

Existential crises faced by sex workers: Navigating through Covid 19 times

Marginalization

Stigma

Access

Health

Finance

SEX WORK

- ▶ **Women in sex work**
- ▶ **Men in sex work**
- ▶ **LGBTQ and sex work**

Sex work- From HIV to Covid 19

- ▶ **Role of sex workers in HIV AIDS Prevention and Control**
- ▶ **Stigma and Discrimination**
- ▶ **Prevention models in HIV and Covid 19**
- ▶ **Role of sex workers in Covid prevention**

Covid 19 and sex workers

'Double protection' is new rule in city's red light district

<https://pune.mirror.indiatimes.com/pune/cover-story>

Sex workers in Pune seek to resume work with caution, SOPs - The Week <https://www.theweek.in/news/india/2020-06-22-Sex-workers-in-Pune-see->

PuneMirror

'Double protection' is new rule in city's red light district

7 Jun 20, 2020, 04:00 AM IST



At Budhwar Peth brothels reopen...

Despite after long lockdown, sex workers resume job, want their customers to wear masks during sexual activity, activists encourage instead, while civic officials advise against these activities

When the danger of HIV became known to the world decades ago, the use of condoms was made compulsory in red light areas across nations. The presence of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) looms large in our lives, commercial sex workers (CSWs) in the city have embraced a new necessary but fragile mandate — the use of masks is now compulsory for customers as the district cautiously resumes operations, for a job in a district in high infection.

On the same note, doctors and social workers helping out in the Budhwar Peth red light area — one of the largest in Asia — have also cautioned the CSWs not to resume work until they are wearing a mask. A mask does not save them from contracting COVID in a unique way to promote safety from the coronavirus, a new trend of phone sex is also being encouraged among the CSWs, so that regular contact with them from far away.



(File) Photo for representation. | Reuters

With the lockdown being eased, some sex workers in Pune's red light areas want to get back to business by taking all precautions and following the standard operating procedures to stay protected against COVID-19.

The livelihood of nearly 3,000 sex workers in the Budhwar Peth area here in Maharashtra has been affected by the COVID-19 outbreak and the subsequent lockdown, following which several of them moved back to their hometowns, according to an NGO working for their welfare.

Now, with the lockdown being relaxed, some of them are gearing up to resume work and are even ready to explore options of services like "phone sex", Tejash Sevaktar, executive director of city-based NGO Saheli Struggle, said.

She said the NGO, which is a collective of sex workers, has chalked out some standard operating procedures (SOPs) for them and is training them on how to take extra precautions while soliciting customers.

All these SOPs and guidelines are for sex workers across the country who are connected through the National Network of Sex Workers, she said.

"As no COVID-19 case was reported from the red light area here, the entertainment zone tag and ban on sex work have been removed. While majority of the sex workers are still not ready to start their work, a handful of them have resumed business as they are facing financial crunch due to the long lockdown," said Sevaktar.

The NGO has started imparting training through audio and video clips to the sex workers on what precautions they need to take during customer visits.

"Since there will be physical contact with customers, we have chalked out SOPs and guidelines. While condoms are mandatory, now masks and gloves are also a must during sexual activity. They have been asked to use hand sanitizers and disinfectants," Sevaktar said.

Some of the sex workers have bought thermal scanners and foot-operated sanitizer dispensers and placed them outside their premises, she said.

"It has been advised to ask the customer to take a shower before the activity and not to masturbate in any customer having cough or fever," she added.

More COVID-19 cases in Gujarat's biggest city
<https://www.theweek.in/news/india/2020-06-22-Gujarat-records-11-new-cases-of-COVID-19.html>

Alcohol ban in Maharashtra that comes in front of jobs, including
<https://www.theweek.in/news/india/2020-06-22-Alcohol-ban-in-Maharashtra-comes-in-front-of-jobs-including.html>

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<https://www.theweek.in/news/india/2020-06-22-Tarun-Kumar-shares-pictures-of-his-wedding-just-after.html>

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'They are starving': women in India's sex industry struggle for survival |... <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2020/apr/29/they-are->

The Guardian

'They are starving': women in India's sex industry struggle for survival

Exclusion from government Covid-19 relief has left many reliant on private food donations, as fears raised over protection from transmission after lockdown



Women working in India's brothels have accused the government of 'turning a blind eye'. Photograph: Handout

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Reshmi Chakraborty and Berna Ramaprasad

Wed 29 Apr 2020 07:45 BST

Rasheeda Bibi has five rupees to her name. A worker in India's sex industry, she lives in the narrow lanes of Kolkata's Kalighat red light area with her three children in a room she rents for 620 rupees (£5) a month.

As a thunderstorm rages through the city, Bibi worries about the leaky roof of her small room.

Sex work and Lock down

- ▶ **RLA as Containment zones**
- ▶ **Stigma and Discrimination**
- ▶ **Zero Income**
- ▶ **Lack of health care**
- ▶ **Indebtness**
- ▶ **No possibility of alternate income generation option**
- ▶ **No packages**
- ▶ **No long-term support available**

Covid 19-Lock down in Pune context

- ▶ **Containment zone**
- ▶ **Going back to Native place**
- ▶ **Children**
- ▶ **Indebtness and zero income-zero savings**
- ▶ **Relief work and approach**
- ▶ **Advocacy with PMC and State Govt.**

Relief work by Saheli-NNSW

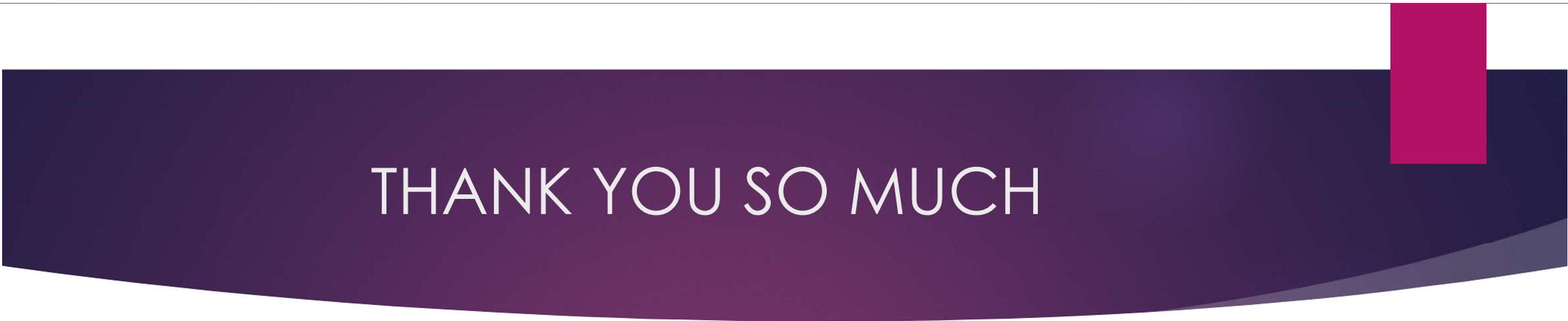


What next??

- ▶ Prolong Support
- ▶ Advocacy at National Level
- ▶ Care of Covid cases among sex workers
- ▶ Alliances and Networks
- ▶ Dealing with Rehabilitation agenda

Moving on.....

- ▶ **Impact assessment survey**
- ▶ **SC Judgement- Govt of Maharashtra**
- ▶ **GFATM**
- ▶ **Collectivization**



THANK YOU SO MUCH

QUESTIONS? COMMENTS??