

Violence against migrant sex workers and HIV positive women in Russia

**N. Volkova, Anti-AIDS Foundation “Steps”
Sh. Yusupova, Regional Expert Group on
Migrants’ Health**

Violence and Sex Work in Russia

- Partners (domestic) violence against women is the acute problem - 35 thousands episodes have been registered in 2017 according to *Internal Affairs Ministry of the RF* i.e. one in four women experienced violence at home or from the partner
- Though it is easy for the offender to remain unpunished as there is no special legislation against domestic violence in the RF Criminal Code unless the victim dies. Even suspended sentences aren't used, only small administrative penalties of 5-10 thousand Rubles for “slight bodily injury” and “beating” (*Article 115 paragraph 1 and Article 116 paragraph 1 of the Criminal Code*)
- Domestic violence is considered as *private accusation* which implies no investigation by the police and obliges the complainant to collect evidence, provide them to prosecutor's office and protect the case in the court by the victim



Violence and Sex Work in Russia

- Estimated number of sex workers in Russia ranges from 1 to 3 million (120 000 of whom are in Moscow), half of SWs are migrants from the Russian regions, former Soviet states and Africa (*Silver Rose movement to protect SWs health and rights*)
- Sex work is classified in the *RF Criminal Code* as administrative offence, organizing brothels and involving people in sex work is a criminal offence
- Public opinion stigmatizes sex work and sex workers and largely considers violence against them “normal” (*Silver Rose*) though it is now known that criminalization of some or all aspects of sex work elevates HIV transmission risks and fuels violence against sex workers (*UNAIDS. The gap report. (2014)*)

Migration and HIV in Russia

- Russia is one of largest centers of labor migration in the world. Experts estimate that, since 1991, the migration population has increased by more than 10 million, representing approximately 10 % of the labor force
- A large proportion of migrant workers come to Russia from Central Asian countries - Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. Also from Ukraine, Moldova, and Armenia
- Migrants provide considerable contribution to Russia's economy and population increase by 5-10 million people as *Russian policy makers say*
- In 2018 Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs issued 1,671,706 labor patents to migrants. Those are people who enter the country legally and are officially registered with the relevant authorities

Migration and HIV in Russia

- For the labor patent or a permit to stay in the country for a period exceeding three months, medical examinations, including HIV testing, are mandatory. But foreign citizen tested positive for HIV-infection shall be deported and gets a life-long ban on entering Russia (*RF Migration Legislation*)
- Some migrants, anticipating possible test results, avoid health check-ups. They come to the country illegally, get short-term visas, buy fake health certificates or send another person to be tested in their place (*Regional Expert Group on Migrants' Health*)
- At this time HIV rates are increasing in Russia, with a record number of new cases and a total of about 1.2 million infected, according to *the World Health Organization*
- This is compounded by low contraception use by Russian males – only 24% use contraception regularly and 40% don't use contraception at all (*Lady.Mail.Ru survey on contraception use in Russia in 2018 and 2019 with 12 782 respondents*)

Violence against sex workers

from the study “HIV and other STIs among FSW in Moscow (Russia): prevalence and associated risk factors”

Collaborative study by Médecins du Monde, Anti-AIDS Foundation “Steps” and Russian Central Research Institute of Epidemiology conducted in Moscow between 2017 and 2018, N=385

Among all participants

- 30.4% had experienced one form of violence in the previous 12 months
- 13.8% - physical violence
- 28.8% - unwanted sexual relationship
- 12.2% both forms of violence

Rates of violence were significantly higher for FSW working outdoor



Violence against sex workers

from the study “HIV and other STIs among FSW in Moscow (Russia): prevalence and associated risk factors”

Socio-demographic characteristics (N=385)			
	All participants N=385	Indoor FSW N=206	Outdoor FSW N=179
Ethnic origin			
Russian	282 (73.2%)	163 (79.1%)	119 (66.5%)
Former Soviet Union States + Central Asia	75 (19.5%)	28 (13.6%)	47 (26.2%)
From Sub-Saharan Africa	22 (5.7%)	10 (4.9%)	12 (6.7%)
Missing data	6 (1.6%)	5 (2.4%)	1 (0.6%)

Former Soviet Union States: Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, Caucasus (Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan), Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan Afghanistan)

Violence against sex workers

from the study “HIV and other STIs among FSW in Moscow (Russia): prevalence and associated risk factors”

Type of violence undergone by study participants in the previous 12 months (N=385)

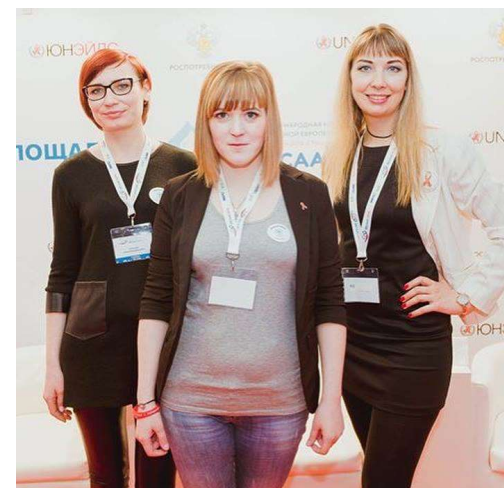
	All participants N=385	Indoor FSW N=206	Outdoor FSW N=179
Physical violence because of sex work			
No	325 (84.4%)	185 (89,8%)	140 (78.2%)
Yes	53 (13.8%)	18 (8.7%)	35 (19.6%)
Missing data	7 (1.8%)	3 (1.5%)	4 (2.2%)
Unwanted sexual relationships			
No	270 (70.1%)	170 (82.5%)	100 (55.9%)
Yes	111 (28.8%)	34 (16.5%)	77 (43.0%)
Missing data	4 (1.0%)	2 (1.0%)	2 (1.1%)
Both types of violence	47 (12.2%)	15 (7.3%)	32 (17.9%)
Either physical or sexual violence	117 (30.4%)	30 (14.6%)	87 (48.5%)

Violence against women, living with HIV in Russia

from the study “Problems of violence against women, living with HIV in the Russian Federation”

The study conducted by EVA Association for HIV positive women health in 2018 with 113 HIV positive women

- 40% of women experienced physical violence after being diagnosed with HIV, 7% of them on a regular basis, 14% links violence to the HIV diagnosis
- 78% experienced psychological violence
- Every fourth – 24% experienced sexual violence
- Only 65% could share information about violence with someone and only 36,4% managed to share about sexual violence
- 70% of those who experienced violence didn't know if there was a shelter in their living location and how they would get there

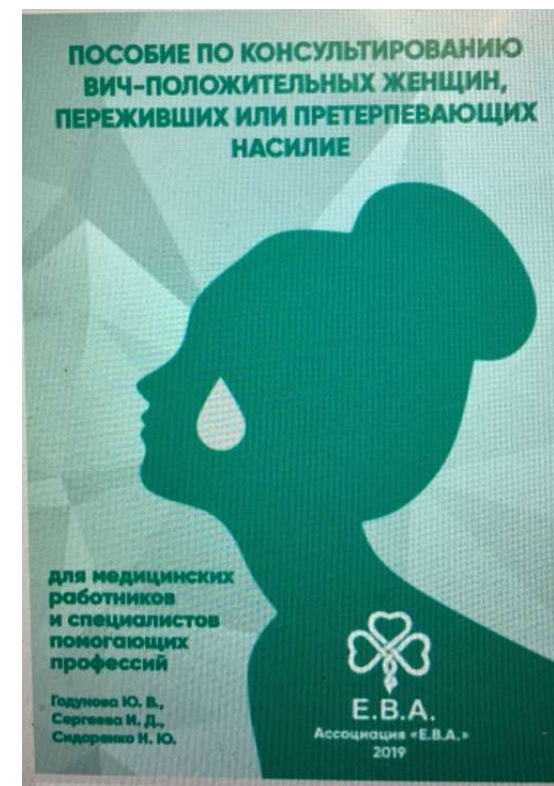
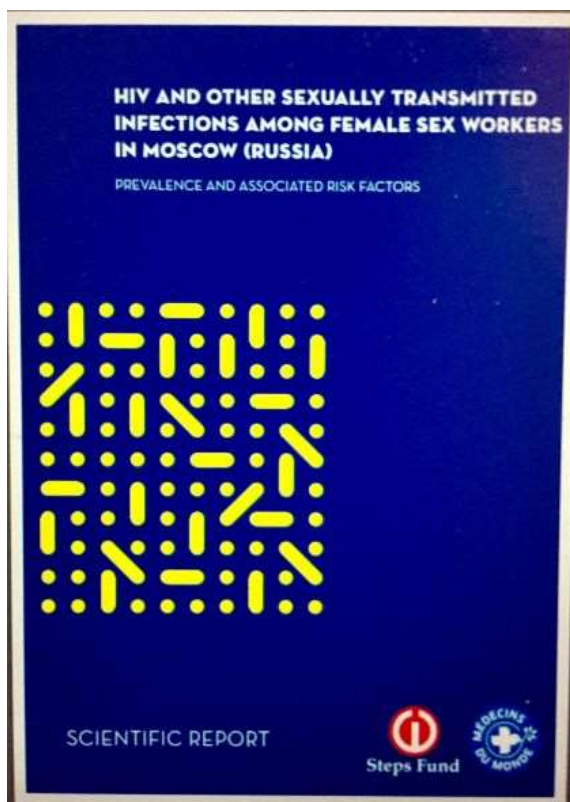
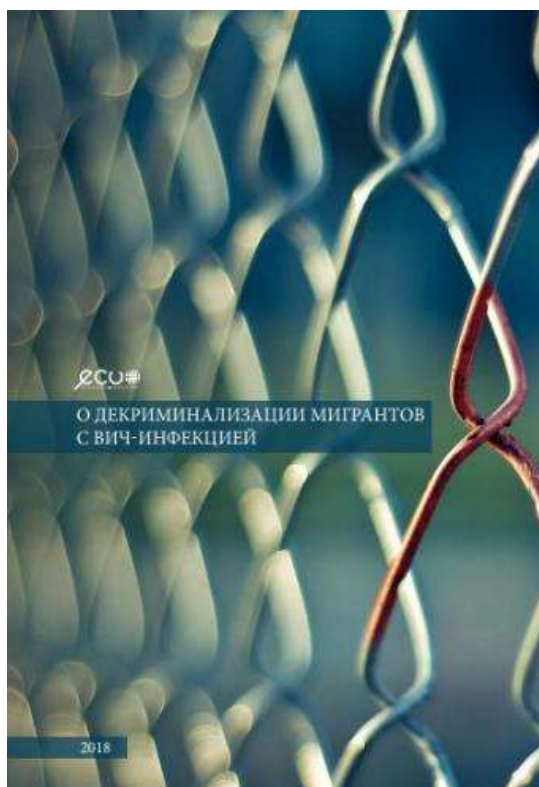


Some barriers in providing assistance to victims of violence in Russia

- Myths about violence, many people think that violence is the victim's fault
- Lack of information about specialized crisis centers. No crisis centers in some regions and territories
- Crisis centers don't admit HIV-positive women and/or women without documents
- Fast burnout of specialists working with violence issues
- Absence or lack of special training for people who work with violence issues: psychologists, healthcare providers, police
- Criminalization of HIV positive people for the possibility of HIV-infection transmitting and actual transmitting. Separate Article 122 in the RF Criminal Code
 - Limited or no access to medical, social and legal assistance for migrants and migrants with HIV infection
 - No regular access to condoms and lubricants to prevent HIV and STI transmission, especially for key population groups (sex workers and others)



Materials used



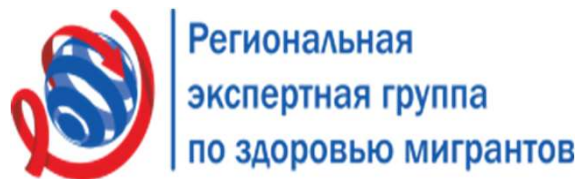
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Thank you for your attention!



Natalia Volkova
natavolkova81@gmail.com
Steps Anti-AIDS Fund



Shakhnoz Yusupova
yusupovash@gmail.com
Regional Expert Group on Migrants' Health