

Integrated Biological and Behavioral Surveillance (IBBS) Survey among Clients of Female Sex Workers (Truckers) in 22 Terai Highways Districts of Nepal

Round V- 2016

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

This is the fifth round of Integrated Biological and Behavioral Surveillance Survey (IBBS) conducted among the Clients of Female Sex Workers (Truckers) in 22 Terai Highways districts of Nepal. This survey was carried out to identify the trend in prevalence of HIV among truckers and to explore their sexual risk behaviors for sexually transmitted infection and HIV infections. This survey was carried during February- March 2016 by selecting the desired numbers of truckers using systematic random sampling at Pathalैया, Bara.

BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE FOR IBBS SURVEY

National HIV surveillance system was established during the early 1990s to monitor the HIV epidemic and to inform evidence-based HIV prevention efforts in Nepal. Since then, IBBS surveys have been conducted at the interval of 2-3 years among Key Affected Population (KAP). Clients of female sex workers, particularly truckers, are one of the KAPs as their vulnerability to the HIV infection is triggered because of their mobility, alcohol intake, and sexual behavior.

This is conducted as a part of national surveillance plan of National Centre for AIDS and STD Control to identify the trend of HIV infection among truckers and to explore their risk behaviors for HIV infection. Facts identified in this study can be the systematic evidence for the formulation and modification of policies and strategies to fight HIV and AIDS in Nepal.

METHODS

This was a descriptive serial cross-sectional study carried out among the truckers who drive in the 22 districts of East-West Highway of Nepal. A total of 400 male truck drivers aged 18 years or above and their helpers aged 16 years and above intercepting at the Pathalैया truck stop along the East-West Highways who gave informed consent were selected using systematic random sampling method. After establishing a static clinic at Pathalैया, individual interviews were organized with the selected truckers to assess their sexual risk behaviors; and HIV and Syphilis testing among truckers was conducted using determine – HIV ½ for detection of HIV antibodies. All the truckers who were tested positive with determine tests were further subjected to Uni-gold HIV ½ test. In the case of a tie in the first two test results, a third test

using STAT-PAK was conducted to perform as a tie-breaker. Rapid Plasma Reagin (RPR) test was used to diagnose syphilis among the truckers. RPR with titre higher than 1:8 was considered as current syphilis and lower than the same was considered history syphilis.

A structured and pretested tablet based questionnaire was used for the collection of behavioral data and test results were also recorded in tablets and then sent to the main server daily.

The survey was supervised and regularly monitored by the expert team of NCASC, Save the Children US/Global Fund and SPMER. External quality assessment of the blood sample was done in the National Public Health Laboratory, Teku, Kathmandu. Ethical approval was obtained from Nepal Health Research Council, and informed consent was taken from each of the participants before the interviews and HIV tests.

KEY FINDINGS

The trend in Socio-demographic characteristics of Truckers: There has been increased in the proportion of truckers aged less than 20 years over the years (2.8 % in 2003 to 26.3 % in 2016). The percentage of illiterate truckers has decreased since 2003 (6.5% in 2003 to 0.8 percent in 2016).

More than a quarter of the truckers were young: More than a quarter (26.3%) of the truckers was less than 20 years age, and another 29.8 percent of them were between 20 – 24 years old. Almost 17 percent were between 25-29 years old (median age 24.0 years).

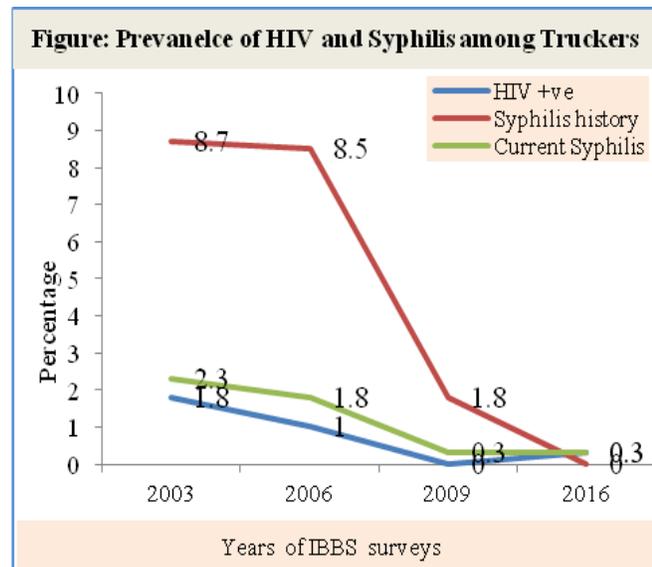
Most of the truckers had 1-9 years of schooling: Nearly half (48.8%) of the truckers had 6-9 years of schooling, and another 29.5 percent of them had 1- 5 years of education.

The proportion of unmarried truckers was higher than that of married ones: Nearly 53 percent of the truckers were never married, and 46 percent were ever married.

The majority of the truckers stay outside the family up to three weeks for a month due to driving: More than two-fifths (41.6%) of the truckers were out of the family for 15-21 days in a month, and almost 11 percent of them remained outstation for a week (mean: 18.7

days). The trend of the average duration of the stay outside the family showed an increasing trend since 2003 (16.2 days in 2003, 19.5 days in 2009 and around 19 days in 2016).

Prevalence of HIV and Syphilis was low among truckers:



Prevalence of HIV among truckers was low (0.3%); nevertheless, it was higher than was reported in 2009. The trend of prevalence of current syphilis among truckers remained stagnant (0.3%) since 2009 whereas the prevalence of history syphilis declined to zero in 2016.

Early entry into sexual life was common among truckers: More than three-quarters (76.9%) of the truckers who had ever had sex had their first sexual contact during adolescent (<20 years of age). The median age at first sex was 18 years. The trend of exposure to sex before 15 years old has been decreased since 2006 (7.4% in 2006 and 4.4% in 2016)

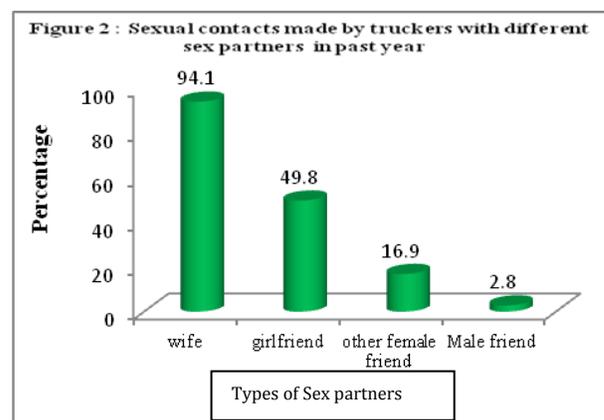
Sexual contact with a Female Sex Worker and other sex partners were prevalent among truckers: More than half (51.1%) of the truckers had experience of having sex with FSWs in their life. Out of those who had sex with female sex workers, 93.4 percent had sex with FSWs in Nepal and 10.2 percent in India. The trend of sexual contact with FSWs has been decreased over the years of surveillance (86.3 % had ever had sex with FSW in 2003 however this percentage was 51.1 in 2016).

Alcohol consumption and drug intake practices were prevalent among truckers: Nearly two-third (64.2%) of the truckers consumed alcohol, and 17.8 percent of them took drug within the past one month of the survey. The trend of regular alcohol consumption among truckers has

been decreased over the years (37.05 in 2006, 14.8% in 2009 and 6.55 in 2016).

Awareness of HIV and AIDS was prevalent among most of the truckers; however, Comprehensive Knowledge about HIV and AIDS among them was low: Almost 85 percent of the truckers had heard about HIV and AIDS. However, only 31.8 percent of the truckers had a knowledge of ABC, and 45.5 percent of the truckers had a knowledge of BCDEF.

Sexual contact with other partners was also prevalent among truckers:



Most of the truckers (94.1%) had sex with their wives in the past one year. Similarly, 49.8 percent had sex with their girlfriends, 27.4 percent had sex with other female friends, and 2.8 percent had sex with male friends in the past year.

Consistent use of condom among truckers while sex with FSWs and other partners in the previous year was uneven: Around 65 percent of the truckers who had sex with FSWs in Nepal and all the truckers who had sex with FSWs in India had used condoms during every sexual intercourse. Similarly, 34.2 percent of the truckers had used condoms consistently while having sex with their girlfriends, 50.9 percent with other female partners and 77.8 percent used it with male friends in the past year. There is a declining trend of consistent use of condom among the truckers while having sex with FSWs since 2006 (83.0% in 2006, 81.2% in 2009 and 65.2% in 2016).

A limited number of truckers had usual condom carrying practices: Thirty-one percent of the truckers carried condom usually and pharmacies (medical shops) were the places accessed most to obtain condom (81.6%). Condom carrying practices of the truckers shows declining trend with 58.7 percent of them carrying condoms usually in 2006, 46.7 percent in 2009 and 31.0 percent doing so in 2016.

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Exposure to and utilization of STI, HIV and AIDS programs among truckers was low: In the past year, only a few truckers (3%) interacted with peer educators, 10.5 percent of them visited DIC, 1.8 percent visited STI clinic, 2.5 percent visited HTC, and 2.5 percent participated in community-based HIV and AIDS awareness programs.

Implications for Program

Sex with female sex workers and other partners like male friends, girlfriends, and other female partners was invariably practiced; nonetheless, there was uneven use of condom with them: Interventions targeting the partner reduction and scaling up condom use among the truckers through mobile clinic or truckers friendly clinics in different location of East-west highways could be useful to reduce their risk of STIs.

Comprehensive Knowledge of ABC and BCDEF of HIV prevention and control was low among truckers:

Escalation of HIV awareness program in the highways particularly truck holding sites during the rest time of the truckers might enhance their knowledge to prevent HIV infection.

Accessibility and utilization of HIV and AIDS program were low among the truckers.

Truckers'-friendly, static and mobile clinics should be established and operated at convenient times in different locations of east-west highways. They should be encouraged to attend such clinics frequently.

IBBS Key Indicators among Truckers

| Indicators | Unit | Value |
|--|-------|-------|
| HIV Prevalence | % | 0.3 |
| Syphilis Prevalence | % | 0.3 |
| Age <20 years | % | 26.3 |
| Ever married | % | 46.3 |
| Ever driven trucks to India | % | 22.8 |
| Mean number of days away from family in a month | Days | 18.7 |
| Ever had sex with a woman | % | 81.3 |
| Average age at first sex | Years | 18.0 |
| Ever had sex with sex workers | % | 51.1 |
| Ever had sex with FSWs (out of those who had sexual experience) in Nepal | % | 93.4 |
| Ever had sex with FSWs (out of those who had sexual experience) in India | % | 10.2 |
| Had sex with girlfriend in the past year | % | 49.8 |
| Had sex with other female friends in the past year | % | 27.4 |

| | | |
|---|---|------|
| Had an anal sex with male friend in the past one year | % | 2.8 |
| Consistent condom use with FSWs in the past year in Nepal | % | 65.2 |
| Condom use with FSWs during last sex in India | % | 100 |
| Consistent condom use with FSWs in the past year in India | % | 100 |
| Consistent condom use during sex with wife in past year | % | 0.6 |
| Consistent condom use with girlfriend in the past year | % | 34.2 |
| Consistent condom use while having sex with the other girlfriends in past year | % | 50.9 |
| Consistent condom use during anal sex with male friend in the past year | % | 2.8 |
| Usually, condom carrying among truckers | % | 31.0 |
| Every day Alcohol drinker | % | 6.5 |
| Drug intake during the past one month | % | 17.8 |
| Injected drugs in last 12 months | % | 34.4 |
| Ever heard about HIV and AIDS | % | 84.5 |
| Comprehensive knowledge on ABCs | % | 31.8 |
| Comprehensive knowledge on BCDEF | % | 45.5 |
| Reported STI symptoms in the recent past (existing symptoms) | % | 8.3 |
| Visited STI clinic in the past year (of those who experienced symptoms of STIs) | % | 27.3 |
| Truckers who had made interaction with PE/OEs in the past year | % | 3.0 |
| Visited any DIC in the Last 12 months | % | 10.5 |
| Visited STI clinic in the Last 12 months | % | 1.8 |
| Visited HTC Center in the Last 12 months | % | 2.5 |
| Participated in HIV and AIDS Awareness Programs in the Last 12 months | % | 2.5 |

Note: A=Abstinence from sex, B=Being faithful to a partner, C= Consistent use of a condom, D=A healthy-looking person can be infected with HIV, E=Can get HIV from a mosquito bite, F=cannot get HIV by sharing a meal.

For more information, please contact:

National Center for AIDS and STD Control
Teku, Kathmandu

Tel: +977 1 4258219, 4261653

Fax: +977 1 4215149

url: www.ncasc.gov.np