

Condolympics with Truck Drivers & Men Who Have Sex with Men (MSM): A Report from India



Presented by

Center for Human Progress (CHP)

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With special thanks to Oluoch Madiang, PATH, Kenya for introducing us to the Condolympics.

CONDOLYMPICS WITH TRUCK DRIVERS & MEN WHO HAVE SEX WITH MEN (MSM): A REPORT FROM INDIA

Background

The Condolympics is an entertaining contest involving a series of condom games, which are designed to overcome barriers to condom use and debunk common myths and misconceptions related to condoms. The Condolympics -- designed by PATH, Kenya -- was shared with the Center for Human Progress (CHP) for the purpose of replicating the games with communities in India.

Condolympics

CHP conducted the Condolympics with truck drivers, allied communities and Men Who Have Sex with Men (MSM) in Delhi on 19 February, 2010. The Condolympics was conducted at Sanjay Gandhi Transport Nagar (SGTN) -- Asia's largest trucking halt point¹ -- located in Delhi.

The games lasted an hour and a half. Approximately 150 participants from truck driver (and allied populations) and 50 MSM community members joined the games. Winners were awarded prizes, which included condoms, soaps, pens, diaries, carry bags and flash lights.

The Condolympics involved several entertaining condom games, which were designed to breakdown highly prevalent myths and misconceptions about condoms and barriers to condom use. The Condolympics helped participants gain confidence in exchanging information about condoms, altering their attitudes and overcoming obstacles to condom use.



¹ Over 70,000 trucks are parked at SGTN at any given point in time and an average of 20,000 trucks drive into and out of SGTN everyday (as per truck drivers). Truck drivers coming to Transport Nagar are from all over India but a large majority of them come from Delhi, Gujarat, Haryana, Punjab, Rajasthan and Himachal Pradesh. There is an active male, female and transgender sex worker as well as MSM community at the Transport Nagar.

The Condolympics included several entertaining games, including:

Demonstrating Correct Condom Use



A number of truck drivers and allied community members admitted never having used a condom. Many did not know how to use condoms. Condom demonstrations focused on opening, wearing, removing and disposing condoms. While a number of participants chose to remain spectators and watch from the sides, many joined the condom demonstration game.

Dialogue and discussion about condom use following the demonstrations helped create acceptance of and confidence in condoms (see Box 1). Those who demonstrated correct use of condoms were awarded prizes.

Box 1

CONDOQUOTES



“THERE IS NOTHING TO BE EMBARRASSED ABOUT. THIS IS IMPORTANT INFORMATION THAT WE ALL NEED TO LEARN” (DHABA WALA/TEA STALL OWNER)

***“I HAVE NOW UNDERSTOOD HOW TO USE A CONDOM. I WILL USE ONE THE NEXT TIME”
(MECHANIC)***

***“I REALISE THAT SPENDING A FEW SECONDS TO PUT ON A CONDOM COULD SAVE MY LIFE”
(TRUCK DRIVER)***

***“ITS OKAY... LET SOMEONE ELSE TRY THE DEMONSTRATION, I WILL WATCH AND LEARN”
(TRUCK DRIVER)***

“PLEASE CONDUCT THE CONDOLYMPICS AT MORE MSM HOTSPOTS. I WILL ALSO SHARE THIS IMPORTANT KNOWLEDGE (ABOUT CONDOM USE) WITH MY PEERS” (MSM)

Condom Blowing



A number of truck drivers, in particular, hesitate to touch, smell and taste condoms. Many firmly believe that condom lubricants are injurious to health. A fear of lubricants, coupled with several myths and misconceptions regarding condom use, e.g., using condoms is unmanly; condoms should only be used during penile-vaginal sex and so on (see Box 2), create barriers to condom use.

While there was a strong initial inhibition among many (especially among truck drivers and allied communities) to join the condom blowing game, once facilitators provided condom blowing demonstrations and clarified myths and misconceptions related to condom use, many participants joined the game. The condom blowing game helped build a sense of acceptance of condoms among participants, especially truck drivers and allied community members. Overall, MSMs displayed a greater comfort with and concern about condom use.

The largest condom balloons were awarded prizes!

Box 2

COMMON MYTHS & MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT CONDOMS



- USING TWO CONDOMS WILL DOUBLE PROTECTION.
- CONDOMS CAN ONLY BE USED DURING PENILE-VAGINAL SEX.
- CONDOM LUBRICATION IS INJURIOUS TO HEALTH.
 - USING CONDOMS IS UNMANLY.
 - MARRIED COUPLES NEED NOT USE CONDOMS.
- POSSESSING A CONDOM IS SOMETHING TO BE EMBARRASSED ABOUT.
 - CONDOMS REDUCE PLEASURE.
- TAKING TIME TO PUT ON A CONDOM DETRACTS FROM THE MOMENT.
 - CONDOMS ALWAYS BREAK.

Condom Water Balloon



A common barrier to condom use is the lack of confidence in the strength of condoms. The condom water balloon contest helped demonstrate the strength of condoms. Participants were asked to fill as much water as possible (several litres) in condoms.

The largest condom water balloons were award prizes!

Condom Dash



The condom dash is a race between pairs that hold a condom balloon between their chests and bellies and run to the finishing line (rules of the condom dash, include no use of hands -- just chests and bellies; and no dropping the condom balloon). The pair that reaches the finishing line first without dropping the condom balloon, wins.

The condom dash is typically conducted between sex partners to develop a sense of cooperation and dialogue between them. In this case, the condom dash was conducted between random pairs of truck driver, allied community members and MSM participants. While these are not typical pairs in a condom dash, the game helped to create a sense of acceptance and concern about using condoms among community participants.

Conclusion

The Condolympics is an entertaining way of demystifying condoms and promoting acceptance of condoms as a critical strategy for HIV prevention. Common myths and misconceptions that form common barriers to condom use among communities can be debunked using entertaining Condolympics games.

In a short-period of time (in this case two hours) and at low costs (this Condolympics session cost approximately Rs.500), the Condolympics can reach a large number of participants.

In the future, trained peers can integrate and adapt Condolympic games with Interpersonal Communication sessions and regular outreach activities. This will further reduce costs and maximise reach, while fostering condom knowledge- and skill-sharing among communities.