

## **IASSCS Conference 2009 Summary for SPW**

IASSCS is very pleased to report the success of the seventh biennial meeting of the International Association for the Study of Sexuality, Culture and Society (IASSCS), entitled “Contested Innocence – Sexual Agency in Public and Private Space.” The conference was co-hosted by the Institute for Social Development Studies, the Consultation of Investment in Health Promotion, and Hanoi Medical University in Hanoi, Viet Nam.

Prior to the previous conference in Lima, IASSCS received the generous offer of Hong and her colleagues to host the next meeting in Ha Noi, the first IASSCS Conference to be held in Asia. When the Conference Organizing Committee met for the first time almost two years ago, it was decided that the Ha Noi IASSCS Conference should focus on issues of particular interest to the region, where the substantial economic growth taking place was inevitably affecting the regions’ social and cultural foundations, including the realm of sexuality. In that sense, representations of innocent Asian sexualities that prevailed within and without, often fostered by the States themselves, were being challenged in many ways, reflecting unsettled discourses on the boundaries between what was acceptable and what was not. Thus the committee considered that a critical view of these representations would let Asians revisit other fundamental questions about the relationship between the individual, society and the state; about the tensions between the local, the regional and the global, and about the binary defined by agency and strategy. In order to reflect these rich set of directions that reflection could take, the conference was called “Contested Innocence: Sexual Agency in Public and Private Space”.

The 2009 Conference focused on socio-cultural analyses of issues surrounding sexual agency in public and private spaces. Cultural and political belief systems profoundly affect the ways in which sexual knowledge and practices are produced, situated, and represented in society. This theme invited conversations on the interplay of sexual innocence and sexual scandal in the media, of sexual agency in the context of limited public knowledge, and the development of sexual rights, human rights and sexual diversity in a post-colonial context.

IASSCS welcomed 432 delegates from 46 countries. This Conference welcomed for the first time workshops and informal meetings hosted by 9 different institutions and networks, as well as 3 initial meetings for IASSCS Sub-Committees: Dissemination and Publication, Research and Training, and Policy and Advocacy.

This year’s Conference showcased 149 oral presentations from 32 different countries, 28 posters from 20 different countries, and 13 exhibits from 9 different countries. 2009 Conference Paper Abstracts will be available for download from the IASSCS Conference website soon.

With the generous support of the Ford Foundation and HIVOS, IASSCS was able to grant 28 Conference Scholarships, 8 full scholarships and 20 partial scholarships, to participants from 19 different countries.

This year's 'Culture, Health and Sexuality' award was awarded to Tsitsi Masvawure for her paper entitled "I Just Want to be Flashy' Transactional Sex at a University Campus in Zimbabwe."

The IASSCS Poster Award was awarded to both Maria Nengeh Mensah for "Sex workers training professionals to reduce stigma and vulnerability to HIV" and Indira (Maya) Ganesh for "Secret Publics and Subversive Erotics in the Networked Society: A Bombay/Mumbai Story." Ronnapoom Samakkeekarom received an honorable mention for "Portraying Homosexuality Representation on Thai TV Advertisements."

The IASSCS 2009 Paper Award for the Best Newcomer submission deadline has been extended to July 1, 2009; results will be announced via email on October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2009.

Immediately following the Conference, IASSCS and the Kartini Network-Asia co-organized a 10-day Post-Conference Training session for 19 IASSCS Fellows and 12 Kartini Fellows.