

# Interpersonal And Structural Factors Of Non-condom Use With Intimate Partners Among Sex Workers In Conflict-affected Northern Uganda

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## Introduction and Objectives

- Women sex workers (SWs) in sub-Saharan Africa have among the highest HIV burden, and similar pregnancy intentions to the general population of women of reproductive age.
- Yet, we know less about male condom use with intimate non-paying partners than with clients.
- Understanding the social and structural contexts of non-condom use in intimate partnerships is critical given shared pathways for HIV and pregnancy, particularly in the absence of other biomedical interventions (e.g. antiretroviral therapy, and hormonal contraceptives).



Photo credit: Anne Ackerman – The Gulu Project

## Methods

- Community-based project in partnership with The AIDS Support Organization (TASO) Gulu, SWs, and other community organizations.
- Conducted interview-administered questionnaires embedded in SW/peer-led outreach to bars, hotels, and truck stops across Gulu, and voluntary HIV testing with 400 women SWs between 2011 and 2012.
- Multivariable logistic regression was used to examine factors associated with non-condom use at last sex with SWs' main/most recent intimate partner.

## Results

- Of the 379 women SWs with an intimate partner:
  - Reported non-condom use at last sex with their most recent intimate partner = 150 (39.6%)
  - Median age = 21 years (IQR= 19.0 – 26.0)
  - Completed less than primary education = 63.3%
  - Living with HIV = 32.5%
  - Were mothers supporting one or more children = 69.9%
- In multivariable analysis, the following were independently associated with non-condom use with intimate partners:
  - **Having low sexual relationship power** (AOR 3.40, 95% CI 1.05 - 2.68)
  - **Harassment by agents of the state (police or military)** (AOR 1.96, 95% CI 1.23 - 3.15)
  - **Hormonal contraceptive use** (AOR 1.68, 95% CI 1.77 - 6.53)

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**TABLE 1. Sample characteristics and bivariate associations (unadjusted odds ratios [OR]) and 95% confidence intervals (CIs) for the associations between individual, interpersonal and structural factors and inconsistent condom use with intimate partners of female sex workers in Gulu, Northern Uganda (2011-2012)**

Variable	Total (%) (n = 379)	Inconsistent condom use last sex, with main/most recent intimate partner		p - value
		Yes (39.6%) (n = 150)	No (60.4%) (n = 229)	
<b>Individual, Behavioural, and Biological Factors</b>				
Age (at baseline) med (IQR)	21.0 (19.0 – 25.0)	21.0 (19.0 – 26.0)	21.0 (19.0 – 25.0)	0.559
Tribe: Luo/Acholi	354 (93.4)	143 (95.3)	211 (92.1)	0.226
Tribe: All others	25 (6.6)	7 (4.7)	18 (7.9)	
Religion: Catholic	294 (77.6)	115 (76.7)	179 (78.2)	0.732
Religion: Not Catholic	85 (22.4)	35 (23.3)	50 (21.8)	
Marital status: Married/Cohabiting	2 (0.5)	1 (0.7)	1 (0.4)	0.764
Marital status: Single/widowed	377 (99.5)	149 (99.3)	228 (99.6)	
Education: Less than primary	240 (63.3)	91 (60.7)	149 (65.1)	0.385
Education: Completed primary	139 (36.7)	59 (39.3)	80 (34.9)	
Single Mother	265 (69.9)	109 (72.7)	156 (68.1)	0.587
Not a single mother	100 (26.4)	38 (25.3)	62 (27.1)	
Living with HIV	123 (32.5)	56 (37.3)	67 (29.3)	0.120
Not living with HIV	253 (66.8)	94 (62.7)	159 (69.4)	
Hormonal contraceptives*	109 (28.8)	52 (34.7)	57 (24.9)	0.041
<b>Interpersonal Factors</b>				
Physically/sexually assaulted by intimate partner*	48 (12.7)	20 (13.3)	28 (12.2)	0.752
No physical/sexual violence by intimate partner*	331 (87.3)	130 (86.7)	201 (87.8)	
High Sexual Relationship Power	303 (80.0)	135 (90.0)	168 (73.4)	<0.001
Low Sexual Relationship Power	71 (18.7)	13 (8.7)	58 (25.3)	
WHO IPV Scale (Physical, Sexual, Emotional violence)*	231 (61.0)	137 (60.0)	94 (62.7)	0.579
Alcohol/drug use while working*	245 (64.6)	99 (66.0)	146 (63.8)	0.655
No alcohol/drug use while working*	134 (35.4)	51 (34.0)	83 (36.2)	
<b>Workplace and Structural Factors</b>				
Unstable housing*	192 (50.7)	78 (52.0)	114 (49.8)	0.673
Stable housing*	187 (49.3)	72 (48.0)	115 (50.2)	
Moved to Gulu for SW	137 (36.2)	60 (40.0)	77 (33.6)	0.200
Did not move to Gulu for SW	240 (63.3)	89 (59.3)	151 (65.9)	
Avg. monthly income (per 10,000 UgX increase) median (IQR)†	12.0 (6.0 – 24.0)	12.0 (6.0 – 20.0)	15.0 (7.0 – 28.0)	0.090
Have a pimp/manager	93 (24.5)	40 (26.7)	53 (23.1)	0.436
Do not have a pimp/manager	286 (75.5)	110 (73.3)	176 (76.9)	
Police harassment*	124 (32.7)	64 (42.7)	60 (26.2)	0.001
No police harassment*	255 (67.3)	86 (57.3)	169 (73.8)	
Lived in IDP <sup>a</sup> camp: Yes	253 (66.6)	97 (64.7)	156 (68.1)	0.485
Lived in IDP <sup>a</sup> camp: No	126 (33.3)	53 (35.3)	73 (31.9)	
Abducted by the LRA <sup>b</sup> : Yes	122 (32.2)	49 (32.7)	73 (31.9)	0.872
Abducted by the LRA <sup>b</sup> : No	257 (67.8)	101 (67.3)	156 (68.1)	

\* In last 6 months

† In last year

<sup>a</sup> Internally Displaced Persons Camp

<sup>b</sup> Lords Resistance Army

## Discussion and Conclusions

- While non-condom use may be reflective of pregnancy intentions and a higher degree of intimacy within intimate partnerships, this study highlights how gendered power dynamics, both at the interpersonal (low sexual power and decision-making with intimate partners) and structural levels (harassment by police and military), shape condom use with intimate partners of SWs in a post-conflict setting.
- Policy reforms to ensure the protection of SWs' health and human rights, and monitoring and redress of abuse in conflict-settings remain critical, alongside gender transformative approaches to HIV prevention, treatment, and care.
- Laws and responses to gendered violence which protect women from violence by agents of the state and domestic violence remain critical in East Africa.

