From Sex Worker to Sex Worker: Enabling sex workers to promote condom use to their peers

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Background

PSI/Mozambique in partnership with Pathfinder, UNFPA and Provincial Health Directorates implements interventions to improve sex worker (SW) capacity to prevent HIV among other SWs since 2007, through a network of sex worker peer educators (PEs). PE's contact street based SWs and their clients on the street, bars, and houses where they work and are responsible for mobilizing and sensitizing SW's about HIV. PEs distribute male and female condoms, educational materials and provide referrals to night clinics providing STI diagnosis, treatment, and CT.

Pathfinder has trained teams of 24 health practitioners who provide STI treatment, HIV counseling and testing (CT), care and treatment for HIV. PSI trains and supports peer education and condom distribution. In 2008, an evaluation was carried out in Maputo to understand the reach and understanding of PE messages and health services.

Methods

In December 2008, we conducted an outcome evaluation of the intervention by recruiting and training five agents to administer short survey among SWs, which based on interviewing SWs in different places in order to understand the awareness and impact of the activities carried out in this group by the PEs. 52 SWs were randomly selected and interviewed in different places or work locations (streets and bars) between 6 pm – 11pm. The interviews used PDAs to facilitate data entry and analysis.

Results

In total 52 SWs were interviewed in Maputo City. The evaluation found that:
- All SWs heard about the project and 92% talked to the project’s PEs – 39% at least 3 times, 28% at least 2 times and 23% at least once in the previous month
- 96% received IEC materials and condoms from the PEs (50% male and female condoms, 30% only male condoms and 10% only female condoms)
- 60% preferred to receive information through PEs and 19% preferred to receive information through health practitioners
- 78% said that the PEs clarified doubts about HIV
- 73% had been referred to health facilities for STI diagnosis and treatment by PEs

Conclusions

- The evaluation shows high acceptability of the project by SWs, considering the percentage of SWs who consider the activities as useful, percentage of SWs who were referred by the PEs, to health services and the percentage of SWs who received and used condoms.
- The success of this project is due to the combination of mobilization, sensitization, IEC and male/female condom provision by PEs with health service provision including CT at night clinics.
- PSI and its partners are expanding these interventions to other provinces using a similar combination of health services, peer education and condom/IEC material distribution in 2009