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Abstract

THPE0347 - Response driven sampling: reaching sex workers post demolition of Goa's red-light area

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Background: Although evidence for the effectiveness of targeted HIV prevention in sex workers (SWs) has been mounting, the invisibility of SW can render interventions undeliverable. Goa (population 1.1m), has thirteen organisations providing “targeted interventions”. We describe respondent driven sampling (RDS) to access dispersed and hitherto un-reached SWs following the demolition of Goa's red-light district.

Methods: During a cross-sectional study (12/2004-12/2005) SWs were recruited using RDS. This variant of chain-sampling involved, rationing referrals per respondent to three known persons, recruited for 4-6 waves, whilst documenting who referred whom, and network size. Respondents completed an interviewer-administered structured questionnaire. Vaginal swabs were tested for trichomonas (InPouch), gonorrhoea and chlamydia (Amplicor PCR, Roche). Dry-blood-spots were tested for HIV (Virinostika II+0, Labsystems, Murex) and HSV-2(Focus technologies) antibodies.

Results: 326 women, from 61 networks, dispersed throughout Goa, participated. Network sizes varied from 1-48. Women worked in various settings, streets, bars, lodgings, brothels, and home. Median age was 26 (IQR: 22-35), 71 (21.8% CI: 17.5-26.7) were literate, 200 (61% CI: 55.8-66.1) were from Karnataka, and 185 travelled outside Goa in the preceding year. 247 (75.8% CI: 70.7- 80.3) had regular male partners; with whom 28 (8.6% CI: 5.9-12.3) reported consistent condom use. Median number of customers reported in previous week was 1 (0-30). 233 (71.5% CI: 66.2-76.3%) used condom with last customer. 216 (66.3% CI: 60.8-71.4) and 204 (62.6% CI: 57.1-67.8%) respectively, were aware that HIV was sexually transmitted and condoms were protective. However, 164 (50.3% CI: 44.7-55.9) thought sex with healthy looking men was also protective. Only 111 (34% CI: 29-39.5) had received HIV/AIDs education. 296 (90.8% CI: 87.1-93.7) could leave SW if they wished to. Infections: Gonorrhoea n=31 (9.5% CI: 6.6-13.3), chlamydia n=30 (9.2% CI: 6.1-12.6), trichomonas n=31 (9.5% CI: 6.6-13.3), HSV-2 n=169 (59.5% CI: 53.5-65.3) and HIV n=77 (23.6% CI: 19.2-28.7).

Conclusions: RDS identified widely disseminated networks of SWs, 1/3 of whom had not been reached by the thirteen organizations. High prevalence of infections, and misconceptions about HIV, suggest an urgent need to utilize these networks to deliver HIV prevention. That over 90% were free to leave SW suggests that RDS may not reach SWs denied freedom of movement.