



YOUTH AND TECHNOLOGY:

IPPF/WHR Experiences to Promote
Sexual and Reproductive Health



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Improving the sexual and reproductive health (SRH) of youth is a growing concern of governments and organizations around the world. In Latin America and the Caribbean, member associations of the International Planned Parenthood Federation, Western Hemisphere Region, Inc. (IPPF/WHR) are finding new and exciting ways to reach young people and provide them with SRH information and services. Many of these projects have involved using such emerging computer technologies as cyber centers, Web sites, interactive multimedia CD-ROM programs, email counseling services, and various chip-based technologies.

The general findings presented in this report show that youth respond favorably to all of these uses of technology. In projects where pre- and post-test surveys were implemented, exposure to the technology brought positive changes in knowledge and attitudes related to SRH and gender roles. Although the studies did reveal that there are limits to reaching certain populations, such as youth without access to high-speed computers, the potential for reaching certain population subsets, such as urban, middle-income youth, is great.

This review of case studies from IPPF/WHR member associations in Chile, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Peru provides important insight related to the preliminary effects of and lessons learned from the implementation of “first-generation” youth and technology projects in the region. Strategic recommendations for the development of

“second-generation” projects in this area are also proposed. Nonetheless, the linkage between computer technologies and improved youth SRH remains unproven, and further investigation is required before specific types of such programming can be fully endorsed.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Youth and Technology: IPPFWHR Experiences to Promote Sexual and Reproductive Health was originally published in July 2001 to compile lessons from the first-generation use of technology in youth programs of International Planned Parenthood Federation/Western Hemisphere Region member associations. The publication is based on a series of case studies undertaken in five countries in Latin America during 1999-2000. The technology examined varied in degree of complexity, sophistication and application. It goes without saying that the use of technology has progressed in the five years since this study was initiated. Today, most IPPF/WHR member associations have greater access to a variety of technologies, and there is an ever-increasing interest in using technologies to reach young people.

The questions presented and the lessons learned from the original case studies remain pertinent today. When planning youth sexual and reproductive health programs, it is still valid to ask the questions presented as key issues in this publication, to assess whether technology is the appropriate resource, and, if so, which sort is most fitting. As in the original case studies, just because technology has advanced does not mean that it is always the best tool to apply to youth sexual and reproductive health programs. Furthermore, the cost, the target group and both the advantages and disadvantages must be considered when assessing the opportunities and limitations of using technology.

It is our wish that program planners, evaluators and donors continue to use this publication as a tool to help make the most informed decisions about the use of technology in youth sexual and reproductive health programs.

March, 2004



INTRODUCTION

Young men and women aged 10-24 currently comprise more than 30% of the population in Latin America and the Caribbean. High rates of unplanned pregnancies, sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV, and sexual violence make sexual and reproductive health (SRH) a major concern for this age group. Between 12-18% of births in the region occur among women aged 15 to 19, and more than one-third of women have a child before the age of 20¹. Many of the more than 1.3 million women, men, and children believed to be living with HIV in the region became infected during their teenage years².

For many years, member associations of the International Planned Parenthood Federation, Western Hemisphere Region, Inc. (IPPF/WHR) have been strengthening their capacity in SRH services for youth with assistance from the regional office. A variety of integrated programs have been piloted, including peer-based outreach and counseling programs, youth clinics or special hours, staff, and space for young people in adult clinics, school-based sexuality education programs, information, education, and communication (IEC) campaigns, and outreach to high-risk and out-of-school youth. In 1999, IPPF/WHR staff surveyed member associations and found a groundswell of interest in using cutting-edge technologies to facilitate work with youth.

¹ Population Reference Bureau, *The World's Youth 2000*, Washington DC, USA

² *Epidemiological Bulletin*, Vol. 21 No. 3, September 2000

CASE STUDIES IN YOUTH & TECHNOLOGY FOR SRH

- **CD-ROM Technologies**

Chile. The Chilean Association for the Protection of the Family (APROFA) developed the “Rock and Male Roles” CD-ROM to address the problems of machismo and gender-based violence. The project aims to sensitize young men aged 15 to 20 to the importance of gender equity in sexual and reproductive health.

Peru. The Peruvian Institute for Responsible Parenthood (INPPARES) developed an integrated STI and HIV/AIDS prevention program for use in secondary schools. The “Planet Zero Risk” project includes a CD-ROM and a training component to help teachers learn how to apply it in the classroom.

- **Cyber Centers**

El Salvador. The Demographic Association of El Salvador (ADS) set up a cyber center in its San Salvador library that provides low-cost Internet access to youth with recommendations for Web sites on sexual and reproductive health.

Guatemala. The Guatemalan Family Welfare Association’s (APROFAM) Youth and the Internet Program seeks to introduce young people aged 10-19 to modern information technology by providing free access to the Internet in its clinic library in Guatemala City. Youth are encouraged to use the service primarily for research on sexual and reproductive health.

- **Other Microchip-Based Technologies**

Guatemala. In response to the high teenage pregnancy rate in Guatemala, APROFAM implemented a mechanical baby adoption program with “Baby Think It Over®” dolls to give young people the opportunity to experience some of the implications and inconveniences frequently associated with early childbearing and single parenting.

Indeed, many SRH service providers in Latin America and the Caribbean are already using information technology to improve youth's knowledge and attitudes related to SRH. IPPF/WHO member associations are becoming pioneers in the promotion of youth SRH through the utilization of such emerging technology as cyber centers, Web sites, interactive multimedia CD-ROM programs, email counseling services, and various chip-based technologies.

Despite the potential for using computer technologies to enhance youth SRH, this remains an unproven area with no established models and little published evidence of its efficacy. IPPF/WHO, therefore, set out to document the effect and sustainability of “first-generation” youth and technology projects carried out by member associations in the region. A study was initiated to gather information about how projects have been developed, understand how the projects are linked to youth SRH, and determine how effective the projects have been in achieving their objectives.

This report presents the results of case studies from member associations in Chile, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Peru. These youth and technology projects (see page 5) were developed at the initiative of each member association and, thus, were tailored to the capabilities of the association, the needs of the specific population, and the setting of each country. See the Appendix for full descriptions of the associations and their projects.

This paper focuses on the key issues related to the potential for using technology to impact youth SRH and strategic recommendations for the development of stronger “second-generation” projects in this area.



PROJECT EVALUATION APPROACH

IPPF/WHO staff developed a variety of data collection instruments as well as guidelines for reporting findings for member associations to use in evaluating their youth and technology projects. With funding from the IPPF i3 Youth Programme, local consultants were hired to conduct the studies and to write country reports. Rather than a rigorous evaluation, the studies were viewed as an opportunity to gather information and data related to the preliminary effects of these youth and technology projects and the lessons learned by association staff.

Study protocols included the following: (a) in-depth interviews with directors of youth programs; (b) in-depth interviews with project implementers; (c) youth survey/exit interviews for associations with open computer/Internet access; (d) youth survey about interactive educational software; (e) review of clinic registration forms; (f) record review; and (g) focus group interviews with adolescent service/clinic users. The instruments were designed to be somewhat general, so as to be applicable to all study settings, but associations were encouraged to make minor modifications as needed.

It should be noted that the projects and studies described here have only limited comparability due to the wide variations in the designs of both the projects and the evaluation studies. Furthermore, since the evaluation activities were, for the most part, designed and implemented after the projects were underway for several months, effects could not be compared against any realistic baseline measures. Although none of the evaluation studies was able to document changes in reproductive behavior or service utilization, they were able to assess changes in individual knowledge and attitudes and some factors related to institutional change. The specific evaluation methods used by each association are outlined on pages 8 and 9.

APROFA/Chile: The “Rock and Male Roles” CD-ROM project is aimed at improving the knowledge and ability of young men to perceive the influence of gender roles in sexual and reproductive health and to promote access to available sexual and reproductive health services. In early 2000, a test implementation and evaluation of the CD-ROM was carried out with a group of 400 male students from four secondary schools in middle-income neighborhoods in the Santiago metropolitan area. As part of the evaluation effort, project staff administered anonymous pre- and post-test surveys to participating youth to determine the acceptability of the software among users and to gauge the effect on participating youth.

INPPARES/Peru: The objectives of the “Planet Zero Risk” CD-ROM project are to improve knowledge about STIs and HIV/AIDS among youth, delay initiation of sexual activity, and promote safer sexual practices among sexually active youth. In 1999, INPPARES conducted an evaluation study of the CD-ROM among 454 male and female students randomly selected from 26 secondary schools in Lima. The students ranged in age from 14 to 17 years and were in their 4th or 5th year of secondary studies. Participating schools, 17 of which were private, five public, three military, and one parochial, were selected based on whether or not they had a computer appropriate for running a CD-ROM. Students completed pre- and post-test questionnaires, which were anonymous and self-administered. Due to loss to follow-up, complete data were collected for 330 students.

ADS/El Salvador: ADS maintains a cyber center to help meet the significant demand for Internet access among youth, to direct them to the latest information on SRH, and to generate income for the association. In order to obtain a profile of typical users and to gauge user satisfaction with the service, ADS conducted exit interviews with 46 users in November 2000. A study of usage and income generated from January to September of 1999 and during the same period in 2000 was also carried out in order to determine the project's potential for attracting users and attaining economic sustainability.

APROFAM/Guatemala: Through its Youth and the Internet Program, APROFAM seeks to introduce young people aged 10-19 to modern information technology by providing free access to the Internet in its clinic library in Guatemala City. The service was studied over a four-week period from August to September 2000 in order to gather data and document the results of the program to date. APROFAM staff collected information about users by administering surveys to 237 youth visitors to its library. APROFAM also has a “Baby Think It Over®” mechanical baby adoption program aimed at sensitizing youth to the challenges of early childbearing and single parenting, and thus preventing adolescent pregnancy. In order to evaluate the effects of the program, APROFAM staff conducted a series of focus groups and in-depth interviews with a total of 141 participating youth, parents, teachers, and school directors. Ninety youth (89 females and 1 male), 42 parents, and nine teachers/directors participated in the follow-up study.



KEY ISSUES FOR YOUTH AND TECHNOLOGY PROJECTS

Sexual and reproductive health programs that utilize computer technologies show great potential for successfully connecting with youth, an often difficult-to-reach segment of the population. Nonetheless, as an emerging area, there are many questions that remain to be answered before technology projects can unreservedly be promoted as an effective youth SRH programming strategy.

KEY ISSUES

- Can technology projects improve youth SRH?
- Do technology projects attract youth to appropriate services?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of the technologies?
- Which youth are reached through the various technologies?
- What is the income-generation potential of technology projects?

that there are attractive aspects of using any sort of technology-based resource, especially in the eyes of youth; however, some technologies appear to be more successful than others in this area. It is important to

A number of key issues identified through analysis of these case studies are discussed below (see box at left). It is important to note that since each project is unique in its design, objectives, and focus population, not all questions were addressed by each case study.

Can technology projects improve youth SRH?

Most of the technology projects presented in this report sought to have an impact in some way on the sexual and reproductive health of participating youth. The primary goal for organizations often was to find an exciting vehicle to provide information to youth about sexual and reproductive health. It is clear

note that using technology as a means to transmit information does not necessarily make the information itself worthwhile. In order to have a successful tool, the information incorporated into any given form of technology must be accurate and up-to-date. Substantial background work and research must be done to ensure that the information included in the tool is appropriate.

The “Rock and Male Roles” and “Planet Zero Risk” CD-ROMs developed by APROFA/Chile and INPPARES/Peru respectively both had a positive effect on the SRH attitudes and knowledge of participating youth. According to the preliminary results from the study in Chile, respondents’ knowledge and attitudes related to gender roles and SRH changed after using the “Rock and Male Roles” CD-ROM. The majority of young men reported a gain in knowledge: 85% indicated that they learned how to recognize and value their emotions; 84% said they learned about the advantages of relating to women as equals; and 70% reported that they learned how to prevent the risks of sexual activity. Pre- and post-test surveys showed that young men’s positive attitudes related to masculinity increased by more than 40%, positive attitudes related to planning sexual relations increased by 32%, and knowledge about prevention of pregnancy, HIV/AIDS, and STIs increased by 15-25%. However, after using the CD-ROM, only one fourth of young men indicated they believed that pregnancy prevention was the responsibility of both men and women, an increase of only 8% from pre-test results. Tables 1 and 2 summarize these results.

In Peru, as can be seen in Table 3, the study results show that students’ knowledge concerning HIV/AIDS increased after using “Planet Zero Risk.” After exposure to the messages, 23% more students were aware that people with STIs or HIV may not show any symptoms and 27% more knew that delaying sexual activity could prevent HIV/AIDS. There were smaller increases in the number of students who reported that abstinence reduced risk (11% gain) and that they intended to use condoms when having sex (a 9% increase).

APROFAM’s Baby Think It Over® program, designed to give young people the opportunity to experience some of the implications and inconveniences frequently associated with early childbearing and single parenting, also had a favorable effect on the attitudes related to early childbearing and parenting of the mostly young women who participated. Both parents and teachers indicated that they had seen positive changes in the youth as a result of their participation in the

TABLE 1. ATTITUDES ABOUT SRH AND GENDER BEFORE AND AFTER EXPOSURE TO APROFA'S "ROCK AND MALE ROLES" (N=62)

Question	% Responding "True" Pre-Test	% Responding "True" Post-Test	Change
Men can change their aggressive traits and sexuality	44	88	+44
Stereotypes of masculinity lead to emotional limitations in the development of a man	43	84	+41
Women have equal biological capacity to become sexually aroused	67	82	+41
It's okay for men to cry or show their vulnerabilities	76	78	+2
Sexual relations between young people should be planned	35	67	+32
Responsibility for pregnancy prevention rests			
•Principally on the woman	20	10	-10
•Equally on both men and women	28	26	-2
•Principally on the man	17	25	+8
•On the man only	21	27	+6
	13	13	0
Responsibility for domestic tasks rests			
•On the woman only	3	5	+2
•Principally on the woman	24	15	-9
•Equally on both men and women	72	77	+5
•Principally on the man	1	4	+3
•On the man only	0	0	0

program. Parents noted that there had been a change in their children's behavior and that they were acting more mature. Most (91%) of the participating youth said they liked the program, and all the youth interviewed indicated that they thought the program was a success because it enabled them to understand the potential consequences of having sexual relations at a young age and the responsibilities of being a parent. All (100%) of the youth who participated in the program concluded that they were not ready to assume the responsibilities of being a parent and that the experience of having a "baby" had affected their life plans and personal growth.

The interactive nature of the CD-ROM and microchip-based projects seemed to hold the most promise for stimulating youth's interest in learning about SRH topics. However, simply making information about SRH available to youth through Internet access and Web site listings may not be sufficient to motivate them to access the information. In Guatemala, the APROFAM library and Internet service serves as an important resource for information on SRH for youth, with the vast majority (85%) indicating that they had never looked for information on SRH topics anywhere else. However, there were no data on the number of youth who actually accessed SRH information through the Internet service. In El Salvador, the majority of youth using ADS's cyber center did not use the Internet to access information on SRH topics, even though the center maintained a list of recommended sites on SRH. Only one-third (33%) indicated that they had used the Internet to look up information about their bodies, while 37% stated that they had looked up information related to sexual health.

Furthermore, these case studies show that there are areas in which additional work needs to be done in order to strengthen SRH youth programming. For example, in Guatemala, young people's knowledge of family planning was somewhat low. Almost three-fourths (69%) of youth interviewed indicated that they had heard of at least one modern contraceptive method but did not know a lot about them. The most commonly mentioned forms of contraception were the condom (21%) and the pill (20%). Apparently, there are serious cultural barriers to overcome in educating Guatemalan youth about contraception. Although almost 90% of teachers stated that they thought youth should be educated about contraceptive methods, only 12% of parents thought it was important. Even more problematic is the other 88% of parents who indicated their belief that by educating their daughters about

TABLE 2. KNOWLEDGE OF SRH BEFORE AND AFTER EXPOSURE TO APROFA'S "ROCK AND MALE ROLES" (N=62)

Question	% Responding "True" Pre-Test	% Responding "True" Post-Test	Change
Condoms help prevent pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections, and AIDS	79	94	+15
Withdrawal does not eliminate all risk of pregnancy	49	74	+25

TABLE 3. USERS' KNOWLEDGE AND ATTITUDES ABOUT SRH BEFORE AND AFTER EXPOSURE TO INPPARES' "PLANET ZERO RISK" (N=330)

Question	% Responding "True" Pre-Test	% Responding "True" Post-Test	Change
People may have no signs at all of being infected with an STI	51	74	+23
Sexual abstinence is a form of prevention	66	77	+11
Delaying initiation of sexual activity is a form of prevention	25	52	+27
Intention to use condoms when having sex	39	48	+9

contraception they would be giving them license to have sexual relations. Sons, on the other hand, should be informed about how to protect themselves, according to most parents.

Do technology projects attract youth to appropriate services?

While attracting youth to appropriate SRH services was not a primary objective of the youth and technology projects reviewed here and the evaluations did not measure the effect on service utilization, the studies do shed some light on the potential to attract youth to services. Most of the organizations did mention that through their technology initiatives they sought to make youth aware of the other SRH services offered by the association.

The cyber centers might be the most effective technology for attracting youth to services, given the fact that they are usually located near or in the same building as clinical services. Although it was noted that the Internet services were promoted among young clinic users, it was not clear from either project how the clinic services were promoted among Internet service users. In Guatemala, only 29% of cyber center users knew about APROFAM's other youth services. In El Salvador, only one-third of Internet users (aged 14-19) indicated that they were aware that ADS provided clinical services to youth, but nearly all youth (94%) indicated that they would use the services in the future.

In Peru, after administering the post-test questionnaire, INPPARES staff provided individual counseling to the students who requested it (42%) and then referred all of these students to the INPPARES Future Youth Center. However, there were no available data on the number of students who actually accessed the services to which they were referred. The "Planet Zero Risk" CD-ROM has information for users on where to go for services, with the address and telephone number of INPPARES listed. The "Rock and Male Roles" CD-ROM project in Chile also sought to introduce young men to local SRH services.

Though referral to clinic services was not one of the original aims of the technology projects reviewed here, the potential for accessing this untapped population is noteworthy. In all cases, the technology projects are attracting young people to the associations who were not previously aware of the other clinical and educational services offered

to youth. Thus, while there is clearly an opportunity to link youth to SRH services through technology projects, additional efforts are needed to promote the other services and further research should be carried out to investigate the efficacy of this strategy.

What are the advantages and disadvantages of the technologies?

There are advantages and disadvantages to each of the technologies presented in these case studies. Obviously, there is not one type of technology that works for all youth. The most appropriate technologies will depend on the focus population and may vary from cyber centers to email based counseling to interactive CD-ROMs.

In general, some of the advantages of using technology include the ability for youth to remain anonymous while accessing information, the lure of game-based learning, and the ability to reach a specific subset of the population (such as young men). Most technology-based resources are new and exciting, making the medium a novel way for youth to obtain information. Indeed, all of the youth and technology projects presented here have proven to be highly acceptable among users.

Two-thirds of users of APROFA's "Rock and Male Roles" CD-ROM, for example, reported that the program was good or excellent. In El Salvador, most (80%) of the users were satisfied with the number of computers available at the cyber center, and nearly half (48%) of the users indicated that, overall, they were satisfied with the services offered and had no suggestions for improvement.

In Guatemala, teachers, parents, and youth all exhibited high levels of satisfaction with the mechanical baby adoption program. Teachers liked the program because it combined theory and practice to teach students about SRH using innovative modern technology. Parents viewed the program as a support in dealing with sensitive SRH topics about which they did not feel capable or comfortable to speak openly with their children.

However, there are a number of concerns, mostly related to equipment, that should be taken into consideration when implementing technology projects.

Most CD-ROM programs require a high-speed computer and, thus, might not be a practical resource for schools that have only older, slower computers. It was found that some of the schools in Chile did not have computers with adequate memory to run the program, and as a result the software was frustratingly slow.

Lack of sufficient computers was a problem in Guatemala, where APROFAM only made two computers available to youth to access the Internet. Nearly all (91%) of the youth users indicated that there were not enough computers made available to them for use. In El Salvador, where there were sufficient high-speed computers available, the cyber center, located in the association's library, faced competition from nearby cyber cafes offering a more relaxed environment and refreshments. Limited and restrictive services could be a factor in attracting and retaining youth to services.

Moreover, there are concerns about the Internet service having a potentially adverse effect on some youth. Although APROFAM staff observed that students were enthusiastic about the Internet service and wanted even greater access, they struggled with how to provide an appropriate research tool for youth without inadvertently providing access to unsuitable materials found on the Internet. Both APROFAM and ADS expressed concern that some Web sites containing keywords related to SRH can link to pornographic and other inappropriate sites.

Which youth are reached through the various technologies?

Not surprisingly, it can be difficult to reach marginal and low-income youth through technology projects. These case studies show that, for the most part, a specific subsector of the youth population is being reached through the current projects, namely middle-income, urban, in-school students, aged 15-20 years old. All of the projects were limited to urban centers, usually the capital city, and insufficient funding often restricted expansion to outlying areas.

The CD-ROM projects, which usually worked initially through secondary schools, were often limited to youth attending private school due to the need for high-speed computers. In Chile, APROFA specifically targeted middle-income students at private schools. INPPARES in Peru, meanwhile, was able to involve some public schools in its "Planet Zero Risk" project and, thus, had a wider coverage among socioeco-

nomic groups. The majority of participating students in INPPARES's project came from low- and middle-income families. About three-fourths (74%) of students lived with both their father and mother, and half (52%) came from households where both parents worked. In both cases, CD-ROMs provided an opportunity to target young men, a segment of the population that is normally hard to reach with IEC information related to SRH.

The cyber centers seemed to attract mostly middle-income youth. The typical cyber center user in El Salvador was a male university student approximately 20 years of age, although users ranged in age from 14 to 34 years old and half (23) of those interviewed were under 20. Even in the case of APROFAM's Internet service, which was free to youth, most of the users came from middle-income homes, almost all (99%) were non-indigenous, and nearly three-fourths (73%) attended private schools. It should be noted, however, that in many Latin American countries, attendance at a private school is not necessarily an indicator of affluence as it is in other regions of the world, due to the prevalence and relatively low costs of many of these schools.

Access for lower-income youth could have been cost prohibitive in the case of APROFAM's Baby Think It Over® mechanical baby adoption program. Although a sliding scale fee was established based on socioeconomic levels, the average cost to participate in the program, including the rental price of the dolls, batteries, and baby clothes, was nearly US\$10, which may have been too high for some potential participants. A number of teachers, parents, and youth indicated that the cost should be reduced, and two parents even reported taking out loans so that their daughters could participate in the program. The majority of students (84%) attended private school and were non-indigenous (97%).

There were also some differential use patterns based on gender presented in several case studies. In El Salvador, only a little more than one-fourth (28%) of all users were young women. In contrast, in APROFAM's Internet project, slightly more than half of users were young women. The fact that APROFAM's Internet access was free and had a much higher rate of young women participating suggests that cost may have been a prohibitive factor in El Salvador. This is supported by the fact that many program managers indicate that young women often have less access to money than do young men.

With respect to the Baby Think It Over® program, the participants were almost exclusively young women due to traditional gender roles associated with childcare that limit the participation of young men in parenting programs. APROFAM staff found heavy resistance among school administrators and teachers to male participation in the program, and the majority of young men were unwilling to participate in the adoptions due to embarrassment and fear of ridicule for going against social norms. Teachers and parents may be inadvertently reinforcing these gender stereotypes. Although all the teachers interviewed indicated that they thought both young women and men should participate in the program, they believe the program should be directed to young women and be optional for young men. They pointed out that traditionally it is the woman's responsibility to raise the children and that most educational curricula on parenting are directed at young women.

Meanwhile, nearly all (90%) of the parents interviewed stated they thought the program should involve both sexes because having a child is as much the responsibility of the man as the woman. Nonetheless, only one father was among the parents interviewed for the study. Most fathers do not attend meetings when the topic is related to sexual or reproductive health because they consider such topics to be the responsibility of the mother. Moreover, many fathers are not willing to let their sons participate in the program because they think it is not a man's place to take care of children.

APROFAM recognizes that there is a lack of communication about sexual education between parents and their children in Guatemala. Program facilitators found that parents were often at a loss to talk with their children about matters of sexual and reproductive health, even in the context of having a new "baby" in the house. Some 45% of parents admitted that they evade answering their children's questions about SRH, and slightly more than half (52%) of parents interviewed said they would not know what to say to their children if they told them they had had their first sexual experience. It is hoped that the mechanical baby program will help facilitate discussion about sexual education between parents and children. Overcoming these cultural barriers will require the specific involvement of parents, both mothers and fathers, in the program.

The evidence from these case studies indicates that different approaches are needed to ensure that technology projects are effective

in reaching their focus populations. Until access becomes more universally available regardless of socio-economics, gender, and urbanity, there are limits to the populations that will benefit from these resources, and organizations will need to plan their strategies accordingly.

What is the income-generation potential of technology projects?

In the context of declining levels of public funding for sexual and reproductive health programs in the region, the possibility of using technology as a means to generate income is often viewed as an attractive option. Nonetheless, the case studies presented illustrate that there is no guarantee of immediate economic sustainability in using technology.

ADS's cyber center is a good example of the challenges involved in turning a youth and technology project into a money earner. In looking at aggregate data for the same nine-month period in 1999 and 2000, the cyber center appeared to be a success, experiencing growth both in terms of users and income. The total number of users of the service increased by 52%, and the total amount of income generated from the center increased by 132%. Despite these positive findings, trends in the data, presented in Graphs 1 and 2, show more mixed results. Although ADS saw steady growth in users and income throughout 1999, this growth began to level off in 2000 and since June 2000 there has been a decline in the number of users and revenue.

ADS attributed this decline to the fact that a new cyber cafe opened nearby, and a price war broke out. While more than three-fourths (78%) of users indicated that the fees charged by ADS were acceptable and 91% stated that they had

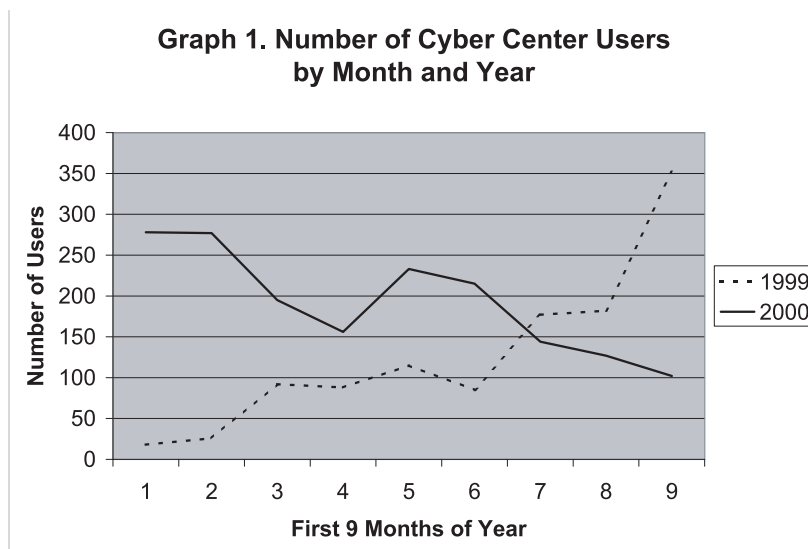
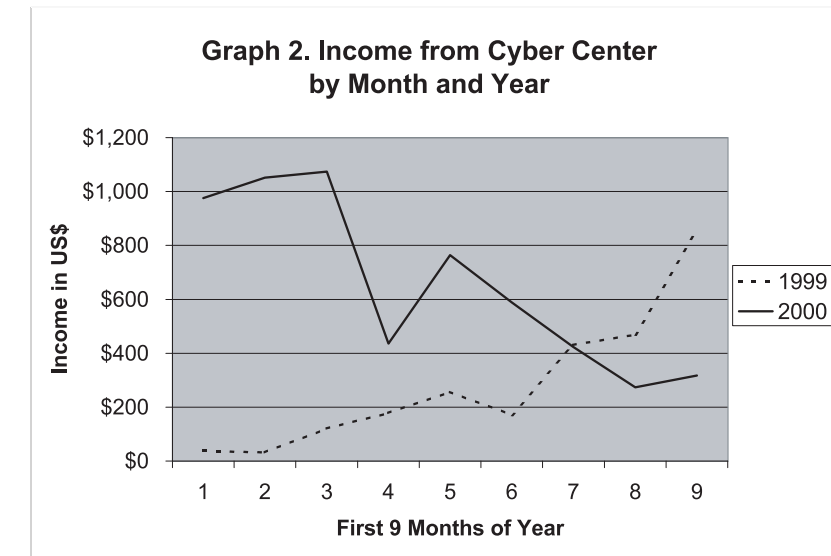
previously paid for Internet access in places other than ADS, the association's problem with the competition may be due to more than just the price charged for services. Since the cyber center is located within the ADS library, working in silence is

required and no refreshments are allowed. This may turn away many potential users who may be more attracted to the informal atmosphere offered by another cyber cafe.

The cyber center is currently operating at less than 10% of capacity, given the number of computers it has, and most months, income does not cover the cost of employing the project administrator, approximately \$600 per month. ADS is exploring ways to make the project self-sustainable, such as by expanding the promotion of the cyber center and integrating the project with other ADS organizational units.

With respect to the CD-ROM projects, it was clear that youth would not necessarily purchase the product even if a price set to recover the cost of research and development. In Chile, one-fourth of the mostly middle-class youth responded that they would be willing to pay to use the "Rock and Male Roles" CD-ROM or to buy it. The price they would consider paying was one-tenth to one-half that of the current selling price (US\$21). On the basis of a market feasibility study, INPPARES in Peru has mounted a national marketing campaign to sell the "Planet Zero Risk" software at a cost of 15 Nuevos Soles (US\$10) and is also planning to distribute the CD-ROM internationally. It is hoped that sales of the CD-ROM will allow the project to recuperate all costs of developing the software. Now that an initial investment in equipment and personnel has been made, INPPARES plans to produce more interactive educational CD-ROMs to sell for profit. A new multimedia program ("Unexpected"), aimed at teenage pregnancy prevention is currently in development.

Meanwhile, the demand for participation in APROFAM's Baby Think It Over® program has been high and is growing. Purchasing the ten dolls cost APROFAM about US\$3,000 in 1999. Between February and July 2000, APROFAM rented the dolls to 282 youth through school-based programs, collecting about US\$1,200. Some 80% of parents whose children were involved in the Baby Think It Over® program indicated that they experienced no difficulties in paying the cost of the program. If the program continues to be well-received and babies are rented on an ongoing basis, it appears that the cost of the dolls could easily be recovered and the program would become financially sustainable.



STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

The future direction of strategies that employ computer technologies to promote sexual and reproductive health among youth remains to be seen and may depend, in large part, on the continuing development of new technologies. It is important, nevertheless, to consider a number of strategic recommendations with respect to how to strengthen programming in youth and technology for SRH based on the results of the case studies presented in this report.

Know your goals and objectives.

Using technology should be a means to an end, and not the end in itself. With the initial explosion of technology, many groups “jumped on the bandwagon” to use technology. Funds were available and excitement about the possibilities was high, but little research had been done on what was effective. This resulted in organizations seeing the goal as using technology, rather than viewing technology as a strategy for reaching a clearly defined goal. It is important that organizations seeking to employ technology for youth SRH ensure that the goals and objectives drive the strategies, rather than vice versa.

Based on what was observed in these case studies, those projects with well-defined goals and objectives seemed to have the greatest effect on improving youth SRH. Both CD-ROM projects, “Rock and Male Roles” in Chile and “Planet Zero Risk” in Peru, had specific, clearly defined objectives and specific strategies for achieving them. Furthermore, the use of pre- and post-test survey instruments allowed the programs to effectively monitor attainment of these objectives. The objectives and strategies for the cyber centers, however, were not as well developed. Consequently, the outcomes of these projects in terms of improving youth's access to information on SRH or awareness of available youth services were less clear.

Know your audience before deciding on the specific technology to use.

These case studies show that computer technology projects primarily reach a specific audience: middle-class, non-indigenous, urban youth attending private schools. This is fine when this is the desired target audience. However, if an organization is seeking to reach rural, out-of-school, or very low-income youth, it should analyze which (or even whether a) particular technology is appropriate or if certain strategies are necessary to enable a given technology to reach the focus population. For example, as noted above, CD-ROMs require access to high-speed computers. Organizations will need to determine whether or not schools have the capacity to run software at adequate speeds; otherwise, users may respond negatively to the technology. Another important factor to consider if targeting out-of-school youth is that many CD-ROMs require solid reading skills to use properly.

It is also important to monitor use patterns and establish a socioeconomic profile of project participants. This will enable organizations to provide more targeted information, alter marketing strategies, and make programmatic changes as needed to ensure that the focus population is actually being reached.

Be aware that technology does not equal sustainability/income generation.

Technology projects are not a clear and direct path to sustainability or immediate income generation. Usually a large amount of funds are required to purchase and maintain the technology, support the research and development (particularly in the case of CD-ROM development), and train the users. It may not be feasible to expect that all of these costs will be recuperated. If the goal of the project is to generate income (such as in the case of a cyber center), sufficient research – particularly a market feasibility study – should be conducted before the investment is made to ensure that the strategy is viable. If low-income youth are targeted, special pricing strategies will need to be implemented, which may impact the level of revenue generation.

Once a pricing or fee structure has been established, the market should be monitored and fees adjusted accordingly in order to keep the service competitive. Because of youth's limited buying power,

marketing strategies for CD-ROMs in particular, most likely will need to be aimed at schools and other educational and health-related organizations, both public and private, as well as internationally. An unforeseen advantage of technology development is the enhanced image organizations can create for themselves by offering cutting edge technologies. This can be an important component for future financial sustainability, though it cannot always be immediately measured.

Do not lose the opportunity to promote SRH services.

Organizations should seek to ensure that after using a given technology, every user is aware of where they can go to receive services and get more information about SRH (i.e., the locations, services offered, and cost of services). The case studies show that a large percentage of the users of the cyber centers/Internet services were not aware that the organization offered clinical services, representing an opportunity lost to increase access to SRH services. Integrating the youth and technology projects with broader initiatives aimed at improving youth SRH may help increase awareness of youth SRH services among users.

Involve youth in project development.

The importance of involving youth in the development of technology projects cannot be overstated. Conducting in-depth interviews and focus groups will enable organizations to gauge young people's opinions, learn about their interests, and identify age-appropriate language. Involving youth on project teams, as artists, actors, musicians and software developers, for example, can be valuable. Such strategies will help ensure that the design of a product or service will be both appealing and appropriate to youth.

INPPARES in Peru involved youth in all stages of project development, including the design, testing, implementation, and evaluation of the “Planet Zero Risk” software, which resulted in the creation of a product that was specifically geared towards the target audience and had a very high rate of acceptability among users. Based on the success of this strategy, the organization is involving youth in the development of subsequent projects, such as its new teen pregnancy prevention CD-ROM “Unexpected.”

Consider possible social barriers.

Although new and exciting computer technologies can be a way to attract youth to SRH information and services, they will not, in and of themselves, overcome existing social barriers. Organizations will need to recognize the difficulty involved in changing attitudes that are deeply engrained in the culture. It will be important to carefully consider the focus population in the design of the project, understanding that in using specific technologies, certain populations may not be reached, such as young men in the case of mechanical babies. Involving parents, both mothers and fathers, and teachers can also be an important strategy for addressing these barriers.

While much work and investigation remains to be done, these case studies from IPPF/WHR member associations in Chile, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Peru demonstrate the enormous potential of using technology as part of an integrated approach to reaching youth. Nonetheless, there is a continued need to assess the use of technology for improving youth SRH in a more systematic way. This will enable us to understand what best meets the needs of a variety of young people and to strengthen and update programming in this area accordingly. It is also important to note that changes in technology development itself may have the biggest effect on the progress of “second generation” technologies in youth SRH programs.

APPENDIX: PROJECT DESCRIPTIONS BY COUNTRY

CHILE – APROFA

The Chilean Association for the Protection of the Family (APROFA) is the main NGO providing SRH services to youth in Chile. APROFA's youth services emphasize prevention of first pregnancies, STIs, and HIV/AIDS through educational programs and materials. The APROFA youth clinic, located in the Santiago metropolitan area, offers sexual and reproductive health services, including family planning and sexuality counseling and consultation as well as mental health services. The clinic also has educational activities targeting both young men and women, including group therapy, self-esteem workshops, and workshops on pregnancy prevention and STI and HIV/AIDS prevention. APROFA also collaborates with a network of Red Cross clinics to provide family planning counseling and services to lower to middle-income youth.

APROFA has developed a number of multimedia tools targeting youth, including three educational videos: (a) Adolescence and Sexuality, (b) From Girl to Woman, and (c) From Boy to Man. APROFA also produced an award-winning CD-ROM program aimed at adolescent pregnancy prevention called “How to Prevent Unwanted Pregnancy” featuring a popular radio personality named El Rumpi. It is installed at a computer at APROFA's Youth Center in Santiago and is also for sale on the Internet.

“Rock and Male Roles” CD-ROM

In 1999, APROFA began developing a CD-ROM called “Rock and Male Roles” targeting young men, aged 15 to 20, with the aim of improving their knowledge about the role that gender plays in sexual and reproductive health. Another objective of the project is to introduce young men to the SRH services provided by APROFA and other public and private agencies.

APROFA conducted a brief feasibility study, finding that schools in the country were equipped with computers able to run a CD-ROM program and that no other group in the country was producing CD-ROMs on SRH. APROFA received a grant of US\$50,000 from IPPF/WHR with funds from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and put aside US\$18,500 of its own resources to develop the project.

APROFA initiated the “Rock and Male Roles” project in response to what was perceived as an unmet need for SRH information among young men. Although the vast majority of APROFA's youth clientele are young women, approximately 40% of the audience in clinic-sponsored workshops on sexual and reproductive health topics consists of young men. This finding indicates that young men are interested in SRH when it is presented in an appealing way that makes them feel comfortable. The project was also developed to address the gender role stereotypes held by many young men. Focus groups for the “Rock and Male Roles” project found that young men often perceive pregnancy prevention to be the responsibility of women.

A team of three psychologists specializing in adolescence, sexuality, and gender were responsible for developing the material for the “Rock and Male Roles” software. Focus groups and in-depth interviews were held with young men to explore culturally relevant aspects of gender and SRH attitudes and behavior among youth. The software developers also interviewed youth on the street for some segments of the CD-ROM. A preliminary version of the CD-ROM was presented and discussed with five young men aged 15 to 19, and necessary adjustments were made.

The content of the “Rock and Male Roles” CD-ROM is aimed at sensitizing young men to the advantages of behavior based on gender equity and to motivate them to seek additional information on topics related to sexuality and gender. The software uses common situations and language to relate to young men. It consists of the following seven chapters:

1. To Be a Man: An Old Story
2. Be Tough, That's an Order
3. The Difficult Task of Being a Man, Without Dying in the Effort
4. The Beauty, the Beast, and Me
5. Rock and Male Roles in the Home
6. To Love Is Complicated
7. Your Opinions

EL SALVADOR – ADS

The Salvadoran Demographic Association (ADS) is the largest sexual and reproductive health NGO in the country. ADS operates a multifaceted youth services program aimed at increasing knowledge about sexual and reproductive health. ADS reaches youth through education, training, and clinical services. Each year, ADS trains about 300 youth promoters between the ages of 15 and 19, who are recruited from schools, sports clubs, and community-based youth groups. These promoters lead approximately 3,000 discussion groups a year, reaching approximately 22,500 young men and women. They discuss issues such as preventing unwanted pregnancies, STIs, and HIV/AIDS. ADS also runs a library in San Salvador that receives 30,000 visitors a year, of which 90% are youth.

Cyber Center

Since 1999, ADS has operated a cyber center for youth in its library. The project's original focus was to provide clients, the general public and local NGOs, especially those working on HIV/AIDS prevention, with increased access to the latest SRH information through the Internet. The project began to cater more exclusively to youth when it became apparent that there was greater demand for Internet access among this segment of the population. The cyber center was also viewed as a potential source of income generation for the organization.

The center has 12 high-speed computers linked by fiber optics to the Internet. A computer technician provides assistance to users from 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Monday-Friday, and from 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. on Saturdays. Other services offered include Web site construction, basic computer and Internet training, and printing. The Center has a sliding-scale fee structure with students paying 18 Colones (US\$2) for 90 minutes of computer/Internet access, while non-students pay between 21-30 Colones (US\$2.40-3.40) to use the service. The service has been marketed through flyers, letters to organizations, announcements in the newspaper, the ADS website (www.ads.org.sv), and visits to schools. The center seeks to guide youth in their Web searches by providing a catalogue of recommended Web sites, from UN agencies to religious organizations, covering a wide-range of issues related to SRH, including: (a) abortion, (b) AIDS, (c) breast cancer, (d) cloning, (e) contraception, (f) demography, (g) fertility, (h) childbirth, (i) prostitution, (j) sexuality, and (k) women and gender. However, users

are free to use the Internet for whatever purpose they have in mind. Because there is always the potential for inappropriate use, ADS is currently installing software to block access to pornographic sites.

The majority (54%) of users stated they used the cyber center only once or twice a month, mostly for “surfing the web” (65%), electronic mail (64%), or Internet research for school or university projects (59%). The majority of users had learned about the service through word-of-mouth, either from a friend (50%), teacher (7%), or family member (4%). Table 4 presents the data available on the number of users and the income generated during the same nine-month period (January-September) for both years, and Graphs 1 and 2 (see pages 20 and 21) present the trends in these data for the same time periods.

TABLE 4. MONTHLY USAGE AND INCOME OF ADS CYBER CENTER
(TOTAL OF 12 COMPUTERS)

Month	Number of users		Income (in US\$)	
	1999	2000	1999	2000
January	18	278	\$37	\$976
February	26	277	\$32	\$1051
March	92	195	\$121	\$1074
April	88	156	\$178	\$436
May	115	233	\$256	\$764
June	85	215	\$171	\$589
July	177	144	\$431	\$423
August	182	127	\$469	\$274
September	352	102	\$854	\$317
Totals	1,135	1,727	\$2,549	\$5,904

GUATEMALA – APROFAM

The Guatemalan Family Welfare Association (APROFAM) was established in 1964 and provides 38% of the modern contraceptive methods in Guatemala in 39 clinics throughout the country. Adolescent sexual and reproductive health is of great concern in Guatemala due to the early onset of sexual activity among youth, high levels of unprotected sex, and a high teenage pregnancy rate. National surveys indicate that 44.3% of adolescent girls are mothers or are pregnant. Through its Education Department, APROFAM offers a variety of sexual and reproductive health services and programs for young people, including a free sexual and reproductive health hotline that young people can call to get answers to health-related questions, as well as a youth clinic that provides primary care, as well as gynecological and mental health services.

Youth and the Internet Program

Since 1997, APROFAM has provided Internet services to the public in its clinic library in Guatemala City for research on sexual and reproductive health. Beginning in July 2000, APROFAM began to offer Internet service to youth aged 10-19 free of charge. This service evolved into the current Youth and the Internet Program, which has the following objectives: (a) to expose youth to modern technology through the use of the Internet, (b) to provide youth with access to information on sexual and reproductive health issues, and (c) to increase youth awareness of clinic services.

The program started out with only one computer available for Internet access. However, an additional computer and printer were added at a later date with IPPF funding. The computers are also available in half-hour intervals to the adult public for 10 Quetzales (about US\$1.25). Both youth and adults are charged 2 Quetzales (about US\$0.25) per printed page. An individual was hired specifically to provide assistance to youth in learning how to surf the Internet, conducting research, and printing desired information.

In its initial marketing of the service to adolescents, APROFAM printed brochures advertising the free Internet service and distributed them in schools, other places where educational activities for youth took place, the clinic library itself, and APROFAM's youth clinic. Program staff also met with teachers and directors at various schools to inform them about the free Internet access offered through the clinic.

As a result, a number of groups of students and graduates were organized to go to the center with a tutor for introductory lessons to the Internet.

With respect to users' level of Internet experience, 65% were first-time users. Of those adolescents with previous Internet exposure (35%), the majority (55%) had gone to a cyber cafe, while the remainder had accessed the Internet on a home computer (20%), on a friend's computer (15%), or at a university (10%). The majority (65%) of previous users reported having paid to access the Internet, with most of them (51%) paying 10-15 Quetzales (\$1.25 - \$1.75) for the service. About 40% of users said they would be willing to pay 10 Quetzales to use the Internet at APROFAM, which is the same amount currently charged to adult users of the service. Finally, the majority of respondents (57%) found the 2 Quetzales charge for printing to be acceptable.

Baby Think It Over®: Mechanical Babies

In response to the high teenage pregnancy rate in Guatemala, APROFAM implemented a mechanical baby adoption program beginning in 1999. This project is designed to give young people the opportunity to experience some of the implications and inconveniences frequently associated with early childbearing and single parenting. APROFAM feels that this direct experience sensitizes and increases the consciousness of young people with respect to parenting better than other educational activities. Thus, it is hoped that the mechanical baby adoption program will impact the sexual decisions made by young people participating in the program and help to delay the initiation of sexual relations.

As part of its responsible parenting program with youth, APROFAM purchased 10 "Baby Think It Over®" dolls. In this program, young women and men "adopt" a mechanical baby for one week. The babies are programmed to cry at various intervals throughout the day and night and must be attended by the "adoptive parent." The babies can be set to three different modes: irritable, normal, or easy. "Parents" are expected to feed, change, and comfort the baby and are required to keep a diary about what they did with the baby and their feelings throughout the experience. A computer chip within the baby records the actions of the "parent," including any "abuse" or "neglect" that may have occurred during the week — the time the "baby" spent crying, with its head in a bad position, or being shaken.

After the baby is returned to APROFAM, the “adoptive parents” meet in groups and individually with program staff to share their experiences and to discuss the data collected on the quality of care they provided. During the next year, participants attend a SRH workshop and receive bimonthly mailings with information related to SRH based on needs identified through questionnaires administered at in-take and at post-intervention. Among the topics discussed include the importance of sexual education, adolescence, pregnancy and childbirth, abortion and its complications, parenting, prenatal care, family planning, contraceptive methods, friendship and romance, as well as an overview of the different youth services offered at APROFAM.

A pilot testing of the program was conducted from December 1999 to January 2000 with 25 youth participants (24 females and 1 male), which allowed PROFAM staff to develop and validate program instruments. Based on the initial success of the pilot program, APROFAM began marketing the program to local schools and meeting with parents and teachers in early 2000. From February through June 2000, 282 youth from ten different schools near Guatemala City participated in the program. The average age of participants was approximately 15 years old, and the majority were students at secondary and technical schools.

PERU – INPPARES

The Peruvian Institute for Responsible Parenthood (INPPARES) has been offering a broad range of sexual and reproductive health services for more than 20 years and was the first organization in Peru to offer such services to young people. An INPPARES study conducted in metropolitan Lima schools showed that more than 30% of students had not heard of any STI; more than 20% did not know that condoms help prevent infections; 40% did not know how HIV is transmitted; and of those sexually active, only 21% used condoms. To address this lack of knowledge, INPPARES has been involved in the development of a number of computer-based technologies for youth.

In 1995, the association began offering an email counseling and information service called “Pregunto” (I Ask) through its Web site (www.inppares.org.pe). By writing to pregunto@inppares.org.pe, youth may ask questions on a variety of SRH topics. In addition, INPPARES partnered with the Johns Hopkins University/Population Communication Services (JHU/PCS) and the Population Council in Peru in 1997 to develop a simple, mobile, touch-screen program called “Isabel: Your Electronic Counselor” for use in the waiting room of their Patres Clinic and in health fairs. The CD-ROM platform allows video, animated cartoons, text, and audio to be accessed on 25 topics related to reproductive health, sex education, and family planning. There are more details and a full review of Isabel at the Web site for the Johns Hopkins Center for Communication Programs (www.jhuccp.org/comet/isabel.stm).

“Planet Zero Risk” CD-ROM

Building upon the success of these projects, INPPARES sought to develop an integrated program to promote adolescent SRH for use in schools, including the development of a new CD-ROM and teacher training on how to apply it in the classroom. The “Planet Zero Risk” project is aimed at improving knowledge about STIs and HIV/AIDS among youth and promoting risk prevention strategies by building on youth's self-esteem, assertiveness, values, and decision-making capabilities.

INPPARES began developing the multimedia application in 1999 with funding from the IPPF Netherlands Trust Fund. A team composed of youth clinic staff and promoters, consultants in adult education,

training, STIs and HIV/AIDS, and INPPARES senior staff worked with a group of young programmers to develop the CD-ROM program, which consists of the following components:

- Two cyber-characters from Planet Zero Risk, who accompany the user throughout the program;
- Six video stories about everyday youth who are exposed to STIs or HIV. In three of the videos, users may choose how the story ends by making behavior decisions for the characters;
- Messages about self-esteem, assertiveness, values, decision-making, and communication with parents following each of the video segments;
- A game about decision-making to avoid STIs and HIV;
- A quiz about assessing risky situations;
- Information about the signs and symptoms of STIs in men and women;
- Information about HIV/AIDS, the correct use of condoms, and local resources for youth; and
- A discussion of myths and beliefs regarding SRH.

In order to ensure validity of the information and appeal to youth, extensive testing of the software was done with the following groups: (a) young experts in multimedia software; (b) consultants who work with youth through the government's STI and HIV/AIDS Control Program (PROCETSS); (c) staff from the INPPARES Future Youth Center; (d) IPPF/WHR staff; (e) students and teachers at the participating schools; (f) doctors at Lima hospitals and INPPARES; and (g) representatives from organizations working on STI and HIV/AIDS prevention. Youth participation was an integral part throughout the various phases of development of "Planet Zero Risk."

After conducting a marketing feasibility study, the software program was promoted at a press conference, in which a demonstration was provided and sample copies were distributed to key agencies such as the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education. "Planet Zero Risk" is currently being advertised in the national newspaper *Diario Ojo*.

In the initial implementation phase of the project, one teacher at each participating school was trained in the use and goals of the "Planet Zero Risk" software. The teachers encouraged students to use the CD-ROM individually. It was found that most of the students (81%) used "Planet Zero Risk" alone, while others used it with their friends. Most of the students (66%) used the program just once, with the majority (77%) viewing the entire contents of the program. Students typically spent about an hour using "Planet Zero Risk."

CONTACT INFORMATION

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“Planet Zero Risk” costs US \$10





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