

HIV/AIDS Prevention Among Youth Project



www.hoanhipjim.vn

Using mass media to influence Vietnamese youth: *TV spots hit the target!*

The *HIV/AIDS Prevention Among Youth* project, funded by the Asian Development Bank and the Government of Vietnam, relies on the synergistic use of mass media and interpersonal communication interventions to reach and influence young Vietnamese. The project's mass media strategy is built around the coordinated and reinforcing use of a television drama series, radio phone-in programmes, radio spots, youth-focused documentaries and television spots. Messages delivered via television spots are designed to stimulate behaviour change among high-risk youth and maintain preferred behaviours among mainstream and vulnerable youth.



A scene from the TV spot 'Flashback' promoting voluntary counselling and testing services for young couples.

Why TV spots?

A wide range of 30 and 60 second behaviour change television spots, each focusing on one important message, are an integral part of the *HIV/AIDS Prevention Among Youth* project mass media strategy.



A scene from the TV spot 'Risk' promoting consistent condom use, targeting young men.

As part of the project's overall media campaign TV spots can influence young people and help to bring about behaviour change even in difficult and sensitive circumstances—such as when dealing with topics related to sex, drug use and HIV.

TV spots are recognised as being effective in contributing to behaviour change due to several reasons:

- they provide crucial information quickly and creatively;
- they are immediate, incisive and convey a sense of urgency;
- they can be funny or intriguing thus 'firing up' the audience's imagination; and,
- they can be aired many times so the message 'hits' the audience repeatedly.

TV spots are doubly effective when they complement other outputs. In the case of the *HIV/AIDS Prevention Among Youth* project, TV spots complement other outputs including a multi-episode TV drama, youth-focused documentaries radio spots, a project website



A scene from the TV spot 'Whisper' encouraging young women to speak up and not be shy about using reproductive health services, including voluntary counselling and testing.

(www.hoanhiptim.vn), and a variety of print materials. The TV spots work to trigger recall of these outputs.

In developing TV spots for the *HIV/AIDS Prevention Among Youth* project in Vietnam, the BBC World Service Trust together with their Vietnamese partner, IDS, followed time-tested, fundamental creative techniques and procedures.

Methodology

Research

Research is the cornerstone to creating effective TV spots. Developing effective spots depends on an in-depth understanding of the target audience. A formative study, carried out by the Centre for Community Health Research and Development (CCRD), revealed the realities and information needs of young Vietnamese. Research results, highlighting the attitudes, knowledge



A scene from the dance-based TV spot 'Audition' encouraging young women to be more open about condom use with their partner. The spot is linked to the very popular and well known on-line video dance game Audition (<http://au.vtc.vn:80/edkjaff/tintuc/audition-hoa-nhip-tim-chung-hanh-dong.htm>). This linkage has helped to increase the spots visibility beyond TV.

and behaviour of young Vietnamese with regards to HIV and AIDS enabled the creative team to develop a variety of concepts for TV spots.

Developing concepts

For TV spots concept development is the most crucial stage. A spot is good only if it can reach out to and connect with the specific target audience. Creativity and innovation are required to conceptualise ideas that carry the concept and connect emotionally with the target audience.

Concepts must match the realities and understanding of the target audience. Thus, the creative team brainstormed over several days to develop a series of concepts based on the audience research. Concepts were developed, then broken down by message, format, genre and style.

Concepts were generated to respond to the five 'themes' of the project:

1. **Condom Promotion**—encouraging young people to use condoms consistently and correctly.
2. **Stigma and Discrimination**—addressing the issues of wrongful treatment towards HIV positive people.
3. **Talking About Sex**—encouraging young couples to discuss 'safer sex', and encouraging parents to talk to their children about 'safer sex' as well.
4. **Voluntary Counselling and Testing**—promoting increased access to VCT centres among youth.
5. **Injecting Drug Use**—warning those who use injecting drugs of the dangers of sharing needles and injecting equipment, and promoting needle exchange.

Message development

The creative team worked together to craft messages, set in engaging scenarios and situations, with characters that were interesting and identifiable to youth. Messages were designed to communicate a solution to a problem, outlining its value to the viewer.

The message development process began with the drafting of a 'message brief' in which the message was broken down into a *core message* and an *expanded message*.

The core message presented the specific behaviour change objective (e.g., 'use a condom consistently to protect yourself from HIV'). The expanded message offered arguments containing values and benefits which support the adoption of the promoted behaviour—safety from disease, enhanced love, long life, good health, bright future.

The combination of the core and expanded message composed the *complete message*. For example: 'use a condom, be wise, enjoy good health and a bright future', or 'use a condom, be responsible, be a good husband, protect your wife', or 'use a condom, be a real man, beat HIV'.

Developing story–lines

Story–line development was underpinned by the ‘7Cs’ of the Johns Hopkins University Communication model.

1. Command attention
2. Communicate a benefit
3. Cater to the heart and head
4. Create trust
5. Clarify the message
6. Call to action
7. Consistent message

Emphasis was placed on making the story–lines novel and innovative—ensuring that they were different from what was already on TV—and communicating a benefit. Each spot made a ‘call to action’. Story–lines commanded attention ensuring that spots were memorable. To accomplish this some spots presented fantasy or a ‘contrived’ reality.

Some story–lines followed a ‘conflict resolution model’ in which a character faced a problem which they solved by following the suggested solution. The benefit of following this course of action or behaviour was values based—pride, self esteem, self worth, quality of life...or simply good health.

This simple problem–solution formula is effective in illustrating something the audience can do or follow.

Creative brief

The message briefs and story–lines were further developed into creative briefs by the creative team. The creative brief was the guiding document, providing a bridge between the creative team and the contracted production team. The creative brief:

- articulated the behavioural objectives;
- identified the specific target audience;
- highlighted the single–most effective argument for or against a certain behaviour change (the message); and,
- offered a tag line that tied all the spots together as a campaign.

In addition, the creative brief contained other relevant details such as the tone of the spot, budget, a production and broadcast time–line, and other mandatory inclusions (i.e., logos, web addresses, phone numbers, disclaimers).

Pre–Production

The BBC World Service Trust was fortunate to work with IDS, a leading Vietnamese video production agency. Professional and highly skilled IDS staff helped to ensure the success of the pre–production phase, from casting, to location scouting, to filming and editing. IDS was efficient and effective in carrying out all pre–production tasks. The BBC WST worked closely with IDS in casting actors, determining locations, and other logistic considerations.

Getting Added Value

Acknowledging the creativity of the TV spots and their ability to reach and influence a young audience, the project determined that some of the TV spots scripts would be adapted for use as radio spots, as well as developing original radio spot scripts.

IDS, together with the BBC WST, adjusted several of the TV spot scripts for use on radio. Each adjusted script was reviewed to ensure their appropriateness for radio. Close technical and creative collaboration took place throughout the production and post–production phases.

In many cases the ‘voice talent’ for the radio spots were the same as those of the TV spots. This facilitated the production process as talent was familiar with the concepts and scripts, and therefore had little difficulty making minor adjustments for the radio spots.

A total of 200 radio spot scripts were developed. These included 60 spots recorded in northern, central and southern dialects (180 spots), 50% of which were based on TV spot scripts. In addition, a set of 20 original radio spots were produced in the ethnic languages of Thai and H’mong.

Production

Filming

When filming the priority is to adhere to the script. But enough flexibility should be accorded to changes that can enhance or improve the execution.

In order to ensure this the creative team spent considerable time discussing with the director the concept of each TV spot. Various approaches to visually represent the concept were discussed by IDS and BBC WST. Filming took place once an agreement was reached.

Post–Production: Editing Visuals & Audio

The prime purpose of editing is to tell the story in the most natural and organic way without calling any attention towards the editing. IDS and BBC WST worked together throughout the editing process. The end result was a set of 50 creative TV spots that told stories in an innovative and engaging style.

Pre-testing

Pre-testing of TV spots was carried out by Indochina Research with discussion guides developed by the BBC WST Research and Learning Group. A mix of quantitative and qualitative studies was used. Respondents included young men and young women from three different groups—mainstream youth, vulnerable youth and high-risk youth. Feedback was obtained on the following:

- general impression and appeal of TV spots;
- understanding of messages;
- credibility and clarity of messages; and,
- cultural appropriateness.

The creative team paid close attention to the results of the pre-testing, adjusting dialogue and visuals as necessary.

In addition to pre-testing the TV spots with youth, all spots had to be cleared with the Vietnam Television (VTV) censors. This was done in two stages. First, all scripts were submitted to the censor for review and approval. Second, edited versions of the TV spots were presented to the censor. In both stages, the VTV censors required some changes to TV spots. Except for two spots, the censors allowed the TV spots to be aired following adjustments to some dialogue and visuals.

TV Spot Production Check-list

- ✓ **Have one clear message per spot.** Care must be taken not to exceed a single, clear message in a spot except in some circumstances when two closely linked and logically connected messages contribute to the overall clarity and value—such as, ‘Do not inject drugs. If you do, make sure you use a clean needle every time.’
- ✓ **Use ‘real’ language.** The language in spots should mirror the language of the public. Characters should talk the way real people do and not use ‘elitist’ or ‘insider’ language that distances the viewers.
- ✓ **Use specific information and make specific points.** Focus on limited, achievable goals that people actually agree with and believe they can achieve. Don’t make claims or promises that can’t be delivered. Nobody will know what to do if they are told ‘Let’s make Vietnam HIV-free’. But if you talk about condom use and clean needles, they will be clear as to what to do.
- ✓ **Draw clear comparisons.** When people in the audience are deciding what to do, they look for clear differences between the options before them. Therefore it is essential to draw clear comparisons between risky behaviour and safe behaviour.
- ✓ **Use humour—especially in spots that tackle sensitive subjects.** Humour is a powerful force in social communication. The problems people face in real life are often heavy and grim. If you can make them smile, while addressing a serious issue, you win their attention.
- ✓ **Tell stories.** Story telling can make important issues—which are technical and impersonal—into something that’s personal and moving for the audience. A story can be told simply; e.g. a testimonial speech from a person living with HIV talking about why they have decided to take up dancing lessons because ‘life does not end with HIV’.
- ✓ **Use novel, unorthodox approaches.** The audience is exposed to countless radio, TV, newspaper and outdoor ads, sales pitches, flyers, coupons, signs and other promotions every day. The communications environment is very cluttered and difficult to cut through and get noticed. Social spots have to compete for their place and attention alongside million-dollar beer and beauty product commercials. So, although technical excellence may not always be on par, it is possible to compensate through novel approaches and presentation style.

BBC WORLD SERVICE TRUST

The BBC World Service Trust served as technical advisors in the development of TV and radio spots for the *HIV/AIDS Prevention Among Youth* project.

The BBC WST is BBC’s international charity, using media and communications to reduce poverty and thereby enable people to build better lives. The BBC WST uses media to:

- Raise awareness of development issues among mass audiences and opinion-formers.
- Influence attitudes, awareness and behaviour amongst poorer communities through a wide range of educational programming on poverty-related topics.
- Build capacity in the media sector in developing and transitional countries.

BBC World Service Trust (www.bbcworldservicetrust.org)
Bush House, Strand, London WC2B 4PH, United Kingdom

December 2009

For more information on the *HIV/AIDS Prevention Among Youth* project contact:

Project Management Unit
12 Ngo Tat To Street, Dong Da District
Hanoi, Vietnam

Phone: 84 (0) 4 3747 1102
Fax: 84 (0) 4 3843 8514
Email: pmuncpfph@hn.vnn.vn

