

## **PSI enables sex workers to use condoms consistently with female condoms**

Hoa has sold sex for the past five years, operating out of a bar in Hai Phong for the past three years. Most sex workers change venues a several times a year, but Hoa has remained at this location because it stays busy through out the day. Hoa sells sex so she can provide medicine to her sick husband and child at home.

Hoa's other sex worker friends at the bar start working from late afternoon until late at night, and spend the rest of their day at beauty salons or shopping. But Hoa can be found at the bar throughout the whole day, waiting for business so she can support her family. Hoa frequently serves men who refuse to wear a condom. She understands the risk of HIV infection from unprotected sex, but given her financial circumstances she is willing to accept more money not to use a condom. Hoa once said, "If I don't use a condom, I may or may not get infected. It will be a long time before I would suffer. But if I do not earn enough money, my husband and child will die today."

An Interpersonal Communicator (IPC) recently met with Hoa and told her about female condoms. The IPC is part of PSI/Vietnam's Song Dep (Beautiful Life) program that reaches out to sex workers to promote consistent condom use with commercial partners, voluntary counseling and testing for HIV, prevention of new injecting drug users among sex workers, and safer drug injecting practices. The Song Dep program is directly implemented by PSI in two of PEPFAR's priority provinces in Vietnam, and PSI provides technical assistance to a network of peer educators and outreach workers of different PEPFAR-funded organizations under Vietnamese provincial government partners across PEPFAR's seven priority provinces.

PSI conducts research to inform intervention strategies and objectives, and uses a mix of targeted mass media, such as billboards and posters, and interpersonal communication activities to reach sex workers. PSI social markets male and female condoms and promotes combined condom use with water-based lubricants to sex workers, providing free samples during outreach sessions.

When Hoa first learned about female condoms, she was hesitant to use them. They appeared strange to her, and she found them awkward to insert. The Song Dep IPC demonstrated how to use them with a female pelvic model and Hoa decided she would give them a try.

Now, Hoa always has a female condom with her. She says, "Most of my clients do not mind using the female condom, and some do not even realize I am using it." Hoa has become an advocate for female condoms amongst her sex worker friends, and often instructs them how to use one properly. When Hoa sees the Song Dep IPC, the first thing she asks for is more female condoms.

PSI's Song Dep program is part of a comprehensive response to HIV prevention in high prevalence provinces in Vietnam. PSI's program includes promotion of HIV related products (male and female condoms, water-based lubricants) and services (voluntary counseling and HIV testing) and targeted behavior change communication messages among most at-risk population groups, including sex workers and their male clients, injecting drug users, and men who have sex with men. PSI also promotes PMTCT services to pregnant women.