

**COMMUNICATING TO ADOLESCENTS ABOUT HIV AND AIDS
THROUGH CAMPUS RADIO:
SUGGESTIONS FROM THE LITERATURE**

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ABSTRACT

Education is currently reputed to be a vaccine against HIV/Aids. Many Aids campaigns use the cognitive behaviour model according to which behavioural change is the result of rational, individual decision-making based on acquired knowledge. Undoubtedly, mass media has a profound influence on the education and empowerment of individuals. The role of the media specifically in combating HIV/Aids was emphasised when national surveys conducted in the US revealed that 72% of Americans had identified television, radio and newspapers — and not family, friends or doctors — as their primary source of information about HIV/Aids. A particularly alarming fact is the extreme vulnerability of the youth — by the age of 23, one South African youth in five is HIV positive. A prominent section of the youth is present on the many university campuses. In this context, campus radio stations constitute one possible vehicle for communicating important health-related messages to this target group. This article aims to make recommendations for successful health communication through campus radio. The article first describes the role of campus radio by interrogating its social and civic role, and its active and participatory role. It goes on to identify specific challenges of HIV/Aids broadcasting pertaining to campus radio stations, and then makes suggestions on how to meet such challenges head-on.

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INTRODUCTION AND ORIENTATION

Broadcast media have tremendous reach and influence, particularly with young people, who represent the future and who are the key to any successful fight against HIV/Aids. We must seek to engage these powerful organizations as full partners in the fight to halt HIV/Aids through awareness, prevention, and education. – Kofi Annan, Former United Nations Secretary General

Education is currently reputed to be a vaccine against HIV/Aids (Vandemoortele & Delamonica 2007). Many Aids campaigns are based on the cognitive behaviour model according to which behavioural change is the result of rational, individual decision-making based on acquired knowledge (Francis & Rimensberger 2005: 87). Analyses of prevention interventions have consistently found that such programmes reduce the frequency of sexual risk behaviour. Behavioural change programmes typically include basic information about the virus, counselling and skills development, e.g. negotiating safe sex (UNAids 2006). Undoubtedly, mass media has enormous influence in educating and empowering individuals and numerous examples can be cited of media interventions that have effected positive changes in society. In one such instance, an Indian village rejected the dowry system after listening communally to a radio soap opera broadcast (UNAids 2004).

In January 2004, the then Secretary General of the United Nations, Kofi Annan, first called upon media companies to join the global effort against HIV and Aids on the occasion of a special meeting of media leaders at the UN headquarters in New York. Here the Global Media Aids Initiative (GMAI) was established. The role of the media specifically in combating HIV and Aids was emphasised when national surveys conducted in the US revealed that 72% of Americans had identified television, radio and newspapers – not family, friends and doctors – as their primary sources of information about HIV and Aids (UNAids 2004). In response to the GMAI, the African Broadcast Media Partnership against HIV/Aids (ABMP) was launched in 2006. At this meeting it was concluded that “the broadcast media in Africa is pivotal to the effort to stem the tide of the HIV/Aids epidemic on the continent”. The aim of this initiative was thus to increase substantially the amount of HIV/Aids-related programming by African broadcasters.

This research was initially sparked by a tagline on an ACT UP² poster (1990) that read: *Aids is everybody's business*. The research was further sparked by alarming statistics about the pandemic. According to the South Africa Survey 2004/2005 (Kane-Berman & Tempest 2006), deaths from causes other than HIV and Aids increase in accordance with increases in population size, and are predicted to increase by 3.6% between 2000 and 2010. Conversely, deaths as a result of HIV and Aids are predicted to increase by 150.3%. A particularly alarming fact is the extreme vulnerability of the youth: whereas the estimated prevalence among the general population is about 11%, the prevalence in the population aged between 15 and 49 is estimated at about 19%. Another source (Ndaki 2004), states that, by the age of 23, one South African youth in five is HIV

positive. In lieu of the above, there is consensus that young people need expanded information, skills, and services concerning sexual and reproductive health.

Some would argue that successful communication can only take place by means of interpersonal, face-to-face communication, preferably in the context of the home. However, the fact is that parents do not communicate with their children about sexuality, let alone HIV and Aids, hence necessitating the identification of other means of communicating about HIV and Aids. Effective communication strategies for addressing sexual health issues can be provided by the media whose role it is to open channels of communication and to foster discussion. Yet, according to Singhal (2003: 7), "the world has underestimated the role communication can play in reducing HIV infection in developing countries".

RADIO AS A COMMUNICATION TOOL

It is a long-established fact that television and radio campaigns have generated interest in the use of the popular media as channels for dealing with both social and personal problems, including sexual health and relationships (Bentley, Blank & Van Haveren 2001: 186). In developing countries beset by social problems such as the HIV and Aids pandemic, addressing such issues has become a key function of the popular media (Vaughan, Rogers & Singhal 2000: 82). And even though social change is not always brought about through mass media campaigns, the latter can lead to broader discourses on development and health.

Radio in particular is regarded to be an effective tool. It can play many different roles and is considered to be a good agent of development (McKinley & Jensen 2003: 182). As radio is a low-cost medium with broad coverage, it has the ability to exert influence on lifestyles; it entertains, informs, empowers, socialises and befriends (MacFarland 1997: 32). All of these make it a gratifying and useful medium.

The post 1994 broadcasting environment in South Africa gave rise to a continuously evolving and somewhat varied community radio sector. Van Zyl (2003: 11, 20, 29-30) identifies the following reasons why community radio, especially, has been very successful in education programming:

- It generates high levels of audience loyalty;
- It fosters trust in the presenters and in the station;
- The accessibility of the station makes it easy to phone in or even walk in if more information is needed;
- It is possible to adopt programming to local needs and language requirements;
- It provides opportunities for enriching learning through linkages with other programmes and campaigns;

- It encourages dialogue in the community and between communities;
- It can build citizens by encouraging individuals in various communities to debate the true nature of a good society, and to discuss the kind of world in which they would like to live; and
- It can create an atmosphere of tolerance by removing the restrictions brought about by stereotypes.

Yet it is also important to note the drawbacks of using radio to communicate about health issues. Because radio is a transitory medium, information is not always retained by listeners who cannot ask for clarification; radio is a one-way medium offering no immediate opportunity for interaction; not all people have access to electricity, and batteries can be expensive; radio can be used for the wrong reasons (communicating divergent messages) and can heighten people's fears and prejudices; some also believe that radio on its own cannot have an educational impact (Adam & Harford 1998: 4), while others suggest a multimedia approach to health education (Storey, Boulay, Karki, Heckert & Karmacharya 1999: 288).

According to Mody (1991: 24), the focus of attention should, however, not be on what media to employ, but on how to incorporate audience research into message design so as to enhance effective communication and educational impact through a locally available, low-cost medium that is accessible to the majority.

A prominent section of the youth is present on the many university campuses throughout the country. In this context campus radio stations constitute one possible vehicle for communicating important health-related messages to this target group. On some university campuses in South Africa there are licensed community radio stations catering for the specific yet varied needs of the student communities they serve. These stations are granted a special-interest community broadcasting licence by The Independent Broadcasting Authority of South Africa (ICASA 2005).

Campus radio targets a diverse audience of both school and university students, thereby providing a direct link to this, the most vulnerable of groups in respect of HIV and Aids. Specific characteristics of campus radio make it an effective medium for HIV and Aids communication:

- Information is communicated by peers;
- The programming reflects the culture and aspirations of student life on the campus, and is made up of talk (25-40%) and music (60-75%). It includes features such as traffic reports, weather reports, etc.;
- It has a youthful character and is entertaining, which lends itself to employing an education-entertainment strategy in respect of HIV and Aids education;

- Anonymous participation is possible;
- Though ownership is not in the community, these stations are managed by the student community. Campus radio is therefore produced by the students for the students; and
- Campus radio, being on a university campus, provides distinct opportunities for research partnerships and programme development opportunities with academic staff.

AIM AND METHODOLOGY

Against this background, this article aims to make recommendations for successful health communication through campus radio. The article first describes the role of campus radio by means of various station managers' perceptions. It goes on to identify specific challenges of HIV/Aids broadcasting pertaining to campus radio stations, and then makes suggestions for dealing with such challenges. These recommendations and suggestions for meeting the day-to-day challenges head-on could empower campus stations to join more aggressively and more effectively in the fight against HIV/Aids.

Apart from a literature review of the topic, which informed the identification of challenges and suggestions to overcome the challenges, it was also necessary to gain insight into the perceptions of selected station managers of campus radio stations regarding their role in general, and, more specifically, in communicating to their listeners (aged 16-28) about HIV and Aids. The OneWorld Radio/Exchange brainstorming meeting in June 2004 emphasised the importance of "opening up opportunities for broadcasters themselves to get into dialogue about the practice of HIV/Aids broadcasting" (Exchange 2004).

Geographical constraints guided the selection of electronic open-ended questionnaires to gather the data from campus radio stations. The questionnaires were completed by the station managers of Tuksfm (University of Pretoria), MFM (University of Stellenbosch) and Kovsie FM (University of the Free State). These stations were chosen on the basis of experience in years (five to nine) of the managers. Other factors influencing the selection process were the stations' diverse geographical locations and the fact that all target diverse audience groups.

A PROFILE OF THE RADIO STATIONS

The following table provides a comparison of the three campus radios in terms of a number of characteristics.

TABLE 1: A COMPARISON OF THREE CAMPUS RADIO STATIONS³

	Tuksfm	Kovsie FM	MFM
Locality	At 107.2 MHz FM Stereo from studios on the campus of the University of Pretoria	At 97 MHz FM Stereo from studios on the campus of the University of the Free State	At 92.6 MHz FM Stereo from studios on the campus of the Stellenbosch University

Communicating to adolescents about HIV and Aids through campus radio: Suggestions from the literature

	Tuksfm	Kovsie FM	MFM
Area served	Most of Pretoria and environs	Bloemfontein and environs, up to a radius of 30km	Areas, e.g. Goodwood, Greater Cape Town, Stellenbosch, Somerset West, Simon's Town and Durbanville
Programming	Reflects the culture and aspirations of student life on the campus Comprises talk (40%) and music (60%) Includes features such as traffic and weather reports, etc.	Reflects the culture and aspirations of student life on the campus Comprises talk (25%) and music (75%) Includes features such as traffic and weather reports, etc. Broadcasts in English (50%), Afrikaans (40%) and Sesotho (10%)	Comprises talk (40%) and music (60%) Includes features such as traffic and weather reports, etc. Features are geared to entertain, educate and inform
Target audience characteristics	Mostly Afrikaans-speaking listeners, 16-29 LSM group 6-10, with an average income of R4000 per month	Listeners 16-28 LSM group 6-10, with an income upwards of R2500 per month	Listeners 16-29 LSM group 1-5 with an average income of R1700 per month.
Frequency of broadcasting and audience numbers	7 days per week audience of 52 000 listeners	7 days per week audience of 7 000 listeners	7 days per week audience of 35 000 listeners ⁴

(The Media Connection 2005)

From the above table it is clear that apart from the specific area served, the stations have much in common, e.g. the programming content. What does vary in this respect is the time allocation in respect of talk and music, with Kovsie FM – in contrast to the other two – devoting much more time to music than to talking. Another significant difference is in respect of the LSM group targeted, with MFM's target group being significantly lower than either of the other two stations. However, what is noteworthy about Kovsie FM is the fact that it broadcasts in three of the most important languages of the region, though only a scant 10% is devoted to Sesotho broadcasting.

THE ROLE OF CAMPUS RADIO: STATION MANAGERS' PERCEPTIONS

More than a decade after the advent of democracy in South Africa, the debate is still on regarding the role of the media in South Africa as a developing country. This trend is echoed in respect of the role of community radio vis-à-vis education and development. According to Van Zyl (2005: 8-9), the necessary work of establishing a community radio sector has been accomplished. The next goal is to develop a new function for community radio, which should include:

- A social and civic role: a positive, post-liberation role that originates from the original mandate;
- An active and participatory role: where community radio acts in strengthening civil society structures; and
- A guiding and reflecting role: where, as one of its important functions, community radio reflects the opinions of the citizens of its community.

When asked about the role of community radio and campus radio in particular, the three station managers all agreed that campus radio should act as a vehicle for students to obtain knowledge of broadcasting and actual broadcasting skills in the industry. One respondent even regarded the in-service training function of campus radio to be the primary role of this form of community media.

A second important function highlighted by the respondents was that of fulfilling the role of an information and entertainment medium for the learners and students of the community served. More specifically, certain sub-functions of campus radio were identified by the respondents. The first couple of functions are generic and general, and they correlate with one of the new functions for community radio as explicated by Van Zyl (2005: 8-9), namely the social and civic role:

- Presenting its target audience with a high-quality, professional radio service;
- Supporting the development of music and musicians from within the immediate community and also those from other areas of South Africa;
- Providing an impartial, fair and immediate local, national and international news service, with a marked emphasis on local coverage; and
- Raising funds to ensure the continued successful functioning of the station.

A last sub-function to be identified by the respondents, namely that of "developing a culture of critical thinking and constructive debate and ensuring that all sectors of the community have the opportunity to state their views or concerns on air", is in agreement with the guiding and reflective role identified by Van Zyl (2005: 8-9).

Respondents also agreed that the role of campus radio does not really differ from that of other community radio stations, except in the sense that all community stations cater for their specific communities and for the needs of their specific communities.

The social and civic role: serving the community's needs

Tuksfm attempts to address the listeners' needs "through effective, intelligent programming". The station manager identified the needs of his listeners as being financial-, entertainment- and social responsibility-orientated. He selected two social issues – employment and HIV/Aids – as being important social issues with Tuksfm listeners.

The Kovsky FM station manager perceived his listeners' needs to be "entertainment, arts and culture and factual, educational programmes". The station attempts to address these needs by providing entertainment through music and presenters. Five times a day it provides community and events news coverage on cultural and community activities. In conjunction with the Department of Communication and Information Studies at the University of the Free State, the station also produces programmes dealing with factual, educational issues.

The MFM station manager described the listeners of this campus radio station as being young, upwardly mobile, socially conscious and dynamic. According to him the needs of the listeners boil down to entertainment, information and education. MFM tries to include these facets in the programming, the music, the planning and the projects. Social issues considered to be important to the listeners are HIV/Aids, sexual issues, education and career planning, and crime and security. MFM has established certain partnerships to ensure that the listeners' needs are met.

The active and participatory role: serving listeners' HIV and Aids needs

In an illuminating article on the role of education in combating the Aids pandemic, Vandemoortele and Delamonica (2007) state that research has shown that the more educated, mobile and affluent members of society seem to be the most vulnerable to HIV infection during its initial stages. Conversely, with increased information, knowledge and awareness this group's behaviour to reduce the risk of contracting HIV changes faster than that of illiterate and poor people. This emphasises the importance of communicating the necessary information to the youth as the most vulnerable group. Yet in many countries open and frank communication about HIV transmission does not occur at home, in school or in public. According to these authors, "a wall of silence ... surrounds the disease". They identify four so-called allies that make HIV so prevalent in many developing countries, namely silence, shame, stigma and superstition. These four allies thrive in "a climate of ignorance and illiteracy. Education is key to defeating this deadly alliance."

Pinpointing the precise role of campus radio in communicating about HIV and Aids is challenging. Several factors complicate the production of radio about HIV and Aids, such as the nature and severity of the illness, its broad impact, and various cultural sensitivities about discussing human sexuality (McLellan 2006). Ideally, it should comprise awareness raising, educating the public about the disease, changing a person's or group's attitudes about the disease, changing individual behaviour to prevent or control a disease, and creating social norms that favour healthy living. Broadcasters

must further bear in mind that the link between public health issues and significant behaviour change is not yet fully understood (Adam & Harford 1999: 4).

The station manager of Tuksfm was clear about the role that campus radio should play in respect of HIV and Aids, and maintained that campus radio stations should “provide information about the pandemic”. This information should “communicate the message of complete abstinence or safe[r] sex and provide information on what causes HIV and how HIV is transmitted”.

Tuksfm has only one programme focusing on HIV/Aids, and this is usually requested and produced by a community-based organisation. The station has sponsorship for the programme and the university is not involved. Student involvement is generated via telephone, SMS and e-mail. Tuksfm is not involved in any other HIV/Aids-related projects or campaigns, but does run public service announcements. Its efforts are not evaluated.

Kovsie FM’s station manager likewise recognised the need for radio stations to “create awareness about the dangers of HIV/Aids, as well as to address all issues related to the virus”. He took a stronger position in stating that more than just running public service announcements, campus radio stations should be actively involved in both HIV/Aids campaigns and with the work of NGOs.

Kovsie FM runs various HIV/Aids-focused programmes. The programming amounts to a total of 90 minutes a week. Interviews, mini-dramas and a live show that answers listeners’ questions are part of the campaign. Two of the programmes are sponsored by the Department of Communication and Information Studies, and another by the university’s Life Skills and Wellness Centre.

The station manager of MFM felt that campus radio stations should primarily play a preventive role, while its secondary role should be one of building tolerance and acceptance. This station does not have specific HIV/Aids-related programmes, but includes the issue in some of its mainstream shows. This will happen anything from twice to five times a month. Partnerships exist with Stellenbosch Aids Action, the university’s Aids coordinator and its Department of Communications. In the manager’s opinion, people living with HIV/Aids had to be made part of producing and presenting HIV/Aids-related programmes. He suggested incorporating the human element to raise awareness.

The following can be deduced from the station managers’ responses: Although respondents had definite ideas about their respective stations’ roles in the fight against HIV/Aids, they had little or no HIV/Aids-related communication campaigns. However, some partnerships had been formed. Their comments regarding their role in general seemed almost forced, sounding somewhat like applications to ICASA for a licence. The impression gained was that they were going through the motions, that they thought that it was expected of them to make some attempt at HIV/Aids communication, but that they themselves were not sure as to how this was to be approached.

According to the respondents, the biggest challenge to be faced in respect of HIV/Aids programming was that of maintaining the level of audience interest. Kovsky FM's station manager recommended that interviews should last no longer than seven minutes so as to contain only the gist of a message.

They also feared that the topic would be too serious and that they would consequently either alienate or lose their audiences. This is a real concern in a media-saturated society in which people are continuously bombarded with messages about what and what not to do. While behavioural change programmes aimed at informing high-risk groups are among the most cost-effective prevention interventions available (UNAids 2006), some studies have found that the incidence of high-risk behaviour did not change much, despite the fact that people had a reasonably accurate knowledge of HIV and Aids, and of prevention measures. Not only does this cast some doubt on the efficacy of the cognitive behaviour model, but it also points to fatigue in respect of the topic as a consequence of having been exposed to much information in this regard (Francis & Rimensberger 2005). Herein lies the challenge, according to Solly Mokoetle, Chair of the African Broadcast Media Partnership Against HIV/Aids (ABMP), namely to turn the awareness about the disease into sustained behaviour change that would then result in reduced HIV/Aids rates (Kaiser Family Foundation 2006).

A further challenge pointed out by the respondents was the difficulty of persuading people living with HIV or Aids to be interviewed, for fear of having their anonymity compromised.

In general there is a lack of formal research on audience needs and on the monitoring and evaluation of the impact of communication initiatives. In the past, the approach to HIV communication was often rather haphazard. This provides the rationale for exploring ways of achieving successful health communication specifically through campus radio. The second part of this article is devoted to identifying the specific challenges of HIV/Aids broadcasting pertaining to campus radio stations, and then ways of meeting such challenges head-on are suggested.

COMMUNICATING ABOUT HIV/AIDS

According to Bernhardt (2004: 2052), public health communication is "the scientific development, strategic dissemination, and critical evaluation of relevant, accurate, accessible, and understandable health information communicated to and from intended audiences to advance the health of the public". Freimuth, Linnan and Potter (2000: 11) argue that the essential elements of the communication process – audience, message, source and channel – must be taken into account when disseminating health information. In order for campus radio stations to develop and/or disseminate and/or evaluate HIV/Aids information, these elements of the communication process need to be considered and addressed.

The audience

An understanding of the intended audience is very important. Part of understanding the audience is using audience segmentation. The criteria for segmentation include demographics, behaviour and psychographic characteristics. Yet when it comes to communicating about HIV/Aids, it might be more appropriate to group the audience according to the precise nature of their sexual activity. According to Hughes and McCauley (1998: 240), three groupings of people emerge:

- Group 1: Adolescents who have not yet begun having intercourse;
- Group 2: Adolescents who have engaged in intercourse and have experienced no unhealthy consequences; and
- Group 3: Adolescents who have engaged in intercourse and have experienced unhealthy consequences.

In order to communicate about HIV/Aids, some knowledge regarding the status of adolescent sexuality must be acquired: their knowledge, perceptions and behaviour concerning HIV/Aids; their misconceptions and fears; the current societal taboos and prejudices in respect of HIV/Aids; adolescents' perceptions of personal risk; the nature of sexual practice among adolescents; the reasons for indulging in high-risk sex; the attitudes of adolescents towards adolescent sexuality; youths living with HIV/Aids; and adolescents' preferred sources of information on HIV/Aids (Hughes & McCauley 1998: 240). Broadcasters would thus do well to consult the South African National HIV prevalence, HIV Incidence, Behaviour and Communication survey, 2005.⁵

The audience's knowledge about HIV/Aids can be determined by asking four basic questions:

- What do you think are the causes of HIV/Aids?
- How do you know if you have HIV?
- How do you/can you prevent HIV?
- How would you relate to a person with HIV?

Here radio stations can partner with their universities' research centres or academic departments to develop and disseminate a questionnaire to students. Alternatively, an online survey can be made available on the official website of the radio station.

The message

Mody (1991: 147-148) cautions the broadcaster to develop audience-responsive content. Content choices should thus be guided by the demarcated audience, e.g. the three groups mentioned above demarcated according to the nature of their sexual activity. However, campus radio stations' ability to do this is questionable, given their perceived functions as discussed earlier. In general, though, broadcasters could run with certain topics as part of the HIV/Aids communication. Care should be taken that

broadcasts adhere to the following overarching criteria for communicating health information, namely that the content must be useful, timely, appropriate and simple and not contain too much technical information (McLellan 2005; Mody 1991: 147-148).

The following topics are adapted from a list provided by Adam and Harford (1999: 35-36):

- How people contract HIV;
- The connection between HIV and Aids;
- HIV prevention;
- The experience of living with HIV/Aids;
- The marked vulnerability of young women to HIV infection;
- The rights of women to negotiate safer sex, and the nature of safer sex;
- HIV/Aids support groups – how people living with HIV/Aids are working to address their own problems; and
- Aids treatment, and the costs involved.

McLellan (2005) maintains that merely providing information about HIV/Aids is not enough. The broadcaster needs to be conscious of the problems closely related to the Aids epidemic in Africa, ranging from those problems closely associated with high levels of poverty, low-level educational attainment, apathy, myths and misconceptions about HIV/Aids, to those linked with emotional/behavioural and human factors (Umerah-Udezulu & Williams 2001: 35). In light of understanding the broader context of HIV/Aids, the role that broadcasters can play is thus not limited to the dissemination of prevention messages but they can also play a role with regard to advocacy and mobilisation.

Adam and Harford (1998: 30) stress the important proviso that messages must provide alternative narratives – more than just doom and gloom. As a result of the circumstances in which many people live, they have a limited ability to imagine either other circumstances or options. The message that one can indeed live positively with HIV can be included in the key messages when communicating about HIV/Aids.

In order to adhere to these criteria, special care must be taken with regard to language.⁶ Language usage must be straightforward and non-judgmental. Adam and Harford (1991: 26) make some useful suggestions. Try to say: HIV positive, to have Aids, to be living with Aids, to become infected with HIV/Aids. Try not to say: Aids sufferers, Aids victims/innocent victims, catching Aids, and, to die from Aids.

Message design can be complicated – especially when one takes into account that broadcasters must communicate on the individual, interpersonal or community level. McLellan (2005) suggests consulting copies of socio-behavioural studies. Gaining insights on what is actually going on regarding risky sexual behaviour among the youth helps towards ensuring that the broadcast reflects what actually transpires. Deciding what the key messages are should be based on discussions with the specialists and asking the people to whom you are broadcasting.

Source

Finding a person who will be a credible bearer/cARRIER of the message is an important aspect of the process. Kreuter and McClure (2004: 443) identify two primary dimensions of credibility: expertise and trustworthiness. Credibility might possibly also be enhanced by being regarded as socially attractive, especially when the channel is video or audio, or when the message being communicated is unpleasant. Highly technical messages should be communicated by expert sources, while a message advocating behaviour change necessitates trustworthiness (Freimuth 1995: 84).

Local voices are just as important as local programming. Local voices not only heighten the identification with listeners, but also reaffirm the identities of the people listening so that they can see themselves reflected in the programme. McLellan (2005) suggests including people living with HIV/Aids in the broadcast – wherever possible – and even getting them to present the programmes.

The channel

If the message does not reach the intended audience, the attempt at communication will fail. The channel, or means by which the message is sent, is as important as the message. It is advised that channels be combined. “Mass media channels are most effective for increasing awareness and knowledge, but interpersonal channels work better in changing attitudes and behaviour” (Rogers as quoted by Freimuth *et al.* 2000: 4). Storey *et al.* (1999: 287) concur that HIV communication through more than one medium increases the breadth and sustainability of the impact.

Mass media channels: radio programming

Adam and Harford (1999: 39-48) have identified some of the most successful formats for health programmes, namely spots, mini-dialogues, mini-dramas, songs, interviews, slogans, magazine, stories, oral testimony, phone-ins and soap operas. However, not all of these are either applicable or feasible for campus radio. The following table gives the broadcaster an indication of the positive and negative aspects of some of the applicable programme formats.

TABLE 2: POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE ASPECTS OF SELECTED RADIO PROGRAMME FORMATS

Programme formats	Positive aspects	Negative aspects
Radio variety shows	These are entertaining and include music ⁷ short stories, short interviews, jokes, etc.	A lot of material is condensed into one programme and the material thus lacks in-depth coverage.
Radio soap operas and drama⁸	Interesting stories that capture the experiences of the youth and their families. Entertainment-education stimulates peer communication about HIV prevention.	The youth could sympathise and identify with the negative characters and feel that they are being treated unfairly.
Radio Spots	These are effective in emphasising the message. Using young people to communicate is very effective in reaching the youth and facilitating the process of normalising specific patterns of behaviour.	Partnerships need to be established to finance these initiatives.
Radio discussions and interviews	Allow for in-depth discussions of issues. Give accurate information and advice.	These are more appropriate for older adolescents.

(Adapted from Nduati & Kiai 197: 85-86; Singhal & Rogers 2003: 382)

Appropriate scheduling is equally important to ensure that messages are heard by the target audience. The broadcaster must remember that the message that unsafe sex can be extremely dangerous is not always a welcome one. The programmes must moreover be entertaining yet sensitive. Adam and Harford (1999: 69) suggest that key messages need also to be repeated in different programme formats so as not to bore the audience. Broadcasters must be sure to vary the times of day, and days of the week when airing radio spots.

Interpersonal channels

Galavotti and Pappas-Deluca (2001: 1602-1608) support the idea that the use of media to communicate about HIV/Aids must be combined with interpersonal reinforcement through community-level support. These authors suggest “the involvement of the credible members of the affected community and mobilising them to endorse and support behaviour changes among members of their own peer, family and social networks”.

The following are possible means of ensuring interpersonal reinforcement of the broadcaster's message:

Support groups and partnerships with the student counselling services and offices dealing specifically with HIV and Aids;

Road shows, thereby taking the shows out of the studio to focus on the issues a community considers important; and

Selecting community promoters able to establish listening groups to discuss issues pertaining to the broadcast (McKinley & Jensen 2003: 192).

Applying these guidelines for HIV/Aids communication might sound simple enough, yet applying them in practice is an altogether different matter. I thus want to take the exercise a step further by also identifying challenges in respect of HIV/Aids communication and then making some suggestions for dealing with such challenges.

COMMUNICATING ABOUT HIV AND AIDS:

IDENTIFYING AND OVERCOMING CHALLENGES

The main challenges in communicating about HIV and Aids pertain to resources, content and implementation. Due to space constraints the challenges and suggestions to overcome these challenges will be summarised in table 3 below.

**TABLE 3: OVERVIEW OF HIV AND AIDS COMMUNICATION CHALLENGES
AND SOLUTIONS**

Challenges	Elements	Solutions
Resources	Human Financial Knowledge	Form sustainable partnerships Link with broader communication strategies around HIV/Aids Tap into existing projects & networks Assess staff development needs and react Investigate possibility of appointing additional staff – such as special community liaison officer
Programme content/message		
	Ethical and liability issues	Liability: Read a disclaimer and also post on your website Phone-ins: keep information factual and general, not offering specific recommendations

Programme content/message		
		<p>Ethics: Adopt a socially responsible approach: normalise rather than marginalise the issue, cover the economic and social implications, include both those infected and affected by HIV, and include simple prevention messages</p>
	Nature of the programme: Entertainment + education	<p>Take into account social dimensions of radio listening Programming must be lively Address great number of major appeals through programming: conflict/competition, comedy, sex appeal/personality, information and human interest Conduct audience surveys to understand your audiences' programming needs and preferences Use a variety of radio formats</p>
	Selecting the appropriate message Risks: (a) too much information is included, (b) the information is too general, while also not giving practical advice, and (c) the information is not well organised	<p>Broadcasters must examine their understanding of HIV/Aids Assess the needs of your audience Consult the experts Always try to pre-test the message If a generic message is used adapt it to the local context and local idiom to ensure relevance</p>
Implementation		
	Audience concerns	<p>Try to anticipate concerns Set up focus groups and select promoters through whom discussions can take place and concerns aired Ensure buy-in from relevant stakeholders e.g. university management</p>
	Evaluation through audience feedback	<p>Design processes, strategies and appropriate channels to ensure effective use of audience feedback</p>

Implementation		
		<p>Identify the impact of intervention, how it is received by listeners and determine how changes can be made and tested</p> <p>Evaluations must determine the target audience's recall of a specific programme</p> <p>Ask the following questions during feedback sessions:</p> <p>Have you heard of Aids? Where did you hear about it? Do you believe it exists? How do you feel about Aids? Why? How do you feel about persons with Aids? Why? How can you best learn more about Aids? What do you want to know?</p>
	Sustainability	<p>Creatively advertise programming</p> <p>Facilitate community and audience participation</p> <p>Editorial control must be representative of the community as a whole</p> <p>Form research partnerships</p>

(Adapted from Bentley, Blank & Van Haveren 2001: 186; Adam and Harford 1998: 23-28, 29, 33, 55-56, 94, 104; Howard, Kievman & Moore 1994: 171-172; MacFarland 1997: 59; Exchange 2004; McKinley & Jensen 2003: 182-183)

CONCLUSION

Communicating to adolescents is challenging, and even more so when it comes to a sensitive and potentially controversial issue such as HIV/Aids. Alarming statistics regarding HIV/Aids-related deaths and infection rates, especially among the youth in South Africa, call for an aggressive communication campaign.

This study has proposed the use of campus radio to reach the youth. The perceptions of Tuksfm, MFM and Kovsie FM regarding their role in communicating to their listeners about HIV/Aids were assessed. Although their community licence requirements do not stipulate the role campus radio should play in communicating about HIV/Aids, the managements of these stations do feel that they have a part to play. The three stations are attempting to fulfil both their listeners' needs and their own specific developmental needs. There does however seem to be a lack of initial research, of the resources required to sustain HIV/Aids communication, and of audience participation. There seem to be both ignorance and apathy on the part of management. Existing HIV/Aids communication might also be done for the wrong reasons, e.g. to obtain sponsorships, to acquire broadcasting licences, or to please stakeholders and community partners.

Four elements of the communication process – audience, message, source and channel – need to be taken into account when communicating about HIV/Aids. An understanding of the audience for which the message is intended is very important. In order to communicate about HIV/Aids, some knowledge regarding the nature of adolescent sexuality must be acquired by the broadcaster. The message must be useful, timely, appropriate and simple. It is crucial that the information be transmitted by a credible source. Selecting the appropriate channel, or in this context, the appropriate programme format needs careful deliberation. Both the talk and the music format seem to be equally appropriate for HIV/Aids communication. Researchers agree that combining interpersonal and mass-media channels to communicate about HIV/Aids is a good idea. Interpersonal reinforcement of a broadcaster's message can be effected through support groups and partnerships with the student counselling services.

Campus radio stations face some daunting challenges when it comes to HIV/Aids communication. These include challenges in respect of resources and content, and other challenges related to community and audience participation and involvement, and the evaluation of programming. These challenges can be overcome, *inter alia*, by investigating every avenue for possible partnerships, by assessing staff development needs, by selecting the appropriate message, and by keeping programming entertaining and professional.

Campus radio management must start thinking about HIV/Aids communication. They must be aware of the fact that their listeners are in some way affected by the disease. They must be open to discussing it among themselves and with their audience. They must not include public service announcements simply to please stakeholders, but be diligent in evaluating the messages by using the criteria as discussed in this article. They must start thinking creatively about including HIV/Aids communication in their broadcasts. They can, for example, ask a local artist to write an HIV/Aids song for World Aids Day, or set up a panel to debate the effectiveness of the LoveLife campaign. They can also see to it that the HIV/Aids-related information makes their news agenda.

Endnotes

¹ The author would like to thank Engela Pretorius for valuable comments on an earlier draft of this paper.

² Aids Coalition to Unleash Power

³ Note that the data presented in the table relates to 2005 when the then station managers completed the questionnaire.

⁴ Station's own survey of audience numbers.

⁵ Full report available at http://www.hsrcpress.co.za/advanced_search_results.asp

⁶ See EU-India media on HIV/Aids, 2007 <http://www.Aidsandmedia.net/manual07.htm#english>

⁷ See <http://www.Aidsandmedia.net/music.htm> to download songs that have been developed by the Thomson Foundation on issues related to HIV/Aids.

⁸ See Rogers, E.M., Vaughan, P.W., Swalehe, R.M.A., Rao, N., Svenkerud, P. & Sood, A. 1999. Effects of entertainment-education soap opera on family-planning behaviour in Tanzania. *Studies in Family Planning* 30(3). Where a university has a drama department, creative collaborations can be made, e.g. providing a platform for the creative work of such students and obtaining sponsors to support such programmes.

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