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Reproductive health among key population at risk for HIV

Sathya Herath

National STD/AIDS Control Programme, Sri Lanka

Nearly 37.6 million people have been estimated to be living with HIV, of which 1.8 million were newly infected as per the 2016 records. However, the epidemic is not evenly distributed. Key population (KP) such as men who have sex with men (MSM), transgenders (TG), female sex workers (FSW), people who use /inject drug (PWUD/PWID), people living in prisons and other closed settings carry higher risk than the general population. These KP are at risk of HIV and sexually transmitted infections (STI) in addition to experiencing challenges in fulfilling other general reproductive health services including family planning, prevention of gender based violence and maternal health. This could be due to many reasons which are bound to individual behaviors involving frequent exposure to infections by engaging in risky activities, societal factors such as a potentially weak family and social support, marginalization, lack of resources, and inadequate access to health care services. Often, the KP includes vulnerable girls and pregnant women, pregnant drug users and pregnant women in prisons; this leads to further barriers and risks. Stigma and discrimination posed towards them and fear of accessing health facilities put these special groups at risk more and more. To improve health outcomes, HIV, STI, family planning, maternal and child health programs need to be designed to address the unique physical and social needs and contexts of the key population by incorporating targeted evidence based education, research and advocacy in implementing the programs.

Biography

Sathya Herath has completed her medical education from the University of Peradeniya and Masters and Post-doctoral Degree in Public Health, Sexual Health and HIV Medicine from the University of Colombo, Sri Lanka. She completed her Post-doctoral Fellowship in the Division of Infectious Disease and Clinical Epidemiology Program at the University of Ottawa, Canada. She is a Specialist Medical Officer at the National STD/AIDS Control Programme, Sri Lanka, where her work mainly involves key populations. Her work and research experience are both public health and clinical oriented. She has published many scientific research articles and has presented research papers in several national and international conferences.

sathya_herath@yahoo.com

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