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Health

## Open-Air Classes in Ethiopia on Family Planning, HIV

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Ethiopia's fertility rate is dropping, but rural women still have twice as many children as urban women, mostly because they don't have access to contraception and other family planning services. One organization, though, has launched a campaign to reach rural women with family planning messages and counseling.

According to the 2011 Demographic Health Survey, unmet need\* for family planning services is almost twice as high among rural women than urban women. Educating women about contraception and sexual health would not only help them have more ownership of their own bodies but also decrease their vulnerability to contracting HIV.

### Educational campaign reaches rural women

For over two decades, [DKT Ethiopia](#), an international non-governmental organization (NGO), has been running a campaign to supply and promote high quality condoms, contraceptive devices and other reproductive health products. However, its work has mostly been based in urban locations.

In late 2012, the NGO launched a campaign to increase and expand its efforts. "After more than 20 years of social marketing experience, we realized that it is time to move to the rural [locations], where the needs for family planning services are the greatest," said Dagmawit Girmay, deputy director of DKT Ethiopia.

A baseline survey conducted by DKT pointed out barriers, including availability, misconceptions and myths, which have to be addressed to encourage rural women to use contraception.

### Addressing many rural women

The Ethiopian topography makes it challenging to reach individual households, as they are dispersed in remote areas. That's why DKT's work is based on market town activities, as people living in rural areas regularly gather in markets for trade. DKT is exploiting the existing market structures to promote family planning messages. The markets are ideal opportunities to reach many women at once.

"We are not creating a different infrastructure," Dagmawit explained. "Rather we are building on the existing one, so it is a win-win."

DKT is currently using 15 teams composed of one male nurse, one female nurse and a coordinator. The teams educate women about family planning and the use of condoms to prevent HIV. They give women counseling and lead small, group discussions in the markets. They also refer people to nearby pharmaceutical outlets.

Close to 1,000 market towns across Ethiopia have already been identified and mapping of 655 towns is completed. The mapping helps the organization plan its program by including a geographic profile of the market towns, market days and hours, pharmaceutical outlets available, and service providers and types of services available.

Campaigns like this one will contribute a lot in creating demand for contraceptive devices and meeting the family planning needs of rural women.