



“Speaker Upholds Sex Workers’ Dignity in Parliament”

“Are we not women Madam Minister?”

26th July 2018

Sex workers across the country welcomed the timely intervention of the Honourable Speaker of the Lok Sabha Ms Sumitra Mahajan, to uphold the right of sex workers to approach the Ministry of Women and Child to discuss a proposed legislation that will have a tremendously adverse impact on their lives.

The National Network of Sex Workers (NNSW) condemned the statement of Ms Maneka Gandhi Minister for Women and Child Department, for making disparaging remarks about sex workers in the Parliament during a discussion on the Trafficking Bill 2018. She stated during the response to the discussions in Lok Sabha *"I am going to be wicked. There are two types of representatives who came to me. One was the Victims of Trafficking and the other was sex workers. Dr. Tharoor accompanied the representatives of sex workers."* One MP objected to the delegation sex workers. The Hon Speaker immediately and forcefully stepped in to insist that sex workers had a legitimate appointment with the Minister, and that is not unparliamentary.

The NNSW, representing sex workers across the country acknowledges the consistent commitment of Dr Shashi Tharoor to highlight the issues of this marginalised community.

For the past two years since the first draft of the Bill was posted on the website, NNSW has attempted to highlight its grievances and specific concerns with the Bill. The concerns of over 250 activists, lawyers and civil society organisations on the proposed Bill, along with the list of signatories to the Coalition 260 were personally handed over to the Minister.

However, as the Minister charged with respecting and upholding the dignity of all women in India, including women who in sex work; snide and improper remarks in Parliament unfortunately reemphasised the stigma with which society views sex workers.

Sex workers are not a source of entertainment or snide laughter for MPs, but workers who earn so that their families have a chance at an equitable life, like all citizens of this country.

“Do we not have the right to be heard by Ministers, Governments and Members of Parliament? Are we according to you so reprehensible that it is ok to make us the butt of your humour at the cost of dignity? Are we not citizens of India entitled to dignity? Are we not women Madam Minister?” asks the NNSW

Signed

Jwala Shakti Samuh (JSS), Jharkhand

Karnataka Sex Workers Union (KSWU), Karnataka
Kerala Network of Sex Workers (KNSW), Kerala
Me and My World, Andhra Pradesh
Mitra, Maharashtra
Muskan, Maharashtra
Nirangal Federation, Tamil Nadu
Saheli Sangh, Pune, Maharashtra
Stree Sanghatan, Chota Udaipur
Uttara Karnataka Mahila Okkuta (UKMO), Karnataka
Vadamalar Federation, Tamil Nadu
Veshya Anyay Mukti Parishad (VAMP), Maharashtra
Kutch Mahila Vikas Sanstha (KMVS), Gujarat
Sampada Grameen Mahila Sanstha (SANGRAM), Maharashtra
Samraksha, Karnataka
Sangama, Karnataka
South India AIDS Action Project (SIAAP), Tamil Nadu
Srijan Foundation (SRIJAN), Jharkhand
Vikalp, Gujarat
Women's Initiatives (WINS), Andhra Pradesh