

Embargoed until noon BST, 22 June 2023

Wellington, New Zealand, 22 June 2023

Sex workers experience a wide range of human rights violations

New data released today show that sex workers around the world experience a wide range of human rights violations. Sex workers, like all people, have a range of fundamental human rights guaranteed by international treaties, and governments worldwide are required to respect and protect those rights. The new data make it clear that many governments are failing in this duty.

Data released today by the Human Rights Measurement Initiative (HRMI) identify sex workers as a group that is particularly at risk of human rights violations. HRMI's qualitative research was conducted in 30 countries around the world, and in 2023, for the first time, collected specific data on the experiences of sex workers. In 27 of the countries surveyed, local human rights experts identified sex workers as being at extra risk of a range of rights violations.

HRMI found that sex workers were at risk of violations for nearly every right measured, including the rights to food, education, work, freedom from arbitrary arrest and detention, freedom from torture and ill-treatment, and freedom of opinion and expression.

Sex workers who were part of the LGBTQIA+ community were at extra risk for these violations. For example, transgender sex workers in Brazil were particularly at risk of torture and ill-treatment, and in the Maldives, LGBTQIA+ sex workers were at extra risk of forced disappearance, especially if they were migrants from Bangladesh.

Among the findings, HRMI data show that sex workers in nearly every country in the sample were at heightened risk of having their right to freedom from arbitrary arrest and detention violated, and were not able to express themselves freely or enjoy their democratic freedoms.

For example:

- Sex workers in Thailand have no social security safety net
- Sex workers in India find that their children miss out on education
- In Mexico, sex workers face poor working conditions
- Sex workers in Kyrgyzstan can be easily evicted from their homes
- In China, sex workers are at risk for their right to work being violated due to government crackdowns.

HRMI Global Spokesperson Thalia Kehoe Rowden, said, "It's clear from our data that sex workers are being mistreated and neglected by governments around the world. People doing sex work have all the same human rights as everyone else, and their rights need to be respected."

This new information shows where and how sex workers are being mistreated by governments and shows governments where they can improve their respect for the rights of sex workers.

—END—

About the Rights Tracker: The Rights Tracker is a global project to track the human rights performance of countries systematically. Our 2023 dataset launched today includes annual data on eight civil and political rights for up to 44 countries from the years 2017 to 2022, with Bangladesh, Thailand, and the Maldives added this year. Our data also include inaugural scores on the right to freedom of religion and belief in a pilot set of nine countries. Annual data on five economic and social rights for 196 countries from 2007 to 2020, based on the award-winning SERF Index methodology, is also available. Please visit rightstracker.org for the freely available dataset.

About HRMI: The Human Rights Measurement Initiative (HRMI) is an independent non-profit organisation part of a global movement building a world where all people can flourish. We track the human rights progress of countries, producing robust data that anyone can use to push for improvements in how governments treat people. What gets measured gets improved: if something isn't being systematically measured, it can be more easily overlooked and undervalued. HRMI data make it easier for decision-makers to monitor their progress, and prioritise human rights. Advocacy based on sound information is one of the key drivers of change. www.humanrightsmmeasurement.org

For media inquiries, please contact:

Thalia Kehoe Rowden

Strategy and Communication Lead, and Global Spokesperson:

thalia.kehoerowden@hrmi.ngo