

Executive Summary

IoveLife is the largest effort ever launched in South Africa to positively influence adolescent sexual behaviour with the aim of reducing teenage pregnancy, HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections. Designed to reduce the rate of HIV infection among 15-20 year olds by 50% in five years, loveLife combines high-powered media awareness and education with development countrywide of adolescent-friendly reproductive health services in the country's 5 000 public clinics and outreach and support programmes, specifically targeting hard to reach youth in poorer parts of South Africa.

loveLife is a deliberate departure from traditional approaches to HIV prevention, relying on a combination of commercial marketing and public health techniques to promote a new healthy lifestyle among a 12-17 year old target group – identified at highest risk of HIV infection. loveLife's strategy is premised on the importance of more open communication about sex and sexuality as an essential precondition for sexual behaviour change backed up by comprehensive services and support programmes.

loveLife is taking to scale much of the substantial experience in adolescent sexual health established in South Africa and elsewhere over the past 15 years and

is informed by international and local experience of HIV prevention.

A five year research and evaluation plan for loveLife has been established, the framework of which is a multi-year comprehensive observational study tracking change in a range of behavioural indicators and for sexual health outcomes, including specifically, the incidence of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections, and teenage pregnancy. The attribution level and reliability of the observational study will be reinforced by smaller research studies including the use of biological markers to track the incidence of HIV among the target group.

In its first year loveLife has succeeded in creating brand recognition among almost 60% of South Africans nationally. This has been achieved through a largescale and intensive countrywide publicity campaign using outdoor media, television, radio and print.

More than 90% of those who are aware of loveLife correctly identify the brand with healthy living and positive lifestyle and about 60% said that loveLife had caused them to think and talk about issues related to sex, sexuality and HIV/AIDS.

In addition to creating substantial public awareness and initiating a national con-

versation about sexual behaviour, loveLife has generated a major national response, most graphically illustrated by the volume of calls to loveLife's free telephone sexual health counselling and referral service. Calls to this service average more than 60 000 per month, with almost 30 000 calls handled.

loveLife's awareness and education programmes are reinforced by a nationwide clinic service development initiative, as well as other support programmes. While significant progress was made – 10 pilot adolescent-friendly clinics were launched, and Y-centres providing a broader combination of recreational and clinical services began operation – development of institutional support is inevitably more incremental. Nonetheless, in the first year loveLife, through its various service and outreach programmes, is estimated to have reached in excess of 4 million young South Africans.

loveLife's impact ultimately will be a function of its ability to establish and sustain over many years a truly national scale programme with the same levels of intensity that have caused South Africans to pay attention to the initiative in the first place. Behaviour change is a function of personal engagement with and internalisation by the target group of the message. Bridging the gap between media awareness and behaviour change is loveLife's priority for year two.

