



**Taking Taboo Topics Public:
How Social Marketing Partnerships Combat HIV/AIDS in Mexico**

Introduction

- ❑ Social marketing influences low-income, high-risk populations to make healthy behaviour changes.
- ❑ Key tactic for combating HIV/AIDS
- ❑ Spread of infection can be managed: level and prevalence of HIV/AIDS are altered by human intervention/decisions.



Social marketing has been widely used to influence low-income, high-risk populations to make healthy behaviour changes. This application of marketing principles has also become an important tool for persuading upstream audiences to make long-term policy changes that achieve socially desirable goals.

As the human, social, and economic costs of the HIV/AIDS pandemic mount, social marketing is now a key tactic for combating the disease.

This is particularly appropriate since the spread of the infection can be managed. Passive contagion, a core tenet of classic disease diffusion models, is not appropriate for HIV/AIDS since human intervention and human decision-making can alter both the level and the prevalence of the disease.

A Case for Social Marketing in Mexico

- ❑ Increase in HIV/AIDS cases each year since early 1980s
- ❑ Affecting youngest and most productive populations as well as poor and marginalized
- ❑ #4 cause of death for men 25-34
- ❑ Diverting resources from other health, welfare, and education priorities



As the human, social, and economic costs of the HIV/AIDS pandemic mount, policymakers worldwide are earmarking funds and forming alliances to combat the spread of the disease. Mexico, where the first AIDS case was diagnosed in 1983, faces serious threats to social sustainability as inflections steadily multiply. Recent reports show the disease is increasingly affecting the youngest and most productive populations as well as poor and marginalized groups.

Mexico ranks 13th globally and third in the Americas in the total number of HIV cases reported; unfortunately, the increase in new cases has been continuous since the early 1980s. With an estimated average of 4,000 new cases annually in Mexico, AIDS has become the No. 4 cause of death for men in the 25 to 34 age group. Higher rates of HIV infection are also being documented among injecting drug users and women.

Overall Research Question

How have alliances of government decision makers, the health care community, and AIDS activists allowed social marketers to bring about voluntary behavioural changes in Mexico?



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A Population of Campaigns

- ❑ Six campaigns selected for comparison
- ❑ Examined purpose, sponsors, audience, where disseminated, media mix, messages, product promotion, and appeals
- ❑ Commonalities and unique characteristics identified
- ❑ Research methods: content analysis, semi-structured interviews with key decision makers



This presentation analyses six recent HIV/AIDS campaigns in Mexico, examining their ability to motivate change and their potential for informing target audiences about new health choices. Analysis of the campaigns identified the commonalities and unique characteristics as regards purpose, sponsors, target audience, dissemination methods, media mix, messages, product promotion, and appeals used. Semi-structured interviews with opinion leaders were used to explore the rationale behind the content choices, cultural influences, and economic factors influencing the public dissemination of HIV/AIDS information. The six campaigns share a number of common concerns and objectives although each has a unique theme and a distinctive focus and approach. All campaigns, however, rely heavily on partnerships and present messages that openly discuss once-taboo topics.

Finding #1: Collaboration is Essential

- ❑ Social marketers do not have infrastructure/marketplace environment of commercial marketers
- ❑ Build network of groups with common goals, varied resources.
- ❑ Good example: “Investing in People” in Mexico City, with largest number of AIDS cases ...
- ❑ Taboo topic: Sex before marriage

Recognizing that expanding HIV/AIDS populations will devastate the global economy, governments in both developing and industrialized countries, often in conjunction with pharmaceutical companies, have launched organized offensives, which include political commitment, law enforcement, government policy, social marketing, and community mobilization.

This global cooperation encourages alliances such as those forged to support the campaigns in this study. From a practical standpoint, these partnerships are essential because social marketers “do not have the infrastructure and the marketplace environment commercial marketers take for granted.” Rather than “divide and conquer,” in social marketing the strategy is to build a network of groups and individuals with common goals and varied resources.

The “Investing in People” campaign is a good example of such alliances...

Partnership Lesson #1:

Build local, nat'l & internat'l alliances with common goals

Investing in People

Purpose: Reduce barriers to behavior change & care seeking, and increase access to services that facilitate safer behavior.

Diminish stigma.

Timeframe: 2003-2008

Sponsors: USAID, CENSIDA, Mexico City AIDS Program, Futures Group International, Mexican National Institute for Public Health, PSI

Audiences: Vulnerable populations, at-risk groups

Where: Mexico City

Media Mix: Trained 40 women advocates, workshops, condom marketing

Messages: Safe behaviors: Abstinence, fidelity, and delay of sexual debut

Speakers: Local HIV/AIDS leaders deliver conference presentations

Products: Condoms

Appeals: Self-interest, sustainable development

...This five-year initiative, which began in 2003, is centered in Mexico City, where the largest number of HIV/AIDS cases are found. "Investing in People" is the joint effort of a half-dozen international, national, and local organizations. A key technique is personal communication through workshops and conferences conducted by trained female advocates and local HIV/AIDS leaders, who openly discuss sex before marriage, a once-forbidden topic in this strongly Roman Catholic country.

Finding #2: Focus on Prevention

- ❑ Messages usually focus on prevention
- ❑ Social marketing involves procuring, distributing pharmaceuticals, OTC drugs, condoms
- ❑ Condom Social Marketing (CSM)
- ❑ Mexico: largest consumer of pharmaceuticals in Latin America
- ❑ Taboo topic: Use of condoms

Most HIV/AIDS campaigns have a stronger focus on prevention messages than treatment information, so social marketing assistance usually involves procuring and distributing pharmaceuticals, over-the-counter drugs, and condoms. For example, PSI [Population Services International], the principal contractor for USAID's 2005 behavioural change campaign in Mexico, emphasizes prevention messages and brand-specific advertising, especially of condoms. Under this "manufacturer's model," partnerships are negotiated with commercial manufacturers, suppliers, and distributors of health products, and products are made available at lower than market costs. Brand-name condoms and related products are always sold rather than given away, albeit at reduced prices, because PSI's policy is "when products are given away... the recipient often does not value them or even use them." In fact, promoting the use of condoms is such an integral part of HIV/AIDS social marketing that the practice has its own acronym: Condom social marketing [CSM], which is central to the Vida campaign strategy...

Partnership Lesson #2: Recruit commercial sponsors for additional resources

VIVE Condoms

Purpose:	Make condoms socially acceptable
Timeframe:	2004-2005
Sponsors:	PSI, USAID
Audiences:	Men who have sex with men, female sex-workers, truckers, migrants, prisoners, young adults (15-24) people living with AIDS, men in uniform
Where:	Southern and Central Mexico, non-traditional outlets in high-risk areas--bars, markets, parks, bus stations
Media Mix:	Commercial distribution of condoms, discussion and interactive activities
Messages:	Appropriate condom use, testing results confidential, required treatment is guaranteed, Vive tu Vida
Products:	VIVE condom brand
Appeals:	Sustainable development, self-interest

The VIVE condom brand, popular in several Latin American countries, is the centerpiece of recent “Vida” educational efforts directed to prisoners and other high-risk groups in southern and central Mexico. A recent survey reported that Mexican society has become the largest consumer of pharmaceuticals in Latin America and the ninth largest worldwide. Pharmaceutical sales jumped from US\$6.83 billion in 2002 to an estimated US\$11.3 billion in 2005. Given these numbers, it seems safe to say that major pharmaceutical companies will continue to vie for partnership status in social marketing initiatives and that condoms will continue to be more accessible and socially acceptable.

Finding #3: Stigma Goes Underground

- ❑ “Underground epidemic”
- ❑ People living with AIDS, esp. women fear rejection by families and loss of jobs.
- ❑ “Vida Digna” in central Mexico, with “weakest civil response to AIDS”...
- ❑ Taboo topic: Alternative lifestyles

HIV has been called an “underground epidemic” because of the stigma and discrimination associated with the disease.

USAID, whose infectious disease objectives in Mexico are designed “to contain and reduce HIV/AIDS in vulnerable populations,” focuses on reducing barriers to behavior change and thereby preventing the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Mexico from becoming generalized to the population at large.

Reducing stigma and discrimination experienced by sex workers, gay men, men who have sex with men, drug users, and people living with AIDS is the central purpose of the three-year Vida Digna [Life with Dignity] campaign, launched in 2005 by the Colectivo Sol alliance and funded by GlaxoSmithKline...

Partnership Lesson #3: Involve the target audience from the outset

Vida Digna (Life with Dignity)

Purpose:	Reduce stigma and discrimination of AIDS
Timeframe:	2005-2008
Sponsors:	AIDS Alliance, Colectivo, Sol, Positive Action, GlaxoSmithKline
Audiences:	People living with AIDS, sex workers, drug users, men who have sex with men
Where:	Mexico - Aguascalientes, Guanajuato, Queretaro, San Luis Potosi
Media Mix:	Training, literature, commercials, community leaders
Messages:	Equality begins with accepting people's differences
Speakers:	Community leaders, key decision makers, media
Appeals:	Social cognitive, sustainable development

...The campaign is centered in the central states of Mexico, a conservative area characterized as having “the weakest civil society response to AIDS.” Vida Digna uses anonymous testimonials to urge tolerance and acceptance of people’s differences. The International HIV/AIDS Alliance’s research indicates people living with AIDS, especially women, are fearful of rejection by their families and dismissal from their jobs if their HIV status is revealed.

Finding #4: Cultural/Gender Norms

- ❑ Machismo and homophobia fueling Mexico's AIDS epidemic
- ❑ Young men often control how and when young women have sex
- ❑ Changing gender norms: "Programa Hombres" and
- ❑ "Programa Mujeres"--female empowerment
- ❑ Taboo topics: Women's rights and homophobia

According to Mexico's National Center for the Prevention and Control of HIV/AIDS [Censida], changing how Mexicans view gender roles and erasing widespread prejudice against gays will be necessary to effectively combat the disease. Speaking at a conference in February of 2006, Censida's director, Jorge Saavedra, said machismo and homophobia are fueling the country's HIV/AIDS epidemic. Saavedra was quoted in *Dominican Today* as saying machismo undermines prevention messages and "puts women, as well as men, at risk," and that "fighting homophobia is one of the best ways to fight HIV."

Links between traditional gender attitudes and the spread of AIDS prompted a partnership of NGOs to develop Programa Hombres [often called Program H]...

Partnership Lesson #4: Initiatives must be multimedia & multilingual

Programa Hombres (Project H)

Purpose:	Help young men question traditional social norms related to manhood, reflect on the advantages of more gender-equitable behaviors and re-think what it means to be a man. Develop strategic relationships at the macro-policy level.
Timeframe:	1999-2004
Sponsors:	Began with Brazil's Instituto Promundo. Partners include PAPAI Institute, ECOS, and Salud Y Genero, PAPA/WHO, USAID, UNAIDS, IPPF/WHO, UNFPA, The Population Council, PATH, SSL International
Audiences:	Young men, 15-24
Where:	Mexico -Tested in more than 20 countries
Media Mix:	Educational videos, manuals, and workshops, information folders, radio spots, billboards, postcards, banners
Messages:	Chega Junta Cara, "In the Heat of the Moment"
Speakers:	Workshops facilitated by young men
Products:	Hora H condoms
Appeals:	Self-interest, decision-making

...This five-year initiative has been used in more than 20 countries, including Mexico, to persuade young Latino men to question traditional norms related to manhood since the male youth often control how and when young women have sex. An extensive media mix included educational videos available in three languages—Spanish, English, and Portuguese—interactive workshops, and collateral materials, as well as radio, outdoor media, and direct mail. The campaign slogan, "In the Heat of the Moment," urged use of the Hora H condom brand, manufactured by the makers of Durex condoms and distributed in non-traditional venues such as funk balls and cafes.

Partnership Lesson #5: Utilize global support for women

Programa Mujeres (Project M)

Purpose:	Promote young women's reflections on gender norms, and their self-efficacy and empowerment
Timeframe:	2005-
Sponsors:	Began with Brazil's Instituto Promundo. Partners include PAPA! Institute, ECOS, and Salud Y Genero, MacArthur Foundation, World Education (USA), OAK Foundation and the Special Secretariat of Womens Policies (Brazil)
Audiences:	Young women, 15-24
Where:	Brazil, Mexico, and soon India
Media Mix:	"Once upon a Girl" educational cartoon, discussion guide
Messages:	Sexual and reproductive health, educational, professional development, community involvement
Products:	Video for sale on website
Appeals:	Social-cognitive

Building on their success in educating young men about the costs of traditional macho culture, in 2005 the Program H partners and World Education launched Programa Mujeres [Project M] to encourage young women to take control of their sexual and reproductive health. This social marketing campaign was based on research that included a review of Latin American literature to define the concept of female empowerment, focus group discussions with groups of young women aged 14-24 who lived in marginalized communities outside Queretaro, Mexico, and interviews with empowered young women.

Finding #5: Population Mobility Danger

- ❑ Travel or migration factor in AIDS prevalence
- ❑ Risk to partners at home
- ❑ U.S./Mexico: Border health initiative to make testing and care more accessible and acceptable...
- ❑ Taboo topics: Sex outside of marriage, prostitution

Studies of highly mobile groups such as truck drivers, seasonal employees, and sex workers have identified travel or migration as a factor related to increased HIV/AIDS prevalence. Higher rates of infection are also frequently found along transport routes and in border regions. In addition, migration and mobility also increase vulnerability to HIV/AIDS for the partners at home.

Not surprisingly then, HIV/AIDS is a significant problem along the 2,000-mile border between the United States and Mexico, where mobility, poverty, and lack of access to health care complicate prevention and care. The SPNS [Special Projects of National Significance] Border Health Initiative is administered by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to raise awareness about HIV and to make testing and care more accessible...

Partnership Lesson #5: Construct trans-border alliances

SPINS Border Health Initiative

Purpose:	Identify infected people and refer to primary care, raise awareness, make testing more accessible, advance skills in delivering health and social services to people with AIDS
Timeframe:	2004-
Sponsors:	U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, CARE Act
Audiences:	Migrant farm workers, trans-border populations, sex workers
Where:	2,000-mile border between U.S. and Mexico, truck stops and border crossings, and communities
Media Mix:	One-to-one outreach, radio, TV, promotores (volunteer health workers), printed materials
Messages:	Bold messages that HIV is a community problem, identify testing and clinical resources, reverse cultural norms (use of Spanish language, culturally specific)
Speakers:	Local, well-known media personalities
Appeals:	Decision-making, social cognitive

...In many of the rural border communities people are reluctant and embarrassed to openly discuss HIV/AIDS or the sex worker industry. Relying heavily on social marketing, SPINS utilizes Spanish language media to blanket the transient communities with “bold” HIV messages designed to “reverse the cultural norm that topics related to sexuality, including HIV, are not discussed in public” and to educate Latinos about the risk of the disease. SPINS border outreach initiatives are designed to be culturally sensitive to the Latino culture, which values trust and relationship building.

Conclusions

- ❑ Communications about AIDS is complex and highly political
- ❑ HIV/AIDS crosses all boundaries; no one unaffected
- ❑ Social marketing is able to create upstream and downstream behaviour changes
- ❑ Partnerships are crucial
- ❑ Taboo topics must be discussed



As demonstrated by these six Mexico-based campaigns, the content of social marketing messages about HIV/AIDS, the role of stigma and culture, and the economic realities of the global medical market created by the epidemic form a complex and politically charged environment that influences public dissemination of information.

As HIV/AIDS social marketing establishes a track record in Mexico, organizations using such initiatives can begin to analyze long-term results. Nevertheless, it already seems clear that the power of social marketing is a strong tool for motivating change and informing target audiences about new health choices. Over a period of less than two decades, alliances of HIV/AIDS social marketers have been able to operate successfully in the maelstrom of cultural, political, economic, and social concerns while bringing about voluntary behavioral changes among both downstream and upstream audiences.

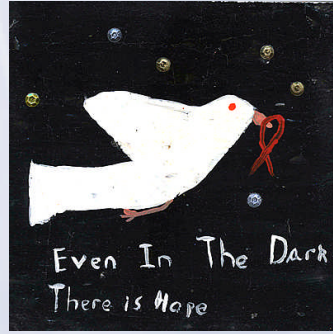
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Discussion & Questions



Images from "World AIDS Day 2006:
The Visual Voice of Children," posted
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