



# The Struggle To Be Human

A training manual

Looking at sex work and prostitution  
through the lens of gender, sexuality and rights



**SANGRAM • VAMP**



**POINT OF VIEW**



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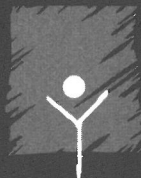
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# The Struggle To Be Human

Looking at sex work and prostitution  
through the lens of gender, sexuality and rights

Dear Facilitator,

Welcome to *The Struggle To Be Human*, a training manual that encourages us to look at and explore sex work and prostitution through the lens of gender, sexuality and rights – instead of the fatigued lens of morality. In these two pages, we acquaint you with the nuts and bolts of the manual, which is designed for use as a structured three-day training programme. (Of course, individual exercises can also be used as part of other trainings).

## Who can use this manual?

The manual is built on a fully participatory methodology - there are no presentations. It assumes that you, as facilitator, are familiar and comfortable with issues of gender, sexuality and rights. You don't have to be an expert on sex work and prostitution to use it, but you do have to be open to looking at and exploring sex work and prostitution from perspectives that may be new to you.

It also assumes that you are comfortable using participatory/interactive forms even if you are not altogether familiar with them. As a participatory facilitator, your role is not that of a teacher – no lectures here. Your role is to encourage participation - by creating a safe, supportive and fun environment which in itself inspires participation; by persuading all to participate, including those who are silenced in such settings; by ensuring that no one hogs the limelight, thus inhibiting others; and by adapting the exercises and timings to different groups and participants.

We assume you believe in the concept of 'learning through participation'. This manual rests on our belief that learning is an open, multi-ended process, in which participants can learn as much from other's responses as they can from you – or from us. It contains exercises, films, games and other interactive methodologies and other stimulating learning tools. The idea is not to spoonfeed or numb participants into learning, but to catalyze them to think about these complicated issues. We have tested this manual in trainings in India from 2004 onwards and have fine-tuned it to participant feedback.

## Who can this manual be used with?

This manual can be used with a variety of organizations, groups and individuals – particularly those working on women's rights, HIV, public health, reproductive and sexual health, human rights, or sex workers' rights. It can be used with grassroots activists, advocates, researchers, policy makers – and with groups of sex workers. Ensure you adapt it for the group that you are training.

## Who has created this manual?

This manual distills, builds on and combines the ground-level experiences of women in prostitution at VAMP, the organizational experience and insights of SANGRAM, and Point of View's passion and skills to communicate marginalized points of view.

- SANGRAM – Sampada Grameen Mahila Sanstha - responds to HIV/AIDS through a comprehensive strategy of prevention, care and support that includes a peer education and condom distribution programme among 5,000 sex workers in six districts in Maharashtra and northern Karnataka.



- VAMP – Veshya Anyay Mukti Parishad - is a collective of women in prostitution which SANGRAM seeded and continues to nurture. VAMP manages the peer education and condom distribution programme and builds the leadership capacities of sex workers who are part of its collective.
- Point of View has contributed to the struggle for sex workers' rights through the creation and distribution of films, books, newsletters, reports etc., including *In The Flesh*, *Unzipped: Voices of Women and Men in Prostitution*, and *Of Vamps, Veshyas, Whores and Women*..

All of us have been working on the rights of women in prostitution for many years. SANGRAM and Point of View are also collaborating to create a theatre production devised and enacted by members of VAMP; a publication documenting dialogues between women's rights organizations and sex worker groups, including VAMP.

### **Why has this manual been created?**

Even today, women in prostitution, in India atleast, are seen as less than human. Less than human not in a species sense, it is understood that they belong to the human species. But in the more ordinary day-to-day sense of what it means to be human, to lead human lives. Because the label of 'prostitute' is such a totalizing identity, it tends to erase all other identities, including that of a human being or woman. People, including activists and policymakers are not able to conceive of sex workers as 'human beings' who are entitled to the same rights and dignities as all of us.

In a 1949 Convention, the United Nations held that "prostitution violates human rights, and human dignity, and represents a threat to the welfare of the individual, the family and the community." As long as prostitution itself is seen as a human rights violation, and as long as the emphasis is on abolishing this (since it's seen as a human rights violation), where is the space to look within prostitution and discuss 'the rights of women within prostitution'? Hence, in a more formal political sense, the need to start talking about the rights of women in prostitution and sex work. Their struggle to be human.

### **How has this manual been created?**

The lives, realities and day-to-day experiences of women in prostitution have shaped and informed this manual at every stage. Sex workers from VAMP strongly felt that rights-based understandings of prostitution and sex work cannot develop in a vacuum – we first need to understand who sex workers are and their location in society as 'bad women'. They advocated reclaiming the concept of prostitution from its societal framing as 'bad work'.

Exploring and unraveling participants' own deep-rooted attitudes and beliefs about gender and sexuality is a critical first step in starting to understand sex work and prostitution. Our own upbringings, social contexts, and conceptualizations of gender and sexuality influence the everyday lives of women in prostitution. We need to deconstruct what we think of as 'normal' or 'natural' if we want to build a more nuanced, multi—faceted understanding of prostitution which will help us create programmes keeping in mind the multiple realities of people in prostitution and sex work.

### **What is in this manual?**

This manual contains:

- The three day training programme, presented as Day 1, Day 2 and Day 3
- The booklet, *Everything you wanted to know about prostitution and sex work – but were afraid to ask: FAQs* in the back flap
- Three DVDs, *Zinda Laash*, *Benaqaab*, *Taking The Pledge*, in the back flap
- A list of websites and films as additional resources on the inside back cover

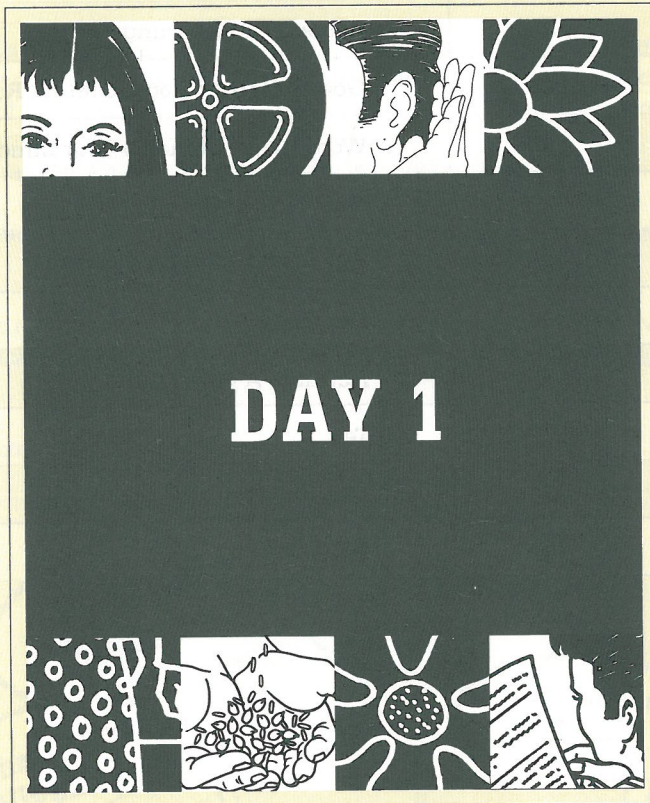
We hope you enjoy using this manual as much as we have enjoyed creating it.

Meena Seshu  
SANGRAM

Bishakha Datta  
Point of View

Shabana Kazi  
VAMP







## DAY 1

The first day focuses on:

- Introducing participants to one another and to the three-day training programme
- Enabling participants to explore their understandings of femininity, masculinity, gender and morality. All of these shape our understanding of and responses to sex work and prostitution.

### Session Plan

9-9.15 am	1.1	I Am Generous Girish
9.15-10 am	1.2	Respectful Listening
10-10.30 am	1.3	Goals, Methodology, Ground Rules
10.30-11.30 am	1.4	Words That Come To Your Mind
11.30-12 noon		Tea
12-1 pm	1.5	Act Like A Woman Flower
1-2 pm		Lunch
2-3 pm	1.6	Act Like A Real Man
3-3.30 pm		Tea
3.30-4.30 pm	1.7	Maya's Story
4.30-5 pm	1.8	Feedback



## 1.1 I Am generous Girish<sup>1</sup>

15 MINS

### Objective

To enable participants to get to know each other's names - and remember them.

### Materials

None

### Process

- 1 Ask each participant to introduce himself or herself to the group with an alliterative sentence based upon the first letter of his or her name.

Eg "I'm generous Girish" or "I'm kooky Karishma."

- 2 The next participant should introduce himself or herself the same way - but he or she must first mention the name of the previous participant. Each participant is to introduce himself or herself, first mentioning all previous participants in the order in which they have introduced themselves. Thus a chain of introductions is created.

Eg "She is kooky Karishma, she is active Anu, he is generous Girish and I am interesting Indira."

- 3 The chain of introductions ends when each person has introduced themselves.

### Variation

Ask participants to add a second alliterative sentence which mentions one activity they enjoy doing.

Eg "I'm kooky Karishma. I like kissing kittens," or "I'm generous Girish. I like giving gifts."

### Note

This is a playful exercise, and needs to be treated as such.



1. This exercise has been adapted from Action Plus, a network of 15 organizations in India working on the prevention, care and treatment of HIV/AIDS.



## 1.2 Respectful Listening<sup>2</sup>

45 MINS

### Objective

To emphasize the importance of respectful listening, specially while working with women in prostitution, whose voices are never heard.

### Materials

None

### Process

- 1 Ask participants to break into pairs.
- 2 Instruct each pair of participants to introduce themselves to one another. One participant speaks about himself or herself for 2-3 minutes while the other listens. Then they switch roles and the other participant does the same.
- 3 After this all participants come back to the larger group. Then each participant has to introduce his/her partner to the larger group.
- 4 After this process is over, invite participants to share their experiences with the group.

### Discussion

Lead a discussion with participants around the following points:

- Did you really listen to each other?
- Did you probe?
- Did you feel impatient?
- Did you feel the information was not very relevant?
- Were you able to reproduce what you heard verbatim or was there an interpretation-distortion in what you reported back?
- Do we really listen to what people and communities tell us?
- Why is respectful listening important?



### Wrapping Up

Explain that we often approach marginalized communities - women in prostitution, hijras, people with HIV etc - with our own assumptions. We hear our own voices and opinions, not theirs. In doing so, we equate them with children, who 'should be seen and not heard'.

But can we work on the rights of women in prostitution without listening to them? Isn't the right to be heard as fundamental as any other right?



## 1.3 Goals, Methodology, Ground Rules

30 MINS

### Goals

Explain that this three-day training programme aims to enable participants to:

- Explore their own attitudes towards and understanding of prostitution and sex work
- See prostitution and sex work through the lens of gender, sexuality and rights rather than the lens of morality
- Use rights-based approaches in their work on prostitution and HIV/AIDS
- Develop strategies to strengthen women in prostitution and sex work to assert, exercise, and enjoy their rights
- Develop advocacy strategies in their own work with sex workers.

### Methodology

Explain that this is a structured training programme spread over three days. It is based on:

- 1 The premise that gender, sexuality and rights are inter-related – and that an understanding of gender and sexuality is needed to address prostitution and sex work through the lens of rights.
- 2 A step-by-step building block process. The first day focuses largely on gender, the second morning is spent exploring sexuality, while the rest of the training is devoted to issues of sex work and prostitution.
- 3 An interactive and participative methodology – each issue is explored not through presentations, but through exercises, games, debates, films etc.
- 4 The understanding that participants will learn from their own participation and from each other.
- 5 The insight that the facilitator's role is to create and sustain participation, not to provide expert knowledge of the issue.

### Ground Rules

Invite participants to frame and adopt a set of ground rules for the training that will enhance communication and learning.

### Logistics

Remember to clarify break, lunch, and end times and ensure that people are aware of house keeping arrangements. Also clarify issues related to reimbursements and resource material.

### Ground Rules

confidentiality  
being non-judgemental  
keeping mobile phone off



## 1.4 Words That Come To Your Mind

60 MINS

### Objective

To identify participants' attitudes towards prostitution and sex work.

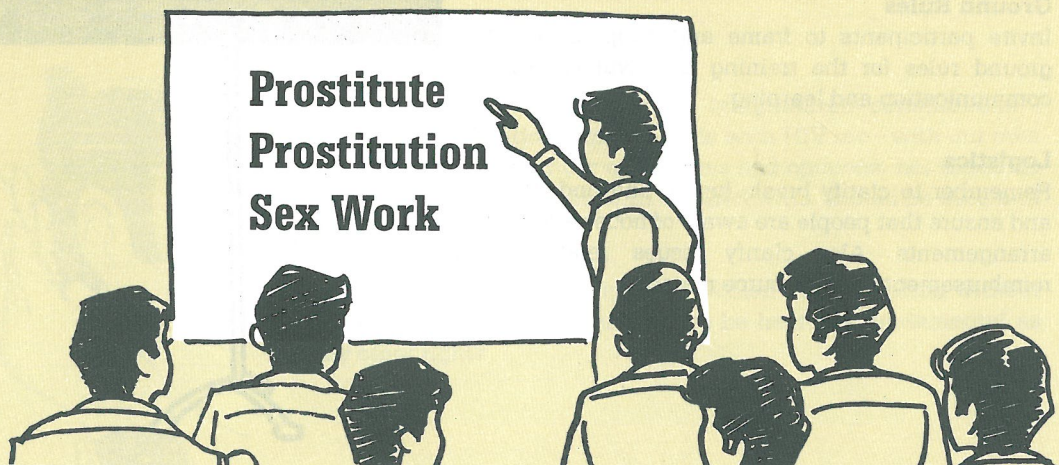
### Materials

Chart papers (1 for each group and 2 for listing words)

Marker pens

### Process

- 1 Select one word from the three below and ask each participant to list all the words that come to mind within one minute of hearing them:
  - *Prostitute*
  - *Prostitution*
  - *Sex Work*
- 2 Participants should write down the associated words on their notepads individually.
- 3 At the end of one minute ask each person to read out their words. Invite a volunteer to write down all the words on the board. Every word that is repeated should be ticked every time it comes up.
- 4 Now break up the larger group into 4-5 smaller working groups.
- 5 Ask the groups to create categories to club all the words based on similarities and/or differences. There is no instruction on how words are classified, only that there should be consensus in the group regarding the classification. Give the groups 10-15 minutes to do this.
- 6 When they are ready each group should make a small 5-minute presentation to explain the basis of their grouping.
- 7 From time to time, intervene and comment on the nature of words that have typically come up and also the grouping of words. What biases, stereotypes do they reflect? What assumptions underlie their choice of words?
- 8 If there is not enough time to do steps 4-6, or if the group is not ready for this, jump straight to step 7.





## Discussion

Lead a discussion around the following themes:

- What are our dominant attitudes towards prostitution and women in prostitution?
- How have these attitudes formed?
- How do these attitudes influence the words we use to describe sex work and prostitution?
- How do certain words come to be associated only with sex work and prostitution?

Explain that words - language itself - often conveys our deeper feelings and attitudes. The dominant attitudes to prostitution and sex work typically fall into one of these categories:

**a Moral outrage or embarrassment:** This is a very common lay response - to see prostitution as a moral abhorrence or a 'social evil' that should be abolished. When we see prostitution through this 'us' and 'them' lens, we become 'civilized' 'respectable' citizens, while they become the Other - moral outcasts, sexual outlaws. In this worldview, the only sex that is legitimate is that in the 'sacred space' between husband and wife. All other sexual relationships are seen as illegitimate, a perception that echoes an underlying moral discomfort with sex itself, which is seen as 'dirty'.

**b Sympathy or pity:** This is the 'poor you' response. When we view prostitution through the lens of pity, we cast women in prostitution as 'victims' who have been 'forced' into prostitution and are unable to fend for themselves. This view robs people in sex work of their individual sense of self, and a sense of agency - and puts 'us' (non-victims) on a higher plane than 'them' as victims. Women, including women's rights activists, often think of sex workers as victims, a position which brings with it a yearning to 'rescue' them from prostitution.

**c Confusion:** Many people don't think of prostitution as a social evil or of women in prostitution as victims - but they don't know how to think about prostitution or women in prostitution. Is prostitution a crime or commerce? Is it exploitation or work? Is a woman in prostitution a victim or an agent? Do women in prostitution choose to come into prostitution or are they forced into it?

Explain that multiple realities exist within prostitution - which is a deep-rooted institution that has existed for centuries. Exploitation, empowerment, victimhood, agency, choice, force, pleasure, danger - all of these exist within prostitution, but none of these *is* prostitution.

Explain that prostitution and trafficking are not the same, although there are overlaps between the two.

Explain that while the vast majority of those in prostitution are women, transgender people and men also come into prostitution.



## Wrapping Up

Remind participants that the values we have around gender and sexuality deeply influence how we see sex work and prostitution. Most of these words/values come from society rather than from women in prostitution, who may see themselves differently. There may be a diversity of views within any group. For instance, when this exercise was done with a group of men and women in prostitution, the women described 'gaand maarna' (anal penetration) as 'violence', whereas the men classified it as 'pleasure'.

## Note

This exercise needs to be done early on - so that the facilitator can get a sense of where participants are at, and pitch the three-day training accordingly. This exercise needs to be done so that real feelings and attitudes come up - not politically correct words. If you sense that participants are being cautious, try to make them recognize their values and challenge them. Try to make them understand where they come from. Are these values really informed by an awareness of the reality of the lives of people in prostitution, or are our values based on an uninformed and prejudiced notion of prostitution? Are we trying to hide our feelings with platitudes and what we think *should* be said?

Challenge negative words and associations. If participants use words that cast people in prostitution as 'immoral', 'bad', or 'depraved', begin to question what these words and associations mean. Expose the double standards of so called 'respectable' society and highlight violence, discrimination, and male privilege that we condone as 'family values' - domestic violence, child sexual abuse, controls within marriage etc.

Words that are likely to come up such as 'exploitation' or 'victim' also need to be addressed. We cannot view people in prostitution and sex work in blanket terms as victims or as exploited people. While there is no doubt that exploitation exists in their lives at many levels (such as caste, poverty, class etc.), it is also just one aspect of their lives.

People in sex work find many ways to subvert and negotiate these systems and find personal power in their own situations and relationships - like anyone else.

## Keep in Mind

Please read the booklet *Everything you wanted to know about prostitution and sex work – but were afraid to ask: FAQs* before doing this exercise. This empowers you to answer a wide range of questions on this issue.



## 1.5 Act Like A Woman Flower<sup>3</sup>

60 MINS

### Objective

To identify socially constructed norms around femininity, particularly the norm of 'good/bad woman', which influence attitudes towards women in prostitution and sex work.

### Materials

3 sheets of chart paper per small group

Markers

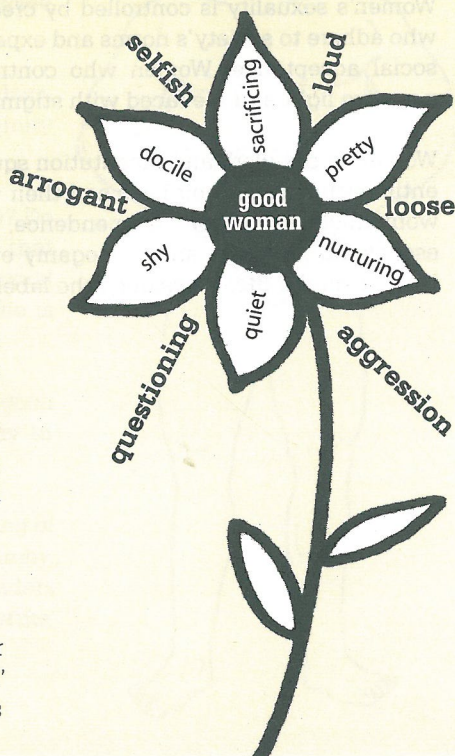
### Process

- 1 Divide the participants in small groups and give each group 3 sheets of paper.
- 2 Ask each group to draw a flower on a sheet of paper and label it 'A Woman Flower'.
- 3 Inside the flower, each group should list all the characteristics of a 'good woman' that they can come up with.
- 4 Outside the flower, each group should list the characteristics of a 'bad woman'.
- 5 Ask each group to pin up their charts on the walls and read out the words written inside and outside the flowers.

### Discussion

Lead a discussion showing how the notions of 'good woman' and 'bad woman' are socially constructed. Women are neither good nor bad - society constructs them as such. Use the following questions as part of this discussion:

- Why did the groups choose to place certain words inside or outside the petals of the flower? Where did we learn about these divisions?
- Are the notions of 'good woman' and 'bad woman' influenced by caste, class, religion and other variables? How do norms of femininity shift and change across castes and classes?
- How has social conditioning played a role in developing ideas of 'good' and 'bad'? What messages did we receive as children and teenagers about how we should or should not act? What did we think would happen to us if we ever stepped outside the flower? What happened when we did? Participants can be encouraged to reflect on and share their own personal experiences in this regard.
- Where do you place yourself now? Why?
- Sex workers are often thought to be outside the flower because they have many of the characteristics of 'bad' women. They are placed outside because those of us



3. This exercise has been adapted from Local Action, Global Change, a manual published by UNIFEM and the Centre for Women's Global Leadership.



with social power reinforce the strict divisions of inside/outside through our own attitudes and choices. What do you think of this?

- Women in sex work have also internalized this notion of 'good' and 'bad' women. When this exercise was done with sex workers they came up with the categories of 'Good Randi' ('Good Whore'), which refers to a woman who pleases a man without asking for her own pleasure; and 'Bad Randi' ('Bad Whore') which refers to a self-centred woman who focuses on her own pleasure equally or more than she does on the man's pleasure. Is it 'bad' to be self-centred? Wouldn't women be able to assert their rights more if they were more self-centred?

### Wrapping Up

Explain to the participants that the flower is not real. These are ideas that we absorb and accept from society about who we are and how our worth is measured. All of us - sex workers and non sex workers - are bound by the flower or social norms of 'good' and 'bad'. It shapes how we see ourselves, and those who are inside/outside the flower.

Depending on how we have been raised, the ways in which we have (or have not) challenged these social norms have a bearing on our own self concept. Someone might decide that she is outside the flower and shape a personality and make choices based on this. Someone who believes she must remain within the flower will make choices that move her towards and within the flower.

In real terms we are all constantly negotiating the spaces inside and outside the flower, because the personal spaces we live in demand different roles and positions. We are constantly moving inside and outside the flower. Gender and sexuality are contested spaces and we are all constantly navigating these spaces within ourselves, in our intimate and social spaces.

Women's sexuality is controlled by creating a divide between 'good' and 'bad' women. Those who adhere to society's norms and expectations are considered 'good', and the reward for this is social acceptance. Women who contravene societal norms and expectations are cast in a negative light and are faced with stigma, ostracism and abuse.

Women in sex work and prostitution squarely fall into the category of 'bad women' because the entire structure of their lives and their work challenges society's expectation of femininity and womanhood: financial independence, an identity built on an independent sexual identity, eschewing marriage and monogamy etc. Therefore any woman, even a non sex-worker, who leads a similar life, is assigned the label of a 'whore'.



## 1.6 Act Like A 'Real Man'<sup>4</sup>

60 MINS

### Objective

To identify socially constructed norms around masculinity, particularly the norm of 'real man'.

### Materials

3 sheets of chart paper per small group

Markers

### Process

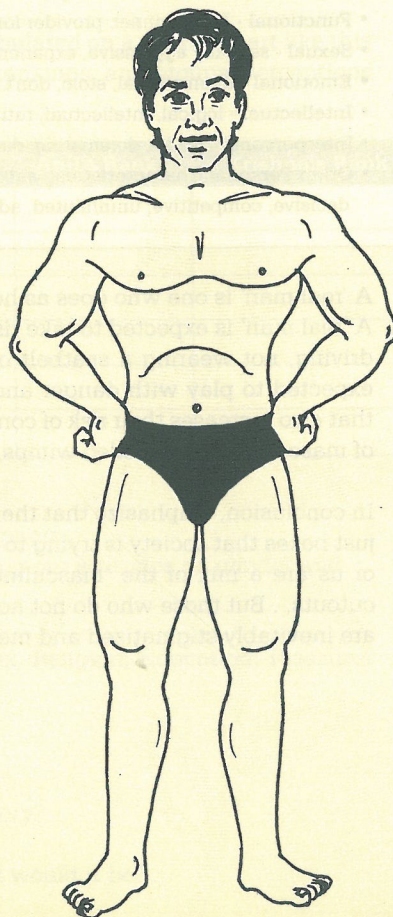
- 1 Divide the participants in small groups and give each group 3 sheets of paper.
- 2 Ask each group to draw a man on a sheet of paper and label it 'A Real Man'.
- 3 Inside the figure, each group should list the characteristics of a 'real man'.
- 4 Outside the figure, each group should list the characteristics of someone who is 'not a real man'.
- 5 Ask each group to pin up their charts on the walls and read out the words written inside and outside the figures.

### Discussion

Lead a discussion showing how the notion of the 'real man' is socially constructed - and is quite similar to the 'bad woman'.

Use the following questions to lead this discussion:

- Why did the groups choose to place certain words inside or outside the figure? Where did we learn about these divisions?
- Is the notion of the 'real man' influenced by caste, class, religion and other variables? How do norms of masculinity shift and change across castes and classes?
- What is the relationship between gender and sexuality? Do the Woman Flower and Real Man exercises show us that while women are not seen as sexual beings or sexual subjects, a man is not considered a real man unless he is sexually active?
- Does this sexual construction of a 'real man' and the 'good woman' increase both men and women's vulnerability to HIV? If so, how?
- Where do transgenders fit into this binary understanding of gender and sexuality? If we had to draw a gender hierarchy, where would we place transgenders? Are transgenders marginalized because they transgress gender norms, sexual norms, or both?



4. This exercise has been adapted from Local Action, Global Change, a manual published by UNIFEM and the Centre for Women's Global Leadership



## Wrapping Up

Explain to the participants that the 'real man' figure - like the 'woman flower' - is not real. Just as women are bound by social norms, men are also subject to norms of gender.

Society typically constructs men and women almost as if they are flip sides of a coin: dominant/dominated, aggressive/passive, tough/frail, sexual/non-sexual. Both men and women can be any of these; isn't it interesting though that women who are aggressive, dominating, and sexual, are inevitably seen as 'bad women' while the same qualities are upheld in men? And men who are soft, emotional, and non-sexual are seen as 'not real men', but these same qualities are upheld in 'good women'?

Families, friends, teachers, and community leaders all play a role in helping boys define what it means to be a man. Mainstream media representations also play a role in reinforcing ideas about what it means to be a 'real' man in our society. In most media portrayals, male characters are rewarded for self-control and the control of others, aggression and violence, financial independence, and physical desirability.

### **Sociology professor Janet Saltzman Chafetz<sup>5</sup> describes seven areas of masculinity in general culture:**

- **Physical** - virile, athletic, strong, brave. Unconcerned about appearance and aging.
- **Functional** - breadwinner, provider for family as much as mate.
- **Sexual** - sexually aggressive, experienced. Single status acceptable.
- **Emotional** - unemotional, stoic, don't cry.
- **Intellectual** - logical, intellectual, rational, objective, practical.
- **Interpersonal** - leader, dominating; disciplinarian; independent, free, individualistic; demanding.
- **Other Personal Characteristics** - success-oriented, ambitious, aggressive, proud, egotistical; moral, trustworthy; decisive, competitive, uninhibited, adventurous.

A 'real man' is one who does as he pleases, has many sexual partners, and is a fast-living bloke. A 'real man' is expected to take risks – never mind the consequences, whether it is drinking and driving, not wearing a seatbelt or a helmet, doing drugs, not doing condoms. 'Real men' are expected to play with danger and be unconcerned about safety, a facet of social construction that also increases their risk of contracting HIV. Men who don't conform to the social construction of masculinity are labelled wimps, pansies, or girls.

In conclusion, emphasize that there is no such thing as 'real men', 'good/bad women' – these are just boxes that society is trying to slot us into. Gender is more like a continuum or spectrum – all of us are a mix of the 'masculine' and 'feminine' in different degrees, not cardboard gender cutouts. But those who do not accept the societal norms of the Woman Flower or the Real Man are inevitably stigmatized and marginalized.



## 1.7 Maya's Story

60 MINS

### Objective

To elicit underlying biases, stereotypes and moral dilemmas that participants have about sexuality.

### Materials

Copies of Maya's story given on page 17, one per participant

### Process

- 1 Hand out copies of Maya's story to all participants. Give them about 10 minutes to read the story in detail and to reflect on it.
- 2 Divide the participants into groups and ask each group to rank all the characters in the story from 1 to 5; 1 being the best and 5 the worst. Each group is to also decide:
  - Who is the villain in the story?
  - Who is the hero?
  - Is there a victim in the story?
  - Who is the victim?
  - What role does society play in the story?
- 3 Each group presents its responses. Their rankings can be tabulated on a simple chart like this for everyone to see. Each group can be asked to explain their rankings, and groups' perceptions can be compared with each other.

Group	Maya's Rank	Prakash's Rank	Ram's Rank	Anil's Rank	Krishna's Rank
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					

### Themes

Use the following themes to lead a discussion with the participants:

- What role does morality play in our decisions and in shaping our attitudes on gender and sexuality?
- How important are these things in our lives - Money; Sex; Religion; Education; Pleasure? How should they be procured?
- Are these different in a man and a woman's life?
- What do you think of Maya's choices and actions in the story?
- If you had to devise an alternate ending for the story what would it be?



## Wrapping Up

Explain to participants that society controls women by setting norms and standards for 'woman-like behaviour'. This encompasses all aspects of our lives from what we wear and how we behave to the people we associate with and the choices we make. The social moralities that govern men's and women's choices and lives are different. Women who earn money through prostitution to be financially independent, or for a child's health or education, may face more judgement than men who might be corrupt or underhanded in their work for the same reasons.

Women's sexuality is controlled by creating a divide between 'good' and 'bad' women. Those who adhere to society's norms and expectations are considered 'good', and the reward for this is social acceptance. Women who contravene societal norms and expectations are therefore thrown into a negative light and are faced with stigma, ostracism and abuse.

Women in sex work and prostitution squarely fall into the category of 'bad women' because the entire structure of their lives and their work challenges society's expectation of femininity and womanhood: financial independence, an identity built on an independent sexual identity, eschewing marriage and monogamy etc. Therefore any woman, even a non-sex worker, who leads a similar life, is assigned the label of a 'whore'.



## MAYA'S STORY

Once there was a girl called Maya. Maya was 19 years old and very beautiful. She was also very poor. She lived in a village on the bank of a big river. Maya was engaged to be married to a young man called Prakash. Prakash lived in another village on the opposite side of the river. The river was very wide and there were crocodiles in it.

One day Maya heard that Prakash was very ill, and might even die. She became very anxious about Prakash. She loved him very much, and she wanted to go and be with him if he was sick, and specially if he might die.

So she went down to the river where there was a ferryboat. The ferryboat belonged to a ferryman called Ram. When Maya said she wanted to cross the river Ram asked her for a fare of Rs.100. Maya said that since she did not have the money she would pay Ram later. Ram refused. Then Maya pleaded with him to take her because Prakash was so ill, and might die. Ram refused again. Then he said that he would take Maya across, but on one condition.... that she should sleep with him first.

Maya was very upset about this, and went back to her village wondering what to do. On the way, she met Anil her cousin and she told him what had happened. "That has got nothing to do with me," he replied. "It's your problem. Do not involve me in it. I do not want to have anything to do with it." Anil went off leaving Maya feeling disconsolate.

Maya did not know what to do. She hated the idea of sleeping with Ram, but she loved Prakash so much and thought she might not see him again. She had to get across that river somehow. So finally, she went back to Ram and slept with him. Then he took her across the river, and she rushed to Prakash's house.

At Prakash's house, Maya nursed him and looked after him. Soon Prakash felt better and was out of danger. After some time Prakash asked Maya how she had crossed the river, and where she had gotten the money. Then Maya told Prakash what happened. Prakash was furious. He shouted at Maya and abused her for having slept with Ram. He told he would never marry her now and that she should get out of his house forever.

Maya went sadly down to the ferry again. On the way, she met a neighbour called Krishna. She told Krishna everything that had happened. Krishna was very angry when he heard it, and he rushed straight to Prakash's house, pulled Prakash off his sickbed, and beat him up very badly.



## 1.8 Feedback

30 MINS

### Objective

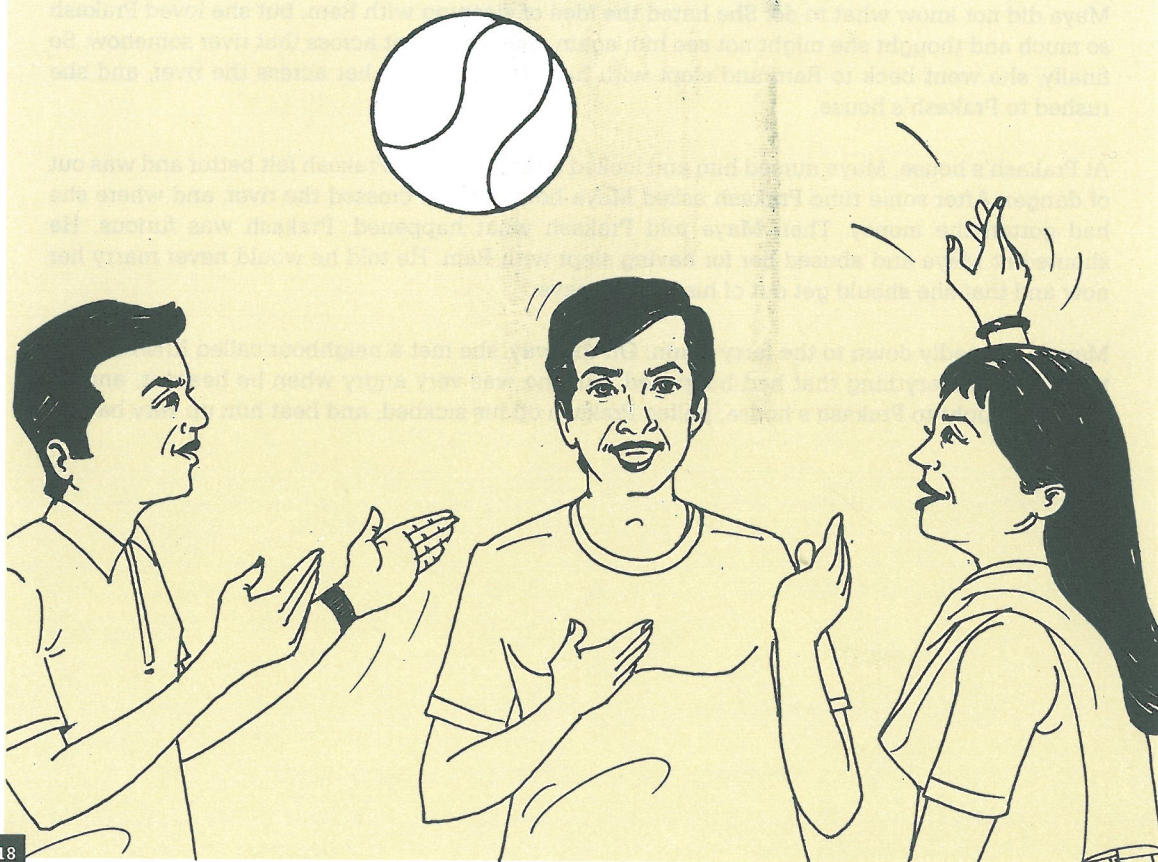
To enable participants to clarify doubts, raise questions, and to reflect on the day's learning.

### Process

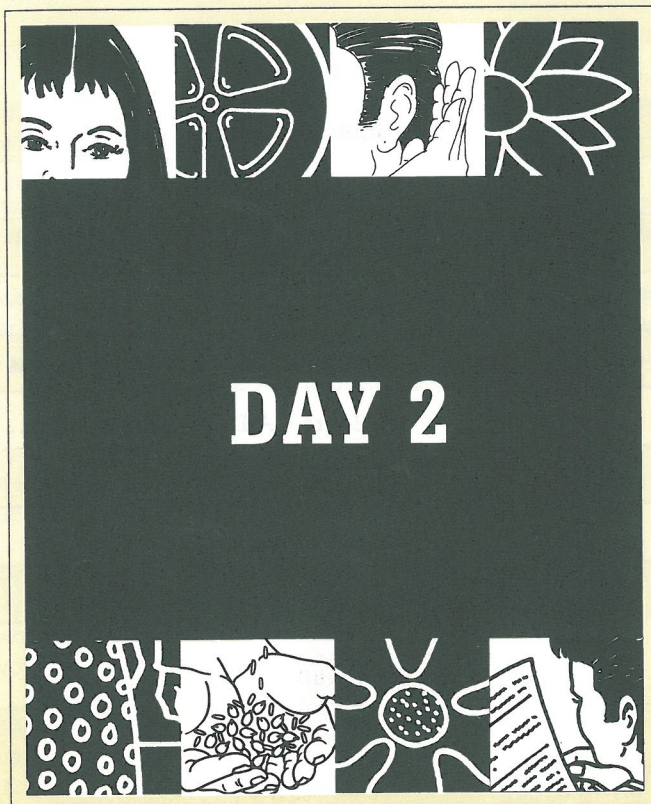
- 1 Make participants stand in a big wide circle.
- 2 Give one of them a ball and ask him or her to throw this to someone. Whenever someone has the ball he or she has to say one thing about the day – what they did, what they learnt – in a few words.
- 3 Ensure that as many people as possible get the ball.
- 4 This can be followed by a more in-depth discussion as required.

### Wrapping Up

Tell participants what to expect the next day.









## DAY 2

The second day focuses on:

- Enabling participants to understand and locate their attitudes to and perceptions of sex work and prostitution in the larger context of their understandings of gender and sexuality.

Gender has already been explored the previous day; the opening exercise on day 2 focuses on interweaving gender and sexuality. The rest of the day is devoted to deconstructing participants' understandings of sex work and prostitution – once again, through interactive exercises, film screenings and debates. There are no presentations or lectures in today's sessions.

### Session Plan

9-10 am	2.1	How We Felt Then
10-11 am	2.2	Labels And Stigma
11-11.30 am		Tea
11.30-1 pm	2.3	Agony Auntyji
1-2 pm		Lunch
2-2.30 pm	2.4	<i>Zinda Laash</i> – Bollywood's Norms for <i>Dhandewalis</i>
2.30-3 pm	2.5	24 Hours – A Day In The Life Of...
3-3.30 pm		Tea
3.30-4.45 pm	2.6	Take A Stand
4.45-5 pm	2.7	Feedback
Evening or Night Screening	Optional	<i>Benaqaab</i>



## 2.1 How We Felt Then<sup>1</sup>

60 MINS

### Objective

To enable participants to explore their own understandings of sex and sexuality in a safe confidential environment.

### Materials

Chart paper

Markers

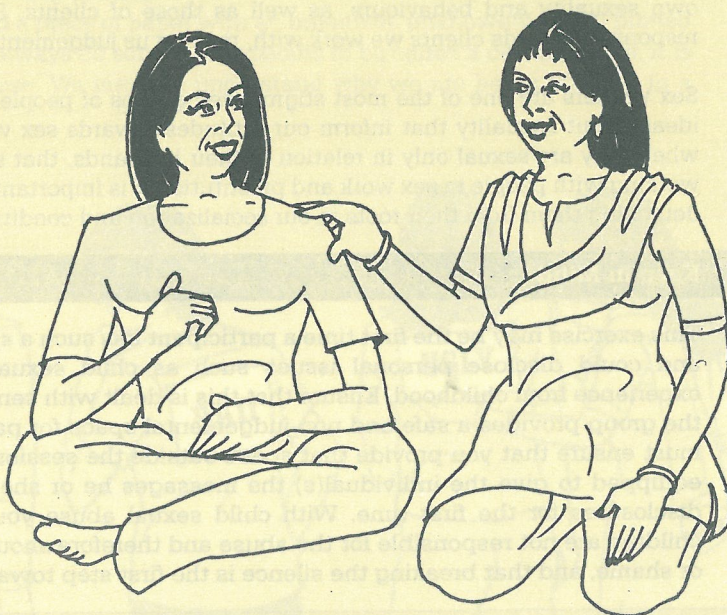
### Process

- ① Ask participants to break into pairs with people they feel comfortable with.
- ② Put up the following questions on a chart paper and read aloud:
  - *Recall the first time you heard the word 'sex'. How old were you and what did you feel?*
  - *Recall the first time you had a sexual experience. How old were you and what did you feel?*
  - *Have you ever seen yourself naked in the mirror?*
- ③ Ask participants to share answers to these with their partners. They need not share specific experiences (unless they feel comfortable doing so), rather they should focus on their feelings.
- ④ Ask participants to come back to the larger group. Ask someone to begin by volunteering to share his or her experience with the whole group. Participants can either talk briefly about their own or their partner's situations. It is not important to talk about personal experiences but about feelings.

### Discussion

Lead a discussion around the following themes:

- What are the ideas we receive about sex and sexuality as we grow up?
- How did you feel about the information or messages you received about sex and sexuality as you grew up?
- What information about sex and sexuality do you feel you lack today? Would you have felt differently about sex and sexuality if you had had accurate and detailed information about these? What might you have done differently had you known more about these issues before?



1. This exercise has been adapted from Talking about Reproductive and Sexual Health (TARSHI), a Delhi based NGO.



## **Wrapping Up**

During the discussion, the following points may emerge. If not, they need to be made:

There is a thread of similarity that runs through many of our feelings and experiences. For example, sex was not discussed in the family, we learned about sex from friends, we learned that sex is only for procreation, sex is bad, boys/men have stronger sex drives, girls don't like sex, men must lead in sex, certain types of sex are wrong/bad, etc. Many of these deep-rooted myths influence our understanding of sex and sexuality.

Talking about sex openly is often difficult. Feelings of embarrassment, shame, fear, honour, stigmatization, and denial can affect the discussion.

Sex is a pleasurable activity. It is not for procreation alone. Everyone should recognize and respect themselves as sexual beings and not feel ashamed to talk about their sexuality.

Messages about sex are learned at an early age. They can come from parents, other members of the family, siblings, friends, etc. Often we do not question these messages because they come from parents or because we are too young at the time to fully understand the issues. These messages become internalized and often shape not only how we think about sex (eg shame, embarrassment etc.), but also our sexual behaviour (eg inhibited, shy, passive etc.). Just because we believe these messages does not make them true.

It is possible to change how we think and feel about ourselves and our behaviours, both through education and through experience and exposure to new ideas. We can challenge received, internalized messages and change them.

Being comfortable with sexual language is a central component of effective education. It is important to be able to talk about sex and sexuality in terms of physical acts and processes, as well in terms of emotions and feelings.

It is important for anyone working in the area of sexual health not to feel ashamed about their own sexuality and behaviours, as well as those of clients. Shame is likely to condition our responses towards clients we work with, making us judgemental and narrow in our approach.

Sex workers are one of the most stigmatized groups of people in our society. It is our received ideas about sexuality that inform our attitudes towards sex workers – that women are 'good' when they are sexual only in relation to their husbands, that sex is for procreation only etc. In working with people in sex work and prostitution it is important to let go of these ideas, often by detaching them from their roots in our socialization and conditioning.

## **Keep in Mind**

This exercise may be the first time a participant has such a space of openness and dialogue, and could disclose personal issues such as child sexual abuse, or any other sexual experience from childhood. Ensure that this is dealt with sensitively. If you do not think that the group provides a safe and non-judgemental space for participants' disclosure then you must ensure that you provide that space outside the session. As a facilitator you must feel equipped to give the individual(s) the messages he or she needs when making personal disclosures for the first time. With child sexual abuse you must reinforce the idea that children are not responsible for the abuse and therefore should not carry the burden of guilt or shame, and that breaking the silence is the first step towards healing.



## 2.2 Labels And Stigma<sup>2</sup>

60 MINS

### Objective

To understand the emotional impact and marginalizing power of stigma.

### Materials

Sheets of paper  
Pieces of cello tape  
Scissor (to cut cello tape)

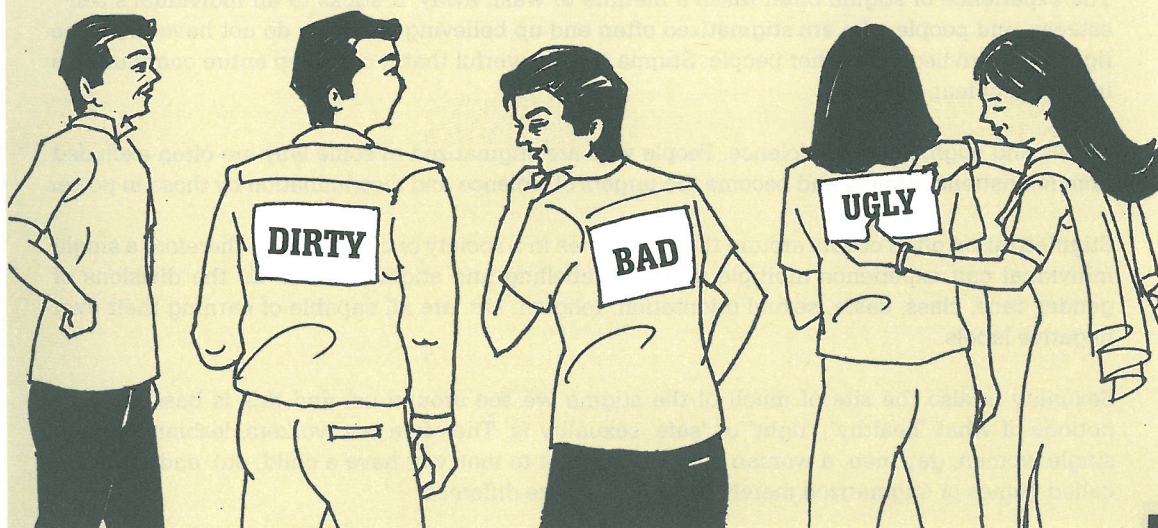
### Process

- 1 Give each person in the group a piece of paper and ask them to write down a label which is a name we wouldn't like to be called. The labels must be written in big bold capital letters. Collect all the sheets of paper.
- 2 Jumble up the papers and go around the group sticking a piece of paper on the back of each participant. The participant should not be able to see what is written on the piece of paper on his or her back.
- 3 Now tell the group to walk around viewing each other's labels. Using actions and non-verbal gestures, but not words, each person should react to the label on another person's back in a way that allows the labelled person to guess his or her label. Allow the group to do this for 5-7 minutes.
- 4 Ask everyone to sit down and to try and guess what their label is. Let them have a look at their labels once they have made a guess.

### Discussion

Lead a discussion around the following themes:

- What did we feel when we had a piece of paper with an unknown, unknowable label pinned to our backs? In life we don't always do something specific to be called a certain name, it is not something we get to choose. We may not understand why we are being labelled in a certain way.



2. This exercise was developed by CORO, Mumbai and shared at the Training Manual Review Consultation in Goa organized by Sangram and Point of View in July 2006.



- What did it feel like to be labelled? How do labels affect us?
- What are the different kinds of labels that were chosen by the group? How are labels different for men and women, or for people from different classes and castes? How many of these labels are related to sexuality?
- What happens when you realize what your label is, or at the end of the exercise? In reality even when we know how and why we are being labelled, the feeling of being stigmatized in a certain way does not necessarily go away.

### **Variation: The Flood Game**

The following variation can be used with a group that cannot read or write.

- 1 Narrate the following story to the group:

"There is a flood in the village and everyone perishes save for five: a priest, a *dalit* man, (a person who is classified as 'lower caste' by the upper castes), a child, a pregnant *gharwali* (brothel owner), and a doctor. There is one boat and enough supplies for just four people to get to the next point of safety."

- 2 Now ask the group this question: If you had to choose, who would be the four people who would be allowed to get away to safety, and why?

- 3 Alternatively, five groups or five participants can represent each of the five characters and make a case to be one of the chosen four who will get away to safety.

### **Discussion**

Lead a discussion around the following questions:

- How do we decide who has more value in society? Who decides this?
- What do you think the person who gets left behind feels? What do the other four in the boat feel?

### **Wrapping Up**

The experience of stigma often takes a lifetime to wash away. It sticks to an individual's self-esteem and people who are stigmatized often end up believing that they do not have the same rights and privileges as other people. Stigma is so powerful that it can keep entire communities in a state of fear.

Labels and stigma lead to violence. People who are stigmatized in some way are often excluded from mainstream society and become the targets of violence and discrimination by those in power.

Stigmatization often occurs around the hierarchies in a society or community – therefore a single individual can experience multiple layers of labelling and stigmatization. So the divisions of gender, race, class, caste, sexual orientation, religion, etc. are all capable of earning their own negative labels.

Sexuality is also the site of much of the stigma we see around us, and this is based on our notions of what 'healthy', 'right' or 'safe' sexuality is. Therefore sex workers, lesbian women, single women, gay men, a woman who chooses not to marry or have a child, etc. end up being called names or stigmatized merely because they are different.



Two international organizations<sup>3</sup> have made some headway in defining stigma in the context of HIV. This definition also holds in other contexts. Stigma includes:

- Physical forms (isolation, violence)
- Social forms (isolation, voyeurism, loss of identity/role)
- Verbal forms (gossip, taunting, expressions of blame/shame, labeling, derogation)
- Institutional forms (loss of livelihood/future, loss of housing, differential treatment in schools, health care settings, public spaces, media campaigns)

Discrimination, which goes hand in hand with stigma, is 'enacted stigma'.

### Keep in Mind

Ensure that the stigma and labels end with the exercise. Tell the group that name calling or using labels on a person outside the session is not acceptable. Some people might be sensitive and deeply affected by labels, especially if they are already in a situation of stigma or are being discriminated against. If you feel that there might be harassment outside the session you can ask all participants to tear up their labels and throw them away as a symbolic gesture towards doing away with labels and stigma.



## 2.3 Agony Auntyji

90 MINS

### Objective

To talk about complex issues and dilemmas related to HIV, sexuality and sex work in a non-threatening way.

### Materials

Agony aunt letters given on next page

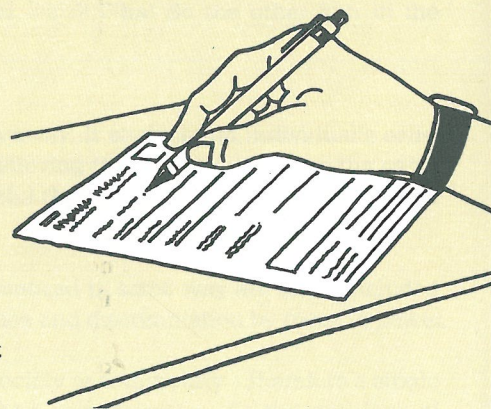
### Process

- 1 Divide the participants into four small groups.
- 2 Give each group one of the four letters given on the next page.
- 3 Ask each group to collectively play Agony Aunt; each group should write a letter of advice back to the letter writer, answering the questions raised in the letter. To do this, each group will have to discuss the issues raised in the letter and formulate a reply. Allow about 30 minutes for this, and tell participants that the advice given should be convincing enough to meet the letter writer's need.
- 4 Once each group is ready with its reply, one person from each group should read out the letter and the Agony Aunt group's reply to all participants.
- 5 After each letter-answer is read out, ask all participants to comment on and discuss each answer and raise related or relevant issues.
- 6 The exercise concludes when all four letters and answers have been read out and discussed.

### Wrapping Up

Raise the following questions during the discussion following the letters/answers:

- How was our advice on disclosure of HIV status affected by gender? Are there any other ways in which gender affects one's experience of HIV?
- How is our perception of love, sex and romance affected by gender and sexuality? Do we consider transgender or homosexual relationships as acceptable as heterosexual ones? What are some of our biases around gender transgressions?
- What if the man in letter 3 had been a woman? How would that have changed the advice we might have given?
- Why was the woman in letter 4 so angry about her brother-in-law falling in love with a sex worker? How would we feel in her position? What is that determines our reaction in such situations?





## Letter

1

Auntyji,

I am a 23-year-old boy and have been engaged to be married for a year now. It is a love marriage and I love my Archana very much, but I have just found out that I have HIV. I am scared she will not marry me if I tell her, but I feel guilty if I don't tell her about this. *Kya karoon?* What should I do? Should I tell her I am HIV-positive?

Help!

Rehman

2

Auntyji,

I am a 33-year-old married woman. I am suffering from anaemia for many years. The other day I went for a blood test and when I got the result I almost fainted from shock – HIV test: **POSITIVE** it said in big bold letters. I have heard this disease spreads through sex, so how can I have it? I have never had relations with anyone except my husband. *Cheee*. I don't even like it. Why would I do this thing with anyone else? But for now, I don't know what to do. Should I tell him about my illness? Otherwise he may also get it, no? But what if he thinks I got it from someone else?

Help, auntyji, you are the only one I can talk to about this.

Chrissie

3

Auntyji,

I am a 28-year-old man and the other day I was at a party. There was fantastic music playing, *Dboom machale dboom machale*, and I started dancing with this gorgeous babe. We danced all night and when the music became slow, I took her in my arms and the world stopped still for a moment. We went to her house that night, and were playing with each other with our clothes on, when suddenly through her pants, I felt something hard. She tried to push my hand away but I went back there. It was hard, like my penis. The minute I realized this I started feeling nauseous. I left immediately. I am disgusted and feel like killing myself but I can't stop thinking about her. What should I do?

Help!

Daulat

4

Auntyji,

My brother-in-law is a shady guy who has always been going to brothels and hanging out with seedy characters, but now he says he's fallen in love with a prostitute and wants to marry her. Bloody sicko! The pervert! This is the limit! How can I stop this?

Write soon,

Annie



## 2.4 Zinda Laash: Bollywood's Norms For Dhandewalis

30 MINS

### Objective

To show how fictional representations rather than real experiences shape our perceptions of women in prostitution and sex work.

### Materials

DVD of *Zinda Laash – Bollywood Norms for Dhandewalis* (in back flap)

DVD player

TV (for groups upto 20 people) or projector/screen/speaker (for larger groups)

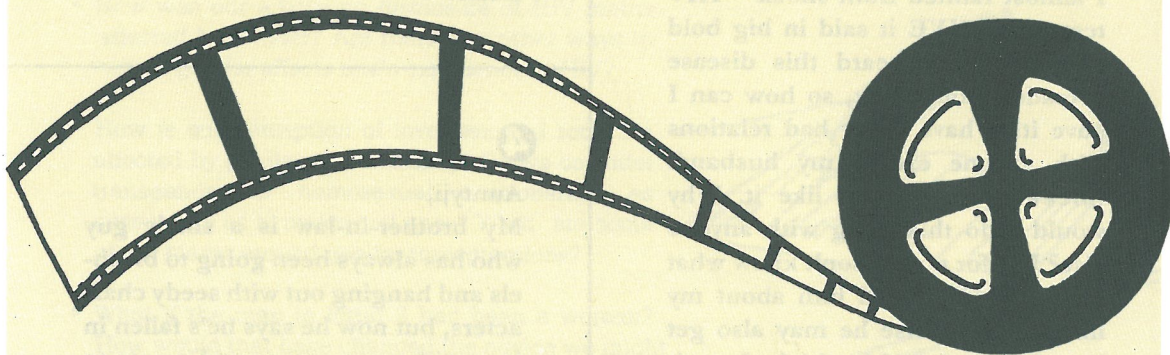
### Process

Screen this 15-minute DVD and conduct a discussion around the issue of media representation for the remaining 15 minutes.

### Discussion

Lead a discussion around the following questions:

- What kinds of stereotypes did the film help you identify?
- What are the different portrayals of women in prostitution in the film? Eg victim versus non-victim, Western versus traditional, bad woman or victim.
- How do you think we can change the stereotypes we have of women in prostitution?
- How do these stereotypes lead to stigma and violence?
- How does a woman in prostitution break the rules of gender?
- What realities of sex work are absent in the film clips used in the film?



### Wrapping Up

Our understanding of sex work and prostitution is often based on media representations, which are themselves a reflection of social attitudes. Bollywood or Hindi cinema rarely shows the real lives of women in prostitution as regular everyday women, but puts them into categories created by popular imagination – victimized, helpless, aggressive etc. Thus their lives and personalities look uni-dimensional, contributing to the further stigmatization and marginalization of those in prostitution.



## 2.5 24 Hours: A Day In The Life Of...

30 MINS

### Objective

To enable participants to understand that women in prostitution are women.

### Materials

Time sheet given on page 31

### Process

- 1 Give each participant a copy of the 24-hour timesheet on the next page.
- 2 Ask each participant to fill in what a woman in prostitution would be doing in each of the hourly time slots.
- 3 Ask participants to read out their answers or to pin up the timesheets.
- 4 After the participants have shared their timesheets ask them to check if the following activities have been included
  - Household chores – cooking, cleaning, shopping
  - Childcare
  - Personal time
  - Time for entertainment, movies, going out
  - Time spent with maalak / lover
  - Community time – interactions with other people in the neighbourhood

### Variation

As a variation participants can be given 2 timesheets each, and asked to fill in one for a sex worker, the other for a non-sex worker, both belonging to the same class/caste etc. The non-sex worker could be a construction worker or domestic help, or a housewife etc.

### Discussion

Lead a discussion around the following questions:

- What do the timesheets reflect? What do they show about how little we know about the lives of women in sex work? Ignorance? Class bias? Moral bias? Stereotypes? Identify each of these on the groups' sheets.
- Do the timesheets reflect that women in prostitution are women, who do the same daily household chores as any other woman? Lining up to fill buckets of water? Taking their child to school? Ensuring the family is fed? Putting a child to sleep?
- If a timesheet has also been made for a woman who is not in prostitution, identify what elements these two lives have in common. What is different?
- How have your views about women in sex work changed through this exercise?



## Wrapping Up

Emphasize that the sexual identity of a woman in sex work tends to overwhelm our view of her. We unconsciously tend to totalize a sex worker as a woman who only has paid sex with men, day in and day out. We often do not see a woman in prostitution as a woman who runs a household like any other, with very much the same chores and responsibilities as any other woman. Our entire perception of her life tends to focus on her sexuality.

What about the other roles a woman in sex work plays – mother, neighbour, friend, community leader, mentor, lover etc.? Are we aware of how central religion is in the lives of women in sex work? Do we know what their relationship with their children is like? When we do recognize the entirety of their lives we can perhaps be more open in our understanding of the needs and issues of women in sex work.

We also do not recognize the freedoms that women in sex work and prostitution have. For example, their time is literally their own, from being able to wake up late, to spending time with a lover, or neighbours, to time for entertainment and going out. Many of the restrictions of mobility and time that a non-sex worker might face do not apply to women in sex work.



# TIMESHEET

9 am	
10 am	
11 am	
12 noon	
1 pm	
2 pm	
3 pm	
4 pm	
5 pm	
6 pm	
7 pm	
8 pm	
9 pm	
10 pm	
11 pm	
12 midnight	
1 am	
2 am	
3 am	
4 am	
5 am	
6 am	
7 am	
8 am	



## 2.6 Take A Stand

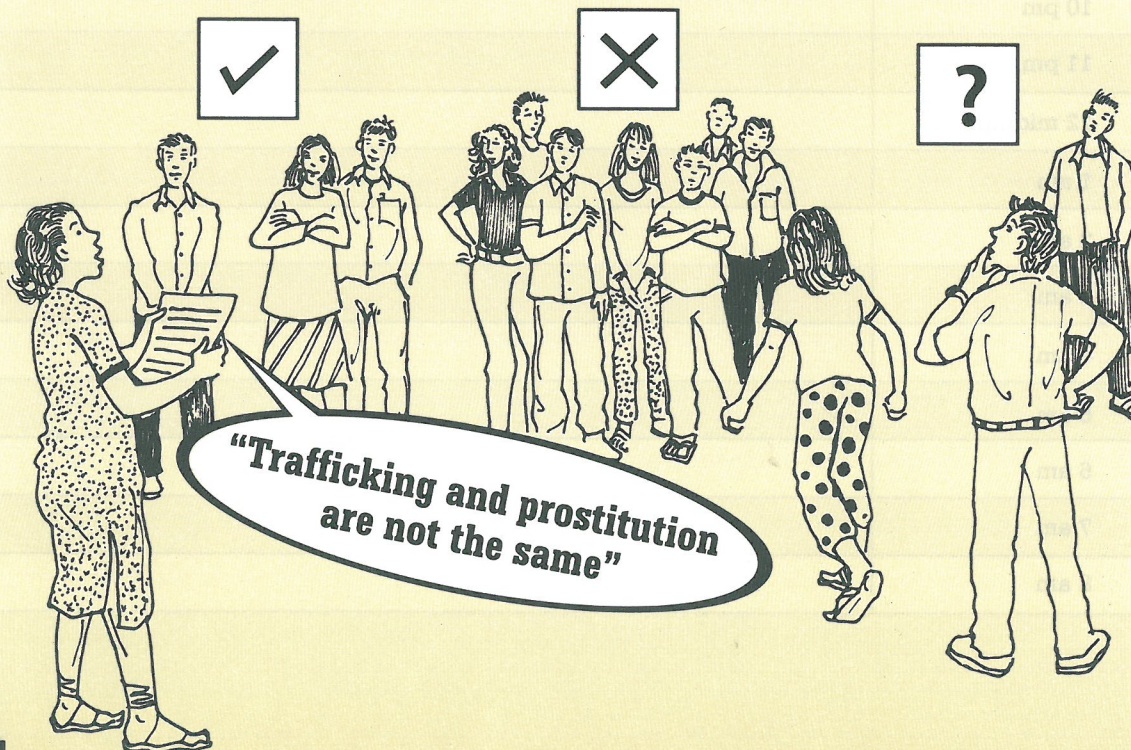
75 MINS

### Objective

To enhance participants' understanding of complex issues related to prostitution.

### Process

- 1 Write any one of the following sentences on a board or chart paper for everyone to see. Choose the sentence based on the group's level:
  - "Legalization is the best way to deal with prostitution"
  - "Trafficking and prostitution are not the same"
  - "Women and children are victims of the sex trade"
  - "No woman would choose to be a prostitute"
  - "Different body parts can be used to earn money. If you can sell your brain/intellect why not your vagina/sex?"
  - "Sex work is inherently violent"
- 2 Tell each participant to individually decide if he or she agrees, disagrees or is not sure about his/her response to that statement.
- 3 Get all those who agree to stand together – they are the Agree team; all those who disagree to stand together – they are the Disagree team; and those who are unsure/undecided to come together – they are the Unsure team.
- 4 Each team must now present 3 strong arguments and attempt to convert people from other team to their point of view and win them over to their own team. Any participant can freely cross from his or her starting group to another group if won over by their arguments.





5 Ensure that each team gets enough of a chance to argue its case, while keeping the debate rolling in between teams. Facilitate it in a dynamic way so that each team presents an argument, then the next team, then the next team and so on – instead of facilitating it in a static way, with each team giving long speeches. It's a conversation, so the talk must keep bouncing from one group to another.

6 The conversation between the three groups forms the basis for a good discussion on sex work and prostitution.

7 End the session when there are enough arguments from each of the groups.

### Note

This session can get very heated and participants tend to defend their positions hotly. Ensure that all three groups get enough space and time to articulate their points.

Some possible responses to the statement:

*"Different body parts can be used to earn money.*

*If you can sell your brain/intellect why not your vagina/sex?"*

Agree	Disagree	Undecided
<p>The vagina is a body part just like the brain. They have different functions but both can be used to exchange their services for money.</p> <p>There is no morality that governs my relationship with either the brain or the vagina.</p> <p>The vagina does not necessarily represent my whole self that is being given over to another person, and similarly with my brain.</p>	<p>The brain and the vagina are separate and different organs with different functions and cannot be compared.</p> <p>There are different societal connotations to selling the brain and selling the vagina. The same rules, laws, policies, do not apply for the protection of the rights of people who sell either the brain or the vagina.</p>	<p>One does not completely give over one's brain/intellect, merely rent it out for a fee. Similarly for the vagina. So it not really a 'sale'.</p> <p>There is a morality which places greater value on the brain (mental activity, the intellect) than on the 'basal' instincts represented by the vagina (sex and sexuality). So there is a slight difference in how we perceive the exchange for sexual or intellectual services for money.</p>



## 2.7 Feedback

15 MINS

### Objective

To enable participants to clarify doubts, raise questions, and to reflect on the day's learning.

### Process

- 1 Make participants stand in a big wide circle.
- 2 Give one of them a ball and ask him or her to throw this to someone. Whenever someone has the ball he or she has to say one thing about the day – what they did, what they learnt – in a few words.
- 3 Ensure that as many people as possible get the ball.
- 4 This can be followed by a more in-depth discussion as required.

### Wrapping Up

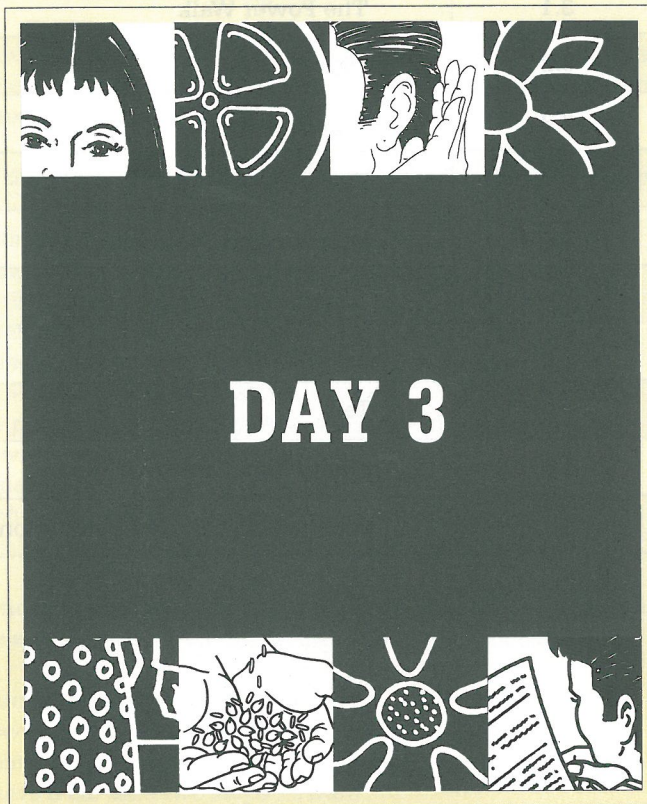
Tell participants what to expect the next day.

### Evening option

If this is a residential training or if an extra hour is available on the evening of day two, the film *Benaqaab*, which documents some of SANGRAM's work, can be shown. The DVD is included in the back flap.









## DAY 3

The third – and last - day focuses on:

- Building the lens of rights into participants' understandings of sex work and prostitution.

Gender, sexuality, and attitudes to sex work and prostitution have already been explored the previous two days. The final day is devoted to looking at rights, policies and laws related to sex work - once again, through interactive exercises, film screenings and debates. Enjoy!

### Session Plan

9-9.30 am	3.1	The Power Walk
9.30-10.30 am	3.2	Dignity Index
10.30-11.30 am	3.3	Rights Graffiti
11.30-12 noon		Tea
12 noon-1 pm	3.4	Policies And Positions
1-2 pm		Lunch
2-3 pm	3.5	Taking The Pledge
3-3.30 pm		Tea
3.30-4.30 pm	3.6	Flaunt Your Creative Side
4.30-5 pm		Facilitator's Choice : Evaluation



## 3.1 The Power Walk<sup>1</sup>

30 MINS

### Objective

To enable participants to explore their own privileges based on caste, class, sexuality, gender, education etc. and to understand how power plays out in society.

### Materials

None

### Process

- 1 Make the participants stand in a straight line about 50 to 100 metres away from a wall holding each others' hands. They must stand facing the wall.
- 2 Explain that you will read out a series of statements – on hearing each statement, each participant should either move one or more steps forward, one or more steps back or remain in the same place. The step to be taken or not taken is evident from the statement.
- 3 While doing so, they should try and hold on to their friends as long as they can.

Possible statements include:

- *People who are graduates take a step forward*
- *People from villages take a step backward*
- *Married women take a step forward*
- *Unmarried, single women over 30 take three steps backward*
- *People from lower castes take two steps backward*
- *People whose parents are educated take two steps forward*
- *People who own houses take a step forward*
- *People who speak English take a step forward*
- *People with physical disability take two steps backward*
- *Women with physical disability take three steps backward*

Use other instructions which are indicators of privilege based on gender, caste, class, religion, sexual orientation etc. depending on the profile of the group such as:

- *People who are in debt take two steps back*
- *People who own a brothel take three steps forward*
- *People who have a house in their own name take three steps forward*
- *People who have a car take two steps forward*
- *People who have a credit card take two steps forward*
- *People who openly identify themselves as gay or lesbian in their workspaces and personal lives take two steps backwards*

Soon the participants will be separated from the people they were standing next to and will be forced to let go of their hands.

- 4 When all the statements have been read, ask participants to run towards the wall the moment you say 'go' and secure a place on the wall. They should try and secure as big a place as they can on the wall.
- 5 People who have been standing closer to the wall will be able to reach it sooner and secure

1. This exercise has been adapted from Local Action, Global Change, a manual published by UNIFEM and the Centre for Women's Global Leadership.



more space on the wall. These are the people who have consistently taken steps forward – or gained from their privileges.

**6** Explain to the participants that the wall represents the opportunities, privileges, facilities and positions we enjoy in society.

### Discussion

Lead a discussion around the following issues:

- Who reached the wall first? Who are the people who were left behind? Why did that happen? What is this a reflection of?
- How did it make participants feel to be singled out on the basis of their personal identities or social locations after spending two days together, on an equal footing, in a workshop?
- What are the other hierarchies that affect us? Who is below and who is above? How does being above/below someone make us feel?

### Wrapping Up

It is important that the following points emerge during the discussion or are made later. Not everyone has equal access to the opportunities and resources that exist in society. In general, those in positions of privilege (due to class, caste, religion, gender, sexuality etc.) have greater access to resources and opportunities.

All of us are constantly negotiating our situations of power and privilege, which are dynamic and relative. A person may be privileged in terms of class but marginalized in terms of sexual orientation. All of us have different identities, which intersect with one another and are in flux. We may have power vis-à-vis one group, but lack power in relation to another group.

Notions of hierarchy based on class, caste, gender, morality etc. put some people in disadvantageous positions. These hierarchies affect policy formulation and resource allocation and create situations in which those lower in the hierarchy face not just a lack of opportunities, but also marginalization, stigmatization and discrimination.

### Keep In Mind

Unless used with sensitivity and caution this exercise could end up inadvertently outing or stigmatizing participants. For instance, statements like: 'People who are HIV-positive take three steps backwards' or, 'People who are lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgendered take three steps backwards', might force participants to be true to the spirit of the exercise and reveal their status even though they may not be ready to. This is specially true of participants who look up, respect, or like the facilitator but may not feel they have the space to refuse. It might be more fitting to say: 'People who are dealing with a terminal illness (in their family) take three steps backwards.' Care, caution and sensitivity needs to be used when framing statements.



## 3.2 Dignity Index

60 MINS

### Objective

To explore the components of dignity and analyze why these are absent in the lives of sex workers.

### Materials

Dignity Index

### Process

- 1 Give each participant a copy of the Dignity Index given on page 40 and ask him or her to fill it out. This should take no more than 10 minutes.
- 2 Once each participant has individually filled in his or her sheet, ask participants to form small groups of 4-5 persons.
- 3 Ask each group to share their answers with each other and analyze why their answers are somewhat similar.
- 4 Then hand out another copy of the Dignity Index to each group - and ask the group to collectively fill it out, answering each question as if the group is a sex worker.
- 5 Now ask each group to analyze why the sex worker's answers may be different from their own answers.
- 6 Step 4 may be skipped if each group's analysis already touches on sex workers.

### Discussion

Lead a discussion around the following themes:

- What does dignity mean to you?
- What are some of the essential components of dignity?
- Who has dignity in our societies? Who doesn't? What are the factors that deprive people of their inherent dignity as human beings?
- Can there be equality, justice, or freedom without dignity?
- How can we move forward to make the right to dignity real for marginalized groups like sex workers?

### Wrapping Up

Human dignity refers to the status of individuals as ends in themselves rather than means to extraneous ends. 'Identity' and 'community' are two essential components of dignity. These correspond roughly to individual freedom and social justice, which are seen as interdependent conditions of dignity<sup>2</sup>.

Dignity is something that many of us take so much for granted in our own lives that we are unable to understand its absence in the lives of marginalized people like sex workers, transgendered people or those who are HIV-positive. Dignity is a basic right of all human beings – the very fact that we are human beings means we have the right to dignity.

2. The Conditions, Criteria, and Dialectics of Human Dignity: A Transnational Perspective Herbert C. Kelman  
*International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 21, No. 3 (Sep., 1977), pp. 529-552



## DIGNITY INDEX

Dignity is universal and non-violable, irrespective of the context. It is a gift that we carry since our birth. It cannot be challenged, and if it is, it cannot be removed. As the Preamble to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights says, "Recognition of the inherent dignity and of equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world."

Please mark all answers that apply; you may mark more than one answer per question.

**1. How do you introduce yourself?**

By your personal identity ☐ By your work ☐ By your family ☐

**2. Have you ever had to hide any of these?**

Your identity ☐ Your work ☐ Your family ☐

**3. Have you ever had to lie about who you are?**

To friends ☐ To your parents ☐ To siblings ☐ To relatives ☐ To neighbours ☐  
To your children ☐

**4. Have you ever experienced public shaming?**

By health officials ☐ By police ☐ While travelling ☐ While walking on the road ☐

**5. Have you ever feared going to a public or social function?**

Always ☐ Sometimes ☐ Never ☐

**6. Have you ever feared going to the market?**

Yes ☐ No ☐

**7. Have you ever felt you are being looked down upon because of these?**

Your identity ☐ Your work ☐ Your family ☐

**8. Do people make jokes about you and point fingers at you?**

Always ☐ Sometimes ☐ Never ☐

**9. Do you ever wish you were never born?**

Always ☐ Sometimes ☐ Never ☐

**10. Have you ever been accused of not having values?**

Always ☐ Sometimes ☐ Never ☐

**11. Have you ever felt you are of no value?**

Always ☐ Sometimes ☐ Never ☐

**12. Do you think of yourself, or do others see you, as a criminal?**

Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know ☐



### 3.3 Rights Graffiti

60 MINS

#### Objective

To collectively understand what is meant by sex workers' rights.

#### Materials

Chart papers

Marker pens

#### Process

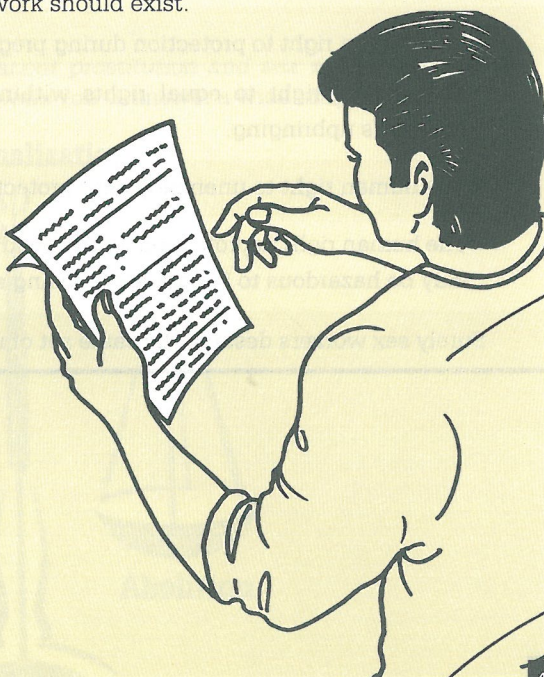
- 1 Ask participants to form small groups of 4-5 persons per group.
- 2 Ask each group to answer all or one of these questions on their chart papers:
  - *What are the rights of sex workers? Are these equal rights or special rights?*
  - *Which rights can sex workers access, and which ones can't they access?*
  - *Why can't they access certain rights?*
  - *What strategies would you use to change this?*
- 3 If there is not enough time, the questions could be divided among the groups, so that each group is answering different questions.
- 4 Ask each group to pin up its charts and let all participants read these.
- 5 Then lead a discussion with all participants on the following question:
  - *Do women in prostitution have a right to sex work?*

#### Wrapping Up

If sex work is seen as a form of work, than surely women in prostitution have a right to sex work? But if sex work or prostitution is understood as 'violence' or as 'exploitation', then participants will have difficulty accepting that the right to sex work should exist.

In a 1998 report, the International Labour Organization recognized sex work as work, and recommended that governments extend labour rights and protections to people who work in it. At the same time, the report unequivocally demanded the eradication of child prostitution as a serious human rights violation and an intolerable form of child labour<sup>3</sup>.

According to The People's Movement for Human Rights Education, The Human Right to Work is the human right of all women, men, youth and children to dignified, creative and productive labour, free from discrimination and exploitation, enabling all persons to live in peace, security, justice and dignity. All workers have human rights to basic labour protections. Engagement in any kind of production should be fruitful and rewarding.





The human right of all persons to dignified and fulfilling work includes the following universal, indivisible, interconnected and interdependent human rights:

- The human right to work and receive wages that contribute to an adequate standard of living.
- The human right to a standard of living adequate for wellbeing, health and life.
- The human right to equal access to productive resources, including land, credit, and technology.
- The human right to freedom of association.
- The human right to protection from forced labour.
- The human right to adequate, safe working conditions.
- The human right to a clean and safe environment.
- The human right to reasonable limitation of working hours, rest and leisure.
- The human right to education and access to information, including vocational training.
- The human right to freedom from discrimination based on race, sex, or any other status, in all aspects of work, including in hiring and promotion.
- The human right to equal pay for equal work.
- The human right to freedom from sexual harassment in the workplace.
- The human right to proper consideration of women's reproductive rights and sexuality, including job security during and after pregnancy, flexible working conditions, and access to child care.
- The human right to protection during pregnancy from work proven to be harmful.
- The human right to equal rights within the family, including shared responsibilities for children's upbringing.
- The human right to unemployment protection and social security.
- The human right to protection for the child from economic exploitation and from any work that may be hazardous to his or her wellbeing and development.<sup>4</sup>

Surely sex workers deserve the same set of rights as other workers?



## 3.4 Policies and Positions<sup>5</sup>

60 MINS

### Objective

To understand the three most common policy responses to prostitution – Abolition, Decriminalization, Legalization.

### Materials

Copies of Policies And Positions given on pages 44,45

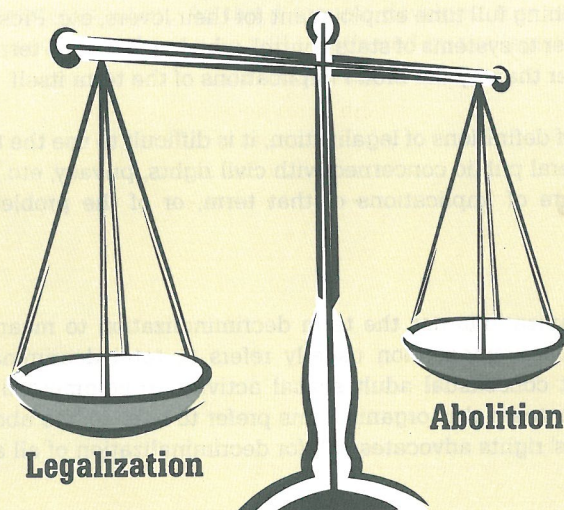
### Process

- 1 Ask the participants to go into one of three self-formed groups - Legalization, Decriminalization, Abolition. Each participant should choose the position he or she most agrees with.
- 2 Give each group the handout. Ask the Legalization group to go through the legalization bit and explain it to the other two groups; the Decriminalization group should go through the decriminalization bit and explain it to the other two groups; the Abolition group should go through the Abolition bit and explain it to the other two groups.
- 3 After hearing from all the groups, participants may change their group if they feel they agree with another position.
- 4 Before winding up, each group should answer the following questions:
  - What are some of the unanswered questions or discomforts around your group's position (legalization, decriminalization, abolition)?
  - How does your group's position (legalization, decriminalization, abolition) advance the rights of sex workers?
  - How does your group's position (legalization, decriminalization, abolition) hurt the rights of sex workers?
  - Is your group's position a rights-based position?

### Wrapping Up

Please refer to *Everything you wanted to know about prostitution and sex work – but were afraid to ask: FAQs* during this exercise. This empowers you to answer a wide range of questions on this issue.

### Decriminalization



5. This entire handout has been taken from the Prostitutes' Education Network at <http://www.bayswan.org/defining.html>



## POLICIES AND POSITIONS

Although there have always been reformist efforts and movements concerning prostitution, the global prostitutes' rights movement, as we know it today, began in the late 60s and early 70s. The difference between the contemporary prostitutes' movement and previous efforts is that the current movement has been defined in a large part by prostitutes themselves. Prostitute activists have defined prostitutes' legal status in specific ways since the beginning of the prostitutes' rights movement. The current movement includes a recognition of the rights of prostitutes to autonomy and self-regulation.

### *Common definitions of legalization*

There is no official definition of legalized or decriminalized prostitution. Those who are not familiar with the contemporary discussion about prostitution law reform usually use the term "legalization" to mean any alternative to absolute criminalization, ranging from licensing of brothels to the lack of any laws about prostitution. Most references to law reform in the media and in other contemporary contexts use the term "legalization" to refer to any system that allows some prostitution. These common definitions of legalization are extremely broad. Conflicting interpretations of this term often cause confusion in a discussion of reform. In fact, in one commonly accepted definition of legalization, legal can simply mean that prostitution is not against the law.

### *Legalization*

Many (or most) societies that allow prostitution do so by giving the state control over the lives and businesses of those who work as prostitutes. Legalization often includes special taxes for prostitutes, restricting prostitutes to working in brothels or in certain zones, licenses, registration of prostitutes and government records of individual prostitutes, and health checks which often means punitive quarantine.

From a sociological perspective, the term legalization usually refers to a system of criminal regulation and government control of prostitutes, wherein certain prostitutes are given licenses which permit them to work in specific and usually limited ways. Although legalization can also imply a decriminalized, autonomous system of prostitution, in reality, in most "legalized" systems the police are relegated the job of prostitution control through criminal codes. Laws regulate prostitutes' businesses and lives, prescribing health checks and registration of health status (enforced by police and, often corrupt, medical agencies), telling prostitutes where they may or may not reside, prescribing full time employment for their lovers, etc. Prostitute activists use the term legalization to refer to systems of state control, which defines the term by the realities of the current situation, rather than by the broad implications of the term itself.

Because of the range of definitions of legalization, it is difficult to use the term in a discussion of reform. When the general public concerned with civil rights, privacy, etc., call for "legalization," they may not be aware of implications of that term, or of the problems inherent in many legalized systems.

### *Decriminalization*

Prostitutes' rights organizations use the term decriminalization to mean the removal of laws against prostitution. Decriminalization usually refers to total decriminalization, that is, the repeal of laws against consensual adult sexual activity, in commercial and non-commercial contexts. (Some prostitutes' rights organizations prefer to refer to 'the abolition of laws against prostitutes'). Prostitutes' rights advocates call for decriminalization of all aspects of prostitution



resulting from individual decision. Asserting the right to work as prostitutes, many claim their right to freedom of choice of management. They claim that laws against pimping (living off the earnings) are often used against domestic partners and children, and these laws serve to prevent prostitutes from organizing their businesses and working together for mutual protection. They call for the repeal of current laws that interfere with their rights of freedom of travel and freedom of association. Civil rights and human rights advocates from a variety of perspectives call for enforcement of laws against fraud, abuse, violence and coercion to protect prostitutes from abusive, exploitative partners and management.

### *Regulation*

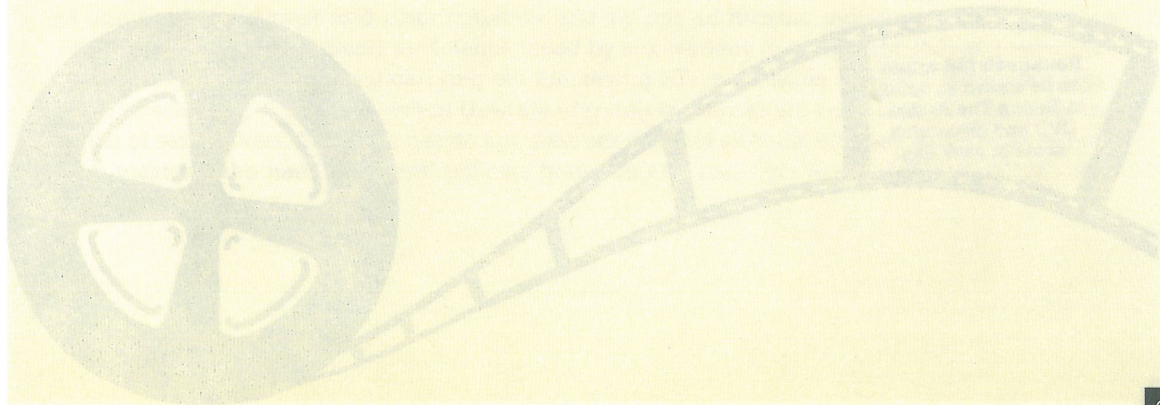
The "regulation of prostitution" usually refers to the criminal regulation of prostitution, but prostitutes' rights activists also refer to regulation in terms of both civil regulation and self-regulation. They call for prostitute regulation of prostitute businesses, and civil codes regulating prostitute businesses with regard to the conditions and rights of workers. Those who call for autonomy support solo and collective work arrangements, and prostitutes' control of their own lives and businesses. The discussion of regulation is primitive and it is difficult to invoke concepts of self-regulation in a context that presumes police control over prostitutes.

### *Abolition*

The attitudes of prostitutes' rights activists contrast with attitudes about prostitution by anti-prostitution or abolitionist organizations. Abolitionist movements define prostitution and other categories of sex work as inherently exploitative. Abolitionists define prostitution as violence, per se, emphasizing involvement in prostitution as a response to childhood sexual abuse. As a reaction to the exploitation fostered by imperialism and military occupations, international anti-prostitution activists oppose prostitution per se, as well as sex tourism and trafficking (international "pimping"). Historically, abolitionists have dedicated themselves to rescuing women from prostitution, and training women to find alternative careers or security in marriage. Abolitionists want to end the institution of prostitution, envisioning a world where no one sells sexual services for any reason. These organizations do not self-define as prostitutes' rights organizations. They work to reduce or abolish the sex business, advocating against pornography, strip clubs, etc.

### *Summary*

Each of the linguistic approaches can be problematic: The term legalization is overbroad. The term decriminalization has not worked its way into a contemporary discussion and can elicit confusion and misinterpretation. As the discourse develops, it is essential that terms be developed from the perspective of those who will be affected by the legislation.





## 3.5 Taking The Pledge

60 MINS

### Objective

To analyze how morality-based policies around prostitution adversely affect the rights of sex workers and how rights advocates can resist and campaign against such policies.

### Materials

DVD of Taking The Pledge (in back flap)

DVD player

TV (for groups upto 20 people) or projector/screen/speaker (for larger groups)

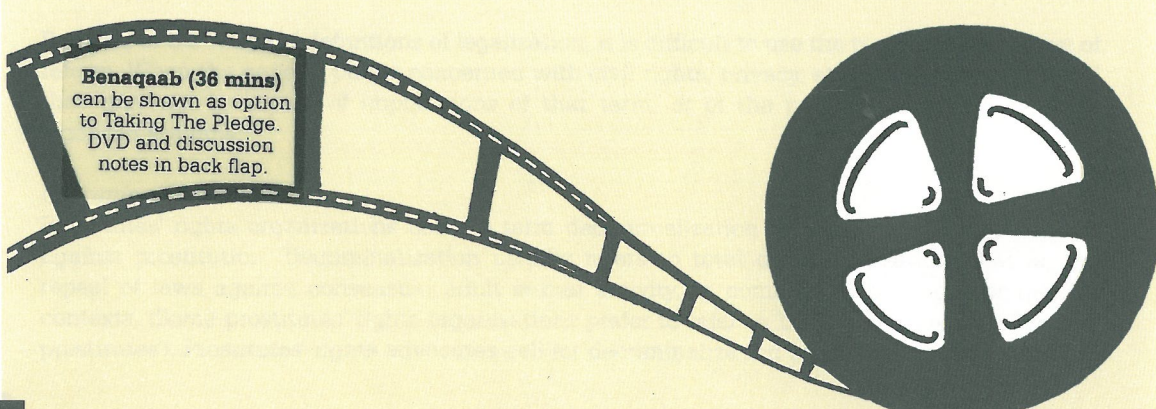
### Process

Screen this 13-minute DVD and lead a discussion.

### Discussion

Explain that the 'anti-prostitution pledge' as it is commonly known, requires any groups or organizations receiving funds from USAID to "have a policy explicitly opposing prostitution". Then lead a discussion around the following questions:

- Does the anti-prostitution pledge spring from a concern to prevent HIV, a determination to stop trafficking, or from a moral/ideological response to prostitution?
- Is there any relationship between HIV prevention and 'having a policy that explicitly opposes prostitution'? If so, what is that relationship premised on?
- How does this policy affect sex workers and organizations working for the rights of sex workers in India, Bangladesh, Thailand, Mali, Cambodia and Brazil?
- Could such policies also have had other indirect impacts that are not mentioned in the DVD? Eg influencing and shaping other donor, policy and media responses.
- Are you in agreement with this policy? If so, why? If not, why not?
- What should policies related to either HIV prevention or sex work or the intersections between HIV prevention and sex work be based on?
- If you were a sex worker rights advocate, how might you campaign against this policy which hurts the rights of sex workers?



**Benaqaab (36 mins)**  
can be shown as option  
to Taking The Pledge.  
DVD and discussion  
notes in back flap.



## Wrapping Up

Explain that the anti-prostitution pledge was strongly opposed by sex worker rights groups and their allies all over the world. Brazil refused to accept such conditional funding, relying instead on national public health funding – while groups in many other countries resisted in different ways. Direct action, street protests, media advocacy, documentation, and networks were used to campaign against the pledge.

In the United States, the Open Society Institute (OSI), along with its affiliates, filed a lawsuit challenging the policy for being unconstitutional – since it required US organizations to adopt the government's point of view in order to receive funding. OSI argued that the USAID pledge requirement undermines efforts to provide life-saving services and information to sex workers, who are at significant risk of infection and can also transmit HIV to others. Requiring health workers to condemn the people they are trying to help would only intensify the stigma and fears among this marginalized population and make it harder to engage them effectively<sup>6</sup>.

It is also unclear how having a policy opposing prostitution would prevent HIV. In bringing an 'anti-prostitution pledge' into the domain of HIV prevention, the policy seems to blame and hold sex workers responsible for the spread of HIV. Not only have sex workers been in the frontlines of HIV prevention (through peer education and condom use among clients), it is accepted that HIV is present in all population groups. HIV is prevalent among women and men who are single or married, men and women who have same-sex relationships, young people, transgenders etc. The OSI lawsuit argued that the policy "undercuts evidence-based practical and urgently needed public health policies in the name of ideological purity." It won its lawsuit against USAID.

Policies related to sex work, prostitution, and HIV need to first and foremost, recognize that people in sex work (women, men or transgender) and those who are HIV-positive are human beings and citizens, who are entitled to the same rights and dignities as any other individual. They are not 'victims' who 'need' 'charity' – they are 'citizens' who are 'entitled to' 'policies'.

Building on this, policies need to 'respect, protect, and fulfil' the human rights of sex workers and HIV-positive individuals, instead of being framed from untenable moral or ideological positions that take away their rights. Policies that ensure that sex workers can enjoy the rights to vote, to health care, to education, to housing, to treatment with dignity, to freedom from violence, to bodily integrity, to protection from harassment, to safety from HIV and STDs (which are occupational hazards) are policies that 'respect, protect and fulfil' the rights of sex workers.

Policies that obstruct sex workers from voting (by not issuing them voter identity cards); that impede their access to health care, housing or education for their children (through barriers of stigma, ill-treatment and discrimination and by not addressing violations based on these barriers); that do not respond to violence faced by sex workers (from clients, police, pimps etc); that try to prevent them from carrying out life-saving HIV prevention work (by falsely accusing them of soliciting – a crime – when they are carrying condoms) are policies that take away the rights of sex workers. Such policies do not treat sex workers as equal citizens, but as 'social evils or outcasts' who need 'different' policies from you and me. This is not just bad policy – it is discrimination.



## 3.6 Flaunt Your Creative Side

60 MINS

### Objective

To empower participants to plan advocacy campaigns around sex workers' rights.

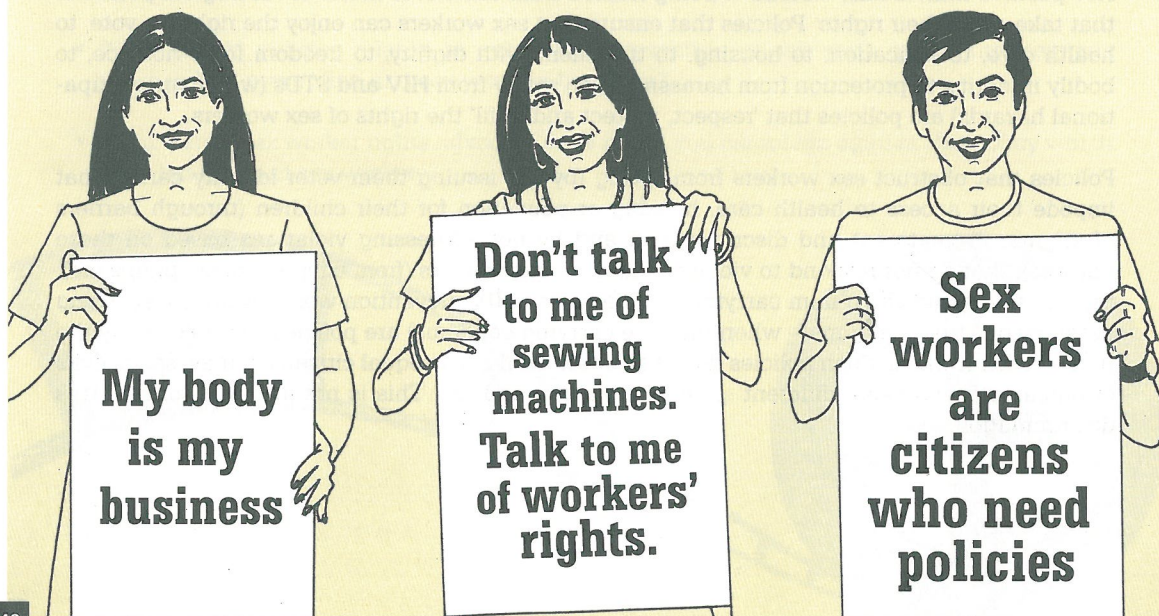
### Materials

Markers  
Magazines  
Gum

### Process

- 1 Write these three statements on a flip chart:
  - *My body is my business*
  - *Don't talk to me of sewing machines. Talk to me of workers' rights.*
  - *Sex workers are citizens who need policies, not victims who need charity.*
- 2 Ask participants to form three groups based on these three statements.
- 3 Each group should present a campaign to take its statement forward to the larger gathering.
- 4 Campaigns may be presented in any creative form, except as speeches. They can be presented through role plays, theatre, dance, song, verse, painting, collage etc.
- 5 The training ends with this participative and celebratory exercise, so ensure that the mood is appropriate.
- 6 And dear facilitator, the time is nigh for you to flaunt your creative side – do end with a closing feedback and evaluation session that reflects the participative, learning together style of *The Struggle To Be Human*.

We hope this has been educational and enjoyable for you. THANK YOU!





| DVDs | FAQs |

**Websites**

Asia Pacific Network of Sex Workers  
<http://apnsw.org/apnsw.htm>

International Committee on the  
Rights of Sex Workers in Europe (ICRSE)  
[www.sexworkereurope.org](http://www.sexworkereurope.org)

Network of Sex Work Projects  
[www.nwsp.org](http://www.nwsp.org)

The Centre for Feminist Legal Research  
[www.cflr.org](http://www.cflr.org)

The Prostitutes' Education Network  
[www.bayswan.org](http://www.bayswan.org)

**Films**

All about my Mother (Feature)  
Dir: Pedro Almodovar  
Available from [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)

In the Flesh (Documentary)  
Dir: Bishakha Datta  
Available from [pointofview@vsnl.com](mailto:pointofview@vsnl.com)

Mandi (Feature)  
Dir: Shyam Benegal  
Available at DVD rental stores and at  
[www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)

Tales of the Night Fairies (Documentary)  
Dir: Shohini Ghosh  
Available from [shohini@vsnl.com](mailto:shohini@vsnl.com)