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Joining and leaving sex work: experiences of women in Kigali, Rwanda

Marie Chantal Ingabire^{a*}, Kirstin Mitchell^b, Nienke Veldhuijzen^{c,d}, Marie Michelle Umulisa^a, Jeanine Nyinawabega^a, Evelyne Kestelyn^{a,d}, Minouk Van Steijn^{c,d}, Janneke Van De Wijgert^{a,c,d} and Robert Pool^e

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Although sex work can bring significant economic benefit there are serious downsides, not least vulnerability to adverse sexual health outcomes. Focus-groups discussions and in-depth interviews were conducted with 70 female sex workers to explore the context in which they started sex work, their motivations to leave, and their experiences of trying to leave. The pathway to becoming a sex worker was underscored by poverty, with disruptive events leading to increasing vulnerability and increasingly difficult life choices. A sizeable minority of women became sex workers while working as house-girls, a position associated with financial, physical and sexual vulnerability. The majority of participants were still working as sex workers, citing financial reasons for not leaving. Motivations to leave sex work included experiencing a frightening incident, peer pressure and concerns about dependent children. Those who left often described a change in their financial circumstances that enabled them to leave. Some had left but had returned to sex work following a financial crisis or because they found their new life too hard. House-girls are particularly vulnerable and therefore an appropriate focus for prevention. Programmes assisting women to leave need to include financial safety nets so that a time of financial difficulty does not necessitate a return to sex work.

Keywords: HIV; sex work; vulnerability; Kigali; Rwanda

Introduction

There are an estimated 5000 female sex workers currently in Rwanda, mostly living in the capital city Kigali (UNFPA 2009). The legal status of the profession is ambiguous and sex workers face both social and legal discrimination. The industry is sustained by a sizeable trucking community, business sector, military camps and an international community. There are no brothels in Kigali and so women tend to work alone or in small groups, mostly on the streets, in pubs and clubs or from home.

Sex work provides financial reward that is ‘immediate, intermittently large, and requires little effort to obtain’ (Gray 1973, 423). However, there can be significant downsides, such as social marginalisation, discrimination and stigma (Jenkins 2000). This stigma, as well as limited power to negotiate safer sex, puts sex workers at risk of adverse

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sexual health outcomes such as rape, unwanted pregnancy and HIV/STIs (Aral et al. 2002; Lieber et al. 2006; Outwater et al. 2001). More broadly, sex work is associated with poor self-esteem, suicide attempts, aggressive actions (such as self-harm) and depression, which contribute, via ill health, to excess mortality (Brody et al. 2005; Lau et al. 2010). Experiences of undertaking sex work, as well as the associated mental and physical risks, are well documented (Aral et al. 2002; Lieber et al. 2006; Outwater et al. 2001). The reasons why women become commercial sex workers have also been explored previously (Cusick 2002; Neequaye, Neequaye, and Biggar 1991; Potterat et al. 1985; Sterk 2000).

In many countries, including Rwanda, sex workers are vulnerable to HIV and represent a key transmission group (UNAIDS 2009). The prevalence rate among sex workers in Kigali is estimated at 24% (Braunstein et al. 2011), compared with a national prevalence of less than 3% (Vogel 2011). The justification for including them in HIV-prevention programmes is therefore strong (Schwartlander et al. 2001).

In this study, we explore how women start, and how they attempt to stop, sex work, drawing on accounts from women themselves. We focus on joining and leaving because they represent points at which interventions could be potentially designed to prevent entry into sex work and to assist women to leave, and in doing so reduce their risk of exposure to HIV. We present findings from an exploratory qualitative study of sex workers in Kigali, focusing on three research questions only: how do women in Kigali get involved in sex work; do any sex workers want to leave their job and, if yes, why; and what factors determine their success at leaving?

Methods

Sample

The sample was drawn from a group of high-risk women¹ currently living in Kigali, who had previously participated in a large prospective HIV-incidence study conducted by *Projet Ubuzima*.² The methodology for this study is described elsewhere (Braunstein et al. 2011). All but one of the women participating in the study were self-reported sex workers at enrolment. Participants were followed up quarterly in the first year and once in year two. As part of the study procedures, women received HIV-prevention and family-planning counselling at each visit. Women invited to participate in this qualitative study were selected purposively among women who attended the year-two study visit.

We used maximum variation sampling in order to enable identification of shared experiences across individuals representing wide variation in the dimensions of interest (Hardon et al. 2001, 266–7). We purposively sampled to include those who used family planning, as well as those who had had an STI previously.

Data collection

We conducted seven focus-group discussions (FGDs), each with 8–10 informants. These discussions focused on reasons for becoming a sex worker, risks to sexual and reproductive health associated with sex work and experiences of trying to leave sex work. The FGDs produced a rich set of group-level data. We supplemented these data with four individual interviews and one life-story interview, which enabled us to probe deeper into individual experiences and allow participants to express opinions without risk of censorship by peers. All discussions and interviews were conducted in the national language Kinyarwanda, recorded (with permission), transcribed verbatim and translated into English or French. The total sample size was 70.

Analysis

After reading through the transcripts, the analysis team (CI, MvS, KM) conducted open coding sessions, in which the team read through the data line-by-line and created a draft framework of codes. The framework was refined by multiple individual coding sessions and follow-up team meetings to agree on amendments. Reliability checks were performed, involving two members separately coding sections of the data and comparing their codes. Once the framework was agreed, the data were fully coded and analysed using Atlas.ti.v5.0. The selected quotations were manually checked for accuracy.

Ethical considerations

Ethical approval was obtained from the Rwandan National Ethics Committee and the Columbia University Medical Center Institutional Review Board. Individuals provided written informed consent prior to participation. Participants were asked to respect other members during FGDs and to keep confidentiality. They were also informed that they were not obliged to answer any questions. All names used in the results are pseudonyms.

Results

The sample

Table 1 describes key characteristics of the source population from which the sample was drawn. Sex workers tended to meet clients in more than one location. The most common venues for meeting clients were pubs/clubs (72%), streets (72%), followed by the client or sex worker's home (63%) and by telephone (3%). We also report a relatively high incidence rate of STIs and unintended pregnancy, despite sexual and reproductive health services provided to study participants. HIV prevalence at baseline was estimated at 24% and incidence in the follow-up cohort was 3.5 per hundred person years (Braunstein et al. 2011).

Starting sex work

Participants recounted how they had become sex workers. Their stories contained several common elements that marked the pathway to becoming a sex worker. As we describe

Table 1. Characteristics of source population.

	<i>N</i>	%
Participants	337	
Age (median; IQR)	25 (22; 28)	
Education level		
No formal schooling	70	21
Some primary school	137	41
Secondary (partial or completed)	32	9
Number of clients per week at year-2 visit		
Stopped sex work since cohort enrolment	69	21
< 10 clients/week	188	56
≥ 10 clients/week	78	23
Hormonal contraceptive use at year-2 visit	112/334	34
Ever reported genital symptoms during cohort follow-up*	161/338	47

Notes: IQR = interquartile range; * Genital symptoms included genital itch, genital burning, vaginal discharge, vaginal odour, dysuria, genital pain, genital ulcers, abnormal vaginal bleeding or pain during sex (restricted to year-2 participants).

below, the common thread weaving through these elements was poverty and, in particular, the absence of a financial safety net. Along the pathway, common markers included disruptive events, crisis events, exposure and initiation. In some of the accounts, the pathway was characterised as a series of desperate decisions made in desperate circumstances but for at least some of the women, a positive decision was made based on the benefits of sex work.

Disruption and crisis

The majority of women began their story by recounting a disruption to their normality. We identified two main types of disruption: to family support networks and to financial support systems. The two were usually intertwined, for instance, the loss of a family breadwinner. Disruption of key relationships included: the death of a parent (or both parents), a relationship breakdown, imprisonment of a family member and abandonment by a carer:

... I am an orphan. I was living with my little brother. He got imprisoned. After that, the situation became serious... (Byishimo, 23 years)

Financial disruption included the loss of a job (and therefore income) and being forced to leave education due to lack of money:

After my aunt's death, I stopped school because I did not have any other way of paying the school fees; I went to look for a job as a house-girl with a sex worker. (Sangwa, 22 years)

These disruptive events often removed psychosocial and financial safety nets, setting women on a path of increasing vulnerability. A common step on this path was to become a house-girl. In Kigali, house-girls are traditionally poor, under-educated young women who live with and work for a household, often with little or no pay. They are vulnerable to mistreatment by their employers and are severely constrained by lack of money. As a result some turn to sex work as an alternative for survival:

I came to Kigali in 2003. I was brought by my aunt but she died few years later. I was obliged to find a domestic job but I found myself unable to continue working as a house-girl because I was insulted and spat in face; and then I decided to become sex worker. (Nema, 29 years)

Once on the path of poverty and vulnerability, many women experienced further disruption – moments of crisis – that tipped them into situations in which sex work seemed like the only option. Crisis events included experiences such as rape, physical abuse, getting pregnant, getting kicked out of the house, losing a job and not being paid. Several women described having to leave their position as a house-girl following pregnancy. Disruption and crisis are differentiated not so much by the type of event, as the stage in the story in which they occur. Whereas a disruption created a context of poverty and vulnerability, a crisis event was, according to the story-teller, the 'tipping point' in beginning sex work. A crisis event (italicised in the quotes below) was described in around half of the women interviewed. It sometimes led directly to exposure or initiation into sex work:

I got in touch with a boy from B, with whom I had sex and got pregnant and he disappeared and I couldn't see him again. *After realising I was pregnant, the person who sheltered me dismissed me from the house.* I went to live with a woman whose job was sex work. (Sano, 32 years)

At other times the crisis event led women to believe that sex work was the only option left:

The reason why I became a sex worker was that my husband left me alone with the kids. I didn't have any other source of income; the only option I had was sex work. (Nyiraneza, 39 years)

Exposure and initiation

One third (25) of the women described being exposed to sex work – mostly either as a house-girl or as a dependent to a sex worker – prior to becoming one themselves. Two participants described working in bars where sex work occurred and eight women said they were exposed to sex work via friends and peers:

I left from N to G where I worked in a bar. The military often frequented the bar and introduced me to sex work. (Grace, 26 years)

Through this exposure, women became aware of the potential to earn money:

I asked a sex worker for accommodation and she agreed [to take me in]. I was observing how she worked and how much money she earned. (Sugira, 26 years)

For some women, the sex worker served as a role model with respect to earning money:

I was working for a sex worker as a house-girl. When I was grown up, I decided to become a sex worker like her. (Simbi, 24 years)

Among women living with or working for a sex worker, several recounted specific initiating events. Some women reported being initiated as substitutes, stepping in as a replacement when the sex worker with whom they lived was unavailable:

I was working for a sex worker as a house-girl. When men were coming to her house in her absence, they were having sex with me . . . (Samaza, 30 years)

A few women reported being initiated by force, either by a client or by an existing sex worker:

Once the [sex worker] brought a man for me and she locked us into the house. At that point I didn't have a choice anymore and I decided that I would go into sex work. (Sugira, 26 years)

The following story illustrates the stages described above: Mary is approximately 27 years old. Her father was killed (Disruption) during the genocide in 1994 and subsequently she and her four siblings lived with their mother. Life was hard, each child had to find their own money to pay for their education. Mary had to give up her studies (Disruption) whilst still in primary school. She was brought to Kigali in 2003 to be a house-girl. Life as a house-girl was so difficult (Vulnerability) that when a man asked her to live with him, she accepted without hesitating. After three months, the man left her pregnant (Disruption). She tried various trades in order to survive, such as selling fruit in the market and even travelling sales, but she failed each time and fell into bankruptcy (Crisis). Having no livelihood, Mary's friends advised her to start sex work (Exposure). With the money she earned, Mary paid the tuition fees for her younger sister and brother, who are now both in high school.

Drawn to commercial sex work

There were six accounts in which participants described the temptations and benefits of sex work: the immediate financial reward and the independence and happiness it could bring. Their accounts suggested that for some women, the money earned from sex work was not just for financial survival, but also for small luxuries. These women had also experienced some level of disruption and vulnerability but their accounts suggested some degree of positive choice or agency in deciding to become a sex worker:

I got involved in sex work because I was an orphan. However, I have noticed that there is one's personal part in becoming a sex worker. Actually, to be honest, I began sex work before the death of my parents because I felt a need for freedom and money. I became a sex worker when I was a student because the money that men gave me made me feel happy. (Buhoro, 28 years)

Leaving commercial sex work

Motivations for leaving commercial sex work

Some of the motivations for giving up sex work were related to a specific incident: for instance, one woman recounted a frightening experience with two clients:

After realising what happened to me, I thought that with the next incident of the same kind, I would be doomed to death. So this has been a cornerstone for me to decide to quit sex work. (Mukagasaro, 27 years)

Other motivations centred on HIV risk: one woman described how testing negative had given her the incentive to leave. Others were motivated by teaching and advice from Project Ubuzima staff about reducing HIV risk. Some described being motivated by peer pressure, by feelings of shame or stigma they and their families experienced, by the difficulties they faced as a sex worker and by concern about their children. Buhoro's account includes several of these motivations:

I decided to quit sex work because of what happened to me. I had a friend who threatened to kill me if I did not stop. . . . He was sad to see me in sex work at my young age. . . . You do not even know the father of your children, yet the children keep on asking you to show them their father. This saddens you so much. . . . Neighbours always label you as a person without value and they always see you as an HIV-positive patient and your children are always isolated. In brief, there is no gain from sex work. (Buhoro, 28 years)

Obstacles to leaving commercial sex work

Although most of the women described their profession as risky, difficult and stigmatising, the majority (59) were still practicing sex work at the time of study. The reasons given for not leaving were overwhelmingly financial. Mostly, these women had limited formal education and felt that they had few options for alternative employment. Some believed that they would not find work that would meet their financial needs:

The best wish for everyone is to quit sex work. The only problem is finding a business to run after you have abandoned sex work. . . . Had we got the chance to afford a money-making business, we would not hesitate to abandon sex work. (Mpano, 32 years)

The need for a steady income was particularly acute for women with dependent children:

The problem is not deciding whether to leave sex work or not. The only obstacle for me is the survival of my child. If I leave sex work, I cannot get the ten thousand I pay for school fees; I cannot afford accommodation fees. (Mukabarisa, 25 years)

Experiences of leaving sex work

Eleven women had stopped sex work at the time of the study, with a further two promising to give up. In some of these accounts, participants emphasised that a change in circumstances had enabled or facilitated their exit including: finding a steady and financially supportive relationship, being supported to resume studies, being supported to set up a business, taking a bank loan and finding a friend to cover financial needs:

I had the chance to resume my studies . . . and after completing my studies I was hired directly. I am therefore no longer in sex work. (Gabiro, 30 years)

I found a friend who accepted to cover my financial needs and I managed [to give up]. (Mukagasaro, 27 years)

There is a bank called 'urwego' that gives loans to women. A person took me there and asked a loan for me. I am now doing commerce [trading] and I stopped sex work. (Devotta, 30 years)

It is not possible to know which of these 11 women remained out of sex work after the study ended. One woman reported that should her current (financially supportive) relationship end, she would return to sex work.

Returning to sex work

Ten women reported that they had attempted to give up sex work but found themselves going back to it. We identified two main reasons. Firstly, women went back to sex work to alleviate a financial crisis such as having to pay rent or school fees:

I think I want to quit but when hunger threatens us and when there is no money in the house, I go directly to look for a client. If a client gives 1,000 RWF (\$1.6) when we are in that unemployment period, I accept because then the children can have something to eat. (Byiringiro, 35 years)

Secondly, women reported attempting other employment such as selling goods on the street, but found their new life even more difficult. Such work often did not provide enough income to meet financial needs. In Rwanda it is illegal to sell merchandise on the street and several women reported being imprisoned and/or beaten when arrested by the authorities:

One day I tried to sell maize. ... Policemen chased me and took all that I had brought and they nearly took me to prison. So, instead of affording such a difficult life, I'd better stay in sex work as you can make a little slowly but safely. (Rugwiro, 26 years)

Discussion

We identified four common markers on the pathway to becoming a sex worker – Disruption, Crisis, Exposure and Initiation. Although we found evidence of women making positive choices to become sex workers, many described finding themselves in situations where sex work seemed like the only option left. At the time of study, only 11 respondents had left sex work, despite the fact that most said they felt motivated to do so. We found that a change in financial circumstances was often instrumental in enabling women to leave.

Participants in this study were previously enrolled in an HIV-incidence cohort study. As a result, they may have had a higher knowledge of the HIV-risk associated with sex work. They may also have sensed that *Projet Ubuzima* staff workers were concerned to reduce this risk. This knowledge and awareness may have led to a bias towards accounts that overplayed the drawbacks and underplayed the benefits of sex work. In order to present themselves positively, some participants may have over-emphasised both their lack of agency in taking up sex work and the barriers to leaving. As with any study exploring sensitive topics, those agreeing to be interviewed may be more comfortable talking about their experiences and therefore possibly atypical. These sampling limitations should be borne in mind when transferring the main themes to other contexts.

Consistent with the literature (Neequaye, Neequaye, and Biggar 1991; Onyeneho 2009; Sterk 2000), we found that, across participant accounts, poverty was a central theme, both in explaining entry into sex work and difficulty leaving. Our finding that most sex workers would like to give up sex work in favour of alternative employment or educational opportunities is supported by the literature (Gray 1973; Neequaye, Neequaye, and Biggar 1991). In practice, it was difficult to leave, particularly where there were dependent children, a lack of alternative employment and where a life without sex work was financially difficult.

Poverty reduction is a key focus of the Rwandan government. The Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion illustrates a wide range of poverty-reduction programmes, including micro-credit for women cooperatives, the Shared Labour Initiative³ and the One Cow per Poor Household initiative.⁴ Women are the major beneficiaries of these programmes (Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion 2009). Tracking such initiatives to gauge their impact on entry into and exit from sex work would be of great interest.

Economic empowerment via alternative sources of income has been cited as important (Neequaye, Neequaye, and Biggar 1991) and may be associated with a reduction in HIV-risk behaviour (Sherman et al. 2010). However, it is noticeable that in Rwanda, women are reluctant to approach financial institutions to apply for loans (Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion 2009). In addition, feasibility studies of micro-credit programmes with sex workers elsewhere suggest that loan repayment and business success may be poor (Dunbar et al. 2010). In Rwanda, broad ranging and effectively enforced laws governing petty trading mean that starting a small business can be challenging. For these two reasons, micro-credit programmes may not be the best option in this context. A mentoring programme – in which former commercial sex workers are assisted to integrate socially and find alternative sources of employment or gain academic or job-related qualifications – may be more effective. Such programmes should include financial safety nets preventing women from returning to sex work in times of financial crisis.

At the same time, it is important to note that similarly poor circumstances and disruptive life events can be found among girls who are not sex workers (Potterat et al. 1985). Our data suggest that against the background of disruption and poverty, exposure to those already acquainted with the trade may be particularly important. This has been suggested previously (Cusick 2002; Neequaye, Neequaye, and Biggar 1991; Potterat et al. 1985; Sterk 2000).

Our data suggest that working as a house-girl is a key route through which young women are exposed to sex work. House-girls in Rwanda are typically young women who live with their employer as they undertake household chores. They are often paid poorly, inconsistently or not at all. They tend to have limited autonomy and are vulnerable to abuse (including rape) by their employers (Action Aid International Rwanda 2007). As a disparate and largely invisible sector of the workforce, this group is hard to reach, but nonetheless key to efforts aimed at preventing entry into sex work.

One approach to protecting house-girls is to focus on their working conditions. Strategies might include recognising them as a professional group, ensuring basic employment rights and ensuring that they are legally protected whilst at work. Such strategies would need to be implemented by the government in collaboration with the national union of workers association. Another approach would be to empower house-girls by giving them life skills, knowledge and opportunities. For instance they could be supported to establish a supportive union or co-operative, which focused on money-saving and income-generating activities. Non-governmental organisations could also work with house-girls on health-promotion activities and continuing education. However, employers are likely to feel threatened by initiatives that empower house-girls and may resist their implementation. Another approach would be to raise community awareness about the vulnerability of house-girls through the mass media.

Working in bars and living with a sex worker were also common forms of exposure and initiation. Prevention programmes therefore need to target bars and clubs, but also need to operate at community level, working alongside existing sex workers within their neighbourhoods.

Our results suggest that we should not assume that all sex workers wish to leave the trade – for some women, the benefits outweigh the risks. However, because sex work is

clearly associated with HIV risk, there is a need for interventions that mitigate HIV risk for those who continue to work. In this regard, there have been a number of successful interventions, including the Sonagachi project in India (Jana et al. 2004). Successful strategies involve sex workers as partners and support them to gain control over their working conditions (World Health Organization 2004). The challenge may be greater in Rwanda because sex workers tend to work alone and have no supporting union. Pubs and clubs as well as streets may be the most accessible entry points for reaching sex workers and their clients with health-promotion messages.

In conclusion, we have shown that the pathway to becoming a sex worker in Rwanda is underscored by poverty and often marked by disruption and crisis. Exposure to sex work is a common entry point and house-girls are particularly vulnerable in this regard. Leaving is difficult, unless women experience a specific and positive change in their financial circumstances. And unless they have an adequate financial safety net, a return to sex work is likely in times of financial crisis. In describing how women enter and leave sex work, we have identified several points at which it may be possible to intervene successfully to prevent entry or re-entry and subsequent exposure to the risk of HIV.

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Notes

1. Defined as having exchanged sex for money at least once in the last month and/or currently having sex with multiple partners plus having sex at least twice per week.
2. *Projet Ubuzima* is an international non-governmental organization and conducts clinical trials and investigating issues surrounding prevention, diagnosis and treatment of HIV infection and other reproductive tract infections.
3. Refers to the traditional Rwandan practice and cultural value of working together to solve problems. It tackles poverty through community collective action, thus creating empowerment.
4. Aims at enabling every poor household to own and manage an improved dairy cow, which would help the family to improve their livelihood through increased milk and meat production. This not only improves the nutrition, but also increases the earnings of beneficiaries from milk, milk products, meat and sale of manure.

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Résumé

Bien que le commerce du sexe puisse représenter une source d'avantages économiques considérables, il a des effets négatifs très importants, dont la vulnérabilité aux problèmes de santé sexuelle n'est pas des moindres. Des groupes de discussion thématiques et des entretiens en profondeur ont été conduits avec 70 professionnelles du sexe afin d'explorer le contexte dans lequel

elles ont débuté leur activité, leurs motivations pour l'abandonner et leurs expériences de tentatives dans cette perspective. La transformation de ces femmes en professionnelles du sexe avait pour fondement la pauvreté, avec des ruptures menant à une vulnérabilité croissante et à des choix de vie de plus en plus difficiles. Une minorité non négligeable de participantes étaient devenues des professionnelles du sexe en travaillant en tant que servantes: un métier associé à la vulnérabilité économique, physique et sexuelle. La majorité des participantes exerçaient encore le commerce du sexe, évoquant des motifs d'ordre financier pour justifier la poursuite de leur activité. Les motivations pour arrêter d'exercer le commerce du sexe étaient fondées sur l'expérience d'un événement effrayant, la pression par les paires et les préoccupations concernant les enfants qui dépendaient des femmes. Celles qui sont parvenues à arrêter de se prostituer ont souvent décrit une amélioration de leurs conditions financières encourageant leur décision. Certaines avaient quitté le commerce du sexe mais l'avaient regagné à la suite de problèmes financiers ou parce qu'elles trouvaient leur nouvelle vie trop difficile. Les servantes sont particulièrement vulnérables, et par conséquent représentent une population cible pour la prévention. Les programmes qui visent à aider les femmes à abandonner le commerce du sexe doivent prévoir des filets de sécurité financière pour préserver ces femmes de la tentation de reprendre cette activité.

Resumen

Aunque el trabajo sexual puede aportar considerables beneficios económicos, existen graves inconvenientes, sobre todo en lo que respecta a la vulnerabilidad frente a resultados adversos en materia de salud sexual. Se llevaron a cabo charlas en grupo y entrevistas exhaustivas con 70 trabajadoras sexuales a fin de analizar el contexto en el que se introdujeron en el trabajo sexual, los motivos para abandonar este trabajo y las experiencias que habían tenido al intentar abandonar esta actividad. El principal motivo de convertirse en trabajadoras sexuales fue la pobreza, con episodios disruptivos que llevaban a aumentar la vulnerabilidad y crearon opciones de la vida cada vez más difíciles. Una minoría considerable de mujeres se convirtieron en trabajadoras sexuales a la vez que trabajaban como sirvientas, una situación asociada a vulnerabilidad económica, física y sexual. La mayoría de las participantes todavía trabajaban en la industria del sexo y declararon que no podían abandonar esta actividad por razones económicas. Algunos de los motivos de abandonar el trabajo sexual eran haber sufrido un incidente inquietante, la presión de los compañeros y sentir preocupación por hijos dependientes. Las que abandonaban el oficio describían muchas veces un cambio en sus circunstancias financieras que les permitió dejarlo. Algunas lo dejaron pero luego volvieron al trabajo sexual tras una crisis económica o porque vieron que su nueva vida era demasiado dura. Las sirvientas son especialmente vulnerables y, por lo tanto, se deberían aunar esfuerzos para fomentar la prevención en este grupo de la población. En los programas de ayuda a mujeres que quieren abandonar el oficio es necesario incluir redes de seguridad económica para que si encuentran dificultades económicas no se vean obligadas a volver al trabajo sexual.