

**YOUTH TEACHING YOUTH ABOUT RISKY BEHAVIOR**



*Zoran with peers, TOT in Razanj*



*How to use condom, Zoran explains*

RAZANJ, SERBIA – "It was my first time to teach outside my school, but I was not nervous at all", said Zoran Miletic about his first *knowledge transfer* session held in the Internet café in Razanj. Zoran is a 20 year old student and he participates as a peer trainer in USAID and CHF CRDA "Youth at risk issues" project.

Zoran always has a condom in his pocket. His first sexual experience he had was in elementary school. "This is usual in our communities", says Dr Zlatko Spasic from the Youth Counselling Cabinet in Nis Health Centre. "Young people explore sex in early teenage years, but their knowledge about protection and risks are poor" said Dr Spasic. During February and March 2004, professionals from the health and education sectors in local communities as well as representatives from the local government and local NGO *Mreza* volunteers held 7 two-day seminars in 6 municipalities. Zoran participated at workshops and follow-up activities in Razanj.

"I know Zoran. He comes to the Cabinet from time to time. He was a regular participant at last year's RH&FP educational events. At the end of those lectures he suggested us to organize educational sessions just for youth", said Dr Olga Milojkovic from NGO *Mreza*. Based on the needs assessment conducted during last year's program, USAID and CHF decided to organize peer education within the RH&FP program this year. Zoran is the first volunteer

who was brave enough to transfer his new knowledge to his friends and colleagues, gained through RH&FP program. "I have decided to help my peers and tell them about sexually transferable infections and high-risk behaviours and explain to them how they can protect themselves" said Zoran. There were 15 boys at that first lecture. "The girls were ashamed to come", explained Zoran. Estimations were that one young educator would train 5 to 15 peers from the local community and surrounding area.

One week after the first lecture held in March, this young man held his second lecture in front of unexpected 40 participants! Understanding the importance of the issue, the director of the primary school in which this lecture took place, sent final year students to participate. Zoran plans to implement knowledge transfer sessions in cooperation with the Youth Counselling Cabinet in the Nis Health Care Centre.

Big support to Zoran was Community Development Council member in Razanj, Slavoljub Guslarevic. With the community support Zoran plans to hold more lectures for his young neighbours. Participants of his lectures were shy and did not want to comment on Zoran's work. "I know that there is a need for this kind of education. Even they did not need to stay, everyone stayed until the end. No one said – it's boring, I am leaving! This is what gives me energy to continue", Zoran concludes.