

Abstract

The KVOWRC (Kenya Voluntary Women Rehabilitation Centre) is a programme aimed at helping commercial sex workers in Nairobi to find an alternative source of income; it achieves this through counselling, peer support and business loans. This study examines whether the programme has been successful in helping the women leave commercial sex work, and finds that a large proportion of women have found alternative work, and now have an improved sense of self-esteem. The loan loss rate is high, however, with 60 per cent of women in arrears. Losses might be reduced if there were more built-in incentives to repay, and if repayments were not collected by the social workers who provide counselling. Even so, it is difficult to see how the programme could ever be financially sustainable given the poverty of its clientele.