

CASE STUDY - ZIMBABWE

In Zimbabwe, over 20,000 women demanded access to female condoms. In response to this need, the CARE female condom was launched through the efforts of Population Services International (PSI) and partners in 1997. Many women in Zimbabwe visit hair salons on a regular basis. PSI/Zimbabwe trained hairdressers in over 230 hair salons, primarily in low-income areas in Harare and Mutare, to serve as retail outlets for female condoms. The Care hair salon initiative has contributed to increased knowledge and sales of the female condom in Zimbabwe, which has seen an 85% increase in female condom use in the last five years. In 2005 alone, PSI/Zimbabwe sold more than 900,000 Care female condoms, 40% of these through hair salons.

PSI/Zimbabwe's CARE Hair Salon Initiative

The FC was first introduced in Zimbabwe 1996, after petition with 20,000 signatures was presented to the Deputy Speaker of Parliament demanding access to the FC within the country. Responding to this expressed demand for female condoms, PSI (Population Services International) and its partners, Zimbabwe National Family Planning Council (ZNFPC) the National AIDS Control Programme (NACP) and Johnson & Johnson, collaborated in launching the Care Female Condom in May 1997.

Care was introduced in Zimbabwe through an intensive mass media campaign and distributed using traditional social marketing outlets – clinics, pharmacies and shops. Initial sales were not as high as expected and PSI/Zimbabwe recognized that a new marketing strategy was needed to familiarize women with the method and increase comfort around use, including insertion or discussion of FCs with partners.

PSI/Zimbabwe chose hair salons as part of an innovative strategy for increasing awareness and distribution of the FC. Many women in Zimbabwe visit hair salons on a regular basis, often as much as once a week, and often develop personal relationships with their hairdressers. Salons offer a unique setting for informing women about the FC. The predominately female environment presents an opportunity for women to touch and feel the product, discuss issues around the FC and see product demonstrations in a comfortable and familiar setting.

PSI/Zimbabwe trained hairdressers in over 230 hair salons, primarily in low-income areas in Harare and Mutare. Hairdressers who agreed to participate in the program were trained in (1) an overview of HIV/AIDS (transmission, HIV/AIDS in Sub-Saharan Africa), (2) STIs (transmission, signs and symptoms), (3) male condoms, (4) Care FC information (including demonstration of use and recommendations for disposal), (5)

partner negotiation of safe sex, and (6) strategies to initiate conversations about Care with customers. Participating hair dressers were asked to initiate a conversation about Care with every client and were trained to evaluate customers' reaction and determine their comfort in discussing Care.

Hair salons also serve as retail outlets for Care, increasing distribution channels and allowing women to purchase Care in a comfortable environment. To provide on-going support to the hairdressers, trained Care promoters visit participating hair salons every other week to answer questions about Care or arrange for re-supply of Care from local sales agents. In a recent study conducted among 400 women who visited participating hair salons, 95% were aware of the Care female condom and 85% reported feeling comfortable purchasing Care in their hair salon.

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