

Reframing the conversation and removing barriers: what makes a promotional campaign on contraception a success with urban youth?

IN BRIEF

Sierra Leone has a young population, with nearly a quarter of the population aged between 10 and 19, and a high adolescent birth rate.

Over the last two years, MSI Sierra Leone (MSSL) has coordinated a series of successful campaigns to promote contraceptive use by youth in their static urban clinics.

The results show a big rise in contraceptive uptake at clinics among the adolescent age group during promotional campaigns. Due to this approach in clinics, combined with MSSL's strong adolescent focus in their outreach channel, Sierra Leone was the highest performing country for reaching adolescents in the global MSI partnership in 2017 (see Figure 2). So could this approach help other countries target adolescent girls more effectively?

THE CHALLENGE

Reaching those in most need

Teenage pregnancy rates in Sierra Leone are high – and soared during and after the Ebola outbreak of 2014-15. MSSL is well-established as a leading contraceptive provider, with nine clinics, 10 mobile outreach teams and around 100 community based mobilizers across the country.

While the clinics usually charge fees for services, prices are kept as affordable as possible and women who can't pay the full price are not turned away. Nevertheless, we know that many adolescents do not have access to disposable income and that fees, however small, can be a deterrent.

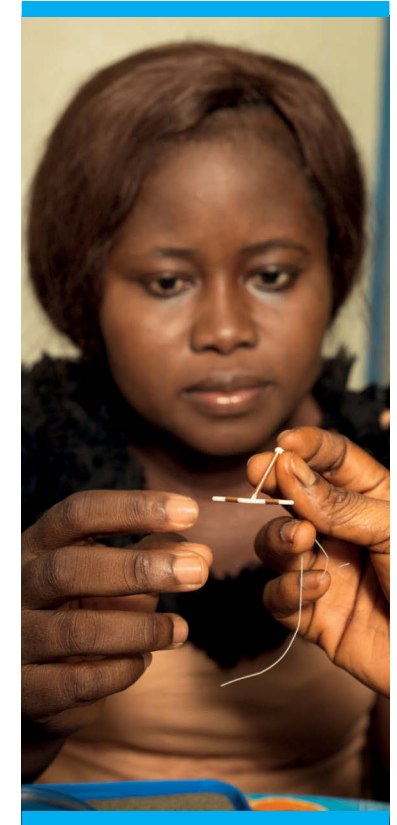
WHAT WE DID

Tailoring messages to different groups

In response to the rise in teenage pregnancies after the Ebola outbreak, MSSL developed a youth strategy that segmented adolescents into different user profiles – helping to tailor messaging according to their distinct needs.

One of the key target segments was the “Education Queen”: girls who attend and aspire to finish school. This group has responded best to the promotional campaigns in urban clinics, as the campaigns frame contraception as a means to delay first pregnancy and stay in school.

Promotional months include free contraception services for all clients on the back of significant marketing and demand generation activities, including radio discussions, social media blasts, news conferences, talks held in slum communities, health talks in schools and colleges, interpersonal sensitization by their community based mobilizers, and working with youth, community- and faith-based organizations.



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WHAT WE FOUND

The benefits of a tailored campaign

Tracking our client numbers through MSI’s electronic information system (CLIC) we found that while promotion months increased access to family planning for all age clients, they had the most impact on adolescent clients.

Between June 2016 and June 2018, MSSL ran a total of six month-long promotion campaigns. Analyzing the trends at each clinic using interrupted time series modeling, we saw that adults attended at a 40% higher rate during promotion months compared to their rate of attendance during non-promotion months on average, but adolescents attended at almost double their normal rate.

This translated into a significantly higher proportion of adolescents during promotion months compared to non-promotion months (see Figure 1). Over 90% of adolescents attending during promotion months were students.

Proportionately more adolescent clients at clinics were recommended to attend by an MSI community-based mobilizer (community health promoter) or clinic staff member (at, for example, a school talk) during promotion months, highlighting the importance of interpersonal engagement.

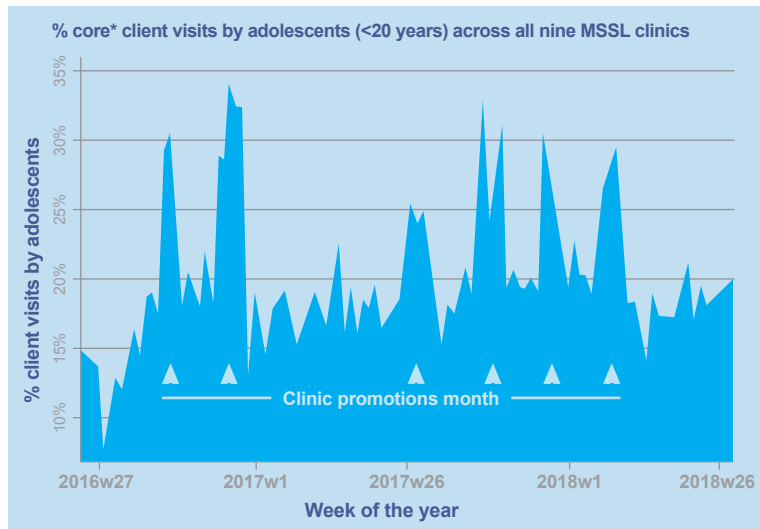


Figure 1. Percentage of core* client visits by adolescents (<20 years) across all nine MSSL clinics. Data source: MSI Client Information Centre (CLIC) electronic data system

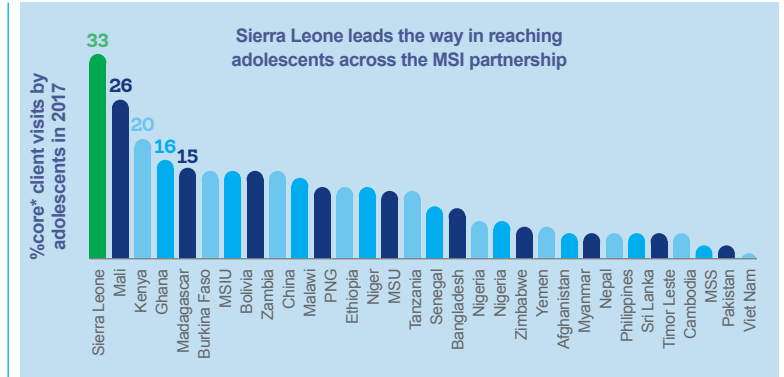


Figure 2. Sierra Leone leads the way in reaching adolescents across the MSI partnership in 2017. Data Source: MSI financial data system

WHAT THIS MEANS

The impact of free provision and tailored messaging

The results show that the combination of free contraceptive provision and adolescent-tailored demand generation is an effective way to reach adolescents. Messaging that resonated with the aspirations of a particular adolescent segment, in this case messaging around using contraception to stay in school and achieve academic potential targeting the values of the urban ‘Education Queens’, was particularly effective.

The involvement of MSSL’s clinic staff in demand generation and the ongoing strong partnerships of their community-based mobilizers with local communities, schools, colleges and youth, community- and faith-based organizations were also key factors in the success of the campaigns.

*Core client visits includes visits for family planning counseling and provision and post-abortion care

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