

Stories from the field

Cape Town, South Africa:

In 2016, a local conversation was held in Cape Town, South Africa on the Feminist Principles of the Internet and the use of ICTS for movement building. The participants included folks from sex workers movements, digital rights activists and girl-led young women's rights collectives. In a conversation specifically about *access*, one case study the conversation explored was sex workers' use of mobile phones for preventing gender-based violence.

Case study: Sex workers, especially those who work on the street, are frequently subjected to harassment, abuse and assault from their clients and the police. As a result, those working in the same or nearby neighbourhoods have organised by creating WhatsApp groups in which they share details, such as car and person descriptions, of abusive clients or alert their colleagues of police presence. Sex workers' access to such communication hubs of crowdsourced information has played a role in preventing their exposure to violence.

Methodological process: As a means of opening up discussion around the case study, the sex workers in the room created a talkshow-style activity, which they set up in front of the other participants, who were the audience. One sex worker, as the host, interviewed their colleagues, asking them questions around how they use their phones to protect themselves from violence, and invited them to tell stories of moments in which it proved effective.

After the activity, the plenary discussion that followed not only led participants to consider how access to mobile phones, in the case of sex workers confronting violence, was crucial for sex workers' safety, but also how that access led to possibilities for collective organising, support and solidarity.

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