

AfriComNet Declaration on HIV, Alcohol and Gender Norms

Alcohol and other substance abuse, gender-based violence and norms that perpetuate gender inequity continue to fuel the spread of HIV in Africa despite significant investment in prevention, care and treatment by governments, civil society and donors.

A truly comprehensive and effective response to HIV/AIDS in Africa must recognize and address critical but long-overlooked drivers of risk behavior and barriers to services.

HIV programs need to harness the power of strategic communication to break down these barriers. Strategic communication tools – advocacy, mass media, community-based and interpersonal channels – are essential in this effort. When integrated, these tools become even more powerful in effecting positive behavior change.

Advocacy

- . Data driven
- . Responsive to community needs
- . Multi-sectoral and multi-channel

- . Champions
- . Coalitions for sustained follow-up

Mass media

- . Involve gatekeepers (editors, owners, etc.)
- . Should integrate interpersonal messages
- . Pan-African campaigns should be shared
- . Feature positive role models
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Interpersonal

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- Mass media is expensive but reaches many people – one should be creative, using multi-media campaigns, and be prepared to invest (use WHO guidelines)
- Use local languages in communication programmes where possible

- Work with media editors and owners and journalists in terms of targeting (“they must change first”!)
- Use real-life examples in media programmes
- Use targeted campaigns (“16 days of violence”)
- Ensure that messages are clear and that messages are not confused by audiences
- Use ‘modeling’ by putting audiences in ‘another person’s shoes’
- Position messages to identify ‘benefits’ of behaviour change
- Support media messages with interpersonal activities – link campaigns to specific content
- One campaign can’t work for everyone – we must find the right target (research) – what they want and need
- Be aware of ‘corporate agendas’ and ensure your campaign assesses the stakeholder environment – a SWOT analysis of external factors
- Create an enabling environment and provide training to medical providers, for instance, so they are able to ‘give the right messages’
- Form a coalition of news editors and writers – recruit them as partners so they place programming/music/etc in ‘context’ and they are not reinforcing negative behaviours
- Pan-African programme exchanges should be fostered and encouraged
- Campaigns should not threaten target audience
- Use faith based organizations and other role models to reach out through campaigns and ‘testimonials

- Strong partnerships are essential to make multi-media campaigns work
- Media literacy – people must be educated in being able to analyse the context in which messages are portrayed. Mass media themselves can incorporate this into their messages as well.
- Use media to disseminate research findings
- Use ‘new media’ (SMS, e-mail, internet, chat rooms, MIG, etc) – embrace!