



## mCENAS! REACHING YOUTH WITH INFORMATION AND STORIES ABOUT SEXUAL HEALTH

With more than 45 percent of people under the age of 15, Mozambique has one of the youngest populations in the world.<sup>1</sup> For two decades, Pathfinder International has focused on this critical group, supporting the government to implement its national youth sexual and reproductive health program, Geração Biz, and implementing the USAID-funded Extending Service Delivery-Family Planning Initiative (ESD-FPI) in four provinces—Maputo, Gaza, Inhambane, and Cabo Delgado. Pathfinder understands young people in Mozambique face a range of barriers to living healthy sexual and reproductive lives, including social norms that do not accept their use of contraception and their lack of knowledge about the range of contraceptive methods. This is an urgent problem that calls for innovative solutions.

### Text “1” for Knowledge

#### SHARING KNOWLEDGE AND INSPIRING BEHAVIOR CHANGE

In response to the growing use of mobile phones in Mozambique, Pathfinder developed a comprehensive text message-based program that targets youth aged 15-24 with children and without children. Pathfinder’s project, mCenas! (“Mobile Scenes” in English), is an interactive two-way SMS system that is accessible at no cost for clients. mCenas! engages youth with an SMS-based role model story, in which characters are shown overcoming common barriers to contraceptive use faced by youth, as well as a menu-based informational message system. The goal of mCenas! is to increase knowledge about contraceptive methods and dispel common myths around contraceptive methods, in order to reduce barriers youth face in starting or continuing to use a contraceptive method.

1. Central Intelligence Agency, “The World Factbook.” Accessed March 2014 at [www.CIA.gov](http://www.CIA.gov)

Launched in September 2013, mCenas! is implemented in Maputo and Inhambane provinces (Matola and Inhambane city districts, respectively). Pathfinder expects a total of 2,500 youth to enroll.

#### STORIES ARE JUST THE BEGINNING

*mCenas! has three main components:*

- 1. Role Model Stories:** For two months, clients follow a compelling and realistic narrative that draws on behavior change theory. Every week, they receive three installments of the story in the form of SMS. The story is relatable, and it inspires further dialogue and reflection with peers.
- 2. Information about Various Methods:** For one month, clients receive informational messages about each contraceptive method.

**3. Interactive FAQ:** To learn more about topics that interest them, youth can ping the system to find answers to frequently asked questions, as well as information about sexual and reproductive health, including information on a range of contraceptive methods. Clients retain access to these interactive menus for the duration of the project.

#### A PARTICIPATORY APPROACH

Pathfinder’s partner Dimagi, Inc., provided the SMS software platform. To develop SMS stories, Pathfinder needed to gather information from youth about the barriers and facilitators they encounter when trying to use contraception. To achieve this, we applied “Pathways to Change,” a methodology developed by Pathfinder to help participants identify various personal, social, and structural barriers to behavior change.



**USAID**  
DO POVO AMERICANO

**esd**  
family planning  
initiative

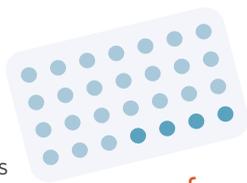
**Pathfinder**  
INTERNATIONAL  
A GLOBAL LEADER IN SEXUAL  
AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

Pathfinder convened a total of 15 small group sessions, divided between Inhambane and Maputo provinces, with young men and women in mixed and single-sex groups. Trained facilitators led the small groups in identifying barriers and facilitators—at the individual, social, and structural level—that a character similar to themselves would experience in seeking to use contraception.

A team of adolescent and youth sexual and reproductive health experts analyzed the results and compared participants' responses by group characteristics. The most notable differences in barriers and facilitators raised were between two groups were among youth with children and youth without children. Therefore, Pathfinder developed two different role model stories, one targeting each group.



Both stories contain role models for males and females and incorporate many of the barriers and facilitators identified in the formative research. Stories were crafted based on the stages of change theory to reflect real-life behavior change processes. They were written by a local scriptwriter, in Mozambique's youth SMS language (texting 'slang').



Today, there are approximately 22 mHealth projects in Mozambique, and the majority address HIV and AIDS. Only mCenas! focuses on contraception—targeting youth to improve their knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, norms, and intentions to use contraception.

Pathfinder adapted existing contraceptive information messages developed and tested by FHI360 through the Mobile for Reproductive Health (m4RH) project in East Africa. We developed and tested the interactive FAQ menu using focus groups of youth, who participated in sorting and ranking exercises to identify the top questions they would like to see in the menu. All stories and messages were pre-tested by young people in Matola and Inhambane, and reviewed and approved by Mozambique's Ministry of Health.

### INTEGRATING MHEALTH INTO PUBLIC HEALTH PROGRAMS

mCenas! is not a stand-alone SMS project. It is an innovative component of a larger program—ESD-FPI. Through ESD-FPI, Pathfinder supports the delivery of youth-friendly health services in 50 health facilities, as well as community-based activities to increase youth's awareness of and demand for contraceptive services in order to reduce unintended pregnancies. Today, mCenas! complements ongoing ESD-FPI activities that improve service quality and availability at the health facility as well as education activities at the community level.

Pathfinder believes that by integrating the use of mobile phones into traditional public health program activities, the delivery and absorption of messages will be reinforced, creating a real impact on a young person's choice of whether or not to begin using contraception.

### PARTNERING WITH THE GOVERNMENT

Youth are also linked to a youth-friendly hotline called Alo Vida, run by Mozambique's Ministry of Health. When they call Alo Vida, youth can access a live representative, who can answer any question they have about contraception. Throughout mCenas!, Pathfinder works closely with the Ministry of Health to ensure every lesson and result from this work is used to inform other mHealth efforts. We will continue to support the government to consider scaling up the project's successful activities to the national level.

### BUILDING A BODY OF EVIDENCE

To assess the success of mCenas!, Pathfinder collaborates with Evidence to Action (E2A)—USAID's global flagship program for strengthening reproductive health service delivery. E2A aims to build evidence and lead the scale-up of best practices that improve family planning services.

In 2014, E2A began its study with mCenas! to determine whether an initiative that delivers contraceptive information via SMS is acceptable, and what impact it has on the knowledge, attitudes, and self-efficacy of male and female youth aged 15-24 in Mozambique. Results are expected by August 2014.

PATHFINDER INTERNATIONAL MOZAMBIQUE

135 Éça de Queiroz, PO Box 1590 | Maputo, Mozambique | Phone: +258 82 3257100

PATHFINDER INTERNATIONAL HEADQUARTERS

9 Galen Street, Suite 217 | Watertown, MA 02472, USA | Phone: +1 617 924 7200

 **Pathfinder**  
INTERNATIONAL  
A GLOBAL LEADER IN SEXUAL  
AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH