

Planned Parenthood Association of South Africa

BACKGROUND

The Planned Parenthood Association of South Africa (PPASA) started working with men as partners in 1998 around parenting issues, sexual health and the eradication of the HIV/AIDS pandemic.⁶ This programme was initiated after a survey by PPASA on men's feelings regarding domestic violence and on their use of sexual health services in clinics, which found that men were not accessing these services because of negative stereotypes associated with doing so.⁷ The underlying assumption that informs their work is that sexual health is a reflection not only of the absence of disease but of the quality of relations and relationships. PPASA works with men in Khayelitsha and Langa in Cape Town and on the East and West Rand of Johannesburg, South Africa.

OBJECTIVES

- Reduce gender-based violence;
- Reduce the spread of HIV/ AIDS;
- Increase men's involvement in treatment, care and support.

BENEFICIARIES

PPASA targets men who spend most of their time in townships (GETNET Men and Masculinities Conference Report, 2003:12). The organisation also targets prison officials, hospital workers, and men in trade unions as well as men in positions of power.

KEY FOCUS AREAS

PPASA is involved in sex education in order to debunk myths surrounding sex and HIV/AIDS. The organisation encourages voluntary HIV/AIDS testing. They inform the public that knowing your status helps you to live healthily and positively even if you are HIV-positive, and it helps you to remain loyal to your partner if you are HIV-negative.

The organisation notes from its experience of working with men that societal expectations of men are different to that of women and these expectations encourage behaviour that places them at risk of contracting the virus and of passing it on.



These differing expectations are reflected in the language used to talk about men and women who have multiple partners. A man with many women partners is described positively, whereas a woman with multiple partners on the other hand is referred to in a derogatory fashion.



TRAINING

PPASA runs workshops for men and women (12 men & 12 women) to discuss sexuality. These workshops give men the opportunity to listen to women and to ask difficult questions. PPASA also started a peer educator programme for groups of 15 men at a time. Once trained, these men educate other men in their communities. PPASA also conducts education with people in the streets such as truck drivers at depots or men at taxi ranks. PPASA further runs programmes for pre-initiates to help young men to debunk myths around sexuality and to discourage heavy drinking. All these programmes are reinforced through activities around special events such as condom week, health week or World Aids Day. The PPASA office in Khayelitsha offers a counseling service.

PPASA educators seek to debunk myths and stereotypes to encourage men to not see women as sex objects, and they encourage them to talk about other forms of intimacy as well as cultural taboos such as masturbation and the fear of being regarded as 'bafazini'.⁸ PPASA has formed ties with the traditional surgeons' organisation Izwi Lwabanthu in Khayelitsha. PPASA hopes to train these men to help prevent the transmission of HIV through circumcision ceremonies. Talking about how to negotiate condom use is seen as an important aspect of peer education. Men often admit that they have difficulty in asking women how to use condoms.

SUMMARY

The focus on the intersection between the spread of the HIV/AIDS epidemic and sexual violence is seen as key to slowing the spread of the epidemic in the community.

By locating itself as a service provider within the community, PPASA avoids being stigmatised as an 'external agency'. This location also allows it to tailor interventions to be specific to the cultural and practical realities of the community, which it serves. It enables it to reach segments of the community such as taxi drivers that would otherwise be difficult to reach.