited Boys**

Both the staff who work with SEG and the SEG themselves said that **sexually exploited boys** were a group who are not being reached.<sup>4</sup>

#### **Women who are not sex workers**

FSW in Lilongwe and Salima felt that there are **woman who are not sex workers**, for example, married women who have multiple partners, sexually-active adolescents and people in rural areas, who could be reached and benefit from TfaC's behavioural change work and demonstrations of condom usage. Whilst these groups are beyond TfaC's current remit, the FSW evidently see the relevance of TfaC's work beyond the target groups.

#### **Muslim sex workers**

Outside the interview space, while travelling home after the workshop, FSW were asked if there are many Muslim sex workers. They said that there were many. It was observed that workshops frequently begin and close with Christian prayers that most women participated in. Muslim sex workers may be a group that are not being reached.

### Reach with existing groups

The main response to the question of who is not being reached related to **geography**: TfaC does not reach FSW and SEG in rural areas, and within Lilongwe it focuses only on areas where there is a high density of bars. Other barriers include: attitudes of girls and women trying to be reached, interest in the TfaC programme, hostile communities, and mobility related to seasonality of FSW work in different areas. The Queen Mothers interviewed saw their role as reaching out to some of these more rural communities – but it is not clear to what extent TfaC supports or instructs such outreach.

*I am a member of LISWAN so I can teach other people what I know and what I learnt. So I am supposed to reach out to many people and support them. Because some of these people are in rural areas and they are involved in sex work but they know nothing unlike what we do here in the city. Even the meetings that we attend here in towns do not accommodate those people who are in rural areas. So it is our duty as Queen Mothers to try and reach out to those people.*  
(Queen Mother)

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<sup>4</sup> Sexually exploited boys as an unreached group were not mentioned by FSW or staff working with FSW.

Staff working with SEG explained the **challenges they face in reaching SEG**. Whilst they may find girls in bars, there are risks involved with this outreach: *Bar owners have a negative attitude towards us because they use the girls to attract customers. We try to work with the bar owners but sometimes it's not possible- we can get attacked.*

Several of the **Sexually Exploited Girls** felt that TfaC does not reach all SEG in their communities. One girl said, *In our community it is only me who is being helped so I cannot say that it reaches out to everyone.* Another said, *There are some girls who are not reached, for example, the street kids.* Another commented that, *There are some other girls who do not know about TfaC and there are others who know about TfaC but do not want to change.* Reasons for not wanting to change were given by other girls in the group and included the fear of not having money and the fear of being mocked by friends if a girl decides to go back to school.

The Queen Mothers who were interviewed describe how FSW do not necessarily accept their advice because QM are themselves sex workers and haven't themselves successfully found an alternative livelihood: *... if we had good examples... But, as you can see we have got absolutely nothing to show to them. We always try the best we can to reach them but they do not welcome us so in the end you will find that we fail to support them... we can go and visit them and we try to advise them on the dangers of sex work [but] what they will tell you is 'how can she be telling us this when she is actually into the same business'. At least if we had something else to do apart from sex work, then that could not have been the case. So it is difficult for the girls to accept what we are telling them.*

### Engagement with existing groups

Several barriers to continuing engagement with the programme emerged during interviews and workshops. There is a concern amongst some FSW that being associated with TfaC would “**expose**” them - a very real fear given their experiences of stigma and discrimination in their communities, and by service providers such as police, health workers, and teachers. One of the FSW explained: *Our colleagues are failing to attend meetings organised by TFAC because they feel that their identities (as sex workers) will be exposed.*

A reason for “quitting” mentioned by a FSW in Salima and also staff relates to the issue of **allowances** and whilst the consultants appreciate the concern of a culture of workshop per diems as a source of income, this should not be conflated with actual needs. A woman's priority to feed her children means she needs to spend time finding that income as opposed to participating in a workshop. Travel allowances may also be essential for women to be able to attend workshops. Women participating in the workshops for this research chose to take their snacks home for their children demonstrating this priority of providing for their children.

Staff working with SEG gave the following comments on engagement:

*Some expect that we will loan them money and drop out when they don't get it. Sometimes a lack of interest.<sup>5</sup> They want instant cash rather than school.*

*Some girls do the workshop but don't want to follow up: if they decide they don't want to go back to school TfaC can't do anything. The Samaritan Trust do vocational training, but for some others – nothing.*

Staff working with SEG also described the fact that **attitudes from others** affect reach and engagement, for example girls may be being pressured by friends and even guardians to stay involved in sex work as opposed to going back to school. Staff also mentioned the fact that sexually exploited girls in the community can be hard to identify – *some dress nicely, you can't see them [that they are sexually exploited]*. Staff working with SEG, when asked about what they would do differently in the future, referred to the need for more staff in order to reach more girls more effectively.

One of the FSW in Salima, talked about a gap in momentum with TfaC activities and the impact on engagement:

*The problem with TfaC is that sometimes they just start their programmes with a bang but as the programs unfold they slowly lose steam and after quite a long time you see that they have resurfaced so you will find that people lose interest.*

Related concerns to do with the timing of activities were mentioned by several staff working with FSW and when staff were asked to think about improvements to the programme several of them considered both the timing and the order of activities and whether there could be a more effective way to run things:

*If it's a six-month training... not all will come for six months. Others will be looking for work. SW is seasonal and phone numbers and names change from place to place.*

*I would change the way we interact. I'd provide them with VSL (Voluntary Savings and Loans), give them a bit to start a business, work closely with them to see how they're doing, then do behaviour change to see if they can do both. If someone's not doing she's not serious about leaving SW.*

*I'd start with behaviour change because it's a process I'd give a lot of time to learn about behaviours, ask them what they want; vocational skills, business, school? Then I would give them what they want, and they can do it for quite a long time. They have long time [in current programme?] waiting for something to do after behaviour change workshops.*

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<sup>5</sup> It wasn't clear whether this was a lack of interest in the TfaC content? Or just a lack of interest in school / leaving sex work etc.

## Addressing the barriers to reach and engagement

Barriers to Reach and Engagement	Questions/possible responses for TfaC
<b>Current programmatic/budget limitations</b>	
Decision to only work with sexually exploited girls	Do other agencies in Malawi support sexually exploited boys? Consider whether any appropriate links/learning/skills sharing with such agencies
Current geographic scope	Related to budget and scope/effectiveness of work.
Focus on communities which are “supportive” have an existing relationship with.	Carry out theatre work to change attitudes/raises awareness in communities which are deemed to be “non-supportive”
Transport difficulties for staff and programme participants, including intermediaries such as CCPT and Queen Mothers. It appears TfaC does not have enough cars and/or the flexibility re use of cars to support CP staff’s outreach work with FSW	Review transport needs and the utilisation /prioritisation of the two new TfaC cars, particularly allowing for flexibility in the timings of car use. The MEL manager suggests that these 2 new cars should be ‘owned’ by the community programme.
<b>Societal barriers</b>	
Mobility of FSW due to seasonality of men’s work	People move from place to place, TfaC’s programme does not. If it were more tailored around women’s needs a woman might be able to stay engaged in a programme while living in different cities, or do an accelerated programme and cover it all while in one place.
Fear of exposure by participating in TfaC programmes	Improved introduction to TfaC to eliminate any fears of being photographed and review risks of exposure and ways to reduce them. Introduce organisational photography and image use guidelines.
Non-participation due to lack of knowledge of allowances and/or allowances insufficient	Increased transparency at any induction with programme participants around allowances and travel expenses Review allowance/expenses amounts and refreshment provisions during workshops and trainings to ensure this is not a barrier to attendance for those FSW or SEG who are most poor.
Lack of cooperation and hostility from bar owners	TfaC to consider if working with traditional leaders can be a means to influence bar owners. TfaC to consider advocacy around a change in law around presence of those underage girls in bars.
Peer-pressure for SEG to NOT attend school/TfaC programmes	Continued outreach by TfaC and SEG who have been through programme to demonstrate value in going back to school
TfaC covers school fees but SEGs lack necessities to attend school such as uniform, transportation and foot.	TfaC to consider additional attendance allowance for SEG (and FSW?) who attend school, but there is a risk that this could involve more form filling/attendance records.

## 2.5 ADVOCACY

The needs assessment aimed to explore women's experiences of and ideas for participating in advocacy activities. However, in general, the issue of advocacy generated less discussions within the interviews and workshops than other issues. The FSW and SEG that we talked to would urgently like to see a change in behaviour and attitude from the police, health workers and teachers and the changes they would like to see in their interactions with these groups are noted within the relevant sections above.

In the FSW workshop in Lilongwe only half of the FSW present had an awareness of TfaC's theatre or radio advocacy activities and only half were aware of the sex workers forum. And many of the suggestions in terms of awareness-raising related to a call for increasing awareness of condom usage amongst those in rural areas, married women and adolescents. It appears that there may be a general lack of awareness amongst FSW about advocacy and its role in relation to other TfaC activities. During the staff debrief it was suggested that this lack of awareness could extend to staff also.

### **Sex work and the law**

Both the Queen mothers and staff working with FSW explained the problems with the legal status of sex work in Malawi. 8 out of 12 of the FSW interviewed in Salima said they know that sex work is legal. However as the following quotes from Queen Mothers below illustrate the legal status of sex work is far from clear:

- *In the constitution of Malawi, we do not have such a law that criminalizes sex work in Malawi. Our constitution is silent as far as prostitution is concerned.*
- *The law says that a person should not hire someone to work as a sex worker or else someone should not be selling sex for money.*
- *There is no such a law and we are actually waiting for them to discuss and agree on what to do.*
- *They once said that the laws that we are using now are old and they were put in place during the time of colonialism. And now we compete with the police and they come to capture us for Rogue and Vagabond which is not always the case. The Rogue and Vagabond in this case is just a scapegoat. They find us standing on the roadside or in the bar and then they say that they are locking us in for Rogue and Vagabond when we were actually looking for money. So they need to go and cross check their laws properly.*

The staff working with FSW suggested that there is a need for a law against discriminating sex workers: *Government need to revise the law like they did on HVAIDS. You know what will follow if you discriminate against people with HIV.*

### **FSW participation in advocacy activities**

The FSW who participated in the two workshops did not express a sense that it was important for them to be involved in advocacy activities. The Queen Mothers who were interviewed

however, shared ideas for the future which involved them speaking out at meetings to various individuals and organisations. For example:

*Whenever they are organising the meetings, they should make sure that they also invite the government health workers to the meetings so that we can present all our concerns to them because in this case Theatre for a Change has empowered us as Queen Mothers so we will be free and open talk to the health workers.*

However, it should be noted that the Queen Mothers expressed their role much more in relation to the support they provide directly to FSW, rather than speaking out on their behalf. And even when the sex workers network LISWAN was mentioned it was in relation to accessing information and feeding that back to sex workers.

Queen Mothers have evidently taken on a role which involves them being identifiable as involved in sex work, and one of the Queen Mothers requested identification from Theatre for a Change to assist with their supporting role:

*I would suggest that Theatre for a Change should produce some IDs for us, who work hand in hand with Theatre for a Change so that when we go to the bars we could show them to the police when they want to arrest us.*

Within the workshops with FSW, however, there were several references to, a concern with being exposed as a sex worker, and this being a risk associated with getting involved with TfaC, and this is also referred to in the section on REACH and ENGAGEMENT. This concern needs to be explored in further detail in relation to TfaC's plans for advocacy activities involving sex workers, or at least an acknowledgement that not all sex workers will feel comfortable being involved in advocacy activities.

For example, it was during the discussion on participation in advocacy that FSW expressed a fear of their photograph being taken by TfaC. They gave the story of a woman who had her photo taken and it being used in a media article, and their view that she should have been paid for that. Some of the women did not even want to have a photograph taken of their hands and feet in the workshop.

#### Looking forward and recommendations

Those interviewed felt that TfaC's existing advocacy activities of public theatre performances and radio programmes were effective and their recommendations for the future related to an increase in scope or scale of these activities.

- *We're doing good work. The touch tag... maybe if we had more resources for that. Vans, microphones etc. We go to the markets and just use our mouths (more people could hear with microphones) (FSW staff)*
- *We could continue having radio and on every channel several times a day [ this ties with BCC theory about having to hear messages repeatedly] (FSW staff)*

- *We do a good job on advocacy. But only in a few areas in Lilongwe. Could expand. (FSW staff)*
- *I also feel that what they were doing in the past like last year, whereby they were broadcasting some radio plays. This was a good initiative because it was reaching out everyone even those who are in rural areas could hear for example some people in other areas do not know what we are doing here but when they hear it on the radio, they were able to know that the sex workers have rights and also the police could know how to treat us well since the plays also involved the police officers so such initiatives should continue. (Queen Mother)*
- *Whenever we are having meetings, police representatives, school committees, health personnel, traditional leaders, a representative from Non-Governmental Organizations, a Member of Parliament, businessmen, and other people from the communities should be present because these groups can play a role in achieving TfaC's objective in this project (others agreeing) (FSW Lilongwe)*

In both workshops with FSW there were also references to an increase in activities which would raise awareness about TfaC amongst the public, such as road-shows, poster campaigns, and door-to-door activities. There appeared to be some confusion in relation to the discussion on advocacy around whether it was raising awareness of TfaC or informed public debate and change in attitudes and behaviour towards sex work and sex workers.

During the staff debrief this point was noted, and how that they should address that fear in any introduction activities, and emphasise that TfaC will never make anyone have their photograph taken. The issue of "exposure" needs to be further explored in relation to the impact this might have on increasing participation of FSW in advocacy activities, and how widely the concern is shared amongst FSW in Malawi.

## 2.6 FINANCIAL AND MONITORING PROCESSES

The consultants made a decision to only include questions on this in the interviews with TfaC staff. It was felt that there was insufficient time to explore this issue adequately with other research participants and that any initiated discussion around allowances risked raising expectations amongst research participants.

The issue of allowances - in relation to amounts as opposed to disbursement procedures - did however, come up unprompted in both workshops with FSW and the interview with Queen Mothers, often in relation to reach and engagement (see above section).

At the point of developing the TOR for this needs assessment TfaC's concern was around whether their verification processes for allowances and other matters, such as condom distribution were respectful to its programme participants and in line with its organisational values.

For staff working with FSW this concern is manifested in terms of their relationships with programme participants. Staff concerns in relation to financial and monitoring processes relate to the impact processed have on their working relationships with programme participants, and impact on the work TfaC do.

During the week of the needs assessment in Malawi the consultant witnessed the provision of allowances and refreshments to programme participants taking part in the assessment. Several of the recommendations in this section relate therefore to the consultant's direct experiences.

The three key issues emerging from this needs assessment are:

- Are TfaC's allowances for FSW and SEG taking part in their programmes sufficient?
- Impact of allowance amounts and verification processes on staff/beneficiary relations
- Monitoring condom distribution
- Are refreshments during TfaC activities adequate and timely?

### **Are TfaC's allowances for FSW and SEG taking part in their programmes sufficient?**

TfaC staff also communicated to the consultants the issue of other organisations providing FSW and others with larger allowances for participating in trainings, workshops etc. The example given was of the Family Planning Association of Malawi (FPAM), and it was suggested that *If FSW can choose between talking to the FPAM and talking to us they talk to them, they pay more.*

When staff were asked what they would change about working with TfaC the issue of allowances and verification processes came up. One staff member suggested, instead of giving FSW small refreshments for attending session, she would prefer to *"provide them with 500KWA or some suitable amount."* Other comments from FSW staff included:

*They have to be given something to attend BC workshops. 1000KWA a day. They genuinely need money. Some want to come but they're doing sex work so if you give them 1000/500 they'll come in multiples. They need that 1500 to feed their kids.*

*People think we have bundles of KWA. When we say we only have a score for them they think we are taking their money from them and want to fight with us.*

During the interview with Queen Mothers, several commented on the allowance issue:

*...and another thing is that the allowances that they receive are too small so they should be increased. Sometimes they thought that they should not attend the meetings and look for a man to have sex with because the amount is very small if compared to what they could make if they had sex with somebody.*

### **Impact of allowance amounts and verification processes on staff/beneficiary relations**

FSW staff reported that the form filling and verification procedures are problematic for them when working with FSW.

The gave the following example of an incident:

*Staff were threatened with physical violence when the finance staff had phoned FSW directly to check whether they'd received the allowances that outreach staff were due to give them. This incident affected perceptions of outreach staff by FSW (that they were dishonest) and evidently this kind of incident is both dangerous and frightening for staff as well as affecting longer-term working relationships.*

Staff working with FSW report on some of the difficulties they face during their outreach work, which need to be understood by TfaC and supported. Examples cited include: having to join in gambling in order to talk to certain FSW. They also mentioned the limitation of not having enough time to engage with women during their outreach and encourage them to participate in TfaC activities, and that if they've only got the TfaC car or an agreed amount of time they will have to stop their outreach to return the car.

During the workshops the consultant was involved with, staff were asking people to sign for allowances in order to get them later in the day. It appeared to the consultant that a step towards transparency would be asking people to sign when they get the money and not before.

Concerns about verification processes were also cited by FSW staff:

*I'd really like to change the system of verifications. - Have you done this or not? How many people have you given money to? It's very hard for us to go back to a community – they don't trust you anymore.*

*There are a lot of forms to be signed for verification.*

*The community programme is the most difficult programme. We might need to change something in the programme but we can't change our budget. WE need more flexibility.*

### **Verification processes for condom distribution**

During the staff debrief, the MEL manager made the connection between FSW's fear of exposure and TfaC's policy of trying to get FSW to sign for condoms. Given that there are evidently issues with verification processes for allowances, it is recommended that TfaC also review their processes around condom distribution and the evidence/verification required.

### **Refreshment provision**

The consultant observed that the provision of refreshments for those participating in the needs assessment workshops was not timely resulting in low energy levels amongst participants. The purpose of providing refreshments is to ensure the comfort levels of participants who are away from their homes. If these refreshments are not provided at the agreed time, then it fails to serve its purpose.

### **Looking forwards and recommendations**

When asked how they could meet their own needs and those of the finance department in relation to verification of allowances, staff working with FSW suggested that **a member of the finance team should attend each session** to deal directly with programme participants. TfaC would need to undertake a cost benefit analysis of this proposal. The consultant felt that another option could be to request two staff and two programme participants sign a form to confirm who is participating in an activity.

During the staff debrief the MEL manager suggested that **clear and accurate messages about refreshments and allowances** should be communicated to any women joining TfaC activities. Explanation in an open and transparent way at the beginning of the relationship with TfaC may mean staff encounter less problems in relation to the issue of allowances. She also acknowledged that TfaC need to be sensitive in considering how best to do checks and verification.

It is advisable for TfaC to consider ways which can **shift the verification procedures from programme participants to staff in relation to condom distribution**. And so it is staff who document how many condoms they take from the existing stock and sign against those. Presumably condoms will always be distributed amongst FSW and so condom distribution can be monitored via stock keeping records as opposed to requesting FSW to sign for these.

FSW should be encouraged to take, use and informally distribute condoms. A system of signing for the number of condoms taken could be perceived as TfaC wanting to record how often they are having sex, and inevitably discourage FSW from requesting and taking condoms from TfaC.

The consultants feel that TfaC need to review its verification processes and to be able to resolve some of the issues referred to above in ways which provide appropriate levels of trust, confidentiality and respect to its staff and programme participants.

### 3.0 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

***What changes would you like to see for FSW?***

- *Changed behaviour, exit sex work, developing businesses*
- *For the government to review the constitution*
- *Improved financial status for FSW so they don't have to do SW*

***What changes for FSW within sex work***

- *Using condoms consistently, HIV testing, when positive go to hospital.*
- *Receiving good treatment from hospitals*
- *Know their rights. Be trained about their rights.*

*From an interview with staff working with FSW*

In all interviews and workshop research participants provided recommendations for TfaC, often in relation to the issue being discussed, and these are presented in each of the **Findings** sections of the report, and not repeated here.

The consultants suggest that TfaC also review the recommendations found in the 2013 evaluation of the Community Programme as there is some overlap with the findings of this Needs Assessment. Reviewing those recommendations alongside this report could support TfaC with decision-making moving forwards.

The TOR for the needs assessment was to listen to the women and girls TfaC works with and document the challenges they face and their ideas or aspirations for the future. The conclusions and recommendations are based on our time spent with TfaC and with the data generated from listening to TfaC's programme participants. They are not based on a detailed understanding of TfaC's past, current and planned activities.

**Continue to invest in and recognise quality of staff**

The consultant who visited Malawi observed that that staff are committed, enthusiastic, non-discriminatory and also possess well-considered ideas for programme development, some of which are presented above. The fact that some of them are ex-sex workers themselves increases their effectiveness in relation to reach and communication with FSW and SEG, as well as being involved in the development of programme strategy and activities.

**Urgently increase scale and effectiveness of activities with police**

The consultants were shocked by the levels of police brutality towards female sex workers. Changing their behaviour as well as their attitudes towards female sex workers must be an urgent and high priority. All female sex workers, Queen Mothers and staff working with FSW cite police as the biggest problem facing FSW.

**'Behaviour change' the same term for working with the police and FSW?**

The consultants question whether it is appropriate to use the same term for the work TfaC does with police and the work it does with FSW. Behaviour change for FSW includes condom usage and increase assertiveness skills to negotiate condom use with clients. Police, however, supposedly the enforcers of the law, are reportedly pulling FSW off the streets, stealing from

them, raping them, and at times torturing them. The level of behaviour and attitudinal change required amongst the police is very different to FSW.

### **Design programme activities to support attitudinal change amongst health workers and teachers**

The findings illustrate significant discrimination towards FSW and SEG from health workers and teachers both of which have a detrimental effect on FSW and SEG well-being. This is an area for programme development by TfaC.

### **Increased sensitivity around non-exposure**

There were several references to fear of exposure through participation in TfaC activities, and the cases of teachers finding out which girls are having their fees paid for by TfaC. Does TfaC need to review this to identify the risk points in activities and processes (including monitoring and finance procedures), and where relevant discuss this with women to reduce its impact on reach and engagement.

### **Review the role/practice of the CCPT and the individuals' roles within it**

As a matter of urgency address the lack of formal identification for members of the CCPT. Review role of CCPT and assess risks associated with this entity. Develop appropriate identification for members of CCPT and ensure all members of CCPT have undergone child protection training that relates to their role. Ensure CCPT members have adequate support and resources to carry out their agreed role effectively (for example, phone credit and travel allowances).

Also explore the definition of "community" with the CCPT (and others) to check whether notions of "local" are the same for both TfaC as well as those it works with.

### **Training for all staff and intermediaries in Child Protection to ensure policy is implemented**

The consultant was concerned by the lack of any reference to a child protection police or procedures during her visit to TfaC Malawi, especially during her interaction with SEG as part of the assessment.

### **Seek out any national or regional Enterprise Development agencies which TfaC could partner with to provide FSW with necessary support to develop sustainable enterprises**

There is a strong and widespread desire for support in enterprise development from FSW who ultimately want to be able to leave sex work and provide for their children via other means.

### **Review transportation needs for staff and programme participants (including intermediaries)**

TfaC should review if and how transport difficulties impact upon the reach and effectiveness of its activities and if so, consider whether any changes can be made. The MEL manager suggested that TfaC's two new cars should be "owned" by the community programme as a response to this issue.

**Develop a comprehensive BCC framework if TfaC does not already have one.**

It was unclear to the consultants how the different elements of the behaviour change and communication (advocacy) programme fully connected. It may be helpful to develop a framework that covers these and can be shared with participants.

**Revise the way verification of allowances is conducted by finance team and how allowances are communicated to FSW when they join the programme to ensure realistic expectations and transparency**

**Ensure all FSW are aware of their rights**

Maintain a programmatic focus on rights as well as service delivery.

## APPENDICES

## Appendix 1: Terms of Reference

### **Terms of Reference for a Consultant to conduct a needs assessment for the project: 'Interactive theatre and Legislative theatre for sex workers and their clients'**

#### **Background**

Through its Community Programme, Theatre for a Change (TfaC) has been working with female sex workers in Malawi since 2007. Our programme uses experiential behaviour change and advocacy approaches to equip participants with the knowledge, awareness and skills to reduce their risk of poor sexual and reproductive health and assert their gender and sexual rights. We have been working with Comic Relief since 2010, and have just begun a new four year project with them.

#### **Objectives of the Assessment**

As we begin this new project and round of funding we want to ensure that we have learnt lessons from our previous work, and that our new project meets the needs of the women and girls that we work with - reflecting their priorities and voices. We are therefore looking for an independent consultant to conduct a needs assessment that will enable us:

- To understand more comprehensively the context in which we work, the key barriers and constraints faced by the women and girls we work with
- To listen to our participants and reflect that listening in our programme design
- To learn how we can better include participants' voices throughout the programme cycle
- To analyse TfaC's role in the change process for participants, stakeholders and staff involved in the project, trying to identify where TfaC can contribute to change and identify cause-effect relationships
- To ensure our systems match our values by looking at how TfaC can ensure and accountability whilst also ensuring that the systems for doing this are suitable for the vulnerable women and girls we work with

#### **Approach**

##### ***1. Examine TfaC's systems, ToC and current approach***

Who are we not reaching and why are we not reaching them?

Are there any ways we can improve our recruitment strategies?

How do our processes (e.g. financial, monitoring etc) ensure respect for participants? Are there any changes we could make?

## ***2. Understand the reality of our participant's lives***

What is good and what is difficult in the lives of the women and girls that we work with?

What are the barriers to sexual and reproductive health that exist in women's and girls' lives?

Have TfaC programmes helped to address any of these barriers and challenges?

What other barriers exist in women's and girls' lives that TfaC are not addressing? Are there ways to include these in our programme?

What are our participant's ideas for solutions to these difficulties and how would they prioritise them?

What would they prioritise in their lives in terms of accessing comprehensive sexual and reproductive health, ensuring general good health, accessing justice, eliminating stigma and discrimination, eliminating violence against them, ensuring economic stability, accessing education? Is there anything else they would prioritise that is not in this list?

## ***3. Understand how social change takes place***

Who are the key stakeholders and influencers that have a direct influence on women's and girls' lives? How can TfaC better work with these people?

For those women that feel comfortable to speak out and take part in advocacy promoting the rights of sex workers and sexually exploited girls are our current activities the best way to involve them in this process? What else could we be doing?

What motivates the women and girls we work with to take part in advocacy activities? What might prevent them from taking part?

## **Methodology**

We require a participatory methodology that actively engages key stakeholders, who should be provided with an opportunity to provide input and comment. Our particular focus however is the voices of the women and girls we work with and they should be the primary focus of this piece of work. You should consider including:

- Focus group discussions/ interviews and more innovative participatory research techniques with participants including female sex workers, sexually exploited girls and other stakeholders
- Interviews with relevant local and national organisations
- Discussions and interviews with TfaC project staff

## Appendix 2: Overview of methods used

### **Focus Group Discussions**

Source: common interview technique

Focus groups were held with staff working with SEG, Staff working with FSW, CPPT and Queen Mothers. A semi-structured format was used, with question matrices developed for each discussion.

### **Individual Interviews**

Source: common interview technique

One individual semi-structured interview, with Katy Chadwick, we held on Skype.

### **Human Sculpting**

Source: Augusto Boal

FSW in Lilongwe and Salima and SEG in Lilongwe were divided into pairs and asked to create a human sculpture of a good day and a bad day. This was done through one participant silently moving the other's body into the pose they wanted. The sculptures then froze in position while the sculptors moved around them discussing what they saw and whether it was common. Participants then swapped roles and did the same thing with a different stimulus.

### **Improvisation**

Source: common theatre technique

FSW in Lilongwe and Salima and SEG in Lilongwe were asked to create a short improvised theatre pieces, two per workshop, on the most prominent challenges revealed by the human sculpting. After discussion of the problems faced, each group then created a second improvisation, showing how a good situation would look.

### **Group Character Generation**

Source: adaptation of Stage 1 of Jo Blagg, Manchester Theatre in Prisons and Probation Centres project (TIPP)

FSW in Lilongwe and Salima were gathered on the floor and traced other participants body shapes on to large pieces of paper. The facilitator led a quick-fire discussion to name the shape and develop a character that represented / contained many of the issues that they faced, and explore some of these issues.

### **Preference Ranking**

Source: common PRA technique

FSW in Lilongwe and Salima were given two sticky notes each and asked to allocate them to various advocacy options including village theatre, community meetings, road shows etc. The options came from existing TfaC work and additional suggestions made by the women in the workshop. In Salima, an additional ranking was done, of the groups that women thought were most important to reach. Sessions were co-facilitated by an English-speaking facilitator and a Chichewa speaking translator/co-facilitator.

### **Agree / Disagree**

Source: common PRA technique

FSW in Lilongwe and Salima and SEG in Lilongwe were asked to place themselves on either side of the room according to whether they agreed or disagreed with various statements, mostly around Reach. Participants were then questioned by the facilitator as to why they had chosen their position, and after discussion offered the opportunity to move. Sessions were co-facilitated by an English-speaking facilitator and a Chichewa speaking translator/co-facilitator.

### **Video Vox Pops / Peer interviews**

Source: common technique

FSW in Lilongwe and Salima were set three questions and asked to film each other standing next to a wall with the question written in Chichewa with a visual prompt for the non-literate. Participants responded directly to the questions in Chichewa only. Sessions were delivered in Chichewa.

### Appendix 3: Schedule of interviews and workshops

Translator	Chifundo	Chikondo	Chikonde	NONE	Chikonde	
Intro person	Tongase	Tongase	Zione	NONE	Tongase	
	Mon 10 Nov	Tue 11 Nov	Wed 12 Nov	Thu 13 Nov	Fri 14 Nov	Mon 17 Nov
AM	Orientation, schedule and logistics	Workshop with 12 Female Sex Workers	Workshop with 12 SEG	Logistics, prep, data organisation etc	Travel to and Workshop with 12 FSW in Salima	
AM	Interview with Queen Mothers	Workshop with 12 Female Sex Workers	Workshop with 12 SEG	Interview with TfaC staff who work with FSW	Workshop with 12 Femal Sex workers in Salima	Debrief with Jenny and Zoe
12:00 – 13:30	Notes write up.		Waiting for lunch and taking girls back.	Interviews Cont.		
PM	Interview with TfaC staff from Child Protection Team	Workshop with 12 Female Sex Workers	Notes and Data organisation	Interview with Community Child Protection Team (CCPT)	Workshop with 12 Femal Sex workers in Salima	Notes and data organisation
PM	Notes and data organisation	Logistics and Translators Discussion	Notes and Data organisation	Notes and data organisation		Notes and data organisation

## Appendix 4: Video Vox Pops with Female Sex Workers

### What makes me happy? What am I worried about? What are my hopes for the future?

#### Video Vox-Pops; Female Sex Workers Salima

##### **What makes you happy?**

**P1:** I am happy because in my job I move around and meet different interesting things despite that I don't get what I want in life.

**P2:** I am most happy when I meet a man who agrees to have sex with me using a condom and then pays me without delays.

**P3:** I am happy when a man gives me enough money.

**P4:** I am most happy because I find money without having any challenges.

**P5:** I am most happy because I find money that helps me and my siblings in our day-to-day life.

**P6:** I am most happy because I find money which helps me and my child.

**P7:** when I make a lot of money in a single day

**P8:** I make money which I use to buy necessities for my child in a quick way

**P9:** I am able to make money for personal use.

**P9:** I am able to make money for personal use.

##### **What makes you sad?**

**P7:** I am sad whenever I meet people who are cruel to me so I am afraid that I can die quickly.

**P8:** I am sad when the police harass me

I am sad when people don't pay me after having sex with them

##### **What are your hopes for the future?**

**P1:** I would love if I can make a lot of money so that I should start a business.

**P2:** if people can give me money, then I can stop prostitution and start a business.

**P3:** a person should give me money for business, and I will stop prostitution.

**P4:** when I find a lot of money I will start a business, and then I will quit prostitution.

#### Video Vox-Pops FSW Lilongwe

##### **What makes you happy?**

The workshops which TfaC organizes because I am learning a lot of things

The project which TfaC has started for the sex workers because I know that one day TfaC will come with some help which will change my life. I really want to find money so that I should start a business.

I have seen that there is little discrimination in most of the Government departments than the way it was in the past.

- Though I am a sex worker I send my children to school and I encourage them to work hard in school
- I know how to protect myself from HIV/AIDS, and I know where to go for my blood test than the way it was in the past
- I am also happy for the condoms which TfaC distributes to sex workers

I am happy because of what TfaC is doing, for example, as sex workers, in the past it was difficult to be assisted by the police whenever we meet a challenge. But currently the situation has changed and we are assisted. Also, because of TfaC I know where to go when I meet a problem.

- I am very happy for the condoms which TfaC is distributing to sex workers, but this should also extend to rural areas.

### **What are you worried about?**

**P1:** when I sleep with men, most of the times I am lowly paid and this worries me because my children starve in such a condition. I do not have any other means of raising money to start a business which could be helping me in meeting dairy needs

**P2:** when Organisations come to find out what we as sex workers are facing in our daily life, we are not given help. For example, TfaC and others just come, interview us and we do not benefit anything. As such, I am worried because I and my friends need to be helped so that we should start a business.

**P6:** It is difficult to make money in *a bar* at the moment, and I am still poor so my children are suffering.

**P7:** my health. Sex work is a risky thing to do because when I contract STIs my children will have no one to look after them. Discrimination. Most of the Organizations do not give us (Female Sex Workers) help when we ask for it, TfaC and other Organizations ask us what we are facing in our everyday life but do not come for solutions. So I and my friends need this help so that we should stop prostitution.

- As sex workers, TfaC has given us the power to share condoms with rural sex workers but we do not have resources to reach them.
- I am also worried with the meetings and workshops which Organizations invite us (sex workers), because in these gatherings we are given a low allowance of MK2, 500.00 per day and yet in our profession (prostitution) we are given a higher pay of at least MK5, 000.00 when one meets a rich client (man). So, in the future I am afraid that sex workers would maybe opt to attend the client first than to attend the meetings/workshops.
- I am also worried about this prostitution profession I am in because it calls for hard work, it requires a strong and energetic person and doing exercises which I am tired of and when I am weak and not active there is a high possibility of making losses that day.

### **Hopes for the future?**

**P3:** to be independent and I hope my children will also be independent in future

**P4:** to start a business...

**P5:** to stop prostitution and be at home most of the times as a woman (since as a woman I have a vital role to play in making sure that my house and the surrounding is clean).

**P6:** when I find money I should start a business

- I should be able to take part in church activities without any burden because prostitution is like a burden to serve God properly.
- I should stop prostitution

**P2:** to go back to school when I will find money, and if I will find such money in future I should be able to meet my children's every day to day needs, and then I will stop prostitution so that my children should have a bright future.

**P7:** to find a job so that I should be able to take care of myself and my children.

- I have gone to school and I have done some interviews with companies but it seems most companies recruit only those people they know, so I do not have anyone to help me find a job as a result I prefer doing prostitution because there are no interviews in this profession. However, I need a job than doing prostitution.

**P8:** in the future I hope to be independent but not poor. At the moment I do not want to stop prostitution because I do not have resources to start a business.

- I would be glad if Organizations can be willing to help us (sex workers) with capital to start a business
- I want to stop prostitution because most men I sleep with sometimes give me a low pay, as such I struggle to provide my children with needs such as food and others, and I also struggle to pay house rents.
- To stop prostitution because some men prefer giving me a higher pay when I have sex with them without a protection (condom), and I am given a low pay when I use a condom. So, prostitution is a risky game to do and this is why I want to quit this profession.

**P9:** To stop prostitution

**P10:** To stop prostitution

- I can see myself growing as years pass, so I feel I will not be active in bed as I am now because in the future it will be difficult for me to sleep with a lot of men in a night for the sake of money.