

Asking Questions for IMPACT

PATH was the IMPACT project partner responsible for behavior change communication (BCC) activities in Kenya. IMPACT was a global USAID HIV and AIDS project managed by FHI. From 1999-2006, PATH implemented an interactive communication strategy and provided technical assistance and capacity building to project partners. BCC interventions included peer facilitation, a weekly radio program, Magnet Theatre, and a youth-oriented comic book series. The objective of PATH's BCC activities was to reduce the risk of HIV transmission by encouraging community dialogue. PATH was responsible for coordinating BCC efforts among IMPACT partners, linking BCC activities to ensure consistent messages, and creating innovative approaches to engage target audience members. Throughout IMPACT, PATH's behavior change communication activities encouraged community discussion and reflection around HIV and AIDS issues.



Photo: PATH, Mike Wang

In 1999 and early 2000, PATH conducted formative assessments and facilitated creative workshops in IMPACT priority communities in collaboration with implementing partners and key stakeholders. PATH used the findings from these activities to develop the IMPACT communication strategy, entitled Question Your Relationships. This strategy, which guided all of PATH's BCC interventions throughout the IMPACT project, encouraged community dialogue and personal reflection.

Key results from PATH's BCC activities under the IMPACT project include:

- 6,500 peer coordinators and peer facilitators trained at over 60 HIV and AIDS peer facilitation workshops
- Over 8,000 Peer Facilitation Discussion Guides disseminated
- 3,408 Magnet Theatre performances reached over 649,940 youth
- 430 theatre troupes trained in Magnet Theatre skills
- 277 Kati Yetu radio episodes aired nationwide and over 11,000 program cassettes were distributed
- 2,100 letters from Kati Yetu listeners received
- 385,000 Nuru comic books distributed to young people
- 93,140 students reached through the youth murals project
- Girl Guides HIV badge and peer education program created
- TB communication strategy and materials developed for MOH

Interventions for community-wide change

PATH operationalized the Question Your Relationships strategy by providing behavior change communication technical assistance to IMPACT implementing partners through strategic planning, capacity building, and materials development. The three key IMPACT behavior change communication interventions – peer facilitation, Magnet Theatre, and radio programming – ensured that community members had information sources that could be accessed by the entire family. These interventions were targeted to meet community member needs at different stages in the behavior change process.

PATH improves the health of people around the world by advancing technologies, strengthening systems, and encouraging healthy behaviors.

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Peer facilitation

PATH trained IMPACT implementing partners' peer coordinators and facilitators in facilitation skills and HIV and AIDS content. IMPACT peer facilitation programs targeted low-income women, men and women at worksites and commercial sex workers. To ensure high-quality peer facilitation programs, PATH developed Splash!, an intense training approach that focused on increasing peer facilitator knowledge while improving facilitation skills. Splash! utilized detailed discussion guides that provided facilitators step-by-step guidance for leading discussions, asking provocative questions, and nurturing community discussions, as well as technical content. As part of Splash!, PATH used an innovative approach to train peer coordinators and peer facilitators, which allowed large numbers of participants (over 100) to be trained in a single workshop. In addition, PATH used specific selection criteria along with a spreadsheet modeling process to identify training participants.

Magnet Theatre

Theatre was a key component of IMPACT's BCC activities for youth. PATH's Magnet Theatre intervention was designed to not only entertain and educate, but to involve audience members in the action and encourage the kind of participation and reflection that is key to sustained behavior change. Magnet Theatre is a form of community theatre that typically takes place in outdoor, public spaces. The hour-long performances explore issues affecting a community and encourage discussion and problem solving with audience members. The actors perform a drama that presents a dilemma based on community problems. The audience participates by offering suggestions to the characters or by taking the place of an actor and acting out solutions to the dilemma. Magnet Theatre encourages audience members to discuss solutions and allows them to act them out in a safe environment, to encourage individual and community-wide change. Magnet Theatre is different from other forms of community theatre because it targets and attracts a specific and repeat audience, takes place at a regular time at a specific venue, and serves as a forum for magnification of behavior change. Magnet Theatre produced some of IMPACT's most visible examples of behavior change.

Kati Yetu radio program

Through IMPACT, PATH produced the weekly half-hour radio program Kati Yetu. The program ran for five years, during which time 277 episodes were aired. It was broadcast on KBC's national Kiswahili station, Citizen FM, and Baraka FM. Before the program began, the theme song asked the audience, "Ni nini kati yetu?" ("What is there between us?"). Kati Yetu, which means "between us" in Kiswahili, mirrors the IMPACT communication strategy, Question Your Relationships. "Ask yourself, question yourself," the song continues. The radio program explored relationships and health, and provided a forum for community members to discuss issues, ask questions, share experiences, and emerge as role models when they decide to make positive choices to improve their relationships or health. The program consisted of two interwoven segments: a 15-minute soap opera that chronicled the lives of a teenage girl named Nuru and her friends and family as they moved towards a deeper understanding of how the quality of their relationships affected their health and happiness, and a dynamic moderated magazine segment with interviews, panel discussions, health news, question and answer sessions, and interviews with listeners who changed their behavior.

Nuru comic book series

PATH developed a youth-oriented comic book series in Kiswahili and English entitled Nuru. The series promoted abstinence and explored many issues and decisions young people face. Nuru brought many of the same characters from Kati Yetu to the page. The series was designed to foster positive attitudes and perspectives to encourage sexual behavior choices that can save their lives. All six issues have a page-turning plot, colorful graphics, youthful language, and characters who face life-altering decisions.

Bingwa's story

Bingwa, a young man from Mumias, owned a kiosk near the site where an IMPACT-supported Magnet Theatre troupe performed. One day, after attending several outreaches, he went to the troupe facilitator to ask some questions about STIs. The following week, he came back with more questions about the difference between HIV and AIDS as well as VCT. He accepted the facilitator's offer to accompany him for testing. After testing negative, he decided to change his high-risk behavior. He agreed to share his story in front of the Magnet Theatre audience in Mumias, which encouraged 17 youth to go for VCT on the spot. He later appeared on the Kati Yetu radio program, which he thinks led to at least 100 more people in his community alone going for VCT. Bingwa's story exemplifies the effect PATH's interventions had in the communities where it was working.