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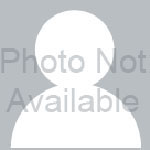
**12,000 sex workers registered in Zimbabwe by NGO**

A HIV test kit displays a negative result. According to the Centre for Sexual Health, HIV and Aids Research, of the 12,383 sex workers registered in Zimbabwe, 2,132 had tested HIV positive while 10,445 had been treated for sexually transmitted diseases. PHOTO | FILE  NATION MEDIA GROUP

**In Summary**

* Of that number, 2,132 had tested HIV positive while 10,445 had been treated for sexually transmitted diseases
* Zimbabwe’s HIV prevalence rate stands at 13.7 percent with sex workers considered to be among the highest risk population

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**By Kitsepile Nyathi**  
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**HARARE**

A Zimbabwe non-governmental organisation says it has registered 12,383 sex workers operating throughout the country since 2009.

The Centre for Sexual Health, HIV and Aids Research (CeSHHAR) said of that number, 2,132 had tested HIV positive while 10,445 had been treated for sexually transmitted diseases.

The women’s ages ranged from 12 to 60 and each of them claimed to entertain a maximum of 12 men a day when business is brisk.

Ms Sibongile Mtetwa, the sex work programme coordinator for CeSHHAR said the majority of the sex workers remained unregistered.

“Sex work is common and sex workers are at increased risk of HIV but less likely to access prevention and treatment services,” she told the Herald newspaper.

Ms Mtetwa said her organisation had started a programme to give sex workers access to health services when they contract STIs.

“The overall goal is to improve respect, protection and upholding of sex workers’ rights to promote their universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support,” she said.

Prostitution is illegal in Zimbabwe but activists say acknowledging that the vice is prevalent in the country would be crucial in the fight against HIV and AIDS.

Zimbabwe’s HIV prevalence rate stands at 13.7 percent with sex workers considered to be among the highest risk population in HIV transmission.