

# Community Mobilisation

**L**oveLife is a national programme and needs to have countrywide reach. While the awareness programme is national in its coverage, there is a need to engage directly with local communities around the content of the loveLife message and to sustain engagement.

The outreach activities included in this aspect of loveLife are in the planning stages and will be initiated early in 2001. However, formative research reported on below has focused on creating appropriate and viable models based on assessments of the application of these in other areas.

## THE LOVELIFE GAMES

loveLife, in partnership with the USSASA, has initiated the loveLife Games – an annual calendar of competitive sporting events reaching 4 million children nationwide. The loveLife Games integrate the themes of healthy living and self-actualisation through sport, with sexual health education. In line with loveLife's approach to communicating with youth through popular culture, entertainment is provided, using theatre, dance and song. Although the games have not as yet been formally evaluated, there are indications that they are extremely popular and viewed as significant events. Since the programme was started in June 2000 over 12 000 schoolchildren have participated in the games. The public response has been good with the loveLife Games featuring prominently in local community newspapers and school bulletins.

## PEER EDUCATION

loveLife as of December 2000 had not as yet embarked on a comprehensive peer education programme. However, in preparation for this it has undertaken an assessment and review of current peer education programmes which do exist in South Africa which are to be used to inform the loveLife peer education programme. Peer education is often regarded as instrumental in galvanising awareness (of HIV, for example) into behavioural change (condom use, sexual negotiation skills etc). The review of peer education programmes aimed to provide insights into best practices for different models of peer education and not to measure impact (in terms of sexual behaviour etc). Although there are significant limitations to the effectiveness of peer groups if not intensively managed, overall the results from the research indicate that peer education programmes can have a significant impact on the attitudes and behaviour of adolescents.

### The YMCA 'Better Life Options'

programme evaluation reported on positive changes in the behaviour of their children as a result of their involvement in the BLO programme. Youth peer educators concurred with these perceptions and highlighted the following areas of change and improvement: self-esteem; leadership; gender issues; goal setting. Compensation (monetary) was seen to be important, but not the only issue for consideration. Youth participants (84%) reported behaviour

change as a consequence of the peer education programme, although it appears that peer educators benefited far more than their beneficiaries.

The PPASA peer education programme evaluation also reflected positive changes in knowledge and attitudes, and participants reported changes in behaviour. The benefits of peer education programmes are their ability to reach many young people in an inter-personal manner.

## **LOVELIFE MOTIVATIONAL PROGRAMME**

South Africa's youth are frequently described as belonging to a 'lost generation', of having emerged from an era of struggle politics and having limited prospects for the future. This sense of hopelessness is seen to underscore risky behaviour and thus increases the risk of exposure to HIV. loveLife, in conjunction with Miles Connection, has launched a motivational campaign that has the primary aim of providing youth with direction and motivation. Their objectives are to develop a manual for training facilitators in the Y-centres who will then involve local school-going youth in a motivational programme. During 2000, 22 facilitators from four of the five Y-centres were trained. In turn they ran workshops with a total of 453 students. The programme aims to expand and intensify its efforts in the year 2001.

