



Success Story

MTV Shuga Down South

Harnessing the Power of Media and Entertainment

Meet Bongi. This vivacious 17-year-old with a passion for singing recently – and reluctantly – relocated from Lagos back to Johannesburg to live with her aunt. Not pleased about the move, and rebelling, she found herself in a life-altering situation. She fell hard for a local DJ, and made the assumption that because he looked healthy, he wasn't HIV-positive, and she didn't need to ask about his status. Unfortunately, this was a mistake she'll live with for the rest of her life. Bongi contracted HIV from the first guy she slept with. Bongi's story now encourages others to go to the clinic with their partners to get tested before becoming intimate.

Although Bongi is a fictional character in the MTV Shuga Down South television drama, the story of unprotected sex leading to HIV, is all too common. In an effort to affect positive change in the sexual and reproductive health of young people in South Africa, the MTV Shuga Down South Partnership was created. It's a broad 360-degree campaign, including TV, radio, online, mobile, billboard, print, and facilitated discussions on key themes related to HIV/AIDS, family planning, and gender issues.

The partnership among MTV Staying Alive Foundation, MTV Base/Viacom, U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR)/Office of the U.S. Global AIDS Coordinator and Health Diplomacy, and the Government of South Africa, and managed by Cardno, is making an impact.

"We saw impressive results. Over the course of the campaign, on-the-ground activations allowed us to move beyond the 720 million households reached through the television drama, to access rural communities. This was seen through localized screenings, such as those taking place at taxi ranks across South Africa, reaching 8.6 million commuters," said Georgia Arnold, Executive Director of MTV Staying Alive Foundation and Executive Producer of MTV Shuga.

In addition to televised screenings, the campaign engaged approximately 46 million youth through social media and digital platforms, aired 15 episodes of Shuga Radio, and printed 10,000 copies of Reggie's Story, "Free Falling" and distributed it to 29 high schools across South Africa.

MTV Shuga Down South continues to generate a positive impact on South African youth, providing youth the knowledge they need to make healthier decisions and empowering young people to live their lives to the fullest – including girls like Bongi with dreams of becoming famous singers.

"Our longstanding partnership with PEPFAR has been symbolic of the impact that a public-private partnership can achieve when carried out successfully."

– Georgia Arnold, Executive Director of MTV Staying Alive Foundation and Executive Producer of MTV Shuga