Using unique approaches to reach industry workers

By employing a multifaceted, strategic approach Reproductive Health Uganda (RHU), supported by the IPPF Japan Trust Fund (JTF), explored a unique solution to cater for sexual health needs for this group. This included an initial needs assessment and creating a tailored response to the needs of industry workers in the area. RHU used innovative methods to reach the group, such as outreach visits at factory sites, establishing condom banks for condom distribution and education efforts amongst local sex workers. RHU also undertook a peer educator training programme. They worked in collaboration with industrial managers to increase sustainability of the initiative.

This project increased knowledge and promoted skill building for safer sex and SRHR choices through different approaches tailored to meet audience needs. Specific knowledge among the targeted group on HIV prevention increased from 52% at baseline to 79% at the end of the project. General HIV awareness increased to 100%. Skills on condom negotiation increased by 11% and condom use in last encounter increased from 45% to 54%.

“Before the project, I was afraid to test for HIV, but now I do it very freely. I have gained a lot of confidence...”, adding that her boyfriend works in Rwanda and can be away for as long as six months. “Whenever he comes back, I always ensure that we first get tested for HIV together, before we have sex.”

Janet N*, 23, a casual worker at Kwera Ltd in Bwaise
The project also increased the overall use of family planning (FP) methods and subsequent couple years of protection due to an overall shift from use of short acting methods like pills, condoms and injections (during the baseline) to more long acting methods such as intra-uterine devices, implants and sterilization. While 36% employees reported that they were not using any FP method during the baseline survey, this proportion reduced to 14% at the end of the project. Condoms (63%) were used more than any other FP method, possibly because of the easy accessibility and availability through the condom banks, outreach services and peer educators. Increased use and acceptability of the condom is a clear sign of the intensive sensitization by the project and the fact that employees could now protect themselves against both unintended pregnancies and HIV and STIs.

Case study

The project has influenced the way people make decisions about their sexuality and fertility.

Esther L*, a machine operator at Kwera factory in Kawempe explains: “I have one child and I wanted a good FP method to avoid having a second. I had no time to go to the health centre because it could take almost a whole day to be seen by the health staff. When this project brought the services right to our factory, they taught us about FP. After seeing the condom use demonstrations and learning about its advantages, I felt it was the right thing for me. I talked to my partner and he agreed. I am now using condoms to avoid pregnancy and also to prevent HIV and STIs. I can now face a man and negotiate that he uses a condom. I can even offer to assist him to put it on properly if he does not know. I don’t need to fear anymore because I know how to protect myself”.

From the workplace to the wider community

RHU recognizes that the ultimate success of the project depends on the wider dissemination of safer sex messages to the community. By working with employees, families were indirectly reached. Further, by training peer educators and working with industry management, an element of sustainability was built into the project from the outset. A good referral mechanism with a wide network of organizations complemented and enhanced co-operation across similar groups working in the project sites.

This IPPF JTF-funded project provided an opportunity for RHU staff to enhance the capacity in areas such as conducting needs assessment surveys, documenting and reporting, and monitoring and evaluation. It has also enabled staff to update their knowledge related to HIV counselling and laboratory testing.

Uganda country information

