Family planning services in developing countries often focus solely on women, neglecting the role of men in the family and proving ineffective in countries where women can't make decisions regarding their own health. In the rural Kamiji health zone of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), however, the USAID-funded Democratic Republic of Congo-Integrated Health Project (DRC-IHP), led by MSH, has begun an effort to increase the number of people using family planning that engages men as well as women.

Before the DRC-IHP project began, just over 12 percent of women or their partners in Kamiji, home to nearly 84,500 people, were using contraceptives. Recognizing that men have traditionally been unlikely to access health information and services through health facilities, DRC-IHP engaged local religious leaders and organizations to reach out to them in community settings.

Between January and July of 2011, DRC-IHP held more than 280 community awareness sessions to highlight the importance of family planning for the whole family—both women and men—and trained more than 20 community health workers to support contraceptive use by both women and their partners. As a result, the number of women or their partners using family planning methods increased from 1,102 to 2,006 in less than a year.