

Project Success Story: Punto “J”: a Portal for Youth-to-Youth Education on Health and HIV/AIDS

Sex and AIDS prevention in the hands of youth and adolescents



Young volunteers meet and discuss the topics to be dealt with on the portal.

Lurdes Chara, aged 20, is one of the more than 30 young people behind the Punto J portal, which provides information and clarifies doubts about sexuality for adolescents and youth. Over the past three years it has been her job to advise her peers on sexuality and HIV/AIDS

prevention. She started as a volunteer and now works as a promoter of the site. One of the tasks that gave her the most satisfaction and brought her closer to the reality of other youth was answering the questions that young people post in the queries space called *Zámpate*. “I’ve learnt a lot. I’ve seen lots of questions that I never imagined someone could ask, and I felt I could help many young people who didn’t know who else to turn to for answers”, states Lurdes. The portal collects curious, naïve, complex questions about topics ranging from masturbation to sexual identity. “I remember a girl who thought that if she had a shower right after having sex, there was no risk of becoming pregnant”, she says. “There was also a boy who was really afraid that he would start growing hair on his hands from masturbating so much, and wanted advice”, she adds.

Romerd Langa, aged 25, also works for the portal mainly writing the editorials. But since his friends and those close to him found out what he does, he has received more queries on sexuality. “One day a girl I’d seen around in the neighbourhood came to me and asked me if she could have a word. I said yes, and then she told me that she was afraid she could be pregnant. I asked her to explain why she was worried and she told me that some days before, she and her boyfriend had kissed and touched each other, but always with their clothes on. So I explained that she had nothing to worry about and gave her information about sex and contraceptives so she would take them into account”, says Romerd. Both Lurdes and Romerd say they are enjoying these communication and counselling sessions and explain that speaking through the same language, with no technicalities, with images and concrete examples is what allows messages to be understandable and interesting for adolescents and youth.

Peruvian initiative spreads to the region

Punto J is an initiative aimed at promoting participation and youth leadership in the fight against HIV/AIDS through the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs). The project is executed by Peru’s *Instituto de Educación y Salud* (IES) with the support of the Institute for Connectivity in the Americas of the International Development Research Centre (IDRC).

The portal offers a chat room where youth and adolescents share their experiences and concerns, a Latin-American forum where adolescents from across the region express their views, youth counsellors with different profiles who answer all kinds of questions, information on sexuality, HIV-AIDS prevention, news from around the world, comics, games, what boys and girls think about different topics, and other content. The site receives over 250 queries a month that are answered on a weekly basis. The average age of portal users ranges from 17 to 24, the youngest users being 15 and the oldest 30, with exceptional cases of users as old as 60. Elena Telles, who is responsible for monitoring the project, says the initiative has been very successful in Peru as an educational and information programme developed by youth for youth through the use of ICT tools that they use on a daily basis for socialization.

Due to the success of the project, Punto J is being replicated in different countries in the region such as Mexico, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Colombia, Bolivia and Argentina. The strategies and learning from the Peruvian experience are adapted to each country’s reality.

Figures and Data

- Young people aged under twenty-five account for about 20% of the world’s population¹.

¹ Information gathered from the IV Latin American and Caribbean Forum on HIV/AIDS and STDs. Argentina, 2007

- Every fourteen seconds, a young person in this age group joins the ranks of people who have acquired HIV, the virus that leads to AIDS².
- In Latin America today, there are over five hundred thousand young people living with HIV.

Links

[Punto J's portal](#)

[Project information on IDRC's website in Spanish](#)

[Project information on IDRC's website in English](#)

[Project information on IDRC's website in French](#)

[Instituto de Educación y Salud \(IES\)'s website](#)

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² <http://www.pnud.cl/boletin/enero/cont10.htm>