

Family Planning

The Integrated Health Project in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC-IHP)

has been working since 2010 to improve the health of the Congolese people in 78 health zones in four provinces. Funded by USAID and led by Management Sciences for Health, with partners International Rescue Committee and Overseas Strategic Consulting, Ltd. (OSC), the project focuses on maternal, newborn, and child health; family planning; nutrition, malaria, and tuberculosis; HIV and AIDS; and water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH)—applying many proven, low-cost, high-impact innovations on a large scale.

DRC-IHP stresses low-cost, high-impact innovations that can be used by providers at all levels of the health system. This project has improved health services for more than 12 million people—17 percent of the Congolese population. Data modeling shows that DRC-IHP interventions saved the lives of more than 150,000 children over just three years.

Now replaced by DRC-IHPplus, the project has recently been expanded to 83 health zones through June 2016, with partners OSC and Pathfinder/Evidence to Action (E2A).

Integrated Health Project in the Democratic Republic of Congo



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE



in **78** health zones:

2.7 million
ADULTS ENABLED TO ADOPT
MODERN FAMILY PLANNING

3,000+
HEALTH WORKERS TRAINED

680
COMMUNITY CARE SITES
OFFERING FP

2,230
IHP-SUPPORTED DELIVERY
POINTS OFFERING FP

149,000
UNWANTED PREGNANCIES AVERTED
THROUGH VOLUNTARY FP

“If families were better planned here, we’d be at a different place in development... We need **information** about family planning choices in the media; we need **education** in the schools; we need everybody talking about it and knowing about it—young women, old men, everyone. That’s where innovations like Champion Communities and Champion Men come in—they’re finally getting this information out to the people, in a friendly, down-to-earth way. Men convince each other that this is a good idea.”

—Colette Losso

Senior Technical Advisor,
Family Planning and Reproductive Health

DRC-IHP

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Challenge: Only 8% of married women use modern contraception. Yet nearly one in four women desire no further children, and close to half would like to wait two or more years before their next child, according to the DRC DHS, 2013-14. Lack of birth spacing increases the risk of both maternal and child mortality. Misconceptions about modern methods and male control over decision-making can make acceptance of contraception difficult.

DRC-IHP response: Emphasizing its role in reducing maternal mortality, in 2014 the government of the DRC officially approved the National Strategic Plan for Family Planning 2014–2020. DRC-IHP is working in more than 2100 health centers and community care sites throughout 78 health zones to train health workers at all levels in contraceptive technology and family planning counseling. DRC-IHP was one of the first to introduce implants—long-lasting, reversible contraception. But planning a family is more than a technical issue; women are reluctant to use a method without consulting their husbands—and men often say “No.” Thus, the concept of Champion Men.

Champion Communities

DRC-IHP also uses the Champion Community approach, training a group of health workers and local volunteers in leadership and management to forward the health of the community. Champion Communities choose a health challenge, develop an action plan, and make a difference.

For example, in Kole Health Zone, the Champion Community organized FP awareness sessions for more than 1,000 women and arranged for local leaders to provide info at churches, markets, and other public places. Within three months, more than 600 women began using modern contraception. ■

Champion Men

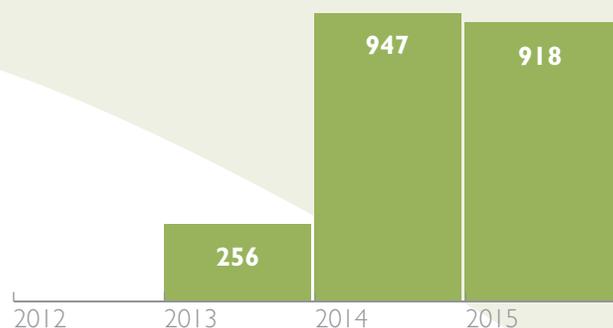
To overcome male resistance, you get men to talk to men. DRC-IHP developed this realization into “Champion Men”—with training, an induction ceremony and certificates. Champion Men talk up the subject at public meetings, in churches—and in bars and other places where men gather.

Today over 1,000 Champion Men are educating other men about family planning in five health zones.



Photo by Warren Zelman

Today **over 1000**
Champion Men are educating
other men about family planning
in five health zones



Number of Champion Men

Note 2015 data is through September only.