



# Kathmandu Declaration

The Kathmandu Declaration was issued by over 200 sex workers and allies from Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka, who gathered for **renew: South Asia Sex Workers' Summit** from 29 to 31 May 2024 in Kathmandu, Nepal.

This Declaration calls upon governments, multilateral agencies, the United Nations, civil society organisations, and law and policy makers to:



- **Commit to advancing sex worker rights** and respect the voices of democratic and inclusive movements led by sex workers over the last 30 years across these countries.
- **Recognise sex workers' consistent, creative and sustainable contribution** in reducing HIV, STIs and trafficking in South Asia.
- **Recognise that sex workers' rights are human rights.** Sex workers at the summit **asserted** that what they need are rights and opportunities, not rehabilitation or rescue. Rescue and rehabilitation are stigmatising and disrespectful because sex workers are not treated as having individual will or agency. Sex workers' rights should go beyond the right to access/receive services. They must include the right to practise their profession free from harassment and stigma.



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- **Recognise sex work as work.** We reject the consistent conflation of sex work with trafficking, and sex work with violence.
- **Respect the dignity of labour** and ensure safe working conditions for sex work. Sex work needs a space, a client, a third party and the sex worker. All of these should be able to operate in safe and private spaces, online and offline.
- **Ensure that laws and policies reflect the lived experiences of sex workers,** including decriminalisation of sex work. The laws on trafficking, vagrancy, loitering and others which are used by law enforcement to harass, intimidate and violate sex workers' human rights should be repealed.
- **Secure available, accessible, acceptable, and quality health services for all.** Sex workers must have access to free health care services, including access to safe abortion and comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services.



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- **Ensure equality and non-discrimination** for children of sex workers. Children of sex workers<sup>1</sup> at the summit recognised the labour that their mothers put in to raise them and are proud of their contribution.
- **Commit to active solidarity with sex worker movements.**

The summit recognised the extraordinary contribution of sex worker movements in realising civic rights and entitlements for sex workers and breaking systemic and structural barriers. The summit was a celebration of the power of collectivisation, the strength and resilience of diverse sex worker movements in the region, and the joy and inspiration we get from the arts.

<sup>1</sup>Amra Padatik, self-led organisation of children of sex workers from West Bengal, India