

COMMUNICATION Impact!

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HEALTH COMMUNICATION
PARTNERSHIP



Zambia's Youth Advisory Group developed effective abstinence messages for adolescents.



Zambia's HEART Logo

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HEART Program Offers Zambian Youth Hope for an HIV/AIDS-Free Future

Poor socio-economic conditions and the HIV/AIDS pandemic can portend a grim future for Zambian youth, but an innovative HIV/AIDS prevention program provides hope to some young adults for a future without HIV/AIDS. In 1998 the Government of the Republic of Zambia (GRZ) asked the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and its implementing partner, the Zambia Integrated Health Programme (ZIHP), to work with young people to address the HIV/AIDS problem, with the support and guidance of the Central Board of Health (CBOH), the National AIDS Council and Secretariat (NAC), and other nongovernmental organizations.

Designed by youth for youth, the Helping Each other Act Responsibly Together (HEART) program informs young adults about HIV/AIDS, discusses ways to prevent HIV/AIDS, and promotes abstinence and condom use. With USAID support, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health/Center for Communication Programs (CCP) and Population Services International help implement HEART. The program's first three phases focused on promoting abstinence, or in the absence of abstinence, correct and consistent condom use. HEART also tried to dispel beliefs that a person can tell if someone is HIV positive just by looking at

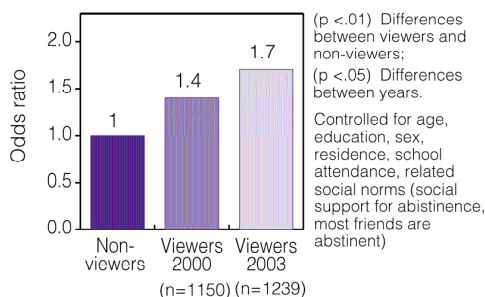
him or her. This issue of *Communication Impact!* focuses on HEART's third phase.

YOUTH AT RISK

Youth constitute 58% of Zambia's population. Approximately 15% are between the ages of 13 and 19. HIV prevalence currently stands at 16%, according to Zambia's Demographic and Health Survey (ZDHS) from 2001 and 2002. This ZDHS revealed a rapid increase in HIV prevalence with age. The proportion found to be HIV positive rose from a level of 5% among 15 to 19-year-olds to 25% among those aged 30 to 34, before falling to a level of 17% among the 45 to 49 age group. While the rates for the 15 to 19-year-old age group were relatively low, prevalence among females is approximately three times that of males (5.9% for females and 1.9% for males). Overall, the infection rate was substantially higher among women (18%) than men (13%).

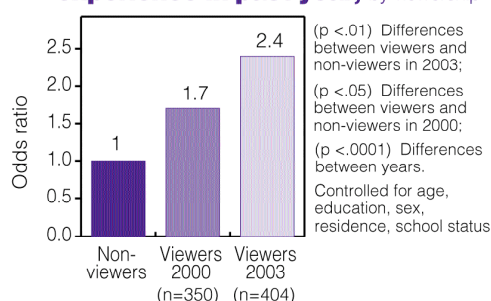
Other surveys demonstrated a lack of knowledge about HIV that make youth especially vulnerable. According to the Zambia Sexual Behaviour Survey (ZSBS) in 2003, 20% of boys and 26% of girls aged 15-19 thought HIV could not be avoided. The ZSBS also showed that among 15 to

Figure 1. Odds of primary or secondary abstinence, by viewership



Source: 2003 Zambia Youth Survey

Figure 2. Odds of ever use of condoms among respondents with sexual experience in past year, by viewership



Source: 2003 Zambia Youth Survey

19-year-olds, 45% of boys and 53% of girls said they have had sex and that misconceptions remained about the transmission of HIV. Condom use was also extremely low with 82% of young women and 68% of young men not using a condom at last sex (ZDHS 2001/2002).

YOUTH INVOLVEMENT KEY

A design team of communication and adolescent reproductive health specialists, including young Zambians, came together in 1998 to plan, develop, and implement HEART. An HIV-positive youth on the team ensured that the concerns of HIV-positive youth were considered. To achieve even broader youth involvement, HEART included a Youth Advisory Group (YAG) consisting of 35 to 40 young people from 11 youth organizations to advise the design team. The YAG developed communication objectives and messages for abstinent males, abstinent females, inconsistent male condom-users and inconsistent female condom-users, all ages 13 to 19 years. Finally, the team tested message concepts for appeal and comprehension through focus groups and in-depth interviews; post-broadcast spot surveys were conducted to test reach and recall. The following concepts were the basis of six television spots and print materials used in Phase 3:

- **Our boy** promotes the delay of sexual debut and, among sexually active male youth, a return to abstinence and suggests the important role fathers play in supporting their sons to practice abstinence
- **No matter how handsome [he is]. . .** dispels the myth that one can tell who has HIV/AIDS simply by looking and informs

youth that trust alone is not enough

- **Virgin power, virgin pride**—adolescent girls disparage sugar daddies, gifts for sex while upholding abstinence
- **4 Cs (clothes, cash, car keys, condoms)**—promotes consistent condom use for those who do not abstain by demonstrating that carrying condoms is a “cool” behavior (shows Maximum brand)
- **No matter how pretty [she is]. . .** dispels the myth that one can tell who has HIV/AIDS simply by looking and informs youth that trust alone is not enough
- **Maximum brand** promotes the use of condoms among sexually active youth and reminds youth that trust alone is not enough (features Maximum condoms)

HEART MAKES AN IMPACT

To measure the effects of HEART, the research team used a quasi-experimental, separate sample pre- and follow-up design. They conducted a baseline cross-sectional sample survey in August 2000; the final sample comprised 533 young men and 656 young women.

Over a three-week period in August and September researchers conducted a follow-up cross-sectional sample survey of 618 male and 621 female respondents.

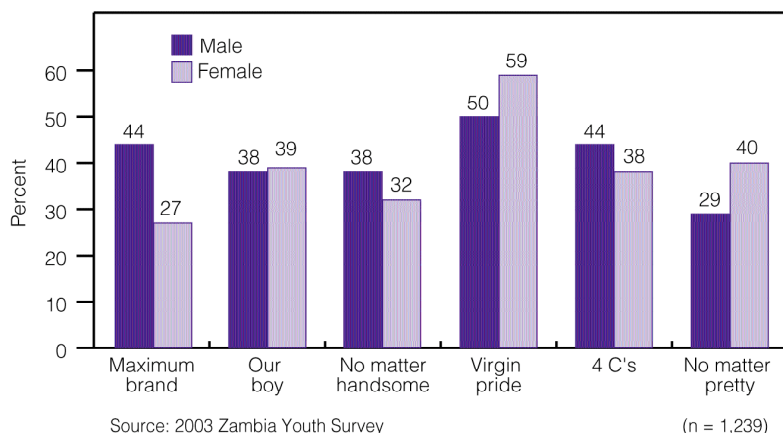
The HEART program largely met its goals. Among the salient findings were the following:

- About 64% of urban respondents reported that they had seen all or some of the television spots, while approximately 14% of rural respondents saw one or more.

- Viewers were significantly more likely than non-viewers to mention abstinence as a way to avoid transmission in both survey years.
- In 2003, viewers compared with non-viewers were more likely to mention condom use and having only one partner as ways to avoid HIV.
- Approximately 53% of viewers reported that they took at least one action as a result of having seen the campaign.
- Overall, respondents were more likely to say they chose “to abstain” than to report that they decided to use a condom as a result of seeing the spots.
- Viewers were significantly more likely than non-viewers to report primary or secondary abstinence. Holding background variables constant, the odds that respondents were abstinent was 1.4 times greater for viewers compared with non-viewers in 2000 and 1.7 times greater in 2003.

While notable, the findings indicate the ongoing need to reach out to young people. Phase IV launched in 2004 with radio messages that echoed the television spots. Radio is widely available in rural Zambia and the messages were broadcast in five regional languages. The Design Team should continue to expand the depth and breadth of HEART program by including more young people from disadvantaged and rural backgrounds and through programs designed for parents and community members.

Figure 3. Recall of HEART TV spots among urban youth



COMMUNICATION Impact!

Summarizes key research and programmatic findings from the Health Communication Partnership (HCP) and five other bilateral agreements.



Based at the Johns Hopkins School of Public Health/ Center for Communication Programs, HCP partners include the Academy for Educational Development, Save the Children, the International AIDS Alliance, and Tulane University's School Public Health and Tropical Medicine.



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Communication Makes the Difference!