



Making Sweethearts Safe: Increasing Condom Use among High Risk Urban Men and their Partners in Cambodia

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BACKGROUND

Over the past few years, commercial sex in Cambodia has shifted out of brothels and into entertainment settings such as karaoke bars and beer gardens. Female entertainment workers may be seen by men as less risky than brothel-based sex workers and “sweetheart” relationships frequently develop between entertainment workers and their male clients. “Sweethearts” are high risk sexual relationships characterized by an element of trust and affection between partners which often lead to low condom use. Historically, men have not been the focus of HIV prevention efforts in Cambodia. To address this critical gap in programming, PSI employs an innovative venue-based communications campaign that targets high risk urban men with messaging to encourage consistent condom use with their sweethearts.

METHODS

- Quantitative behavioral surveys among high risk urban men were conducted in 2008 and 2009 in four urban intervention sites: Phnom Penh, Siem Reap, Sihanoukville, and Battambang.
- Criteria for inclusion in the surveys included men 18 years or older who currently have at least one high risk sweetheart and have had sex with their sweetheart in the last 3 months and had sex with other partners in the past 12 months.
- Time location sampling methodology was used.
- Results were segmented among correct and consistent condom users and inconsistent condom users.

RESULTS

Men reported large numbers of **multiple concurrent sweetheart relationships**.

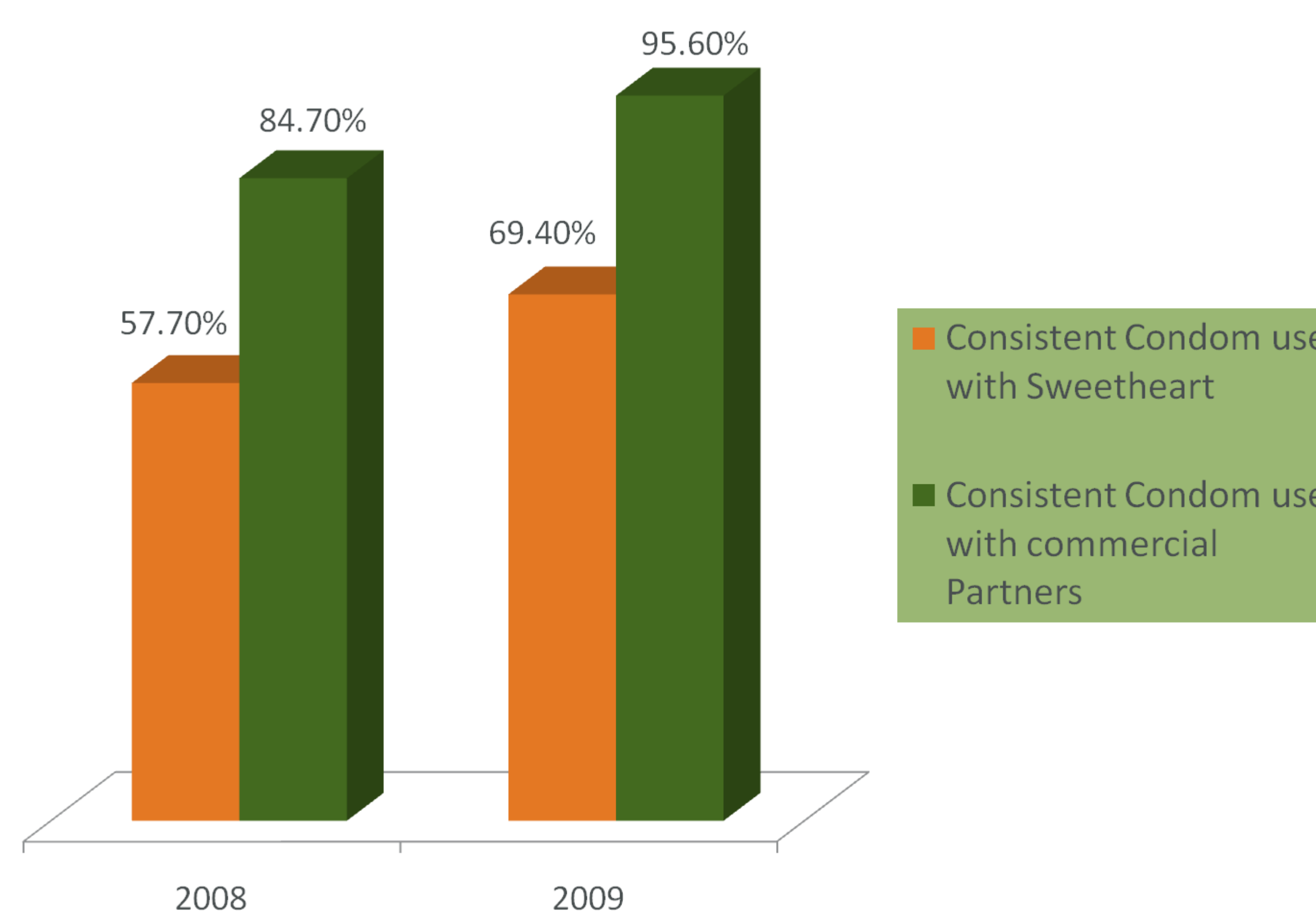
- In 2009, **41.2% of men** currently have more than one sweetheart compared to 36.4% in 2008.
- In 2009, men reported an **average of 5.8 commercial partners** in the past twelve months.
- Key behavioral determinants for condom use among high risk men and their sweethearts are anchored in **beliefs about a partner’s background and trust in a partner**.
- Exposure to PSI’s Behavior Change Intervention among high risk urban men increased from 34% in 2008 to 44% in 2009. **Over 350,000 contacts with high risk urban men** have been made since project inception.
- Men exposed to the intervention two times were more likely to use condoms** than those reporting exposure only once, 77.5% versus 66.5% in 2009.
- 88.5% of men reached by the intervention in the last 12 months are able to recall at least one of the messages.**



DESCRIPTION

PSI uses an integrated campaign approach to its behavior change intervention targeting high risk urban men. Interpersonal communications sessions (IPC) take place in entertainment venues where men socialize in evenings and decisions are often made about seeking sex. Sessions are conducted by trained Interpersonal Communicators using innovative, interactive games and tools designed to engage groups of men and address determinants of condom use. Complementary outdoor media and posters reinforce messages. Multiple rounds of quantitative research are used to inform communications tools and monitor changes in self-reported condom use by men. This intervention is supported by USAID, DFID, GFATM and Johnson & Johnson.

Consistent condom use by men with their partners significantly improved from 2008 to 2009.



CONCLUSIONS

- Targeted, evidence-based IPC campaigns are effective in improving condom use behaviors among high risk urban men in Cambodia.
- Increasing frequency of exposure to interventions improved condom use among high risk urban men.



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