



# Sex Workers in Conflict Zones and Humanitarian Crises

Sex workers are disproportionately affected by humanitarian crises and conflicts due to structural barriers and intersecting forms of oppression which increase their vulnerability to violence, economic hardship, and human rights abuses.



## Core Humanitarian Principles

In line with international humanitarian law, humanitarian action must be guided by the principles of:

- **HUMANITY**
- **NEUTRALITY**
- **IMPARTIALITY**
- **INDEPENDENCE**



## Challenges Faced in Conflict Zones and Humanitarian Crises

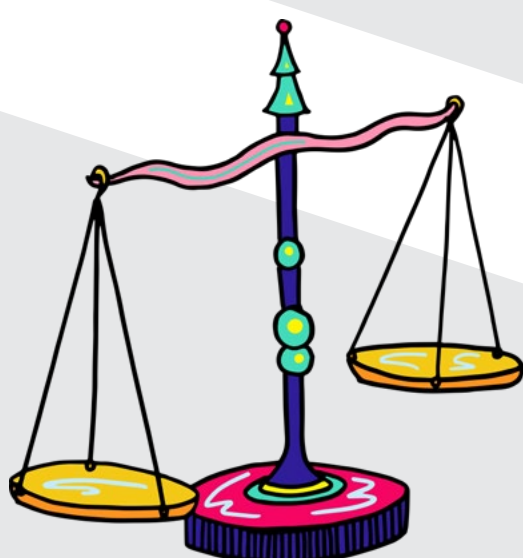
### Violence and Abuse

Sex workers are disproportionately impacted by violence in conflict zones and humanitarian settings, including gender-based violence. The breakdown of law and order creates conditions in which violence and abuse can occur with greater impunity.



### Socioeconomic Challenges

Greater financial need during crises and conflict can reduce negotiation power with clients, increasing sex workers' vulnerability to violence, HIV, STIs, and unintended pregnancy. This vulnerability is exacerbated by sex workers' exclusion from many state social protection schemes and emergency aid responses.



### Legal and Bureaucratic Issues

Sex workers face significant legal and bureaucratic barriers, which are multiplied for those who have migrated or been displaced due to conflict, disasters, and other humanitarian crises.



### Reduced Access to Services and Support

Humanitarian crises and conflicts reduce the availability and quality of healthcare, harm reduction services, and legal support. Humanitarian responses seldom consider the needs and priorities of sex workers. Sex workers trying to access humanitarian services and support may encounter stigma and discrimination from service providers, and lack of confidentiality and privacy.



### Exclusion from Planning and Programming

Structural barriers limit sex workers' involvement in all stages of developing, implementing, and monitoring humanitarian responses. Stigma and discrimination make it harder for sex worker-led organisations to partner and meaningfully engage with humanitarian groups and international agencies.



## Community Empowerment and Sex Worker-Led Interventions

Sex worker-led organisations have developed and implemented initiatives in conflict zones and humanitarian settings, including:

- Peer education and outreach on health and safety topics
- Emergency support and rapid crisis response measures
- Conducting needs assessments
- Working with governments and humanitarian actors to provide recommendations, guidance, and expertise.



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