

HIV/AIDS Prevention and the role of men and boys

A Speech by Josef Kaspar

Hello, my name is Jo Kaspar and I'm a UK sixth form student representing the NAWO Youth Caucus. I'd like to thank you for having me here to speak and I hope that I can bring a different perspective to the discussion. When I was assigned the subject of HIV and AIDS prevention and the role of men and boys I was at first tentative and had no idea how to speak to a room full of experts on a topic which, until recently, I had little knowledge or personal experience of. Therefore, instead of speaking about the classic ways of HIV prevention such as condom distribution, I decided to focus on alternative approaches.

I'm going to start by talking about community music and sport programmes and how they can be used to challenge and change the attitudes of young men around the world in regards to their views on masculinity and HIV. These programmes need to not only engage a traditionally 'difficult to engage group' (i.e. us men) but they also need to change men's mind set in order to achieve significant results.

One of the biggest problems in attempting to mentor groups on the dangers of HIV is that the audience who voluntarily attend are most likely to be women (who in many circumstances are powerless to insist on the use of condoms) and those who are educated enough to know of the dangers of STIs. Therefore, the greatest advantage of using music and sport as a vehicle for educating and changing the attitudes of men and boys is that it allows access to a mass audience who would not normally be interested or worried about their sexual health. Primarily, this is due to the classic 'macho', 'alpha male' image that many men aspire to project, an image strongly associated with sport and music. By appealing to the audience using these aspects of popular culture, they are much more likely to be receptive to the underlying message and make associations between 'cool' popular culture and the importance of HIV and AIDS prevention.

Starting my research, I came across the Brazilian-based organization Promundo, aiming to prevent gender based violence. Their campaign targeted adult men through a community-wide football tournament alongside educational workshops and community meetings. The five-month tournament was held as an opportunity to bring the messages of the workshops to

the communities at a more informal and social level and to increase the likelihood of retention of the information. For the men to participate in the football tournament they had to attend at least one workshop per week and after each match, family members were invited to meals to encourage wider family discussions of the topics. Although the focus was on using sport to engage the audience, the campaign also used additional methods such as the creation of a samba song addressing gender based violence, which was played at football games and meetings.

I came across another programme, 'Man Up', aiming to prevent VAW by using similar methods of educating youth through sport and music. As Yvonne Chaka Chaka, the South African singer said, Man Up is "a brilliant campaign which captures the heart of young people. Using music and soccer as a catalyst for change is the best way to motivate young leaders to transform how women and girls are treated in every country, in every city, in every home around the world." Man Up used similar methods in a more recent project in Guyana, (Abbas Mancey) again using soccer to challenge men and boys attitudes regarding violence against women. Both of these projects proved successful and the project evaluations showed that men experienced long term attitude changes towards the issues discussed.

Another programme, this time in Zimbabwe in the 90's, used similar but a wider range of male motivation techniques to encourage men to take a more active role in family planning.

The programme used soccer imagery in most aspects of the campaign with radio and television spots urging men to "win" the family planning "game" with the help of their "teammates" (their sexual partners). The use of sport as a metaphor to connect football and family planning in men's minds was successful in gaining their attention. 57% of men surveyed had seen the motivational posters and although they absorbed the idea that it was important to take responsibility in family planning, the "team player element" seemed to be misunderstood. Many men misinterpreted the campaign's messages to mean that family planning decisions should be left solely to the man. (This is visible from the increase from 27% to 37% in the proportion of men believing they should be responsible for choosing a method.)

As well as focussing on sport, the programme also included a radio drama, street processions and family festivals with live music and drama performances. These designed to encourage discussion about family planning, and to increase knowledge of long-term and permanent contraceptive methods. Music was used to create a festival atmosphere which helped to draw people in but was again, only used as a supportive element in the program rather than the main technique. This was a very well

evaluated project and it showed that message of the campaign reached a huge number of people. The survey showed that the radio drama alone reached 62% men, 69% women and indeed it was so popular that it was carried on in a serial form.

Sport is well known as a vehicle for engendering co-operative behaviour but music, in my experience having spent my youth playing in numerous bands, is just as powerful. Singing and playing with others needs co-operation. Therefore, music, like sport, teaches the need to be a team player. Thus the use of music and sport can contribute to developing men's ability to have a more collaborative approach to relationships while promoting gender equality. A study in Rio de Janeiro showed that boys who were strongly connected to school excelled in some cultural competency such as dance, music or sport and seemed to have a greater freedom to explore gender equitable ideas.

The well-established and successful Venezuelan music programme 'El Sistema' is a wonderful example of how empowering music can be when used for social change. It is a programme aimed at enabling some of the countries poorest and most needy children to become musicians but in the process, change the trajectory of hundreds of thousands of children's lives. It has been used as a model in countless other countries worldwide and although it is a programme with a very different vision, its relevance here is that it proves the power of music as a medium to bring about social change.

Music and sport can also be beneficial due to the power of celebrity in the modern world. Many sports and music stars have become either founders or ambassadors of charities and organisations around the world. For example, Alicia Keys, a popular singer, is the co-founder of the charity 'Keep a child alive' aiming to provide treatment, love & support to families affected by HIV/AIDS. By using popular stars that are internationally respected and known, they do not only act as role models to men and boys around the world who may not normally listen to HIV prevention advice, but can also actively change the image in some cultures of protected sex from showing a man as weak to becoming the 'social norm'. In Britain, the pop group JLS have teamed up with the condom company 'Durex' again sending a positive message to their fans and showing that it's important to 'Just Love Safe'.

In conclusion, many HIV programmes have had a tendency to focus on imparting information, but it has long been shown that this is not enough to lead to behaviour change. If we are to change men and boys' attitudes, we need to think not only about the best methods of educating them but also, about our approaches to engaging the target audience. From all of the examples that I have focussed on, sports,

music and the arts clearly have an important role to play and it seems that these alternative prevention programmes can often be more successful. Apart from just informing people of the issues, they can help bring communities together and successfully challenge attitudes on an emotional as well as an intellectual level. I feel that programmes such as these should be used more often as a vehicle for social change, but I also feel that music could have a more fundamental place in these prevention campaigns.

Thank you.