

Chakruok Interactive Radio Program

Brief Overview

Married adolescent girls have relatively poorer health and use fewer health services than their unmarried peers in developing countries. Improving their access to critical services, including those related to reproductive health and HIV, is still a challenge. Studies from around the world indicate that married girls are often isolated and have limited access to information in general. There is often a generational gap between married girls and their partners, making contraceptive use negotiation and the uptake of other reproductive health services difficult. Yet, married girls often have sex more frequently than their unmarried peers, given the constant availability of their marriage partners.



In order to address these issues, Population Council, through the USAID-funded APHIA II Operations Research (OR) Project, in collaboration with Well Told Story and the Kenyan Ministry of Public Health and Sanitation, designed and implemented a community health project that included a radio program with an interactive mHealth component. The goal was to expand access to reproductive health and family planning (RH/FP), as well as HIV information and services for married adolescent girls in order to improve their reproductive health outcomes.

The project was implemented in Homa Bay and Rachuonyo Districts of Nyanza Province, Kenya, between 2009 and 2011.

■ Geographic Coverage:

Nyanza Province, Kenya

■ Implementation Partners:

Population Council through the APHIA II Operations Research Project, in partnership with Well Told Story and the Kenyan Ministry of Public Health and Sanitation

■ Funder:

USAID

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About *Chakruok*

Well Told Story, in collaboration with the APHIA II OR project, developed a radio soap opera series revolving around the life of a married adolescent girl, consisting of 20-minute episodes. The soap opera aired twice a week in the evenings, along with a weekly discussion segment exploring key educative topics. Entitled *Chakruok* (meaning 'Beginnings' in Dholuo), the soap opera was aired on three FM stations in Nyanza province over an eight-month period.

Text messaging and call-ins were incorporated into the radio drama to encourage listener participation and communication about the RH/FP and HIV issues raised in the episode concerned. During the weekly discussion segment of the radio show, some listeners who sent in text messages or letters were telephoned for interviews, and a pre-recorded interview with an expert in that week's topic was played. A Facebook page was also set up for listeners to explore the issues raised in the show in more detail. Several times a week, different questions were posted on the Facebook page to encourage discussion and debate.

Leaflets referencing the radio soap opera were developed (in Dholuo language) to accompany the key topics explored within *Chakruok* and to link readers to the radio program. Each leaflet tackled a separate topic. Leaflets were distributed to married adolescent girls by community health workers (CHW) during periodic home-visits, and were also mailed free, twice monthly, to *Chakruok* listeners who requested copies, sending in their names and addresses via text message.

Evaluation and Results

In the course of the radio programming, 3,407 questions and comments were texted to the *Charuok* radio program, and the *Chakruok* Facebook page had garnered 406 Facebook fans. By the end of project survey, study results revealed that 66 percent of married adolescent girls interviewed had either listened to *Chakruok*, or been visited by a CHW in the past one year. There was an increase in demand and utilization of family planning methods among married adolescents. Additionally, support from partners of the married adolescent girls increased.

Based on evaluation surveys, researchers noted that there was a significant change in the following indicators by the end of the project:

- Increased uptake of family planning methods (including long-acting methods) among married adolescent girls;
- Increased support among partners for married adolescent girls' access to reproductive health services;
- Increased attendance at the four recommended antenatal care visits among married adolescent girls exposed to the intervention;
- Decreased use of unskilled birth attendants during the last pregnancy among married adolescent girls;
- Increased use of postnatal care services within 48 hours of delivery among married adolescent girls; and
- Decreased likelihood of worrying about being HIV-positive among married adolescent girls and partners, and increased uptake of HIV-testing among never pregnant married adolescent girls.

Lessons Learned

Radio campaigns built in synergy with multiple media channels can successfully be used to target hard-to-reach groups, such as married adolescent girls. When SMS information is reinforced through other channels of communication such as radio and IEC materials, they are more effective.

Conclusion

The combined use of this mHealth application with community health worker visitation, health information provision, and referrals, is an effective means of reinforcing RH/FP and HIV messages, and of increasing access to RH/FP and HIV information and services among married girls in rural settings.

Information was excerpted from:

Chi-Chi Undie, Harriet Birungi, Francis Obare, Ben Ochieng, Wilson Liambila, Erick Oweya, Ian Askew, Rob Burnet, Bridget Deacon, Aisha Mohamed. 2012. Expanding access to comprehensive Reproductive Health and HIV information and services for married adolescent girls in Nyanza Province. APHIA II OR Project in Kenya. Population Council: Nairobi, Kenya.