New and innovative online approaches to reach MSM population in the Central American region

Susana Lungo
PASMO and PSI, USA

The challenges in the Central American region to address HIV programs in the region are complex due to its concentrated epidemics in Men who have sex with men (MSM) and transgender women (TW) populations, with prevalence from 8% to 24% and also high levels of stigma and discrimination which make these populations hard to reach for interventions. The Pan-American Social Marketing Organization (PASMO) developed a combination prevention intervention in Central America that delivers HIV prevention behavior change communication (BCC) messages, products, services and referrals to promote improved condom and condom-compatible lubricant use, HIV testing, violence reporting and the use of complementary services. As part of this program and due to the difficulty to reach MSM populations, an online intervention was created taking advantage of the internet and its dating potential in this population. The intervention’s name is “cyber-educators” and consists of virtual one-on-one BCC and HIV counseling and testing referrals. This part of the program was launched through existing chat-rooms and websites. Participants were tracked using a confidential unique identifier code (UIC) based on some personal characteristics. Only in 2014, 12,514 MSM UICs were recorded and most of them were never contacted before by other interventions. Coverage of this program represents now 43% of all MSM activities in the region. Created as a response to social media evolution, this intervention successfully illustrates how innovative HIV prevention education can reach populations most-at-risk for HIV.

Biography

Susana Lungo is an experienced marketer and with more than 20 years of experience in marketing, brand planning, advertising, media & creativity. She has specialized expertise in brand management, new product positioning and communication, consumer research and evaluation and extensive experience in Social Marketing and Behavior Change Communication. She has worked with PASMO for the last 12 years, overseeing the Central American countries. Since 2013, she is the Regional Deputy Director and since 2010, she has been serving as COP of the USAID HIV/AIDS Combination Prevention Program in Central America and Mexico, responsible of providing leadership, management and oversight.

Notes: