

P3.14. Use of Mass Media and Interactive Games to Promote HIV/AIDS Awareness among Youth in Maharashtra, India: Jawan Hoon Nadan Nahin Campaign (“I am young, but not irresponsible”) - Sanjanthi Velu, CCP JHU, India; Susmita Das, CCP JHU, India; Vishal Shastri, CCP JHU, India; Karen Allen, CCP JHU, India; Prerna Kumar, CCP JHU, India

E-mail: svelu@jhuccp.in

Background/Significance: In India, Maharashtra has a high prevalence of HIV/AIDS with 19% of the nation’s AIDS cases. According to the National AIDS Control Organization (NACO), 31% of HIV infections in India are among the 15-29 age group. The National Family Health Survey 2005-06 in India reported that 20% of women and 36% of men age 15-25 have comprehensive knowledge of HIV/AIDS.

In Maharashtra, only 29.5% of women and 52.5% of men age 15-49 have comprehensive knowledge about HIV/AIDS. Because youth have limited awareness and low risk perception of HIV, there is a need to reach them with prevention messages. In urban (slum) and semi-urban settings, an integrated strategic communication campaign was used with 15-19 year old single youth to increase risk perception for HIV/AIDS and promote responsible conduct. Interventions included mass media (TV, radio, bus shelters), mid media (banners, posters, giveaways), and interactive edutainment games with HIV prevention messages.

Methodology: The campaign, in Marathi and Hindi languages, sought to reposition perceived “old fashioned values” such as delaying sexual initiation, as an acceptable norm. Interactive games were implemented by partner NGOs with their youth groups in 45 slum/village areas and 15 colleges in seven HIV high prevalence districts of Maharashtra. NGO outreach workers discussed and distributed campaign materials to young people and facilitated board games and games based on Interactive Communication Technology platform.

Findings: 909 unmarried youth (587 males, 322 females) age 15-19 years were selected from the intervention areas by stratified random sampling. Respondents included working, non-working/college drop-out and college youth.

Findings suggest that most respondents (97.6%) were exposed to at least one mass medium (television, radio, cinema, billboard, bus shelters/panel). 88% of respondents were exposed to television, 55% to radio, 29% to cinema and 73% to billboard and bus panels/shelters. Only one tenth of respondents were exposed to the computer games.

Among mass media, television was most liked; almost two-thirds of respondents liked information received through television. Among interactive games “Cricket” was liked by boys, and “Chuppa-Chuppi” (a memory game with cards) was liked by girls. While the board game, “Carrom”, was liked by both another board game, “Circus”, was not popular.

It was found that 70% of respondents shared the HIV/AIDS messages with their peer group. Very few shared messages with their family members (6%) and only 1% shared it with their sexual partner.

Eight slogans were communicated through various channels, but the major theme of the youth campaign was “Jawan Hoon Nadan Nahin” (I am young but not irresponsible). It was found that 90% of respondents were aware of this key campaign message, mostly through television. Few respondents received the message through participatory games. The respondents could recall “A” for Abstinence or delayed sexual debut more than any other message of the campaign.

Lessons Learned: Main campaign slogan resonated well with young people as the approach was non-judgmental and based on positive, normative influence. Further it promoted self confidence and self-esteem among young people. The campaign was not didactic and it was grounded in the realities of youth. The campaign recognized and addressed the challenges that young people face, with issues like peer pressure and difficulty of refusing a sexual advance, especially for women.

A mix of media is important so that young people from different backgrounds can access information from sources familiar to them. The study found that it is necessary to have more skills-based training of NGO outreach workers to enhance their interpersonal communication skills and to effectively use campaign materials. Routine monitoring and evaluation of program activities implemented by NGOs will help to make interventions more effective in the long run.