

Sex-workers in West Bengal face staggering levels of physical violence and psychological manipulation and abuse from the people closest to them, the people they work with and representatives of the State – the Police - who are responsible for protecting citizens. Victimisation is an everyday occurrence in the life of a sex-worker: beating, rape, harassment, violent raids and arrests, extortion, verbal abuse and so on.

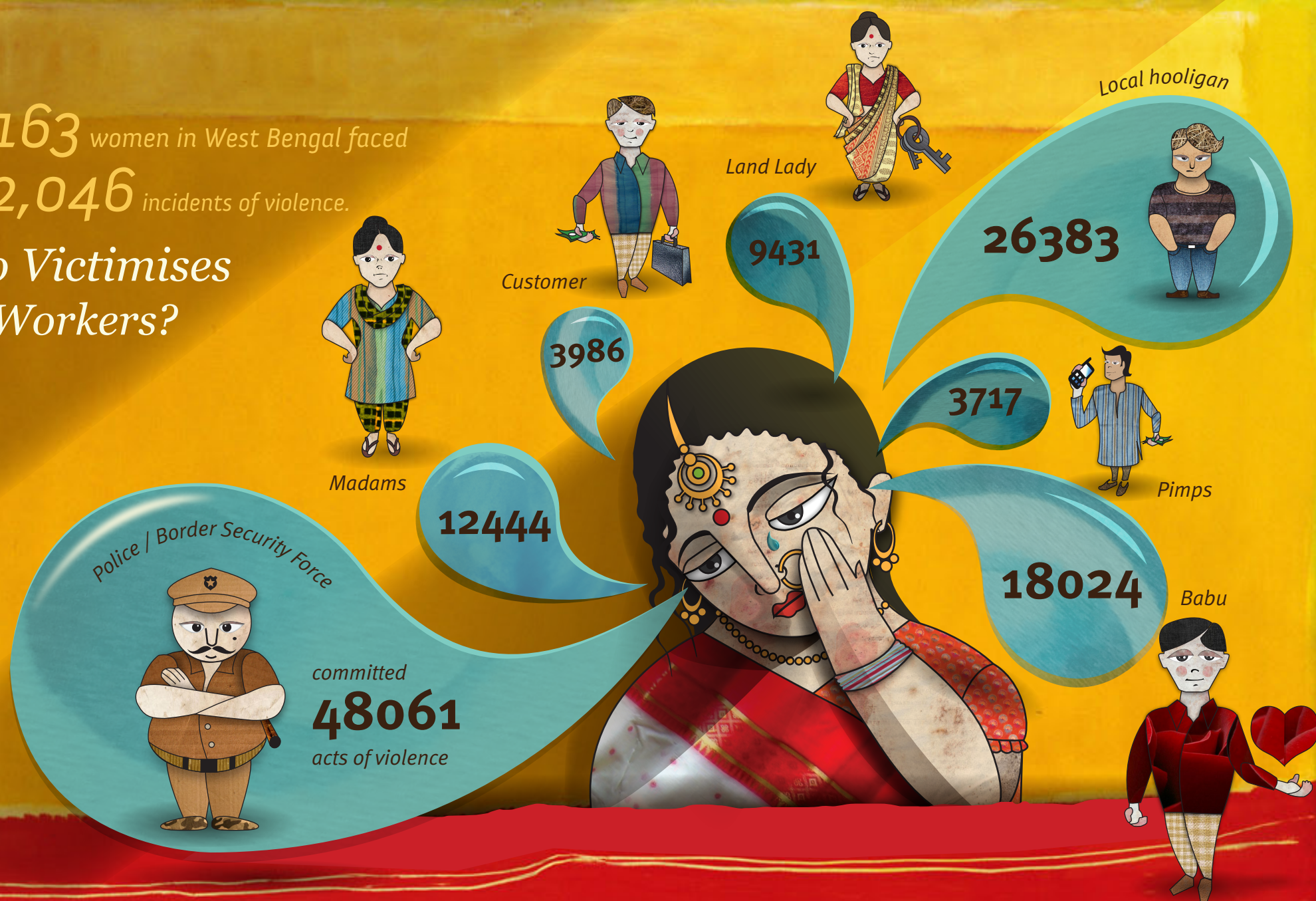
However, there are some kinds of victimisation that defy neat classification. Where would you put the following: “not being allowed to wear salwar kameez because the neighbourhood is worried that their daughters will be indistinguishable from sex-workers”, “being denied burial grounds”, “children not allowed to go to the local school” and “threatened to have head shaved”? Sex-workers report that these acts serve to belittle and humiliate them and their families.

Sex-workers are stigmatised and experience victimisation because they are considered 'immoral' 'bad women' and therefore beyond human dignity or respect. Discrimination and social marginalisation are the tangible effects of stigma. Stigma associated with sex-work is woven into the fabric of our cultural ideas about women, about family honour, notions of shame and in the structures of our everyday speech and language.

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22,163 women in West Bengal faced
1,22,046 incidents of violence.

Who Victimises Sex Workers?



'Who Victimizes Sex Workers' was a collaborative project between Tactical Technology Collective and Durbar Mahila Samanwaya Committee (DMSC) in West Bengal in India, to explore the use of community-owned and community-aggregated data as visualisations in advocacy campaigns. Tactical Tech and DMSC supported sex-workers in West Bengal to collect data on mistreatment from the community and represent it in various visual

formats for use in advocacy campaigns with their target audiences. Data was collected in 44 locations across Bengal from January to October 2010 using a structured questionnaire administered by members of DMSC. All questionnaires were sent to the central DMSC office in Calcutta where they were entered into a database and analysed.

A total of 22163 incidents of violence were recorded from a sample of 122046 sex-workers. The data was visualised by Mediashala, a design company working out of the National Institute of Design, Ahmedabad, India, based on feedback and guidance from DMSC and Tactical Tech

5730 cases
Police Harassments

23321 cases
Money Extortion

2542 cases
Violent Arrests

21926 cases
Violent Police Raids

8026 cases
Threatening

40866 cases
Verbal abuse

19635 cases
Beating

How are
Sex Workers
Victimised

