

MAKING ACCESS REAL

Increasing access to safer sex
commodities for men

HealthPlus 4 Men (HP4M)





Title: Increasing access to safer sex commodities for men

Name of Organisation: HealthPlus 4 Men (HP4M)

Country: Swaziland

Date: December 2016

Who are we?

HealthPlus 4 Men is a non-governmental organisation established in Swaziland in 2014 working to support health care access for gay men. We opted for the "HealthPlus4 Men" name to circumvent legal challenges around registration of an openly gay focused organization in the hostile Swaziland environment that criminalizes same sex relationships.

What was the issue?

Men's health-seeking behaviour differs considerably from women's – for example, men are much less likely to go to a doctor or hospital. Swaziland is a deeply patriarchal society where a man is not expected to fall sick. If he does, the expectation is that he will seek counsel with a traditional healer rather than going to a clinic or hospital.

As well as regulating men's access to health care, these patriarchal expectations also limit the ability of men to even discuss their health-related needs.

In this context, discussing men's sexual and HIV related health care needs becomes particularly challenging.

Judgmental and discriminating attitudes and practices of health care workers towards MSM further limit the access of MSM to health care services.

Policy makers refuse to recognise the health care needs of MSM.

Consequently, HIV and STI prevalence rates amongst MSM in Swaziland are very high.

What was the change we wanted to see?

We wanted to see that all men, and especially marginalised groups of men could access health services without the fear of stigma and discrimination.

We wanted to see a shift in public attitudes so that all members of society recognised men's health needs, particularly their sexual health needs.

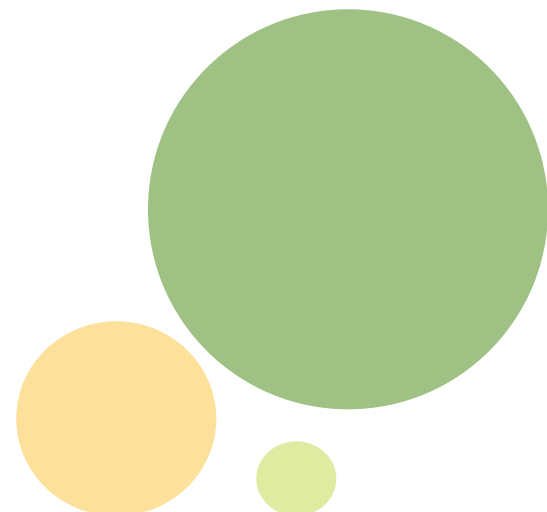
We wanted health services to offer sensitive, confidential and appropriate health care information and services to all men, especially MSM, and in particular to increase access to condoms and lubricants, and counselling.

What did we do?

- We mobilised our members and other men using social media. We created a Facebook page as a vehicle to drive the distribution of accurate information and to increase discussion about men's health and well-being.
- We directly distributed condoms and lubricants through the HP4M focal persons who are in all four regions of Swaziland.
- We provided psychosocial support through the focal persons who are also lay counsellors.
- We formed partnerships to increase support for our work on MSM issues.

What did we achieve?

- We built a core team of unwavering, committed, passionate advocates within HP4M, working in a very hostile environment.
- We increased access of MSM and other men to discussions of accurate health information in hard-to-reach areas of the country. This was done through creating platforms which were confidential and which men could access anonymously. These platforms contributed to helping men acknowledge the health care issues of men.
- We increased access of MSM and other men to psychosocial support through providing counselling and through strengthening the MSM community. We increased access of MSM and other men to condoms and lubricants.



What were the key lessons learned?

Solidarity

Partnerships with other organisations are of mutual benefit. We have limited resources but working with others increases our reach and strengthens our advocacy.

Social media

Our Facebook page is an excellent communication medium which can be accessed by those living in remote areas as well as by older MSM who may be more socially isolated than younger men.

This Case Study was prepared by HealthPlus 4 Men as part of the CAL Conversations Series: Co-creating Conscious Learning Cultures. This set of Conversations are a part of the KP REACH Project, funded by the Global Fund through Hivos

For more information on Health Plus 4 Men

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