

Sex Workers and Trans People take out rallies and protests to oppose Transgender and Trafficking Bills

Karnataka Sex Workers Union, a trade union of male, female and transgender sex workers, which strongly believes that sex work is work, has opposed two current legislative Bills that were being introduced in the upper house of the Indian Parliament in the winter session.

The two Bills are Transgender Persons Bill 2018 and Trafficking of Persons Bill 2018. Opposing these Bills, Sex Workers and Trans People held Public Meetings, street rallies and protests in 11 districts of Karnataka with support of Karnataka Sex Workers Union, Uttar Karnataka Mahila Ookutta, National Network of Sex Workers, Sangama in collaboration with local Community Based Organisations.

The protests which started on Sunday, the 23rd of December in Chikkamagaluru and Shivamogga, spread to Chitradurga, Hassan, Bidar and Chikkaballapura on Monday, the 24th. Scores of sex workers and sexual minorities, including many transgender people participated in the protests and street rallies. Members of Madilu Seva Samsthe took part in the protest in Chikkamagaluru while Raksha Samudaya Sangha actively participated in Shivamogga, where members of Dalit and farmers' movement also supported the community. A group of sex workers and trans people met the Deputy Commissioner of Shivamogga, the next day and submitted a memorandum.

Community organisations, Vahini in Chitradurga, Sangamitra Seva Samasthe in Bidar, Sangamitra Seva Samasthe in Hassan and Karnataka Vikalachethanara Sangha along with Nisarga in Chikkaballapur joined the members of Sex Workers Union, Sangama and NNSW in taking out the rallies.

Ardanarashwari Sangha, the district community organisation of sexual minorities and Pragathi Seva Samasthe, the CBO of sex workers in Bellary took out the protest on Christmas day with a Public meeting and a road show. Community members displayed placards demanding to stop the Transgender Bill and Redraft the Trafficking Bill. On the same day, the sexual minorities CBO, Srusti Sankula and Uttara Karnataka Mahila Okkuta (UKMO), a strong sexworker community organisation in North Karnataka

took out the rally in Gadag. Sangama and NNSW supported these two rallies in Bellary and Gadag. Sammilana in Kolar and Ashakirana in Yadgiri took out the rallies and conducted hall meetings on 26th December while the rally took place in Koppala on 27th. In Koppala and Dharwad, the members gave a separate memorandum to the the ADC while petitions were given to the DC in Bellary and Udupi.

Shouting slogans and displaying placards in both Kannada and English, the community members also burnt dummy copies of the proposed Bills in a couple of districts and attracted huge public attention. The Social Media campaigns following the protests with hash tags #StopTransBill2018 and #RedraftTraffickingBill2019 received huge response both on twitter and facebook. Local media too gave wide coverage to the protests.