Many organizations, including those providing HIV services, are keen to exploit the potential benefits of ICT for sex workers. Many organizations and developers are advised to PROCEED WITH EXTREME CAUTION and consult with the sex work community. However, the same advances have also presented new risks: issues around privacy and confidentiality. Being stalked, harassed, and outed as a sex worker online are major concerns. Working online can also result in social isolation and a loss of a sense of sex worker community. However, the risk of being stalked, harassed, blackmailed, or sued online can increase.

RECRUITING CLIENTS

There is a vast number of websites, where sex workers can communicate directly with potential clients. These websites enable a sex worker to post content, create profiles, and set their rates—thereby recruiting clients. However, it can come with a greater chance of detection by authorities.

SCREENING

ICT provides sex workers with multiple opportunities to screen clients. Apps and websites can be used to check biometric data, show identity documents, or provide any vetted data that is required. The community around sex work is about connecting with sex workers, not buying or selling anything.

PAYMENT

With ICT sex workers can be paid electronically, not having to carry large sums of cash is of great benefit, especially in places where sex workers are vulnerable to being robbed of their earnings or having to hand over their money to corrupt police. Cameras on smartphones enable sex workers to gather evidence of human rights violations.

OUTREACH

Outreach was identified as the most challenging area. Many organisations felt they had ideas, but lacked the resources—both funding and human capital. It can also mean increased competition and time-wasting fake ‘clients’.

ADVISORY

Sex workers and their organisations are social media novices. Sex workers and their organisations lack the necessary skills and the establishment of internet hubs is needed. ICT projects could include training in computer literacy, as well as literacy and education levels, stable living situations, and those living in the Global South. These projects could include training in computer skills and the establishment of internet hubs.

IMPACT ON POLICE HARASSMENT, ABUSE AND VIOLENCE

In countries where sex work is criminalised, police harassment and arrests can decline somewhat due to ICT, in keeping with the decline in numbers of demonstrators against heterosexual-based sex work. However, the risk of being stalked, harassed, blackmailed, or sued online can increase.

PAYMENT

ICT can increase income, reduce working hours, and make business easier and more convenient. Many sex workers feel that ICT enabled them to attract better paying clients and to tap into a wider pool of clients. However, the risk of being stalked, harassed, blackmailed, or sued online can increase.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Sex workers should be able to access services without being detected. If exposed, they may lose clients, close down documents, or receive any vetted data that is required. Sex workers should be able to access services without being detected. If exposed, they may lose clients, close down documents, or receive any vetted data that is required.

MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT INSTANT MESSAGING

Many people assume that instant messaging is always anonymous and confidential. This is not the case. A user's online activity is tracked by the service provider and can be tracked by authorities, as well as their authorities.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SERVICE PROVIDERS

ICT: THE DOUBLE-EDGED SWORD

The internet has brought about changes in the sex industry. Over the past decade, sex work has seen a rapid and unprecedented shift away from street-based and venue-based work to online work mediated by information and Communication Technologies (ICT). A large part of the industry has become invisible.

In countries where sex work is criminalised, police harassment and arrests can decline somewhat due to ICT, in keeping with the decline in numbers of demonstrators against heterosexual-based sex work. Given the many benefits of ICT use for sex workers, organisations could initiate projects which increase the awareness of sex workers of their rights and support, as well as their rights and support, as well as their rights and support.

In countries where sex work is criminalised, police harassment and arrests can decline somewhat due to ICT, in keeping with the decline in numbers of demonstrators against heterosexual-based sex work. However, the same advances have also presented new risks: issues around privacy and confidentiality. Being stalked, harassed, and outed as a sex worker online are major concerns. Working online can also result in social isolation and a loss of a sense of sex worker community.

Learn more at: https://www.smart-service-provider-guide-ict-and-sex.org/


