

PREVALENCE AND RISK FACTORS FOR SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS AMONG NEWLY-ARRIVED FEMALE SEX WORKERS IN TIMIKA, INDONESIA.

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Timika is a mining town in West Papua, Indonesia, with approximately 12,000 “geographic bachelors”, and many engage with female sex workers (FSWs). Our aim was to investigate the trends in prevalence and risk factors associated with STIs among the FSWs attending the STI clinic for the first time, almost all of whom are newly arrived in Timika. The clinic was part of a government/industry sponsored STI/HIV intervention program.

We recruited FSWs from the only brothel, from local bars and from the street between 1997 and 2002. After informed consent, sociodemographic information and sexual health history were obtained, clinical features noted and laboratory testing performed on genital samples and sera.

Most of the 3,086 FSWs recruited worked in the brothel or bars and most originated from Java or Sulawesi. Prevalence of *C. trachomatis* was significantly higher in 1998 (41%) compared with 1997 (28%), the only two years for which testing was carried out ($P=0.005$). From 1997-2002, prevalence of positive cervical gonococcal cultures varied from 11% to 19% ($P=0.68$). Syphilis varied from 1% to 5% ($P=0.55$). Trichomoniasis declined significantly from 16% to 14% ($P=0.030$). HIV infection was detected in 19 FSWs, and the prevalence increased significantly from 0% to 1% ($P=0.003$). While consistent condom use was low, there was a significant increase from 8% to 16% ($P=0.001$). In multivariate analysis, STIs were associated with young age, high frequency of sex, and not using contraceptives. Inconsistent condom use was associated with young age, high frequency of sex, having a regular partner and place of origin other than Java.

High prevalence of STIs, low consistent condom use and increasing HIV prevalence among these FSWs require enhanced interventions. FSWs in Indonesia are vulnerable to HIV transmission, and a partnership with industry can help in developing an intervention program.