

The Collaborative Development of a National AIDS Campaign

For three months in 2004, Romania was bombarded with an innovative National Campaign regarding HIV/AIDS. The Romanian Family Health Initiative (RFHI) collaborated with the Ministry of Health, UNAIDS, UNFPA and over 30 NGOs to develop and carry-out the campaign. They agreed to address the two issues: prevention of HIV and discrimination attached to people infected or affected by HIV/AIDS. This was the first time that a national campaign discussed discrimination against people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWA). Contributors to the AIDS campaign included USAID, UNAIDS, UNFPA, Ministry of Communications and IT through the National Post Office and the Sensiblu pharmacies who donated a TV spot.

An advertising agency was selected to help develop the campaign. It was pretested and evaluated, another first in the design of campaigns in Romania. The agency produced TV and radio spots, street billboards, leaflets and a structured media campaign. Romania also participated at an international level with an MTV broadcast entitled “Staying Alive.” The campaign officially ended with an award ceremony recognizing the best drawings done by children aged 6-18 years old; a calendar was produced from the drawings.

A locally run AIDS Hotline was used to estimate the immediate impact of the campaign; the number of calls doubled in one year. A research company designed and implemented an evaluation of the 2003 AIDS campaign and the results and lessons learned were utilized to plan the next campaign. Two of the major lessons learned were:

- Future campaigns should focus on a single message. Utilizing a dual message – prevention and anti-discrimination – confused the public.
- In order to reach the rural populations via TV, public television must be involved. In 2003, the TV campaigns reached between 60-70% of the public. The TV shorts, however, were seen on private television stations accessible only to urban populations.

