



# THE NETWORK OPERATOR APPROACH

*Strengthening the outreach of HIV & AIDS Prevention and  
Control Services for Female Sex Workers in Delhi*

*An Implementation Note | 2020*



# **The Network Operator Approach - Strengthening the Outreach of HIV & AIDS Prevention and Control Services for Female Sex Workers in Delhi**

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## **Acknowledgements**

All FSW Targeted Interventions

## **Photography**

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## **Design & Layout**

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## **Year of Publication**

2020

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India Health Action Trust

## **Printed at**

Creative World, Bengaluru

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## PREFACE

The HIV epidemic in India has been known to be concentrated in the Key Population (KP). Female Sex Workers (FSWs) are one of the key target groups for the National AIDS Control Organization (NACO)'s Targeted Intervention Program (TI). This group is marginalized facing the stigma and violence. Working with FSWs is a challenge and requires specific strategies to reach out to them.

Study conducted in 2016 by Delhi State AIDS Control Society (DSACS), in collaboration with its Technical Support Unit (TSU) - Delhi TSU (DL TSU) implemented by India Health Action Trust (IHAT), has highlighted changing pattern of female sex work in Delhi. Different networks have emerged in the FSW-client solicitation space due to smart phone and internet revolution leading to affordable availability. The study gave direction to the TI program in terms of harnessing the new emerging networks and reaching out to the individual FSWs associated with the networks.

Network approach has been considered in the targeted interventions for FSWs in Delhi as early as 2017, with support from DSACS and DL TSU. Network Operators drive these networks and play a significant role in facilitating the process of solicitation. They also act as mediators between FSWs and clients. Adopting the Network Operator Approach to enroll FSWs associated with them has been an important program innovation that led to the identification of new FSWs and new networks. The approach helped in leveraging the potential of Network Operators in awareness generation on safe sexual practices and opting for regular screening and services at the right time.

The present document highlights the emerging need of the TI program vis-à-vis FSW population. It elaborates the steps in implementation of Network Operator Approach in Delhi. This document should be helpful for NACO, State AIDS Control Societies, State Technical Support Units, Global Programme and other key stakeholders who seek to replicate this innovative approach for HIV prevention and control services to FSWs.

  
(Udit Prakash Rai)

**Know AIDS, No AIDS**  
दिल्ली बोले एड्स नहीं





# Message from the Managing Trustee



IHAT established Delhi Technical Support Unit (DL TSU) in Delhi in the year 2014 to support the Delhi State AIDS Control Society (DSACS) to achieve a high level of coverage and ensure quality of its HIV prevention, care and treatment programs, delivered under NACO's TI Program. Using a program science approach and techno-managerial expertise, IHAT is committed towards developing strategies, designing and supporting implementation of innovations and promoting knowledge translation in the public health sphere with the vision of bringing equity and quality in public health and development.

A study conducted by DSACS/DL TSU on 'Changing Female Sex Work patterns in Delhi: Geographical to Virtual Network', provided significant insights about the changing face of the female sex work patterns in Delhi. The study brought out the need to redefine the current TI strategies and channelize the efforts towards gaining access to contemporary networks, network operators and thereby their operations to reach out to the hidden FSW population of the city and bring them under the TI program. This led to the development of the Network Operator Approach, which has been described in this implementation note. The evidence that the approach has received a positive response is in the gradual increase in registration of network operators and the consequent increase in new registrations of FSWs.

I congratulate the DSACS/DL TSU in conceptualizing the Network Operator Approach and the TI partners in implementing the same with great rigor and compassion. I hope this approach becomes widely acceptable and is taken up by other state agencies dealing with the Key Populations; thus taking a step towards enhanced delivery of HIV prevention, care and treatment services. I would also like to thank the Project Director and Additional Project Director, DSACS for their continued support to DL TSU.

**Dr Shajy Isac**  
Managing Trustee, IHAT



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# Abbreviations

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<b>AIDS</b>	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
<b>ART</b>	Antiretroviral Therapy
<b>CBS</b>	Community Based Screening
<b>DL TSU</b>	Delhi Technical Support Unit
<b>DSACS</b>	Delhi State AIDS Control Society
<b>FSW</b>	Female Sex Worker
<b>HIV</b>	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
<b>HSS</b>	HIV Sentinel Surveillance
<b>ICTC</b>	Integrated Counseling and Testing Center
<b>IHAT</b>	India Health Action Trust
<b>NACO</b>	National AIDS Control Organization
<b>NACP</b>	National AIDS Control Program
<b>NCT</b>	National Capital Territory
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organization
<b>NWO</b>	Network Operator
<b>PLHA</b>	People Living with HIV/AIDS
<b>PWID</b>	People Who Inject Drugs
<b>OST</b>	Opioid Substitution Therapy
<b>SACS</b>	State AIDS Prevention and Control Societies
<b>STI</b>	Sexually transmitted infections
<b>TB</b>	Tuberculosis
<b>TG</b>	Transgender
<b>TI</b>	Targeted Intervention

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# Introduction

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FSWs are at a higher risk of experiencing a broad range of social, sexual and reproductive health conditions such as sexually transmitted infections (STIs)/HIV, unintended pregnancy, violence, sexual exploitation, stigma and discrimination<sup>1</sup>. Unprotected sex between FSWs and their clients contributes to ongoing HIV transmission globally, and in India. FSWs face a disproportionately high risk of acquiring and transmitting HIV. In 2016-17, the HIV prevalence among FSW was five times higher than the prevalence among pregnant women attending antenatal clinics. In 2017, an estimated 1.60% of Female Sex Workers (FSWs) in India were living with HIV<sup>2</sup>.

FSWs are one of the high-risk groups focused upon through Targeted Interventions (TI) by India's National AIDS Control Organization (NACO) under the National AIDS Control Program (NACP). TI programs involve working with vulnerable communities to provide them with the information, means and skills that they need to minimize HIV transmission and improving their access to care, support and treatment services.

As per NACP III guidelines, FSWs are categorized as: street-based, brothel-based, lodge-based, dhaba-based, home-based and highway-based sex workers, based on the way they operate. With the advent of mobile and newer communication technologies, the patterns of sex work have also changed and evolved. Mobile phones act as a tool for networking and soliciting. Increasingly, FSWs have started depending on mediators termed 'Network Operators' for client solicitation. Contact numbers of FSWs are shared with clients through these Network Operators. Network Operators (NWOs) are part of several networks and in regular touch with clients, FSWs and other NWOs. They play a facilitative role in the solicitation process and in turn, draw a share of the earning of the FSWs and in part, work to also assure safety of FSWs associated with them. Thus, NWOs can be considered to play a potential role as stakeholders for HIV prevention programs and in linking FSWs to HIV prevention and care services.

**Network Operator is a person who arranges clients for the FSWs and controls the network and takes a percentage/share of the earning of the FSWs in return.**

Studies have been conducted in India and also across the globe to understand the emerging role of NWOs in the sex work dynamics. A research study conducted in Pakistan found that NWOs control and protect the operation of home-based, brothel-based and kothikhana (shifting mini-brothels) based FSWs by bringing them clientele and providing space for sexual activity in exchange for a proportion of the sex worker's income. In cases where the FSWs cannot be reached through the physical hot spots for HIV prevention, treatment and control interventions, NWOs can play a pivotal role in spreading awareness about safe sexual practices and the importance of getting tested for HIV infection and can thus facilitate reduction in HIV incidence<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup>Female sex workers experiences of using contraceptive methods: a qualitative study in Kenya, (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/29925361>)

<sup>2</sup>HIV Sentinel Surveillance Technical Brief 2016-2017, NACO ([http://naco.gov.in/sites/default/files/HIV%20SENTINEL%20SURVEILLANCE\\_06\\_12\\_2017\\_0.pdf](http://naco.gov.in/sites/default/files/HIV%20SENTINEL%20SURVEILLANCE_06_12_2017_0.pdf))

<sup>3</sup>The organization, operational dynamics and structure of female sex work in Pakistan', 2013, (<https://rb.gy/vs5jl2>)



A qualitative study on the modes of operation of female sex work in Belgaum district, Karnataka, India, highlighted the role played by NWOs in the women's ability to practice safe sex, in case of brothel and lodge-based sex workers<sup>4</sup>.

A network enrollment (size estimation and mapping) approach developed by a Bangalore based organization indicated the role of 'Connectors' who play a key role in introducing and facilitating women in sex work operations. In this approach, the connectors have been categorized into primary, secondary and tertiary stakeholders. It also highlighted the role of secondary stakeholders in mobilizing FSWs and directing them towards safe sexual practices<sup>5</sup>.

It is quite evident that sex work dynamics has undergone change due to advancement in mobile technology and communication and the role of NWOs have emerged as a new mechanism in carrying out sex work solicitation in India, as well as across the world. A similar pattern was observed in Delhi; wherein the role of NWOs in being the mediators between FSWs and clients, became increasingly known.

## The Scenario in Delhi (National Capital Territory)

The HIV epidemic in India is observing a decline in new infections. The incidence of HIV is decreasing among both men and women in all age-groups. However, Delhi continues to see a rising trend in the HIV epidemic as per the HIV Sentinel Surveillance (HSS). The estimated adult HIV prevalence in Delhi in 2007 was 0.18; which increased to 0.23 in 2015 and 0.30% in 2017. The estimated adult HIV prevalence of 0.30% in Delhi is greater than the national estimated adult HIV prevalence of 0.22%. The HIV prevalence among FSWs in Delhi (1.6%) is slightly higher than the national average (1.56%)<sup>6</sup>.

The TI program in Delhi began in 2001 with a target of covering 2000 FSWs in the state. Massive scale-up to saturate the coverage of FSWs has occurred and currently (March 2020) the program is reaching out to 51248 FSWs. The expected outcome of the program has been to saturate the coverage of FSW population for provision of HIV prevention, treatment and care services and to achieve sustained behaviour change.

## An Emerging Need

While traditional TI programmes have addressed many issues faced by FSWs in the context of prevention and control of HIV, they have traditionally covered only the FSWs available at the physical hotspots. In recent times, FSWs have shifted towards network-based (online, network operators, mobile phones) client solicitation and many remain unreached as they are not congregating at a physical hotspot. The Delhi Technical Support Unit (DL TSU) and DSACS conducted a qualitative study on the changing patterns of female sex work in Delhi, which brought to light the new patterns of sex work solicitation. It highlighted that street and home-based FSWs had shifted to mobile phone based solicitation methods. Solicitation

<sup>4</sup>The Female Sex Work Industry in a District of India in the Context of HIV Prevention', 2012, (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3546462/>)

<sup>5</sup>Approach to female sex worker enrolment and dropout, Swasti and CMS (<https://rb.gy/mznyud>)

<sup>6</sup>HIV Sentinel Surveillance Technical Brief 2016 – 2017, NACO ([http://naco.gov.in/sites/default/files/HIV%20SENTINEL%20SURVEILLANCE\\_06\\_12\\_2017\\_0.pdf](http://naco.gov.in/sites/default/files/HIV%20SENTINEL%20SURVEILLANCE_06_12_2017_0.pdf))





at physical locations had reduced and working through network operators and mobile phones had increased. The shift from geographical networks to virtual networks relates in large part to the wider access to mobile phone based communication<sup>7</sup>.

Further to this, the analysis of TI program data had highlighted the gap in service uptake and the stagnation in the levels of coverage and HIV related service utilization. The program data indicated that 75% of FSWs in 2016-17 were not available at physical hotspots and were operating through other sex work networks. The mobility in these networks was high and the TIs were not able to reach out to the sex workers who visited Delhi for sex work only for a short duration. This also resulted in reduction of regular contact from 86% to 60%. The program data also showed that in 2016-17, the TI was able to contact around 90% FSWs every month. This gradually declined to 71% in the year 2018-19<sup>8</sup>. According to another study by DSACS/DL TSU on mobile and social media usage in sex work solicitation, almost four-fifths (77.6%) of the FSW respondents indicated that they used mobile phones for soliciting clients<sup>9</sup>.

On the basis of the study findings, strategies were developed to reach FSWs engaged in network-based solicitation. The NWO approach was adopted as a part of the ongoing TI program so as to reach out to this hidden population and to link them to prevention counseling, regular STI screening and treatment adherence.

Network-based solicitation is a method used by FSWs for soliciting clients through network operators via mobile phones, messenger application, and various other digital communication media.

This document:

- Records and highlights an innovative strategy that has been adopted through the network operator approach to serve the needs and improve reach and coverage for more difficult to reach FSW.
- Can be utilized by NACO, SACS, State Technical Support Units, Global Programmes and other key stakeholders to replicate the network operator approach and address HIV and STI-related issues in their respective area of work.

<sup>7</sup>Changing Female Sex Work Patterns in Delhi: Geographical to Virtual Network, 2014-15, DSACS, IHAT (<https://www.ihat.in/resources/changing-female-sex-work-patterns-in-delhi-geographical-to-virtual-network/>)

<sup>8</sup>DSACS Program Data 2018-19

<sup>9</sup>Use of Mobile Phone and Social Media in Sex Work Client Solicitation amongst Clients of HIV Targeted Intervention Projects in Delhi-An Exploratory Study, DSACS & DL TSU, 2018



# The Network Operator Approach

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NWOs play a significant role in the process of solicitation for sexual services between FSWs and clients and for information exchange within their networks. They are active on virtual platforms (Messenger Groups, websites, mobile phones) and act as mediators between the FSWs and the clients. It was observed that their role extends beyond just facilitation in sex work to also a responsibility for safety of FSWs associated with them. Acknowledging the potential role that the NWOs can play in engaging with the FSWs to seek HIV services, the NWO approach was incorporated into the TI program strategy. This section elaborates on the implementation process that was carried out in Delhi.

## Geography

This approach has been implemented by 25 TIs covering all the eleven districts of Delhi NCT, namely, North Delhi, North East Delhi, North West Delhi, South Delhi, South East Delhi, West Delhi, Central Delhi, New Delhi, South West Delhi, Shahadra and East Delhi.

## Objectives

The NWO approach is designed to motivate the NWOs to proactively encourage the FSW community to seek/access HIV prevention, treatment and care services and shift from high risk behaviour to health-seeking behavior. The objective is to reach out to the hidden/hard to reach FSWs, encourage them to adopt safe sexual practices by providing an enabling environment wherein they can avail HIV services and lead a dignified life, free from stigma and discrimination.

- **Maximizing coverage:** Reaching out to and including hidden/unreached FSW community members under the TI program is one of the major objectives of the NWO approach. This includes (i) Reaching out to the FSWs through NWOs and also widening the outreach by the snowball method of reaching out to NWOs and FSWs who are in touch with other FSWs. (ii) Reaching out to new and young sex workers at the earliest and supporting them to access HIV/AIDS services.
- **Access to TI Services, Health and other Facilities:** The TI program is designed around hotspot based identification and coverage of the community; however those who have shifted from hotspot based to solicitation through NWOs may remain unaware of the services. The NWO approach aims to address this gap and encourage the FSWs to access TI services and other related facilities through NWOs.
- **HIV Risk Reduction:** The approach aims to create awareness and develop understanding of HIV amongst the FSW population, leading them to proactively opt for risk reduction practices/methods.

## Roles and Responsibilities

The NWO approach has been led by DSACS with support from NACO and the key implementers include the TI teams with specific support from DL TSU.

**DSACS** is the overall in-charge of the program and is responsible for strategy implementation. It is also responsible for allocation and capacity building of TI staff and stakeholders. DSACS is responsible for timely and uninterrupted supply of commodities to the TIs. Through periodic reviews and field visits, DSACS assures proper monitoring of the program and is responsible to report to NACO. DSACS is responsible for executing outreach models to reach the unreached population.

**DL TSU** provides technical assistance to DSACS as per the national guidelines. It ensures capacity building of TI staff and provides hand-holding support through regular visits to the TIs. DL TSU supports DSACS in providing overall program analysis including fulfilling the analytical requirements of commodities. It also supports in planning, implementation and supervision of NWO approach and online outreach for and identification of hidden population. It also assesses and identifies locations for outreach and scale up. DL TSU also supports the documentation of the best practices and innovations at the state level in the TI programme. Development of tools and job aids is the joint responsibility of DL TSU and DSACS. Quality audit of TI data is one of the key responsibilities of DL TSU.

**TIs** anchor the NWO approach. They conduct network mapping, profiling, interviewing and sensitization meetings of NWOs. They are responsible to maintain and update the program data. They link the FSWs to the physical services and facilities.

**The Network Operator Approach** involves mapping the existing networks and NWOs and identifying and profiling FSWs associated with NWOs. This is followed by sensitizing the NWOs to the TI program and the need for service uptake for FSWs. Through snowballing, information about different sex work networks and sex workers working under these networks, is collected to reach out to the women. Further, FSWs that are contacted through this approach, are linked to the TI services. The implementation of the approach is reported and monitored using customized tools and job aids. The sequential steps of the NWO Approach include (Figure 1):

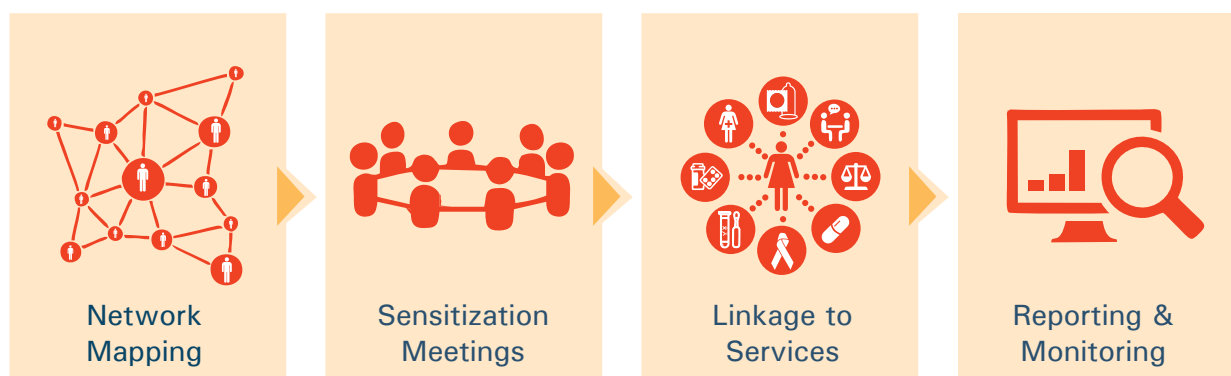


Figure 1: Steps of the Network Operator Approach



# 1. Network Mapping

Network mapping involves mapping and profiling of different sex work networks and the sex workers associated with these networks<sup>10</sup>. The information was collected through a network mapping tool and is carried out through snowball technique. It was a dynamic approach of identifying and reaching out to the FSWs, by working with existing informants/stakeholders, in various networks of sex work with the objective of providing HIV prevention and treatment services.

Network mapping was carried out in 5 steps (Figure 2):

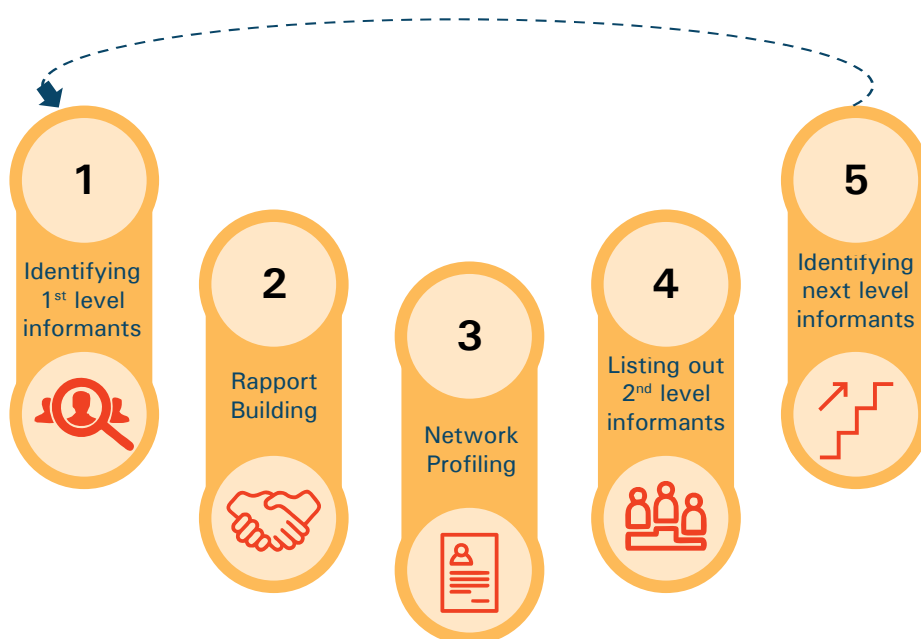


Figure 2: Steps of Network Mapping

**The first step** of Network Mapping involved identification of first-level informants. FSWs who were already registered under the TI program, were asked to provide information on the first-level informants that they were aware of and/or were in touch with. First-level informants are well connected with sex work operations, know more about the sex work trade and recognize its activities.

**The second step** involved establishing rapport with the first-level informants. This was done through active listening during regular visits to initiate discussions on the need for safe sexual practices. During the interactions, it was reiterated that the NWOs can play a key role in supporting the FSWs to develop correct understanding about HIV, risk reduction measures and importance of linking to testing and care services.

## FIRST LEVEL INFORMANTS

**FSWs** who are currently practicing sex work and are willing to support/facilitate, involve and contribute.

**Senior Sex Workers**, who have left the sex work but are very active in soliciting clients for other sex workers.

**Individuals from community or non-community**, who are involved in the operations of sex work.

<sup>10</sup>Approach to female sex worker enrolment and dropout, Swasti and CMS (<https://rb.gy/mznyud>)



**The third step** was to conduct profiling of the networks of the first-level informants. This was done through a network profiling form that recorded the basic information of the informant, along with the nature of their operations, details of FSWs associated with the informants and the program support required, for instance, the HIV/AIDS services that can be provided or information on relevant schemes and facilities, among others.

**The fourth step** involved listing out of second-level informants that were sourced through the first-level informants. The TI initiated discussions with them with the help of the first-level informants or directly using the details shared by them. A comprehensive list of NWOs was prepared based on the information collected by first-level informants. All the details collected from the informants were recorded in the prescribed NWO profiling format.

**The fifth step** involved identifying the next level informants. Through snowball method, and as per steps one to three, next level informants were identified and approached and the process is a continuous activity aimed towards saturation.

*During the network mapping process, details of informants that belonged to a different geographical area were received. In this case, the information that was collected by one TI and shared with the TI of the respective geographical area, in the spirit of shared confidentiality. The informant would be contacted by the relevant TI by using contact information that was provided to them. This assured coverage of the informants across various geographies of TI operations.*

The network mapping and profiling exercises have provided significant insights into the operational aspects of NWOs and the scope of reaching out to the FSWs associated with them. Table 1 reflects the district and TI-wise NWOs and FSWs in Delhi.

**Table 1: District and TI-wise NWOs and FSWs Distribution in Delhi**

Districts	Number of TIs	Number of NWOs	Number of FSWs associated with the NWOs
Central	5	363	8916
East	3	245	5053
North	3	125	4189
North East	2	227	2890
North West	4	305	6408
South	1	114	2058
South East	3	263	4900
South West	2	158	3076
West	1	112	1331
Shahadra	1	95	2514
New Delhi	1	71	1703
<b>Total</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>2078</b>	<b>40178</b>

Source: TI Program Data 2019-20





Profiling of 2078 NWOs based in Delhi was conducted. The data indicated that majority of them work only as NWOs. Gender wise data shows that majority (93%) of NWOs were females and only 6 % were males (Figure 3). A large number of NWOs operate in Delhi; but most of them belong to Uttar Pradesh and Bihar (Figure 4).

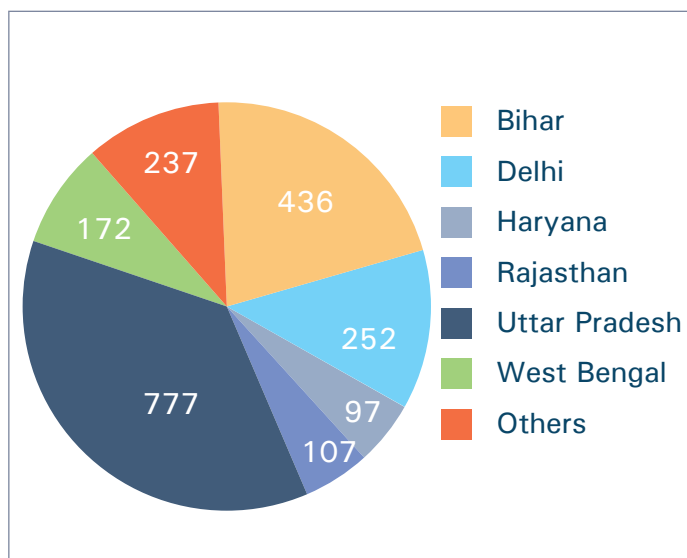
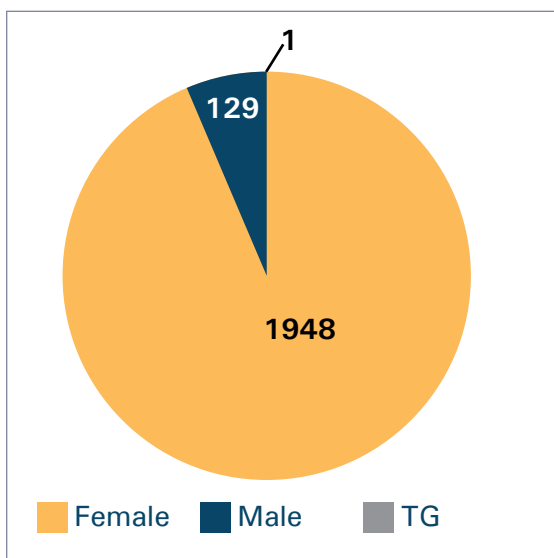


Figure 3: Gender-wise Profiling of NWOs

Figure 4: Source State-wise Profiling of NWOs

NWOs are also involved in alternative occupations. It was found that alongwith carrying out the network operations, the NWOs were home makers, shop owners, beauty parlor owners, among others (Figure 5).

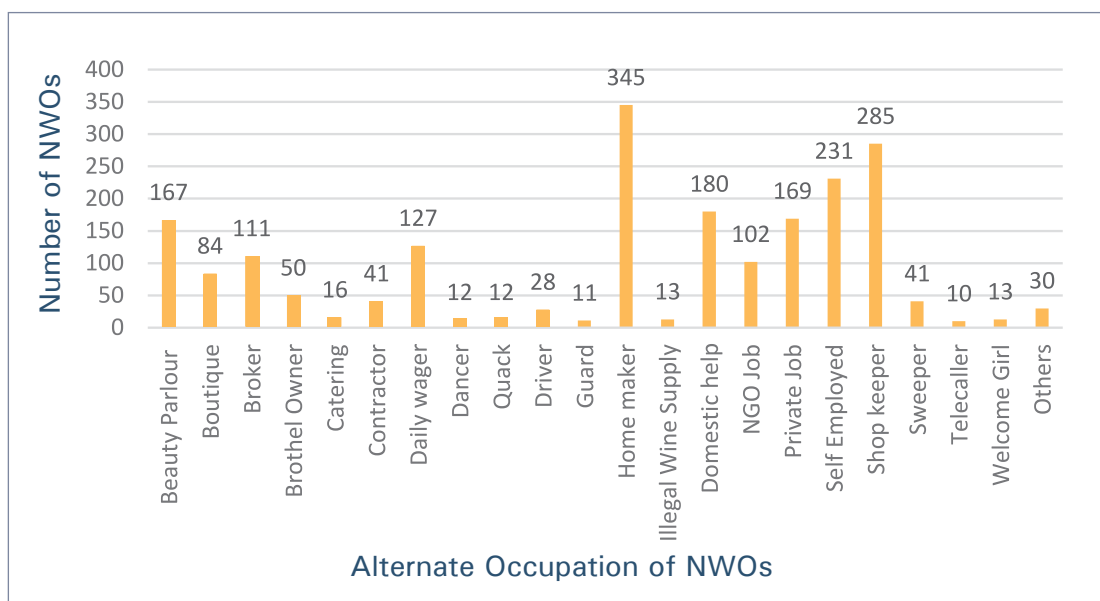


Figure 5: Alternate Occupation-wise NWO Profiling

There is a gradual increase in the registrations of NWOs under the TI program. The NWO approach has given a boost to new registrations of FSWs in the TI Program as well (Figure 6). Currently 40178 FSWs are associated with 2078 NWOs. However, the monthly increase up until December 2019 indicates that saturation had not yet been achieved even a year and a half after initiation.

TI maintains a linelist of the registered NWOs, who are reached out every month. The NWOs are considered inactive when the TI staff is not able to contact them during the regular visits, on phone and even after repeated follow up calls. Their names are maintained every month in the list as inactive NWOs. In case if the TI is able to reach out to them again, their status is updated to active NWOs. If they shift to other location, that gets duly mentioned in the sheet.

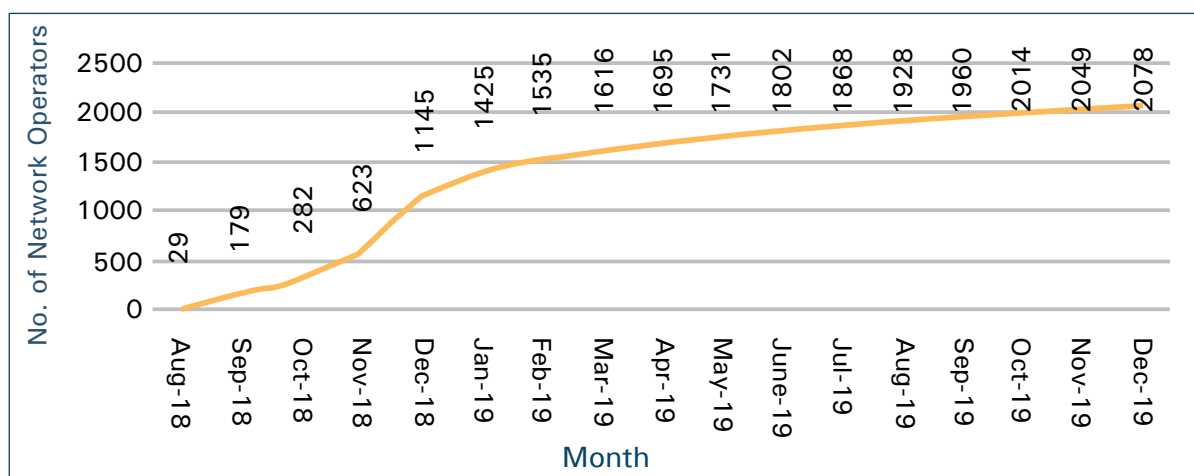


Figure 6: Network Operator Registration (Cumulative)

The program data indicates that in Financial Year (FY) 2017-18, 93% of individual FSWs were screened/tested for HIV; which gradually increased to 96% in the FY 2019-20.

Linkages of FSWs to ART have seen an increase from 94% in the FY 2017-18 to 98% in FY 2019-20. There has been an improvement in percentage of PLHIV on ART from 73% in FY 2017-18 to 90% in FY 2019-20 (Figure 7). The new registrations gradually increased in the FY 2018-19 and FY 2019-20. Early identification and coverage of young FSWs has also increased along with the increase in the new registrations after the initiation of the NWO approach (Figure 8).

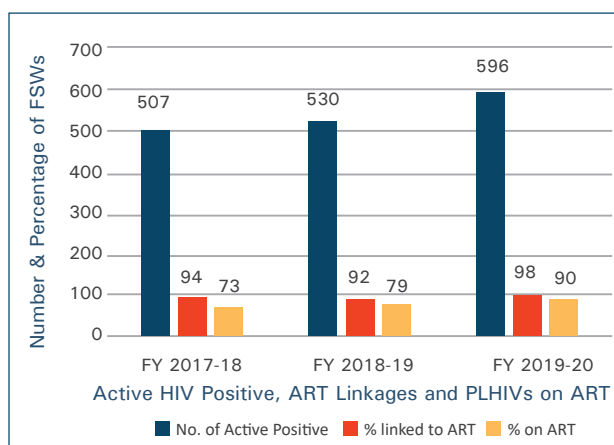


Figure 7: Active HIV Positive FSWs, FSWs linked to ART and PLHIVs on ART

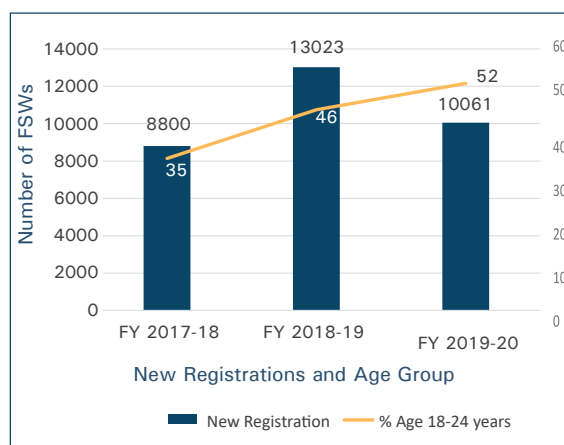


Figure 8: Total new registrations of FSWs and registrations in the age group of 18-24 years

## 2. Sensitization Meeting

The Network Mapping exercise provided a line list of NWOs that became the base to carry out the program initiatives. Sensitization meetings were organized across all the FSW TI program locations, wherein more than 1300 NWOs were sensitized in a period of one month. The meetings aimed at strengthening rapport with the NWOs and providing them with a platform to express their concerns and elicit their views/suggestions on involving more and more FSWs under the purview of the TI program. The sensitization meetings were kept interactive and entertaining through ice breaking exercises, competitions (mehandi, dance, singing) and games. Some FSWs associated with NWOs were also invited in the meeting for strengthening the rapport. The TIs had arranged for Clinic and HIV screening services during the meetings in order to encourage the FSW participants to get themselves screened. The meeting also included a session on TI services, its significance and role of NWOs. The NWOs were felicitated for the support they had been lending to the program. This has resulted in strengthening the relationship and an increased level of support/engagement from the NWOs. The meetings garnered a positive response from the NWOs and it has been decided that similar meetings will be conducted on a quarterly or six-monthly basis.

## 3. Linkage to Services

The TI programs run across Delhi NCT and have been actively providing the necessary services at the doorstep to the FSWs and at the same time addressing various issues faced by the community. Through the NWO approach, the FSWs were linked to the TI services and facilities. NWOs facilitated the process of this linkage. Further, NWOs also motivated

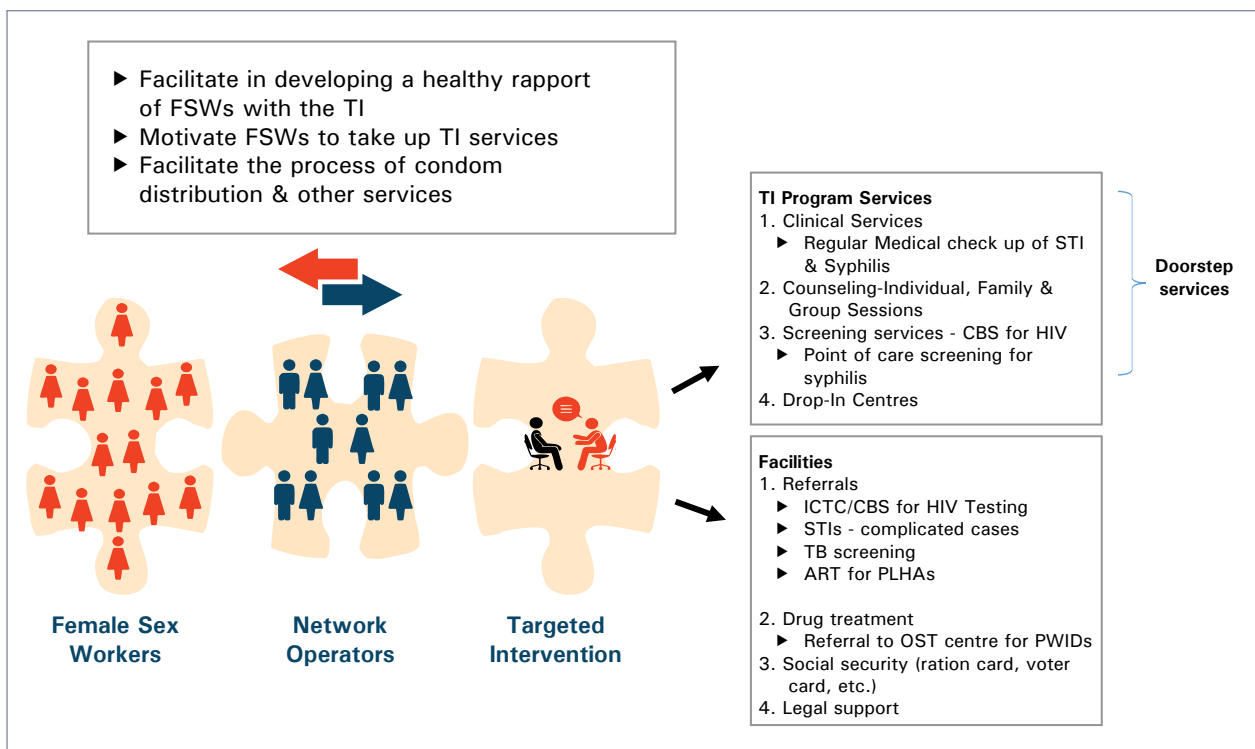


Figure 9: Linkage to Services



FSWs to register with the TIs and take up screening and testing. NWOs facilitated the distribution of condoms; wherein they placed free condoms with the TI on monthly basis as per the requirement (Figure 9). Before the NWO approach was introduced, condoms were distributed by the TI staff on a one-to-one basis to the FSWs. However, the program was not able to reach all the FSWs because of the changing patterns in sex work. After adopting the new approach, the NWOs placed the demand for free condoms in advance, considering the number of FSWs associated with them. In this way, the FSWs get access to condoms as per their convenience. Further NWOs helped in developing a rapport between the women and the TI.

## 4. Reporting and Monitoring

Reporting and monitoring were crucial for successful implementation of the NWO approach. The approach being one of the initial endeavors in the capital city of the country, the monitoring aspect had to be customized, well-laid out and tested at every significant step of the approach.

Multiple tools have been developed by DSACS and DL TSU to record and monitor all the steps of the approach:

- **NWO Outreach sheet** captures information on regular outreach done with NWOs by the TI staff to collect information on the women associated with them and plan for service delivery.
- **Individual FSW tracking sheet** captures information on FSWs being reached out by TI staff on regular basis and the service uptake.
- **Condom outlet sheet** traces the availability and supply management of commodities and ensures uninterrupted supply to NWOs and FSWs.
- **Lead tracker** highlights the duplication of NWOs as well as the FSWs in a specific geographical area. The sheets track the quality of member enrollment/network mapping approach followed by the implementing agency.

Reporting and monitoring tools are regularly updated and reported to DSACS/DL TSU on monthly basis. Data analysis is done by DL TSU and in consultation with DSACS, further approach and modification for the implementation strategy is decided. Periodic supportive supervisory visits of DSACS strengthen the work on the ground; at the same time, periodic reviews and consultations with the TI staff reinforce the intervention. This being a new intervention, the TIs need hand holding support and capacity building at various stages; which is duly provided by DL TSU.



# Learnings, Challenges & the Way Forward

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## Learnings

One of the major success factors behind the vigorous implementation of the NWO approach has been the cultivation of strong rapport with the NWOs. This was achieved through regular visits that facilitated discussions, active listening and responding to the needs of the community. The values of trust and confidentiality gave a boost to the process of reaching out to unreached FSWs for HIV prevention and treatment services.

Further, the highly-engaging and interactive sensitization meetings with the NWOs, culminating with their felicitation towards their contribution to the program, reaped an affirmative response from them, thus increasing their ownership towards their newly found role. (Refer photographs on page 13)

Continuous engagement with the NWOs is a must as there are various players in the network with frequently changing dynamics in sex work. The implementing agency needs to be responsive to these changes in order to be resilient and adapt as per the need of the stakeholders. For instance, the option to receive services at the doorstep was initiated after it was realized that the FSWs considered this option to be more convenient. These services included screening for HIV and other symptoms of STI, counseling and the provision of commodities for prevention at a location and a time suitable to them.

## Challenges

In many of the circumstances, FSWs and NWOs remain in touch with each other through mobile communication only with limited face to face interaction. This poses a challenge to not only reach out to these FSWs with HIV prevention, care and treatment services, but also to monitor their use.

Secondly, due to high mobility of FSWs, the TI programs are not able to reach out to those FSWs that have relocated or have been carrying out solicitation and sex work in the area outside the program's geographical coverage. We were not able to gather information that would enable us to estimate the average duration of FSW's stay in Delhi, or the frequency with which they return to their place of origin during a given year.

Another challenge is to reach saturation in covering the target population under the program. This is because this is a very dynamic network with new women continuously entering into sex work and new network operators emerging within the society and the expanding geography.





## The Way Forward

As a part of the TI programs, the NWOs are being contacted and sensitized on need for the FSWs to have access to condoms and other HIV prevention, testing and care services. The program in the near future seeks to mobilize NWOs to learn basic service delivery, namely, conducting HIV screening using Community Based Screening kits, educating women on safer sexual practices and encouraging them to seek services like regular medical check-ups, HIV and syphilis testing and opt for safe sexual practices and treatment for those FSWs living with HIV. The program also intends to train them in HIV awareness generation activities to be carried out with FSWs associated with them, using digital and social media based applications.

# Glimpses of the NWO Sensitization Meeting

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*The photographs used in this report have been included after receiving consent from the community.*



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