



Entertainment Television Summit on HIV/AIDS

Thursday, 12th May 2005 – Mumbai

The Entertainment Television Summit on HIV/AIDS held on 12th of May, 2005 at the Renaissance – Mumbai Hotel & Convention Centre, saw the coming together of some of the country's leading TV producers, scriptwriters and the television creative community for the purpose of mainstreaming HIV/AIDS in the mass media.

The **Opening Comments** were by *Dr Subhash Salunke*, Director General, Health Services, and Government of Maharashtra who welcomed the participants and set the tone for the rest of the day.

The First Panel Discussion on '**Communicating Creatively About AIDS**' aimed to provide the participants a brief kaleidoscope of programmes in India and U.S.A. that have incorporated HIV/AIDS messages. The panel was moderated by *Mr. Cyrus Broacha*, VJ, MTV India. Speakers on the panel included:

- *Dr. Neal Baer*, Executive Producer, Law & Order: Special Victims Unit
- *Ms. Tracy Poust*, Executive Producer, Will & Grace
- *Ms. Nina E. Jaipuria*, Vice President Marketing, Sony Entertainment Television India
- *Ms. Nilanjana Purkayastha*, Senior Executive Producer - Star India Pvt. Ltd

The panelists shared their experiences of working in the area of social programming, specifically the treatment given to the subject of HIV / AIDS in their popular TV shows.

The Second Panel Discussion on '**Real Life Stories**' focused on bringing the issue of HIV/AIDS alive to the participants. It was moderated by *Dr. Jaya Shreedhar*, Health Communications Consultant, Internews. Speakers on the panel included:

- *Dr. Suniti Solomon*, YRG Care
- *Mr. Elango Ramchandrar*, Karnataka Network of Positive People
- *Mrs. Asha Ramachandran*, Karnataka Network of Positive People
- *Mr. O. Hari Kumar*, SASO
- *Mr. Anand Grover*, Lawyers Collective (Mr. Grover who was not able to join the panel in person; however a video recording of his interview was shown).

The anecdotes and life-stories that the panelists shared aimed to give the creative community a ground to sensitively portray HIV/AIDS as a health and social issue in their popular TV storylines and 'normalise' the issue.

After Lunch there were two Case Studies which lasted 45 minutes each.

The **First Case Study** was on *Jasoos Vijay*, Doordarshan/BBC World Service Trust/NACO. Presenting the case study were:

- *Mrs. Usha Bhasin*, Director Programmes, Doordarshan
- *Ms. Devika Bahl*, Creative Director, BBC World Service Trust





The **Second Case Study** was on *S'camto, SABC/Love Life*. On the panel were:

- Ms.Kamscilla Naidoo, Head of Commissioning and Special Projects, SABC
- Ms.Carolyn Carew, Creative Executive Producer, Love Life

The Final session was the **Concurrent Workshops**. The Participants had a choice between Comedy, Drama and Reality. Details of the workshops were:

- **Using Comedy to Break Social Taboos.** Ms. Tracy Poust, *Will & Grace*
The theme of this workshop was the use of humor while dealing with complex social and political issues. *Will & Grace* broke new ground in television as the first show to feature openly gay people among its lead characters and in doing so, is credited with breaking down stereotypes and stigma around sexual identity, homophobia and other related issues. *Will & Grace* has been widely recognized by both AIDS organizations and groups supporting gay rights as well as the television industry with more Emmy nominations than any other comedy program.
- **A Dramatic License to Entertain and Educate.** Dr. Neal Baer, *Law & Order /E.R.*
Dr. Neal Baer's workshop focused on integrating health messages into dramatic television programming. He talked about his experiences of writing and producing for such popular programs as: *Law & Order: Special Victims Unit*, on which he is executive producer; *E.R.*, the long-running medical drama which he helped to create; and *China Beach*. On *E.R.* Dr. Baer had developed the storyline of Jeanie Boulet, an HIV+ physician's assistant whose story was told over four seasons on the show and represented the longest-running character living with HIV in a drama.
- **Making Reality TV Real.** Ms.Carolyn Carew & Ms. Kamscilla Naidoo, Lovelife/SABC
Ms. Kamscilla Naidoo, head of commissioning and special projects for the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC), and Ms.Carolyn Carew, head of television for LoveLife, (South Africa's largest youth HIV prevention program), shared their vast experience on working in television and film, and developing original HIV-themed programming, including both documentary and reality formats. They expanded on their case study presentation of *S'camto* to discuss opportunities for cross promotions around reality programming.

