

Social mobilisation, IPC, media, ICT, messaging

PROMISING PRACTICE South Africa: JHESSA “Brothers for Life” Campaign

INTRODUCTION

Key Promising Practices:

- Brothers for Life is an award-winning multi-pronged marketing and awareness campaign involving print media, TV, billboards, community outreach projects, canvassing, education, and information. Focused communication efforts reinforce mass media communication. For example, peer communication under the Brothers for Life Brand is given credibility and kudos because those receiving it will have already heard the radio messages, seen the billboards, etc. This multi-pronged feature of the campaign has also made Brothers for Life a recognisable brand across the country.
- Brothers for Life is adaptable, taking what works, and strengthens it. It responds to specific needs and situations in differing communities and remains flexible and changeable. The communication mix is adjusted to target the areas where the largest impact will be felt.
- Brothers for Life is a partnership effort. It draws on the contributions of a number of different organisations and individuals. Joint ownership has helped the campaign achieve more in terms of demand creation for VMMC.

Introduction

Johns Hopkins Health and Education in South Africa (JHHESSA) is funded by USAID to provide overarching “above and below the line” communication support to the South African government and the USAID/PEPFAR partners working in the area of VMMC. JHHESSA’s award-winning communications portfolio includes a multi-platform HIV and men’s sexual health and anti-gender violence focused campaign called Brothers for Life which pre-dates VMMC but is now used as the main vehicle for VMMC communication and messages. Brothers for Life was launched on 29 August 2009 in KwaMashu. In 2010 JHHESSA started a nationwide campaign to draw attention to and increase knowledge about Voluntary Medical Male Circumcision.

In 2012 this campaign was intensified, and began using the personal stories and real-life accounts of men who have been circumcised.

Many other organisations working on demand creation for VMMC in South Africa use Brothers for Life material. JHHESSA has also helped the National AIDS Council to develop the National VMMC Communication Strategy that has been incorporated into the National Operational Plan, which is currently awaiting DoH approval, and have assisted provincial DoH offices to develop provincial communications strategies.

Target groups

1. Men aged 15 – 49, with a particular emphasis on young men aged 15 – 24 and older men aged 30+. JHHESSA explains this focus by pointing out that the majority of the population in South Africa is below the age of 30 and that most HIV infections in the country happen among men in their mid 20s to mid-30s. The strategy therefore is to generate demand for circumcision amongst men before they enter this high risk period as this helps to confer protection.

Scale and scope

Brothers for Life is a national campaign.

Organizations involved

Lead

- JHHESA

Funding

- USAID

Other partners

- South African National AIDS Council (Men's Sector)
- Department of Health
- Joe Public, creative advertising agency
- Over 100 other partners, including:
 - The Centre for AIDS Development, Research and Evaluation (CADRE) is committed to fast-tracking appropriate and effective responses to HIV/AIDS through informing policy and developing coherent strategic models for interventions.
 - Cell-Life is a Cape Town based not-for-profit section 21 company which develops and implements open source technical systems to support the fight against HIV and AIDS. Their main approach is to use cell phones as a mass media tool to reinforce HIV messaging (SMS and Mxit).
 - The Community Health Media Trust works in Gauteng, Kwa-Zulu Natal, Eastern and Western Cape and the Free State and focuses on the dissemination of prevention and treatment messages.
 - Curious Pictures – is a film and television Production Company and an industry leader on HIV/AIDS awareness drama. Their work includes Tsha Tsha, Foreplay and the highly successful Intersextions drama (all made in partnership with JHHESA).
 - DramAidE works in secondary schools and faith based organisations disseminating their Health Promoter programme that focuses on HIV prevention and support. They currently work in 18 tertiary institutions and use group discussions, workshops, live events and classroom instruction to mobilise young men and women.
 - Sonke Gender Justice Network works in the areas of gender and HIV/AIDS training, policy, advocacy, and community mobilization. JHHESA and its partners draw upon the technical expertise and experience of SGJ to develop and integrate some of its programmes such as VMMC and the National Men's Campaign.
 - Health and Development Africa (HDA) provides technical assistance and project management to organisations in the fields of health, including HIV and AIDS. They, together with JHHESA, managed the National Communications Survey of 2012 (as well as the ones conducted in 2006 and 2009).

- Anova Health Institute runs the HIV/AIDS and the Media projects based at the University of the Witwatersrand which investigates the impact of the news media on the HIV/AIDS pandemic in South Africa. It also advocates for better media coverage of the pandemic.

Who is carrying out demand generation activities?

- Brothers for Life, SABC, field workers trained by Brothers for Life but managed by Government or other sub-contracted organisations, traditional leaders.

Management of demand creation

- Brothers for Life manages and implements demand creation activities, but sub-contracts other organisations to manage field workers and creative partners to produce media outputs.

VMMC ACTIVITIES

VMMC activities

- Brothers for Life do not manage VMMC services, but rather drive demand for services which are already available. They direct potential clients to the [healthsites](#) website through which they can search for their nearest clinic. Potential clients can also SMS “MMC” to the dedicated number promoted through the media and be given the details of the clinic/service provider nearest to them.

APPROACH TO DEMAND CREATION

The approach to Demand Creation:

The Brothers for Life Campaign is engaged in a wide array of demand creation activities around VMMC, ranging from support for the development of national communication and advocacy strategies to the production of mass media programming and community-level social mobilization.

Brothers for Life draws heavily, though not exclusively, on the Entertainment-Education tradition in which its affiliate Johns Hopkins University is so expert. This approach recognises the need to engage audiences on an emotional level through compelling stories which entertain them and reflect aspects of their own lives. These stories will contain or convey life-saving health messages which audiences absorb, but also prompts and triggers to discuss and reflect on these messages and their place in an audience-members own life. Audience members are not only encouraged to adopt recommended health behaviours through the actions of characters they identify with, but also shown how. Increasingly, new media

technologies provide an additional opportunity for audience members to engage actively with the entertainment content and others who are exposed to it, and thus questions and issues specific to their own health. This is far more effective in delivering behaviour change than the passive receipt of health messages. It also enables audience members to connect with peers and the wider social environment, both of which are highly influential to health behaviours.

DEMAND CREATION ACTIVITIES

Demand Creation Activities:

Brothers for Life is a multi-platform campaign with a series of overarching and coordinated themes and messages which are delivered through multiple channels.

Key message:

The Brothers for Life campaign addresses existing social norms about manhood head on, associating broader concepts and behaviours like responsibility towards others and for one's actions, respect for women and safe sex with real manhood/brotherhood or 'the new man in South Africa'. Within those broad themes, sit specific behaviours or actions that a Brother for Life will perform, such as testing for HIV and undertaking VMMC. The programme promotes VMMC broadly, within a sexual health framework rather than vertically on VMMC alone. The campaign is aspirational, has strong emotional appeal and aims to instil pride in men who adopt its values or even participate more actively by advocating that their peers also adopt its values. The messages about specific health behaviours are more compelling because they sit within such a powerful and emotionally engaging brand.

Traditional media:

- **TV spots:** The Brothers for Life TV spot focused on increasing knowledge about HIV prevention and targeted men aged 16–35 and has been aired on all the major stations across the country about 100 times per month since Feb, 2012, with one or two small breaks.
- **Radio talk shows:** Brothers for Life also produced a weekly radio talk show in 11 different languages that was broadcast over 30 weeks on the SABC local language stations. In terms of developing radio shows, Brothers for Life develops the guidance scripts for the show producers. People phone in to these radio shows and speak to the presenters about the issues being discussed. JHHESA says that such an approach helps to create discussion and dialogue about this issue, bringing it into the public domain and thereby making the process seem more acceptable and less contrary to traditional male

social norms. It also provides people with an important platform to air their questions and perhaps more importantly, to hear the responses given to the questions raised by others phoning in on the talk show.

Considerable effort goes into making the shows. Pre-production starts about two months before the programmes are due to be broadcast. Guidance scripts are prepared and the show's producers are brought together with doctors, nurses and other technical personnel so they are able to handle the conversations. Producers may have to attend up to three such workshops per programme, making sure that everyone involved has the basic knowledge to confidently discuss the issues and handle call-ins and make recommendations/referrals.

Education Management teams also attend the workshops, along with the SABC Social Mobilization teams and advertising teams. This is to ensure that the broadcaster references the talk shows and branding in other shows (such as TALKSA or SHIFT – Social Magazine programmes) or adverts and that the programmes get maximum exposure.

The talk show is loosely planned. People know the kinds of subjects that they will deal with but the conversations are allowed to run on in a natural way in order to increase public interest and engagement.

- **'Live reads'**: During their summer campaign, they also commissioned "live reads", wherein radio DJs will talk briefly and provide key facts about VMMC.
- **TV Drama**: Intersextions is a TV drama that was produced by JHHESA. It was aired on SABC1 and it has become an award-winning series. The series comprises 26 independent but interrelated episodes that cover a range of health issues, not specifically focusing on VMMC but including it as a theme. These episodes examine how that which remains unsaid in love relationships and sex, places people at risk of HIV infections. Intersextions is a high budget and well received drama. It has 71,276 Likes on Facebook.
- **Print media**: They have also designed and distributed about 125,000 informational brochures and have placed inserts on VMMC in South Africa's most popular daily newspaper.
- **Ambient media**: Brothers for Life has around 98 billboards in all the major centres. Further outdoor advertising is placed on taxis and adverts are placed in taxis as commuters travel from A to B as well as on outdoor screens at various taxi ranks.

Digital media:

- **Web presence:** There is a “Brothers for Life” website where clients can obtain more information on MMC, and also search online for their closest MMC clinics. Clients interact with the programme about service delivery, or ask questions. Where need be issues are referred to service providers and the Department of Health.

Mobile services:

- JHHESA operates an SMS service that clients can contact for details of the nearest service site (publicized also on billboards, television and radio and all promotional materials). Clients can also opt into an SMS service at registration which sends automatic SMS messages about proper post-operative care for 6 weeks after the procedure.

IPC materials:

- **Men’s Wellness Toolkit:** This toolkit includes leaflets, reading materials and a flipchart. This flipchart is used to structure a conversation between an audience and a facilitator. A facilitator flips through the pages of the flipchart, although in reality the pages are often made of fabric or other more durable materials, and each page features an image which is thought-provoking and can stimulate discussion.

The content of the VMMC flipchart provides a full walk-through of the benefits of VMMC, what the procedure actually entails, what a penis would look like before or after VMMC, some of the risks involved. It also looks at some of the benefits for women.

Social mobilisation:

JHHESA partners undertake social mobilization teams through 25 local sub-contractors that support USAID partners in 17 different sites. There are about 10 social mobilizers per site, for a total of approximately 170 across the country. These teams are trained by Brothers for Life for 2 days and provided with a toolkit, consisting of a flip-chart and facilitators guide.

Rationale

JHHESA makes use of social modelling theory, wherein role models are used to convey educational messages and audiences learn through observation and imitation.

One particularly successful example of the use of role modelling has been the True Life stories initiative which featured a man called Sandile from rural KZN. He tells of how he accompanied his sister to the clinic one day, heard about VMMC and decided it was something he should have done.

JHHESA received very positive feedback about the impact of those communications which featured real men who were ambassadors for VMMC. It helped de-mystify the procedure and worked towards turning VMMC into something socially acceptable. Through Brothers for Life's role modelling process, VMMC becomes more integrated within the everyday social life of South African male behaviour.

EVIDENCE BASE

Evidence

JHHESA messaging strategy is informed by qualitative and quantitative data. For example the programme points to research which indicates that in 2009 only 7% of respondents know the HIV prevention benefits of VMMC as the rationale for its messages which seek to raise awareness of the functional benefits of VMMC.

EVALUATION OF DEMAND CREATION ACTIVITIES

Evaluation of demand creation activities

Both the mass media and the social mobilisation components of the programme are monitored on an ongoing basis. Partners doing social mobilisation complete forms from activities that captures a range of indicators that are uploaded onto a central database.

The National SMS Site locator has had on average around 4000 – 7000 queries per month from men intending to get circumcised.

The USAID/JHU HIV Communication Programme did qualitative research in 2009 and again in late 2012/2013 and are now planning to do a qualitative evaluation of their VMMC work. The National Communications Survey in 2009 serves as a

baseline to evaluate their VMMC media programming, compared against the result of the 2012 NCS survey.

The NCS survey shows that there has been a 39% increase in the knowledge of the HIV benefits of MMC from 8% in 2009 to 47% in 2012. The clinical records tell the same story, with an exponential increase in VMMC uptake, albeit with strongly seasonal variation of intensity.

Some statistics from the National Communication Survey:

- Men who were circumcised or are intending to get circumcised were more likely to:
 - have a Grade 11 or higher education;
 - have used a condom during their first sexual encounter.
- 54.4% of men now report being circumcised (12% increase since 2009);
- 48.9% of these respondents were medically circumcised as opposed to 32.7% in 2009.
- 66,7% of recent circumcisions were medical circumcisions;
- 17.9% of uncircumcised men (1000 000 men) indicated they intend to get circumcised in the next 12 months;
- And 81% of these respondents said the circumcisions would be medical.
- The NSP's target is to circumcise 1.6m men by 2016 which looks promising, however
- A larger number of older men need to be targeted in demand creation drives.

(*From the NCS Survey 2012: Magni,S¹; Figueroa²; Kincaid, D L²; Johnson,S¹; Mahlasela, L³; Delate, R³)

1. Health & Development Africa
2. Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health Centre for Communications Programs
3. Johns Hopkins Health & Education in South Africa