

Red Light Area, Ward number 14, Silchar, Assam, India: a review and solution

Mahfuzuar Rahman Barbhuiya¹, Harshit Sosan Lakra²

*¹Research Assistant, Department of Architecture and Planning, Indian Institute of Technology Roorkee, Roorkee, Uttarakhand, India,
oyemehfuz@gmail.com*

*²Assistant Professor, Department of Architecture and Planning, Indian Institute of Technology Roorkee, Roorkee, Uttarakhand, India,
Hsl31fap@iitr.ac.in*

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Silchar, the second largest city in the state of Assam, India in terms of population and municipal area houses near 1000 commercial sex workers (CSW) with families in decades-old organized red-light area. It is located in the Nagapatty area in ward number 14, heart of Silchar city with around 15 brothels. During the British rule in India this area was used by the English Planters and then during World War II local girls serviced soldiers. Still today military people from different camps visit the red-light area for entertainment purpose, which is why it is still running today. There is popular demand that the red light area should be uprooted else flesh trade will not stop and more girls would fall victim to illegal prostitution. Children, in the age group of 8-13, are trafficked or left at brothels in Silchar's red light area and are forced into illegal prostitution. The red light area is just 200 meters away from Silchar Sadar police station and the illegal flesh trade racket has now flourished in connivance with police.

Red light area in big cities in India has gathered attention and many NGO's are working directly or indirectly for them. In 2012, Assam government has directed the social welfare department to carry out a survey to ascertain the actual number of inmates, their age and health condition. Recently, Unicef and the Assam State Commission for Protections of Child Rights (ASCP CR) have started working on an action plan to help children of female sex workers in the state to benefit from various

government welfare schemes. It has been found that because of the stigma associated with their profession that most sex workers keep away from availing the services and schemes of the government for them and their children. There is an immediate necessity of rehabilitation of the children living in the red light area and to improve their education, health, living condition, self-confidence and dignified livelihood.

This Paper discusses the present condition and scope for planning intervention in the Silchar red light area. It also intends to find solution for community-led intervention for improving the health status of the CSW and their families. Furthermore, it looks at the possibilities to empower CSW to break barriers and fight for their individual and collective social, economical, and political rights.