

ABSTRACT CATEGORY

Track D: **SOCIAL AND BEHAVIOURAL SCIENCES**

D42 : **Sex work and other forms of transactional sex**

TITLE: SIZE ESTIMATION FOR LOCAL RESPONSES IN MALAYSIA FOR HIV PREVENTION IN SEX WORK

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ISSUES :

Sex workers are one of the high-risk groups for HIV infections. Surveys conducted in Malaysia also confirmed that sex workers have the second highest HIV prevalence rates (Siti Norazah Zulkifli *et al.*, 2006). HIV may spread to the general population through sex workers. Thus, size estimation of sex workers is needed for better coverage and efficient allocation of resources for HIV prevention, as well as facilitating capacity building.

DESCRIPTION

The size estimation for local responses in Malaysia for HIV prevention in sex work project was undertaken by the Malaysian AIDS Council (MAC) and its partner organizations (POs) to provide a more credible estimation of the number of sex workers in the country. This project was also implemented to inform the National Strategic Plan on HIV/AIDS 2006 – 2010 to help achieve its goals of reducing HIV vulnerability among sex workers through the development of all-encompassing evidence-based intervention programmes. Using three academically sound estimation methods, the multiplier, respondent-driven sampling, and triangulation, the study also took into account other limiting factors that might negatively influence the findings, i.e. mobility, inaccessibility, influences of significant events, non-venue-based sex workers, and “invisible” sex workers who are not reached by POs of MAC in the calculation. The study ultimately estimated that there are approximately 60,000 sex workers in Malaysia, which is considered to be a rather conservative estimate.

LESSONS LEARNED

This exercise has helped MAC and its implementing POs to identify the gaps in addressing the needs of this at-risk population. Currently, only 10,000 sex workers are reported to have been reached through prevention programmes nationwide.

NEXT STEP

Scale up the existing community-based responses such as outreach intervention and peer education in terms of geographical coverage, population network, and programme efficacy by referring to best practices