HIV and STI Prevention for Female Migrant Sex Workers (MSW)
Challenges, Strategies and Research Needs
A Qualitative Study with Expert Interviews in Berlin

Claudia Santos-Hövener
Master Thesis

Charité, Berlin School of Public Health
Master Study Program
Health and Society: International Gender Studies
Background

- In Germany 86% of sex workers are women
- 60-80% of female sex workers in Germany are migrants
- Increase of women migrating to engage in sex work
- Since the eastward enlargement of the EU, more women from Eastern and Central Europe
- Studies from other countries indicate that MSW at heightened risk for HIV/STIs
- Raising HIV incidence of migrants in Germany

☞ HIV/STI prevention for MSW is pivotal
Research Questions

- What are barriers and achievements for HIV/STI prevention for MSW in Berlin?
- What are potential new approaches to HIV/STI prevention for MSW in Berlin?
- What additional information is needed to plan HIV/STI prevention services for the target group?
Methods

- Study Approach: Qualitative, inductive
  - Using semistructured interviews with 12 experts

- Data Sources:
  - Partial transcription of interviews
  - Fieldnotes

- Data Analysis:
  - Elements of Grounded Theory (Charmaz)
  - Method for analysis of guided interviews (Schmidt)
Findings- Main Themes

- Services of HIV/STI Prevention
- Group of MSW
- Future Research
- Achievements
- Problems/Barriers
- Approaches to HIV/STI Prevention
Findings-Achievements and Challenges

- Access/Accessibility
- Behavior Change
- Collaboration
- Achievements of HIV/STI Prevention

Pressures

- Cultural Issues
- Physical Accessibility
- Financial Pressure

Barriers/Problems of HIV/STI Prevention

- Reaching the Group
- Pressure
- Lack of Collaboration
- Legal Issues
- Lack of Knowledge about Bodily Functions
- Stigma
- “Johns” Requesting Unsafe Sex
- Lack of Resources
- “Pimps”
- Living Situation
- Migration Laws
- Regulation of Working Conditions
- Raids

- Lack of a Comprehensive HIV/STI Prevention Strategy

- "Johns" Requesting Unsafe Sex
- "Pimps"
- Pressure
- Reaching the Group
- Lack of Collaboration
- Legal Issues
- Lack of Knowledge about Bodily Functions
- Stigma
- "Johns" Requesting Unsafe Sex
- Lack of Resources
- "Pimps"
- Living Situation
- Migration Laws
- Regulation of Working Conditions
- Raids

- Lack of a Comprehensive HIV/STI Prevention Strategy

- "Johns" Requesting Unsafe Sex
- "Pimps"
- Pressure
- Reaching the Group
- Lack of Collaboration
- Legal Issues
- Lack of Knowledge about Bodily Functions
- Stigma
- "Johns" Requesting Unsafe Sex
- Lack of Resources
- "Pimps"
- Living Situation
- Migration Laws
- Regulation of Working Conditions
- Raids

- Lack of a Comprehensive HIV/STI Prevention Strategy
Findings-Approaches
Discussion

- Focus on street-based sex work even though 80% of sex work in Germany takes place indoors

- New finding
  - Level of sex education in MSW from Central Europe

- Sex Work – a gender issue

- Structural and behavioral/cultural barriers to HIV/STI prevention for MSW

- HIV/STI prevention planning adhering to the model of structural prevention by Etgeton
Recommendations

- Addressing the underlying issues
- Designing effective HIV/STI prevention strategies
  - Involvement of MSW in HIV/STI prevention
  - Interventions for “johns”
- Increase of collaboration on national and international level
- Continuous advocacy for the rights of MSW and sex workers in general
- Further research
Thank you very much for your attention and interest!

Claudia Santos-Hövener, MSc (Public Health)
Robert Koch Institute, Berlin
Santos-HoeveneC@rki.de