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Raising awareness

SEX workers sought to raise awareness about discrimination and AIDS with a colourful fashion show on the margins of the world AIDS conference recently.

Strutting sexily - or shyly - down an improvised catwalk, sex workers and activists drew a large crowd at the Global Village where NGOs have set up booths for the week-long conference.

The collection featured skimpy yellow shorts with thin braces, a mini-skirt over red fishnet tights and frilly dresses, with condoms in bright packaging sticking out of bodices or pockets as a reminder of the theme.

It was designed by Daspu, a Brazilian label set up in 2005 by a former prostitute now involved in defending sex workers' rights and named from "das putas", which means "from the whores" in Portuguese.

For prostitutes, "AIDS prevention is an instrument for working," Friederike Strack of Davida, an association working Daspu in Brazil, told AFP.

The prevalence of HIV among this group is significantly higher than in the rest of the population but criminalisation of sex workers meant access to information and treatment was limited in many countries, Strack said.

"It's important that the sex professionals, the sex workers, know how to use condoms, and they are the best to make HIV prevention: they have contact with the clients," said Strack.

"Visibility of our population is very important to get less discrimination, violence and negative attitude against our group," added Camille, a transgender sex worker and model for the day. - AFP Relaxnews



Sex workers and activists participate at the fashion show to raise awareness on sex workers' rights.