

MULTISECTORAL RESPONSE (MR)



BY SAMKELO
MAHLALELA

Information Centre Manager
The National HIV and AIDS Information
and Training Centre

PROJECT LAST MILE

...redefining approach to social behaviour change communication



Project Last Mile in Eswatini

Towards the end of 2016, Project Last Mile (PLM) Strategic Marketing was introduced in the country's HIV response to partner with the ministry of health (MoH) and the National Emergency Response Council on HIV/AIDS (NERCHA) to support demand creation for HIV services.

Through funding from The Global Fund and The Coca-Cola Foundation, PLM has been enlisted to design and test an innovative approach to transform social behaviour change communication (SBCC) for health including HIV in the country.

With all evidence showing concern in the issue of AGYW, it was agreed to start the project with young girls and later expand to reach all those in need.

PLM leverages on the marketing approaches of The Coca-Cola Company (TCCC) in particular, on demand creation. Without a doubt, Coca-Cola always has the best adverts and anecdotally, a loyal customer base for the dark drink. PLM has designed a campaign called GirlChamp to encourage AGYW to prevent HIV and live healthy lives. The campaign sets out to create a youth-friendly future, with a goal to make healthcare spaces more welcoming.

The Girl Champ Campaign

In a point of departure from how health communication is often undertaken in the public sector, the Girl Champ campaign is designed through powerful and relevant marketing. The campaign grew out of specialised neuro-scientific research to better understand why HIV is a pandemic among young girls in

Eswatini.

The pre-campaign research discovered that young girls have many battles to fight. It found that young girls are strongly desirous of a better future, but often feel afraid, judged and alone, and often find themselves in unhealthy relationships that aggravate their vulnerability and risk-taking behaviours.

The research revealed that while health education is available, safe spaces in which individuals can have meaningful conversations about the best prevention and treatment options, are not available.

Generally, the girls have respect for clinics, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and health service providers, but they are sceptical about visiting the clinics owing to false stories. The research also showed that young girls value the support and love of their families and need a loving mother or a strong female role model.

To build on the foundation already laid by nurses and healthcare workers in creating healthcare spaces that are more welcoming and youth friendly, the Girl Champ introduced the idea of a healthcare worker as a Coach – someone there to support, care for, educate and offer objective guidance, with the aim of encouraging young girls to make good decisions about their health and well-being.

The campaign supports the training of youth friendly nurses and other youth interventions by reminding the healthcare workers of the important role they play in a young girl's future. Ultimately, the campaign supports the MoH's existing initiatives to ensure that healthcare remains

professional, confidential and youth friendly.

Fun and safe events break down barriers to health and well-being

The Girl Champ movement is about building a positive and empowered community of adolescent girls and young women in Eswatini.

The movement uplifts girls through exercise (especially boxercise) to start conversations about health and well-being.

The exercise benefits girls in that: it relieves stress, can ward off depression, build confidence and encourage girls to respect their bodies and prioritise their health, and helps them understand how important it is to take care of themselves.

Girl Champ fitness events are hosted as Super Saturdays in participating clinics, where the girls are recruited into the clinic system in a fun and youthfully relevant way.

The Super Saturday involves fitness sessions and a talk by the clinic nurses, who share their own journey of well-being.

Empowering and informative talks about the services offered by the clinic and how these services can help a young girl live a healthier life, are also given.

Inaugural Super Saturday events were held in the Manzini region for young girls aged 14-30 at Luyengo, Mafutseni and Zombodze Clinics in November 2018 where just under 1 900 girls attended and registered.

Approximately 160 girls were provided with counselling for various issues. PLM is considering the concepts to be introduced under the health promotion programme for

the ministry of health and her partners – nationally and regionally.

Time for the boys perhaps

From a capability perspective PLM will build on the Girl Champ movement and look at ways to expand capability initiatives. In an entirely new segment, this year, PLM will once again replicate The Coca-Cola Company strategic marketing process as was done for AGYW, but this time for young boys.

The key deliverables will be to contribute to an enhanced understanding of HIV for the young boys, to provide the best ways to connect with young boys over time, and to ensure that they protect themselves from HIV and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

As the saying goes, ladies first. Let us support the efforts of the Girl Champ in overall HIV prevention.

“ The movement uplifts girls through exercise (especially boxercise) to start conversations about health and well-being. The exercise benefits girls in that: it relieves stress, can ward off depression, build confidence and encourage girls to respect their bodies and prioritise their health, and helps them understand how important it is to take care of themselves. ”