

SEXUAL BEHAVIOR OF IDENTIFIED RISK GROUPS: THE PHILIPPINES

The Philippines has been viewed as low and slow in terms of HIV/AIDS, but recent activities of the identified risk groups is a clear manifestation of it transiting as hidden and growing. Having this description the author would also like to explore this issue in terms of Sexually Transmitted Infections.

The Demographic Research and Development Foundation and the University of the Philippines conducted a study about sexual behaviors of identified risk groups, but this paper would also like to dig deeper into the sexual networks of the risky groups.

The objectives of the study are:

- To know the trends and behavior of identified risky sexual groups *in terms of the transmission on STDS/HIV/AIDS,
- Questions were asked regarding their bargaining power, sexual networks, condom used, reasons for selling sex etc.
- Knowledge on HIV/AIDS and STIs were also asked and they were asked about their needs and suggestion for their own sake like safeguarding their health etc.
- And policy implications were also explored pertaining to STDs

The identified risk groups are: Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs), Injectable Drug Users (IDU), Men Having Sex with Men (MSM), Free Lance Women Sex Workers, Registered Freelance Sex Workers. There were twelve Focus group conducted among the groups. The site for the FGDs are in Davao City, Cebu City, Bacolod City, Olongapo City, San Fernando City, Pasay City, Legaspi City, General Santos City.

The findings are that most of the freelance female sex workers said that most of their clients are drivers, vegetable vendors, construction workers etc. while the registered female sex workers said that immediate need for money fuels the need and they always yield to price bargains. Freelance female sex workers also used drugs, and condom use is low also. Some have boyfriend and they don't use condoms when they make love with them. And even if they know that they have STIs already they still sell sex. They also have sexual intercourse among people in the general population.

Among the Overseas Filipino Workers, there is casual sex, among male crew and female, and they have sexual intercourse to those who are selling sex in their areas or port of destinations. Use of condom is very slow.

Among the IDUs they make casual sex with RFSWs and FFSWs. They have high preference for group injection with needle sharing.

In the Philippines, the rise of men having sex with men is phenomenal, and male sex workers have casual sex with female sex workers and anal sex is also practiced. Among

the MSMs also, the network is that they meet through friends and they have hangouts, also the internet as a form of communication or contact is rampant
Condom use is very low among all identified risk groups.

In the different risk groups, condom use is very low, low knowledge in STDs etc, and they all have sexual contacts with the general population.

Summarizing all the risky sexual behaviors of the identified sex groups it is apparent that even if there is lack of real data on the cases of HIV/AIDS as it is stigmatized, we know very well that the risky sexual behaviors of the risk groups alone is telling us that HIV/AIDS situation in the Philippines is really hidden and growing.