

Background

Guinea's maternal and child health indicators are among the lowest in the world. Even before Ebola hit in 2014, trust and confidence in its health services were low. Ebola's rapid spread further fueled fear and distrust, with many people believing health workers themselves spread the disease.

Guinea's current population of 10.6 million is growing at a 3.1 percent annual rate. Life expectancy is 59 years, indicating a heavy disease burden. According to recent surveillance data, health services in more than 30 health districts are underutilized, especially in areas where Ebola hit hardest. This is due to a lack of quality services and limited confidence in the health system.

As the country continues to recover from Ebola, the Health Communication Capacity Collaborative (HC3) is working with Guinea's hardest hit communities to rebuild both trust in the health system and the quality of care delivered. This series of case studies examines some of HC3's activities and tools that were part of an overall social and behavior change communication (SBCC) strategy to improve health behaviors and increase the demand for and use of quality reproductive, maternal, newborn and child health (RMNCH) services in Guinea.

Branding Quality with a Gold Star

A national health services quality campaign underway in Guinea awards a "Gold Star" to facilities that earn it. The campaign enhances the visibility of the Gold Star symbol as a sign of high-quality services delivered by selected

health facilities. The campaign also encourages people to use these facilities so they can access better maternal, newborn and child health services.

A key strategy for driving demand for health services was to ensure that those services could adequately serve a skeptical population. Many health facilities were in disrepair and did not present a welcoming first impression. Service providers also had not been trained in basic skills.

Based on feedback from community dialogues and health facility staff, two key needs emerged: 1) an upgrade of the facilities, and 2) provider training in interpersonal communication and counseling. Once these needs were met, the public needed to know about them.

In collaboration with the Maternal and Child Survival Program (MCSP) and the Ministry of Health, HC3 revamped the Gold Star brand. Since 2012, MCSP has worked with health facilities to meet quality criteria for service through a months-long accreditation process. Once accredited, a facility received a "Gold Star," which was prominently displayed inside and outside the facility.

Using MCSP's criteria to qualify a facility to be branded as Gold Star, HC3 developed a new logo, print materials and a media campaign to promote these facilities.

The Gold Star Campaign

The new logo featured the image of a smiling male and female Guinean nurses inside the star and the slogan, "High-quality services, your health is guaranteed."



The Gold Star campaign launch.

HC3 produced a number of materials to promote the campaign, including a poster, stickers, a flier, a client's rights poster, a billboard, T-shirts and banners. The campaign officially launched in Conakry in May 2016 in Coleah health center. The launch ceremony attracted 6,000 people and included the unveiling of the new logo, a carnival and a concert with popular musicians and comedians.

The campaign held similar events in other prefectures where health facilities had been awarded Gold Stars. To date, a total of 15 health facilities have met the criteria. In each prefecture, HC3 partnered with women's networks, religious leaders, hygiene and health committee members, syndicates of motorcycle taxi drivers, local radios, health providers and NGO staff.

“*The strong message I heard is about encouraging pregnant women to always go to the health center. To bring more people in the health facility requires the improvement of quality care. I encourage the project to continue to educate the public.*”

Fatoumata Binta
Agent Technique de Sante, Telimele

A TV spot promoting Gold Star clinics aired in six languages twice a day on the three main TV stations. Twenty-four radio stations aired the radio spot six times daily, five days a week every month in six languages. In addition, billboards were erected near Gold Star sites and fliers were distributed.

To strengthen the collaboration between Gold Star health facilities and community members, HC3 also launched “Open Door Days” inviting community members in to learn about the facilities.

Results

The major result of this campaign was a change in perception. Realizing the health centers were there for the community and could be improved by their own efforts helped community members feel ownership of the process.

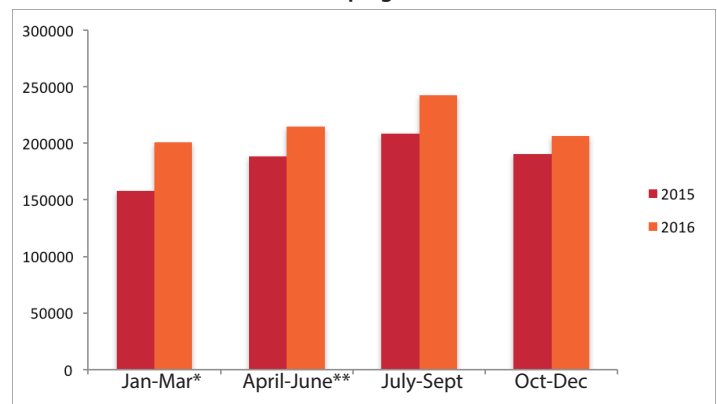
It is estimated that more than 1,000 people at each site were exposed to key messages disseminated during the launches. The number of people reached by radio



programs is estimated to be about 3,000 people per station each month.

Attendance at clinics increased compared to one year before the campaign began, as shown in the graph below.

Clinic attendance comparison from 2015 to 2016 after facilities rehabilitation and Gold Star campaign



*Rehabilitation started in 2016; **Community activities started in 2016, Gold Star campaign started in May 2016

About HC3

HC3 is a five-year, global SBCC project funded by USAID from October 2012 until September 2017. The project is designed to strengthen the capacity of developing countries to implement state-of-the-art SBCC programs. The Ebola emergency response and the post-Ebola recovery response are among the important health areas addressed by HC3.

HC3 is supporting the Government of Guinea, U.S. Government implementing partners and local SBCC professionals to design, produce and implement a package of high-quality SBCC interventions to encourage Guineans to use their local health centers and improve associated behaviors.

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