

Behavioural Risk Factors of HIV among Young Female Sex Workers in Selected Districts in Sri Lanka

**De Silva, W.Indralal¹, Dewasurendra, J.W.², Bandara, S.M.A.S.²,
Suranga, M.S.S.², Rajakaruna, R.M.D.K.², Priyantha, H.A.S.³**

¹. Department of Demography, University of Colombo

². Monitoring and Evaluation Unit, Family Planning Association of Sri Lanka

³. Community Strengthen Development Foundation

Indralald37@gmail.com

Estimated number of Female Sex Workers (FSW) in Sri Lanka is 9,947 of which 11.9% (1,183) is estimated to be in 15-24 age groups. Prevalence of HIV among FSW was 0.81% in 2014. By the end of 2013, 52 new HIV cases were reported among the females of age 15-24. A community based cross sectional study was conducted to identify behaviours that cause risk of HIV and behaviours of youth FSWs related to health.

A pre-tested, structured questionnaire was administered among 526 youth (aged 18-24) FSWs respondents randomly selected using a snow ball sampling through Peer Educators in five selected districts. The interviews were conducted by trained field supervisors after receiving the oral informed consent of the participants.

The mean age of the sample was 22.93 (SD=1.9) years with a range of 18-25. 41% of them have not completed primary education (year 05) with the mean of 8.7 (SD=2.84) years of formal education. Sixty per cent of them were currently married. Majority (83.8%) of respondents were residing in urban localities. Of the total sample, 27% were street based FSWs, another 27% are based in massage centers, 16% are based in hotels/lodges and the rest were based in their houses/slums, brothel houses, night clubs, etc.. Majority (92%) of the respondents were engaged in selling sex for a period 1-5 years with the mean of 1.14 years of sex work per FSW. Average partner exchange rate was high (25.9 partners per month); 26% of the respondents reported having 11-20 sexual partners during the last month. Around three fourth (73%) of respondents were engaged in sex work daily. 84% of respondents reported using condoms at the last sex encounter which is lower than

the general FSWs (92.9%) reported in Integrated Biological and Behavioural Surveillance Survey (IBBS) in 2014. Only 15.6% of respondents had tested for HIV during the last 12 months and knew the outcome of the test (test result) which is again significantly lower (35%) than the accessing of HIV tests by the general FSWs reported in IBBS.

Results reflect that the youth FSW in the selected districts reported high HIV risk behaviours and low health seeking behaviours with compared to general FSWs in Sri Lanka which highlight the importance of more focused interventions to address the issue.

Key words: *Condom, HIV and STI Prevention, HIV Risk Behaviours, Youth Female Sex Workers.*