



Fighting discrimination inside the African community living in France: a campaign involving the people concerned

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Issues

As a community-based organisation, AIDES has been running grass-roots actions with migrants since 1996. Inside these communities HIV+ people have to deal with verbal and behavioural rejection. Having a sex life and wanting children are considered unacceptable. Faced with this phenomenon, we had no tools to promote the acceptance of infected migrants nor fight the discriminations they are subjected to, even inside their own community.

Description

This project covers the creation, organisation and launch of a campaign to fight discrimination within the African community. The slogans, thought up by AIDES and HIV+ Africans during focus groups, are based on real life experiences. Thus as Célestine says "People keep criticizing me for still having sex! Doesn't every human being have the right to love?".

Slogans for the campaign

- "Darling, it's a dangerous world out there! The guy tells me this when we're watching a report about AIDS on TV. He tells me this and I'm HIV positive sitting there beside him." Gabrielle
- "Everything seems fine, then suddenly someone says something like: How are we going to send your corpse back to Africa?" Amina
- "I'm fed up of taking my medicine secretly. I want this disease to be accepted like diabetes." Blaise
- "Yes I'm HIV positive, and so?" Alphonsine
- "Yes I'm HIV positive, and so?" Ibrahim
- "He didn't say anything specific but the way he looked at me changed. That's what really hurt." Fatima
- "When you have some support, even the slightest bit, you can get by." Gustave
- "We're all going to die some day, why should I die sooner than anyone else." Martine

All the slogans feature the following sentences

AIDS, loneliness can be more devastating than the disease itself.
AIDS, rejection can be more devastating than the disease itself.

Objectives: To enhance the status of migrants affected by HIV within their family, friends and professional circles

- By setting up a support system to fight against the stigma that HIV positive migrants are subjected to, and having their voice heard within their communities.
- By distributing the posters, postcards etc which were created during our field work on the specific issue of stigma.

Exploratory pre-enquiry intended to confirm the initial hypothesis

- Bibliographical research.
- Presentation of the mechanisms of discrimination.
- A focus group.

Conducting the campaign

- Three focus groups on the experiences of the people, bringing to light the most intense and meaningful testimonials in order to clearly illustrate what these people go through.
- Two focus groups on the choice and wording of the chosen sentences so that they give rise to thought and discussion.
- A focus group for the closing validation.

Those taking part/participants

11 HIV positive women and men, French speaking, of African origin between the ages of 25 and 55.

Lessons learned

This campaign was produced in a variety of forms: 9,000 posters, 9,000 stickers and 36,000 postcards. It has proved very successful with the RAAC-SIDA (network of French Afro-Caribbean associations fighting AIDS). The network will use and distribute the tool during its actions. One of our partners, an African hairdressing salon has launched the campaign in Marseille.

Next steps

The significance of this campaign lies in the fact that it was drawn up from HIV+ migrants' personal experience of HIV. It is a grass-roots campaign to accompany field work, to bring change to the environment people live in, in order to ease acceptance and disclosure in the community and enable people to talk about their own preconceived ideas.



"Yes, I'm HIV positive and so?"

AIDS, loneliness can be more devastating than the disease itself

Launch of the official anti-discrimination campaign in a shop in Marseille, France (October 2007)

