

## PTA Consults Potential Audiences on Microbicide Messages

**M**embers of the Kenya advisory committee (PAC) for the PTA activity Communicating Microbicides with Women in Mind worked with FHI 360 staff in January 2013 to begin developing messages and materials that could support the eventual introduction of microbicides.

The USAID-funded activity is part of a larger agency initiative to begin preparing for introduction should ongoing studies of microbicides yield positive results.

The Kenya advisory committee, which is chaired by Dr. George Githuka of the National AIDS and STI Control Program (NASCOP), currently consists of 13 members from government departments and nongovernmental organizations working in Kenya. The PTA convened this group at the recommendation of key stakeholders who participated in a consultation held in Naivasha, Kenya, in September 2012, on [\*ARV-Based HIV Prevention: State of the Science and Considerations for Implementation\*](#).

FHI 360 staff and selected PAC members divided into teams of three to conduct audience consultations in Kisumu, Mombasa, Nairobi and Nakuru in late January. The teams met with members of the potential audiences for a microbicide communication campaign — adolescents, female sex workers, service providers, men, HIV-negative women in serodiscordant couples, married women and women in stable relationships — who were recruited by the PAC members' organizations.

The consultations involved informal discussions and participatory activities designed to help the teams

better understand the factors that put the members of each audience at risk of HIV infection, inform participants about microbicides, and brainstorm potential messages and materials for microbicide introduction. Information gathered through these



A young woman presents her idea of an effective message for microbicide introduction at the Mombasa, Kenya consultation.

audience consultations contributed to a two-day message development workshop held in Nairobi from January 31 to February 1 for all PAC members and additional key stakeholders from local organizations.

The results of the workshop and the consultation findings will guide the content and format of messages and materials about microbicides. The materials will

focus on female sex workers, adolescents and men as primary audiences, with the understanding that some messages will likely be appropriate for a broad range of women. Other materials will address those who influence women, such as male partners and health care providers.

FHI 360 staff will use the workshop results and the audience consultations to draft a creative brief that outlines the objectives, audiences, direction and other essential elements of a communication campaign. The brief will be used to solicit bids from a local marketing firm that will work with FHI 360 staff and PAC members to develop prototype materials. The PTA will conduct research to assess these materials, so that the project can provide the Kenyan government with an evidence-based report on potential messages and materials for microbicide introduction and offer other governments a process and prototype materials that could be adapted to introduce microbicides in their countries.

# Curriculum Aims to Decrease Multiple Sexual Partnerships

“The Big House,” “Spare Tire,” “Sugar Daddy”—these are just a few terms used to refer to multiple sexual partners. Even though there are many terms that could be used, the risk is the same: within a large sexual network, HIV is spread more quickly and entire communities are affected. Multiple sexual partnerships are a major driver of the HIV epidemic, and yet this topic is inadequately covered in HIV prevention curricula for young people. *Promoting Partner Reduction: Helping Young People Understand and Avoid HIV Risks from Multiple Partnerships (PPR)* is a set of activities created to address multiple partnerships, with an emphasis on those that are overlapping or concurrent (sometimes referred to as “multiple concurrent partnerships” or MCPs).

Launched in early 2013, the PPR curricula, was developed by FHI 360 and ETR Associates through PTA funding. It is designed to supplement other youth programs on sexuality education or HIV prevention by promoting partner reduction. The detailed units are outlined and scripted for facilitators to follow easily and includes guidelines for unit activities, background information and notes. Although the units stand alone, each one builds on the prior unit, culminating in young people’s intention to avoid engaging in multiple sexual partnerships.

Field tested with youth ages 13–24 in Kenya, Botswana, and the U.S., the PPR activities are tailored to help young people: 1) learn why HIV spreads at different rates in monogamous, sequential, and concurrent sexual partnerships; 2) examine the role that gender norms play in encouraging multiple partnerships; 3) analyze reasons that young people engage in multiple, and especially concurrent, partnerships and provide alternatives; 4) practice skills to refuse engaging with multiple partners; and 5) develop the intention to avoid multiple partnerships.

In August 2012, FHI 360 staff provided training to South Africa youth program staff on the HIV risks associated with multiple partners and using PPR. During the three-day training, 27 community-based youth program staff from LoveLife, South African

Council of Churches (SACC), Family Life Association of Swaziland (FLAS) and AMICALL-Swaziland learned how to use the educational tool and discussed how to integrate PPR into their existing youth programs.

“One FLAS staff person told me, ‘Prior to the training, [they] did not have a specific tool that focuses on addressing partner reduction. It was not discussed in detail in [their] program,’” said Marta Pirzadeh, a technical officer for FHI 360’s youth team who conducted the South Africa training along with other training experts from FHI 360’s South Africa office. “There was general consensus that multiple sexual partnerships are common among young people, but they don’t have the information or resources to address it. This tool will help close that gap.”

Following the training all four programs piloted select activities to gauge youth response and provide feedback on the resource during an assessment. Facilitators were then interviewed about their experience and this information is now being used to understand program gaps and learn how to expand the reach of partner reduction activities to other programs.

*Promoting Partner Reduction: Helping Young People Understand and Avoid HIV Risks from Multiple Partnerships (PPR)* may be downloaded directly at [www.iywg.org](http://www.iywg.org) or at [FHI 360.org](http://FHI360.org). Hard copies and USB flash drives may be obtained by sending a request to [youthwg@fhi360.org](mailto:youthwg@fhi360.org).



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# Youth Tell the ‘Stories Behind the Statistics’

The USAID Interagency Youth Working Group (IYWG) has teamed up with The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to raise awareness of youth sexual and reproductive health issues. It began in April 2012 when the Gates Foundation invited FHI 360 to develop a three-part series for its blog, *Impatient Optimists*. “The Stories Behind the Statistics” was launched with a pilot series focusing on youth reproductive and sexual health, family planning for young women, and young people and HIV. The three posts were so well received that the Gates Foundation asked FHI 360 to continue managing the series on behalf of the IYWG. Each month, the foundation publishes at least one blog post focusing on youth sexual and reproductive health issues as part of the “Stories Behind the Statistics” series.

Written by youth across the globe, “Stories” showcases global youth sexual and reproductive health issues (the statistics) by putting young faces with the data (the stories). Authors from the U.S., Kenya, Zimbabwe, Nepal, Jamaica and the Philippines have written about general youth sexual and reproductive health, adolescent pregnancy, access to contraceptives, youth and HIV and early marriage in the first five series.

Each issue discussed opens with an overview post written by a young staff member at FHI 360, followed by one to two posts written by young people in developing countries on the same topic. The contributing youth authors share the impact of youth

***“The gap in available information about HIV risk impedes the war against HIV and AIDS and the promise of a brighter future for adolescent girls. Young people, and especially adolescent females, need information about reproductive health services and HIV prevention so that they are empowered to make informed decisions concerning their lives.” ~ John Mwikwabe, peer educator, Kenya Red Cross Naivasha Sub Branch, and author of “The Stories Behind the Statistics: Adolescent Girls and HIV Vulnerability in Kenya”***

sexual and reproductive health issues on their lives, their peers’ lives, and their country. Authors also share their vision for how to improve the sexual and reproductive health of young people.

The IYWG blog receives an average of 1,000 views per month. [Read](#) previous blog posts and [sign up](#) to receive the IYWG blog at [www.IYWG.org](http://www.IYWG.org).

## FHI 360’s PQC Lab Receives Second Perfect Audit

Recently the North Carolina Product Quality and Compliance (PQC) Lab received a perfect score on its accreditation audit by the American Association for Laboratory Accreditation (A2LA) for International Organization for Standardization (ISO) 17025. This is the second perfect audit in a row for the NC lab, which has 33 competencies in its accreditation scope, up from 28 in 2010. ISO accreditation positions PQC staff as technical experts to help guide organizations, manufacturers, and government agencies.

With PTA funding, the PQC staff ensure the quality of commodities—including condoms for HIV prevention—procured by the U.S. government for its field health programs. In 2012, the NC facility evaluated 1,274 lots of male condoms and 36 lots of female condoms. In addition, at PQC’s Bangkok Laboratory, 968 male condoms lots were evaluated for compliance.

# Experts Address Men's Role in Microbicide Introduction

The urgent need for an HIV prevention method that a woman can use with or without her partner's knowledge has driven the development of microbicides. But when microbicides do become available, what role will men play in women's access to and use of these products?

A meeting organized by FHI 360's Preventive Technologies Agreement (PTA) to begin answering that question brought together experts on microbicides, community engagement and male involvement in women's health programs. Twenty-two people from five countries met in Washington, D.C., on January 10, 2013, to discuss ways to encourage constructive male engagement in microbicide introduction and remove gender-related barriers to microbicide use.

Participants identified additional information needed to develop programs that will engage men as supportive partners in microbicide rollout, but also allow women to decide whether to use a microbicide and communicate with their partners about it. The questions they suggested helped guide the development of a protocol for formative research the PTA will conduct this year in Kenya. Formative research results from Kenya and South Africa will be used to develop programmatic guidance on how to engage men in microbicide introduction.

PTA staff members are also collaborating with social scientists who worked on microbicide trials in South Africa to analyze existing data on the role of male

partners in facilitating — or hindering — women's access to microbicides and their ability to use them as directed. Many of the trials collected a wealth of data on gender issues, but given limited resources, much of it has not yet been analyzed or presented in the research literature.

Rose Wilcher, technical advisor on research utilization at FHI 360, noted that this research is part of a USAID initiative to prepare for microbicide rollout: "Although the introduction of microbicides is still several years away, USAID and its partners recognize that it is important to begin planning for introduction now, and this work will contribute to that early planning," she said.

***"Although the introduction of microbicides is still several years away, USAID and its partners recognize that it is important to begin planning for introduction now, and this work will contribute to that early planning." ~ Rose Wilcher, Technical Advisor, FHI 360's Research Utilization Team.***



**To learn more about how the Preventive Technologies Agreement (PTA) is Advancing the Science of HIV Prevention, please visit [fhi360.org/projects/preventive-technologies-agreement-pta](http://fhi360.org/projects/preventive-technologies-agreement-pta) or write to [PTAinfo@fhi360.org](mailto:PTAinfo@fhi360.org).**

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