YOUTH ENGAGEMENT THROUGH MASS MEDIA: Improving knowledge on and generating demand for adolescent reproductive health services

DESCRIPTION:
Ku Saurara!(KS) was created to address the reproductive health needs of young people in northern Nigeria and to increase access to adolescent reproductive health (ARH) services. Using an entertainment-education approach, KS worked with a variety of local partners and youth groups to create radio programs, films and materials that helped advance dialogue for ARH and create a strong link between young people and friendly service providers. KS reached millions of youth through its radio variety shows and drama, home videos, and community mobilization. Radio was the project’s flagship program, written by young people for young people, tackling ‘real life’ issues relevant to youth. The show was also interactive, encouraging listeners to respond to on-air questions and share their thoughts. Later programs used mobile technology and email to engage listeners. Many youth groups voluntarily established community and school-based listeners clubs in response to the KS radio program. The overwhelming response to community rallies and road shows compelled the project to expand into film.

APPROACHES:
• Creation of a youth radio variety program – Ku Saurara! radio was the first of its kind in northern Nigeria. Utilizing drama, vox pop, expert interviews and music, the variety show highlighted key ARH topics. KS produced and aired 179 episodes that were written by young writers and hosted by two popular youth from Kaduna State.

• Development of Home Video Drama – Akwai Mafita (There is a way out!) and Burina (My Dream) were two full length entertainment-education home videos produced and aired by the KS project. With scripts written by KS youth writers and starring Hausa film industry rising stars, the films were extremely popular among young audiences.

• Establishment of Radio Listener Clubs – Community and school-based listeners clubs were established to increase access to the radio program and hard to reach audience members such as young married adolescents. The forum offered opportunities for young people to gather and discuss ARH reproductive health issues in a safe and secure environment. Listener clubs were continually engaged and feedback routinely collected.

• Community Mobilization Events and Participatory Feedback – Community events and road shows featuring tent outreach, school shows and sensitization lectures were used to promote the radio program and video release. More personalized interaction occurred with responses to radio quiz questions through letters response and later texting and call-in. Respondents received recognition and prize incentives for their participation.
**RESULTS:**

Ku Saurara! mass media activities resulted in:

- The production and airing of three separate youth radio variety programs reaching 168 listeners clubs and more than 1.5 million young people, with 97% of listeners reporting an intention to listen again.
- The distribution of 5,000 copies of the home videos and discussion guides through youth servicing organizations, project partners, video clubs and viewing centers.
- The successful completion of 41 community road shows and school-based rallies reaching more than 150,000 young people ages 10 – 24 years in twelve northern states.
- Over 14,000 letters received in response to Kurucya and Rayuwa Kenan radio program; and over 600 text and phone responses from the radio drama Kwar Amarya.

Project KS Impact evaluations found:

- Among those exposed to the radio program, 95% agreed with the key messages, attributing to a 7% increase in awareness about modern family planning methods (2003).
- Youth who attended any of the KS community rallies were three times as likely as those who did not attend to have favorable attitudes towards using a family planning method (2003).
- Campaign exposure was associated with increased knowledge about family planning and HIV prevention, increased approval of family planning, increased perceived self-efficacy to use modern family planning, and increased use of modern methods. More than 70% of respondents found key program activities both entertaining and informative (2005).
- An increase in couple communication about family planning by 33% and an increase in belief in one’s ability to use contraceptives by 20% (2008).

**LESSONS LEARNED**

**Feature youth as the program’s driving force.** In order to gain a better youth perspective, young people were a part of the creation and production of the Ku Saurara! radio variety show from the beginning. Youth writers were selected from a competitive process and trained in scriptwriting. Audiences and community members recognized the program as a means of empowering youth to better understand their reproductive health rights.

Community mobilization activities are more effective when perceived as being locally generated. With the community rallies, Ku Saurara! aimed to promote awareness of ARH issues in the community. Despite its popularity, some traditional leaders viewed the rallies as externally driven rather than community generated. As a result, in later phases the project adapted to use personalized mediums such as home videos.

**Home video is a useful medium to reach young women in gender sensitive environments.** Young women in northern Nigeria have limited opportunities to attend public film viewings and community events. Ku Saurara! supported wide distribution of videos and smaller viewing events in women’s centers and schools to increase reach.

**MATERIALS DEVELOPED:**

- Akwai Mafita! (There is a Way Out!) and Burina (My Dream) home videos and discussion guides
- Kurucya (Adolescent) 130 – Episode Radio Variety Program
- Rayuwa Kenan (Such is Life) 39 – Episode Radio Variety Program and discussion guides
- Kwar Amarya (Bride’s Friend) 13 – Episode Radio Drama and discussion guide