

The Historical and Sociocultural Landscape of Sex Work in India: Exploring the Intersections of Gender, Caste, Tradition, and Rights

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Abstract

This article closely looks at the historical and sociocultural dimensions of sex work in India, highlighting how it affects women's empowerment and the discussion about their rights. It looks back at how sex work started in a traditional system like the Devadasi and Tawaif systems, which were once considered acceptable, and how it became illegal and pushed to the side during colonial and postcolonial periods.

The article explores how things like caste hierarchy, strict gender roles, and restrictive laws shape the lives of sex workers, especially those from less powerful communities. Using a review of academic papers and reports from institutes, the article finds that there are still many problems, including continuing caste-based work patterns, strong social stigma, and mixed views on sex workers, while some see them as victims. It also pointed out how local efforts and groups like RACS and NACO have helped change the way sex work is seen, pushing for dignity, health, and rights. The analysis highlights that the situation is complicated, where remnants of traditional acceptance coexist with legal restrictions, which makes it hard to support sex workers properly. To deal with this, the article advocates for an inclusive way of thinking that focuses on the right instead of a mortality-driven approach, aiming to fix deep inequality and help sex workers. By looking at sex work through the lens of gender equality, the article calls for policies that guarantee dignity and support the rights of sex workers as equal citizens.

Keywords: Sex work, India, caste, gender, tradition, human rights, Devadasi, NACO, RACS.

Introduction

In India, sex work cannot be seen as a debate of legality versus morality. It is a complex situation shaped by religious, cultural, political, and economic factors over many years. Public discussion is often split between those who want to ban sex work and those who support the rights of sex workers, while often forgetting the long-term reasons behind the practice. Historically, sex work was part of accepted cultural systems like the Tawaif in Mughal courts and the Devadasi system in southern India. (Cokic et al., 2012; Research & 2019, 2019) Far from being the same everywhere, sex work was connected to religious rituals, caste, and performances, showing both cultural acceptance and deep inequality. (Asthana et al., n.d.)

In modern times, caste and gender continue to play a role in who enters sex work. Women from lower castes, such as the Nat, Bedia, and Dom, often enter this profession through family traditions or because they have no other livelihood options. (Sex et al., 2014) However, recent efforts by public health agencies and local self-groups, such as NACO, DMSC, and RACS, are shifting towards preventive strategies that respect human rights and empower communities. (Nilsson et al., 2016)

State-wise Distribution of Sex Workers in India

Sex work is everyday throughout India, and the number of sex workers varies by state. According to estimates from state AIDS control societies, India is home to about 900,000 female sex workers (FSWs), with the most being in southern states like Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, and Telangana. (Bharat et al., 2013)

Estimated Number of Female Sex Workers by State Andhra Pradesh: 133,447, Karnataka: 116,288, Telangana: 100,818, Tamil Nadu: 65,818, Maharashtra: 59,785, Delhi (UT): 46,786, Uttar Pradesh: 22,060, Mizoram: 833, and Rajasthan: ~12,000 (approx.)

Note: These figures are approximate and may be underreported due to the hidden nature of sex work. (India, Today, 2022; ETV Bharat, 2023), (Research & 2019, 2019)

Regional Context: Rajasthan and Jaipur

In Rajasthan, sex work happens both in cities and villages, within specific caste-based communities. The estimate shows over 12,000 people are involved in sex work in the state, with Jaipur being a big centre in northern India. Informal red-light areas have formed around Jaipur's primary markets and railway stations, housing many sex workers. (Azeez et al., 2017), (Mishra & Neupane, 2015)

Broader Observations and Legal Framework (Rewritten)

States like Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, and Telangana together account for over one-third of India's estimated sex worker population. Legally, sex work in India is in a grey area. While the act of sex work itself is not illegal, things like asking for business in public, running brothels, or making money from another person are against the law under the Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act of 1956 (Government of India). This unclear law helps create discrimination, police abuse, and makes it hard for sex workers to get fair treatment. In a step forward, the Supreme Court of India (2022) acknowledged the fundamental rights of sex workers, asking law enforcement to treat them properly, without unfair arrest or pressure. (Mishra & Neupane, 2015b)

Study Objectives

The following objectives guide this study:

- To trace the historical evolution of sex work in India, examining its transformation from ancient practices to contemporary forms.
- To investigate the influence of traditional customs and caste hierarchies in sustaining and shaping sex work across diverse regions and communities.
- To analyze the gendered dimensions of sex work, focusing on how patriarchal norms and power relations impact the lives and agency of sex workers.
- To explore the role of legal frameworks, rights-based discourses, and social movements in redefining the conditions, recognition, and protections afforded to individuals engaged in sex work.

Methodology

Research Design

The study uses a systematic literature review method to understand the history, culture, and politics of sex work in India. This method helps study a wide range of research and ideas in a well-organised way, focusing on how factors such as gender, caste, traditional practices, and the right to discussion influence the lives and positions of sex workers across time and place.

Search Strategy

The literature review employed a comprehensive search strategy across multiple academic and institutional platforms to ensure depth and credibility—academic Databases from JSTOR, Scopus, PubMed, Web of Science, and Google Scholar. Institutional repositories form the National AIDS Control Organization (NACO), the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), India, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS), and the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD), Government of India.

Search Terms Used: “Sex work” AND “India.” “Prostitution” AND “history” AND “India.”, “Devadasi” OR “Tawaif” OR “Nautch girls.”, “Caste and prostitution” OR “hereditary sex work.” “Gender inequality” AND “sex work.” “Sex workers’ rights” AND “legal framework” AND “India.” And “NGO” OR “NACO” AND “intervention” AND “sex workers.”

Inclusion Criteria

To ensure comprehensive coverage, the review included scholarly peer-reviewed articles, academic books, official government documents, NGO reports, and legal reviews. Publications released between 2000 and 2024, with select historical texts included for their foundational relevance, and studies specifically focused on the Indian context and addressing the intersections of gender, caste, cultural traditions, and human rights.

Exclusion Criteria

Sources were excluded if they were not available in English. Relied heavily on opinion or anecdotal evidence without a clear methodological framework and lacked direct relevance to India or failed to engage with core themes such as gender, caste, or tradition.

Ethical Considerations

As the study used only secondary data from public sources, formal ethical approval was not needed. However, the review was carried out with respect for cultural sensitivity, ensuring that the experiences and voices of marginalised communities were presented with dignity and fairness.

Limitations

- The review did not include literature in Indian regional languages, which might have missed important cultural insights.

- The representation of different states was uneven, possibly limiting how widely the findings can be applied.
- There is a significant gap in research on male, transgender, and non-binary sex workers, highlighting the need for more inclusive studies.

The Historical and Sociocultural Landscape of Sex Work in India

Ancient India (Before 10th Century CE)

In early Indian civilization, sex work was closely connected with cultural, religious, and social practices. Women known as ganikas and later tawaifs played an important role in urban and courtly settings. They were admired not only for their beauty but also for their skills in poetry, music, and classical dance. (Crowell, 2024; O'Neil et al., n.d.-a) Far from being overlooked, these women were represented figures in royal courts and seen as symbols of refinement and artistic talent. Ancient texts, such as the Kamasutra (circa 3rd century CE), described these women as highly skilled and independent. At the same time, the devadasi system emerged in South India around the 6th century CE. Devadasis were the girls who served temples, performing sacred dances and rituals as part of their spiritual duties. Initially, they were respected and supported by temple authorities; however, as the social structure changed, many devadasis were pushed into exploitive situations, showing the growing conflict between religious duties and social exclusion. (*The Historical and Sociocultural Landscape of Sex... - (Google Scholar, n.d.)*)

Medieval India (10th to 18th Century)

The cultural and social aspects of sex work evolved significantly during the Delhi Sultanate and Mughal periods. Courtesans, especially tawaifs, became key figures in cities like Delhi and Lucknow. They were not just performers but also teachers of etiquette, music, and literature, often instructing the sons of noblemen. Their salons were places of cultural and artistic expression. Caste and class differences became more rigid, with women from lower castes facing more stigma, fewer opportunities, and poor treatment from the Government and other institutions. (theses et al., n.d.)

Colonial Era (18th to Mid-20th Century)

British colonial rule brought significant changes in how sex work was managed and viewed. Influenced by Victorian ideas, colonial authorities created laws like the Contagious Diseases Acts (1864–1869), which required checking and examining sex workers in military towns to protect British soldiers from sexually transmitted infections. This marked a shift towards controlling and stigmatizing sex workers through institutional methods. (Begum, 2012)

Post-Independence Period (1947–Present)

After independence, India became independent, the country had mixed views on sex work. In 1956, the Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act (ITPA) was enacted. The law did not make sex work illegal, but it made other related things illegal, like operating brothels, asking for money in public, and getting people to be clients. This created a situation where sex workers were in a legal middle ground, which made them more vulnerable to police abuse and not protected as workers. The law aimed to “rescue and rehabilitate” sex workers instead of seeing their work as a recognized job.

By the 1990s, the HIV/ AIDS epidemic changed how public health approaches sex workers. Sex workers became important in national health programs. For example, there is the Sonagachi Project in Kolkata, which was started by sex workers themselves and focused on empowering them, building communities, and educating others. This helped lower the spread of HIV. A similar project later started in places like Mumbai's Kamathipura and Delhi's GB Road. This shows a more inclusive and fair approach to public health and social justice.

Typologies and Modalities of Sex Work in India

Sex work in India happens in different forms and for different reasons. It is shaped by factors such as caste, class, whether one lives in a city or a rural area, gender, and unclear laws governing the professions. Knowing these different types is important for making policies and support systems that truly reflect the lives of sex workers. (Buzdugan et al., 2009)

Brothel-Based Sex Workers

These workers operate from fixed places in areas known for sex work, like Kamathipura in Mumbai and Sonagachi in Kolkata. These places are usually run by people called “madams” or “garhwalis”. They control who comes in, how much is charged, and how the money is split. While this setup can be harmful, some of these workers get help from NGOs that offer health checks, advice, and legal information. In Jaipur, these brothels are often near busy markets or railway stations. The money is usually divided, with the madam keeping 30 to 50% for rent, bills, and, they say, safety from the police. (Dandona et al., 2005)

Street-Based Sex Workers

These workers meet clients in public spaces such as roadside corners, railway stations, or parks. They are at high risk because there is no safe space. They face police trouble, violence, and being poorly treated by society. Not having enough money can push people into this kind of work. They usually get between INR 1,000 and INR 5,000; they have to pay extra fees to people who help them find clients, which reduces their earnings. (Sexualities & 2019, 2019)

Home-Based Sex Workers

These workers provide services from their own or rented residences, using private networks and personal connections. Many of them are married or live with family and do not tell their family and neighbours about their job. This gives them some privacy and freedom, but they do not have easy access to health or legal services. In Jaipur, these workers often operate in middle-class areas and charge more, usually between INR 5,000 and INR 15,000. They use apps like WhatsApp for booking and privacy. (Peters et al., 2023)

Bar Dancers and Entertainers

In cities like Mumbai, bar dancers work in dance bars and may or may not engage in transactional sex. Some of them might engage in sexual activities. When dance bars were banned in Maharashtra in the early 2000s, many dancers were forced to become sex workers in hidden or illegal ways. A similar thing happened in Jaipur, where some women now work as escorts or entertainers via online platforms. They can get paid upfront through digital wallets, which gives them some control but also makes them vulnerable to online surveillance or the exposure of their details. Intermediaries like dalals, pimps, or gharwalis still play a significant role by managing bookings and collecting money, which keeps them in dependent situations. (Forsyth & Deshotels, 1997)

Escorts and Call Girls

Escorts and call girls usually work alone or through agencies. Use the internet, apps, and online ads to get clients. They have more freedom in choosing whom they work with and how they set prices. However, they also face problems like online scams, abuse, and being watched. Even though they make money, staying safe and keeping their information private is hard. (Name et al., 2023; Snow et al., 2022)

Transgender and Male Sex Workers

Transgender individuals, like hijras and male sex workers, are often excluded from discussion about sex work. Because of discrimination and not being able to get regular jobs, they might turn to sex work to survive. They mostly work in street or underground settings, and they face extra problems because of their gender identity and the job they do. They are more likely to be attacked, harassed, and lack tailored health services, which exacerbate their vulnerability. (Brookfield et al., 2020)

Technology-Driven Sex Work

Technology has changed how sex work is done in India. More and more sex workers reach more clients and have more control. Increasingly, workers use social media, encrypted messaging apps, and online platforms to connect with clients, organize services, and receive payments. (Anthropology & 2025, n.d.; O'Neil et al., n.d.-b)

Digital Platforms and Online Engagement

Using websites, classified ads, and personal profiles helps sex workers to reach more clients and exercise greater autonomy. While these platforms offer some privacy, they also come with risks related to data privacy, legal surveillance, and cyber exploitation.

Age of Entry, Duration, and Exit in Sex Work

The Age at which someone starts working in sex work is significant when looking at the social, economic, and health effects of these professions. In India, many sex workers begin their work as teenagers. According to the National Human Rights Commission (2016), nearly 40% of female sex workers started before the age of 18, with some beginning as young as 12 or 13. This early start is often because of poverty, abuse, displacement, being trafficked, or parental abandonment by their families. (Caviglia, 2017)

Groups that are already mistreated, like the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes, are most likely to be trafficked into sex work (UNODC, 2013). In traditional practices such as the Devadasi practice, girls are ritualistically inducted into sex work at a young age, which keeps them in a cycle of exploitation. Globally, the average age at which someone starts working in sex work ranges between 13 and 16 years. In India, sex workers in brothels usually begin between ages 15 and 18, while those who are trafficked or work on the streets often start even younger. (Health & 2008, 2008) How long someone stays in sex work can vary a lot. Some people work for only a few years, while others stay for many years, often leaving

in their late 30s or early 40s due to a drop in demand, health issues, or help in leaving ((Banerjee, 2021)). However, leaving sex work does not always mean they find financial security or a new place in society because of ongoing stigma and limited job options. Starting sex work at a young age often leads to long-term emotional pain, interrupted education, and a higher risk of getting sexually transmitted infections, including HIV. These challenges show how important it is to have strong child protection laws, better education, and programs that help people leave sex work safely.

Factors Driving Men Toward Sex Workers

The reasons some married men are drawn to sex workers involve many different psychological, emotional, social, and relational factors. Studied and personal accounts identify several key reasons, such as some men feeling unsatisfied in marriage due to a lack of intimacy, emotional distance, or less sexual activity. Life changes, such as menopause or illness, can make this feeling worse. A need for new and different sexual experiences may push some men to look outside their marriage. This could be linked to traits like impulsivity or narcissism, which lead them to prefer impersonal and exciting interactions. Some men want to talk and connect emotionally without the commitment of a long relationship. This “bounded intimacy” allows for emotional connection in a transactional way. Traits associated with the “Dark Tetrad” narcissism, Machiavellianism, psychopathy, and sadism can lead men to engage in these interactions as a way to feel powerful or satisfy specific fantasies. Cultural attitudes and peer groups often make visiting sex workers seem normal, especially in group settings or during social gatherings. (Begum, 2012) Peer pressure and the idea of male bonding play a significant role. For some, spending time with sex workers offers a temporary escape from stress, loneliness, or emotional issues, and Men might see these paid interactions as different from emotional affairs. Since they are transactional and usually do not involve deep emotional connections, a(Anthropology & 2025, n.d.; Banerjee et al., 2023; Caviglia, 2017; Sanders et al., 2023)

These reasons show how complex these behaviours are. To deal with them, people need to be honest with themselves, communicate well in their relationships, and sometimes get professional help to address the root issues.

Why Some Elite Housewives Engage in Extramarital Relationships

Elite homemakers are often perceived as living lives of privilege and security. However, beneath this façade of comfort, many experience emotional voids, unmet desires, and personal struggles that can lead to extramarital relationships. While such behaviour is socially stigmatized, it frequently stems from deeper emotional, psychological, and social factors rather than mere indulgence.(Resolution & 2024, n.d.) Despite financial stability, many women in affluent households feel emotionally neglected and isolated. Frequent absences of busy or indifferent spouses can create loneliness and a longing for emotional and physical connection.

Unfulfilling marriages are primarily transactional, arranged for status or social alignment rather than affection, resulting in a lack of intimacy and emotional fulfilment. Search for personal identity, educated and accomplished women may feel confined within domestic roles. Seeking intimacy outside marriage can become an attempt to reclaim autonomy, control, and individuality. In conservative cultures, female sexuality is often suppressed. With changing societal norms and greater exposure, some women begin to explore their sexual identities beyond traditional boundaries.

In the face of monotony and emptiness, with household responsibilities delegated to staff and children away for studies or work, many elite homemakers experience prolonged inactivity. Boredom can lead to risk-taking behaviours, including extramarital affairs. Influence of social environment, in certain elite circles, extramarital relationships are discreetly normalized. Observing peers engage in such behaviour without consequence can lower perceived moral barriers.

Emotional bonds turning physical, relationships with personal trainers, family friends, or online acquaintances may begin as emotional support and gradually evolve into physical intimacy, particularly when a woman feels valued and understood. Underlying psychological factors like validation needs, seeking affirmation through sexual desirability. past trauma, unresolved abuse, or emotional neglect. Mid-life challenges, a desire to reconnect with youth, excitement, or vitality. While male infidelity is often socially tolerated, women engaging in similar behaviour face severe judgment, reflecting persistent patriarchal biases. Understanding these dynamics requires empathy rather than moral policing, as many of these choices arise from unmet emotional and psychological needs rather than mere transgression.

Discussion

This article brings together social science and public health, mixing research with real-life case studies to explain the complexities of sex work in India. The cases presented offer a detailed look into the challenges sex workers face, the community they belong to, and the policies that affect them. By focusing on in-depth case analysis, the article seeks to uncover the real-life situation behind the data. Using academic research program data and stories from participants in training programs supported by RACS and NACO, this work connects theory to real-world experiences. It provides a complete view of the challenges and opportunities in the field. The four case studies that follow highlight the human side of the data, showing how policy and programs affect people’s lives. (Nikfar et al., 2005)

Case 1: Rekha's Ordeal – Institutional Violence Against an Independent Sex Worker

In 2022, Rekha (pseudonym), a 28-year-old independent sex worker in Jaipur, Rajasthan, suffered a serious violation of her rights. She works independently through digital platforms and personal referrals; she scheduled a client meeting at the city's outskirts. Shortly after arriving, hotel staff suspected her profession and called the police.

Three officers arrived. Instead of following proper procedures, Rekha said that they verbally abused her, asked for money, and threatened to arrest her under the Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956 (ITPA). When she refused to pay, they took her to an undisclosed location under false pretences and sexually assaulted her at transport hubs and warned her not to speak out. Initially fearful of retaliation and legal trouble, she eventually reached out to a local NGO that supports marginalized women. With their help, she filed a formal complaint and underwent a forensic examination. Despite these steps, her pursuit of justice faced many challenges, including delays in FIR registration, police indifference, attempts to discredit her character, and intimidation of NGO staff.

Rekha's experience is not unique. Studies show that sex workers in India often face violence not only from clients but also from law enforcement. Laws like the ITPA, meant to protect sex workers, are often misused to harass and criminalize them in the name of "rescue." Her case highlighted the deep-rooted power imbalances and systemic abuse that result from legal and social marginalization. Without proper accountability, perpetrators act with impunity. Rekha's story calls for urgent legal reforms, decriminalization of sex work, and training police to treat sex workers with dignity, protection, and justice.

Case 2: Rani's Night – Navigating Consent and Risk with Multiple Clients

Rani (pseudonym), a 28-year-old sex worker in Jaipur, has been in the profession for over six years and works through an intermediary who arranges hotel-based client meetings. One evening in March 2024, she was assigned to meet three clients consecutively at a mid-range hotel. The men were attending a business seminar and had requested services through her intermediary.

Client 1 (8:30–9:30 PM): Courteous and respectful, he began the conversation and confirmed her consent before engaging. The interaction was professional and open.

Client 2 (9:45–10:45 PM): The client was assertive and transactional, showing a dismissive attitude. Though within agreed terms, Rani felt uneasy due to his dominant behaviour.

Client 3 (11:00 PM–12:00 AM): Intoxicated and uncooperative, he refused to use a condom. Rani firmly insisted, and he eventually agreed, but the situation made her feel unsafe and concerned about her health.

Rani's night highlighted the complex realities of sex work in India, where consent can vary, comfort levels differ, and risks remain despite precautions. It reflects the delicate balance of power between sex workers, clients, and intermediaries, often made harder by legal ambiguities and societal stigma. The case emphasises the need for better safety standards, legal protections, and public health support to ensure the autonomy and well-being of sex workers.

Case 3: Meena's Journey – Balancing Motherhood and Sex Work

Meena (pseudonym), a 32-year-old sex worker in Jaipur, moved to independent work after escaping an abusive marriage. She lived in a rented house with two other women and managed her work through client referrals and mobile contacts. In August 2021, Meena found out she was pregnant. Due to limited access to contraception and some clients refusing to use it, she was at risk. Although her intermediary pushed her to end the pregnancy, Meena decided to carry the child, as she has always wanted to be a mother. With help from a local NGO that provides reproductive counselling, she made an informed choice to continue the pregnancy. She kept working during her early months of pregnancy but slowly reduced her work hours and stopped entirely in the eighth month. She used her savings and support from the NGO to get through this period. She gave birth to a baby in a government hospital in March 2022. After giving birth, Meena returned to work on a limited basis. She relied on a trusted neighbour to take care of her child's birth, but the NGO helped her get a certificate with only her name listed. emerged when registering her child's birth, but NGO intervention enabled her to secure a certificate listing only her name. Meena's story shows the complicated mix of reproductive rights, social judgment, and economic needs. Her experience highlights the need for inclusive maternal and child welfare policies that truly support sex workers. From ensuring proper legal documents to providing access to childcare, systems must ensure that motherhood is a right, not a risk, for women on the margins of society.

Case 4: Anjali's Escape – Fleeing Violence in the Shadows of the City

Anjali (pseudonym), 26, moved from Bihar to Jaipur after her father's death and started sex work to help her family. She was careful and selective in choosing clients, working through intermediaries who arranged meetings in cheap hotels. In October 2023, Anjali was assigned a client at a hotel in Subhash Chowk, an area known for low-cost hotels. What started as a typical encounter quickly turned into a dangerous situation. The client became aggressive, forcing her to do things she refused. Afraid for her life, Anjali ran to the bathroom and escaped through a second-floor window, landing in an alley

below. She sustained multiple injuries, including a broken leg. She was taken to the hospital under a false name to avoid police attention. With support from a local NGO, she later filed a police report, and the man was arrested. However, the legal process was slow, and she received threats to drop the cases.

Anjali's experience highlights the dangers sex workers face and the lack of support from institutions. Her use of a false identity to seek medical help shows the stigma and criminalization that push workers into hiding even during emergencies. Her escape was not just a way out of violence; it also reveals how a society fails to protect its most vulnerable people. Anjali's story calls for immediate policy changes: legal recognition, safe working areas, fast justice systems, and strong support for sex workers must be more than optional; they must be essentials.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study concludes that a mix of gender, caste, tradition, and human rights shapes sex work in India. From being part of religious and royal institutions in ancient times to being stigmatized and often criminalized today, the profession has undergone significant change. (Faulkner & Finlay, 2003) Colonial moral beliefs, caste systems, traditional norms, and unclear laws have all played a role in these transactions. Women from lower castes, especially Dalits, are overrepresented in the profession because of socio-economic struggles and discrimination. Marginalization is kept going by mixing and conflating consensual adult sex work with human trafficking, leading to punishment instead of protective policies. However, local movements, NGOs, and community groups have played a pivotal role in empowering sex workers and fighting for their rights. Organizations like NACO, RACS, and networks like RCAX have made significant progress in reducing harm, preventing HIV, advocating, supporting advocacy, and reducing stigma. Sex workers themselves have shown strength and control through self-regulatory groups, unions, and community-based organizations. This signals a shift toward sex work as real work and sex workers as people with rights.

Recommendations

- Legal reform and decriminalization make consensual sex work legal, and change laws to differentiate it from human trafficking clearly.
- Institutional recognition and labor rights treat sex workers as workers under labor laws, so that they can get access to identity documents, health insurance, social security, and pensions.
- Caste and gender-sensitive approaches create special programs that focus on Dalit and marginalized groups who are more likely to be in sex work.
- Strengthen the role of RCAX, NGOs, and CBOs that fight for sex workers' rights and influence policies that affect them.
- Enhanced public health interventions, expanded NACO and RACS programs to include mental health and reproductive health, and to reduce stigma.
- Community-led development models, sex workers lead projects that improve and empower them, so they fit their community's needs and last longer.
- Access to education and housing, offering free education and a safe home for sex workers and their kids to break the cycles of being left out and poor.
- Evidence-based policy and research support research from different fields to create better, more inclusive policies that work for everyone.

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