Reviewer’s report

Title: HIV vulnerability among female sex workers with a non-paying partner: Evidence from southern India

Version: 1 Date: 18 November 2013

Reviewer: Shreena Ramanathan

Reviewer’s report:

Minor essential revisions
1. Abstract - no reference to the states. Acknowledge states where the survey was conducted.
2. Background - the gap this paper is aiming to address needs to be made clearer and stronger. Locate the gap in the context of studies conducted in India. Explicitly state the gap/limitations and mention why it is important to study the vulnerability of FSWs having non-paying partners. Convey why cohabitation status is important. Discuss the social and structural context in which FSWs live in India. Also include relevant literature from other countries. The last paragraph in the background could be organized in terms of some sort of groupings such as Aim1, 2, etc. Using a format such as this throughout the paper would greatly improve the flow and the ability to interpret the results.
3. Methods - include operational definition of a non-paying partner. Define key terms used such as occasional and regular clients. Explain why street-based solicitation, financial debt and experience of violence were considered to construct the vulnerability index. A rationale for this is not provided [...guided by literature....] Elaborate more on the vulnerability index.
4. Results - if reorganized would improve readability [...sections ...sample characteristics, HIV related risk perceptions, Exposure to programs and service utilization, Comparison of risk and exposure to programs among non-paying and paying partners based on cohabitation status].
6. Discussion - generic limitations are mentioned but need to mention limitations of the current analysis.
7. Tables - include timeframe for variables and definitions of key terms used [e.g., cohabiting non-paying partner..]

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interests