



RED-LIGHT AREA MAPPING

KAMATHIPURA

2024-25



ABOUT PRERANA

Prerana is a civil society organization that started working in the Red-Light Areas (RLA) of Mumbai in 1986 first with a view to eliminate inter-generational trafficking i.e. trafficking of the children of the sex trafficked prostituted women, into the sex trade, its allied activities or exploitative labour. To achieve this, we at Prerana evolved several pathbreaking interventions, piloted them, and created a success story out of each intervention, and disseminated them widely to facilitate their mainstreaming. To address the issues faced by the prostituted women in the RLAs, we expanded the scope of our interventions to fight the violence perpetrated against them and to protect their legal and human rights.

ABOUT KAMATHIPURA

Kamathipura stands as one of the oldest and most prominent Red Light Areas (RLAs) in India's commercial capital, Mumbai. Geographically organized across a dense grid of 15 congested lanes, its physical infrastructure is defined by aging cessed buildings with extremely dilapidated infrastructure. The internal units function as brothel-like establishments that mirror the claustrophobic, dark quarters frequently depicted in popular media. Within these structures, the realities of severe urban decay are visibly etched onto the walls—stained heavily by the red sputum of chewed betel nut (paan), a ubiquitous habit among both local operators and transient visitors.

Far from a uniform residential neighborhood, these brothels are tightly interspersed with a chaotic informal economy, including restaurants, paan-cigarette joints, and liquor stores. The ecosystem is further populated by unlicensed medical practitioners—or quacks—who openly claim to specialize in treating sexually transmitted diseases. In previous decades, the area also housed several video parlors that screened adult films and supplied X-rated videotapes, players, and television sets directly to individual brothels on demand. Kamathipura is fundamentally distinct from a standard neighborhood, community, or colony of mainstream society. By day, it functions as a cramped commercial zone; by night, its lanes fill with a large number of unfamiliar faces seeking transactional sexual pleasure from the women and transgender individuals trapped within the RLA.

The neighborhood's location at the heart of South Mumbai has long made it a primary target for fast-growing commercial enterprises, vertical housing sectors, and aggressive land consolidation. Historically, as Mumbai expanded, the absolute volume of the commercial sex trade grew with it—but its operational geography transformed. Because traditional, inner-city RLAs face rigid physical boundaries and severe structural limits to their expansion, the sex trade grows primarily through dispersal.

Prerana's longitudinal documentation reveals that while the total volume of commercial sexual exploitation has increased across the wider metropolitan region, the concentrated population within the traditional RLAs has steadily decreased. Over the years, a definite change of hands occurred as old brothel chawls were covertly acquired or repurposed by commercial entities. While the entire 15-lane grid once functioned as a vast, open RLA, the sex trade has contracted structurally, leaving brothels actively functioning out of only a fraction of the original lanes.

ABOUT RED-LIGHT AREA MAPPING

Since 2011, Prerana has routinely mapped the Red Light Areas (RLAs) of Kamathipura and Falkland Road during the months of February and March. Undertaken by an experienced team of social workers in areas where Prerana provides Night Care Center (NCC) services, this annual exercise tracks the shifting structural and socio-economic dynamics of the sex trade. This year's 2024-25 mapping marks a critical, unprecedented juncture. With a massive cluster redevelopment plan underway, the physical landscape of Kamathipura is poised to change forever. We face the imminent reality that there may be no traditional RLA left to map in the coming years, forcing an urgent examination of the lives, rights, and survival of thousands of marginalized individuals who have built a fragile existence within its boundaries.

THE REDEVELOPMENT PUSH

The long-term trend of commercial displacement has culminated in a definitive, state-sanctioned transformation. Under the Development Control and Promotion Regulations 2034, individual building repairs have been abandoned in favor of a massive 34-acre cluster redevelopment blueprint managed by the Maharashtra Housing and Area Development Authority (MHADA). A developer consortium has been granted the Letter of Approval (LoA) to replace 943 old cessed buildings and 349 non-cessed buildings with a modern high-rise complex.

This multi-billion-rupee project aims to rehouse approximately 8,000 traditional resident families into new 500-square-foot apartments, while erecting three 69-storey luxury towers for open-market sale to maximize real estate values. To improve the project's marketability and erase the deep historical stigma associated with prostitution, active administrative measures are underway to rename the precinct entirely—with titles like "Upper Mumbai Central" being heavily considered by officials.

Concurrently, the physical layout of the historic district is being re-engineered: the iconic 15 galis will be compressed into six to eight wider roads, causing the historical lane names to disappear. Local political plans suggest erecting a central garden and descriptive murals to preserve a historic record of Kamathipura's past. However, this corporate rebranding and spatial contraction present an immediate crisis of erasure for the most marginalized. For the trafficked, documented, and undocumented women who continue to rely on the shared rooms of the remaining brothels for survival, this market-driven sanitization threatens sudden eviction, forcing them out of the reach of protective civil society networks and deeper into invisible, unprotected urban margins.

75,000 to ~10,000

ESTIMATED HISTORICAL DECLINE IN PROSTITUTED WOMEN WITHIN KAMATHIPURA FROM 1960 TO 2012, MASKING A TREND OF GEOGRAPHICAL DE-LOCALIZATION RATHER THAN AN ABSOLUTE REDUCTION IN COMMERCIAL SEXUAL EXPLOITATION.

800+ Buildings

CRUMBLING STRUCTURES AND HISTORICAL BROTHELS SLATED FOR COMPLETE DEMOLITION UNDER THE CURRENT MHADA CLUSTER REDEVELOPMENT BLUEPRINT.

SERVICES IN THE RED-LIGHT AREAS

Night Care Centers (NCC)

The Night Care Centre program was initiated as a response to an expressed need for the safety and well-being of the children of the prostituted women. Located in/near the red-light area, the NCC is a safe shelter where children are taken care of so that they are de-linked from the traumatising influences of the happenings in the red-light areas during the dangerous night hours while their mothers are made to entertain customers. The NCC provides services such as – protected shelter, safe sleeping place, responsible adult supervision, wholesome nutrition, access to hygienic toilets and bathrooms, constructive recreation on a daily basis, and other periodic but regular services such as health check-ups, referrals, mental health support, education support, safe play options, along with opportunities for skills development, awareness sessions, and an overall platform for holistic personality development and growth.

The NCCs have a comprehensive nutrition and health component that adopts a holistic approach. Carefully planned nutritious meals are served four times a day (six times during Prerana's Summer Camp) to the children. Health and medical services follow a systematic process including a complete general health check-up, periodic follow-ups, and end-to-end support for the management of specific medical conditions.

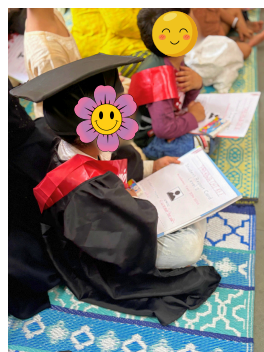
Apart from this, our teams managing the NCC also work to ensure that the children have their personal Identity Documents like birth certificates, school bona fide document and other social protection Eligibility Documents like Aadhaar cards and ration cards. They also ensure that children have access to public services like public distribution systems (PDS). They hold meetings with the mothers on various issues and concerns related to their children's health, education and overall wellbeing. At present, Prerana runs three NCCs located in/near the red-light areas of Kamathipura, Falkland Road, and Vashi-Turbhe Stores.

Institutional Placement Program (IPP)

IPP was evolved in consultation with the prostituted mothers in the red-light areas. Some mothers approached us saying that their children aren't safe in the brothels. In some cases children expressed their safety concerns themselves. In certain other cases, it was the terminal illness of the mother. In some cases the cause of the mother's death necessitates Prerana social workers to refer the child to the Child Welfare Committee (CWC) and they are then placed into appropriate Child Care Institutions (CCIs). The mothers want to de-link their children from the traumatising impact of the RLAs and place them in other safe places for residential care and protection. While we firmly believe that a child must grow in a family and institutionalisation should be the last resort, the fact is that the family structure for these children is different. Their surroundings in the RLA are often unsafe for them, and their mothers are themselves struggling to fight violence. In such a situation, institutionalisation serves as the last resort. At present, the IPP is a structured intervention that involves collaborations with the government and non-government services, and child protection systems to ensure successful protection, rehabilitation and social reintegration of children in need of care and protection. The IPP program reaches out and supports children and mothers, and is run across all the three red-light areas where we work.

Educational Support Program (ESP)

ESP is an intervention that caters to all educational needs of children living with their mothers in the Red Light Areas, and also those whose mothers have moved out of the red Light Areas and are still in the sex trade. ESP focusses on curricular, co-curricular, and extracurricular activities. The team keeps a track of the progress made by the children at their respective educational institutions by visiting their schools and colleges regularly. They also actively follow up with the mothers, involve, encourage and support them to participate in their children's educational progress. Besides this, the program team organizes study classes during the evening hours wherein qualified teachers provide support to school/college-going students in their studies and project work. Prerana also collaborates with other donors to provide educational scholarships for students who want to pursue advanced or professional degrees, and to those students who have to pay school/tuition/extra coaching fees. This program is deployed at all the Prerana NCCs through a dedicated team of social workers, teachers, and other resource persons.



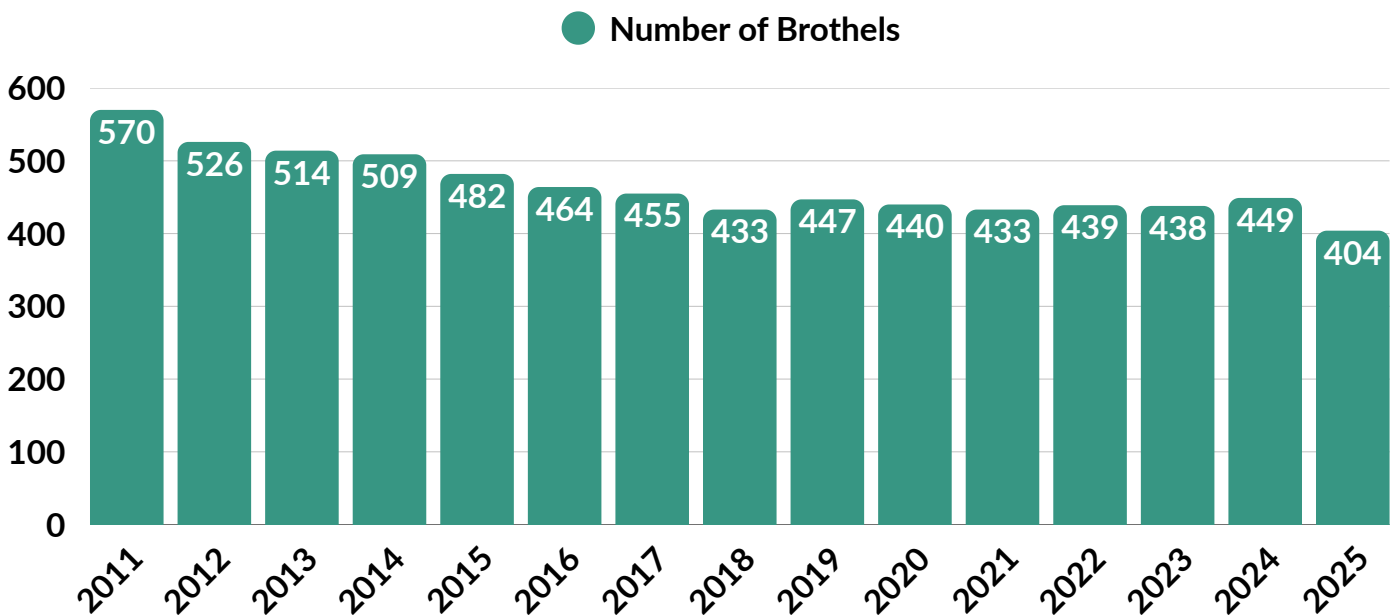
ABOUT RED-LIGHT AREA MAPPING

Over the years, Prerana has witnessed significant changes in the RLAs. Since 2011, Prerana has been routinely mapping the RLAs of Kamathipura and Falkland Road. Through this exercise, the team of Prerana's social workers has identified the changing structures and dynamics of the RLAs. Understanding this is crucial for planning welfare and developmental services and strategies. The annual RLA mapping is undertaken in the months of February and March in the RLAs where Prerana's NCC services are being provided.

Through this document, we hope to indicate the changes in the RLA of Kamathipura, in 2024-25.

BROTHELS

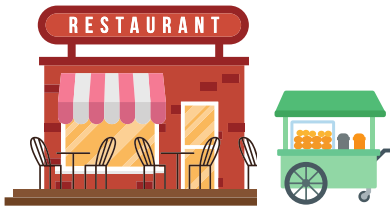
Between April 2024 – March 2025, following numbers have been observed:



DWINDLING NUMBER OF BROTHELS IN KAMATHIPURA OVER THE TIME

COMMERCIAL & OTHER ESTABLISHMENTS

1. Grocers, Food Stalls, etc.



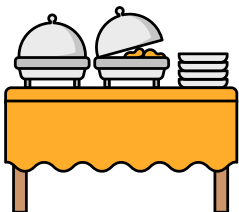
Restaurants and Food Stalls

29



Ration Shops

02



Catering Services

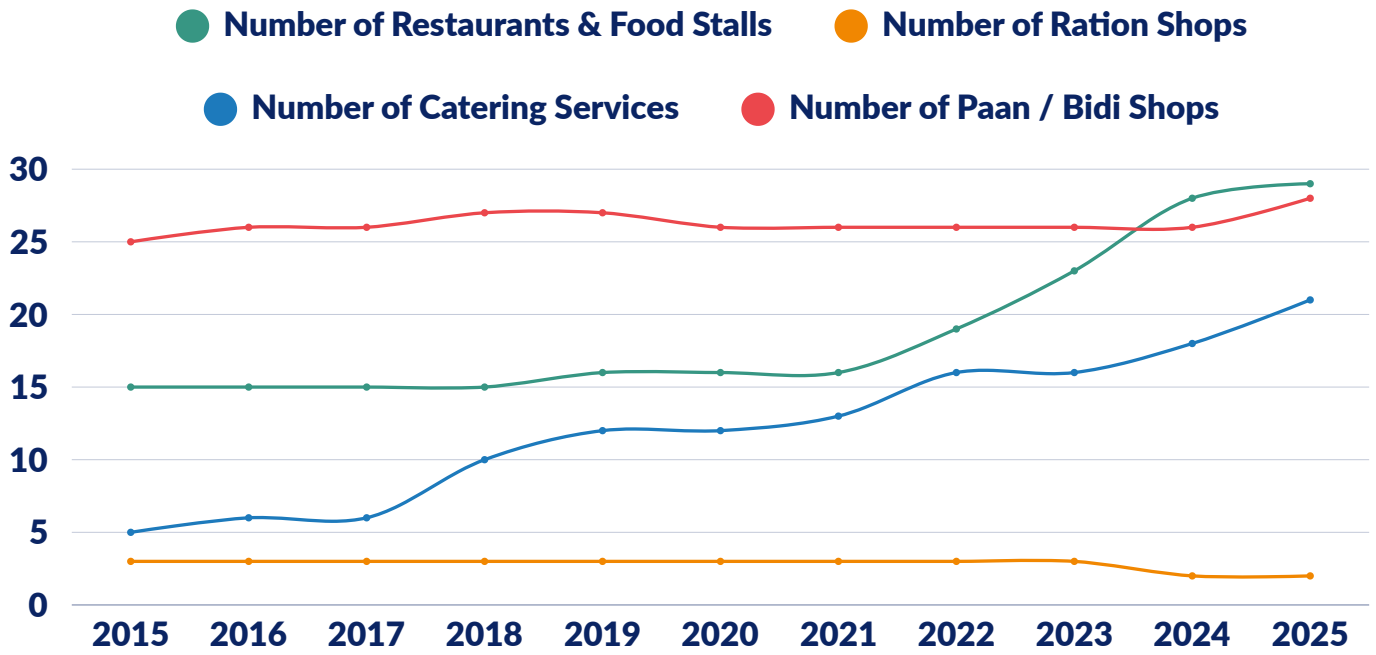
21



Paan / Bidi Shops

28

- The three new food outlets are Cafe Shama (located on 10th Lane, R.S. Nimkar Marg), Aqsa Tea and Milk (located on 9th Lane), and Baba Ramdev Bhojnalaya Shudh Shakahari (located on 11th Lane).
- Additionally, two new catering services have opened on 13th Lane, along with one more on 11th Lane.



THE CHANGING LANDSCAPE OF FOOD & RELATED PRODUCT OUTLETS OVER THE PAST DECADE

2. Manufacturing Units



Zari Wala

18



Metal Work

26



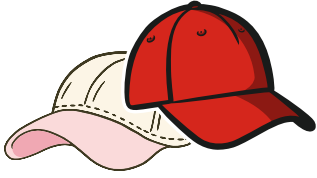
Bag Making

169



Leather Shoes

21



Cap Manufacturing Units

32

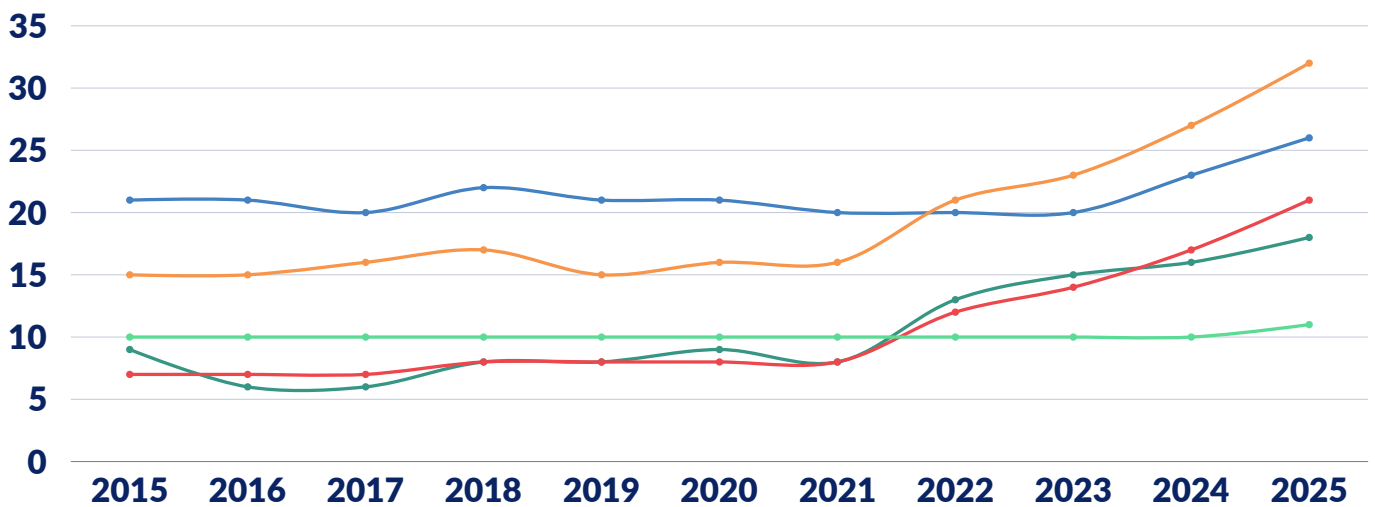


Tailors

11

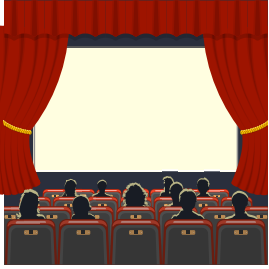
- Five new Zari Wala units have opened in 12th Lane, with an additional unit opened in the Alexandra building.
- Four new Leather Shoe manufacturing units have been established in 13th Lane.
- Three new Cap manufacturing units have been opened.

● Zari Wala ● Metal Work ● Leather Shoes ● Cap Manufacturing
● Tailors



THE CHANGING LANDSCAPE OF MANUFACTURING UNITS OVER THE PAST DECADE

3. Entertainment



Small Theatres (Films)

01



Video Game Parlour

01

SERVICES

1. Medical Facilities



Medical Clinics

10



BMC Health Post

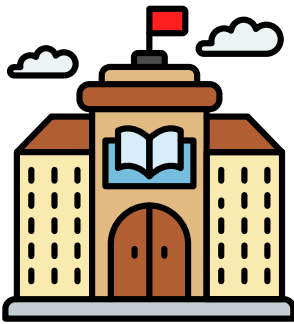
03



Pharmacies

05

2. Educational Facilities



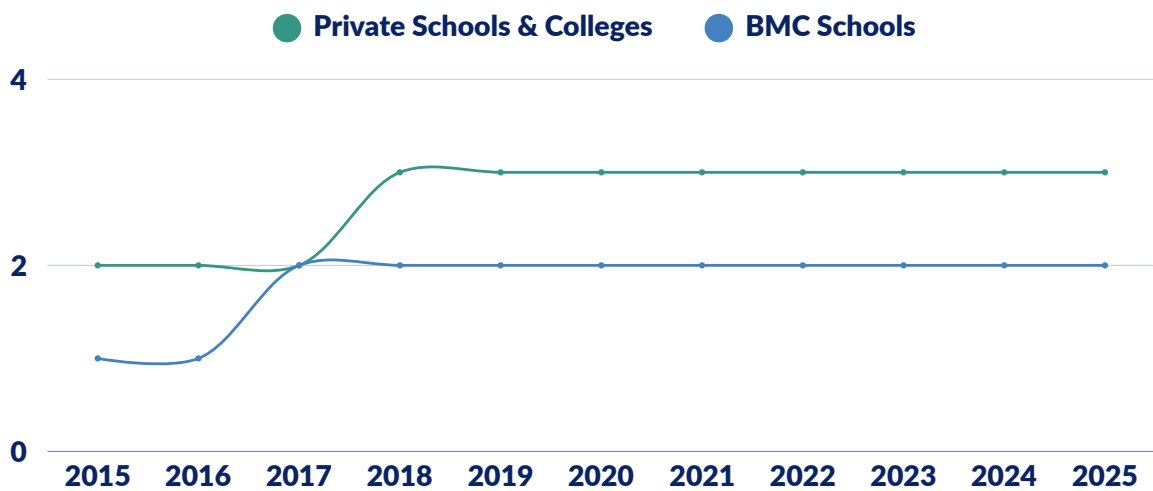
Private Schools and Colleges

03



BMC Schools

03



NUMBER OF PRIVATE VS BMC EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS OVER THE PAST DECADE

3. Civic Services



Police Stations

01



Bus Stops

02



Public Parks & Playgrounds

02

- The three private educational institutions include: St. Anthony's School, Maharashtra College of Arts, Science and Commerce, and Akbar Peerbhoy College of Commerce and Economics.
- The two BMC schools are: Chandramani Buddhavihar Public School and Kamathipura Public School.
- The local police station is Nagpada Police Station, which oversees community beats.
- There are two playgrounds, one located on 10th Lane and the other on 12th Lane.
- Health facilities include Gaurabai Dispensary, Shri. Murli Deora Eye Hospital, and Siddharth Nagar Hospital BMC (which reopened during COVID-19), as well as Gaurabai Dispensary for women and tuberculosis check-ups.

4. NGOs



NGOs

12

NGO	KNOWN SERVICES	WEBSITE
Apne Aap Women's Collective	Educational sponsorship, self-help groups, grocery distribution for women living with HIV, medical services, and vocational training.	https://www.aawc.in
Asha Mahila Sanstha	Health services specifically tailored for women, assistance for individuals living with HIV/AIDS, medical facilities for women affected by tuberculosis and HIV, and condom distribution to women in the red-light district.	https://ashamahilasanstha.wordpress.com
Bombay Teen Challenge	Comprehensive Care Initiatives for Girls and Women focus on empowering the girl child. The program provides meals specifically designed for women. It offers counseling services at no cost. It supports individuals living with HIV/AIDS through treatment and rehabilitation programs.	https://btcashagram.org

NGO	KNOWN SERVICES	WEBSITE
Living Water Mission	Offer financial and nutritional assistance while also organizing prayer services within the community.	https://www.justdial.com/Mumbai/Living-Water-Ministries-Church-Mulund-Mulund-West/022PXX22-XX22-190522071414-E511_BZDET
Mumbai Smiles	Pre-Primary School	https://www.mumbaismiles.org
Nagri Seva Prabodhini	Support women employed in bars by helping them obtain identity documents, connect with government programs, and facilitate HIV check-ups.	https://www.medindia.net/directories/ngos/nagari-seva-prabodhini-mumbai-maharashtra-49307-1.htm
Navjeevan Centre	Day and Night Care Shelter for Children	https://www.navjeevan.in
Oasis India	Medical facilities are dedicated to children's care. There are 24/7 shelter services available for both day and night care. Study classes are designed to enhance children's learning. Opportunities for educational sponsorship are provided. Vocational training and job placement services are available for women and youth.	https://www.oasisindia.org
<u>SAI NGO</u>	Women's health, medical services, vocational training, educational sponsorship, and study groups are important areas to focus on.	http://saingo.org
Salvation Army-Jeevan Asha Center (Drop-In Center)	Daycare center for both boys and girls, and a night care center specifically for boys. Preschool programs are also available. Medical services are provided for women and children.	https://maps.app.google.com/RXYzah4JVMperSaX7

NGO	KNOWN SERVICES	WEBSITE
<u>Savera Foundation</u>	Vocational training programs for women and help secure job placement opportunities.	<u>http://www.saverafoundation.com</u>
<u>Grace Foundation</u>	Pre-Primary School	<u>https://maps.app.goo.gl/MMhArTTc94Cnj4rw6</u>

If you are aware of any NGOs working with women and children in the Kamathipura red-light area, we would be grateful if you could share their details with us. We hope to connect with them and include them in this year's community mapping document to strengthen collaboration and outreach efforts.



Disclaimer

The information contained in this document has been gathered from the residents, women, and individuals living in the specified Red-Light Area, all of whom are connected with Prerana through its diverse initiatives and efforts in the community. The Prerana team has endeavored to uphold a high level of accuracy while developing this resource. Please note that this document is intended primarily for informational purposes.

DATA COLLECTION TEAM

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www.fighttrafficking.org

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human trafficking*

MAY 2026

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