

Workplace-based SMS Awareness Campaign

Brief Overview

More than 120,000 people are estimated to be receiving antiretroviral therapy in Uganda, and HIV/AIDS prevalence is estimated at nearly six percent. Despite tremendous success in treating the epidemic, HIV transmission continues unabated. Through a pilot partnership, Text to Change (TTC) collaborated with Health Initiatives for the Private Sector Project (HIPS) to provide key prevention messages and education on HIV/AIDS to employees and community networks at three neighboring companies in Masindi, Uganda: Kakira Sugar Works, Kinyara Sugar Works, and Kasese Cobalt Company Limited.



Participants opted-in to the program by sending a SMS to a four digit number and began receiving daily texts, which were primarily interactive questions. The questions were designed to spark conversation and thought on both conventional and controversial topics, and included basic information such as age and gender.

The pilot project ran from June to August 2009. Due to its popularity and success, HIPS and Text to Change planned to expand the joint program to employees and neighboring communities of eight of the companies HIPS partners with in Uganda. Companies that are participating in the follow-up program include: Kinyara Sugar Works, Kasese Cobalt Company Limited (KCCL), Eskom (one of Uganda's largest energy companies), and Kakira Sugar Works Limited.

■ Geographic Coverage:

Four private sector companies in Uganda

■ Implementation Partners:

Health Initiatives for the Private Sector project (HIPS-USAID) partnered with Text to Change (TTC)

■ Funder:

USAID

■ For More Information Contact:

HIPS

- **Dr. Dithan Kiragga, Chief of Party;**
Tel: +256-772-444194
- **Linillian Nakato, Communications Advisor;**
Windsor Crescent, Off Acasia Avenue,
Kololo, Kampala, Uganda;
Tel: +256-414-347590

TTC

- **Veronica Yow, Program Manager, Uganda;**
Katali Rise, Plot nr. 4a Naguru, P.O. Box 40187,
Nakawa, Kampala, Uganda;
Tel: +256-754-157659; email: vyow@texttochange.com

Workplace-based SMS Awareness Campaign

About Workplace-based SMS Awareness Campaign

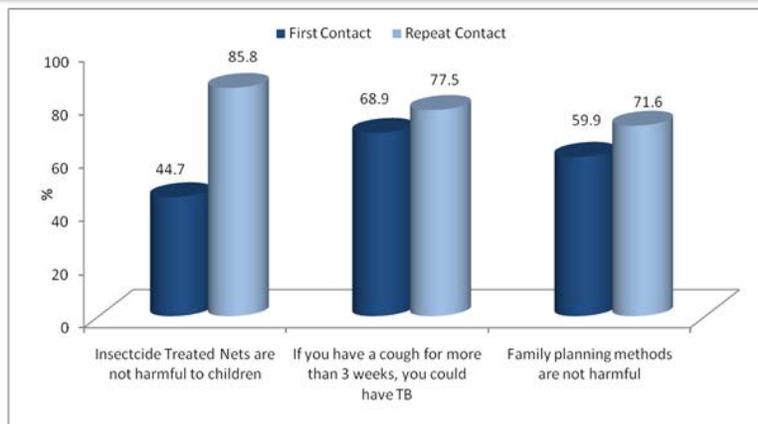
SMS messages on various selected health issues that include family planning as well as HIV counseling and testing are sent to company employees, their families and members of the neighboring communities. The aim of the program is to provide people with accurate health information, encourage people to change their attitudes and behavior, and promote the adoption of healthy practices into people's daily lives. As part of the efforts to motivate employees to join the program and use available health services, simple gifts that included airtime, phones, and t-shirts are given out to participants. These are lucky winners who participated in a quiz, answered questions correctly, or took up services for the first time.

In addition to providing information, text responses have generated baseline data on knowledge, attitudes, and practices (KAP) concerning safe sex, medical male circumcision (MMC), family planning, and HIV/AIDS transmission from 1,380 respondents in the three partner companies during the pilot period.

Evaluation and Results

In order to understand the impact of the program on knowledge levels, TTC conducted a quiz via text message with 3,099 participants in the program. In 2010, a total of 35 health related questions were sent to the group. TCC identified three questions which participants had difficulty answering correctly and resent them to the same cohort one year later in 2011.

Participants replied free of charge to the toll free shortcode with their true or false answer. If the participant replied incorrectly, he or she would receive a new message with the right answer and some additional information. For all three questions there was a significant increase in knowledge levels. On the malaria related question, there was a 41 percent increase in the number of correct responses, while on the TB and family planning questions, correct responses increased by nearly ten percent and 12 percent, respectively.



Lessons Learned

- Include local radio to promote the SMS campaign. This was not included in the pilot budget, but the combination of radio and SMS has proven to be very effective.
- Encourage involvement from the company. Although each company had a platform at hand and was encouraged to use this platform for company related messages, the platforms were not used for this.
- Organize brief interactive meetings between peer educators and participants to evaluate the SMS quiz and participation among workers.
- Due to knowledge gaps, some of the topics might require more attention in future awareness campaigns.
- The human resource manager at Eskom has indicated that some questions were too easy for the participants at Eskom. However, results do not show that participants at ESKOM have more correct answers on all topics, so this may be something interesting to feedback to the company.

Conclusion

The HIPS and TTC SMS program has shown many interesting results and promise for health interventions. In addition to HIV/AIDS and family planning, workplace-based text messaging can be used to encourage healthy behaviors and treatment-seeking for malaria, tuberculosis, childhood illnesses, and others. Early experiences from the initiative indicate the vast potential to expand health text messaging in the workplace and elsewhere.