



The Coalition Of Children Who are Affected by HIV
Collaboration with Mothers for the Future

Report

About Mothers for the Future

Sex work is a sexual offence under act of 1957 and is fully criminalised in South Africa.

Despite this, the industry is currently thriving. In 2013 a study estimated that 8.350 female sex workers work and reside in Cape Town, most of whom are black South African women from the age of 24 - 28 years.

Most women enter the sex work industry to meet their urgent **financial and social needs**, which include food, shelters and number of dependents.

Sex work offers an opportunity to bring home immediate cash, **earn three more to five times** more than they could in any other job commensurable with their skills and work without academic or technical qualifications.

Mothers for the Future has established in 2013 and since then has expanded to **4 provinces** and in 2 provinces they are providing a safe place for children of sex workers.

The Coalition of Children Affected by AIDS supports the project to conduct consultations to understand and support the reality of young mothers who are **associated with sex work in South Africa**.

Since Mothers for the Future have a co-group structure in 4 provinces and a membership group of **450 members** we have chosen to conduct **10 consultations in each province**.

Methodology for data collection

- We developed the questionnaires form in a language that was very easier to understand
- We made sure that the participant are members of Mothers for the Future
- Gave them an understanding of what the information will be used for
- Assured Privacy and Confidentiality
- We made them feel free to leave out any questions that made them feel uncomfortable
- We put in place a referral system for counselling with our partner SWEAT, who have a professional trauma team if anyone would breakdown during the interview.
- We set up the group consultation that I was supporting to make sure they are fully supported and being a part of the discussion.
- All the participants that are in the videos they were made aware of and understood the purpose of the conversation (sign the Concern forms)
- We conducted the interviews during our home visit and other safe spaces mothers create for mothers.
- The language they used was done in a way that made them feel comfortable.
- We interviewed 40 individuals and one group section.
- This was voluntary and we only provide catering and transport reimbursement.
- We have kept their names anonymous and used pictures of their hands to protect their identity.
- The interviewees were young mothers aged 18 years to 31 years

What information we were collecting

- To know what their story is and who they are
- **What** challenges they face when they become pregnant when they are young
- As young mothers, what challenges them and how?
- **What** is the age of their children and do they stay with their children and if not what is the reason
- **When** they started working as a sex worker
- **Finding** out more about the relationship with their children and if they know about the work they do
- **Their** aspiration for their future and their childrens future
- **What** Guidance they need to be able to raise their children
- **Do** they feel that are they parent enough because they are sex workers?
- **How** did they become involved with Mothers for the Future?

- If they are receiving treatment, they are using the local clinic to collect their medication and if sodo they have a positive experience?
- **What** have the experiences been of young mothers in carrying on with their medication/ treatment
- **How** can Mothers for the Future assist you to build a relationship with thier children?
- **What** are the biggest challenges that they have experienced as young mothers associate with sex work?
- If they could speak to funders and other leaders about how best to support young mothers associate with sex work, what they would they say?
- If they could speak to funders and other leaders about what skills they would like and benefit from developing, what would they be?
- **How** would they want funders and leader to choose to engage with them as young mothers associate with sex work?

Interviews

In a meeting with seven young mothers on the 24th of October 2020, we discussed the hardships of young mothers living with HIV, the challenges other young moms are facing and how best we can assist them.

The following are points that were taken from the meeting:

1. **YOUNG MOTHERS WHO ARE HIV + AND WHAT THEY ARE GOING THROUGH**

- Discovered that these mothers are going through tough times and also some of their children are also HIV positive.
- Because of their HIV status, they have lower levels of education than the general public.
- They are not skilled so doing sex work is their only way to survive
- They have lost their sense of dignity from their
- Stigmatised by their children and families,
- Mothers are keen to see their children but because of stigma they can't bond with their children.
- Are so heartbroken they don't know what the future holds and also they are

- Struggling to answer difficult questions when asked about their relationship with their children
- Faced with challenging life circumstances such as homelessness, unemployment and lack of adequate health insurance.
- Living in impoverished communities and facing a range of social vulnerabilities.
- Very happy to engage in these open spaces because they are free to air their views.
- Being HIV positive and your child being positive, they are scared to go for clinic check ups because the service providers may start shouting that you are too young and questioned where the father of the child is.
- Feeling vulnerable and mistreated in the clinic setting and at home when trying to defend HIV status.
- Trying to find a way to survive and an easier way to financially support you and your child.
- Loss of trust in the community and family as a young mother which leaves you having to rely on yourself which makes sex work a good opportunity in that moment but is limited and comes with high risks and bad experiences.
- Sex work offers some hope for you and your children even though it is difficult and limited.
- Many young mothers fall into using drugs to survive and they express it is difficult to be understood and supported by old mothers in sex work because they treat them as an adult, not a young mother.

2. CHALLENGES IN GENERAL THEY ARE FACING AS YOUNG MOTHERS

- Finding it very difficult to put food on the table for their children.
- Young mothers want their own open space to be able to discuss their issues and help each other to come up with solutions.
- They love their children, but some are taken away from them by social workers or family which makes it difficult for them to visit them
- They are not able to share their experiences during the support groups with older mothers.
- They have so much pressure from their families because they always use them as financial machines.
- They don't have any other skills; hence they do not get enough money to take care of their children.
- Due to COVID-19, the sex work industry was affected badly thus making things even more difficult.
- They can't come out to their children who are old enough to understand, about their line of work and some medications they are taking because they are afraid of ruining their mother-child relationship.
- Due to the fact that they are getting pregnant so young, the families treat them like adults and do not support them to complete education and pursue their dreams.
- The pressure to be the breadwinner and parent for their families places a lot of emotional and financial pressure.

- Sometime they do not even know how to guide their children because there are still so young themselves
- Their children become used to push them to generate and support more financially by their families because they are not able to live with them
- Our hope to further study is often impossible to achieve because all the money made goes to supporting their children, 'most we are single mothers; the money you make you have to send home so that your child will be treated better'.

After hearing their hardships and challenges, we were able to come up with the following supporting outcomes:

3. OUTCOMES

- **Design** programs for young mothers.
- **Regular** access to open safe spaces for them and their children
- **Young mothers** need counselling to bond with their children in order to protect them.
- **Resources** to help them but they need to be properly managed so that they are not used on unnecessary expenses.
- **Training** as trauma counsellors so that they can be able to support and counsel each other, due to the fact that they are not likely to use psychologists because they are prejudiced against and can put pressure on their past.
- **Offer short-term courses** that can help to empower the young mothers.
- They are willing to carrying further with their studies if they may get support
- **Education support** for their children and protection from the stigma and discrimination that they experience because of the work they do.
- **Platforms** to represent their needs and their children's needs
- **Personal growth and self-Development skill** because we need to be able to build hope and forgiveness.
- **Skills** to upmarket themselves in the work we do and access better working environments
- **Parenting skills and support** to empower them to guide and be able to teach their children and communicate with them about the work they do
- **Skills** that assist them into setting up their own businesses and become entrepreneurs; Chefs and catering; wine makers; Office administrators

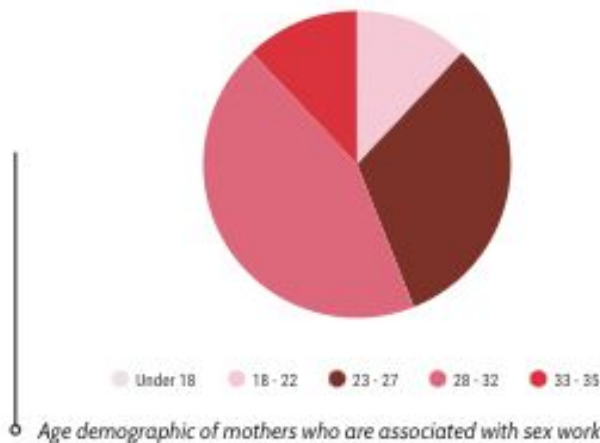
Questionnaires

Survey results from 40 Young Mothers Associated with Sex Work

Young Mothers Associated with Sex Work



Age of Mothers Associated with Sex Work



Most women had their children from age 13 - 22 and faced many challenges as a young mother

- 82% of them do not live with their children
- 76% of the children lived with a family relative
- 10% Taken into social care
- 18% Lived with the mother
- 9% Told their children about their work
- 73% Did not tell their children about their work



Main challenges faced by young mothers

- Arrest and abuse
- Police brutality and abuse
- No safe space for their children
- Mental strain and feeling like a failure as a parent
- Family stigmatisation and lack of support
- Social discrimination



How can M4F assist Mothers associated with Sex Work

1. Safe space in the CBD for them & their children
2. Assistance with child care while working
3. Job support and Skills training
4. Legal support to child custody
5. Training and workshops on child care as mothers associated with sex work



How can funders and supporting organisations assist

1. **Education** for them and their children
2. **Safe space** to bring up their children
3. **Training** and **skills development** to improve job opportunities
4. **Supportive spaces, training** and **counselling** on parenting from older women who have been mothers associated with sex work
5. **Child care** support and knowledge sharing