

Soapie cleans up attitude to HIV/Aids

Exploiting mass media to affect change in behaviour in young people has paid off in the war against HIV/Aids, a study shows.

A randomised controlled trial by the World Bank, with extensive data collections prior and six months after exposure to the popular TV series, *MTV Shuga*, found clear evidence that the drama has positively influenced attitudes to HIV/Aids and safe sex among its target audience

A total of 5,000 18-25 year olds from across southwest Nigeria took part in the in-depth six-month evaluation, funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the Impact Evaluation to Development Impact (i2i), a World Bank fund supported by UK's Department for International Development (DFID).



A scene from *MTV Shuga*

Topline findings

- *MTV Shuga* substantially increased HIV testing: Individuals who watched the show were 35% more likely to report getting tested in the last six months. Immediately after the six-month data collection, twice as many viewers went to sexual health centres to get tested.
- A 58% reduction of chlamydia was seen among females who had watched the show.
- The programme improved knowledge about HIV transmission and testing.
- Viewers were less likely to have concurrent sexual partners, and also engaged in safer sex with primary and non-primary sexual partners.
- Viewers liked the TV drama and had good recall of its main messages after six months.

Victor Orozco, principal investigator and economist from The World Bank Development Impact Evaluation (DIME) comments: "The experimental evaluation shows that *MTV Shuga* directly improved knowledge, attitudes and behaviours related to HIV/Aids. The effects in several key outcomes were substantial and given the show's global reach and low broadcast costs, it can potentially alter attitudes and behaviours of millions of individuals at low marginal costs."

Season five set in SA

A fifth season, set in South Africa for the first time, is due to begin pre-production in September 2016. The latest incarnation of the series will be funded by South Africa's ministry of basic education, PEPFAR (The US President's Emergency Plan for Aids Relief), Marie Stopes International and Positive Action.

"HIV prevention is not only a challenge for the health system, but also for the education, economic, social and cultural systems of our society. HIV has the potential to undermine our efforts to achieve improved quality basic education," says Angie Motshekga, South African minister of basic education. *MTV Shuga* comes at a time when the South African government had resolved to implement a 360 mass media behaviour change campaign as part of its HIV Prevention and Sexuality Education Programme.

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