Author's response to reviews

Title: Demography and sex work characteristics of female sex workers in India

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Dear Editors,

Thank you for suggesting revision of our manuscript. We appreciate the comments by the reviewer, which are addressed as follows in the revised manuscript:

Minor essential revisions

1. Standard deviation is now added for age distribution of female sex workers (page 8, para 2, line 2), the number of children of female sex workers (page 9, para 2, line 7), the age at which female sex worker had first vaginal intercourse (page 10, para 3, line 2) and age at which she had first sex in exchange for money (page 10, para 3, line 3).

We have now provided results of statistical test for significance for those comparisons for which these were not reported previously - page 8 (para 2, line 6), page 8 (para 3, lines 3 and 5) and page 10 (para 3, last line). The chi square test for trend is now reported for Table 2 using the data available as suggested by the reviewer.

2. Tables 3 and 4 - Means for the relevant variables in these Tables are already presented in the text. We understand that these Tables are over-loaded but as we had explained in our previous revision letter, these data would be useful in the manner that these have been presented. We would appreciate if these were left as is.

Table 1 describes only the distribution of age group and marital status of female sex workers who participated in the study. On the other hand, Figure 2 shows the distribution of marital status within age groups for the female sex workers and the women from general population in the Indian state of Andhra Pradesh. The data provided in Table 1 and Figure 2 are not the same, and hence Figure 2 cannot be removed.

3. Abstract - Wording in conclusion corrected as suggested.

4. Page 5, para 1 - As suggested, the language in this para is now modified to reflect that we have presented data from the baseline study, and that a follow-up study is planned at a later stage.

5. We found two mentions of stat results that were not shown explicitly in the results/Tables. We have now shifted the description of proportion of children among the never married 16-24 years old female sex workers from discussion (page 14, para 1) to results (page 9, para 2). The description of the comparison of gap of more than 5 years between the first vaginal intercourse and intercourse in exchange for money between the three types of FSWs is now modified (page 15, para 2) as these results are seen in Table 4.

6. Page 7, last line - Bivariate analysis is now added.
Discretionary revisions

7. As suggested, the title of the manuscript is modified to better reflect the data presented in the manuscript.

8. Number style is made consistent.

9. Background (page 4, para 2) - Sentence 1 is now modified using the terms low and high prevalence, as suggested.

10. Discussion, para 1 - It is difficult to point the direction of the bias for the data presented in this manuscript. We have mentioned that the female sex workers who participated are likely to be those who are better connected with their peers.

We thank BMC International Health and Human Rights for considering our manuscript. We hope that this revision would enable a final decision on this manuscript.

Yours sincerely,

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