

An Exploratory Study on the Barriers and Conditions for Reintegration of Commercial Sex Workers of Guwahati, Assam, India

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ABSTRACT: *Very little is studied about the Commercial Sex Workers (CSWs) of Guwahati, India on the issues of exit and reintegration. This study objective was to identify the barriers and conditions to exiting and reintegration from the sex workers' perspective. The methodology involved a combination of experiential learning tools including life stories, immersion, FGDs and in-depth-interviews.*

The findings show sex work in Guwahati is highly mobile, largely hidden with no red light area and brothels. The women mostly entered sex-work because of financial hardships and low education and skills. Many desire to exit if provided alternatives to sex work income. The barriers and conditions to exiting and reintegration can be segregated under economic, social and institutional factors. These barriers include higher income from sex work, no employable skills, no societal support, children's education expenses. The enabling conditions include stable household income from at least one partner, alternate livelihood opportunity and skills training, safer working conditions in informal industries, legal aid and gender equality.

Guwahati CSWs share many similarities with their peers elsewhere, however there are barriers and conditions unique to CSWs of Guwahati, Assam which entails a contextualized approach that is both preventative and rehabilitative in any reintegration intervention.

KEYWORDS –alternate livelihood, CSW, reintegration, sex work

I. INTRODUCTION

Assam is a state in the Northeastern region of India bordered by neighbouring countries of Bhutan, Myanmar, Bangladesh and Nepal. The word 'Assam', which means "peerless" in the now extinct Ahom language, became a constituent state of India in 1950 after India got its independence in the year 1947. As of June 2016, the state of Assam has 33 administrative districts [1] within its territory. It covers an area of 78438 km² and has a population of 31,169,272 (31.20 million) as per the last census report [2]. Due to its special location Assam provides the only direct physical link with road and rail links between mainland India and the northeastern states. Assam is often referred to as the gateway to the northeast of India. As a result, Guwahati, the capital city of Assam is an important center for trade and commerce in this region and remains one of the major cities of India. Due to its strategic geographical location and status as an important northeastern city, the state of Assam particularly the capital of Guwahati receives a lot of migration from within the state as well as from the bordering countries such as Nepal, Bangladesh and Myanmar. Assam's economy is mainly agro based. Agriculture makes the highest contribution to the domestic sectors, accounting for more than a third of Assam's income and employing 69% of the population [3]. Assam is also world famous for its tea and silk, which are important foreign exchange earners for India. More than half of India's tea is produced by Assam [4]. With regards to silk production, Assam is famous for its golden silk (Muga) and produces 95% of the world silk [5]. The other important products that contribute to Assam's economy are crude oil and natural gas, rice, jute, sugarcane, potato, mustard, turmeric, cane and bamboo, handicrafts, etc. Fishing is another source of income for the people of Assam, but fishing is still in its traditional form and production is not self-sufficient [6]. Tourism

also forms a part of Assam's economy, Kaziranga National Park and Manas National Park, which are home to the one horned rhinoceros and world heritage sites, are part of the state. Even though Assam is rich in its natural resources, economic poverty is quite high in the state with about 32% of the state population falling below the poverty line (BPL) [7]. The city of Guwahati wherein the capital of Assam, Dispur is situated is the largest and fastest growing city of Assam, with an estimated population of 957,352 [2]. As a result of its strategic location Guwahati is the connecting gateway with road, air and rail links between the northeastern region and the rest of mainland India. Sharing porous borders with Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh and Myanmar, Assam has a high amount of internal and external economic migration with its share of negative consequences. Due to the porous borders, it provides an easy destination for the people from neighbouring countries to come in search for work even though most of them do not possess proper documentation to stay in India. Within these immigrants coming into Assam, are females who are either falsely promised jobs by scammers in India or are trafficked illegally mainly for the purpose of selling them into prostitution in India and abroad. In addition to illegal trade, reasons like economic hardship, unemployment, excess labour force etc. together with social, political, and environmental factors in the neighbouring countries contributing to the movement of people into Assam [8]. According to the National Crime Records Bureau in 2015, Assam had emerged as the trafficking hub of the country. With 1,494 cases in 2015, Assam accounts for 22% of the total reported cases of human trafficking across India [9]. The state also recorded the most child trafficking cases, which accounts for 38% of the national figures [9]. For the city of Guwahati, since it is the hub of many trading activities and an entry point for many commercial traders, prostitution in the city has been on the rise. The movement of truckers through the region also makes it a popular hub for sex workers to come to Guwahati in search of work and money. The increase in prostitution in this region is mainly considered to be an expression of a complex socio-economic fermentation that the region is reeling under (NMAP, 2016). Assam is a low HIV prevalence state as compared to the other six high HIV prevalence north east states in India. However the adult HIV prevalence in the state has been steadily increasing from 0.04 % in 2007 to 0.06% in 2015, whereas the rates in the other states are on a declining trend [10]. According to a report by Assam State AIDS Control Society, there are several causes leading to this increase in HIV prevalence. Firstly, Assam is the gateway to the northeastern states and surrounded by three high prevalence states of Manipur, Mizoram and Nagaland. Secondly, a large number of female migrants from neighbouring states and countries, many of them illegal migrants are coming in search of work and getting involved in risky behaviour favourable for HIV transmission. The report also states that HIV/AIDS epidemic in the state is concentrated among the high risk group populations of female sex workers (FSWs), men having sex with men (MSM) and injecting drug users (IDUs) [11], which makes it extremely important that the disease needs to be stopped from spreading more and that the communities involved be made aware of the health risks involved.

Purpose of the study

A study conducted by the Ministry of Women and Child Development, Govt. of India [12], estimated the numbers of commercial sex workers (CSWs) in the state of Assam at around 52,625. In Guwahati city alone, the number of CSWs currently reached by the HIV targeted intervention program is about 800, according to the Assam State AIDS Control Society (ASACS), the state nodal agency for HIV prevention. The actual number may be higher since many hide their identity by not openly disclosing about their profession because of the taboo and stigma associated with sex work profession. Since sex work as a profession involves many kinds of risks, including health risks, and the women involved in this profession are looked down upon by the society and highly stigmatised and excluded from the mainstream society, the study wanted to look into the various barriers that compels CSWs to be in the profession and the enabling conditions that would help their reintegration with the mainstream society.

Significance of the study

At the moment, there is a knowledge gap about the CSWs of Guwahati owing to the sex work profession being considered an anti-social activity which cannot be discussed openly, and sex and sexuality a taboo topic in Indian society. Till date any interest in the sex workers of Guwahati has been only in relation to HIV/AIDS

prevention and intervention against human trafficking. There is an absence of studies done on the CSWs in Guwahati particularly on the issues of exiting, reintegration and alternate livelihoods. The literatures currently available are national estimates of HIV prevalence amongst this population and their relatively higher risk and vulnerability to HIV and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) as captured by the national HIV estimates.

Scope of the study

The study looked at the lives of CSWs of Guwahati to gain an insight into their lives with a focus on their initiation to sex work, their reasons for staying in the profession and their opinions about exiting from the profession. The study also tried to explore alternate livelihood options that could be made available for this group of socially excluded women if they so wished to exit from the profession. The sex work profession involves a lot of risks including health, violence, ostracization. Therefore the study was also important to highlight and document these issues to sensitize the larger public towards the plight of these marginalized population.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Prostitution and Commercial Sex Work

Weitzer [13] defines a sex worker as a person who provides sex, sexual stimulation or erotic services in exchange for cash or goods. Sex work is a term used to describe a wide range of activities relating to the exchange of money (or its equivalent) for a provision of a sexual service [14]. The term “sex work” has been adopted as it is free of complicated, derogatory and sexist connotations which are more commonly associated with the term ‘prostitute’ [15]. In India sex work is consensual sex between the two individuals of legal age above 18 years of age and receiving money in exchange for sexual activities [16]. India has an equal mix of brothel and non-brothel based sex work [17]. Brothel based sex workers are among the groups based in red light areas and elsewhere, and include those who engage in sex work as their profession for economic survival, as well as workers who have been sold or trafficked into prostitution [18]. Non –brothel based sex workers include groups such as home based and mobile sex workers who are hidden to the general public [19]. Women make up the majority of the sex work population [14].

In India sex work is not treated as work, but as a dirty and immoral lifestyle threatening act to taint the “innocent” public [20], although sex work or prostitution has been referred to in abundance in the Indian Vedas and the Puranas as an organised, established and necessary institution. In the post-Vedic era the custom of devadasi (servants of God) system came into practice. Today, the word ‘devadasi’ is a euphemism for referring to a woman engaging in sex work in the name of religious tradition [20]. Sex work or the exchange of sexual services for money, is legal in India [21]. However a number of related activities including soliciting in public place, kerb crawling, owning or managing a brothel, prostitution in hotel, child prostitution, pimping and pandering are illegal in India [21]. This dual approach towards commercial sex work as reflected in the Indian law makes the status of prostitution in India quite complex and ambiguous leaving the sex worker vulnerable to harassment, extortion and violence from both the law enforcing agencies as well as the customers. The risk of contracting Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs) is always present for women involved in commercial sex work where they are in contact with customers from various strata of the society, with various kinds of demands and it makes them highly vulnerable. In a study done on sex workers in India, it was found that the customers of the commercial sex workers would often pay them less if the sex workers insisted them on using of protection [22]. An article in The Guardian [23], wrote about husbands of most sex workers being unaware that their spouses were in the profession while there were also husbands who were involved in contacting customers for their wives. In the literature there has been found mention of sugar-daddies or “adult males who exchange large amounts of money or gifts for sexual favors from much younger women”, especially in the context of African countries, however that is sometimes wrongly assumed as commercial sex work [24]. There are also studies where it has been found that pimps or madams (a term used for female pimps) would be engaging women for sex work and would be collecting part of the earnings. A study [25] found that low-priced sex workers (“street-based”) retain over 90% of their earnings, while higher priced suppliers utilizing more sophisticated

intermediaries often saw up to 50% of their earnings extracted. Frequently sex workers face harassment and violence when trying to protest or break free from their pimps. In a study by [26], on Vancouver women in prostitution, 75% had suffered physical injuries from the violence in prostitution. These included stabbings and beatings, concussions and broken bones (broken jaws, ribs, collarbones, fingers, spinal injuries, and a fractured skull), cuts, and black eyes. Many had their heads slammed against walls and against car dashboards. The customers and pimps regularly subjected the sex workers to extreme violence when they refused to perform a specific sex act [26]. In India in spite of the recognition to prostitution in the Indian religious books, post Vedic Indian society and the Indian legal system, the sex workers in India do not get respect and recognition from the society at large. In line with studies mentioned above many of them become victims of sexual violence, abuse and exploitation at the hands of pimps and madams as well as police and government officials. This study works on the premise that similar to sex workers around the world, sex workers in India also suffer extreme marginalisation at economic, political, social and symbolic levels.

Throughout the literature economic needs and coercion are mentioned as the primary motivating factors for entering into sex work [27]. When interviewed, sex workers across settings express desire for alternative forms of employment, but lacked the skills to find another job [28]. It seems arguable to state that many sex workers entered into sex work because they were victims of extreme poverty or sex trafficking, and it was not their first choice of livelihood. Poverty and limited options are the most-cited reasons for entering sex work, affecting risk in direct and indirect ways. [29]. For many of these women with a background of poverty and low education, sex work is perceived to be an 'easy' way out of their deplorable economic condition. Compared to commercial sex work, few other jobs offer the same advantages for women, including ease of entry, ready market and higher earnings than any other job these women could find [30].

India is a highly stratified society in many ways but caste and religion is no bar when it comes to sex work. In a country where women are rarely in control of their own finances, all classes of women can find themselves forced to turn into sex work. Many of these women have been widowed or divorced and find themselves barred from other forms of employment. Others may be single or married, but work in secret to supplement their family's meager income [23]. According to [22], in her study paper where she interviewed sex workers in India, one of the respondents replied that in recent times girls are coming to the profession on their own choice. According to [31], "the absence of social security and the impact of urbanisation were leading to a situation in the North Eastern states where women had to fend for themselves in this manner. We are recognising the problem now though it existed for a while. Ours was a purely agricultural society and the sudden impact of modernisation, migration to cities has led to the disorientation of the joint family. It is also the emerging problem of single women: How to survive without a partner." [31].

Reintegration and Rehabilitation

Reintegration and rehabilitation have in recent years been a central approach of NGOs and INGOs in places such as Nepal as it has been found essential to the issue of girl trafficking. [32] imply the term reintegration to refer to the process of reunification of the trafficked returnees with family members. Reintegration also incorporates support to the trafficked returnees so as to make them economically viable and socially acceptable. According to [33] 'reintegration' refers to renewed reunion or incorporation with a social unity. In the case of reintegration of victims of sex trafficking, it aims at assuring some minimum social acceptance and protection against discriminatory social treatment ensuring victims would have access and control over resources as other members of the respective society [34]. Social reintegration is also a term that has been used in the area of drug dependency treatment. According to the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction, 'social reintegration' means 'any social intervention with the aim of integrating former or current drug users into the community'. It has three main pillars which are housing, education and employment (vocational training). Further, supportive measures to overcome personal and structural level barriers to obtain employment, to increase personal employability are recognised as key to social reintegration. Social reintegration therefore also includes all those activities that aim to develop human, social, economic and institutional capital including counseling, leisure activities etc. [35].

Despite the economic benefits of sex work, many sex workers desire to exit and reintegrate back into society due to the hardships involved with the profession [36]. These include hardships such as physical and sexual violence, substance abuse, low self-esteem, inequitable work environments, risk of disease, exhausting working hours, poverty, degradation, and marginalization by society. The birth of a child also acts as a catalyst in a sex workers life for her decision to leave sex work [37]. The literature on pathways to exiting describes exit from sex work as a process not an event. But it provides some pointers as to how changes in circumstances can act as a springboard for exiting. While sex workers often 'take breaks' and frequently come back because of financial needs, there can be 'turning points', these can be fortuitous events that alter the balance of play (a new relationship for instance), or 'crisis' situations (such as violence or losing children into care) [38]. But it is also true that not everyone wants to exit the profession or is into sex work profession because of coercion or exploitation, but sometimes on their own choice as well. In a study article published in the Canadian Press, 2017, it was reported that while a third of sex workers who were surveyed entered the industry due to "critical life events" such as abuse or neglect; it was more surprising to find that a quarter found the work appealing. On the issue of alternative livelihood, literature has also shown that strategies or options such as micro-finance can help CSWs to exit and reduce their financial dependency on sex work. In a study in Kenya offered micro-loans after requests came from the sex workers themselves. This study introduced micro-finance and assessed the individual effects of adding micro-enterprise services into an existing HIV intervention program. The findings showed that two-thirds of the study participants had operational business by the end-line survey while nearly half of the participants reported to have stopped sex work. There was also reduction in self-reported average weekly number of sex partners. The study further reported that micro-enterprise may empower CSWs by giving them an alternative livelihood when they wish to exit or reduce reliance on sex work [27]

Research Objective

The objective of the study was to gain insight into the lives of CSWs in Guwahati Assam to be able to identify the barriers and enabling conditions to exit from sex work and their reintegration into the mainstream society and to come up with alternative livelihood intervention strategies based on the findings

Research Questions

1. What is the current profile of CSWs and the sex work industry in Guwahati?
2. What are the barriers to reintegration for the CSWs of Guwahati?
 - (a) What are economic barriers to reintegration of CSWs of Guwahati, Assam?
 - (b) What are social barriers to reintegration of CSWs of Guwahati, Assam?
 - (c) What are institutional barriers to reintegration of CSWs of Guwahati, Assam?
3. What conditions may support reintegration for the CSWs of Guwahati?
 - (a) What are economic conditions that will support the CSWs to exit and re-integrate?
 - (b) What are social conditions that will support the CSWs to exit and re-integrate?
 - (c) What are institutional conditions that will support the CSWs to exit and re-integrate?
4. What is the best approach to understand the process of exit and reintegration of CSWs?

III. METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The research design used was participatory as it allows the use of innovative methodologies to elicit more complex and diverse realities of a problem and capture the multi-dimensionality and commonalities [39]. The majority of studies focusing on sexual exploitation and sex work have utilized a qualitative approach which requires nonrandomized sampling strategies, as these kind of studies generally aim to uncover phenomena and understand processes that would be lost in quantitative design [40]. Participatory research aims to combine investigation, education, and action while taking measures to enable participation of "oppressed and ordinary people in the problem posing and solving" [41]. Face to face experiential learning is one of the approaches

within participatory approaches. Face to face experiential learning has three main forms namely life stories, immersions and total participatory research [39]. For answering the research questions life story and immersion methods as well as focus group discussions and semi structured interviews with key informants, were utilized to achieve the research objectives.

Data Collection

The data collection was conducted between for a period of 2 months. In order to be able to access the CSWs, a peer leader was recruited as the initial participant through the local NGO implementing an HIV Intervention program. For the life stories, in-depth interviews and FGDs were conducted. Telephonic interview was also used with an ex-CSW as she was not available for a face to face interview. For the immersion experience, and to gain insight into the living and working conditions, the researcher spent time with the CSWs, followed the peer leader during her outreach work as well as met with the CSWs in the field. Photos of these sites as well as the houses of the CSWs, which would inform about general aspects of the sex industry to outsiders, were taken with permission of the CSWs. For other key informant interviews, such as managers of other local NGOs, vocational institutes, Director of Ujjawalacentre for trafficked women were contacted by taking appointments by mail or phone. During data collection, Assamese (the local language) was used as the working language, as well as Hindi (official language of India) for those who were more comfortable with Hindi. During the data collection process, a research assistant assisted the researcher in recording and note taking as well as to ensure the safety of the participants and researcher. For data collection, a voice recorder was used after obtaining permission and transcripts done after every discussion session. Additionally, field notes and observations were also captured by both the researcher and assistant.

Data Analysis

For analysis of life stories/case stories, the data analysis process followed was the five different forms of analysis and interpretation for case study research as given by [42]. The first step involved thorough description of all aspects of the case as whole. This included details of the participants to the study, the work places, dynamics and conditions of sex work, perceptions and attitudes. The second step involved categorical aggregation, coding and interpretation of the collected data from transcripts. The third step of analysis involved direct interpretation of any data that did not fit into the previous categorizations. The fourth step involved reviewing all the data to specifically identify reoccurring patterns. The fifth step involved naturalistic generalization of the data as a whole.

IV. RESULTS/FINDINGS

This section presents the findings of my study starting with a description of the current profiles of CSWs and the sex work industry in Guwahati, Assam and the sections following are presented according to the barriers and conditions to reintegration of CSWs in Guwahati, Assam.

Description of CSWs and Sex Industry

The participants of the study mostly belonged to the state of Assam. They were from the neighbouring periphery areas around Guwahati or from other districts of Assam as part of in-migration. One of the study participants was originally from Bihar which is another state in India and she had come to Guwahati with her husband after her marriage. The ethnicities of the respondents were Assamese, Bengali and Bihari. The age group of the participants ranged from 33 years – 50 years. The educational qualification of the study participants was below class 10 standard, some illiterate and one of them studied till class 12. Most of them were married but there were few study participants whose husband had died, separated or divorced and one of the study participants was

unmarried. Their family sizes in general comprised of the husband and 2-3 children. A brief profile of the study participants is provided in Table 1.1 and Table 1.2

Table 1.1 Profile of CSW for Life story interviews

No.	Name *(Pseudonym)	Age	Religion	Ethnicity	Place of origin	Jobs tried/currently doing
1	Nilima	> 35	Hindu	Assamese	Nalbari, Assam	Court clerk, worked in wine company, plays small roles in Assamese theatres and local TV series
2	Afsana	> 38	Muslim	Bengali	Patsala, Assam	working as Hospital patient attendant, ferrying massaging items
3	Arifa	> 40	Muslim	Assamese	Mangaldai, Assam	Owned pan shop, owned a bus
4	Anima	> 40	Hindu	Assamese	Guwahati, Assam	Owned small shop, working in tailoring shops
5	Kushi	> 50	Hindu	Bihari	Bihar(other state)	Working as maid, sells chana(snacks) in school with husband
6	Rumi	> 35	Hindu	Bengali	Dhubri, Assam	Owned pan shop and small hotel in ISBT, Working as maid now
7	Aruna	> 35	Hindu	Bengali	Guwahati, Assam	Worked as daily wage labour, into selling of small clothing items and making baskets
8	Ritu	> 35	Hindu	Assamese	Tihu ,Assam	Worked as patient attendants at hospital, works as maid in houses
9	Munmi	> 40	Hindu	Bengali	Kokrajhar, Assam	Worked in hotel and as maid earlier, does not work anymore.
10	Nabia	> 30	Muslim	Bengali	Dhubri, Assam	Worked as maid but now into sex work full time
11	Rukia	> 40	Muslim	Bengali	Boko, Assam	Owned spices shop, works as maid and cleaners at godown
12	Rabia	> 35	Muslim	Bengali	Barpeta, Assam	Works as maid and godown cleaner
13	Shargun	> 25	Muslim	Assamese	Mangaldai, Assam	Ex sex worker, currently working as Counsellor

The CSWs in Assam can be categorized broadly into the high level CSWs and the low level CSWs. The high level CSWs earn higher amount of income and are mostly dealing with the affluent of the society, e.g. politicians, business man, government service holders, tourists, etc. The low level CSWs mostly deal with the other strata of men in the society for e.g. daily wage labourers, truckers, small business men, cycle rickshaw pullers, taxi drivers, small shop owners etc. The income of this section of CSWs is lower in comparison and the older CSWs may also continue to supplement their income by doing other manual jobs along with sex work.

Table 1.2: Profile of CSW details for Focus Group Discussion

No	Name	Age	Religion	Ethnicity	Place of origin	Jobs tried/currently doing
1	Binita	> 25	Hindu	Assamese	Morigaon, Assam	Full time CSW
2	Dolly	> 25	Hindu	Assamese	Morigaon, Assam	Full time CSW
3	Pinki	> 20	Hindu	Assamese	Guwahati, Assam	Full time CSW
4	Jutika	> 30	Hindu	Assamese	Morigaon, Assam	Full time CSW

5	Nishita	➤ 25	Hindu	Assamese	Dhekiajuli, Assam	Full time CSW
6	Kaberi	➤ 32	Muslim	Assamese	Guwahati, Assam	Full time CSW

The sex industry in Guwahati is found to be more of a mobile based operation and transaction would take place in the homes/rented houses and the dhabas (motels) and bars. The medium of operation would be through the mobile phone. The advent of affordable mobile phone technology has changed the sex industry so much that although the street based CSWs who solicit their clients on the street do exist, their numbers are declining to an almost non-existent number as the new medium of operation is all through the mobile phone. In Guwahati a section of the sex workers are also said to be day time sex workers. These sex workers come from the peripheral areas around Guwahati city. They take a day trip or even two-three days trip to Guwahati city under the guise of working in daily wage jobs, but are actually engaging in sex work. In Assam, the transaction of sex work is higher during festivals like Bihu (spring festival), Durga Puja (religious festival), etc, with a growing increase in tourists who come to visit the wildlife sanctuaries and other tourist attractions and look for an escort. The CSWs of Guwahati are mostly hidden from the general public. They hide their identity as CSWs by engaging in other kind of works like maids, daily wage labourers, roadside pan-shop (selling tobacco products, betel nut leaf) or other small shop owners, vegetable and fruit sellers, ferrying and selling items, hospital attendants (unskilled work) etc. Their involvement in sex work is only known by trusted people in their social network such as partners, contacts at the dhabas, lodges, regular customers and lastly HIV NGO staffs if they register as beneficiaries to the program.

Economic Barriers

1) Financial aspect of entry

It is assumed that the relatively high income of commercial sex work is a major barrier to exit and reintegration for the CSWs of Guwahati, Assam. In this study also the economic condition was an issue at the time of initiation into this occupation. Almost all of the CSWs interviewed entered into sex work due to financial difficulties. They all said that it was compulsion (majburi), the need to look after their families and especially their children that they had to come into this occupation. At the beginning all of them had no idea of the occupation and they were working in different other jobs, it would be mostly through their friends or other women and madams who were already in this occupation that they were introduced to the sex work industry in Guwahati. The following two fragments of life stories exemplify that entering CSW may result from a long trajectory of economic needs and diverse affective relations.

“My father is poor. We are three sisters and two brothers. Father was doing work alone and looking after my family. He got me married to a guy at the age of 17 years but he was a bit mental and I could not stay with him. After that my uncle and aunt of my present husband bought me to Guwahati. After that they married me to my present husband. The two of us worked and managed our house. I worked as maid in houses and my husband worked as a cycle rickshaw puller. We had three children together. My husband used to gamble. My children were growing up and I needed to pay for their school fees. So through all those I opened a hotel near the ISBT (Inter-State bus terminus). We continued the hotel for 3 months and after that the hotel was demolished from the site because it was illegally constructed. During that time I was in love with a building contractor. He used to come to me to visit in my house to which the landlord kept complaining. Even my husband was giving problems. So me and my husband moved to our own house in the hills and started staying there with my children. My daughter was growing up and I needed money for her school and I was not able to marry her off. Then the lady who was staying near our house called me to her house one day and asked me why I kept working in people’s houses. She told me about this work and said you can work and earn money like this. That is how I came into this line. Even now I do it along with my other works like cooking in people’s houses and do not do it so regularly. Then one time my husband went into prison for 3 months in Dhubri (one of the districts of Assam). Then I did not know what to do. I had to run the house also. Some girls approached me and said they were looking for some jobs then I said ok to them. I do this work like this once a while but not so much on a regular or urgent basis. If I get some work or some customer call me then only I go. In a day sometimes I earn 300

rupees. I work as a maid so I do not get so much time for this work. And it is not possible to call my customers to my home as I have sons and if the locality comes to know about it we will lose our land and house and have to move away from there. My husband income is not enough to run the house. My one son works in a clothes store. Another son is studying. My daughter is married off now. I have continued in this line for 10 years.” – *Life story interview CSW Rumi*

“My husband is not good. He is very bad. He drinks and all. He brought me to Guwahati. I have a son and a daughter. The daughter is grown up. She studies in the school now. I do not have any work; I do not know to do anything also. My husband left me and married again. So what can I do now? I work in a Marwari (a North Indian business community) household. But the income is not enough; we need food, house rent, school fees etc. I kept working in the Marwari house, and then one day I met the sister (madam) on the road. Then she asked me what work do I do, I said I work in a Marwari household. I go at 8 in the morning and come back at 4 in the evening. I get 5000 rupees for a month. But that does not run my house; even house rent is 1500 rupees. Then she said ok you do one thing you start working with me. I asked her what kind of work. Then she told, you have to do this kind of work and you will get daily money for daily work. The more work you do the more money you will get. So since I had no other option and the income from other work was not sufficient, I started doing this work.” *Life story interview CSW Nabia*

Many of the women came to Guwahati with their husbands after marriage in search of work for leading a better life but there were also a few of them who had failed relationships back in their villages and had come to Guwahati to work and earn money and look after themselves and their families back in their villages.

“I am from Guwahati but my childhood days I spent in Dimapur, Nagaland (another state adjacent to the state of Assam). My first husband tricked me into marriage. I was very young then, 13 years of age and did not understand things much. He was older. I went back to my family after my husband died of some illness because my in laws did not want me after his death. I had my baby at 16 years and my in laws did not want me but only my baby. She was my first child how can I give her away. After all I am a mother, so I refused to give my child to them. That’s the time when I came to Guwahati in 2002. After coming here in Guwahati I worked as daily wage labourer. It was my first time to work as a labourer. I was working as a helper to a mason. The mason was a known person to me and staying nearby my house, since I was just staying at home and not doing anything I thought it was a good idea to work somewhere and earn something. That time my brothers were also young and I did not have my dad, he had died. It was only my mom who was earning that time and she was working in a small hotel as a cook. I felt sad about her situation and thought that I need to work and support her. And it became time to send my daughter to school also and give her admission.

So the first day when I went to work at one house the owner of the house saw me from the floor above working. Then next day again he was watching me and that day he called me to his floor. Then he asked me to come inside and told me you do not look like a daily wage labourer to me. Then he asked me what made me come into this work, you must be facing some problem that is why you have come to work here. If you have some kind of problem, then please tell me. Then I narrated my story to him. Told him that my husband had died and my mom was working in a hotel, even my child needs to be admitted to school. My child is 3 years old I need to give her admission. After that he asked me around how much I would need for the school admission. I said around 2000 rupees would be enough for admission. Then he gave me 2000 rupees and asked me to go down and not to tell anyone. That time I did not have mobile. That brother wrote down his phone number in a piece of paper and gave it to me. He told me to meet him in front of Commerce College the next day. Then next day I took an auto till Commerce College. I went to the PCO nearby and from there I called up the brother. Then he reached there within 10 minutes in a car. This brother (pimp) took me to a lady and introduced me to her. Then he openly discussed the whole thing with me. He told me that see you are beautiful still and so young. No matter what job or work you go for, people will give you an eye so do not do it with someone just like that instead take money from them, which will be good for you. After that the brother told me that I will get physically intimate with you, because when I saw you I liked you. I also said ok and then I did the work with the brother in that lady’s

house for the first time. That time I was around 22-23 years of age. After that the lady took me to 2-3 other places. Sometimes if there was work at her place she called me.” – *Life story interview CSW Aruna*

Another CSW shared that she was the third wife of an old man and not being satisfied sexually she had ended up in extra marital sex and earning money from it.

“I did not come so much for the money, of course men give money for the work, but my husband was a little aged and he got married 3 times. I am his third wife. And he was not able to give much physical satisfaction to me and so that is how I ended up in this line. Other than that I did not have any problem.”- *Life story interview CSW Kushi*

Most life stories describe combinations of economic needs, emotional issues and entry into CSW without really being aware of what they were entering into, as it seems almost accidental or by a relative outsider bringing them into this business.

“I am originally from Mangaldai. I gave divorce to my husband, he was a school teacher, and after that I came to Guwahati to work. I had a 3 year son to look after. My aunt was staying in Guwahati that time and she helped me start a Pan shop (betel nut shop) near Ganeshguri and I looked after myself and my son like that. I came into this occupation in 2007. At first I did not know anything about all this and that work happens like this. It was when I was working in my Pan shop, one lady used to keep coming to buy things from me and she used to keep staring at me. One fine day she asked me if I would like to work somewhere else. I said if I get something I will like to work. The next day she asked me to come a bit well dressed and go with her. After that the lady took me to her house where she was doing these works with other girls, and then through her only I came to know about this line. Then slowly I also got involved in this work. After that I made a lot of money by doing this work. I took a house and did this work by giving the landlord a share of my money. I would give him 100 for each customer and if they stay for the night I would give him 500 rupees. Like this I made a lot of money.” – *Life story interview CSW Arifa*

“But later on wherever I went to go for work, men will be always asking for this kind of favour. So after sometime I also got involved this kind of work. Since everywhere man wanted to get physical then why not to do it for money.” *Life story Interview CSW Rukia*

The legal aspects are not mentioned frequently but are however an issue as can be witnessed from the following fragment:

“I am originally from Patsala, Assam. Now I stay in Hatigoan. I have been in this work from 2009. I am 38 years of age. I have studied till class 10. I had a love marriage. After that we came to Guwahati. We got a free room without the landlord staying with us. After that I had three daughters. I had one son but he died. Some girls were staying in the compound with us those girls used to go early morning and come back in the evening. They used to come back with good supplies. I used to ask them where they work and what kind of work they do. They used to say that they work in people’s houses. Then one day my husband fought with me and he left the house. That time I was left with my three daughters. I waited for him 1-2 months and had no money for food and paying rent. I was not able to explain to my landlord about difficulty in paying rent. My daughters were also going to school that time. I was not aware that the girls staying in the compound were involved in sex work, I did not know anything about this work or how it is carried out. Sometimes they used to give me 20-50 rupees for betel nut. Then one day one of the girls came to me and said sister if you do this work you can earn money. I did not understand what work it was and how it can be done. Then she explained that we will bring men for you after you do the work we will give you some amount from the earnings. When I started doing the work at home I used to earn 150-200 rupees sometimes even 300 rupees. Then we share the amount 50:50. This way I did the

work for 2 years. After that the girl took a room somewhere else and got caught by the police. I was also called to the police station. I was asked by the police not to do this job and to stop doing this job. But I had no other option so I still kept doing the work because I had to look after my daughters and run the house. Around 6 months later my husband came back but I did not stop the work. He was not aware that I was doing this work behind his back. It is now 6 years that he has died. I have married off my 3 daughters now. So since 2009 I have been in this line and this is my story.” *Life story interview CSW Afsana*

2) Profitability of sex work

The income of the CSWs varied per service and per month.

“The income that the CSWs usually make can be around 2500-3000 rupees in a day. The minimum can be of 500 rupees and can go up to even 4000 rupees.” *Key Informant 5*

“I can earn 3000-4000 by doing this work in a single day.” *CSW - Arifa*

The difference in income varied based on their age. The younger the CSW the higher price she can earn from her customers. Although on an average it can be said that if a CSW is young in age (18-28 years) she can earn from 10000-40000 rupees in a month.

“In a month I can earn around 10,000 rupees, sometimes it is less also. In a day it can be 1500-2000 rupees sometimes it can go up to 4000 in a day as well.” *CSW – Afsana*

The older CSWs would be making an average income of 4000-15000 rupees in a month, but not from direct CSW as it was found out that most of the older CSWs were involved in providing or contacting girls to customers and taking a cut for themselves.

“To be honest in this work I try to get at least 5000-6000 rupees in a month. Even my age is deteriorating so nowadays I take my customers to other girls and if they like them they stay back and we do not take customers for ourselves.” *CSW- Rumi*

The income from sex work is much higher, takes less time and skill than other jobs that the CSWs have tried. The money earned from sex work is much more compared to other activities that they have tried doing earlier even up to 2-3 times higher.

“I worked as a security guard at a shopping mall for 2-3 years and was earning 7500 rupees per month but the salary was not enough to look after my daughter who is studying in a private school and I have to pay for the house rent, school fees, tuition fees, etc.” *CSW- Binita*

“I started working in a tailoring store. I had to keep my children with someone for going to my work. I had to pay 300-400 rupees in a month for that. And even the payment for my tailoring work was not paid fully to me. So it made me think again that by doing so much hard work if I am not able to get my due payment then why not do it “sex work” and earn more money from it. I will be earning more in 1 hr then what I am earning from it in 2 hrs from the tailoring shop.” *CSW- Anima*

3) Household expenses

On an average the household expenses of the CSWs ranged from 10,000- 20000 rupees in a month although there were exceptions where some sex workers said that their expenses were much higher in a month. One of the CSWs said that she was staying in a rental apartment where as most of the others said that they were staying in cheaper “Assam type” houses on rent which are usually older tin-roof and wooden houses. Their house rents ranged from 1500-6000 rupees. The school and college fees of the children were the major expenses they all talked about in addition to food, clothing, transportation and health related expenses.

4) Children’s education

Most of the study participants’ reason to enter sex work and staying in the profession was for looking after their children and providing them with a good education. They felt the need of giving their child good education.

“I came to Guwahati because I wanted to my boys to do well.” *CSW – Ritu*

“My children are in school and colleges now and we need money to pay for their fees. So by doing all kinds of work I try to earn at least 10,000 rupees in a month.” *CSW – Rabia*

Their own lack of education seems to strengthen the importance of good education. One of the study participants shared that she was in this condition because of her foolishness but she did not wish for her daughter to become illiterate like her.

“And it became time to send my daughter to school and give her admission. I was dumb that is why I am in this situation today but I cannot make my child dumb also.” *CSW – Aruna*

One of the participants was very proud to share that her son was studying engineering in a college and that she had provided the best of education to him by doing this work.

“I paid 100,000 rupees for my son’s admission fee in the engineering college. I had put my son in good private schools and colleges earlier. The reason I came into this line was to look after my son and give me a good life and make him study well.” *CSW – Arifa*

Another two participants shared that the father was not worried about their children’s education but they as mothers cannot ignore their children’s educational needs and good future.

“The girl is studying now. I need money for her every month. The husband never gives any money. The daughter is 10 years old now. The boy is 4 years old. He stays along with me. The girl stays in the village I need to send money for my child every month; her father is not bothered about anything.” *CSW- Nabia*

5) Lack of skills

Education is a subject linked to skills and employment opportunities

“In the remote area of Guwahati, the countryside of Guwahati there is not many skills, especially the uneducated girls who do not possess education but also do not have any other skills to earn a living from.” *Key Informant 9*

The study participants have very minimal skills or at least report so. Some of them had informal skills like weaving, stitching, grooming, basket making, etc., but no one was actually pursuing those skills full time as their primary occupation.

“I do not have any skills or qualification. I do not know if I would like to go for trainings and all.” *CSW-Kushi*

“I do not have any other skills or worked anywhere else. I worked only in that house as a maid.” *CSW-Munmi*

“I have been working in the godowns and as house maids. But the income is not sufficient so in order to meet the financial needs of my family and my children so I started working as a sex worker.” *CSW- Rabia*

When the conversation was about other jobs participants mentioned jobs and thereby implicitly indicate certain skills. What skills they do have are mostly labour intensive and applicable to informal industries.

“I know all kinds of work, like stitching, weaving, etc. I can also work in the rice fields.” – *CSW Ritu*

“I do not know stitching or things like that but in my village, I was doing works like Bidi binding, making incense sticks, etc.” – *CSW Nabia*

“I did not find any interest to study at home. So my mother made me join a stitching and cutting school, I learnt stitching there and also got a diploma in that. I even got a sewing machine from the government.”- *CSW Anima*

“I had been trained in beauty grooming and had even tried out the profession in a small way.” *CSW-Dolly*

“I worked as a security guard at a shopping mall for 2-3 years and was earning 7500 rupees per month.” *CSW-Binita*

“I also work in a house as a maid and cook food for them.” *CSW – Kushi*

“These days I also go and do massaging in some households for ladies.” *CSW- Rumi*

6) Other jobs

It was found that the other jobs which the study participants tried doing or are doing together along with sex work are working in tailoring shops, pan shops, maids, cooks, security guard, court clerk helpers, store sales, ferrying items, beauty parlours, hospital attendants, godown workers and artist.

“I was working as a sales girl earlier but the income was not enough for me. I am currently working as a clerk assistant in the court as well.” *CSW- Pinki*

Many of the study participants were doing sex work on a part time basis but it is also a fact that younger ones were earning more income from sex work so they were not into doing other jobs so much, whereas for the older sex workers it was necessary for them to supplement sex work with other jobs in order to earn sufficient income.

For older CSWs, they were not able to get enough customers to survive on sex work income full time and therefore it became important for them to supplement their income from other sources.

“I ferry massaging items. And while ferrying those items I am able to find my customers as well as our work.” *CSW- Afsana*

Interestingly, few study participants mentioned that at the jobs that they previously worked at they were asked for sexual favours and they had to do it for free in those work places indicating the vulnerability of poor uneducated female labourers.

“But no matter wherever I worked, people wanting physical intimacy were there everywhere” *CSW Anima*

“I am in the sex work profession still and I work as an artist as well. I acted in 2-3 TV serials. That’s how I am managing myself.” *CSW- Nilima*

Again their ages are mentioned as relevant in CSW

“In this profession the age also matters a lot. The younger the girls are the more they can earn.” *Key informant 5*

“And these days’ younger girls are coming in this profession and men prefer them more and the clothes they wear attract the customer that is why we are losing our customers these days. Even age plays an important role in this job.” *CSW- Dolly*

It was interesting to find out that majority of the key informants said that sex work was a source of easy money for the sex workers. However none of the sex workers said that it was easy money which they were earning from sex work.

“As per me it is a source of easy money. Of course they all come looking for a source of income. For instance the family needs a job, nowadays nothing happens without money, children have to be sent to school, foodingetc all these needs lots of money.” *Key Informant 2*

“It is a source of earning easy money in less time.” *Key Informant 5*

“They are mostly in this work because of their necessity and difficult times. Also it is a source of easy income. Yes it is true, for instance the women who used to be involved in this work in earlier days used to come to this work by compulsion or because of family problems. But nowadays it seems like girls are coming into this work mainly to make easy money.” *Key Informant 4*

7) Financial independence

Although all the study participants were hiding their identity as sex workers from the general public, they all appeared to be self-independent women who enjoy the fact that they are earning income, looking after their families and having the ability to not depend on their husbands or partners for their financial needs. In particular, for the older CSWs, the taste of financial independence that they have now does not let them leave the work.

“I do not want to leave this job, why will I leave this job, I am free now and no one stays with me. I am making my income through it. The income from this helps me pay house rent, electricity and my day to day expenses. What other job will I get?” *CSW – Afsana*

“I had asked one of them directly, but she said that it is not possible for her to leave this work.” *Key Informant 3*

“My husband is earning 12000 rupees a month and my two sons are working and earning daily wages of Rs 550 every day. So even if I do not do this work I can manage with my husband’s and son’s income. Even if I do not do this work my house will run. But then again I think that I can earn some money and utilise it for my own expenses.” *CSW –Munmi*

“Actually I want to leave this work because the only tension I had was for my daughter. Now my daughter got married herself. She got married nicely and staying nicely. I have no more tension. Now I have a younger brother next to me who is little ill mentally so his wife and two kids I am looking after. If they want or need something I only give them. That is why I am still doing the work. If this problem was not there I would have stopped doing this work totally. Now knowingly I do not feel like leaving the work and suffering.” *CSW – Aruna*

Social Barriers

1) Exposure to sex work exit

When asked about the CSWs being aware if any of their friends or someone that they have known had left this work totally and how they were able to leave, most of them responded that they do not know anyone who had left the work totally. They said that some may have started doing other small income generating activities like hawking vegetables, fruits, opening a pan shop etc. but while doing that they also continue engaging in sex-work or contracting other girls that they meet while doing this activities for sex work. Further, the girls go for other jobs only when they are ageing and start having lesser customers than before because the younger girls take away their customers.

“I do not know anyone who have left this line and working in something else. Whoever I have met or seen are still working in this line.” *CSW – Rumi*

“All these years I have not seen anyone leave this line totally. Even if they themselves are not continuing the work they keep girls and do the work.” *CSW – Arifa*

“Some of them have left the profession, started working in small company, selling clothes, selling vegetables, etc. And also do contracts with us giving us clients.” *CSW – Afsana*

“There are girls who are doing other works, like working as maids or doing some business but if they get customers they continue with this kind of work also because starting a business also needs money, from where the girl or woman will get money from. It is not possible for poor people to have so much of money that is why they are not able to do any kind of other works or business.” *CSW – Kushi*

“I have not met so far who have left this profession totally.” *Key Informant 2*

However two study participants who said that they knew some friends who had left this work totally because they got married and they have settled down with their husbands and kids and they are not doing any kind of work now because they are having a good and secured life with their kids and husband. One of the key informants said that she had seen CSWs being reintegrated into the mainstream society.

“There are some friends of mine who have left this profession and got married started family and have kids now. I know some who have left this job and their husbands were aware of their profession before their marriage but now they do not allow their wives to be in this profession anymore. Even if they are allowed to work after marriage their husbands search different type of jobs for them.” *CSW – Nilima*

“I have one friend who totally left this work. In fact she got married and has two kids as well now. She left this work because of the man she got married to now.” *CSW – Aruna*

“I have seen reintegration of CSWs into the society but they are the low level ones. The reason they might want to come to the mainstream might be because of their age or because of some illness that is why they want to return to the mainstream.” *Key Informant 9*

“There are some friends who have exited from this line but I cannot tell you their names because they will get angry at me for telling it to others. At this time they are not working. But they exited this work because they got married and settled down. They also have kids now. The husband is working and doing well so they do not have to go back to this work again.” *Ex Sex worker- Shargun*

2) Extra income in pimping

The percentage cut from pimping, finding new girls etc. is another barrier to exit the sex work industry. It was interesting to find out that all of the study participants said they were not aware of any girls who were trafficked or sold in their line of work. They all said that no one can be forced in this work unless the girl herself is interested in doing the work. However during the life story interviews, it was found out that many of them were into pimping of girls to other customers and they were specially the older sex workers.

“They would be contacting girls for the customers as a side business. Because they are old now and they keep other girls under them now. They will do this work after they stop doing the work themselves.” *FG Discussion*

“So nowadays I take them (customers) to girls and if they like them they stay back” – *CSW Rumi*

“There is not many who are trafficked in this work in Guwahati, mostly come on their own will to earn money or because of their poor financial conditions. If we force girls in this profession then we will face problem later on from the police, etc. and so we do not do human trafficking and all.” *CSW – Nilima*

“While working as Peer Educator, the HRGs (sex workers) would save my number and then call me and offer me customers, I used to get very angry.” *Ex Sex Worker – Shargun*

The interviews with other key informants also confirmed that trafficking was happening in Assam and the North eastern states but mostly they were trafficked out of Guwahati to other cities of India and the pimping network also was very strong.

“The pimps they are so active that even if some are in other profession they will try everything to bring them to this profession (sex work), they know all the tactics.” *Key Informant 9*

“In Guwahati there are not many cases of girls who are forcefully bought into this work as much as I know or hear about, it is mostly on circumstances that the girls are compelled to join this work.” *CSW- Munmi*

“In Guwahati the trafficked girls in this work are not so much. Mostly the girls coming to me come on their own will. We do not need to force them if we force them, we will be caught by the police. Instead they come on their own to do work in this profession because they are in need of money.” *CSW – Afsana*

“I have not met anyone who have been trafficked or sold belonging from the neighbouring states of Nepal or Bangladesh. Human trafficking is mostly done to the outside states of India from Assam, because the girls of Assam can be recognised here so trafficked girls are difficult to be kept in Assam since it has a local context and people can recognise.” *Key Informant 2*

“Human trafficking is quite high not only in Guwahati but all over the north east. Guwahati is a transit point, from everywhere people come to Guwahati, come from hills, come from remote areas. It is a source area as well as a transit area. The trafficked girls are very young, slowly the trends are changing. Earlier the married girls used to be trafficked; even now they are being trafficked. From our community (Hindu) married women are less trafficked, it is mostly from the minority (Muslim) community that married women are trafficked, what happens is that they get married at a very young age and the husband marries again, or she has babies and the man marries again. Then some other man trafficks and takes her away. That happens mainly with the minority (Muslim) community.” *Key Informant 9*

But the new trend now that is happening is that girls of 7-8 years girls are being trafficked. This is not because of maid servant, earlier many people used to take small girls to look after their children. The people of Bihar, West Bengal (other two states of India) have a superstition, that before a girl reaches puberty if a man has intercourse with her then HIVAIDS is cured. This is a superstition and it is there in Bihar and West Bengal.” *Key Informant 9*

“And these girls of 7-8 years, like we have massage parlours here, they have places there, where people who are infected with HIVAIDS go to have intercourses. That is why many girls of 7-8 years are trafficked and younger the girl is the more money the trafficker is able to get.” *Key Informant 9*

“Actually I happened to know about this whole trafficking way back in 1999 as I told you I was working with YWCA, I do not remember if it was 1997 or 1999, I was asked to go for a conference, World Council of YWCA, there were four countries and they were doing a collaborative work along with YWCA of India, they came up with a report wherein they wanted to find out the route of the traffickers, and to find out the route of the traffickers they interviewed the sex workers of Delhi (capital state of India), so while talking with the sex workers of Delhi they interviewed them (they were not the sex workers, they were the survivors and also some sex workers). So when they were talking with the sex workers they gave a description as to where did they halt, what did they eat, to identify the different places. So when I was reading that report I found that many of the things that they were saying about like, when they were describing the places, when they were describing the dresses, when they were describing the food, it seemed like that they were describing of Assam and that was the first time I realised way back in 1997 that Assam is one of the route of human trafficking.” *Key Informant 7*

3) Regular Customers

The general opinion of the study participants about their customers were that they were not abusive to them or harass them in any way. The customers came from all sections of the society like rickshaw pullers, truckers, shopkeepers, service holders, businessman, tourists, politicians, etc.

“No there is no harassment from the customers. I do not keep terms with those kinds of people.” *CSW-Rumi*

“Some of them have regular customers. The customers of the CSWs are serviceman, government officials, businessman, labourers, contractors, drivers etc.” *Key Informant 5*

“I do the work outside. But if they are my regular customers I do the work at my home only. The customers in this work are mainly the businessman because the service holder men have to usually stay within their budgets.” *CSW – Arifa*

“Our customers are from every community, if we choose only Assamese clients we will not be able to earn any money.” *CSW – Afsana*

One of the participant mentioned that sometimes they find customers who do not want physical intimacy with them and instead would just want them to sit and talk with them and would even pay the agreed amount and there would be other customers who would be paying less after the work and some others who would be paying more than the agreed amount after the work.

“All customers are not bad, some would not do anything and still pay us and send us back. They are mainly looking for someone to talk to and have some company with.” *CSW – Dolly*

The older sex workers more or less had permanent customers coming to them.

“The customers I have now are permanent.” *CSW - Aruna*

4) Partners

For many of the study participants their first marriage had failed or they have problems with their husbands who are into drinking, gambling, not working, etc. For some of them after coming to Guwahati they had found new husbands or partners to stay with however it was found out while discussing with the key informants that though many of them say that they have husbands or married they are not their actual husbands, sometimes the partners who they stay with are the pimps themselves. But no one from the study participant mentioned that their husbands or partners bring in customers for them.

“But actually they are not their real husbands because when they have to look for houses to stay they have to show somebody as their husband. They just happen to be staying with them. It is a way of showing to the society also that they are married and he is the husband. Like one of the CSW, she is staying with a man but he is not her real husband.” *Key Informant 6*

“The person who stays with the girl knows about her work and keeps earning from the girl. It is kind of extra income for him as well. Sometimes he brings customer for her as well.” *Key Informant 4*

“If you ask my personal opinion I felt that maybe he was into the system and he was acting as a pimp in a disguise form, as a husband, because my area was domestic violence so I looked at those victims, so those victims like sex workers can also exist in the form of wives and the pimp maybe their husband.” *Key Informant 7*

“Yes I have a partner. He knows about my work, he does not know about my doing the work, but knows that I am engaging others in this work.” *CSW – Afsana*

5) No social acceptance/Invisibility

The hidden nature of the sex work in Guwahati makes it a bit easier for them to work secretly and not face much stigma and discrimination from the society. Except for few of the study participants no one in their family was aware of them working as sex workers. All of them made sure that no one in their neighbourhood gets to know that they were doing this work and tried to carry on their work as secretly as possible and moved their houses if by any chance their landlords or neighbours came to know that they were doing sex work in their houses. Even the sex workers did not approve themselves of working as sex workers as they were of the opinion that they were doing sin and that people should do those kinds of works which are socially acceptable and not sex work. One of them even put “sindoor” on her forehead to make herself acceptable to the society as married woman, as then the chances of the neighbours or passerby assuming her to be a sex worker will be less while awaiting customers on the road.

“No one in my family knows about my work. They only know that I work in the godown. The society never approves this kind of work.” *CSW- Rukia*

“Sometimes I end up meeting known people in this job also, once I met an uncle of mine and he recognised me but I requested him not to tell it to my family, that I am involved in this job.” *CSW – Anima*

“This kind of work is wrong, it is a sin. But for the sake of the stomach people do it, the heart never agrees to it.” *CSW- Kushi*

“Since it is a bad work, no one in the society will accept us. I do not think that my work is wrong but the society thinks it in that way.” *CSW – Arifa*

“I put sindoor on my forehead because I do not want other people to think that I am a CSW, because people in the society do not see a CSW with a good eye.” *CSW-Binita*

On the other hand, 4-5 CSWs who were interviewed believed that they were providing good service to the society by working as sex workers.

“If I keep doing this good work (sex work), it is good for the society as well, isn’t it? That is why I keep doing this work.” *CSW- Aruna*

“We are making everyone happy through our work.” *CSW –Afsana*

6) Gender Bias

Some of the study participants were victims of a deeper gender inequality which is still prevalent in Assamese society. One aspect of this is the gender bias where boys are seen as an investment for old age and girls are seen as a burden and to be married off early.

“My first husband tricked me into marriage. I was very young then, 13 years of age and did not understand things.” *CSW Arifa*

“My parents died when I was small. My brothers somehow managed to get some education by staying with relatives. I could not even manage that much. My family got me married to a boy of their choice.” *CSW Ritu*

“He got me married to a guy at the age of 17 years but he was a bit mental and I could not stay with him.” *CSW Rumi*

“I fell in love with a boy, but he turned out not be such a nice boy, so after that I left him and went to stay with my maternal uncle”. *CSW Anima*

Institutional Barriers

1) Lack of legal documents

Many of the study participants did not have government-recognised identity cards. Some of them who were staying in Guwahati for many years were a little more aware of the need of identity documents and have been able to get ration-cards (govt. subsidy cards) for getting food supplies at government subsidised rates with the help of their family members or other known persons to them, and pan cards, voter ids as identity proofs but many of the study participants said that they do not have any form of identity documents. This makes it difficult for them to even apply for a cooking gas connection which is a basic necessity. The lack of identity documents also makes it difficult for single or separated women to find a house or room in Guwahati as the landlords are not willing to give rooms without any identity proofs.

“I do not have any Aadhaar card (unique identification authority card) or identity document. But if we have them then it will become better for us”. *CSW – Afsana*

“I have a bank account; my daughter opened it with for me”. *CSW – Anima*

“We have ration cards and also get the 2 rupees per kg rice from the ration stores.” *CSW – Rukia*

“We have told them about some schemes from the government in their villages where the government is providing money to the villagers for building houses. We have provided them with the information but it is up to them if they want to take the facility or not, because we cannot help further with that. We try and help them with whatever possible from our side but because most of them do not have documents they are unable to access the services and schemes of the government.” *Key Informant 4*

“The government schemes that are available for poor and marginalised women are for the Below Poverty Line (BPL) women in general and not necessarily specific for sex workers.” *Key Informant 1*

“We make use of their PAN cards (govt. issued Identity cards for tax payers which can be used as Identity proof), Voter Ids (govt. issued voting identity cards) and house rent agreement with the landlords to help CSWs open bank accounts. But the girls who do not have those we are not able to help them to open bank accounts. But the identity is usually made for a different profession and nowhere do they introduce themselves by this profession, because no one in this society recognises this job.” *Key Informant 4*

2) Lack of education support

For sex workers with children, they want to make sure that their children have a better future than them.

“When my daughter passed her class 10 exam everyone in my locality was very happy. My daughter is going to give MA entrance exam by the end of this month. My daughter is asking me to leave this job now and I have told her that once she finishes her studies and finds a government job I will leave this job totally.” *CSW-Anima*

3) Unsafe working conditions in informal sector

Few study participants mentioned that at the jobs that they previously worked at they were asked for sexual favours and they had to do it for free in those work places indicating the vulnerability of poor uneducated female labourers.

“But later on wherever I went for work, men will be always asking for this kind of favour. So after sometime I also got involved in this kind of work. Since everywhere man wanted to get physical then why not to do it for money.” *CSW- Rukia*

“But no matter wherever I worked, people wanting physical intimacy were there everywhere” *CSW Anima*

“During the time when I was working in the court office I could not understand many of the things, like my employers used to instruct me to go here and there for official work, to do this and that, and there were many people who were after me, for instance, after the official works were done they used to take me to dhabas and offer me drinks, etc”. *CSW Nilima*

Conditions

Economic Conditions

1) Stable income

Income on a regular basis and sufficient enough to cover their household expenses is an important condition that would help CSWs to break their reliance on sex work and help them decide whether to exit. For instance they all said that they would like to do some other kind of jobs if they get an opportunity but the uncertainty whether they would be able to do that work or whether the income earned from that work will be enough to look after their children and families made afraid to take any decision. In the case of the ex-sex worker, she was able to

leave when her husband's earning became a bit stable and he himself suggested to her to leave the sex work profession.

"They have to maintain their family. The husband's income is not sufficient or is not enough to cover all these expenses. Hence the female wants to earn some income and this income becomes a little easy. It does not need too much labour also, they do not need to invest too much of time also and the income earning is very good."

Key Informant 2

"It is very difficult for girls to exit because it becomes like a chain system, one customer will bring in more customers and the income goes on increasing. Even in my case I was able to earn 10,000 rupees from a single customer sometimes." *Ex Sex Worker – Shargun*

2) Alternative opportunity

The CSWs skills for other works are mainly labour intensive such as weaving, basket making, stitching etc. The income that they can make out of these labour intensive works is very less compared to the income that they can make from sex work.

"For example the younger girls are earning 15000-20000 rupees in a month but if we try to take them out and provide for an alternative arrangement then we will not be able to pay so much of amount to them." *Key Informant 4*

"The likelihood of them taking up other livelihood options and leaving this work is very less because there is very less options for them and no one can give that amount of money which they are earning from this work." *Key Informant 2*

One of the study participants said that if she is provided with two sewing machines she would start a shop and earn like that. She said that she is willing to pay for the rent of the shop on her own from the earnings that she will earn from her tailoring works. Whereas another said that she would not prefer to do business and instead would like to work in an office set up. Another participant shared about starting a self-help group whereby she can provide training to girls on basket making and they can sell those baskets and share the profit making among themselves.

"If someone helps me with two sewing machines I am willing to do it. I can pay the shop rent on my own from the earnings that I get from the tailoring works. I just need the starting up and then I can manage it own my own." *CSW – Anima*

"Today I have a brought of friend who knows how to make plastic basket and all. So we are thinking of starting a self-help group among us the CSWs. About 12 of us will make investments and she will train us and also engage some people and sell the baskets, and after the selling of the baskets we will share the profit among us." *CSW – Arifa*

Social Conditions

1) Support from the family

The support of the family is another condition which the women or girls need for exiting. The responsibility, particularly financial responsibility of a single women, mother or separated women sometimes becomes too heavy to handle alone. The family support and sharing of responsibilities for these women is very much needed for them to come back to the mainstream society.

“At times what happens the family also do not want them to come back, it is not because they do not want them to come back cause they do not like them, but it is also a source of income for the family, because whatever she earns, a portion of that money comes to the family, so if she comes back the source of income will just diminish or it will just vanish so they prefer them to stay in that work.” *Key Informant 7*

“In my house my mother knows about it and no one else. My mother knows as I cannot hide it from her. If I have any problem, I will share it with my mom only. My mother just tells me one thing, if later on our situation improves, like if I am able to start a shop or start a family of my own, then I should stop this work. That she tells me and makes me understand.” *CSW- Aruna*

2) Stable relationship

It was found that most of the CSWs had early marriages or unstable relationships which compelled them to be in this work. Even during the interviews with the Ex-CSW and the current CSWs they said that they have friends who have completely left this work because they got married and they have the financial and emotional support of their husbands and so they do not have to do this work again and that they are well settled with their kids and husbands.

“There are some friends who have exited from this work but I cannot tell you their names because they will get angry at me for telling it to others. At this time they are not working. But they exited this work because they got married and settled down. They also have kids now. The husband is working and doing well so they do not have to go back to this work again.” *Ex Sex Worker – Shargun*

“But I will be leaving this work after 4-5 months as I plan to get married with my boyfriend by the end of this year and since he is not aware of this work, I don’t want him to come to know about it because once I get married it will not be easy to hide from him anymore. Prior to him I had a boyfriend who knew about this job of mine but I did not marry him because later on he will abuse me by talking about my sex work profession after marriage.” *CSW – Nilima*

“I have one friend who totally left this work. In fact she got married and has two kids as well now. She left this work because of the man she got married to now. That way her luck was good, a man found her and he married her. After marriage she is living well with concrete house and all. She keeps calling me, does video call with me and shows me her kids. He is a good man. Actually he has married before but he has not left his first wife also and has not left my friend also. He has kept her nicely. Now she has two kids also, one boy and one girl. She is happy now.” *CSW – Aruna*

3) Desire to leave sex work

Another important pre-condition that has to exist for CSWs to leave this industry is willingness to leave sex work. It is important that the women have the mental and emotional strength to take this decision.

“I do not want to leave this job, why will I leave this job, I am free now and no one stays with me. I am making my income through it. The income from this helps me pay house rent, electricity and my day to day expenses. What other job will I get?” *CSW – Afsana*

“I had asked one of them directly, but she said that it is not possible for her to leave this work.” *Key Informant 3*

“My husband is earning 12000 rupees a month and my two sons are working and earning daily wages of Rs 550 every day. So even if I do not do this work I can manage with my husband’s and son’s income. Even if I do not do this work my house will run. But then again I think that I can earn some money and utilise it for my own expenses.” *CSW – Munmi*

“Actually I want to leave this work only because the only tension I had was for my daughter. Now my daughter got married herself. She got married nicely and staying nicely. I have no more tension. Now I have a younger brother next to me who is little ill mentally so his wife and two kids I am looking after. If they want or need something I only give them. That is why I am still doing the work. If this problem was not there I would have stopped doing this work totally. Now knowingly I do not feel like leaving this work and suffering.” *CSW – Aruna*

“I wanted to show my family and husband that I can look after my son on my own. I also bought land and property in my village and also bought a night super bus. I have made enough money now and can return to my village and start a shop there and do business there.” *CSW – Arifa*

“I took up the responsibility of my whole family. At one time I used to earn a lot of money, but whatever I earned I was not able to use much on myself, but completed building a house in my village.” *CSW – Nilima*

Interestingly, in my interview with a key informant who is director of a shelter home (Ujjwala Centre) for rescued girls from trafficking, she mentioned that girls who are trafficked against their will and have been rescued have the willingness to leave sex work. The CSWs who have entered voluntarily after meeting madams or pimps although out of financial compulsions have less desire to leave and exit sex work.

In rare cases such as one ex- sex worker, she said that she was more determined to find some other work because of the fact that she had a baby and she did not want her child to have any kind of bad influence because of her sex work. Also other facts like her husband and her other family members became aware of her work and were asking her to leave the work. She also had better educational qualification compared to most other sex workers who are involved in this work who hardly have any skills or qualifications, her husband’s income was improving slowly and support from other family members to look for other jobs/livelihood opportunities made her stick to her decision and not return to sex work again.

4) Support from the society

In the context of Assamese society it seems that the sex workers were not confident of coming out or opening up to the mainstream society as sex workers. There were instances where if the neighbourhood came to identify them as sex workers they would be chased out of their homes or localities. Support from the society for the sex work profession is necessary for sex workers to exit and reintegrate, otherwise any reintegration has to be in secrecy, which can have its own share of damaging consequences.

“This job is not accepted by anyone in our society, no religion or caste will allow this to happen. No man will allow his woman to go and sleep with another man. Even if the man is blind he will not allow his wife to go and sleep with another man. Then how will the society accept this job.” *CSW – Afsana*

“Society should accept this work also. I want to tell something, if today I tie my stomach and lie down at home the society will not come to feed me or give. So they do not have a right to tell me anything also. If someone tells me this kind of words, I directly tell it to them, ok come and feed us.” *CSW – Aruna*

“The first problem that the girls face while going into the mainstream society is that when we try and send back the girl to their homes, even if the family is willing to accept the girl back, the village is not willing to take her back into their village or society. Then our counselor has to go there and conduct meetings. We tell them that the girl was with us, she has been learning works with us.” *Key Informant 9*

Institutional Conditions

1) Educational support for children

The cost of education makes it difficult for sex workers to think about leaving their source of income. Although universal education for children up to 16 years is provided by the Indian government in government schools, there is no similar provision for higher secondary and beyond. Due to the poor implementation of the universal education scheme for children upto 16 years too, these government schools have issues of poor infrastructure, absentee teachers etc. as a result of which they are not a preferred schooling option for Assamese who have the option to choose.

“I paid 100,000 rupees for my son’s admission fee in the engineering college. I had put my son in good private schools and colleges earlier.” *CSW- Arifa*

“When my daughter passed her class 10 exam everyone in my locality was very happy. My daughter is going to give MA entrance exam by the end of this month. My daughter is asking me to leave this job now and I have told her that once she finishes her studies and finds a government job I will leave this job totally.” *CSW-Anima*

2) Social security nets

There are few schemes in Assam that target informal workers in factories as well as social health insurance for the BPL (Below Poverty Line) people. However, access is very difficult for many sex workers due to the many legal documents required which the sex workers do not have the awareness of or even the time to look for. Most often the benefits available from the schemes are also not worth the effort. In this situation, social security nets in the form of micro-finance assistance to start up a business, revolving funds among Self-Help Group members etc. can be provided.

“There is neither any help from the government nor any help from the NGOs. There are so many needy persons than me how can the government help me alone. There is a girl who will come to meet you. She is so poor, her husband left her and she has two kids, how will she take care of herself and her kids now.” *CSW –Munmi*

“We have received no help from the government. Some people have received some help from government through some schemes and all. But we have not received anything till now.” *CSW- Ritu*

“No help is there from the government side; unless someone gets affected by HIV/AIDs then may be some health related services are provided.” *CSW –Nilima*

“We have even given some of them with small wooden boxes to open Pan Shop. But it was from our own side and was not under any government scheme or anything. The wooden box comes for 2000-3000 rupees and if the initial supplies are given for say 1000-2000 rupees, the total cost will come around 4000-5000. That is how they run their houses. But even then they would be contracting girls for the customers as a side business. Because they are old now and they keep other girls under them now. They do pimping work after they stop doing the work themselves.” *FG Discussion*

3) Legal support

Majority of the sex workers have little to no education and many of them find it difficult to access relevant documents such as ID cards, Voter ID cards etc. Due to this they also are unable to access any schemes that come from the government such as subsidies for the poor, health insurance for the poor, housing schemes for the poor, etc. that could have made their life a bit easier. Access to free legal assistance is important for these women.

“I do not have any Aadhar card (unique identification authority card) or identity card. But if we have them then it will become better for us.” *CSW-Afsana*

“We have told them about some schemes from the government in their villages where the government is providing money to the villagers for building houses. We have provided them with the information but it is up to them if they want to take the facility or not, because we cannot help further with that. We try and help them with whatever possible from our side but because most of them do not have documents they are unable to access the services and schemes of the government.” *Key Informant 4*

4) Safe working conditions in informal industries

A few of the study participants mentioned cases of sexual harassment, being approached by men and being asked for sexual favours without any payment in their previous jobs. This made them unwilling to keep working at these places and also made them think about engaging in sex work for payment. As many of the informal industries in Guwahati, Assam are unregulated, the vulnerability of poor uneducated girls/women is often preyed upon by men. Informal industries, factories, construction sites, maid services, etc. need to have policies and regulations that protect the rights of these women.

V. CONCLUSION

The study findings show that the sex work occupation in Guwahati is highly mobile and largely hidden with no designated red light area and absence of brothels as found in other states in India and other countries. The CSWs can be broadly separated into two namely the high class sex workers dealing with the higher income clientele and the low class sex workers who deal with the general public. The participants of this study mainly belong to the lower class sex workers although there are crossovers, and they are more vulnerable to financial hardship, to sexually transmitted diseases, have little to no education and engage in labour intensive occupations. The sex industry operates through a hidden well-knit social network and there is a lot of luring into sex work, pimping activity going on due to the profitable incentives involved. The primary target of these madams and pimps are women in financial hardships, working in labour intensive jobs and with little to no education. With a highly mobile operation, the sexual encounter also takes place either at the houses of the CSW, houses of the pimps and madams or at pre-arranged places such as dhabas or lodges in the city. For the CSWs of Guwahati, there are several barriers to exit the sex work occupation and reintegration into mainstream society. Foremost is the profitability of sex work, which in stark contrast to the other occupations available to these girls provides a higher income. Financial hardship is both a cause and barrier to exit sex work as these girls remember their financial conditions at their initiation and have developed a reliance on income from sex work. The fact that there is a lot of in-migration happening from the other districts of Assam or peripheral areas of Guwahati looking for better income opportunities and the existence of madams and pimps who are always looking for potential sex workers among these vulnerable women to increase their own earnings adds to the difficulty. Many girls are victims of failed marriages, financially unstable husbands, and having children to look after. Social institutions such as the patriarchal system that exist in the Assamese society where women have no property rights after getting married or instances like in-laws not wanting to look after the widowed or separated wife makes it further difficult for these women. The need of paying a huge sum of money or other household gifts (dowry) at the time of marriage by the parents of the girl also compels the parents and girls to get married early as she is seen as a burden on the family unlike the son in a family who is seen as an investment by the parents for their old age. These belief systems are more pronounced among the less educated and economically poor off people. As a result, the girls are ill-equipped to take up employment after a failed marriage or death of a husband resulting in some girls resorting to sex work. The pressure of putting the children in good schools and giving them all the facilities which they could not afford themselves also makes poor women look out for any source of income which is available. There is also very limited awareness and interest (possibly due to illiteracy, the lost working hours and very marginal gains from the schemes themselves) from the poor households to apply to different government schemes such as health insurance for the BPL families, different types of national ID cards, subsidised food grains etc. that might have aided their household financing. This results in many of these girls not having legal documents, with the fate worst for those who may have migrated from the neighbouring countries. Literature from various countries have shown that there are some enabling conditions that can alleviate these girls from a reliance on sex work and even stop sex work and reintegrate back into the

society. These conditions are both at the macro level such as alternate earning options as well as at the micro-level taken here to mean the individual level. At the individual level, literature has shown that certain critical life events such as the birth of a child, or a marriage can make a sex worker decide to exit. A similar finding is found in Guwahati, where a husband finding financial stability and the welfare of their new girl child made a sex worker to exit the occupation. Another critical event was the girl's family finding out about her involvement in sex work. It has to be said that some family members such as mother, sisters etc. of these girls are aware of their involvement in sex work but are dependent on their monetary support and do not object as long as the girls send money back to them. For a sex worker to move towards exiting sex work, she needs a financially stable husband or partner, less dependency from her family on her earnings, educational support for her children and importantly a new viable alternative livelihood option which effectively should be able to provide her enough income to manage a household. Literature in countries such as Kenya has also shown that alternate livelihood strategies such as micro-enterprises for sex workers can lead to sex workers stopping sex work and reducing their reliance on sex work for income and reducing their sexual partners. At the moment, very little provisions have been offered or made available to the sex workers of Guwahati. It is possible that similar strategies will achieve similar successes with the sex workers of Guwahati, Assam. The strategy needed for Guwahati based on the findings is both preventive, to be able to stop vulnerable women from entering sex work, and rehabilitative, to reduce reliance on sex work and eventually exit by replacement of income source with an alternate livelihood option.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings have shown that the CSWs in Guwahati share many similarities with their peers elsewhere on the issue of exit and reintegration. However, there are many barriers and conditions that remain unique to Guwahati, Assam and that entails a contextualized approach to provide recommendations towards any new intervention strategy.

- Firstly, the majority of CSWs (excluding high end escorts) in Guwahati share a common profile of being in poor financial condition, having little to no education, engaged in labour intensive low skilled-low pay jobs and got initiated into sex work through madams and pimps, be it friends or acquaintances at previous jobs. Based on this finding, the link between the network of the sex industry madams/pimps and the vulnerability of women having the aforementioned characteristics into initiation to sex work can be seen. The lack of regulation in the informal sector e.g. factories, construction sites, maid services etc. also make it unsafe for these women who are already vulnerable due to their poor economic conditions. As such, a possible intervention strategy can include preventive steps addressing the vulnerability of these women before initiation. These would involve awareness generation through outreach and advocacy and legal aid for safer working conditions for women in informal industries.
- Secondly, majority of CSWs rely on sex work income to manage their households but are not averse to alternative livelihoods as many of them do engage in other odd jobs besides sex work as they become older. Exit from sex work has to be seen as a gradual process of reducing a reliance on sex work income and not an event, by taking up alternate commercial activities, building confidence and eventually replacing sex work with the other livelihood activity. To be able to reduce this dependency on sex work income, a rehabilitative strategy comprising of risk free micro-loans for small businesses, skill development and mentorship, legal aid to support access to government schemes and advocacy can be provided.
- Thirdly, further research study can be commissioned building on the findings of this study. This may include mapping studies of the at risk population, vulnerability assessments as well as occupational health and safety to promote the highest degree of physical, mental and social well-being of informal sector workers in Guwahati, Assam.

Annex 1: Logical model of alternative livelihood intervention for Guwahati, Assam

Target population	Females in Guwahati between the age group of 16-35 years working in low skilled labour intensive occupations, with low education and income inclusive of both locals and migrants as well as those already engaged in sex work				
Target number	2000 (to be revised after mapping study)				
Strategies	Proposed activities	Inputs	Outputs	Outcomes	Means of verification
Prevention outreach	Mapping of target population Vulnerability & Risk Assessment of target population	Assessment study	Assessment study completed with mapping data and vulnerability/risk profiles by first 2 months	Data on vulnerable women and their risk and vulnerability profiles available for intervention program	Study hard copy
	Weekly outreach to labour intensive jobs sites, labour intensive workers to build awareness about vulnerability, dangers of pimps and sex industry & alternative options Identification of new target (new migrants etc.)	IEC material on prevention of trafficking, sex work	outreach sessions conducted with 2000 target population by year 1	2000 vulnerable women sensitized and diverted from the pimps and sex work by year 1	Project reports
	Advocacy with supervisors and owners of factories, industries, construction companies	Advocacy package for safe workplace policies for women	Sensitization and advocacy meetings conducted with xx number of supervisors and owners of informal industries and job sites by year 1	Xx number of supervisors and owners of informal industries and job sites sensitized on safe workplace conditions for women XX number of informal industries have workplace polices on safety and equal rights for women	Project reports Workplace policies signed

	Free legal assistance through helpline and in person at Guwahati court	Helpline Legal volunteers	Helpline number provided to target group Legal aid cell established with legal volunteers	Target pop are able to get legal aid and receive assistance throughout the year	Project reports
	Spouse/partner counselling sessions	Counselling module Counsellor	Counselling sessions conducted for xx number of married target families conducted by year 1	Xx number of married partners are able to discuss openly their hardships, and understand the risk of separation as well as the steps to supporting each other	Project reports
Rehabilitati on Services	Enlisting and providing low risk loans	Micro-finance/loan for low risk small business activities	Xx number of target pop are enlisted and started on small business by year 1	Xx number of target pop are able to reduce reliance on sex income and able to depend on small business income by year 1	Project reports
	Skill development training	Facility based courses	Xx number of target pop are trained on different skills as per their profile by year 1	Xx number of target pop are able to independently run a small business using their training by year 1	Project reports
	Business skills training (financial literacy, opening bank account etc.)	Training package/module	Xx number of target pop are trained on different skills as per their profile by year 1	Xx number of target pop are able to independently run a small business using their training by year 1	Project reports
	Mentorship	Mentor	Xx number of target pop have access to a mentor for small businesses by year 1	Xx number of target pop have clear cut plans and independently run a small business with guidance from mentor by year 2	Project reports
	Promotion of a savings culture	Part of training pack			
	Free legal assistance	Legal/accompanied assistance for ID cards, government subsidies, social health insurance, other schemes	Helpline number provided to target group Legal aid cell established with legal volunteers	Helpline number provided to target group Legal aid cell established with legal volunteers	Xx number of target pop are able to get legal aid and receive assistance throughout the year Xx number of target pop are able to access ID cards, other government subsidies, social health insurance

		Advocacy for property rights, safe workplace polices, regulation for women in informal industries		and schemes Workplace polices on safety and equal right of women in informal industries Evidences for advocacy on property rights, inheritance rights for women etc. collected	
	Education scholarships/loans	Educational loans/scholarship for children of CSWs	Mapping on access to financial assistance for education of children of CSWs conducted	Access to financial assistance for education of children of CSWs established	Project reports
	Linkages set up with CSR divisions of public private institutions, government departments for sustainability	Linkages strategy/plan	Linkage developed with CSR divisions of xx number of public private institutions by year 1	XX number of target pop are able to get financial assistance/micro-loans from CSR for their small business by year 2	Project reports MOU signed

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