



Report of results of national monitoring work

The present report reflects the results of the national monitoring work conducted by **Associação Tiyané Vavasate**, an organisation focused on advocating for the rights of vulnerable women with a special focus on women sex workers in Mozambique. The document presents the results of the monitoring carried out on the follow-up of the recommendations of the shadow report by the government of Mozambique.

CEDAW Recommendations:

The absence of data on the number of investigations and prosecutions in cases of gender-based violence against women and the sentences imposed on perpetrators;

They systematically collect data on the number of reports, investigations, prosecutions, convictions and the sentences imposed on perpetrators of gender-based violence against women.

1. Main actions taken by the government of Mozambique in response to CEDAW recommendations regarding sex work:

- At the level of police stations and police posts there is an office of assistance to family and minors who are victims of domestic violence and in these offices it is already possible to obtain information on cases of violence against women sex workers;
- Availability of a government report on violence against women sex workers;
- Currently issues related to women's rights and protection have received special attention around the world and Mozambique is not left out as it is also possible to note the growing interest of the government of Mozambique for actions that contribute positively to the protection and empowerment of women. These actions include women sex workers.
- Holding talks in the hot zones of the country with the aim of sensitising sex workers to maintain a good coexistence and to know where to go in case they suffer some type of violence.

2. Impacts of the measures taken by the government



- Although not directly, the facilities that the Mozambican government offers to associations and individuals interested in working with sex worker research or support already show some interest in the good of this group of professionals. Some sex worker organisations are leading efforts to promote human rights and access to justice services in Mozambique. Community empowerment services aimed at reducing violence, stigma and discrimination include sensitisation training and a helpline for sex workers.
- There are already indications of the creation and future availability of a database on cases of violence against women sex workers. This will allow for an improvement in the handling and monitoring of these cases. According to the data available in some police stations located near sex workers' work areas, it is possible to verify that there was a reduction in the number of reports in the period between 2019 and 2021. Although it is not known whether this reduction means an improvement in the safety of sex workers or fear of reporting.
- The need to draw up a report on the situation of women sex workers has led the Mozambican government to train technicians to be able to attend to cases that appear at strategic points for data collection (hospitals and police stations)
- The awareness of police officers on human rights reduced the level of violence they committed against sex workers since sex work in Mozambique is not a crime and the Constitution of the Republic guarantees respect for all human rights and freedoms.
- The guarantee and access to justice facilities offered by the Mozambican government, including for sex workers, is a victory in the fight against all types of violence because it makes it possible to denounce and penalise those who abuse or rape women.
- According to the laws in force in Mozambique the act of sex work itself is not illegal, but the activities associated with this practice, such as managing a space that promotes sex in exchange for money or luring people into prostitution and gaining profits from the practice. The fact that there is no



clearer and more objective legal framework about sex work and female sex workers remains a major obstacle for all movements that seek to improve the safety and protection conditions of this group of women who use sex as a source of livelihood for their families.

- The number of sex workers dying from violence has reduced significantly in recent years. Awareness about human rights has brought a new approach to sex workers and the local police now look at them as people who also deserve respect and consideration. Before being sex workers, they are human beings, they are women and they have rights like all women in the world.

3. Barriers

- Limited access to justice due to low level of knowledge of sex workers' rights;
- In some cases the aggressors are privileged by the police;
- The lack of inclusion on sex work in the penal code;
- Involvement of sex workers in reports that talk about sex work;
- Amicable resolution of cases of violence forced by the police;
- Existence of some police officers who do not know the laws;
- Note that these barriers were the same as those cited by women sex workers in the focus group discussions held in various provinces of Mozambique.

3.Challenges

- Programmes should be set up to improve awareness-raising on human rights;
- There is a need to sensitise sex workers on the importance of reporting any kind of violence by their clients;
- Introducing data on women sex workers in the government's report to CEDAW;



- The legislation on sex work is still unclear, despite efforts by various organisations to improve the Mozambican state's view of the importance of including sex workers in the social life of the country. sex work is not a crime and is not legal. Data from previous research on Violence Against Sex Workers in Mozambique indicates that sex workers in Mozambique experience high levels and multiple forms of violence.

The need to develop a database with concrete information on the number of investigations and prosecutions against individuals who abuse sex workers.

Through the interviews it was possible to see that in Mozambique sex work is still seen as an immoral act and is related to drug use, sex workers are ignored by society and the few who look at these workers are with contempt and pity. In some provinces sex workers experience improved relations with the police. There is a calmness in the hot zones and this contributes positively when deciding to file a concern or complaint with the police. Sex workers feel that the cases they bring to the police stations have had an outcome. There are trials and the guilty are convicted.

Sex workers still suffer from some of the oppression, exclusion, discrimination and stigma associated with sex work. Stigma also prevents the formation of a sense of belonging to a group, that is, it refers to the absence of a professional identity.

When placed in a problem or discussion involving sex workers and clients, it is still possible to observe that the police always blame the sex workers. According to one of our interviewees:

"Police officers always prove the customers right. Everything bad that happens in the hot zone is the fault of the sex workers".

Although they are not yet involved in government reporting sex workers feel welcomed. When new measures or procedures are introduced The Mozambican government institution has always sought to listen to sex workers in order to understand their position.

Sex workers continue to face criminalisation, violence, discrimination and other forms of human rights violations, which contributes to an increased fear of going to a police station or health post.



Many of the human rights challenges, vulnerabilities and barriers faced by sex workers in accessing justice stem from criminalisation and the lack of a consistent legal framework on sex work in Mozambique.

The sale or purchase of sex is partly or fully criminalised as are many other aspects of sex work, and in some, general criminal law is applied to criminalize sex work in Mozambique. This paragraph reflects some cases of people who use their houses to force women to do sex work but that the money goes to them, they end up accepting to have a roof over their heads or food.

Most sex workers do not define themselves as victims, nor do they consider themselves to be sexually exploited, which, regardless of whether or not they objectively are, presupposes respect for their way of life. Most women sex workers have considerable power over themselves and their lives, understanding that they do a job like any other, but without rights and the law to protect them.

Decriminalising all aspects of sex work and accepting it as a profession is the best way to defend women who work in this sector and who have serious problems for lack of adequate working conditions, legal protection, trade union representation and the authorities' interest in protecting them.

The government of Mozambique should adopt social and psychological intervention measures for cases of exclusion, as well as legal support for cases of female sex worker victims of violence. It is urgent that government institutions design and implement effective assistance and protection programmes for victims of violence regardless of their profession.

The world of prostitution is marked by contradictions, stigmas and prejudices, with sex workers making an effort to reconstruct the concepts and images attributed to them with a view to breaking away from social representations that are culturally associated with demoralising meanings.



Thus, there is a need to displace the "cultural policy" of exclusion for the social integration which both recognizes and legitimizes the valorization of prostitutes and redefines their social power. Thus, the understanding of the reality experienced by them is only possible when the various categories related to the activity, to gender and to sexuality are analysed, which, when articulated, originate means of oppression and social exclusion which influence the subjective dimension, from what is lived, and how these women perceive themselves and their working activity. In a context of daily violence to which these workers are subjected, there is a need to seek protection and defence mechanisms for women in situations of prostitution that ensure income, education, health, housing and social protection. It is necessary to discuss the sex work in the field of health, citizenship, human rights and social justice from the perspective of building a professional identity in which these women are free from stigmatized values, violence and present themselves as rights holders, respected in their work activity as for any other professional category.

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