

Campaign counts on love to boost uptake of couples testing

“Give your partner the greatest gift” was the appeal made to the public to promote HIV testing for couples in a campaign that launched in August 2014 and was re-activated around Valentine’s Day in 2015.

The thinking behind the campaign was explained by New Start’s Senior Programme Manager, Ncamsile Nhlabathi: “The most valuable things in the world are things we cannot buy – good health, the respect and love of our partners, and the ability to care for our children.

“Knowing our HIV status helps us safeguard our health, make better lifestyle choices and be there, as parents, to raise our children. If you and your partner agree to go together and take an HIV test you are truly doing something of huge value for each other and for your family.”

Objectives of the campaign

- To create interest in couples HCT as an option.
- To inform people of the benefits of couples testing.
- To increase the number of couples using the service.

Elements of the campaign

The campaign comprised an above-the-line radio advertisement, out-of-house advertising in the form of street pole adverts and a mobile billboard, and below-the-line interventions such as loud-hailing and mobilisation conducted by pairs of mobilisers wrapped in a single “double-necked” T-shirt. Collateral was produced for distribution in communities and couples were offered coupons to take a special Love Taxi to the testing venue. They were given a framed photo of themselves to commemorate the occasion.

Main message

Give your partner the greatest gift – get tested together at a New Start HIV counselling and testing site near you.

Testing facilities

Specially branded HIV testing tents were set up at shopping centres and transport hubs. Mobilisation took place in these areas and in nearby residential areas. Branded “love taxis” were available to transport couples from residential areas to the testing facilities, where necessary.



New Start sites involved

New Start sites in Nelspruit, Witbank, Welkom and Bloemfontein were involved in the August campaign. The February campaign saw an increase in the campaign to six sites (Nelspruit, Witbank, Bloemfontein, Johannesburg, Tembisa and Mabopane).

The impact

Both campaigns achieved an immediate upsurge in couples testing as well as a large number of single tests. The number of couples who tested during August was 2 840, more than three times the monthly average for the 2013/2014 financial year.

In the February campaign the result was even better, as 9 384 couples underwent testing. This figure was four times the monthly average for the first half of the 2014/15 financial year.

