

# LOCAL PEOPLE OF VARIOUS AGES AND PROFESSIONS TRAINED TO PROMOTE FAMILY PLANNING IN SENEGAL

In 2012, with a contraceptive prevalence rate (CPR) of only 12%,<sup>1</sup> the Senegalese Ministry of Health and Social Action (MSAS) made an ambitious declaration via their National Family Planning Action Plan (NFPAP) to reach 27% CPR by the year 2015. Concerted action among government and partners helped increase CPR to 21% in 2015<sup>2</sup>, falling just short of that bold goal. Stakeholders realized that further increases in CPR would require collaboration with new partners who could expand demand-creation activities and link individuals to services.

In response, the USAID-funded Advancing Partners and Communities project, implemented in Senegal by FHI 360, began designing an approach to convince non-traditional sectors and civil society organizations in regions with low CPR and high unmet need for family planning (FP) services to support NFPAP.

The region of Diourbel has one of the lowest CPR rates in the country (6.6 %<sup>3</sup>), and those working to increase use of FP methods among the regions' residents have faced stubborn challenges. Diourbel is an extremely religious region, home to the city and Great Mosque of Touba, one of the most sacred sites for Muslims in West Africa, and although Islam does not prohibit use of FP methods, many in Senegal have noted difficulty in garnering support for FP in highly religious zones.



Photo: Trinity Zan

"I don't want to marry or have kids until I'm done with school. I want to be a midwife." -Koudhiou Fall, 18-year-old student in Mbacke district.

In addition, the youth population in Diourbel, at 57%,<sup>4</sup> is extremely high, presenting logistical challenges to the government that is struggling to ensure young peoples' access to quality FP and reproductive health (RH) services.

<sup>1</sup> DHS-MICS 2010-2011, modern method actual use

<sup>2</sup> Continuous DHS 2015, modern method actual use

<sup>3</sup> Continuous DHS 2012-2014, modern method use

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.diourbel.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=category&layout=blog&id=110&Itemid=519](http://www.diourbel.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&layout=blog&id=110&Itemid=519)

APC in collaboration with MSAS and the Directorate for Reproductive Health and Child Services identified two local civil society organizations that could implement strategies to reach men, women, and youth in the three districts of the Diourbel region with information about FP. *Action et Développement (AcDev)* is a Senegalese community-based organization (CBO) focused on improving the socio-economic and health status of communities across the country through participatory development. *Alliance Nationale des Jeunes pour la Santé de la Reproduction et la Planification Familiale (ANJ)* is an association that represents a variety of local youth-focused groups that are interested in promoting the health and development of Senegalese youth.

AcDev implemented promotional community activities in the districts of Bambey and Diourbel, recruiting locals such as bush and moto-taxi drivers, tailors/seamstresses, hairdressers, religious school teachers, and traditional communicators who knew nothing about creating demand for FP. AcDev trained these people to promote the benefits of FP, offer basic information about FP services, and refer

Advancing Partners and Communities is collaborating with MSAS and the Directorate for Reproductive Health and Child Services to design and implement this two-pronged approach—focusing on other government Ministries as well as community-based CSOs. The project has facilitated several consultations with non-health Ministries (Environment, Tourism, Interior) to orient personnel to the NFPAP, discuss their interest in supporting national FP goals, and to identify their potential contributions to those goals. APC identified two Ministries—the Ministry of Youth, Employment and Citizen Engagement and the Ministry of Women, Family and Children—with which it will formally partner. Preparatory activities, including training and developing materials, began in May 2016 while community-level demand-creation activities began in July.

interested individuals to health facilities.

Similarly, ANJ reached in- and out-of-school youth in Mbacke and Diourbel through a variety of approaches including peer education, film screenings, radio, home visits, community dialogues, and social media.



Photo: Edouard Ndiaye, Bambey supervisor for AcDev

A group education session at a local house in Bambey district is facilitated by two trained community leaders selected from the local girls vocational school.

With technical assistance from APC, both CBOs went through a similar process to develop their program packages, beginning with introductory meetings with key stakeholders including mayors, district health management teams, and focal point persons for youth. Each CSO worked with health personnel at the local and district levels to strengthen linkages to services, share data, and coordinate demand-creation strategies.

ANJ worked with the regional structures called CDEPS that work with the Ministry of Youth, Employment and Citizen Engagement on efforts to help youth develop socially and economically. Diourbel district CDEPS Director Rosalie Gomis is pleased with the ANJ partnership, which allowed her to combine her organization's financial resources with ANJ's human and material resources to open and staff a youth center within her facility. "The local authorities, including the Governor and Prefect, are very interested in this project," as an opportunity to collaborate across sectors, says Rosalie.

After several months of implementing various IEC activities, the two civil society organizations positively affected the lives of individuals in their communities. In the district of Mbacke, a young motorcycle taxi driver who participated in one of the ANJ-sponsored dialogues among his fellow drivers indicated that he previously knew very little about FP. "I really value what I learned."

ANJ's focal point person in Diourbel district worked with groups including local chapters of boy scouts and girl guides to give young people sexual and reproductive health information. Fifteen-year-old guide Medaine Diop spoke of researching the negative effects of early birth and facilitating a talk on the subject with her peers.

Mbayang Fall, a young hairdresser in Diourbel district who was trained by AcDev to speak to her peers about FP, also managed to turn her father, a previously staunch opponent of FP, into a champion. "He was very against FP, but I kept talking to him and slowly he became for it. He even asked that we

hold discussions at the house!" She also noted that the variety of approaches used to reach people is important because while a big community mobilization may be useful for attracting attention to a topic, it isn't always appropriate for going in-depth. For that, she prefers talking to a client one-on-one to make a connection and answer individual questions.



Photo: Seydina Limamoulaye DIOP (ANJ)

Training youth to use social media to promote FP/RH.