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Assessments Reveal Impact of Youth Resources

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Over the past four years, the Preventive Technologies Agreement (PTA) has supported a robust collection of resources to help improve the sexual and reproductive health of youth.



Trainees in Kenya learn how to use the PTA-supported manual on HIV counseling and testing for youth.

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Recent assessments of selected resources

show that the investment has paid off, as the resources are having a widespread impact around the world.

FHI 360 developed [HIV Counseling and Testing for Youth: A Manual for Providers](#) in 2005 to describe best practices for integrating HIV counseling and testing with other reproductive health services for youth. An accompanying resource — [Training Guide for HIV Counseling and Testing for Youth: A Manual for Providers](#) — was developed a few years later by FHI 360, Population Services International and the International Planned Parenthood Federation to help train providers to use the manual as a job aid.

Nearly 14,000 copies of the manual and 500 copies of the training guide have been disseminated in print format, and thousands more have been downloaded electronically. The manual has reached health care providers in more than 40 countries.

With support from the PTA, FHI 360 conducted an electronic survey with 41 people from 15 countries who had been trained to use the manual or had received a copy of the training guide. Interviews were also conducted with 16 individuals, including HIV counselors and nurses who had attended trainings on the manual in Zambia.

“The results suggest that the manual’s impact ranges from behavior change at the individual and facility level to changes in national policy,” says FHI 360’s Robin Dayton, a senior technical

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officer who led the assessment. For example, an HIV counselor from Zambia remarked that “everything changed” after the training. “We’ve managed to overcome stigmatization — not just in [the] clinic but in the community,” the counselor said. At the national level, the manual was used as a reference in developing Guyana’s national policy on HIV counseling and testing in 2007.

The HIV-related resource [Promoting Partner Reduction: Helping Young People Understand and Avoid HIV Risks from Multiple Partnerships \(PPR\)](#) was also recently assessed. Developed by FHI 360 and ETR Associates with PTA support in 2011 and 2012, this resource is an evidence-based participatory curriculum to help reduce multiple sexual partnerships among youth.

In 2012, 27 staff from four sexual and reproductive health programs for youth in South Africa and Swaziland were trained on the curriculum and then participated in a three-month pilot study to introduce it into the programs. Surveys and interviews showed that the training improved knowledge, attitudes and beliefs about multiple sexual partnerships and HIV risks and that the activities in the curriculum were easily integrated into the sexual and reproductive health programs. FHI 360’s global dissemination of the curriculum has included nearly 500 print copies and more than 50 flash drives to date.

AIDS Journal Supplement: Family Planning and HIV

FHI 360 has announced the publication of a supplement of the journal *AIDS* dedicated to expanding the evidence base on how the fields of family planning and HIV are interrelated — and how they can be better integrated in policies and programs. Rose Wilcher and Dr. Ward Cates from FHI 360 and Dr. Jared Baeten from the University of Washington guest edited the supplement, which was produced with support from the PTA.

The 2013 supplement offers original research, cutting-edge reviews and thought-provoking opinion pieces on topics ranging from the effects of hormonal contraception on HIV to promising practices in the integration of family planning and HIV. “Stronger linkages between family planning and HIV programs are critical to expanding access to contraception, preventing maternal deaths and achieving an AIDS-free generation,” says Wilcher, who is a technical advisor for research utilization at FHI 360.

According to Dr. Cates, president emeritus and distinguished scientist at FHI 360, the supplement also offers insights into future directions for the field. “We’re pleased that several articles stretch the traditional borders of family planning and HIV into areas that have been underrepresented in the global dialogue, such as maternal mortality, preconception care for women living with HIV and sexual health,” he says. To access the supplement’s table of contents, click [here](#).



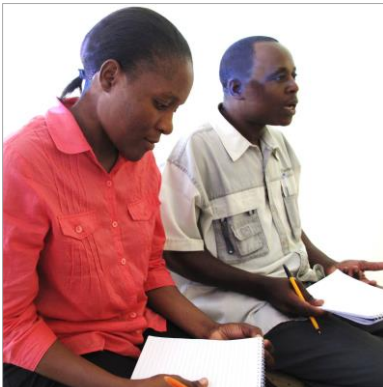
Research Identifies Needs of Adolescents Living with HIV

Little is known about HIV prevention behaviors among adolescents on antiretroviral therapy (ART) in sub-Saharan Africa, but results from a PTA-supported study in Zambia are helping to change that. Interviews with adolescents living with HIV, their families and their health care providers showed that adolescents living with HIV face barriers to adhering to their ART and practicing safe sex, such as fear of stigma and rejection if they disclose their HIV status. A summary of key findings and implications of the study, which was conducted from 2011 to 2013 by FHI 360 in collaboration with three ART clinics in Zambia, are available in a [new research brief](#).

Study Aims to Support Male Engagement in Women's Microbicide Use

Growing evidence suggests that male partners can influence a woman's ability to access and adhere to new women-centered HIV prevention technologies such as vaginal microbicide gels and rings. As these new technologies become available, strategies for engaging men will be an important part of programs to introduce the products into the community.

With PTA support, FHI 360 and the Kenya Medical Research Institute (KEMRI) are conducting formative



Study staff take notes during a training for the male engagement study.

research in Kisumu, Kenya, to identify potentially effective ways to engage men during microbicide introduction. Between May and August 2013, 98 interviews and

two focus group discussions were carried out among men, women, community advisory board members and health care providers, including many who have been directly involved in microbicide clinical trials. The findings are being analyzed now.

“Challenging inequitable gender norms, strengthening communication between partners and promoting equitable relationship dynamics will all be important for effectively engaging men in microbicide introduction programs,” says Michele Lanham, who co-leads FHI 360's male engagement in microbicides project, which includes this study. “We hope that the results of this study will offer a more sophisticated understanding of how best to build on these approaches.”

To complement the formative research, data on male engagement from several past microbicide clinical trials are also being analyzed. By bringing together a team of social scientists from different organizations to do this, the project will be able to synthesize a large amount of data that may not otherwise have been published or used. The data from these analyses, which are expected later this year, will eventually be combined with the findings from the formative research in Kenya to develop evidence-based guidance documents.

“The guidance we develop could be used in future microbicide programs, but it could also be integrated into existing programs that aim to transform gender norms among men,” says Lanham. “Both of these scenarios would benefit women who may want to use microbicides to help prevent HIV in the future.”

Social Media Expands Reach of Interagency Youth Working Group

Since its knowledge management resources were last assessed in 2009, the U.S. Agency for International Development's (USAID's) Interagency Youth Working Group (IYWG) has added several social media resources to its offerings — most notably a blog, a Facebook page, and a Twitter account. A new PTA-supported assessment by FHI 360, which manages the IYWG's technical content, shows that people have responded well to these additions. Since July 2011, the [IYWG blog](#) has been viewed by more than 23,000 users. The [Facebook page](#) has more than 530 “likes,” and the [Twitter account](#) is followed by more than 1,000 individuals and organizations. All of these statistics are steadily rising each month. Surveys and interviews showed that the use of YouthLens is also on the rise and that the IYWG website, Youth InfoNet, and e-forums are popular and valuable resources for a variety of individuals including researchers, staff of nongovernmental organizations, policymakers and youth.

World Contraception Day Celebrated at County Level in Kenya

On September 26, 2013, the Kenya Ministry of Health celebrated the national launch of World Contraception Day at Kenya Methodist University in Meru County. “It’s Your Life, It’s Your Future, Know Your Options” was the theme of the event, where 904 clients received family planning and other reproductive health services such as counseling and testing for HIV and screenings for cervical and breast cancers.

“This was the first time that World Contraception Day was celebrated in a devolved system of governance at the county level in Kenya,” says Jones Abisi of FHI 360, who with PTA support helped provide supportive supervision during family planning service provision at the event. Also with PTA support, FHI 360 contributed to a supplement about World Contraception Day that appeared throughout Kenya in *The Daily Nation* and *The Standard* newspapers.

During the launch, the Governor of Meru County acknowledged this and other support from FHI 360 and partners toward a successful launch. The Governor takes health as one of the top priorities for his county development plan, and he said that he looks forward to fostering closer working relationships and collaborations with partners to ensure that the county improves on all health indicators, including family planning.

Testing Messages for Microbicide Introduction

Once an effective microbicide gel becomes available, what will motivate women to use it?

A team from FHI 360 is exploring this question as it pretests draft messages and materials that could be used to introduce microbicides in Kenya, explains Elizabeth Ryan, associate director for social marketing and communication. “One of our overarching goals is to determine whether our target audiences prefer messages framed by the HIV-prevention benefits or those framed by other perceived benefits of microbicides, such as enhanced sexual pleasure,” Ryan says.

Messages emphasizing these benefits are being pre-tested with members of potential audiences through Communicating Microbicides with Women in Mind — an activity that will develop a prototype communication strategy and materials to support eventual microbicide introduction. This PTA-supported activity is part of a larger U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) initiative to begin preparing for introduction should ongoing studies of microbicides yield positive results.

The first round of pretesting, conducted in Nairobi, Mombasa and Kisumu in September 2013, involved focus group discussions with young single women, young single men, adolescent girls, older women in relationships, married men and sex workers. Participants discussed draft logos, messages, images and posters that had been developed in collaboration with a Kenyan firm, Artful Eyes Productions, based on consultation with stakeholders and formative research conducted by the FHI 360 team.

The findings from the first round of pretesting were used to create posters, a brochure, flip chart illustrations, recorded radio spots and storyboard illustrations of TV advertisements, which are being pretested in

Nairobi and Nakuru in October 2013. The results of this second round of pretesting will guide the development of final drafts of the materials.

FHI 360 researchers will then assess the effects of exposure to the materials on people’s knowledge of and attitudes toward microbicide gels, including whether they are interested in using a microbicide once one is available in Kenya and how intentions to use microbicides might affect condom use.



Women in Kenya vote on which images should be used in microbicide materials.



NEW RESOURCE

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 or write to PTAinfo@fhi360.org.

Positive Connections

Before antiretroviral therapy was developed and expanded, children infected with HIV did not usually live to adolescence. But today, thanks to widespread HIV care and treatment programs, they can lead long, healthy and productive lives. The same is true for those who are infected as adolescents, defined as young people ages 10 to 19.

On behalf of the U.S. Agency for International Development's (USAID's) Interagency Youth Working Group (IYWG), FHI 360 with PTA support developed and recently released [Positive Connections](#) — the first guide of its kind for adult facilitators of information and support groups for adolescents living with HIV. The 194-page guide provides the essential information and support adolescents need as they transition from HIV counseling and testing to HIV care and treatment, and as they transition from childhood to young adulthood.

“What makes this guide special is that it was field-tested and informed by young people in Kenya, Vietnam, Botswana and Guyana who shared what it was like to live with HIV,” says Joy Cunningham, a

youth expert at FHI 360 who helped coordinate the development of the guide. “So the guide fills a niche by providing evidence-based information as well as support geared to this specific age group.”

The guide was developed with the help of experts from many organizations including USAID, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Botswana-Baylor Children's Clinical Centre of Excellence. Cobranded by WHO, it outlines 14 group sessions that adults can conduct among adolescents living with HIV. The sessions can help adolescents understand their diagnosis, participate in managing their care and treatment, identify healthy strategies such as adhering to treatment, and make informed sexual and reproductive health decisions.

Also included in the guide is information that facilitators will need to know about the needs of adolescents living with HIV, a review of counseling and facilitation skills, considerations for starting a new information and support group, and ideas on how the success of a group can be tracked.

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