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EDITORIAL

Evolving Transactions in Sexualities

Richmond Tiemoko PhD,

Sexuality from a positive and human rights perspective should be an empowering and enjoyable experience. It should be an experience that clearly highlights one's humanness as an individual and social being , for it is foremost relational (relationship with one self or with other).

Sexuality from a relationship and rights perspectives can hardly be non-transactional. From a sexual rights perspective, positive sexuality and sexual relationship between two mature individuals should only be a continual transaction, in the sense of deal and consensus.

'Sex for money or reward has gone beyond the cliché of women in a brothel'

However transactional and commercial sex differs from this fundamental humane expression of sexuality. Commercial sex is simply the commoditization of sex (not necessarily of sexuality). As it is well known in the Marxist approach, commoditization transforms everything into commodities. Such development should be of concern if issues around vulnerability, exploitation and rights are not adequately addressed.

Commercial sex has evolved over the last two decades. It has indeed become complex in different ways. Sex for money or reward has gone beyond the cliché of women in a brothel. It is now more sophisticated and includes male sex workers for either male or female clientele a phenomenon often largely denied or over looked. Another important development is the evolving construction of place and space in commercial sex. The physical place of the transaction is now just one of the many ways commoditized sexuality is practiced. Indeed physical space and bodies do acquire different importance and meaning in commercialized sexual service. For instance Erotic massage, call girls and call boys, virtual sex and voyeurism all part of transactional sexual services- may value different physical locations and bodies.

The commoditization of sex brings the question of not only market operations but also ways in which different people get involved in the market as indicated in the articles in this issue. While there are adults in the business as a choice, there are others who are forced into sex work. Commercial Sex has particularly taken a wortisome and indeed despicable turn on the continent through trafficking in person, and violation of people's human rights and these have become major issues in west Africa.

'One fundamental truth that should guide any action or inaction, is the fact that both men and women in transactional sex are simply human beings with social rights and ties'

In spite of the complexity of transactional sex, there is one fundamental truth that should guide any action or inaction, is the fact that both men and women in transactional sex are simply human beings with social rights and ties. Therefore the concern should be to ensure that their fundamental human rights are protected and enforced and their right to health and wellness promoted. Such positions would require a comprehensive approach to transactional sex that includes prevention, protection, empowerment and support for children (male, female and intersex.)

Richmond Tiemoko PhD,
is the Director of the ARSRC

FEATURE

Transactional and Commercial Sex Issues

An interview with Leslie Ann Foster

(L-R) **Leslie Ann Foster, Director of** Masimanyane Women's Support Centre being interviewed by Folaka Sholola and Louisa Ibhaze .

Iann interview with Louisa Ibhaze and Folake Sholola, Dr Lesley Ann Foster , the Director of the Masimanyane Women's Support Centre discussed the issues surrounding transactional and commercial sex with regards to women in South Africa .

In your opinion , what is the difference between Transactional and Commercial sex?

From what I understand, transactional sex often takes place between people who know each other and it is being rewarded in a relationship for sex. While Commercial sex is when people, (mostly men) pay to have sex with women and it is almost always with women they do not love. In some cases they may get to know these women, as they go along. This also applies to those who practice same sex sexual relationships.

Do you think there is any relationship between Transactional, Commercial sex and Sex tourism?

Yes, they are all connected as sex tourism is also a form of commercial sex. At the heart of trafficking is commercial sex. In Scandinavia, mail order brides are a big phenomenon. This is a situation where men get catalogues of many women from different parts of the world and look to see which one is the most exotic or posses the physical attributes of their choice and pay a price to have her brought to their country. In most cases some of these women are actually trying to get out of the poverty in their countries. Unfortunately, they are brought into these foreign countries and used as sexual objects by the men who order them. In some other cases, these men actually marry some of them and have children by them but as soon as they are tired of them, they kick them out, or do so before these women get their papers legalized thus they end up in shelters.

In most cases some of these women are actually trying to get out of the poverty in their countries.

After which these same men take another mail order bride and another one after another. There was the case of a man in Norway who had nine different wives over a period of ten years. These women most of the time are always unaware of the violence or ill treatments that awaits them or

that others before them suffer.

Here in Africa, we have sugar daddies who are usually older men with some form of financial or economic means. They lure younger ladies into relationships by buying them gifts and things that they need or simply want.
A good example, are secondary schools where some teachers will sleep with young girls in exchange for new uniforms or their school fees. In higher institutions like universities these girls sleep with these men in exchange for pocket money and other little luxuries their parents can not afford..

Although there is no comprehensive study on the prevalence of these practices, I think Commercial sex is the most prevalent and it is also the biggest problem we face globally.

Why do you think people would want to involve themselves in Commercial and Transactional sex?

It is largely due to poverty. Even though there is often an argument that some women choose to go into the sex industry of their own freewill. Research so far has revealed two things, the first is that most of the women in the sex industry are screaming to get out and second is that if they have other choices which give them the same returns as sex work dose, they will rather take those choices. In South Africa , some sex workers are offered the choice to learn bead work. The problem here is that this is not a fair offer because it doesn't give these women the same financial return or any thing close to what they earn as sex workers. At the root of all of this is the structural issue of women's poverty and women's economic return. If these are adequately met, women would not need to sell sex.

A middle aged European woman takes a walk with her new acquaintance - a young Kenya "Beach Boy" - In Mombasa, Kenya 2008 © Julius Mwelu / IRIN Photos

The question I always ask is, how many little girls would say I want to grow up to be a prostitute? And how many women in the sex industry would go public and say I am in the sex industry. The truth is that, most of these women are hiding the reality of what they do for a living because of the social implications for them; because prostitution in most cases is circumstantial. It is not a profession like Nursing or Teaching , neither can it be pre determined in life .

Do you think commercial sex has any implications on general sexual health or sexual well-being?

Commercial sex has a very high toll on women's body, the psychological well-being and the spiritual health. Some also fall pregnant, and will either have to abort or give birth and raise the child themselves. The problems around identification of the father and the burden of raising a child without financial or emotional assistance from a man makes it very difficult. In other situations they chose to have an abortion. They also get infected with HIV because the client might prefer not to use a condom and if they refuse, they get beaten up. Commercial sex workers in South Africa also complain of customers demanding oral sex from them and other infections they get in the process of the sexual services they offer .

I personally think that Commercial sex should be criminalized and the men who sell

or buy sex from women should be prosecuted. I see both transactional sex and commercial sex as a form of violence against women and believe that governments are complacent in perpetrating violence when they relate to commercial sex. I think that if you look at this on a global perspective, the entire sex industry (pole-dancing, lap-dancing, strip tease etcetera) commodifies women's body and strips them of their human dignity and respect. Put crudely, governments are robbers when they get economic benefits by asking these women to start paying tax from commercial sex. . It is actually a disgusting practice.

What are the implications of criminalizing commercial sex to the women?

First of all I think it is important that we do not criminalize the woman, what we need for these women are support programmes to help them. It is the men who need to be criminalized because they not only buy sex but sometimes pimp these women for money. Many of these men are married and in the long run when you look deeper, you discover that it is not all about sex but more about power and control and it builds their masculinity and egos. The more money they can get, the more masculine they feel. It is unfortunate that women get blamed for all the time for sex work, where as it takes two to tango. Women should be protected.

The problem is African countries have large populations. In Nigeria for instance, the number of women being trafficked into Scandinavian countries is horrific. I was in Norway in December and there was a group of beautiful young girls I came across, when I asked my host who works on the violence for women sector, who the girls were as they all looked like they came from Africa , she explained to me that they are Nigerian young girls brought into the country for prostitution and they have pimps that are on the street and they (these girls) absolutely hate being here prostituting. They all want to get out of it, they don't necessarily want to go back home because the options at home are not much better than in foreign countries but they do not want to be on the street hawking or selling sex.

The process of trafficking is absolutely horrendous, because it is a process. First these girls are promised love and a brighter future. They are then taken to a place where they are held for a period of time, here they are raped, beaten and photographs of them are taken and they are told if they do not obey, their incriminating photographs would be sent to their parents, children and family. They become completely submissive as a result of shame. They are then blind folded and are taken away. Often, they do not know where they are taken to. Thus they end up in some strange land where they can not communicate because they do not know the language nor how they got there. All they are told by their pimps or traffickers is that they owe them (the traffickers) money for their trip and accommodation which they have to pay back over time by doing sex work. It is just a horribly vicious circle of violence.

Leslie Ann Foster is the Director Masimanyane Women's Support Centre a non-profit international women's organisation based in East London, South Africa. With a specific focus on gender-based violence, sexual and reproductive health and rights and the gendered nature of HIV and AIDS, they aim to build the capacity of women and human rights advocates to claim and realise women's human rights.

ISSUE IN FOCUS

Sale of Womanhood or Sex?

Margaret Onah

A "Please pay as you collect" sign in the bar of a Commercial Sex brothel in Nigeria

Introduction

Safe Haven International is a non profit, non governmental organization set up in 2003 by Margaret Onah, a Medical Laboratory Scientist, who identified a vacuum in dealing with vulnerable girls and women, especially commercial sex workers in Nigeria. She discovered that female sex workers are stigmatized by the society, family and the church. As a result, they have no say in development issues concerning their society or state. Even the church looks upon them as outcasts. In summary, Nobody is interested in finding out what the inner cry of a sex worker is .Safe Haven international was established to look into that vacuum by breaking barriers, creating positive attitudes, changing behavior of the society , providing support for women and girls who are victims of violence, rape and pursing activities aimed at preventing rape, all forms of sexual abuse, sexual harassment and violence in schools, at homes and in the community. They also have a drop in centre which provides health and counseling services along with emotional support and occupational training for target groups. "Help them heal themselves' is the guiding principle of the centre. They help ex sex workers return to the society by educating them on health issues like HIV &AIDS, Malaria and other diseases, self reliance and leadership skills.

Commercial sex In Nigeria.

Commercial Sex is basically sex for money and Transactional sex is sex in exchange for gifts , small favors or money. There will always be transactional activity because there will always be a demand for commercial sex, and commercial sex goes beyond money. Some are attracted to the profession. Also poverty thrives on it because some people see this act as an additional source of income.

Commercial sex is not restricted to any culture

Commercial sex is not restricted to any culture, it is global and it transcends all age barriers as in some cases girls as young as eight are involved. There are also different types of sex workers. You have those that stay in the brothels, those that stand on the road side, those that operate from the higher institutions and even those that operate from home.

There are also male Sex workers in Nigeria who have sex with men for commercial reasons and there is an organization that supports them based in Ibadan, Oyo state. I do not work with them directly but as a network of members of the civil society organization working on HIV & AIDS in Nigeria.

What are the reasons you think these take place?

I believe poverty is one of the main reasons for this even though I have met some girls from wealthy families in sex work, who are not in sex work for financial gain. Sex work is not any woman's ambition or destiny. Some people are just attracted to the financial gain.

Do you think Sex Tourism exists in Nigeria?

We have things like musical jamborees and international football matches being held in Nigeria, therefore a lot of girls come from other countries and regions to attend these activities just to have sex and to sell sex to people. That is the only way I can link sex tourism into the Nigerian environment.

What policies or programmes are needed to address the issue of sexual health and well being in these situations?

Sex work is stigmatized and criminalized in Nigeria, as a result when these girls have any health problems they are not bold enough to go to government hospitals or clinics for proper treatment as they might be asked questions about their sexual history. They would rather just go to road side chemists to buy drugs and self medicate or buy drugs based on the prescriptions given to them by these untrained chemist staff or they simply take local herbs for treatment. One good thing that has happened so far is that the Nigerian HIV & AIDS response has been able to single out the vulnerability of this, "high risk" group by organizing programmes whereby the Network of Sex Work projects in Nigeria (which is a network of Civil society organizations) come together to educate and inform sex workers on sexual and reproductive health and HIV & AIDS issues.

Most of these NGO's are only able to educate the girls in the brothels but can not establish clinics for them due to the fact that clinics for sex workers do not exist and they are not willing to attend the public clinics. Most times they have STI's, at the public clinics they are asked about their sexual history which might either reveal their profession or the fact that they have many sexual partners. Rather than giving the public clinics the opportunity to ask them such sensitive questions, they would rather go elsewhere which is not necessarily good for them.

If possible, I would suggest that more non discriminatory and non judgmental STI clinics be established to provide health services for sex workers and positive encouragement given to them to attend, as it would really go a long way to help the society because many men go to brothels. This includes all classes of men who in some cases have wit doesn't matter where they are from or who they are and these men go back to their wives and their girlfriends. As a result of this lack of proper health provision for these women, some of these men go back to re-infect their wives and girlfriends and eventually the general population.

Sex work is stigmatized and criminalized in Nigeria

If STI clinics are made available and more friendly for these vulnerable class of people, it would be easy for them to get proper treatment when they are infected. These girls should also be trained and educated on how to advice their clients on the importance of visiting STI clinics. This will also enable the men send their partners to the clinics for treatment too and in the long run, curb the spread of STI's.

Condom Use In The Industry

We work with 25 brothels in Agege and Ikeja local government areas in Lagos State. When we started with them. We had to educate them on the importance of using condoms and had them see reason .All the brothels we operate with now operate its "No condom no sex". Even with the special men they refer to as their boyfriends who they do not want to use condoms with, we educated them about the risks of not using one.

A sex worker poses for a snap shot at a brothel in Nigeria

HIV is not as high as thought among Sex Workers because they use condoms regularly. The girls here are very clean and take their condom use very seriously. It is unfortunate that some married women can not insist that their husbands should use a condom and most times these men have extra-marital affairs with women who are not sex workers but who also have unprotected sex with other men. Therefore the risk for infection increases. Communication between couples should be encouraged.

Socio- Political Context of Sex Work

Most of the sex workers in Lagos state are from the South-South and South-East regions of Nigeria and they are between the ages 12 - 30. Most of the girls are brought to Lagos from Calabar, Uyo, Akwa-Ibom, Port-Harcourt and other parts of Nigeria. In most cases, they are brought by either a "Madam" or "chairlady" who would have told them from home that she is bringing them to Lagos to give them a better life. When they get to Lagos, they are kept in a brothel and are asked to watch and learn from the other girls they meet here. At that age they don't know what else to do. I also discovered that even at 12 and 13 years of age some of them are no longer virgins from their villages before coming to the city. Some have been raped and some have even had babies.

They are initially shy on arrival to Lagos. By the time they have been starved and ill treated , they are left with no choice but to join the other girls they have been watching and learning from in order to refund all the money the "madam" or "chair lady" used to transport them to Lagos and also the money for accommodation and clothes. It is the madam who dictates how much has been spent on each girl and only after they have paid her that money that they can be independent since they have been groomed. After two years of working she goes home for one Christmas to visit her parents and entices other young girls with money and gifts and the same circle continues. In all the brothels we work, the story is always the same and when they are asked why they chose sex work the reply is always that they want to provide for their children, parents and other family members. This means in their villages they see no alternative means of livelihood with tangible financial returns thus there sojourn to Lagos for greener pastures.

At present to my knowledge, the government is not doing anything serious about it. Instead, it is the police that go about raiding brothels, arresting, beating and in some cases raping them, and extorting money from them. Imagine a police man at 12mid-night jumping over the fence and breaking into their rooms.

In August 2007 we had a work shop

with sex workers, after which the police went and raided the girls. When we got there the next day, the girls where afraid to come out for the workshop. We went to the police station with a lawyer to bail the ones that had been arrested but the police refused to grant them bail. They said the police commissioner was interested in the case because women that dressed *indecently* were being arrested at that time. It was only after the State Governor stated via media that he had not instructed uniformed men to arrest anybody due to their dressing that they were granted bail after spending nine days in Police custody for doing nothing. This is one of the few occasions that the governor came out to make a statement. Imagine what could happen to the ones who are not lucky enough to have someone intervene for them?

There was a time in 2006, we had sex workers international human rights day, which is commemorated on the 3rd of March every year. On that day many sex workers came out on the streets with placards and we had a rally at the Ikeja Local Government area. We were asking the government to provide an alternative means of livelihood (skills training, micro finance etc) for sex workers. We had a meeting with the representative of the chairman of the Local government who promised to get some of the educated sex workers trained for little exercises like state immunization programmes etc, but till today the promise has not been fulfilled. Even after persistent reminders of the promises made.

The time the police raided the brothels in Agege, the police commissioner instructed the brothels to be shut down, and all those girls were sent back home without any provisions made for them, that was after we had concluded the HIV/AIDS training and they were sent to the women development centre to start their skills training. They had not completed that and would go back to the villages and start sex work on a large scale again and endanger the lives of the men and women in the villages who have little or no access to medical assistance.

The brothel based sex workers are not as high risk as the ones on the road side because they can be easily reached, trained and educated if they are willing. Therefore when you dislodge them, it is difficult to get access to them for trainings and education.

Why Is Sex Work Stigmatized?

People always ask if sex workers have any rights. Yes they have rights because they are human beings too. Sex work is being encouraged and discouraged at the same time in our society. It is encouraged because we have the tradition, mostly in the south East where in a family where they have all females children and no male, the unmarried females are encouraged to go out and have children who will carry on the family name. This is a form of encouraging sex work At the same time we have the tradition where a woman is expected to be a virgin before marriage. Therefore we encourage and discourage it at the same time.

How do you think the Nigerian Government can help curb this problem?

We are looking at the Millennium Development Goals now and one says "to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger". The Nigerian strategies to achieve the MDGs is to create wealth, regenerate employment, value reorientation and etecetera. Some of these girls should be sent back to school, trained in skills, or given micro credits etc. Many of these girls want to get out of sex work, when you talk to them you see pain because of abortions, infections and other ugly experiences they have had. Therefore if the government can really establish skills centers for them and give them micro credits, it will be a very good way forward for everyone. This may not end Commercial Sex.

Even in the brothels HIV is not as high because they use condoms regularly

Like I said earlier there is no age barrier to sex work, we have the older ones and the younger ones. The younger sex workers are the ones that we are really focusing on because they are willing to get other jobs and go back to school. Most of the older ones do not want to leave the industry because they are used to the amount they make and have found ways around the risk factors of the industry. They are also not as prone to violence from customers and the uniformed men as the younger ones are. That is why it would be difficult to eradicate sex work completely because the older ones usually don't want to stop

What would you say your organization has achieved with regards to the Sex Workers you have been working with?

- Increased use of condoms at the brothels we work with.
- Some of the Female sex workers have left the sex trade and are now gainfully employed
- Some, though still working in the brothels are learning a skill which after training will be considered for seed grant (financial support) to start an alternative means of living.

The aim of my organization is to give an alternative means of livelihood to sex workers. We want to separate them totally from sex work and reintegrate them back into the society. We do not want them to be in sex industry anymore.

Margaret Onah is the Executive Director of Safe Haven International a.k.a. Commercial sex Workers Initiative. An NGO based in Lagos State, Nigeria that gives support services to vulnerable women such as female sex workers, teenage mothers and widows.

RESEARCH NOTES

Sexual Abuse of Brothel-Based Female Sex Workers in Abuja, Nigeria

Dagunduro Tolu. A, Fawole Olufunmilayo. I & Makinde Olusesan .A

Marine is a prostitute in Mombasa on the coast of Kenya 2008

Introduction

Violence against women (VAW) has become invasive and of recent, researchers have been trying to delve into it as part of public health concern. Of all the forms of VAW, sexual violence (SV) is the most common with a link to STIs and HIV infection, coupled with other grave consequences for women in Africa. SV is any sexual act or attempt to obtain unwanted sexual comments, advances or otherwise directed against a person's sexuality using coercion by any person regardless of their relationship to the victim in any setting including home or work [1].

As a result of discrimination and ostracism, sex workers are vulnerable to violence from perpetrators. As they are treated as outcasts, they are often stigmatized and marginalized by both government and the society. Law enforcers pay little attention or totally disregard sex workers' rights [2]. They like all other women, need to have their rights protected by all members of the society. Violence is a manifestation of the stigma and discrimination experienced by sex workers, thus increasing their vulnerability to STIs/HIV and other health problems [3].

A study in Papua New Guinea revealed that, sex workers participating in an HIV prevention intervention reported gang-rape and harassment by the police as a serious problem that impeded their ability to practice safe sex [4]. In Kazakhstan, police routinely arrest, beat up or force sex workers to bribe them with money or sexual services before they are released when caught or arrested [3].

Program experiences with sex workers suggest that maintaining health and preventing HIV hold lower priority for sex workers than coping with violence and daily harassment from police in some places [5]. In Nigeria, some of the researches conducted on Commercial Sex Workers (CSW) like the National Behavioral Survey 1&2 on commercial sex workers (CSWs) focused mainly on STIs and HIV infections [6] with only very little on the problems of sexual abuse and other ills. Therefore, this research serves as a baseline study on the extent and determinants of sexual abuse ofthe FSWs in Abuja, Nigeria.

They like all other women need to have their rights protected by all members of the society

Methodology

A descriptive cross-sectional study design was conducted with the use of semi-structured questionnaires. Three hundred and five brothel-based FSWs were selected using stratified random sampling and proportional allocation techniques. The brothels were stratified into low and high income areas in the city of Abuja. Information on occurrence of sexual abuse and predisposing factors were obtained from the respondents. In-depth interviews were also conducted with 10 FSWs to obtain qualitative data on recent sexual abuse experienced. Analysis was done using descriptive statistics and logistic regression.

Results

The age of the respondents ranged from 15-50 years with mean of 27±5.7years with the awareness of sexual abuse among FSWs at 49.5%. In-depth interviews revealed that brothels serve as an abode for some participants since the demolition of the illegal constructions in the Federal Capital Territory. The findings also revealed that 63.66% at the same time highlighting the different forms of violence experienced which include: Rape (26.1%), forced sex without the use of condoms by clients (46.1%), changing mode of sexual intercourse after the usual agreement by clients or pimps (44.2%), refusal to pay for the agreed amount after sexual intercourse (55.8%), unwanted sexual remarks (30%) and unwanted physical contact to any part of the body that was not initially bargained for (27.6%).

There was a difference of SV against FSW based on the strata of their operation. FSWs in the low class brothels are more vulnerable to unwanted sexual comments and unwanted body contact from clients than those in the high class brothels. Also, younger FSWs are more susceptible to rape than their older counterparts irrespective of the brothel class. The longer FSWs stay in the sex industry, the more likely they experience perpetrators refusing to pay for sexual service and also refusing to use condoms. The 5 main perpetrators of FSW who experience violence include, clients (47.5%), brothel owners (38.2%), uniformed men (4%) and thugs (8%). The main health consequences reported were, HIV infection (4.3%), other STIs (10.5%),

unplanned pregnancy (55.7%).

An in-depth interview participant explained that "*some clients especially the uniformed men/policemen take us for granted by gang-raping and sometimes having sex and refusing to fulfill their financial obligations. The fact that we are not accepted by the society does not mean our rights should be violated.*" Another comment from a participant in the high class brothel with regards to the type of sexual abuse experienced was *"I deal with big men in town, they call me any time my service is needed. So I have not gotten any cause to experience any thing bad from them don't you know there are different classes of sex workers?"* A lower class sex worker said, "*I wanted to use a condom with a client after he had paid me and he refused. When he insisted on having sex with me without a condom I yelled thief thief and people around came and chased him away. Of course I kept his money it was just his bad luck.*"

Table 1: Determinants of Sexual Abuse

Determinants	Odds ratio	Confidential interval
Rape		
Younger age	0.4	0.23-0.73
Refusal to pay for the agreed amount after sexual intercourse		
Longer years of sex work experience	1.9	1.01-3.52
Refusal to use condoms		
No formal education	2.6	1.37-5.08
Longer years of sex work experience	2.3	1.26-4.31
Unwanted sexual remark		
No formal education	1.7	0.85-2.85
Low class brothels	2.8	1.51-5.23
Changing mode of sexual intercourse		
Younger age	2.7	1.38-5.09
Longer years of sex work experience	1.6	0.84-2.96
Unwanted touch of body		
Younger age	1.8	1.37-4.34
Longer years of sex work experience	2.3	1.26-4.31
Low class brothels	2.5	1.00-3.52

The Table shows different category of participants that are vulnerable to different forms of sexual abuse when $p<0.05$

Discussion

The research results show that the prevalence of sexual abuse against FSW is high with the magnitude of clients refusing to pay the negotiated and agreed amount after service high too. In addition, lack of negotiation over condom use is another factor that increases the risk of transmission of STIs especially HIV between victims and perpetrators [5]. More programs on prevention of HIV and other STIs should be set up among this group. Based on the in-depth interview results, policemen often take FSW for granted by requesting for sexual services as a means to bail themselves from detention [3]. Education, class of brothels, years of experience and age were found to be the determinants of sexual abuse against FSWs.

Conclusion

Sexual abuse is dehumanizing and calls for action from concerned actors and other strong bodies that can effect positive changes. Though sex work has been criminalized in Nigeria . It is a booming industry despite its legal consequences for this reason, sex workers need protection against all forms of violence and the right to sexual health and rights and access to health care.

Recommendation

- This is a preliminary baseline study
- There is a need to empower young girls and women to mitigate prostitution.
- There is a need for further research in other parts of the country to help develop intervention to mitigate sexual abuse.
- There is a need to educate men on women's rights.
- Uniformed men who indulge in such acts should be penalized
- Care and referral services for abused FSW

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SWEAT

Sex Worker Education and Advocacy Taskforce

Introduction

Sex Worker Education and Advocacy Taskforce (SWEAT) began 12 years ago and has established itself as a credible human rights based organisation that works with sex workers around health and human rights. It is a small organisation nformed by both their outreach work to sex workers in Cape Town, research and their networking with a core group of sex workers on a local and national level. it is the only organisation working in this way with sex workers in South Africa.

Background

SWEAT began as a project of ASET [AIDS Support, Education and Training], with the purpose of establishing a non-governmental service organisation focusing on safer sex educational work with adult sex workers. It became independent in 1996, and registered as a non-profit organisation.Outreach work to sex workers working on the streets and within agencies extended beyond safer sex education to include crisis counselling, legal advice and skills training for sex workers. In 2000,SWEAT began actively advocating for the decriminalisation of adult sex work and an advocacy and lobbying programme was established. Since 2002 SWEAT has been working towards reaching sex workers nationally to engage in issues related to health and legal reform. In 2003 Sisonke, a sex worker movement was launched, and currently they support a local Sisonke group in Cape Town,consisting of over 30 members as well as a core leadership group of 8 sex workers from across South Africa. As of 2006 this has become a core project within SWEAT and informs much of their direct work with sex workers.

Mission

To work with adult sex workers for:

- Rights, fair and safer working conditions;
- Decriminalization of adult sex work;
- Access to health, legal and social services; and
- Promotion of safer sex practices and sex workers' health and well being.

Programmes

SWEAT has developed three programmes that collectively aim to address the structural impediments to achieving a legitimate and respected sex work industry where informed, empowered, safe sex workers are able to make choices about their working lives and career options and address human rights violations.

Training and Support Services Programme is focussed on interventions that address the immediate health and safety needs of sex workers and targeting them collectively with in-depth workshops around safer sex, general health and life skills.

> It is important to emphasis that SWEAT is the only organisation working in this way with sex workers in South Africa.

Advocacy and Lobbying Programme aims to give input to legislative reform processes on a national and local government level. This programme strives to make optimum use of the media in order to raise public awareness and influence public and political attitudes towards sex work.

Research Programme was initiated in 2003 to address the need for a credible and useful research base that would be in the interests of sex workers, improve the effectiveness of our interventions and support our work around health and human rights.

SWEAT is further committed to supporting the development of *Sisonke*, an autonomous sex worker led movement in South Africa.

Current Situation

In South Africa, women are still faced with high levels of unemployment, under-employment, poverty and limited access to social security. The limited opportunities are such that the continuous flow of women into the sex industry now and in the future is still expected .Adult sex workers are a marginalized, stigmatized and vulnerable groups (consisting mostly of women). They face direct and indirect forms of violence and persecution like harassment, arrests, detention and criminal prosecution from the police such that their human rights are violated with the highest level of aggression . The criminality attached to sex work deters sex workers from accessing police protection as well as increasing the already existing power imbalances between men and women.The net effect is one in which a cycle of oppression is created in which accepted prejudice is used to 'justify' discrimination, harassment, persecution, misuse of power and other direct and indirect forms of violence.

To address both violence against women, SWEAT is committed to giving sex work a human face and the need for sex workers to come together through Sisonke *[togetherness]* was self-identified by sex workers at a national meeting in 2003. Over 60 sex workers attended and identified the following key goals:

- The need to have a say in issues of regulation and codes of good practice
- Campaign for the right to be treated as workers with access to labour laws.
- Strive to build solidarity amongst themselves
- Awareness of Police violence towards them

The challenge facing SWEAT with regards to the development of Sisonke is to move from a situation in which the growth of Sisonke is driven forward by SWEAT.

Successes

The study of the sex working industry in Cape Town has enabled SWEAT map out the Sex Industry in Cape Town and put concerns around trafficking into context. and how women and men are recruited into the sex work industry. Their quantitative and qualitative data confirmed that deception and force, at the point of recruitment is not a prevailing feature of the sex work industry in Cape Town. On the contrary, the percentage of sex workers who claim to have been misled or forced into selling sex is remarkably low.

Challenges

Sex work is a crime in South Africa, as is brothel keeping. Criminalising the industry creates an environment where sex workers are more exposed to criminal acts, like rape and assault. Advocating for its continuation makes the society an accomplice to the crimes perpetrated against sex workers. It is very difficult to intervene in these human right violations as Sex Work is illegal.

For more information , please visit their website at **http://www.sweat.org.za**

A Chat with Sex Workers

Olunosen Louisa Ibhaze

A Sex Worker's Caution sign at the entrance to her cubicle

Louisa Ibhaze and Margaret Onah the Executive Director of Safe Haven International a.k.a. Commercial sex Workers Initiative visited a brothel in Lagos for a chat with five sex workers.

Objective

The main objective of this chat was to understand the general experience of sexworkers, how they got into and why they were still in the sex trade.

Locating the Brothel

The first thing that struck me when we asked for directions to the brothel by its name (i.e. the name boldly written on its fence) no one seemed to know the place. Then Margaret my companion asked a few other people if they knew where we could find the brothel where *ashawos*[1], hang out and most of the young men we asked immediately seemed to know and give us precise directions!

Margaret informed the manager about our mission before we start talking to the girls who are at first very skeptical as they are not sure of my mission. As Margaret is a familiar face, I had to make it clear to them that I was not there to judge them but hear their story. In the end five of the girls gave their consent and were willing to have a chat with us.

***Sandra**[2]

Sandra hummed a gospel tune as she invited us into her small cubicle. It contained a small bed, a TV with two bibles carefully placed on it. I sat on the bed while Margaret stood in the only available space which was by the door. Sandra is from the South and was brought to Lagos by a friend 2 years ago promising to get her a job in a restaurant but ended up introducing her to sex work. Poor conditions pushed her into selling sex for money which has paid her way through a fashion designing program which she hopes to take up as soon as she can save up enough money to rent her own shop and buy a sewing machine. When asked if she saw sex work as a long term profession, she explained that it was something she was doing to make ends meet after which she would stop because she saw it as a dirty job she hates. She does not attach any emotions to her job which according the her was one of the reasons she has refused to have a boyfriend as there is no possibility of falling in love with any of her clients. She was just there to make money. Her low points of the job was the little money paid for her service by some clients after bargaining against her initial price and some aggressive clients who fought her. In such situations, the manager usually called the police and had these men arrested She had no choice but to tolerate and accept the fact that not all clients will be well behaved as it wasn't an industry she was not forced into and she had the option to leave now if she couldn't stand the ill treatment.. Healthwise, she protects herself by using condoms with *all* her clients and going for monthly medical checkup so she has no health fears of contracting any STIs or HIV. She has chosen to stay single for now because she believes that, *"the men you meet in a place like this are just out to use you (opportunists) and move on. They are not ready to take on any responsibilities"*.

***Harriet**

Harriet's cubicle has a picture of her younger siblings hanging on her wall. She was brought to Lagos from the South where she was schooling by a close friend to learn hair dressing which she never did. Now as a sex worker, she sends money home to help pay her brother's secondary school fees and her parents' upkeep. Her mother knows she's a sex worker. In her words, *"Any time I visit home my mother never wants me to return to this city. She always begs me to stay back."*. This is her only source of income as she has no other skills and despite her mother's disapproval, she still accepts the money she makes from the trade.

***Augusta**

Starring at us with eyes full of

[1] A local derogatory term used to refer to a prostitute in Nigeria

[2] * Not real name

distrust. She describes her job for the past 1year and 3 months as hustling to make ends meet and at the same time pay her brother's way through the polytechnic . She has a boyfriend, but he like others, has no idea of her profession. When asked if she would have sex with a client without a condom for triple her usual charge , she exclaimed, *"Who wants to die?"*. when asked how she felt and if any thing could be done to make the conditions of sex workers better, she said, *"I am suffering here and there is nothing any body can do about it. if I get a better option I would leave the sex trade."*

"Safe Sex"A sex worker's pack of condoms

***Lovett**

The signs at the entrance to her cubicle caught our attention as one of them read, *"use condom"*. She seemed educated as her command of language and general conversation was very good. A mother of two, for her it wasn't a case of being deceived or tricked into the trade and she was here to hustle because she had responsibilities. With the money she makes from here, she sponsors her younger siblings and her two children who live with their father. She would like to learn a trade depending on what it was as long as the training would not take too much of her time or a very long period to master. Her high point of the job is the financial reward at the end of the day as the lowest amount she makes a day is about N2000. Her low points, was the starting rate of N300 - N400 for services which she felt is very low. For her this was just a job to make money and not a place to bond or make friends. Health wise , she said, *"Only God protects. Despite the fact that I strictly insist on the use of condoms, sometimes insisting clients use up to two or four at once , there are situations where the condoms bursts open. So only God protects"*. When asked if she would have sex without a condom for a higher amount , she said no, instead when she met such clients, she didn't mind spending time trying to educate and convince them about the advantages of using a condom. *"Excellent client service and manner of approach are very important in this business. I have been accused of using juju due to the fact that my clients keep coming back for my services"*. She had encountered an aggressive client only once and that was at the beginning. *"I charged the man, N400 as he wanted "short rest"[1]. After his time was up, I asked him to get off me as I was tired. He got angry and asked for his money back that since he didn't ejaculate, he hadn't gotten what he paid for. When I refused he started fighting me, in the end, at the instruction of the manager, I had return his money."*

"Customer service in this business is very important and that is what I give my clients, which is why I have never had any problems with any clients or encountered aggressive or abusive clients".

***Bidemi**

At twenty seven was married and a mother of two. In her words , *"I am here for a purpose."* Her husband did not treat her well as a full time housewife. As she had no regular income she was financially dependent on him. His attitude made her take a "bold step" of making money for her self as no one was willing to help her financially. She left her children last year with her mother in law (she still visits them from time to time) and since she had no capital to start a provision business as she would have loved to, she went into sex work where she charges between N500 to N5000, depending on the services required by the client. She believes that as a woman she should be able to buy herself basic things and also provide for her children.

She was trying to save up some money to start a provision business. *"Customer service in this business is very important and that is what I give my clients, which is why I have never had any problems with any clients or encountered aggressive or abusive clients"*. She says getting into fights is not worth it because she might get injured and at the end of the day spend the money given to her by them in treating herself, so fighting is a waste of her time .She is aware of Sexually Transmitted Infections and other diseases as her motto is *"Prevention is better than cure"*. Apart from STIs, she said, sex was not the only way through which HIV could be contracted, blades, needles and other sharp objects which could pierce the skin could also transfer these infections. She doesn't share blades and needles. She uses a condom with all her clients as it would help prevent unwanted pregnancies and infections. Her high points of her job is her financial independence. She believes that where there is life there is hope as her feelings towards her job are ambivalent as she does it to

[1] "Short Rest" in brothel term is a term for a client who pay for sex for a short time usually between 20 to 30 minutes

make ends meet. Put in her words *"I am not comfortable with it but I am comfortable"*. The government could help by providing loans through microfinance banks to help people who are willing to be helped because there are people who actually enjoy sex work and are not ready to leave but if she if offered alternatives, she would gladly leave.

Conclusion

The outside picture of the sex trade is quite different from the inside, as was revealed by our chat. Some assume that women in this industry are immoral and carefree, which in some cases is not always true. What is important to note is the fact that, the desire to escape poverty and its pressures in our society is inevitable and as a result some women, have been forced to sell sex for money so they can fend for family and personal needs. The girls I met here are not different from the general population. Most important is the fact that they are very concerned about their health and well being and also their families. Most interesting is the fact that some of them actually do care about their spirituality too.

Olunosen Louisa Ibhaze is a Medical Sociologist and is presently the Programme Officer for Research and Documentation at the ARSRC.

NOTES TO CONTRIBUTORS

Guidelines for Submission

The editors welcome submissions related to future issues of the Magazine and also other areas of sexuality, sexual health and rights in Africa. These articles or poems should be objective, analytical and reflect current issues and debates i.e. taking a broader approach to sexuality and taking the sexuality discourse beyond health to integrate the expression of sexuality without guilt or fear.

Priority would be given to previously unpublished articles while already published material might be considered based on the relevance of the subject area to ARSRC's work, accompanied by details of where to seek permission for its reprint. Presently we are seeking articles on:

Food, Body And Sexual Well-being (Volume 5 Issue 4)

This issue of the magazine will explore the relationship between food, the body and sexual well-being. Contributions will look at the sexualization of the body and food, and the extent to which this process contributes to individual sexual well-being in contemporary Africa. Issues around femininity, masculinity and nutrition will also be explored.

Region Watch: Topical Issues with a country or sub regional focus.

Programme Feature: Best practices from programme implementers.

Research Notes: Focus on research and methodologies

Viewpoint:: Reactions to previous magazine issues or subject areas that a reader wishes to express very strong opinions about.

Length:

Feature article : 1,000 - 1, 500 words
Research issues: 800 - 1, 000 words
Opinion articles: 400 - 500 words

Pictures:

Pictures are welcome with or without articles and appropriate credit would be given if the picture is used.

Presentation:

An abstract with your name, contact address, phone number, email address and short personal bio as you would like it to appear on the list of contributors should also be submitted.

References:

*** It is important to note that references should be from the last five years.

*** All contributors would be sent a copy of the issue with their published articles.

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Sexuality Resources

Poverty and the Social Context of Sex Work In Addis Ababa
Author: Bethlehem Tekola
Publisher: Forum for Social Studies, Addis Ababa, 2005

This book explores the social context of sex work in the city of Addis Ababa. It focuses on the social ties between sex workers and a variety of other categories of people, from their family members to their co-workers to their clients. It explores which of these social ties are affirmed and reinforced, which come under strain and which are cultivated and built by the women as a result of their engagement in sex work. It argues that these things depend on the specific types and conditions of sex work that they do and on the places and conditions of their residents. The main thesis of the work is that sex workers share the same social milieu and value system with non-sex workers and that, despite severe constraints put on them by poverty and very difficult working conditions, they struggle on a daily basis to have social relevance.

Sex, Traffic : Prostitution, Crime and Exploitation
Author: Paola Monzini
Publisher: Zed Books, London, 2005

This book critically addresses gender relationships. The author gives a poignant account of the linkage between sexual exploitation, prostitution and human trafficking. She assesses the attempts made to control trafficking, and the strategies for resistance and change.

Sex, Work, and Professionalism : Working with HIV
Author: Katie Deverell
Publisher: Routledge, London, 2005

Sex, work and professionalism examines what happens when professional concern is defined in terms of sex. Based on original fieldwork with outreach workers in HIV prevention it addresses issues of professionalism, emotion work and boundaries, integrating empirical insights with sociological theory.

Commercial Sex: Beyond Decriminalization
Author: Sylvia A. Law
http://www-rcf.usc.edu/~usclrev/pdf/073302.pdf (Accessed 28th Jan 2008)

This Article demonstrates that decriminalization of sexual services is a necessary first step toward creating more effective remedies against abuse, protecting vulnerable women and building a more humane society. It argues that: 1) criminal sanctions against people who offer sex for money should be repealed, 2) legal remedies and programs to protect commercial sex workers from violence, rape, disease, exploitation, coercion and abuse should be enhanced and 3) whether or not commercial sex is prohibited by criminal law, government policy should promote decent working conditions for all workers and should not require people to engage in sex as a condition of subsistence.

Documenting Human Rights Violations Of Sex Workers In Kenya :A report based on findings of a study conducted in Nairobi, Kisumu,Busia, Nanyuki, Mombasa and Malindi towns by the Federation of Women Lawyers in Kenya
Author : FIDA Kenya, 2008
This report as the title explains , documents the experiences of Sex Workers in Kenya with regards to the violations of their human rights. It is set within the context of the Kenyan legal and public policy systems contrasted to the international human rights framework to determine the extent to which persons engaged in commercial sex trade realise protection of their human rights. The study aimed to examine specific aspects of sex work, like the legal and policy framework affecting sex workers in Kenya, to access the environment within which sex workers operate in various regions in Kenya, to identify and document the various forms of human rights violations experienced by commercial sex workers in Kenya and finally to make recommendations on suitable interventions to secure the rights of commercial sex workers.