

SEX WORK AS WORK

Sex work is work. This simple yet powerful statement frames sex workers not as criminals, victims, vectors of disease, or sinners but as workers. The **right to work**, to **choose one's work**, and to **fair and safe** working conditions are **fundamental human rights**.

Sex Work & The Economy:

Sex work is an income-generating activity.

Sex work enables a decent living, compared to many formal and informal labour market alternatives.

Sex workers contribute to the economy.

Through the income generated from sex work, sex workers support their families.

Sex work is one of the forms of intimate labour, predominantly undertaken by women, which have gender, class and race dimensions and are often informal, undervalued and underpaid.

Sex workers' rights movement is a part of a broader struggle for economic justice.



10 BENEFITS OF LABOUR APPROACH:

Legal protection

If sex work is work, then it is not a crime, making criminalisation an inappropriate legal model. Sex workers are protected by the same labour and other laws that protect the rights of all citizens.



Reduced Stigma

Sex work is accepted as a job and is judged by the same standards that are applied to other jobs, which reduces both societal and internalised stigma.

Setting standards for decent work

The labour approach recognises the agency of consenting adults and the distinction between sex work and trafficking. That enables the establishment of industry standards, and reduces exploitation.



Freedom to organise and unionise

If sex work is work, sex workers can organise and form associations, collectives and unions like other workers. That empowers them to set industry standards, access legal representation and support, enter into negotiations, mediation and collective bargaining, and launch industrial actions such as strikes.

Reduced violence and police harassment

Where sex work is not recognised as work, lack of access to justice creates impunity for perpetrators of violence against sex workers, including abusive law enforcement.



Improved occupational health and safety

Recognising sex work as work and decriminalisation empower sex workers to insist on condom use and reduce vulnerability to sexual violence and barriers to accessing health services.

Improved access to social protection

When sex workers are recognised as workers, they can access the range of social protections, such as sick pay, pensions, unemployment benefits, parental benefits, disability benefits and workers' compensation for injury at work.



Improved access to social services and resources

Currently, in many countries, sex workers are forced into rescue/rehabilitation/exiting programmes, which violate their right to free choice of employment, and often leave them without realistic economic alternatives. Recognition of sex work as work would allow sex workers to more freely access education and development opportunities.

Free Choice of Employment

Stigma, discrimination and criminalisation prevent sex workers from accessing alternative employment. Recognising sex work as work would reduce barriers such as criminal records and a lack of 'employment history' and recognise sex workers' skills and experience.



Alliances with other workers and broader social movements

The labour approach recognises that many of the unacceptable and exploitative conditions in sex work are not specific to sex work, but exist in the broader context of global economic injustice. It provides an opportunity to form alliances with other groups of workers and broader social movements.

SEX WORKERS CALL FOR THE LEGAL RECOGNITION OF SEX WORK AS WORK!

To learn more about the labour approach, read NSW's Policy Brief: Sex Work as Work

<https://www.nswp.org/resource/policy-brief-sex-work-work> or at <http://bit.ly/sex-work-as-work>