

# The Public Response

**T**he loveLife campaign has resulted in a wide variety of responses from the general public, academics, AIDS activists, youth groups, organisations and government. This response is reflected in the 1 144 letters and emails that have been received since March 2000. Many are requests for information booklets and other printed materials. A significant number of requests for advice and information have also been received.

The following extracts from letters to loveLife demonstrate the range and scope of the problems about which people requested help.

*'Neither of my parents gives me love and support and I am only 15! That is why I get obsessive about a guy cause I want someone to love me and I don't like getting close to anyone not even my best friend who is a guy. Anyway please phone or write. I need to get some advice, etc.'*

*'I am mother of a six-year-old pre-school boy. He is a very curious young man who likes to know and has too much to ask, sometimes I've got no answers for his questions and he's got nobody else to ask, as I am only his parent.'*

*'I am a girl of about 20 years – the problem is that the people of this place don't care about AIDS and STIs and even pregnancy and young girls of about 13 years are mothers and they are taking their spare time using it time for making love and having sex. So may you go there and show them the way.'*

*'I'm always listening and watching these youth open talk organisations that is loveLife, Take 5 [loveLife television show] and Fresh [Television talk show for youth], I am gaining a lot from the discussions of youth and you elders who always care about us.'*

*'I am 14 years old – I come from Bush-buckridge [a rural area in the Northern Province]. My brother is 21 years old and he is having more girlfriends. I said to him 'do you know how many people in SA who is having HIV/AIDS?' He said to me that he would be happy if ever the department of health could send him a letter that shows these statistics and he will start using condoms. It will be great if you can send him a resource book [The Impending Catastrophe].'*



## The Popular Press

The popular press has responded to the loveLife campaign in a positive fashion. Since August 1999 until November 2000, 192 articles have been published in national and local newspapers. Most have been reviews of the loveLife campaign, commentary on loveLife personalities, or reviews of the awareness campaign. Both negative and positive reviews have been published. The negative perceptions focus largely on aspects of loveLife's media campaign – often television reviews – and less so on the objectives or broader content of loveLife. One clear problem loveLife has encountered in the general media is that the full scope and inter-related nature of the loveLife campaign is rarely adequately portrayed. The scope of most media focus tends to be narrow and superficial. There is also a tendency on the part of the media, because of the history of controversy surrounding HIV/AIDS programmes in South Africa, to look for further controversy and/or to dismiss loveLife as ineffectual.



## OVERALL CONCLUSIONS

loveLife has in the past year managed to implement an awareness and adolescent sexual health campaign of significant proportions. It has done so in response to an epidemic that threatens all South Africans and all sectors of our society, and has placed the younger generation at particular risk. loveLife has recognised the need to make a significant impact on the behaviour of young people. During the first year since inception, it has sparked the popular imagination and created a solid foundation for a sustained national campaign.

Evidence collected through output evaluations, monitoring and research indicates that the open and liberal nature of the campaign appeals to young people, while adults recognise the need for a programme dedicated to young people to protect them against exposure to HIV. The monitoring and evaluation of loveLife during its first year has also indicated areas for improvement – for example, in the design and execution of messaging. loveLife appears to have been very effective in causing people to think afresh about issues relating to sex and HIV/AIDS. This

is seen as an important first step towards creating a desire to change behaviour. However, shifts in behaviour are not created solely through awareness. loveLife has therefore created several means through which adolescents and parents are able to engage with loveLife messages. The national call centre, thethajunction, has demonstrated a positive response to the loveLife messaging. The increasing demand for adolescent services is also reflected in the numbers of visitors to the Y-centres. Here, however, there is a need to balance the predominantly male involvement in the centres, and to increase national access.

In 2001, plans to improve the accessibility and acceptability of services for adolescents will be realised through NAFCI accredited clinics. These clinics will be able to begin to meet the envisaged demand for good quality reproductive health services for adolescents. In addition, loveLife aims to increase its reach through community and Y-centre-based peer educators. The national loveLife franchises that are planned for the first quarter of 2001 will further increase the breadth of loveLife's national impact.



