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**DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO**

# SUCCESS STORY

## Female condom, an efficient option for commercial sex workers

**USAID distributes female condoms to vulnerable groups such as commercial sex workers (CSWs) through social marketing.**



Photo: Igor Kalumba, PSI/ASF, DRC

*Fany (right, stand up) led an interpersonal communication (IPC) session with CSWs. She promoted the correct and consistent use of male condom with a female condom use demonstration, and built capacity of her peers to negotiate the use of condoms with all their clients. People leaving with HIV (PLWHAs) also participated in this session.*

**During FY2011, thanks to USAID funds, 36 peer educators and 6 supervisors were trained in collaboration with the National Multi sectoral AIDs Program (PNMLS) which sensitized 5,362 CSWs in different provincial settings (Kinshasa, Katanga, Sud Kivu, Bas Congo, Kasai Oriental, Kasai Occidental). The key messages delivered by the trained actors have focused on risk perception, male and female condom use and HIV testing and counseling.**

Fany, 32 years old, lives in Kasavubu, one of the populous areas in DRC capital, Kinshasa. She started being a commercial sex worker since the age of fifteen. For her, key factors drove her in choosing this job: “My family was poor and it became more and more difficult to pay my schooling. Also, one of my best friends encouraged me to prostitute myself in order to get money and satisfy my day-to-day needs”. She has a 2-year old child. About condom use, Fany said that it is a pretty new behavior in her life: “The age of my clients are various. And before the training I recently received, I did not know the importance of condom use. I was not using condom. I was only using it when the client insisted to wear a condom”.

In May 2011, Fany participated in a peer educators training workshop held by the “*Advanced Social Marketing for Health in DRC*” project, funded by USAID. As a member of the *Association pour la Défense des droits de l'Enfant et de la Femme*, a ten-year old local NGO whose capacity was reinforced by the project, Fany feels that her capacity for condom use has significantly increased: “Since the training, I always use condoms. And I prefer female condoms because when the client doesn't want to use condom, I wear it without its knowledge and protect myself”. In order to increase the availability of and access to female condoms, *Association de Santé Familiale (ASF)*, a partner of *Population Services International (PSI)*, has opened female friendly points of sales in beauty shops and hair dressing shops. Fany also feels that she can find condoms when she needs it: “We also easily find female condoms at pharmacies and hotels reception. For me, it is as easy to buy as chewing gums or paper-made towels”.

“In the past, I had several sexually infected diseases and now, with the use of condom, I do not have anymore STIs”, said Fany. Today, she is engaged in teaching and sensitizing her peers and other PLWHAs members of her association on correct and consistent use of condom, associated with treatment adherence messages for people already infected. She continues her work as her number of clients has not decreased with female condom use and the promotion of female condom use on TV and radio facilitates her negotiation with her clients for condom use. With the other members, Fany has taken the initiative to save 0.1 dollar per day to start income generating activities inside the group.