

South Africa's Beyond Awareness Campaign: Tools for Action

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ISSUES

National communications campaigns tend to focus mainly on mainstream mass media advertising. Such campaigns tend to promote awareness and generally emphasise prevention aspects of HIV/AIDS.

A considerable body of research has demonstrated that although awareness is an important precursor of social action, such campaigns seldom bring about concerted change.

The Beyond Awareness Campaign, is a project of the HIV/AIDS and STD Directorate of the Department of Health. It set out to explore alternate approaches to a national campaign.

DESCRIPTION

The Beyond Awareness Campaign is a multimedia communications that was conducted in two phases over a three year period. The objectives of the campaign were to:

- intensify communication of key messages around the HIV/AIDS epidemic directed primarily at youth;
- develop and distribute communications resources that can support action around HIV/AIDS;
- promote social action through targeted projects. Specifically these included the AIDS Memorial Quilt Project, a Tertiary Institutions Project and a Mediaworkers Project;
- build capacity amongst HIV/AIDS communicators and strategists through conducting key research;
- conduct appropriate behavioural research in support of HIV/AIDS communication and to evaluate various aspects of the campaign.

The campaign incorporated research and consultation in development of the Beyond Awareness model. The campaign was run on a tender basis with an annual budget of R13-million (US\$1.9-million).

INTENSIFYING COMMUNICATION OF KEY CONCEPTS

THE RED RIBBON: The AIDS red ribbon allows for a recognisable icon to be associated with a wide range of HIV/AIDS communication and social action oriented activities. The ribbon allows HIV/AIDS to move from the invisible to the visible, and also allows individuals to personalise their endorsement of HIV/AIDS issues by wearing the ribbon. The campaign popularised the ribbon through ensuring that it was used on all campaign media. Several hundred thousand red ribbon pins and beaded badges were also produced. These were made available through the campaign's AIDS Action Office.

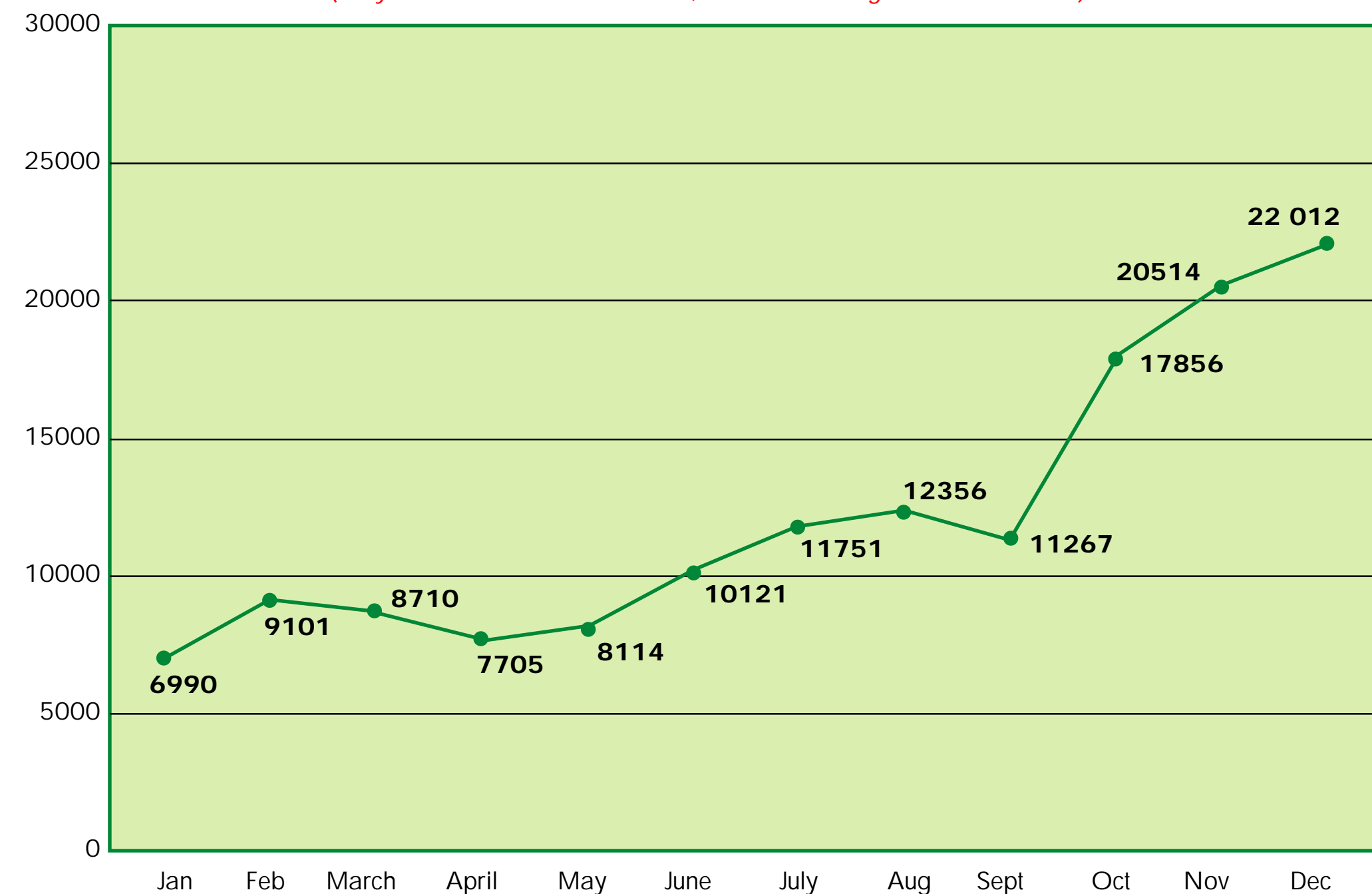


The red ribbon rapidly became integrated into diverse AIDS activities, and the red ribbon pin was worn by politicians, sports stars, television newsreaders, actors as well as health workers, AIDS activists and the general public.

THE AIDS HELPLINE: The AIDS helpline is a tollfree national service that was initiated in 1992. It provides an important opportunity for dialogue, whilst at the same time providing accurate basic information, counselling and referral. The line also plays an important role in breaking down myths, and allows for a confidential interaction.

Calls to the AIDS Helpline - 1999

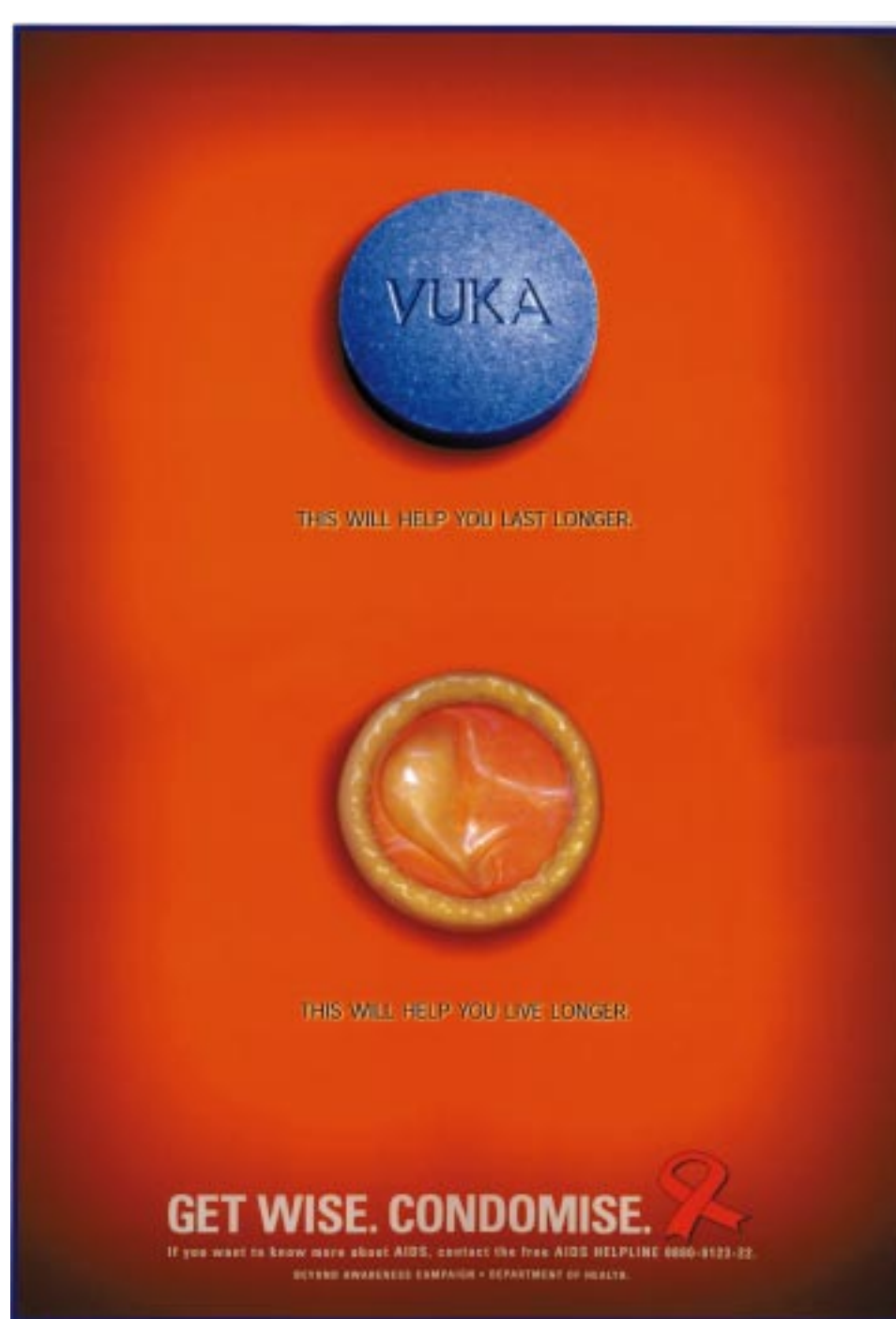
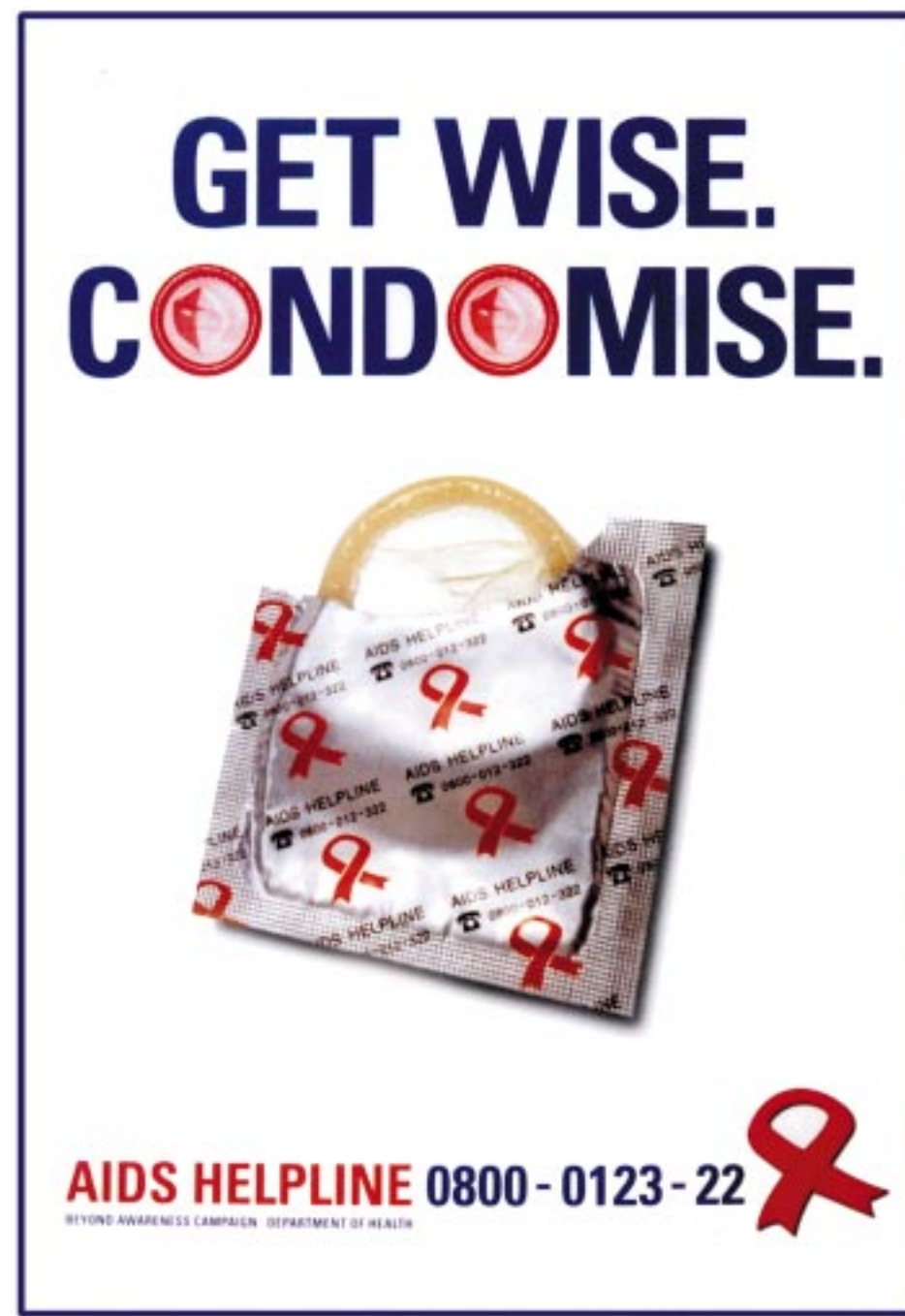
(Only calls over 1-minute recorded, radio advertising introduced in June)



The helpline number was actively promoted through incorporation of the number into the national logo. Various mass media campaigns were conducted to promote the helpline. During 1999, for example, call rates increased by over 300%, and required collaboration with the helpline service provider to develop a more sophisticated centralised service. A centralised call centre was established in June 2000.

A Letter-writing project was also developed to allow for the provision of information to those who do not have access to telephones, or who prefer a written response.

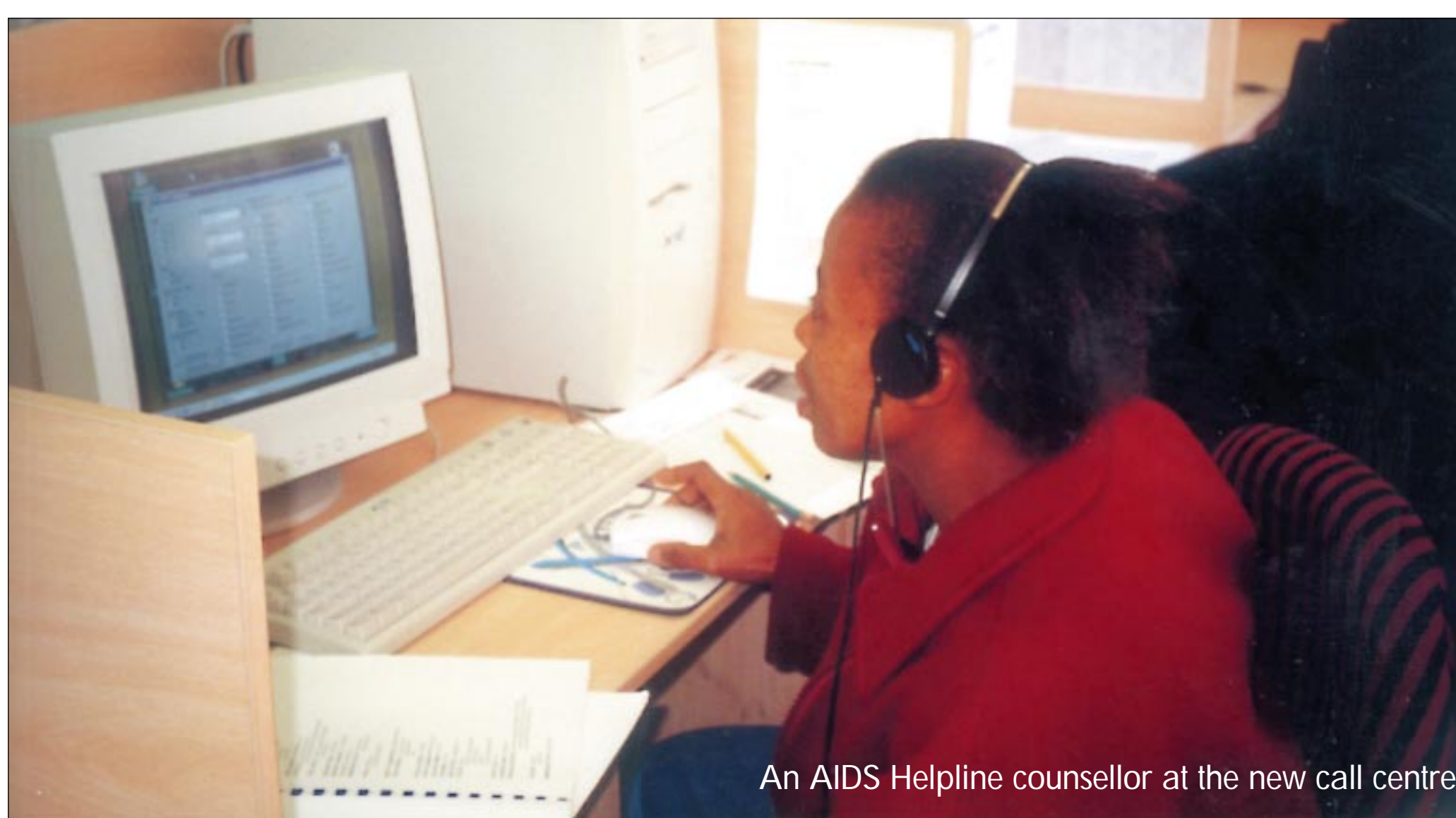
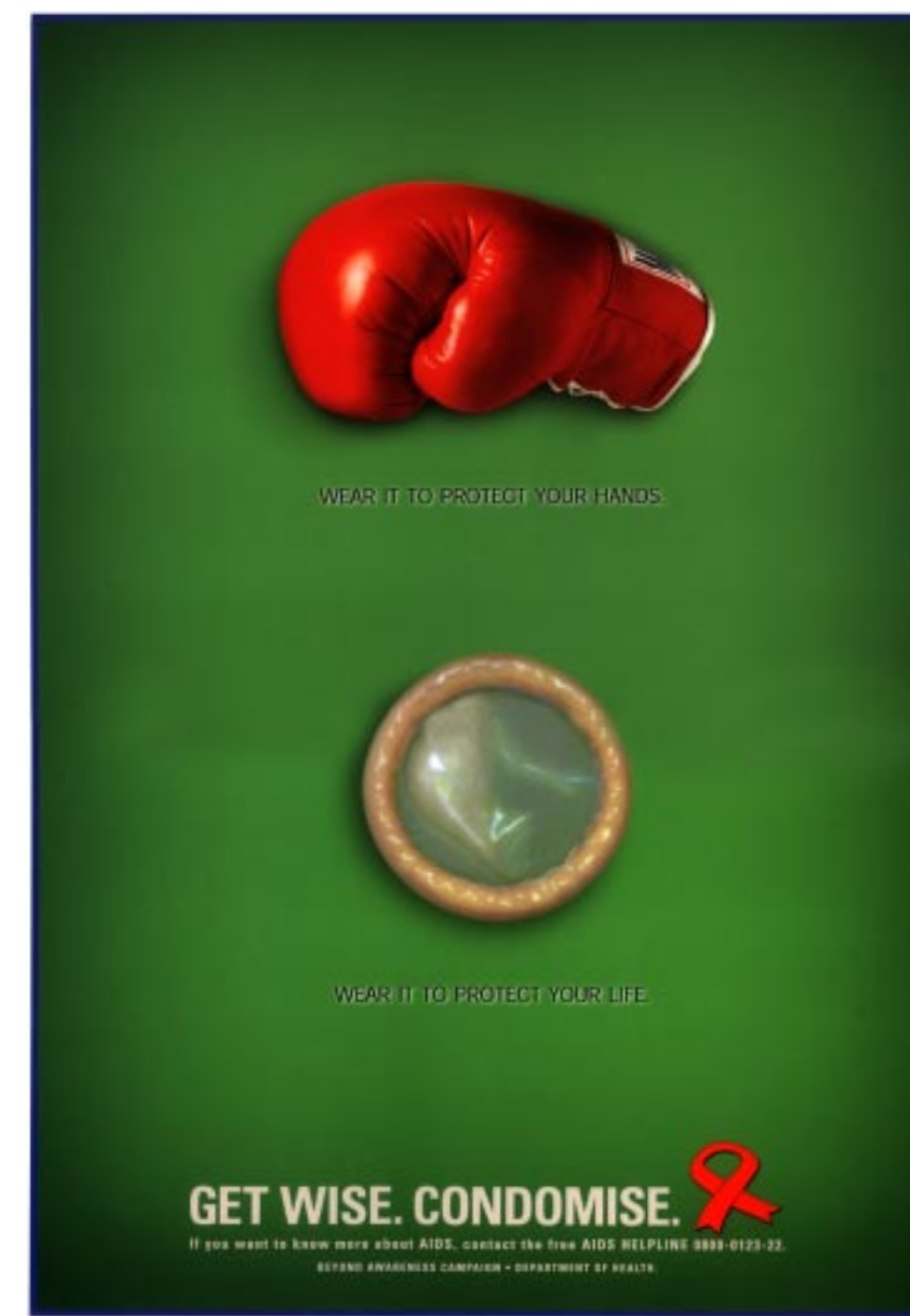
CONDOMS: The Department of Health has prioritised condom distribution through a systematic annual procurement, supported by



distribution through clinics and other sites. The slogan "Get wise, Condomise" was used on a wide range of media including radio, print and outdoor.

In 1999 over 160-million free condoms were distributed. A sentinel site research study conducted by the campaign showed high levels of condom use, with 70% of sexually active respondents having used a condom before.

Condom use during the last sex act ranged from 22% in a rural community to 79% in an urban community. 75% of respondents also reported that condoms were easily accessible when needed. 71% of condom users reported that they obtained condoms from clinics or community health centres.



PROMOTING SOCIAL ACTION THROUGH READILY ACCESSIBLE SMALL MEDIA

Many South Africans are aware of the importance of urgent action around the HIV/AIDS epidemic but lack the necessary information and educational resources to become involved in AIDS action. The campaign developed a wide range of resources including multilingual leaflets on key topics, various posters, multilingual slickers, red ribbon badges, caps, T-shirts, and research/resource booklets.

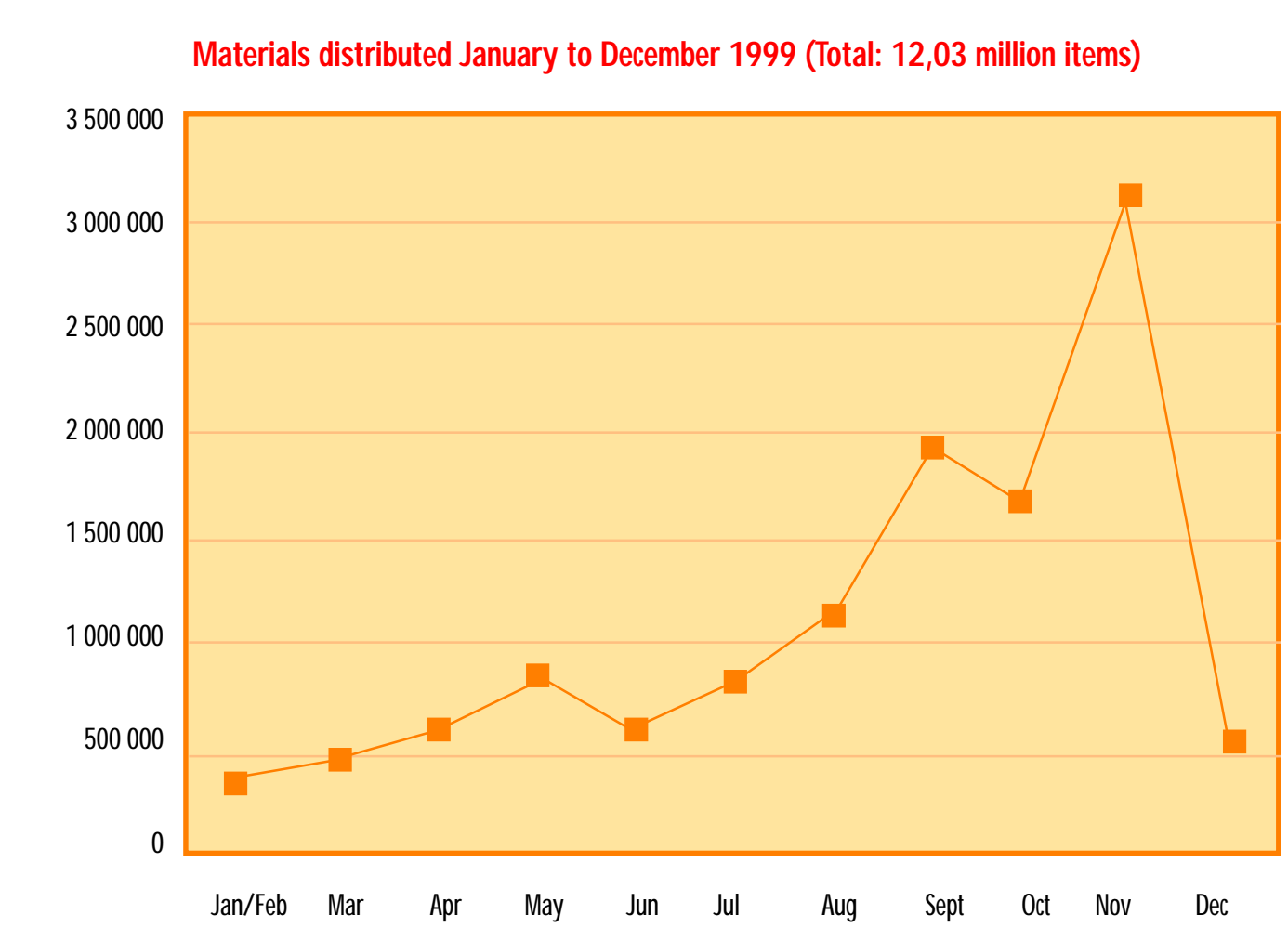
A centralised AIDS Action Office was set up which allowed for handling of telephonic requests for materials from AIDS organisations and individuals. Materials were provided free of charge and delivered by courier. Material stocks are constantly monitored with a view to ensuring that sufficient stocks of key items were maintained. The main constraint was the complexity of servicing an almost infinite demand within the context of a finite budget.



An evaluation of the Action Office service showed a number of important benefits of the AAO service. These included:

- having access to high quality HIV/AIDS materials and resources that assisted them in being effective in their work;
- having accessibly-written materials, covering a wide range of topics, available in all South African languages, that rapidly filled existing gaps in existing media availability;
- having free materials available in large quantities, with simple and efficient systems for access;
- having materials with broad appeal and wide application;
- simplifying HIV/AIDS awareness activities;
- allowing for free access by all organisations, sectors and individuals working in the HIV/AIDS field;
- allowing wider reach of materials, particularly to the poor;
- allowing locally/regionally-based organisations to develop more specialised materials;
- providing sufficient resources for larger organisations to sub-distribute materials to smaller organisations.

Contexts of use included counselling, training, health education promotion, workshops, forums, cultural activities (eg. dance, drama, music), youth camps, exhibitions, libraries and resource centres, clinic consultations, door to door visits, street campaigns, events (eg. festivals, HIV/AIDS day focuses, orientations, parades), public transport campaigns, and distribution to friends and relatives.



PROMOTING SOCIAL ACTION THROUGH TARGETED PROJECTS

THE AIDS MEMORIAL QUILT: In South Africa it has been difficult to engage the culture of silence that exists around HIV infection. Although the AIDS Memorial Quilt has been successful internationally, it was not clear how effective the approach would be in a South African context, particularly given that there was no tradition of quilting.



The project followed the broad objectives of the international model, but developed a varied approach to implementation. This included dedicated workshops held in communities, or for specific sectors or organisations. The workshops were multilayered and included provision of skills and opportunities for acknowledgement and healing.

Over a 16-month period over 200 workshops were held and 4 400 participants trained. Over the same period more than 850 panels were produced. These have been displayed countrywide in schools, churches, and in communities. As far as possible, completed panels are located in the communities where they have been made.



The objectives of the AIDS Memorial Quilt Project include:

- providing a creative visual symbol of remembrance and healing for those whose lives have been touched by AIDS;
- promoting a greater understanding of the effect AIDS has on all our lives;
- showing the massive impact of AIDS by giving insights into the people whose lives lie behind the statistics;
- honouring those who have died of AIDS and remembering their names;
- providing a starting point for AIDS education and action;
- reducing hostility and discrimination against people living with AIDS.

TERTIARY INSTITUTION PROJECT: South African tertiary institutions have been relatively slow in developing a systematic response to HIV/AIDS. The project recognised both the importance of developing youth leadership, and of promoting systematic programmes and policies at tertiary institutions. Involvement in outreach programmes was also promoted.

A partnership with the National Association of People Living with HIV/AIDS (NAPWA) included campus visits by young people living with HIV. Participants in the programme lived on campuses for short periods.

In 1999 a national conference was held in Johannesburg, bringing together representatives from tertiary institutions countrywide to discuss HIV/AIDS issues. The conference allowed for the development of draft policies and curricula.

One aspect of student action on campuses was the development of murals through working with campus Art Departments. Murals were painted on six campuses, and students were also able to initiate further mural projects in their communities.



MEDIAWORKERS PROJECT:

This project emerged based on research that showed that there was little reporting that emphasised social action around HIV/AIDS, and thus, for the most part, the social response to the disease was hidden from view. Furthermore, visual images accompanying articles related to AIDS were rare, and when used tended to depict people who were sick or dying.

The project worked with a team of freelance journalists and photographers who were trained in AIDS reporting and who systematically documented a wide range of social action oriented activities.

Articles and photographs were promoted through direct promotion to health reporters and news editors, and an e-mail newsletter was distributed to promote recent articles.

A database of articles and photographs was made available via a specialised website that allowed users to download text and pre-scanned high resolution images.

CAPACITY BUILDING OF KEY COMMUNICATORS: Individuals involved in HIV/AIDS

communication within the government and NGO sector have potential to make considerable impacts on the epidemic, particularly if their activities are collaborative and co-ordinated. The campaign has run workshops with key communicators covering relevant aspects of communications theory and research.

Broadcast media, particularly radio, have potential to reach large audiences in the various South African languages. Radio programming appropriate for HIV/AIDS education and dialogue can provide information to listeners, and community stations in particular, can provide referrals to appropriate services. The campaign has conducted a number of workshops with radio producers to promote AIDS programming.



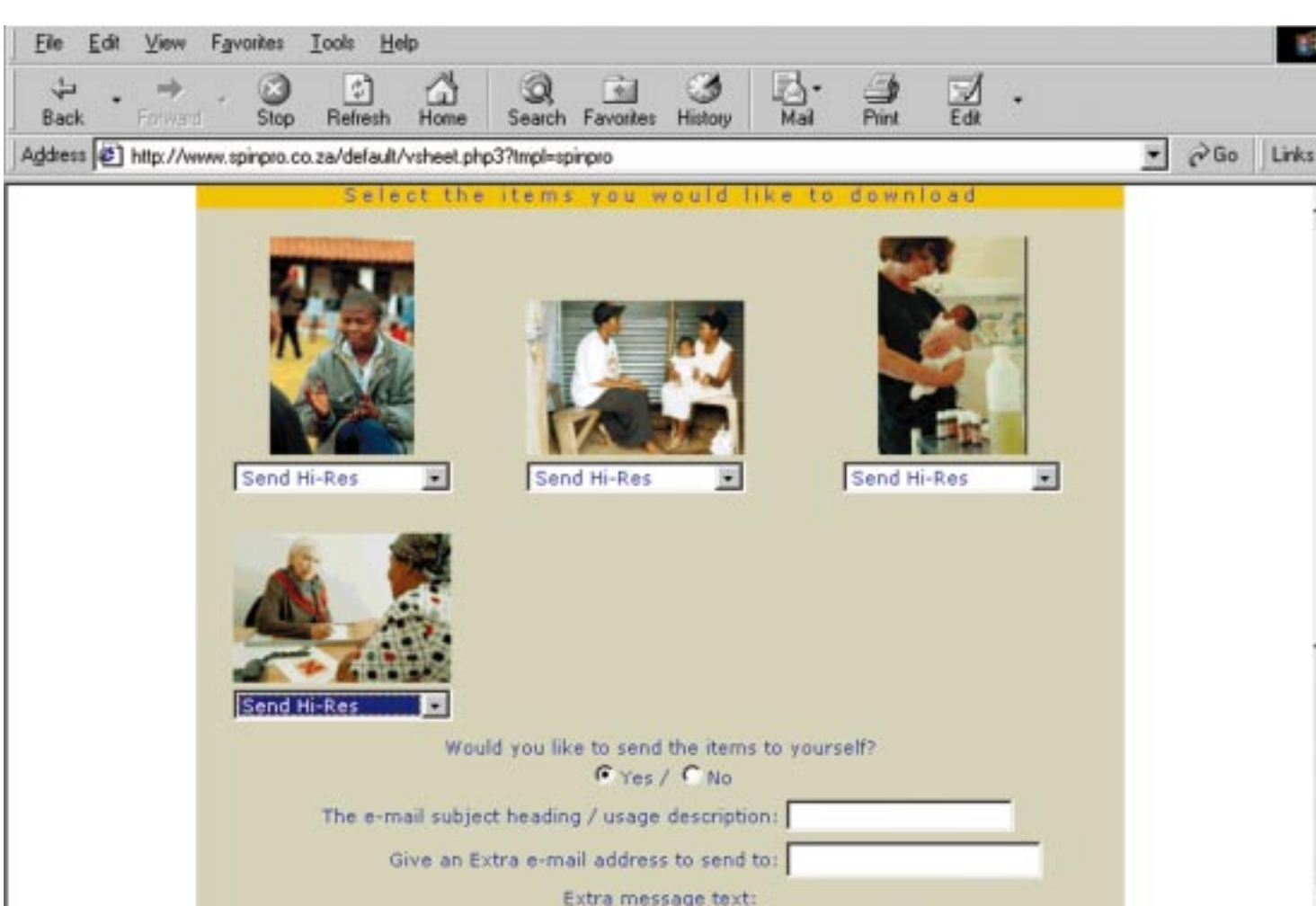
Scholars get active about AIDS

One school has cut through the squeamishness about AIDS and sex education to prove a dynamic force, writes **Andrea Meeson**

THAMANSANDA high school is one of many schools in Orange Farm, a sprawling town on the outskirts of Johannesburg, that is home to half a million people. The school resembles any other township school on the outside—a drab, one-story building in the middle of a dusty, treeless plain. Inside, however, there is enough excitement and energy to make the school feel like a different place. The school is celebrating its 100th anniversary and is marking this for a spring day celebration. In fact it is the beginning of a day of action around AIDS.

Students' representatives from many schools in Orange Farm have arrived early at Thamansanda to join in a march that will culminate in a 10-minute blockade of a major intersection of the busy concrete highway that runs north to Johannesburg. The march is just one of the activities that students have organized, in partnership with the Orange Farm AIDS Club (OFAC) to mark TV Day, a public issue in their community.

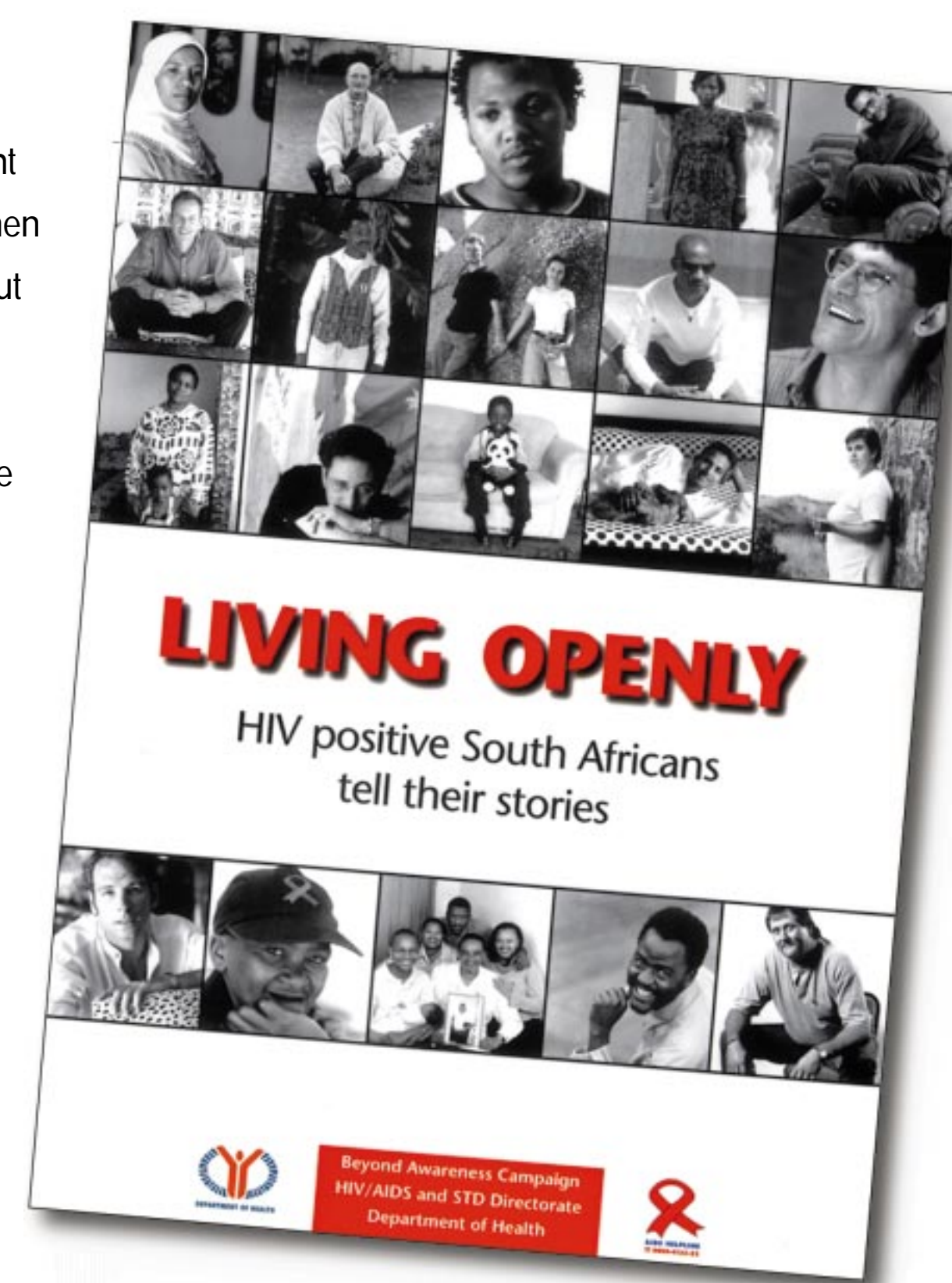
As the march gets underway, students from Thamansanda's AIDS project join hands and banners lead the procession along the dusty streets. People emerge from their homes, some with their faces painted to see what the commotion is about. Students, teachers and people bound—but the words have been changed to read 'Viva' is reserved for condoms, and anyone who uses them, and



LIVING OPENLY PROJECT: AIDS is a disease that is seldom associated with openness but this project has given insight into the courage and strength needed when confronting HIV infection, especially about being open about one's infection. The interviews trace the experiences of 31 South Africans living openly with HIV. The participants were drawn from many different contexts and in terms of age, range from Nkosi Johnson who is 11, through to Jan de Groot who is 73.

Although the stories focus on public disclosure of HIV status, each person's experiences are uniquely different.

The project includes a photographic exhibition, a book and a television documentary.

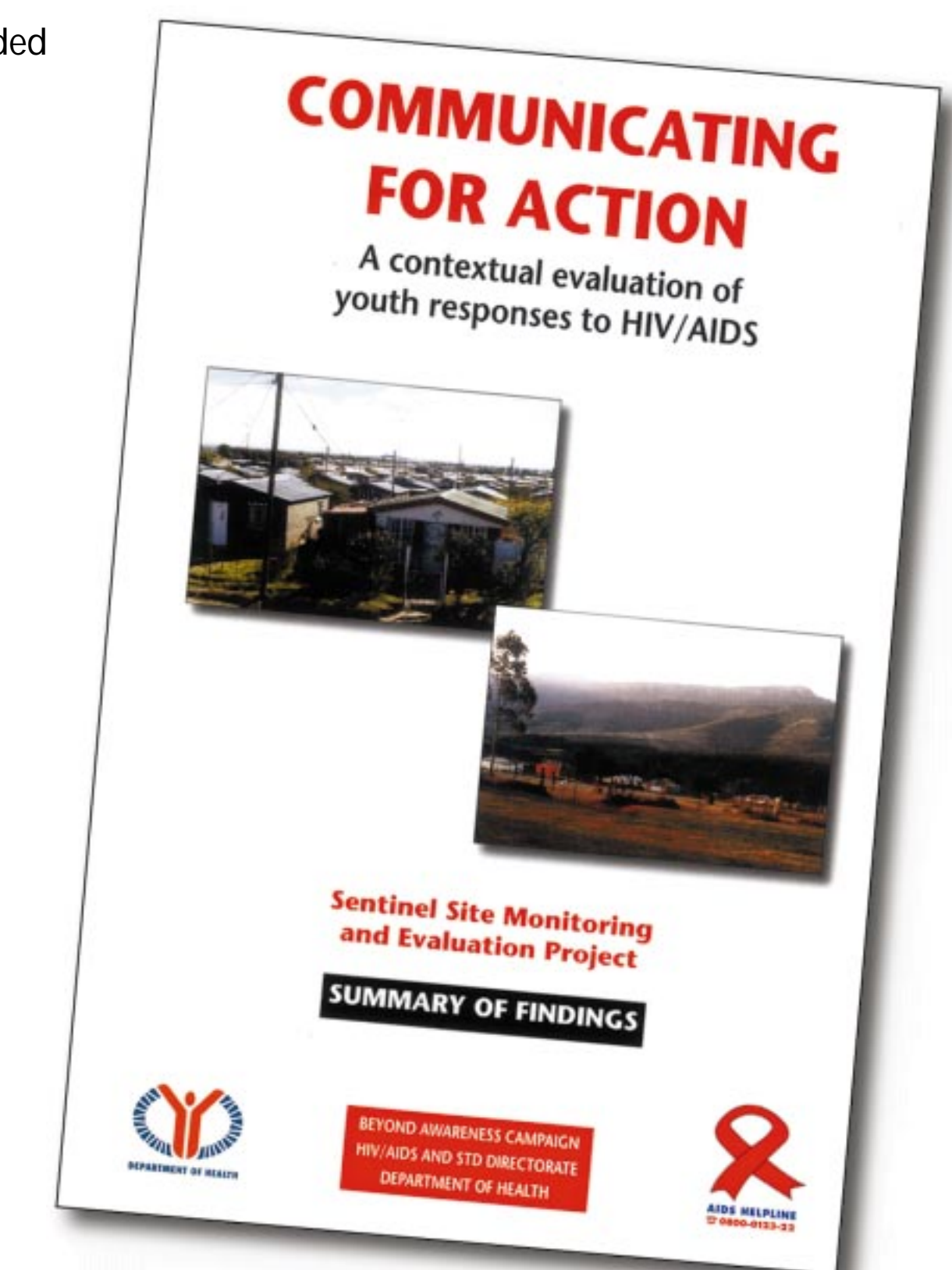


BEHAVIOURAL RESEARCH: Given the importance of behavioural research in informing communications and other strategies, the campaign prioritised the development of a study focusing on youth in the 15-30 age group. The research represents one of the first national surveys to specifically examine youth response to HIV/AIDS. It recognised that youth receive information from diverse sources, and that it is important to understand these diverse impacts as opposed to analysing the impact of specific campaigns.

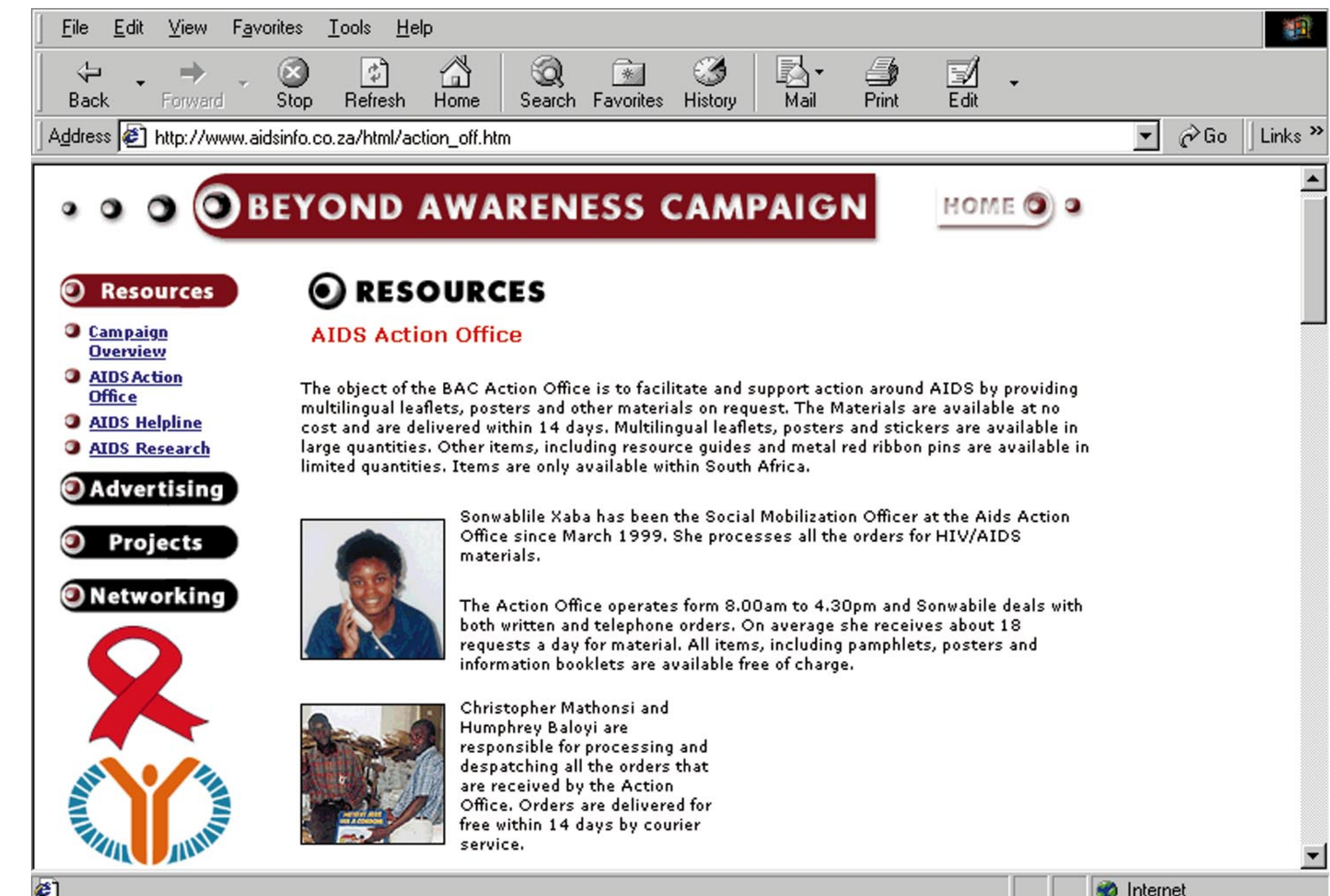
The research involves a longitudinal study which includes both qualitative and quantitative methods. The results of the study were considerably affirming of activities to date, with strong evidence that a range of key messages had been internalised. In sites with high levels of media penetration youth showed particularly strong signs of responding actively and appropriately to HIV infection risk. Last intercourse condom use rates were considerably higher than expected. Potential exists for expanded promotion of delayed sexual debut, discontinuation of sexual activity and faithfulness as key themes.

Most respondents had positive attitudes towards people living with HIV/AIDS, and there was also a willingness to become involved in community oriented work, although there were few opportunities for this.

The research also revealed a number of areas of concern that should be addressed in future campaigns and further research. There were large differentials in age between sex partners at first intercourse, with a tendency for females to experience sexual debut with partners several years older than themselves.



INTERNET: An internet site was established to promote the campaign. The site also provides access to most of the campaign's literature set in the form of downloadable Acrobat documents. It includes overviews of all project activities and also allows for electronic ordering of materials. Research and other data is also regularly updated.



CONCLUSIONS

The Beyond Awareness Campaign has demonstrated the viability of communication activities that focus on engendering individual and social action. The campaign was able to promote both prevention and care aspects of HIV/AIDS. Evaluations of various projects have provided insight into the campaign elements. The campaign model has potential for replication in other countries, and small media materials produced could form the basis for materials development within other campaigns.

References: Karen Hurt, *Tools for Action: An Evaluation of the Beyond Awareness Campaign's AIDS Action Office*, Department of Health, 2000; Mary van der Riel, *Communicating HIV/AIDS: An audit of provincial responses to HIV/AIDS in South Africa*; Kevin Kelly, *Communicating for Action: A contextual evaluation of youth responses to HIV/AIDS*, Department of Health, 2000.