

Sex Workers Want to Teach Police Sensitivity Lesson

by Daniel Thimmayya

Chennai: If there's one place that you'd never have expected a sex worker to operate in, it has to be the Police Academy. But if the All India Network of Sex Workers (AINSW) has their way, the induction training for all police officers in the country could have a sex worker as a mandatory resource person. This is to reduce violence against the sex workers as well as have police accord protection to them in a 'sensitive manner'.

"If someone attacks a regular woman, they will go to a police station. But if someone attacks us, we are afraid

to go to the police, as the case is often turned against us," laments Sultana, a sex worker in Rajasthan and president of the AINSW board. This was one of the major demands that arose during the two-day board meeting in Chennai.

More members of the board like Kusum from New Delhi and Geetha from Tamil Nadu outlined how more than half the incidents of violence against them was not from touts and gangsters, but policemen. "There is almost no way we can stop policemen from calling us prostitutes or inflicting violence on us, but at least if we can show trainee policemen that we

are normal human beings — mothers, sisters and wives — plying a profession, then they may not take a moral dislike to us," said Geetha, propaganda secretary and Tamil Nadu representative.

With representatives from across the country drawing up recommendations to make to the Social Welfare Ministry, the most common demand was for their profession to be declared legal and included in the labour department.

Setting up of welfare boards in all states, a lawyer to represent their rights and sanctioning of loans and voter identity cards for sex workers.