



**KIASWA**  
**INITIATIVE**  
**KIAMBU SEX WORKERS ALLIANCE**

It is important to first state that the name prostitution is an archaic and abusive name used to diminish, insult and show lack of respect to female sex workers. Sex workers engage in sex work out of volition, good will and self-identification. That said, We The Kiambu Sex Workers Alliance have the following to submit.

There are several forms of hidden sex work that include the following; survival sex, massage parlour sex work and online sex work. Recognition and handling vary globally; some jurisdictions acknowledge these forms and implement measures, while others may lack awareness or effective strategies, contributing to underreporting and inadequate support for victims. Collaborative efforts, human rights institutions, and civil society are crucial to addressing these challenges comprehensively

In Kenya, women and girls engaging in sex work often face diverse challenges. Disaggregated data indicates higher numbers in Central, Western, and Northern regions. Factors such as economic disparities, limited educational opportunities, and vulnerabilities contribute to this

Profiles of individuals soliciting women in sex work vary, encompassing a range of socioeconomic backgrounds. In many places, such relations are regulated to varying extents, with legal frameworks differing globally. Some jurisdictions criminalize solicitation, while others adopt harm reduction approaches. Comprehensive data on the profiles of solicitors is challenging to obtain due to the clandestine nature of the activity

Sex workers often face various forms of violence, including physical, psychological, sexual, economic, and administrative abuses. Physical violence may involve assault or coercion, while psychological harm includes manipulation, degradation, and emotional abuse. Sexual violence is inherent in many situations, often involving non-consensual acts. Economic exploitation may include unfair payment or control over earnings. Administrative violence can be seen in legal and social structures that perpetuate vulnerability and discrimination. Addressing these multifaceted issues requires comprehensive strategies encompassing legal reforms, support services, and awareness campaigns.

Perpetrators of violence against sex workers in Kenya can include clients, pimps, traffickers, law enforcement officers and health care providers just to name a few.

Clients, often those seeking sexual services, can perpetrate violence through physical or sexual abuse, coercion, or non-consensual acts. Pimps and traffickers, acting as intermediaries, may subject women and girls to violence as a means of control or punishment, exploiting their vulnerabilities. Law enforcement officers in many instances harass sex workers by arresting them and charging them with loitering and drunkardness instead of sex work. Also law enforcers do harass self identifying sex workers by asking them sensitive non answerable questions or even fail to support sex workers reporting violence who need legal support. Health care workers mostly offer services to sex workers with a lot of stigma and discrimination. These dynamics are exacerbated by societal factors such as poverty and limited legal protection. Addressing violence requires a comprehensive approach involving law enforcement, legal reforms, and support services to protect the rights and well-being of those involved in sex work.

Sex work is often linked to the violation of the human rights of women and girls in several ways.

**Right to Dignity:** Many sex workers face degrading conditions, including verbal and physical abuse, which violate their right to dignity.

**Right to Physical and Mental Integrity:** Physical and sexual violence are prevalent in the sex industry, infringing upon the right to physical and mental integrity.

**Right to Health:** sex workers may lack access to healthcare, exposing them to various health risks, including sexually transmitted infections, and impacting their right to health.

**Right to Non-Discrimination:** Women and girls involved in sex work often face discrimination, marginalization, and stigma, infringing upon their right to be free from discrimination.

Links between pornography and sex work often exist as both industries involve the commercialization of sex.

**Objectification and Normalization:** Pornography can contribute to the objectification of individuals, influencing attitudes toward sex as a commodity. This normalization of commodified sexuality can be connected to the perception of sex work as an acceptable transaction.

**Demand and Supply Dynamics:** The demand for sexual content in pornography and the demand for sexual services in sex work are interconnected. The industries can reinforce each other as they cater to overlapping consumer interests.

**Perception of Consent:** Pornography can shape perceptions of consent, potentially influencing attitudes toward the consent dynamics in sex work. It can contribute to blurred lines between consensual and non-consensual acts

The issue of consent in the context of sex work is complex and often challenged by power dynamics, coercion, and vulnerabilities. Meaningful consent for sex workers in Kenya may be compromised due to various factors:

**Economic Coercion:** Financial desperation can pressure individuals into sex work, affecting the voluntariness of their choice.

**Trafficking and Exploitation:** Traffickers and pimps may manipulate or force individuals into sex work, severely undermining the notion of free and informed consent.

**Social and Gender Inequality:** Deep-seated social and gender inequalities can limit the agency of women and girls, influencing their ability to make truly autonomous choices.

**Violence and Abuse:** The prevalence of violence within the sex industry can create an environment where consent is often obtained under duress.

The effectiveness of legislative frameworks and policies in preventing and responding to violence against sex workers varies globally. Some factors influencing effectiveness include:

**Legalization vs. Criminalization:** Jurisdictions with different approaches, such as legalization or criminalization of sex work, show divergent outcomes. Legalization may lead to better regulation and protection, while criminalization can drive the industry underground, exacerbating risks.

**Comprehensive vs. Fragmented Approaches:** Comprehensive policies that address root causes, provide support services, and involve law enforcement effectively tend to be more impactful than fragmented approaches that solely focus on criminalization.

**Collaboration with Stakeholders:** Policies that involve collaboration with various stakeholders, including

law enforcement, healthcare providers, and social services, are more likely to address the multifaceted nature of the issue.

**Implementation and Enforcement:** Even well-designed policies may lack impact if not adequately enforced. Implementation challenges, corruption, and insufficient resources can hinder effectiveness. Collecting and analyzing data at the national level to understand the impact of sex work on the rights of women and girls involves various measures:

**Surveys and Research:** National surveys and research studies can be conducted to gather data on the prevalence, dynamics, and impact of sex work, shedding light on its implications for the rights of women and girls.

**Collaboration with NGOs:** Partnerships with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) can facilitate data collection, especially when working directly with affected individuals. NGOs often have insights into the challenges and experiences of sex workers.

**Law Enforcement Data:** Collaboration with law enforcement agencies can provide data on cases related to sex work, including instances of violence, trafficking, and exploitation.

**Healthcare Data:** Data from healthcare providers can offer insights into the health implications and vulnerabilities of women and girls engaged in sex work.

**International Collaboration:** Sharing data and collaborating with international organizations can provide a broader perspective, allowing for comparative analysis and identification of best practices.

Organizations and frontline service providers supporting sex workers in Kiambu, Kenya, may encounter various obstacles:

**Stigma and Discrimination:** Deep-seated social stigma and discrimination can hinder the effectiveness of services, making it challenging to create a safe and supportive environment for sex workers.

**Limited Resources:** Insufficient funding and resources may limit the scope and quality of support services, affecting the organization's ability to provide comprehensive assistance.

**Legal Challenges:** Inconsistencies or gaps in legal frameworks may impede efforts to protect and advocate for the rights of sex workers. Clear legal protections are crucial for their well-being.

**Community Attitudes:** Prevailing community attitudes towards sex work may contribute to a lack of understanding and support for the initiatives aimed at helping.

**Coordination and Collaboration:** Lack of coordination among various stakeholders, including government agencies, NGOs, and community groups, can lead to fragmented efforts and gaps in services.

**Security Concerns:** Working in sensitive areas like supporting sex work may pose security risks for frontline service providers, especially if they face opposition or hostility from certain groups.

**Limited Awareness:** Low awareness among potential beneficiaries about available services may result in underutilization of support resources.

Some lessons learned about what works and what does not in addressing the negative human rights  
**What Works:**

**Holistic Approaches:** Comprehensive and holistic strategies that address the root causes of sex work, including economic inequalities and lack of education, tend to be more effective.

**Legal Reforms:** Clear and progressive legal frameworks that protect the rights of those involved in sex work and criminalize exploitative practices contribute to positive outcomes.

**Exit Programs:** Specialized programs providing support, counseling, vocational training, and economic empowerment for those wishing to have alternative sources of livelihood have shown success.

**Community Engagement:** Building awareness and engaging communities in understanding the challenges faced by sex workers helps reduce stigma and enhances support networks.

**Collaboration with NGOs:** Partnerships with non-governmental organizations specializing in this field bring valuable expertise, support, and resources to the efforts.

**What Does Not Work:**

**Criminalization Without Support:** Simply criminalizing sex work without offering support services can drive the industry underground, exacerbating risks and vulnerabilities.

**Stigmatization:** Stigmatizing individuals involved in sex work can lead to isolation, making it more challenging for them to seek help and support.

**Lack of Victim-Centered Approaches:** Approaches that do not prioritize the needs and autonomy of sex workers may be less effective in promoting long-term well-being.

**Ignoring Structural Inequalities:** Failing to address broader structural issues such as poverty, gender inequality, and lack of education can undermine efforts to combat negative consequences.

**Solely Legal Solutions:** Relying solely on legal measures without considering social, economic, and cultural factors may not lead to sustainable improvements.

To prevent and end violence associated with sex work, a multifaceted approach is essential. Here are recommendations:

**Legal Reforms:** Advocate for legal frameworks that criminalize exploitative practices, such as trafficking and coercion, while decriminalizing those engaged in sex work. This helps shift the focus from punishing the individuals to addressing the root causes of violence.

**Supportive Exit Programs:** Develop and fund comprehensive programs providing support services, counseling, vocational training, and economic opportunities for those wishing to have alternative sources of livelihood to complement sex work.

**Community Awareness:** Conduct public awareness campaigns to challenge stereotypes, reduce stigma, and foster understanding of the complex issues surrounding sex work. This can contribute to creating a more supportive environment for those involved.

**Education and Economic Empowerment:** Invest in education programs and economic empowerment initiatives, particularly targeting vulnerable populations.

**Comprehensive Healthcare Services:** Ensure access to comprehensive healthcare services, including mental health support and counseling, to address the physical and psychological consequences of sex work.

**Legal Protections:** Strengthen legal protections for individuals involved in sex work, ensuring their rights are safeguarded, and they have recourse against violence and exploitation.

**Community-Based Support Services:** Establish community-based support services that include counseling,

legal assistance, and resources to address the specific needs of sex workers

**Collaboration with NGOs:** Collaborate with non-governmental organizations supporting sex workers, leveraging their expertise and resources.

**International Collaboration:** Collaborate internationally to share best practices, research, and strategies for addressing violence associated with sex work.

**Research and Data Collection:** Invest in research and data collection to better understand the dynamics of sex work and its impact on women and girls, helping to inform evidence-based policies and interventions.