Marginalized and untold: Violence and SRH risks among mobile female sex workers (FSWs) in India

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Rationale of the study

- Female sex workers - one of the most critical group layers of marginalization - global evidence

- Several targeted intervention on FSWs - lacks a comprehensive approach that reflects violence prevention

- Limited evidence in India displaying association between violence and SRH risks among such marginalized population
What the study answers?

- What is the magnitude of violence among female sex workers in India and how many of them face sexual violence?

- What is the linkage between violence and SRH (reproductive and sexual health) risks among the female sex workers in India?

- Who are the perpetrator? What are the possible predictors of violence among female sex workers?
Design and Method

- Multi-state study (4 states)
- Mobile female sex workers (those who are into sex work for more than a year; moved at least two places in the past two years, one of which is to outside the district)
- 9475 female sex workers screened for eligibility
- Survey data of 5498
Continued...

• Bi-variate analysis to examine 1) the extent of violence and magnitude of SRH risks; 2) examine the association between two and 3) who are the perpetrator

• Regression models to predict the violence correlates within the sex worker setup
The profile of marginalization (N=5498)

- More than one third are illiterate.
- Half of the total FSWs are socially destitute (either divorced/widowed/separated): 51.6%.
- Two fifths are financially indebted.
- 43.6% are engaged into other works along with active sex work (sex worker is a part time profession).
- 14% have entered into sex work under 19.
Pervasiveness of violence (N=5498)

- Any violence: 30.5
- Physical violence: 11.6
- Sexual violence: 19.3
## Violence and SRH risks

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No violence (3822)</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>24.5</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>55.0</td>
<td>48.0</td>
<td>51.0</td>
<td>35.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Either sexual or Physical Violence (1676)</td>
<td><strong>16.5</strong></td>
<td><strong>31.3</strong></td>
<td><strong>7.9</strong></td>
<td><strong>66.0</strong></td>
<td><strong>63.0</strong></td>
<td><strong>68.0</strong></td>
<td><strong>50.0</strong></td>
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*Excessive vaginal discharge or chronic pain in lower abdomen in last six months is considered as RTI related symptoms

$Ulcers/sores in genital area, swelling in genital area, pain during intercourse or frequent/sometimes painful urination in last six months s considered as STI symptoms
Violence and SRH risk: Measuring the strength (Adjusted Odds ratios#)

Both physical and sexual violence$:

- Four or more pregnancies: 1.35**
- Any pregnancy loss: 1.43***
- Multiple forced preg. loss: 2.07***
- RTI related symptoms: 2.03***
- Inconsistent condom use: 4.22***
- STI related symptoms: 3.10***
- High risk to HIV: 2.55***

** p<.01  *** p<.001

$ Comparison group: Neither physical nor sexual violence

# Adjusted for Age, Education, Income, Debt, Program exposure, duration of sex work experience
Perpetrator of violence in the last incident (in percent)

- Clients: 56%
- Rowdies: 8.5%
- Others: 12.5%
- Police: 20%
Predicting the violence

- < 30 years
  - AOR = 2.09**

- Highly mobile
  - AOR = 2.13***

- Not a member of any collectives
  - AOR = 1.76**

- < USD90 monthly income
  - AOR = 1.02*
Discussion

• A great majority of female sex workers in India experienced violence (both physical as well as sexual)

• Reproductive and sexual health risks are high among mobile female sex workers by and large

• Reproductive and sexual health risks are significantly higher among those who experienced both physical and sexual violence

• Particular sub-groups of female sex workers are at increased risk for both physical and sexual abuse (young, highly mobile, new entrants into the trade)
Discussion

• Strengthening programmatic coverage for mobile FSWs

• Networking among community

• Special focus on young sex workers

• Strengthening support system- beyond condom promotion
Wishing an END