



U.S. Agency for International Development

Bureau for Global Health

SUCCESS STORIES

HIV/AIDS

AIDS Hotline Reaches Youth in Jordan

DESPERATE AND SCARED, a single 25-year-old Jordanian man called the AIDS Hotline after hearing a radio announcement about it.

At first, he was suspicious. Was this phone service some sort of policing agency out to trap people who had broken the law? Once the call went through and the phone counselor gave him reassurances that the Hotline staff were there to help people with questions about HIV and AIDS, the young man opened up and talked frankly about what had compelled him to call. He needed information. Awhile back he had been out one night with some of his buddies and he had given into temptation and had engaged in sex with a sex worker. Looking back on his actions, he regretted the experience. Worse, though, he was scared that he might have contracted HIV from the encounter. His fear compelled him to seek information. He wanted to know about testing and treatment.

Approximately 50 percent of HIV/AIDS cases in Jordan are among young people, ages 15 to 34.

The Hotline counselor asked the young man to visit the center for an anonymous test. Still feeling some trepidation, he went to the voluntary testing and counseling center and was tested. On learning that the results were negative, to his great relief, the young man thanked the center staff for being discrete and supportive and for giving him valuable information. He knew that he would never again put himself at risk for HIV. With the knowledge that he is not HIV positive, he looks forward to marrying the love of his life.

As in many parts of the world, in Jordan stigma, social pressures, and discrimination make it hard to combat the AIDS epidemic. Although the official number of reported cases is low, estimates are larger, and no national surveillance system exists to track HIV and AIDS cases. Fear, stigma, and discrimination associated with HIV throughout the country prevent many people from reporting the infection. Discussion of sexual practices is culturally unacceptable, condoms are not openly marketed, and reproductive health knowledge, especially among young people, is still lacking.

To help keep infection rates low in Jordan, the U.S. Agency for International Development

(USAID) began a modest program of surveillance and prevention to halt the spread of HIV. Part of that work included renovating and equipping the Jordanian National AIDS Program Voluntary Counseling and Testing and Hotline Center. These tasks were accomplished through the IMPACT Project, implemented by Family Health International. USAID established a day clinic in the center as well. There staff provide antiretroviral treatment and monitor HIV-positive clients and distribute condoms provided free of charge by the Ministry of Health.



Photo courtesy of Family Health International

Students in Jordan's Ajloun Governorate participate in a role-playing activity for World AIDS Day. The event was sponsored by the Red Crescent Society and IMPACT Project.

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The hotline maintains confidentiality and is a reliable source of information. Meeting this demand for information and privacy is critical, since approximately 50 percent of HIV/AIDS cases in Jordan are among young people, ages 15 to 34. "With culturally sensitive approaches, young Jordanians can become comfortable discussing sensitive issues related to HIV/AIDS. There is a high demand among young Jordanians for reliable information about sexuality and gender," says Basma Khraisat, IMPACT Project Country Director.

http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/global_health/aids

<http://www.fhi.org/>

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