

Providing Stigma-free HIV Services to Sex Workers in Botswana: a Healthcare Worker Perspective

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Slogan: Sex Workers' Health is the Nation's Health

Botswana Context

- No clear absolute number of Sex Workers in Botswana.
- 2012 Mapping, Size Estimation & Behavioral and Biological Surveillance Survey (BBSS) estimated 4153 FSW in 3 districts
- Gaborone, F/Town & Kasane (all urban areas)
 - HIV prevalence : FSW 61.9% , General pop: 18.5 %
 - Incidence: 12.5% , General pop: 1.35 %

Botswana Context

- A sex worker is defined as any woman 18 years & older who received either money or gift or incentive for sexual services or favours (BBSS 2012).
- Legal environment is hostile: Section 155: Botswana Penal Code - Person living on earnings of prostitution or persistently soliciting is guilty of an offence.

Botswana Context

- FSW in Botswana felt highly stigmatised: (BBSS 2012)
 - They cited being insulted, hospital staff being angry that they present with STIs every week.
 - Preferred to give false names due to the fear of being noticed

Providing Stigma Free HIV Services

Stigma is a barrier to access to health

As a health care provider I :

- Accept sex workers as human beings
- Am dedicated to helping sex workers without asking them unnecessary questions that might scare them away.

Providing Stigma Free HIV Services

- Provide counselling and always ensure that their sessions are confidential and assure and protect information shared with me.
- Always assess their needs to improve the services I offer to them and break stereotypes
- Offer accompanied referrals and make sure they access additional services in other institutions.

Providing Stigma Free HIV Services

- Always treat sex workers like other clients and encourage other service providers to treat them likewise.
- Discourage use of derogatory language and labels towards sex workers.

Providing Stigma Free HIV Services

- Provide one on one and group counselling sessions to both citizens and non-citizens without judging them.
- Visit sex workers at their homes to check on them (during one of the visits I found that one sex worker's kids were not in school. I helped the kids to be admitted at school)

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I have helped sex workers to save money and some bought furniture, built houses, and show progress during sessions.



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- Support sex workers in obtaining national identity cards (30 to date) and their children to obtain birth certificates.
 - ID card is required for ART enrolment

Providing Stigma Free HIV Services

- I got trained on dispensing emergency ARVs after realizing that some sex workers missed their refill dates.
- To date we have retained 90 % of our HIV-positive sex workers on ART.
 - *I got a client and we went to South Africa with him, I missed my refill appointment with 3 days, then I was tossed around and given another date, I never went back to get my treatment. One sex worker who was re-initiated on treatment at NYG.*

Providing Stigma Free HIV Services

- Trained sex workers as peer educators to engage their peers and facilitate swift dissemination of health and rights education; increasing uptake of service by sex workers.

What needs to be done

- Include KP issues in different trainings for (nurses, doctors, counsellors)
- Regular sensitization of different stakeholders
- Health care providers to continuously learn with an open mind
- Government to have a specific strategy to address needs of KPs

Thank You