

Anti-drug abuse campaign unfolds over Cape Town

The City of Cape Town aims to combat drug abuse through a campaign displayed on 93 of Primedia Outdoor's bus shelters and billboards.

“We have looked at how drug abuse affects not only the user, but those around them. We have called on community ambassadors to get on board to spread the anti-drug message to communities, and we have appealed to those who don't use drugs not to start”, says Priya Reddy, spokesperson and media manager for the City of Cape Town.



This marks the third year that the City of Cape Town is including Primedia Outdoor's billboards and bus shelters in their bid to highlight the problems around drug abuse. According to Reddy, the previous campaign reached some 4,8 million people through traditional media channels, and an additional two million through social media. This resulted in an 883% increase in the number of calls to the 24-hour helpline.

“On average, nearly 2,400 people are calling our drug helpline each year to seek help,” says Reddy.

This time around, the campaign will focus on the youth. “We know that some children begin using drugs at a very young age, so we got the voices of ex-users and used these authentic voices to talk about how the use of drugs affected their lives she says.

The South African Community Epidemiology Network on Drug Use - Sacendu's [November 2015](#) report notes that between January and June 2015, “the proportion of patients [receiving treatment for addiction] under 20 years ranged from 18% (in the Eastern Cape) to 31% (KZN)”. The report also notes an increase in the number of patients admitted for treatment in the first half of 2015, with 10,936 patients across 75 centres/programmes, up from 10,197 in the latter half of 2014.

To reach as broad an audience as possible, the campaign is being conducted across a range of media. “We know that drugs are an issue around the city – not just in poorer or richer areas,” says Reddy. “To ensure we reached as many people as possible, we used community papers, commercial papers, radio as well as billboards, bus shelters and social media. We also know that many addicts find shelter at bus stops, so we wanted to ensure that a helpline was available to them.”

Peter Lindstrom, Primedia Outdoor's sales and marketing executive, notes that bus shelters are an effective medium through which to reach a wide array of demographics. “The format also provides an optimal space for pedestrians and commuters engage with messaging in a different way, as it impacts passers-by at eye level,” he says.

Developing awareness of both the effects of drug addiction and the possibility of treatment remains crucial. “We hope that more people will reach out for help”, says Reddy of the campaign's objectives. “And we hope that those who are considering starting will pause when they read how desperate the life of an addict can be.”

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