

UNFPA SUPPORTS REMORK-MOTOS TO DELIVER MOBILE FAMILY PLANNING MESSAGES AND SERVICES: PROMOTING LONG-TERM CONTRACEPTIVE USE IN RURAL COMMUNITIES

On a hot day in April, villagers came out of their houses and rose from their hammocks as they heard the lively music and key messages on sexual and reproductive health, specifically family planning and long-term contraceptive methods coming from a speaker on top of Mr. Vanthorn's remork-moto. He slowly navigated the dusty rural roads, reaching rural communities with messages blasting from the loud speaker and information posters that hang from three sides of his vehicle.

Everyday Mr. Sok Vanthorn drives his remork-moto, a 2-wheeled carriage attached to a motorbike, around the rural villages of Bati Operational District (OD) in Takeo Province. This local mode of transport is mostly used in urban centers in Cambodia, but in Bati OD it is used for a different purpose: for outreach to village communities in rural and remote areas.

Mr. Vanthorn and his remork-moto are a critical component for outreach in this mobile campaign in four ODs of Takeo Province, managed by the Reproductive Health Association of Cambodia (RHAC) under the financial and technical support of UNFPA. On the ground the project involves other key actors including community based distribution volunteers and team leaders that conduct community education sessions and disseminate information and contraceptives, including short term methods and vouchers for long-term methods.

Most of the people who attend the education sessions are women who have heard about them from the remork-moto and the community volunteers. They are drawn to the community meetings to hear more about contraceptive methods and the vouchers that can be obtained for free IUD services. Mr. Vanthorn said "I enjoy my job and the initiative is good. I am able to pass information [on sexual and reproductive health] onto people in the village and I learn a lot from the community based volunteers."



A remork-moto drives through a village broadcasting family planning messages.
Photo: UNFPA Cambodia

OVERVIEW AND HIGHLIGHTS:

- The mobile campaign provides information to communities, in particular women to make informed choices and about their reproductive health and contraceptive use.
- Community education sessions are held 44 to 46 times a month in the numerous villages of each OD.
- Community based distribution (CBD) volunteers answer any questions and provide commonly used contraceptives such as the oral contraceptive pill and condoms.
- Women are able to obtain a voucher for free intrauterine device (IUD) services, which they can acquire at a health center in the OD.
- Many women express interest in the IUD because of the low financial cost, the absence of hormones, fewer side effects, and the fact that it is long-acting and convenient to use especially for child spacing and limiting.
- Normally, IUD services at private clinics in provincial towns and Phnom Penh cost around \$25 to \$30, but with this community based initiative IUD services at local health centers are free with a voucher (RHAC, 2014).

A woman at a community education session declared her content with using an IUD stating, "I have been using an IUD for three years and I am very happy with it. It is convenient and is a long-term method for family planning."

Mr. Tun, who has been working as a community based distribution volunteer for 10 years commented that the RHAC programme "is good because before many people in the villages did not have much knowledge about contraception and they were very concerned about side effects or were not interested in it." He said that with the combination of the remark- moto and the village education sessions, messages about family planning and contraception are disseminated.

The information that volunteers provide is reinforced by the messages projected by the remark-motos, RHAC, and health center staff. Mr. Tun observed that more and more people are coming to the education sessions, which they hear about from the remark-moto and through word of mouth. While Mr. Tun remarked that many women still approach him because they want short-term methods of contraception, especially the pill, they are interested in attending the education sessions where they learn about long-term methods.

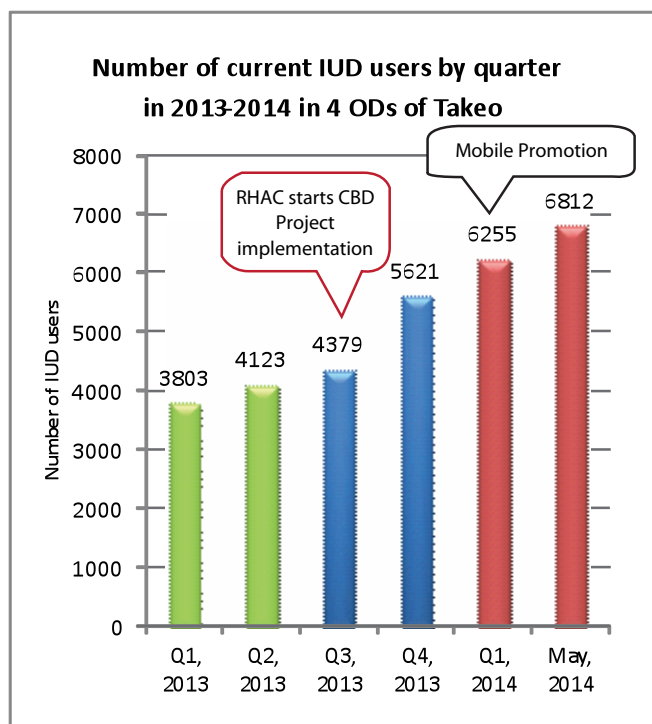
Women in these villages are now able to receive accurate information and services closer to their homes for no fee. Critically, they feel more confident about using long-term methods such as the IUD, which traditionally in Cambodia are thought to cause negative side-effects. This programme disseminates correct information, counteracts negative perceptions about IUDs, and responds to women's needs to space or limit their pregnancies.



Women at a community education session learn about contraceptive methods, including long term contraceptives. Photo: UNFPA Cambodia

PROGRESS SO FAR

Impressive advancements have been made by the RHAC project, where the number of current IUD users increased from 4,123 in the second quarter of 2013 to 6,255 users in the first quarter of 2014 when the mobile promotion project started (RHAC, 2014).



Source: HIS/MoH, RHAC, 2014

National progress has been steady and the prevalence of modern contraceptive use amongst married women in Cambodia increased from 19 percent in 2000 to 35 percent in 2010. The total fertility rate declined from 4 children per woman to 3 children per woman during the same period (CDHS, 2010). However, the current unmet need for family planning stands at 17 percent (CDHS, 2010) indicating that programmes must continue to reach women with less education, who live in rural areas and are far from public health facilities, have difficulty accessing family planning services due to financial barriers, and fear the possible side effects of contraceptives.

Reaching women in rural communities with reproductive health information and family planning commodities is essential. Through innovative projects such as this, UNFPA is working to ensure that women have the information to make informed choices about their reproductive health and rights. Having knowledge is empowering and helps to reduce the number of unwanted pregnancies and unsafe abortions and to ensure that every pregnancy is wanted, every birth is safe, and every young person's potential is fulfilled.



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