



Transgender Communities

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The transgender group of people are commonly known as 'Hijra' in South Asian countries. Their lack of education compounded by the stigma and discrimination surrounding their non-conventional lifestyles has made it next to impossible for them to be employed in any conventional occupation. There have been cases where some members obtained regular jobs but were later dismissed when their employers learnt about their identities. Furthermore, Hijras are often victims of verbal, physical and sexual abuse in the workplace, for which they seldom receive any justice. Many of the members resort to sex work for their livelihood and face physical and verbal abuse and harassment from law enforcers and clients. They also collect

money from shops, work in beauty parlors, and dances at paid for events. Stigmatized as criminals or as deviants, many have had to develop their own networks of trust which have been severely affected from the self-isolation, sequestration of the vulnerable, and confusion and fears regarding existing public health information.

The shutdown has severely curtailed if not brought the earning sources of the Hijra community to a complete halt. Initial findings from a series of in-depth interviews with 22 members indicate that the community is even being shunned from the various relief initiatives by government bodies, private organizations, mosques, and well-off families in their locality. Some expressed the view that the general public perceived them to be carriers of the virus resulting in many refraining from venturing outside their homes during this time.