Sex Worker Picture Codes
How to use PICTURE CODES

Introduction

• Picture codes are materials that are used to stimulate a discussion about specific issues like behavior which puts people at risk of HIV infection.

• The picture code has a photograph on one sideshowing people in different situations and on the other side has questions for the field worker to ask to stimulate a discussion.

• Underneath the questions are “talking points“ or information the field worker can share with participants.

• Picture code stories are basically the same as picture code except that there are several pictures that should be shown and discussed one after the other. They usually tell a story of people in different situations who make different behavior choices.

Getting started

• Bring together a group of one to 15 participants for a session and have participants sit in a circle or in a way they can see the picture.

• It is best not to stand in front of the participants like a teacher since the idea is to get the participants to talk about themselves.

• The field worker should lead the discussion by asking questions and not talk too much.

Asking questions

• Show the picture to the participants and start with the general question “what is happening in this picture?”. That should be enough to get the discussion started.

• Ask other questions to stimulate further discussion.

• Skip questions that have already been discussed.

• Ask follow-up questions to encourage the participants to offer more detail about their behavior.
• Try to ask open-ended questions that don’t take a single word answer like “yes” or “no” such as “What do you think about that?”

**Being a good listener**

• Don’t be judgmental or moralistic about the discussion.

• There is no right or wrong answer to the questions.

• The idea is to get participants to think about their behavior choices.

• A good field worker is a good listener who is very interested in the answer to the questions.

• Get the participants to relate what is happening in the photos with themselves or people they know.

• Correct any misinformation at the end of the session, not during the session.

**Getting everyone to participate**

• Don’t let one or two people talk all the time.
• Ask a question directly to a different person each time.

• Re-ask the same question to different people.

• Ask other if they agree with the responses given.

**Organizing sessions**

• Discuss one or two picture codes or flip chart pages in a half-hour session. Take as long as the group wants to discuss each picture code.

• Discussing many pictures in one session not recommended unless it is doubtful the field worker will see the participants again.

• Use the information under the “Talking Points” section to answer questions or make points that haven’t already come up in the discussion.

• If specific questions arise find a suitable picture to use to stimulate a discussion on the topic.
Alcohol use and risky sexual behavior Drinking in Bar

- What is happening in this picture?
- Why do we use alcohol and sometimes drugs (cocaine, sniff, dagga or Mandrax when working?
- Why do we need a sober head while working?
- What do you think will happen next?

Key messages:

- Sex workers often drink to reduce shyness and fear and get confidence to approach clients.
- Using alcohol and drugs while working may make it harder to negotiate safer sex and it can increase risky sexual behavior like having sex without a condom, and possible infection of HIV.
- We need a clear head while working to make good decisions and not putting ourselves at risk of being beaten up.
Alcohol use and risky sexual behavior Road Side

- What is happening in this picture?
- Do you think the client and sex worker is aware of HIV while negotiating? (Why/Why not)
- What would you have done if you were in this situation?

Key messages:

- We drink alcohol, because it gives us courage to have sex with strangers whose HIV status we don’t know.
- Drinking alcohol increases the chance of HIV infection by having sex without a condom with someone whose HIV status is unknown.
- Alcohol impairs your judgment and increases risk of injuries and being a victim of violence or a crime.
Unsafe Setting

- What is happening in this picture?
- What are the dangers of drinking with clients in deserted places?
- What can we do when a client gets aggressive?
- What can be done to ensure sex workers’ health and safety?

Key messages:

- Try to limit the amount of alcohol you drink while looking for clients/being with a client, to ensure that you are fully in control of your actions and be safe.
- Avoid deserted places and work in groups.
- Always let someone you trust know where you are at all times.
- Establish codes to let each other know if there is a problem or if you need help.
- Share the names of aggressive clients to all sex workers.
Sexually Transmitted Infections Picture 1

- What is happening in this picture?
- What could have been the cause of this woman’s discomfort?
- How do we know that we have an STI, also anal STI?
- How can we protect ourselves from STI?

Key messages:

- STI are contracted through sexual contact (vaginal, oral and anal sex).
- It is important not to have sex when you or your partner/client have any sign or symptom of an STI AND use condoms and lubricants correctly and consistently.
- The sores, blisters and rashes from the STI provide openings for HIV to enter the body.
- Sometimes STI can be asymptomatic.
- Go monthly for STI screening at a health facility.
Sexually Transmitted Infections Picture 2

• What is happening in this picture?
• How can you tell that someone has an STI?
• What are some of the most serious consequences of untreated STIs?
• What can you do when you suspect you have an STI?

Key messages:

• You can have an STI without feeling sick or having symptoms like an abnormal discharge, swelling, frequent or burning urination, but still can pass the STI to someone.
• STIs left untreated can increased risk of contracting HIV and death and can cause infertility, cervical cancer.
• Seek health care and take all the medicine for treatment of the STI.
Negotiating condom and lubricant use

- What is happening in this picture?
- What can the sex worker do to protect herself from risky sexual behavior?

Key messages:

- Use condoms and lubricants correctly and consistently during every sexual encounter to reduce the risk of HIV infection and other STIs, even with your regular partner/s.
- Always carry condoms and lubricants with you and have alternate solutions available (female condoms, peers or pimps).
- The best time to discuss condom use, is before you start having sex.
- Always negotiate condom and lubricant use.
Negotiating condom and lubricant use

• What is happening in this picture?
• How can we convince our clients to use a condom and lubricants?
• What can we do ensure that our health rights and needs are met?

Key messages:

• We should always negotiate for safe sex.
• Different men/women have different preferences to sex and therefore it requires us having different convincing skills to use condoms consistently and correctly.
• We are good negotiators since we always negotiate with our clients and therefore we need to also negotiate for safer sex.
• Once negotiating sex, ensure that your needs are met.
Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission Picture 1

• What is happening in this picture?
• Why do you think it is important to visit the health facility regularly?
• What challenges do we have in visiting health facilities?
• What support do we need when seeking health services?

Key messages:

• It is important to seek health advice before falling pregnant, we need to plan for every pregnancy.
• We receive counseling on HIV before getting tested.
• The health care providers need to be non-judgmental, supportive and able to answer to your health concern.
• It is good to have a friend/mother to assist you during your health visits.
PMTCT Know Your HIV Status

- What is happening in this picture?
- What can we do if we test positive for HIV to lower our chances of passing HIV to our babies?
- Why do some pregnant sex workers fear to go for ante-natal services and HIV Counseling and Testing?

Key messages:

- Continuously use condoms and lubricants, regardless of your HIV status, even until you are finished with breastfeeding.
- A pregnant woman can take ART during pregnancy and immediately after delivery to lower the chances of passing HIV to her baby.
- Health care providers need to be supportive and non-judgmental.
PMTCT Taking Your Medication

• What is happening in this picture?
• Why do you think it is important for her to take her ARV?
• What support does she need?

Key messages:

• A number of ARV regimens have been shown to be effective in reducing mother to child transmission of HIV.
• Services for HIV infected women, infants and their families can include treatment of opportunistic infections, use of ARV’s, psychosocial and nutritional support.
• You need to take your ARV at the same time every day for the rest of your life.
• It is important to consistently visit a health facility during your pregnancy and keep to follow-ups.
PMTCT Picture 4

- What is happening in this picture?
- What are the benefits for the mother and baby to go for PMTCT?
- What does testing of the baby entail?

Key messages:

- Effective PMTCT drastically reduce child HIV infection.
- PMTCT also serves as an entry point to care, treatment and support of HIV infected women, their exposed children and families.
- A baby will be tested the first time within 2 months after birth to check for HIV and if positive, they will have to start treatment.
- Testing entails the prick of the heel of the baby and the blood is collected to test for HIV.
- Negative babies of positive mothers will get medicines for as long as they breastfeed (max. 12 months).
PMTCT and Breastfeeding

- What is happening in this picture?
- Why do you think she is still breastfeeding her baby?
- What other options instead of breastfeeding are available?

Key messages:

- If a mother adheres to her ARV, she can exclusively breastfeed her baby until six months, introduce appropriate complementary foods thereafter and continue breastfeeding for the first twelve months of live.
- There are other options to breastfeeding available, consult your health care provider.
PMTCT Follow Up Visits

• What is happening in this picture?
• Why is it important that mother and baby go for regular follow-ups after birth?
• What are the benefits of family planning for us?

Key messages:

• During follow-ups the feeding options of the child will be assessed and the child will be immunised as well as growth monitoring will be done.
• Our nutritional status will be assessed, signs and symptoms of HIV disease progression will be monitored and we will receive counseling on infant feeding, disclosure, safer sex, family planning and positive living.
• Making family planning available to sex workers can prevent unintended pregnancies.
• Children will benefit with improvements in the mother’s survival and quality of life.
HIV Counseling and Testing: Unsafe Sex

Unsafe Sex - HIV Counseling and Testing

• What is happening in this picture?
• What are the risks involved?
• Do you think the sex worker and client know their HIV status? Why/Why not?
• What do you think will happen after this?

Key messages:

• Use condoms and lubricants correctly and consistently during every sexual encounter including with your regular partner to reduce the risk of HIV infection and other STIs.
• Get tested to know your HIV status and encourage your regular partner/s to get tested to know their HIV status.
HIV Counseling and Testing: Concerned

**HCT: Concerned**

- What is happening in this picture?
- Why would we not use condoms?
- What do you think she will do next?

**Key messages:**

- We face many risks and HIV testing is an important part of taking care of ourselves and our partners.
- If you know you HIV status, you will have peace of mind and be confident with your relationships.
HIV Counseling and Testing: Registration

HCT Registration

• What is happening in this picture?
• What do you need to take with for HCT?
• What are the benefits of knowing one’s HIV status?
• Why do you think sex workers choose not to go for HCT?
• Where will you be able to go for HIV counseling and testing?

Key messages:

• Knowing your HIV status gives you the power to make the right choices and to plan better for the future.
• Sex workers may fear the stigma and discrimination they may experience if they test positive.
• HCT is easily accessible and confidential at any health facility with trained counselors.
• When you go for HCT at private doctor, you need to take your identification card with, but when you go to a health facility, you will be asked to give a secret name, you need to remember.
HIV Counseling and Testing: Pre-test Counseling

HCT: Pre-test counseling

- What is happening in this picture?
- What do you think happens during the pre-test counseling session?

Key points:

- HIV counseling before the HIV test prepares you by addressing HIV related concerns that you may have, as well as preparing you for the test and results.
- The counseling also helps in discussing risk reduction issues in a supportive way and you will have the choice to go for testing.
- Everyone has the right to access health services without discrimination.
HIV Counseling and Testing: Rapid Test

HCT: Rapid test

- What is happening in this picture?
- What does the rapid test entail?
- What does the rapid test test for?

Key messages:

- A small amount of blood is taken from your finger when it is pricked.
- The blood is tested for antibodies your body had developed to HIV.
- The results can be provided within 15-20 minutes.
- This test is reliable.
HIV Counseling and Testing: Waiting for Results

HCT: Waiting for results

• What is happening in this picture?
• How are the people feeling while waiting?
• What can you do to relax during this time?
• Why is it important to wait to receive your results?

Key messages:

• Being afraid about the test is normal, but by getting tested for HIV and receiving your results, you will know your HIV status.
• The waiting period may feel long, but it is important to get your results.
• Take a book or a friend with to make up time while you are waiting.
HIV Counseling and Testing: Receiving Results

HCT: Receiving results

• What is happening in this picture?
• What do you think a negative/positive result will mean to you?
• After knowing your results, what can we do differently?

Key messages:

• If your results are negative, you need to maintain your negative status by using condoms and lubricants consistently and correctly every time you have sex. Get a HCT after 3 months to confirm that you are still HIV negative. You can be in the window period – your body did not yet developed antibodies to the virus.
• If your results are positive, you will be linked to a health facility for further assistance. You can continue living a healthy life as long as you take care of your health. You need to eat healthy, using condoms and lubricants correct and consistent and if needed you can go on treatment.
• It is important for sex workers to go annually for a HCT test.