Peer Education: Management and Supervision Guideline Notes for Project Staff on Management and Supervision of Peed Education Volunteers and Activities

(Excerpt from Peer Education Manual)

1. Activity Planning and implementation

The work plan created during the quarterly assessment and planning includes peer education activities.

In your activity planning, also check that the resources needed for activities such as flip charts, IECs (pamphlets) and condom stock (both male and female) are available when needed.

Always make sure that the activities connect directly to the objectives and indicators of the TL STEPS model. Clear links are important because you will be using the objectives and indicators to monitor the performance and achievements of the project. Similarly, the TL HIV Module (HIV – Sik Long Koap) is a useful resource if more information is needed on HIV and STI information.

2. Providing Support for Peer Education Volunteers

The support you provide to volunteers is very important in ensuring that volunteers are motivated to do good work. These supportive activities can be through:

Regular meetings for all volunteers.

Providing additional educational material for the volunteers' own use.

Making IEC materials and condoms available for distribution regularly and consistently.

Providing certificates, badges, T-shirts, bags or caps to identify them as trained TL volunteers.

Providing comprehensive local reference and referral lists.

Creating opportunities for new peer education volunteers to work with more experienced volunteers in a mentoring relationship.

Arranging special activities to reward the volunteers and help maintain their commitment and enthusiasm.

2.1 Managing Peer Education Volunteer drop-out rates

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As well as assisting volunteers to work effectively, staff support can help to manage dropout rates. Particularly, if the volunteers are young people or mobile populations, they can have many other interests and commitments, which contribute to high dropout rates.

There are certain dropout issues which are inevitable because of the nature of the project and its target population. Analysis of peer education projects shows the main reasons for volunteers dropping out are: finding a job, preparing for an exam, marriage or childbirth or sickness. Often the reasons are not connected with the project, but are concerned with other life events.

Here are some strategies for reducing dropout rates:

> Give each volunteer a one-year contract, which they may renew only once. In this way, the turnover rate is official and it allows you to plan to recruit new volunteers every two year.

> Establish compensation schemes to motivate and help to retain volunteers.

> Provide mentoring and support for other interested peers who are part of the wider peer education network, and consider involving them in the next training.

2.2 Management Support Project staff members need to consistently supply the practical support that the PE volunteers need to conduct their activities.

A common problem for peer support projects is a lack of equipment or material, which creates competition for the few resources that are available.

You can minimise such competition through good planning and coordination. Another solution is to create a personal educational kit for each volunteer, which might contain:

> Videos/DVDs
> Flip charts
> Demonstration kits
> Condom storage box
> Reference books
> Handouts
> Brochures
> Promotional material

Project staff must also provide any money due or required by the volunteers on a timely basis as agreed. Such payments might be for various purposes including transport, activity support and session expenses. Because many volunteers have no other source of income, it is important that their involvement in the project does not cause them financial hardship.

Apart from provision of materials and logistical support, the project team must prepare to manage conflicts amongst volunteers or between management/staff and volunteers.

3. Supervising and Monitoring Volunteers

3.1. Management Style Project staff need to be accessible and efficient (see Table 1 below).

If staff members are around the same age as the volunteers, this similarity can enhance the relationship.

A 'volunteer friendly' management style and working environment for volunteers can contribute significantly to efficiency. In an encouraging setting of this kind, the peer educators will feel they can communicate with project staff and report openly on their successes and difficulties.

Five useful tips for peer education managers and supervisors

1. Be clear about expectations of volunteers. Carefully explain well in advance your expectations regarding matters such as targets, deadlines and dates.

2. Do not use power and position to intimidate people. Admit mistakes openly and honestly, and recognise achievements.

3. Be accessible. Set aside time to talk with each volunteers.

4. Deal with problems in an honest and straightforward manner. Listen to the volunteers, concerns without being defensive, follow up on these concerns and explain decisions.

5. Create a healthy work environment. Discourage gossip. Empower volunteers by giving them materials, training and support.

3.2. Supervising the Volunteers

Ongoing supervision is essential to the success of the project. It supports and motivates the volunteers. The ongoing attention from project staff also helps them to feel valued and remain with the project.

The amount of supervision and support that volunteers need will depend on: · The types of activities they do – those who conduct large group education sessions and those who work in more emotionally difficult situations may need more supervision and support; and · The amount of training they have had. The more training provided, the less supervision is likely to be needed.

Themes of supervision Good supervision will identify how things are going with the volunteers and the project. It will highlight the topics or skills where the volunteers need further training. These issues of knowledge and skill development may be common to all the volunteers, or particular to an individual volunteer.

The supervision sessions can be structured around the following themes:

Comprehension. Does the volunteer use language that is clear and simple, and limit the number of complicated ideas/topics to a manageable level?

Achieving the purpose. Does the peer educator provide the information or communication that the target group needs?

Attractiveness. Do the presentations, visuals or IEC materials hold the target group's attention?

Acceptance. Are the messages and the way they are communicated acceptable to the target group?

Involvement. Does the target group identify with the messages and the materials and see that they are intended for them? Is the peer educator reflecting the language and values of the target group?

Approaches to supervision You can provide supervision:

Through one-to-one work with volunteers by observing them at work and discussing their performance;

In group meetings that identify common experiences of successes and difficulties with the work;

Through peer review, where volunteers review each other's performance;

By observing the volunteers giving community education presentations/talks;

Through overall evaluation and feedback of volunteer's performance; and/or

Using a process whereby the volunteers provide regular written reports, which the project staff then comment on.

If the supervisor has identified areas where an individual volunteer needs to improve the supervisor can create an individual development plan for this volunteer and monitor progress against that plan during individual supervision sessions.

If project staff have created professional development programmes for volunteers to help expand their skills and employment opportunities, supervisors can also monitor the operation of those programmes.

4. Stress Management

Peer education volunteers can experience considerable stress as a result of their work. For example, they may feel generally stressed, experience burnout or have psychological issues. Project staff should be alert to this potential and take proactive steps to prevent or minimise stress wherever possible.

Supervision and management staff should be able to recommend interventions to manage or reduce stress. Options include reducing an individual's workload, providing counselling and support, and assisting in the development and implementation of personal stress reduction programmes.

Provide regular support sessions to volunteers, as individuals and as a group, to address general stress, burnout and other psychological issues. You might incorporate these sessions into monthly site visits or hold them as special debriefing sessions.

Management and supervisors need to use their best judgement as to what is happening within the project and thus what is the most appropriate technique to use.

5. Reporting by Peer Education Volunteers

Volunteers should submit progress reports regularly with the following information:

Quantitative reports (with measurements, amounts etc.) of each activity they conducted, containing:

Time and place of event

Topic discussed

Number and characteristics of target group served (age, sex, education level, etc.)

Type of material handed out (condoms, information)

Referrals provided

Reflections and comments on the quality of their work, containing: Comments on the strengths and weaknesses of their work

 Feedback from the target group

Feedback from stakeholders

6. Links with partners and Stakeholders

Maintaining the support structure during the implementation phase (keeping up links with partners and stakeholders) is very important.

At the project design stage, the project team identified stakeholders and partner organisations. During the project implementation stage, it is possible that other stakeholders and partners will emerge. It is important that the project team maintains its relationships with these people and organisations as they can play an important role in supporting the project and in providing referral services and support.

While the project is in operation, the staff should maintain contact and liaison with these stakeholders by:

Continuing to meet with them formally and informally, and informing them of all new project activities;

Inviting them to any special occasions;

Supplying them with the HIV/STI educational materials used in the project and asking them to review new IEC materials;

Encouraging them to speak with others about the value of the peer education project;

Asking them to provide public support for the project such as by writing articles or letters to papers; and

Encouraging the volunteers to talk with the stakeholders about their work.

With partner organisations the project team should establish regular discussions about how the partnership is operating. During these discussions, both sides can give feedback about how the partnership is working.

Especially important are regular meetings with any HIV/STI and sexual and reproductive health services that the project uses for referrals. At these meetings, the project team could supply service providers with feedback it has received from the key affected populations about the services.