THE HIGHER EDUCATION INITIATIVE (HEI): 7 YEARS OF HELPING UNIVERSITY STUDENTS STAY HEALTHY

The Higher Education Initiative (HEI), DKT’s set of sexual and reproductive health (SRH) activities for Ethiopian university students, enters its seventh year of activity this year.

Since 2009, HEI has worked closely with university administrations and student populations across the country to deliver high-quality SRH programming.

HEI’s outputs to date have been impressive:

- **1,300** mass events for nearly a million students
- Peer education and other training for **84,000** students, faculty and staff
- **2.1 million** condoms distributed

In addition to consistent, wide-scale programming, HEI has also served as an innovator, authoring and managing the Temarinet website, one of the largest indigenous social media websites in the country, and creating “block-based” discussion sessions at girls dormitories.

“The block-based sessions came out of a need to personalize our mass promotion,” says Shimeles Gebye-hu, SRH Coordinator for DKT Ethiopia and Head of HEI.

“We needed a space where female students could share and also reinforce one another.”

“Block-based sessions have been a great vehicle for this.”

HEI has also been at the forefront of helping universities integrate SRH into their budgets and administrative processes. One of the great successes of the project is that several universities now include budget outlays for SRH commodity procurement, which was not a consideration a few years ago.

(Continued on Page 2)
The number of universities also increased, from one in 1993 to 36 today with plans to add 11 more by 2020. There are also numerous Teacher and TVETs as well as private institutions existing and planned in the country.

While the expansion has been rapid, it has occurred in the midst of multiple “macro-demographic” factors, including a moderate and declining HIV epidemic, the introduction and uptake of family planning, and rapid growth in international media and technology.

It has also occurred almost within a single generation, during which time a massive number of young people has lived away from their families and community structures for the first time, for which the culture has had little time to adapt. This has left some students vulnerable to STIs and unwanted pregnancy, necessitating ongoing SRH work at universities.

Contact Shimeles Gebeyehu at shemeles.g@dktethiopia.org.
CHILD SPACING IN SOMALI AND AFAR: THE CASE OF THE LEKIE PROJECT

Niman Ahmed, a father of two from Tekedem town in Somali Region, is pleased with the results he is seeing from using family planning.

“My wife and I are happy and our kids are healthy.”

“We are doing well physically, mentally and financially.”

Like Niman, many residents of Somali and Afar Regions are increasingly seeking family planning as a means to space births.

“I think some people are surprised to learn that Islam supports spacing pregnancies for the sake of the child’s and mother’s health,” says Ekubarebi Mohammed, DKT Ethiopia’s Monitoring, Evaluation and Research Officer.

“For example, the Majallah Majma al-Fiqh al-Islami, the proceedings of a 1989 meeting of Islamic scientists in Saudi Arabia, concluded that contraception is acceptable in order to control the timing of births.”

“This conclusion is supported elsewhere as well.”

The Lekie Project
DKT Ethiopia’s Rural Social Marketing (RSM) or Lekie Project has been working in rural areas of the country, including in Afar and Somali, since 2012.

“Afar and Somali lag Ethiopia on most maternal and child health indicators” says Hirut Araya, DKT Ethiopia’s Coordinator for the Lekie Project.

“Birth spacing, including through contraception, is accepted by a number of Islamic teachings and is an important mechanism for improving the health of women and children in these regions.”

Since 2013, the Lekie Project has organized dozens of sensitization trainings for community and religious leaders in Afar and Somali. The project has also conducted 899 mass events for tens of thousands of residents and over two thousand small group discussions. The events gather participants as they come to market days, an essential strategy in reaching geographically diffuse populations in a cost-effective manner.

“Market days bring together farmers and rural inhabitants across the developing world,” says Hirut.

“We’ve figured out that by targeting our programming to coincide with market days, we are able to reach a considerable segment of our target population.”

In addition to sensitization and mass events, the project has been responsible for stocking pharmaceutical and clinical outlets with a continuous supply of high-quality contraceptives, including 29,824 cycles of oral contraceptive pills and 11,076 injectable contraceptives, among other products.

“We’ve learned a lot in the three plus years we’ve been active in Afar and Somali,” says Hirut.

“We now have a package of interventions and relationships that lay the groundwork for consistent gains in these regions.”

Contact Hirut Araya at hirut.ar@dktethiopia.org.
DKT LEADS SESSIONS AT NATIONAL CONDOM WORKSHOP IN ADAMA

DKT Ethiopia, the largest supplier of condoms to the private sector in Ethiopia, was invited to present at the National Condom Programming Workshop organized by the Federal HAPCO March 21 – 24, 2016, in Adama.

DKT led participants through sessions on developing information, education and communication (IEC) materials for individual and mass audiences.

“It’s an honor to share our experience communicating about condoms, which is a strength of DKT,” says Befekadu Beyene, DKT’s HEI Officer and Social Media Specialist.

“Since 1990, we have carried out hundreds of marketing campaigns as well as multiple brand introductions and grassroots promotions.”

“All of this has taught us what works in Ethiopia.”

The workshop was organized by the Federal HAPCO with the goal of bringing together diverse actors in condom programming, from supply chain management to monitoring and research. Male and female condoms are uniquely valuable to public health responses as they are the only technology that prevents both STIs, including HIV, and unwanted pregnancy.

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON FP 2016: A FOCUS ON YOUTH

DKT Ethiopia participated in the 4th International Conference on Family Planning in Nusa Dua, Indonesia in January 2016.

One emphasis of this year’s conference was youth and family planning.

“A wave of young people is set to enter their reproductive years throughout the world,” says Dagnachew Alemayehu, DKT Ethiopia’s National Key Accounts Manager.

“Our task is to ensure FP is available to this demographic in Ethiopia.”

The meeting is a semi-annual gathering of thousands of practitioners, Government leaders, and activists from around the world who gather to discuss family planning and reproductive health. It is sponsored by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

Over 3,000 participants were present at this year’s event.

During the conference, the Ethiopian and Kenyan Governments each received the Excellence in Leadership for Family Planning (EXCELL) Award, which is given to Governments for extraordinary achievements in family planning.

Ethiopia is considered one of the most robust family planning success stories globally, having increased contraceptive prevalence from 4.7% in 2000 to more than 40% in 2014.

The 2013 International Conference on FP was held at the African Union Exhibition Hall in Addis Ababa.