



Men Behind the Menace: An Ethnographic Study of Male Clients of Female Sex Workers in the Wake of HIV/AIDS Epidemic in India



Presented by: Sudipta Mondal, M. Phil
Manager- Monitoring & Evaluation, Pune, India

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Introduction

Sex work in India

- Sex work is centuries old in India
- Various types with primary focus on brothels
- Sex Workers (SWs) found predominantly in cities
 - For every SW, there are 204 males between the ages of 15-59 in Mumbai

Sex work, stigma, and Indian law

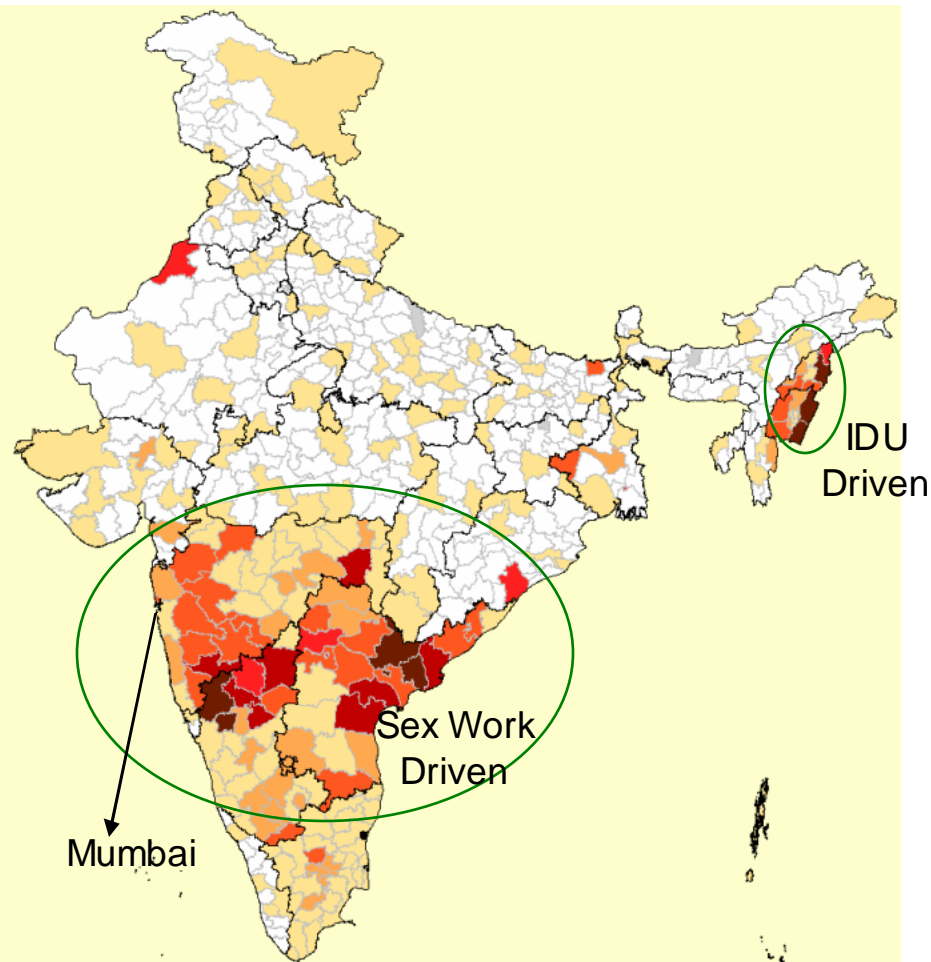
- “Sex” is a taboo subject in India
- Soliciting for sex and living off the income of sex work is illegal
- SWs are more stigmatized than clients

Introduction Continued

HIV/AIDS and sex work in India

- Indian HIV epidemic predominantly fueled by sexual transmission
- SWs form a large part of high risk population
- Clients are a bridge between high risk to general population
- 6 Indian states including Maharashtra are highly affected
- Mumbai (capital of Maharashtra) is often labeled as the epicenter of the epidemic
- Many HIV/AIDS prevention programs mainly work with Female SWs (FSWs), Men Who Have Sex With Men (MSM), truckers, and migrant men

HIV/AIDS in India



- 2.5 million HIV positive – third highest in the world
- 77 districts with ANC prevalence over 1%
- High-prevalence districts appear to cluster
 - Coastal Andhra Pradesh
 - North Karnataka – South Maharashtra
 - North-East
- Limited data from the Northern states

Source: NACO's Sentinel Surveillance data: Average of ANC urban and rural sites (2005)

Methods and Material

- **Qualitative:**
 - Observation
 - Organizational and local key informant interviews
 - In-depth interviews with clients
- **Quantitative:**
 - Semi-structured interviews with 300 clients during (Dec 2006-Jan 2007)
- **Sampling:**
 - Time Location Cluster Sampling
- **Recruitment:**
 - From brothels and bars in Greater Mumbai

Brothel Alleys in Mumbai



Brothel Alleys in Mumbai



Brothel Alleys in Mumbai



Brothel Alleys in Mumbai

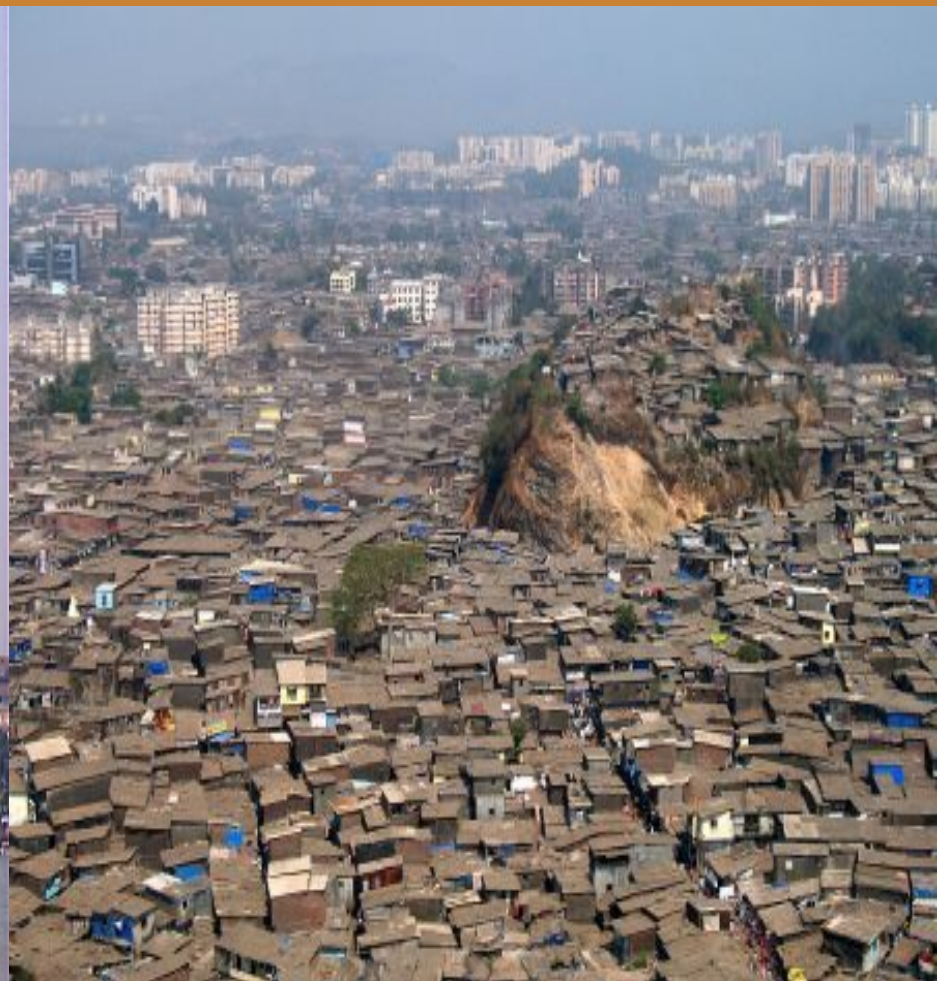


Beer/Dance Bar



Study Area: Mumbai

- Population: 11 Million (2001 Census)
- A city of paradox: Coexistence of extreme opulence with abject poverty
- More than 40% of the population lives in slums; influx of migrants
- Booming real estate price, one of the costliest cities in India
- Nearly 32,000 FSWs (*Avahan - FHI estimate*)
- Sex access points: Well known red-light districts, public places, bars, lodges/hotels, homes



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Changing Sex Work Scenario in Mumbai

- Kamathipura, the largest red-light area, fast losing clientele
- New brothels coming up mainly in city suburbs
- More “sex joints” in the form of bars, parlors, lodges etc.
 - More “disguised” operation
 - More tailor-made packages
- Use of cell phones and internet for solicitation
- Ban on “dance bars” by local government and opening up of “orchestras”

Beer/Dance Bars



Beer/Dance Bars



Beer/Dance Bars



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About the Study Sample: The Men

- 300 male clients were interviewed from 47 bars and 3 red-light districts in Mumbai
- 65% from bars (196) and 35% from brothels (104)
- Very high (more than 35%) refusal rate

Characteristics of male respondents (N=300)

- Age: Mean 32.4 years, Range 18-61 years
- Religion: Predominantly Hindu (65%) followed by Muslim (15%)
- Education: More than 60% had received more than 10 years of schooling
- Marital Status: Nearly 70% were currently married and nearly 66% were living with spouses
- Occupation: From all walks of life; only 6% are students
- Income: More than three-fourths of them earned more than \$120 a month
(*National average = \$40 – Mumbai average = \$136*)

Characteristics of male respondents

- Migration: 89% were residents of Mumbai
- Mean age of sexual debut: 18.9 years, range 13-30 years
- First paid sex: Nearly 62% visited sex workers the first time with friends
- Cost of sex: Brothel = \$5 Bar = \$25 (per encounter)
- Casual sex: 81% had relationships with other girls/women
- Anal sex: twice as much anal sex with paid partners as with wives/girlfriends
- Alcohol intake: 86% reported using alcohol during last sex with paid partners

STI/HIV: Knowledge & Health Seeking Behavior

- **Knowledge about HIV/AIDS:**
 - All of them had heard of AIDS
 - 86% knew AIDS was transmitted through heterosexual intercourse
 - 81% stated using condoms during sex could prevent HIV
 - 90% believed that HIV was concentrated among sex workers
 - Mass media was the most common source of knowledge

STI/HIV: Knowledge & Health Seeking Behavior

- **Health Seeking Behavior:**

- 75% said STIs were curable
- 97% could report at least one symptom of an STI
- 20% had experienced a symptom in the last year
- 91% sought treatment and a quarter of them either self-medicated or purchased pharmacist-prescribed drugs

Condom Use

Partners	Used condoms in the last sex
FSW	91.6
Bar girl	89.9
Other girls	43.0
Girl Friend	9.0
Wife	5.0
Male Partner/'Hijra'	34.6*

* 17.3% (52) clients ever had sex with male partners

More on Condoms

- 34% said that their partners insisted that they used condoms
- 35% revealed that they learned about condom use from sex workers
- 28% reported carrying a condom while going in for sex
- 17% experienced condom breakage at least once in their last 5 encounters

Risk Perception

Risk of HIV in different sex venues			
Paid sex with girls from:	Low	Medium	High
Brothels	12.3	16.3	71.3
Street	41.3	19.3	39.3
Bars	18.3	54.0	27.7
Homes	77.3	19.3	3.3



Conclusions

- Demand for perceived “safer” sex is driving women out of the brothels
- Men appear willing to spend more money for sex in non-brothel-based settings
- Condom use shows:
 - Same partner sex perceived as safer
 - These men seem to be “menace” to the general population

Recommendations

- Interventions outside brothels – wide net to “catch” vulnerable populations
- Condom messages in India need to focus on types of sexual encounters, not just type of partners
- HIV/AIDS program planning and evaluation should include client perspective and realities
- Further studies looking at risk perception of same partner sex

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Thanks!

