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Positive or negative, you are the same person: The use of social media to amplify voice and change HIV testing norms in South Africa

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HIV Counselling and Testing campaign



Brothers for Life South African social health and well-being brand.

Campaign Objectives: Achieve 90-90-90 through

- Promoting a culture of regular testing and prevention amongst high risk sexually active men and women
- Empowering people who test negative to reduce risk and stay negative
- Empowering those who test positive to initiate ART at the appropriate time

Key formative research insight: No-one is scared of a prick on the finger. Barriers to testing are fears of the consequences of a positive diagnosis, which include fears of loss of love and respect, stigma, male norms, low trust in clinics and low belief in life after diagnosis.

Background: Communicating about HIV

On-going communication about HIV in South Africa.

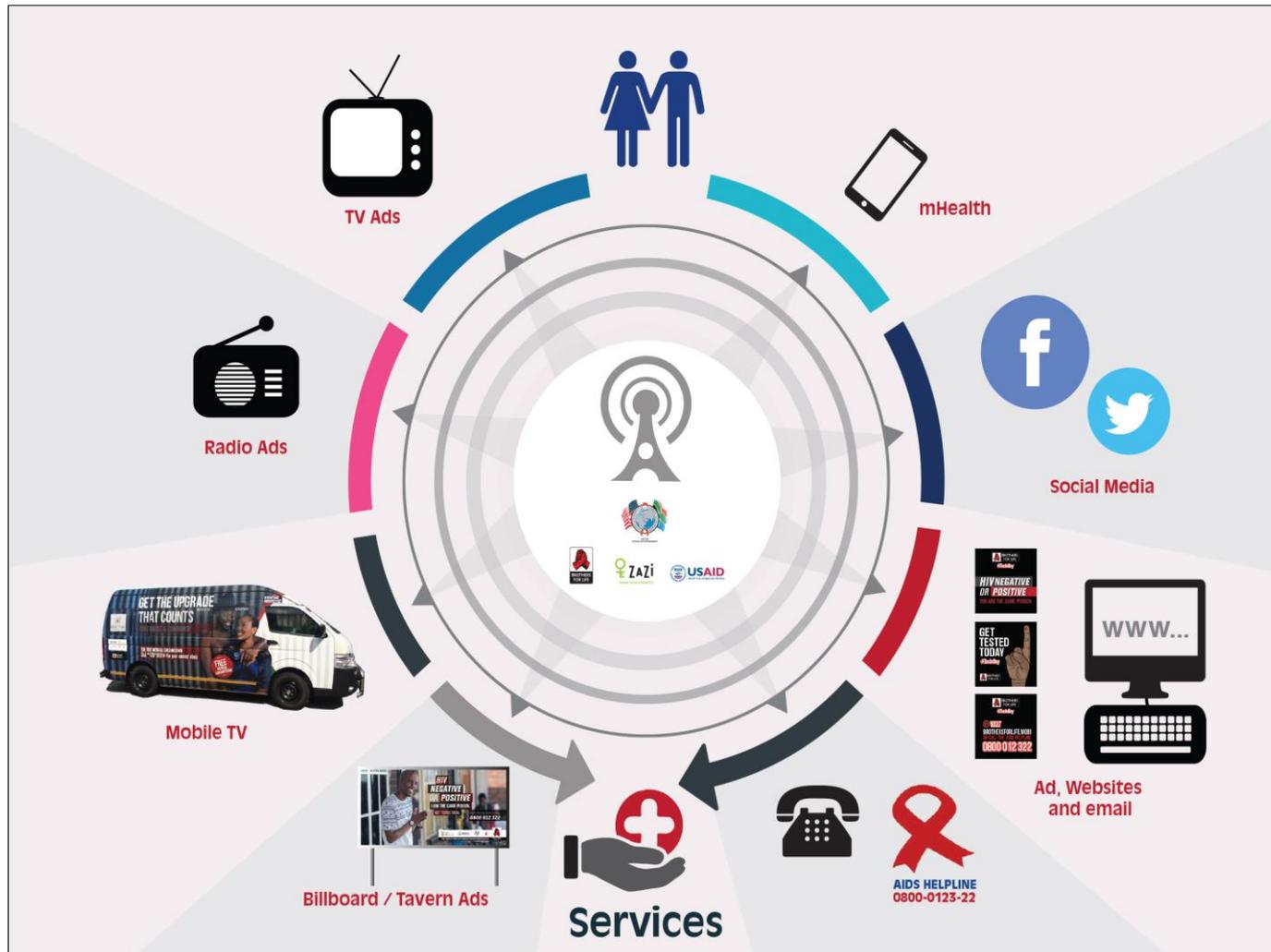
Men described that they don't have **stories** of people living well on HIV, and **knowing a person doing well on treatment** is a key enabler for testing.

Personally, some men told us they don't speak about their health concerns to others: *'I can't share my moment of weakness with my friend'*

Others discussed having close friends as their most trusted confidants *'The only people that I'd feel safe to talk to is the guys.. not someone professional. I'd prefer to talk to my friends'*

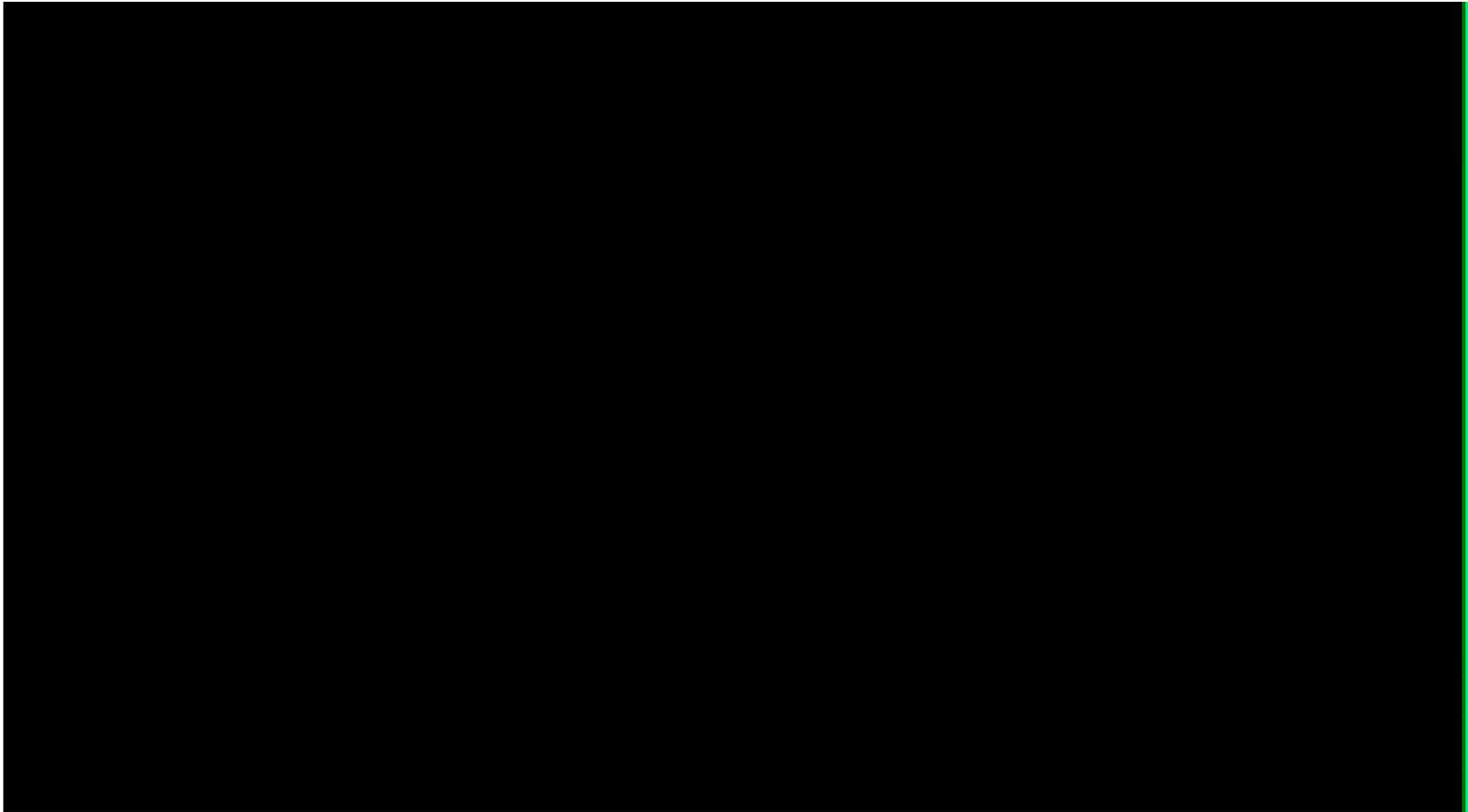
Key insight: We needed to create a space for men to talk about HIV, to normalize discussion about HIV, to answer questions, and to tell stories that address fears +barriers and elevate enabling behaviour

360 degree campaign



Ambassadors





Facebook Content

Experimented with Facebook to meet the communication challenges and link people to services with posts derived from a TV PSA with the message *Negative or positive you are the same person*, ambassador films and photos + gifs extracted from them, and illustrations created by our social media team.

Brothers For Life Yenzakahle Like Page

Published by SoulProviders [?] · July 12, 2016 ·

Simiso Msomi knows that even if you're HIV positive, you're still the same person. Watch his story about living positively with HIV. #TestaBoy



Simiso's Story
01:01

251,465 people reached Boost Again

Performance for Your Post

251,465 People Reached

46,122 Video Views

2,037 Reactions, Comments & Shares

1,374 Like	585 On Post	789 On Shares
96 Love	33 On Post	63 On Shares
2 Haha	1 On Post	1 On Shares
5 Wow	1 On Post	4 On Shares
2 Sad	0 On Post	2 On Shares



Facebook Research

Method

Conducted a qualitative content evaluation of 113 posts and their responses between 1st June and 31st December 2016

Research Objective:

- To understand the nature of community engagement with Facebook
- To identify the extent to which posts reflect norms around HCT, including norms regarded as 'difficult for men', and how users engaged with these norms
- To understand the extent to which content triggered discussions and actions on the themes raised.
- To recommend a way forward for the use of social media in health communication.



Results

Overall Analytics

- Brothers for Life page grew from 8 465 followers to 62 250 followers over 6 months.
- Posts reached over 1.7 million Facebook users and just under 225 000 people engaging via comments, views and shares.
- Public + private conversations did enable testing and expression of positive norms
- Managing HIV in relationships emerged as most important issue to users
- Campaign attracted women as well as men; similar campaign on *Zazi* women's page did not attract men in significant numbers.

High levels of diverse interaction

- One or two-word expressions, expressing resonance / appreciation: “Wow”, “powerful”, “inspiring”, “thumbs up”.
- Repetition of a campaign slogan or catch-phrase: “Testaboy”, “know your status”.
- Catalytic messages
- Deeper reflection in response to new messages and ideas
- Dialogue and debate.
- Personal disclosure
- Requests for advice and support (private messages).

ALL carried meaning. Important that people could **choose** how they responded to posts. One form of engagement was NOT more significant than another, but each is likely to have had an impact both on users who posted and people who read the posts

Catalytic messaging: “Know your status”

Male participant1: *“I Salute u if u #test”*

Male participant2: *“I know mine do u?????????”*

Female participant1: *“Get Tested And Get Help So That You Can Live Longer.”*

Male participant2: *“Let’s Get tested guys.”*

Female participan1: *“Yes, its da right thing to do!”*

Male participant2: *“GET TESTED SOON
BEFORE ITS TOO LATE.”*

Male participant1: *“Test guys.”*



Detailed, reflective HCT messaging: “Know your status”

Male participant 1: “Testing and knowing your status gives a man peace of mind.”

Male participant 2: : “Its very Great my Guys to have a fear to have sex without protection than to have a fear to get tested, coz positive or negative your sexual behaviour will totally change to positive. Get what i mean!

Knowing your Status is the Right thing to to do!”

Female participant 3: “A person must first accept himself or herself before someone accept you.”

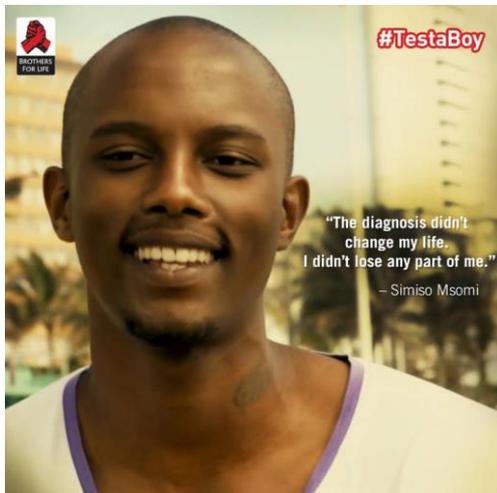


A screenshot of a Facebook post from the page "Brothers For Life Yenzakale". The post is dated July 19, 2016, and has 61,120 people reached. The main image is a graphic with a dark background, white and red text, and a hand pointing upwards with the index finger. The text on the graphic reads: "KNOW YOUR STATUS GET TESTED TODAY #TestaBoy". The hand has a red dot on the index finger. In the bottom right corner of the graphic is the "Brothers For Life" logo. Below the graphic, the Facebook interface shows "61,120 people reached" and a "Boost Again" button.

Rich motivational messages: Knowing your status is courageous

Female participant: *“This is what I call true leadership...If you have gone through the process of getting tested and the fear of knowing your resulting you wouldn't even dare have judgmental thoughts for someone who discloses but respect for their courage and bravery.*

It is people like Simiso who have chosen to play their role in helping and giving hope to those who are scared to find courage



to get tested and treated before they infect even before they infect more people.

Utmost respect for you my brother.”

Addressing HIV stigma: Support and solidarity for PLHIV

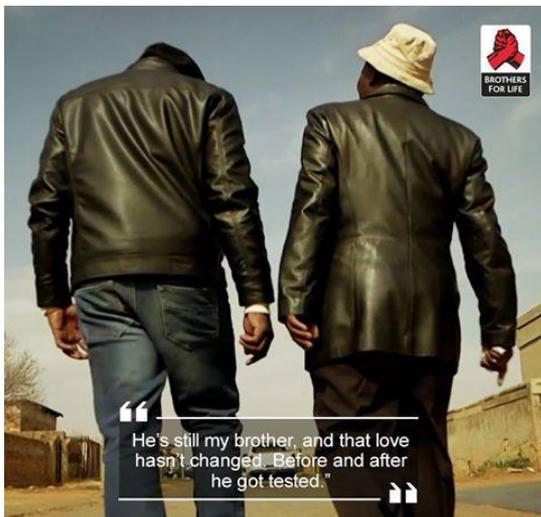
Male participant: “Let’s support each other sisters and brothers. We are one nation one blood let’s come together and act.

Female participant: “We’re All In The Same Ship Affected By This Disease.”

Female participant: “There's nothing wrong with anyone living HIV positive, the virus dont change u as a person.”

Male participant: “Whether ur negative or positive ur still my bro indeed....

Thanks brothers 4 life 2 keep us in love 4 one 2 another...”



Contestation and debate: Resisting stigma

Male participant: *“Sorry Brothers we are Tired with people who infect innocent people, may be they have heard and understand something. People are dying with this Disease!”*

Female participant: *“yaa das true but de main point here is somone wit HIV still a person lik u and deserv to b loved as before so pls lets not used hectic words cus sum r too weak if dey c yr reply will feel dat we neglected dem so wat remain is let’s give dem luv n support to feel free plz.”*



“A person with HIV is still a person.” - Mpume Mdletshe, Brothers For Life ambassador. When Mpume looks at her husband Oziel, she sees the man she loves, not his HIV status.

Self-reported HCT: modelling positive norms

Male participant 1: “On the queue with my partner FOR Testing, #BeThatBrotherYenzakahle.”

Male participant 2: “I just got tested yesterday for the first time in my life.”

Male participant 3: “I did it 2day i just came back now with a smile on my face.”

Female participant: “**Test now before is 2 late i just did.**”

Male participant 4: “I got tested on friday and i’m no longer taking chances...i so wish people can know where they stand.”



Shifting norms through knowledge-building

Male participant 1: “Eshh..guys I am afraid to go and test.I don’t know why.”

Brothers for Life: “It is not unusual to feel nervous or afraid. Ask yourself this question: do you think your life might change if you know your status?”

Female participant: “To tell u the truth (Male participant 1) its good 2 know ur status in these days and knowing ur status won’t change ur life bro Im telling u.”

Brothers for Life: “Hi (Male participant 1), if any changes take place, it will probably be healthy changes. Finding out that you are negative may encourage you to practise safer sex by condomising to maintain your negative status. Finding out that you are positive will alert you to the need to get ARV treatment and to condomise for your partners’ safety.”

Private messages: Services and support

Male participant: *“I want to test but I'm so scared.”*

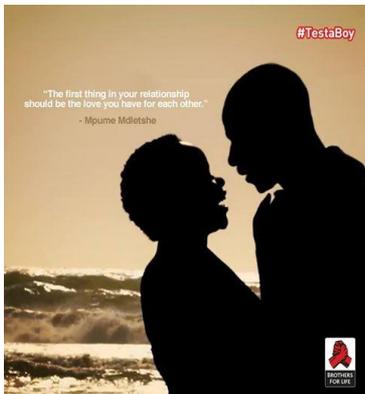
Brothers for Life: *“Hi (male participant). Would you like to speak to someone? We can call you if you send us your number.”*

(Ambassador Simiso Msomi spoke to him on the phone and then via WhatsApp)

Male participant: *“After talking to Simiso, I was courageous enough to go test. And I am happy to say I am negative. Thanks for the support.”*

Knowledge building: Discordant relationships

Female participant: *“Dating and falling in love is one of the most normal of human behaviours, and for the most part it’s no different for someone with HIV. with someone education on both side a lot of acceptance and loving, understanding, you can indeed have a happy dating relationship with a man or woman who is HIV positive, and you can even marry and have a future.”*



Conclusion

- Range of engagement key to impact because it allows people to participate on their own terms
- Developed new knowledge and an enabling environment for discussion: positive campaign messaging and discussions between users challenged barriers to HCT
- Provided actual solidarity and support for people living with HIV and modelled positive support of friends, family and community
- Highly interactive: Site for dialogue, encouraging behaviour change and re-constructing norms.
- Ambassador's testimonies were key – stories made it easy for people to participate in discussions and allowed us to trigger discussions to address barriers

Implications for HIV communication with men

- Social media can build people's voice and confidence to take action about their health.
- Low transaction costs for programme managers and beneficiaries enables instant service referral and personalised problem solving
- Sharing personal experiences + beliefs enhances esteem and allows for positive engagement with others
- Conversations with an expert moderator and others users enhances learning.
- Facebook does offer men a space to communicate about HIV and offers space for solving individual problems and promoting positive norms
- The use of targeted short films sharing personal testimonies of people living with HIV is particularly effective at triggering discussion and action.
- Strategic use of data and users' comments enables creation of relevant posts, requiring an agile, responsive team.
- Women will engage in content aimed at men; men won't engage in content aimed at women

Acknowledgements

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