



Interpersonal and Structural Contexts of Intimate Partner Violence among Female Sex Workers in Conflict-Affected Gulu, Northern Uganda

Background

Intimate partner violence (IPV) is the most prevalent form of violence against women, yet remains under-researched among sex workers in Sub-Saharan Africa, particularly in the context of post-conflict settings.

The Question

What are the interpersonal and structural determinants of recent intimate partner violence (IPV) among women sex workers in Gulu, northern Uganda?

The Study

This analysis drew on data from the Gender & Sexual Health Initiatives' Gulu Sexual Health Project, a community-based cross-sectional study in Gulu District, northern Uganda (May 2011-January 2012). 400 female sex workers were recruited through peer/sex worker-led and community outreach. The study was conducted by Canadian and Ugandan researchers in partnership with The AIDS Support Organization (TASO) and other local community partners.

The Results

Of 379 women with non-commercial intimate partners, 59% (n=225) reported recent moderate or severe physical or sexual IPV. Factors associated with recent IPV were:

- Recent workplace client-perpetrated violence
- Reporting a relationship that favored male partner control
- Forced sexual debut
- Recent arrest or incarceration (marginally associated)

Violence from multiple perpetrators across the life course:

The burden of IPV was heightened among sex workers exposed to other forms of recent and historical structural and interpersonal violence, including violence in the workplace, gendered power dynamics favoring male intimate partner control and experience with forced sexual debut.

The Policy Implications

- Our findings highlight a high burden of recent intimate partner-perpetrated physical or sexual violence among young women sex workers living in conflict-affected northern Uganda.
- Programs and policies promoting the safety and health of marginalized women and address gender dynamics and historical violence are needed. Structural interventions that address violence and trauma across the life course for marginalized young women as well as their partners are critically needed within conflict-affected settings.

Margaret Erickson, Shira M. Goldenberg, Aditi Master, Godfrey Muzaaya, Monika Akello, Melissa Braschel, Josephine Birungi, Kate Shannon. Interpersonal and structural contexts of intimate partner violence among female sex workers in conflict-affected Gulu, northern Uganda. *Women & Health*, 2017.