

HIV campaign for deaf on TV

Brothers for Life (B4L), a national men's campaign, is providing HIV prevention information to South Africa's deaf population on TV in November 2009 through a minute of silence. During this time, Eric Mahamba from Khayelitsha will sign a message to viewers.

Mahamba says, "He is really thrilled by the effort that has been made to communicate with the deaf community. Believed to be a first in South Africa, it brings a twofold message into everyone's home - people living with disabilities and the B4L values." He is extremely proud to be allied with this campaign and is confident it will have a positive impact on the deaf community at large.

At the same time, the silence aims to show the majority of South Africans what it is like to be living in a silent world and to draw attention to the vulnerability of people living with disabilities and HIV infection.

More avenues of communication

In addition to the television commercial, during the run-up to World Aids Day on December 1, B4L will be printing its manifesto brochure in Braille so that this can be used as part of its education efforts targeting South Africa's blind population. The 'please call me' number will be used to provide subscribers with information about HIV amongst the disabled communities. It will also encourage subscribers to talk to people with disabilities about the behaviours that place them at risk of HIV infection.

"South Africa's National Strategic Plan for HIV recognizes the importance of targeting people with disabilities", says Minister Noluthando Mayende-Sibiya, Minister of Women, Children and Disabilities. "Yet often this very vulnerable community is excluded from HIV-related campaigns as radio is not accessible to people who are deaf, billboards cannot be seen by people who are blind and television messages are not accessible to both groups and those with multiple disabilities. For disabled people to access this information, all these disabilities need to be catered for, and the messages need to be tailored to optimize reach."

B4L is a collaborative effort led by South African National AIDS Council (SANAC), the Department of Health, USAID/PEPFAR, Johns Hopkins Health and Education in South Africa (JHHESA), Sonke Gender Justice, the United Nations System in South Africa and twenty other civil society partners working in the field of HIV prevention and Health.

Go to www.brothersforlife.org for more.