

# MYTHS ABOUT PROSTITUTION



#Fight\_Prostitution  
#Fight\_Trafficking

Our opinions and ideas about prostitution and how it operates are built upon several “myths” and misconceptions. This booklet lists and refutes some of the most common misconceptions and myths about prostitution with the purpose of showing that they are unfounded and misleading. Our aim is to raise awareness in our society so that we cease to advocate for these myths as infallible or undeniable facts.

The myths below fall within the scope of KAFA’s work on fighting the sexual exploitation and trafficking of women and girls, namely the “Hawa Ma Byinchara” campaign launched in 2014, which focuses on the responsibility of the buyers of sexual acts in perpetuating the sex industry and the exploitation of persons in prostitution.

**“Prostitution is a profession; it is the oldest profession in the world”**

To be considered a profession, any economic activity must provide the bare minimum of human dignity and personal security. However, in prostitution, women and girls are subject to all types of physical, psychological, and sexual violence perpetrated by the sex buyer, the pimp, and the human trafficker. Statistics show, in fact, that mortality among women in prostitution is 40 times higher than women not involved in prostitution. Should prostitution be considered an occupation, then it ought to be offered as a career option for future generations, for both men and women, and maybe taught at colleges and universities. Considering how old prostitution is does not justify its recognition as a de facto phenomenon among societies. Criminality, slavery, and pedophilia are in fact as old.

**Prostitution is not the oldest profession, the work of pimps is!**

## “Prostitution is a woman's free choice”

Prostitution is never a choice in itself; it exists because other choices are missing.

The absolute majority of women in prostitution have entered prostitution because they are poor, in dire need for money, and/or are trapped in difficult social and personal conditions such as psychological, sexual, and physical abuse.

They become easy prey for pimps, facilitators, or traffickers and the majority are encouraged or drawn into prostitution. It is a fact that most women were not yet 18 years old when they entered prostitution; they were teenagers or children, which stands against the notion of free choice.

**Studies conducted in several countries show that more than 90% of the women in prostitution expressed their wish to leave it**

## “Prostitution is a form of sexual freedom and an expression of a woman's right to own her body”

There is a difference between sex and prostitution, between a woman enjoying her right to sexual freedom and a woman offering sexual services imposed on her by the power of money because she is in dire need for it. If the desire to have intercourse is free and mutual, why is money exchanged?

When the buyer uses money, he requests the sexual acts he wishes for, and not those desired by the woman. Prostitution is an expression of a man's sexuality rather than the woman's.

**Eighty percent of the sex buyers that KAFA interviewed watch pornographic movies and admit re-enacting the sex scenes with women in prostitution**

**“ Men have a big sexual appetite that they need to satisfy ”**

We are raised to believe that men have sexual appetites that they cannot control, and which they must satiate even if it requires buying sexual acts. This belief is based on the assumption that a failure to satisfy men's sexual needs will lead to psychological problems and to severe social consequences such as an increase in the percentage of sex assaults and rape in society. In simple terms, this assumption is a social construction, which negatively construes men as creatures that are helplessly controlled by their instincts and sexual needs.

**Many men do not buy sexual services; does this mean they do not have a sexual appetite?**

**“ If women had not offered their services, there wouldn't have been prostitution ”**

In fact, it's the opposite. If there was no demand from buyers of sexual acts, there would be no prostitution or a market providing women and girls of all ages and nationalities to satisfy the needs of buyers. From a purely economic perspective, the equation is very simple: no demand, no supply.

**NO DEMAND, NO SUPPLY**

## “The abolition of prostitution causes an increase in rape”

Many believe that abolishing prostitution will lead to an increase in the number of sexual offenses and rape. Prostitution is believed to help alleviate a man's sexual energy. However, case studies have shown the opposite. Countries that legalized and organized prostitution still suffer from sexual violence and even register an increase in the number of rape crimes.

**Legalizing prostitution reinforces the idea of owning and trading a woman's body, which encourages more sexual violence against women**

## “Legalizing prostitution protects women”

Legalizing prostitution means legalizing the work of pimps and the businesses benefiting from prostitution, such as super night-clubs, brothels, escort agencies, etc. Hence, countries that legalize prostitution become a safe haven for pimps, traffickers, and buyers of sexual acts.

Legalizing prostitution is an explicit recognition that women are available for sale. It hides and normalizes the exploitation and violence that are concomitant with prostitution.

Terms such as “sex work” and “sex workers” are often used in an attempt to remove the social stigma from the persons in prostitution. However, both the stigma and the exploitation remain no matter the terms used. The act of prostitution per se will not change, no matter how varied are the regulatory or the legal frameworks. Whether legalized or not, prostitution will still take place behind closed doors.



**“When prostitution is criminalized, it becomes invisible and less controllable”**

The industry can never be totally invisible as long as buyers can access women in prostitution. On the contrary, since prostitution depends on demand, pimps and traffickers will work to ensure buyers' access to women, whether it is legalized or not. It is also not true that legalizing prostitution abolishes all illegal practices of prostitution. In fact, illegal prostitution remains and even flourishes in countries where prostitution is regularized.

**Decriminalizing women in prostitution, providing them with alternatives, and ceasing to trade them as goods is what actually protects women**

**“Trafficking and prostitution are not the same”**

The United Nations defines trafficking for sexual exploitation as the recruitment or transportation of victims via the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability, for the purpose of sexual exploitation. Here, one can see the interconnection between human trafficking and prostitution since the vast majority of women and girls in prostitution come from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds and this position of weakness is used to recruit or keep these women in prostitution and exploit them.

