

***You know most of the time they do
sex work, transgender women,
because of issues like acceptance.***

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**Embracing positive living
for our people**

Trans 101...

- Transgender (“trans”) = An umbrella term for people whose gender identity and/or gender expression differs from what is typically associated with the sex they were assigned at birth.



Trans 101...

Transgender women (male to female) = Assigned male at birth but identify as women

- Gender identity is independent of sexuality:
 - Transgender women may identify as *straight*, *gay*, *bisexual*, or may consider conventional sexuality labels inadequate or inapplicable.

Trans 101...

- Most transgender women want to transition their bodies to be more congruent with their identities; they often use medical technologies, such as cross-sex hormones, and undergo various types of surgeries –
 - *The reality is very complex:*
 - *Transgender women's bodies can be at any stage of medical transition, ranging from male to female to unusual and non-conforming bodies that cannot simply be defined in male-female binary*

Trans 101



Trans 101

A woman in the making

GAUTENG / 7 AUGUST 2015, 6:20PM / BOTHO MOLOSANKWE



29.07.2015 Snowy Mamba, shares her a journey at her home in Tsakane, East Rand. Picture: Itumeleng English

Hijras of India



What is known of transgender women and HIV?

- Globally, transgender women have been shown to be at high risk for HIV infection.
- Transgender women are nearly 49 times more likely to be infected with HIV than other adults of reproductive age
- In South Africa we currently have no information regarding the specific HIV vulnerabilities of transgender women.
- HIV prevalence among transgender women also remains undocumented

Rapid Ethnography...Methods

Cape Town	Johannesburg	East London
Ministry of Health	Trans Female Sex Worker	Representative of Eastern Cape AIDS Council
NGO for trans female sex workers	Trans woman, Coordinator for Miss Gay Jozi	Outreach team leader for LGBTI organisation
Senior clinical advisor at LGBTI NGO	Representative SANAC LTBTI sector	Trans woman, founder of trans-NGO
Trans woman and founder of NGO working with trans women in rural SA		
Medical nurse at LGBTI NGO		

Rapid Ethnography...Methods

- We asked key informants:
 - Life of a trans woman in the city?

Preliminary results... Life of a trans woman

- Social rejection leads to homelessness:

I remember, I emigrated from home to the city of Johannesburg and that moment, I think I was between the age of twelve going thirteen. And when I came here, I became homeless for about 1 year and six months you know? And I hustled my way from the pavement to a hotel somewhere in Hillbrow (Trans Female Sex Worker, Gauteng)

Preliminary results...Life of a trans woman

- Homelessness, little or no education leads to unemployment:

*And also, hearing or having heard some of the other stories of my trans sisters and how they became **sex workers** is also because of the fact that they are, some of them have been on their own since a young age. Nobody accepted them for who they are and those are the kinds of stories that you hear (Trans woman, coordinator for Miss Gay Jozi, Gauteng)*

Preliminary results...Life of a trans woman

Engaging in sex work provides a space where trans women are affirmed as women

The link between gender affirmation and high risk sexual practices (i.e. sex work)

You know most of the time they do sex work, trans women, because of issues like acceptance. They say when it comes to engaging in sex, those are the only people who accept them just as they are (Representative of Eastern Cape AIDS Council, East London)

Preliminary results...Life of a trans woman

- Violence and victimization directly and indirectly leads to HIV risk
 - *But you know the daily sort of struggle to try and negotiate the city police, people's belongings are destroyed all the time and you are homeless, your stuff is confiscated, your ID book destroyed, all your things can be wiped out overnight. They are trying to push people out of the city ... they are assuming that will stop people from being homeless, but of course that is a ridiculous assumption* (NGO for trans female sex workers, Cape Town)

Preliminary results...Life of a trans woman

- Sex work
- Unable to negotiate safer sex
- Drug use
 - *Many trans women say that they use substances as the way of coping with the heartache, coping with the isolation, coping with the rejection* (Trans woman, founder of trans-specific NGO, East London)
 - *Unemployment, being on the street, using drugs. If you are on the street and you are cold and you are whatever, you start to use drugs. That whole culture, that bottomless pit of vulnerability basically that there is* (Ministry of Health, Cape Town)

Preliminary results...Life of a trans woman

- Individual level, structural
- *The trans female sex workers that I see, there is not one that is not HIV positive* (Medical nurse at LGBTI NGO, Cape Town)

Conclusion

- HIV risk in transgender communities is embedded in multiple co-occurring public health problems, including poverty, substance use, violence and victimization, discrimination
- The heightened HIV risk of trans women through the overlap between drug use and sex work

Recommendations

- Multi-level interventions are required that address risk at an interpersonal, biological, structural and community levels
- Considerations of the legal and policy framework in which sex workers work needs to be looked at
- Community-led interventions, grounded in empowerment

THANK YOU

