

# HIV, Health and Development



United Nations Development Programme Asia-Pacific Regional Centre

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Innovative Approaches - UNDP China

2010

## Arts and Media AIDS Advocacy Initiative Addressing Stigma and Discrimination in China through Public Private Partnerships

Key features of this novel HIV programming and partnership-building initiative:

- Sustainable HIV and Public Private Partnership model created
- Modern media and advertisement platforms utilized reaching hundreds of millions of Chinese
- Minimal financial investment leveraged to mobilize over US \$5 million in donated advertisement time

|            |  |
|------------|--|
| Country    | China  |
| Focus area | Stigma and discrimination;<br>Partnership building   |
| Audience   | HIV programmers; Public Private Partnership officers |
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## Background

Stigma and discrimination against people living with HIV (PLHIV) remain a major problem in China. In a recent survey of more than 2,000 PLHIV in China, more than 40% said they had experienced direct discrimination due to their HIV status, with many losing jobs, being forced to leave school, or being rejected by their own families. In the same survey, 76% of PLHIV said their families had experienced discrimination due to their status. The ramifications are huge, as fear of stigma and discrimination leads many people to avoid HIV testing services, and reinforces dangerous stereotypes surrounding HIV that perpetuate misunderstandings and ignorance about the virus.<sup>1</sup>

Despite years of government and project based public information campaigns, understanding of HIV transmission and prevention remains limited: Most people still fear even casual contact with someone with HIV. In a 2008 survey of young people in six Chinese cities, four out of five respondents knew that contaminated syringes or unprotected sex can transmit HIV, but almost half said a mosquito bite could transmit the virus, and some 31.7% thought people living with HIV *deserved* to have the disease because of their sexual behavior or drug abuse.

In short, stigma and discrimination against people living with HIV continue to be major barriers to effective responses to the AIDS epidemic in China by impacting behaviors such as increasing condom use, accessing HIV testing programmes, and disclosing one's HIV status to family and friends. Ultimately, stigma and discrimination are having a serious impact on national efforts to control HIV and providing treatment, care, and support for those already infected.

To creatively address this national challenge, UNDP worked closely with a range of government, private sector and non-government partners to mobilize a coalition of partners with the aim of maximizing the impact of the advocacy activities. The UNDP China Arts and Media AIDS Advocacy Initiative designed and implemented public advocacy campaigns which went well beyond traditional project-based advocacy campaigns – single-partner, project-based, short-term,

## Discrimination against PLHIV in China

- 65%** said they did not want to live in the same household;
- 47.8%** would be unwilling to associate at meals;
- 41.3%** would be unwilling to be a co-worker;
- 30%** objected to HIV-positive students being allowed to study with healthy students

Source: Xinhua News Agency, November 18, 2008

limited coverage, and single-media platform. With minimal financial investment, this initiative created a multi sector coalition of partners to design and sustain distribution of innovative anti stigma messages reaching hundreds of millions of Chinese by utilizing modern media and communication platforms, while generating over US \$5 million in donated advertisement time.

## Harnessing the Power of the Arts and Commercial Media

Launched in 2007, UNDP's innovative and groundbreaking initiative to harness a previously untapped potential in China – the Arts and Commercial Media Sector – had a simple goal: to engage and harness the potential of the Arts and Commercial Media Sector to increase access to a broad segment of the Chinese population, improving understanding of HIV and thus creating a more supportive and accepting attitude towards people living with the virus.

UNDP initiated the programme by organizing the first China Arts and Commercial Media Roundtable on HIV to help identify possible private sector partners and articulate the potential of their engagement. By understanding individual companies' market advantages and advertisement platforms, UNDP approached individual companies to participate in a specific part of the initiative. In some instances, this required UNDP to "cold call" a media company's communication department and propose partnership on HIV and stigma.

This initiative provided a welcome opportunity for many commercial media companies to be engaged in an HIV public service campaign for the first time. The fact that the public services announcements with international and national celebrities were already produced and endorsed by the Ministry of Health or other government departments helped in securing commitments to different stages of the initiative.

Working with a wide variety of government, private sector partners and community based organizations also reduced some of the bureaucratic pitfalls that slowed earlier efforts, in effectively reaching a broad sector of the public with HIV prevention information and anti

<sup>1</sup> China Stigma Index Report, 2009 (see <http://www.stigmaindex.org/211/analysis/china-2009.html>)

*“This public awareness initiative and multi sector partnership with Government, arts, the private sector and the UN, coming together to distribute information about HIV and AIDS demonstrates a new willingness in China to address these issues. Furthermore, it shows our collective resolve against the HIV epidemic, which is one of the most serious development challenges affecting all of us.”*

- Subinay Nandy, UNDP China Country Director

stigma messaging. The traditional approach of focusing on slogans and public banners has been largely viewed as ineffective in changing public opinion or reducing deep misunderstandings about HIV transmission and infection, so this new strategy was very welcome.

## Using Arts and Media to Fight Stigma – how did it work?

This UNDP initiative consisted of many different projects and multi-sectoral advocacy efforts, all of which centered on the use of media and public advertising to reduce stigma against PLHIV and improve public understanding of HIV. The initiative ran from 2007 through 2009, and included a number of separate collaborations, including:

### “We are Friends” Anti-stigma media Campaign with NBA All-Star Yao Ming and Chinese film star Pu Cunxin (2007)<sup>2</sup>

**Activities** included distribution of Yao Ming / Pu Cunxin anti-stigma posters, HIV information resource kits in schools, and multi-media information on Chinese trains, at workplaces, gas stations, universities and other sites. By working with the Chinese State Ethnic Affairs Commission, the poster was translated into *Uygur*, *Tibetan* and *Jingpo* (Yunnan) languages and distributed throughout these areas. The poster and message was designed by people living with HIV and local university students.

**Partners** included National Basketball Association (NBA Cares), China National Population and Family Planning Commission, China Association of Ethnic Economy under the State Ethnic Affairs Commission, Aaron Diamond AIDS Research Centre (ADARC), UNESCO, UNICEF, ILO, the China HIV/AIDS Information Network (CHAIN) and several private sector companies including Total. The poster was placed in each of China’s Total petrol stations, and on billboards across universities in Shanghai.

2 For more information visit: <http://www.undp.org.cn/modules.php?op=modload&name=News&file=article&catid=14&topic=7&sid=430&mode=thread&order=0&thold=0>



### Arts and Commercial Media Roundtable on HIV and AIDS (2007)<sup>3</sup>

**Activities** included planning a strategy to expand public-private partnership around HIV anti-stigma education, the signing of an agreement with a local web advertising company for free space to distribute HIV prevention and testing information, and strengthening linkages between various public and private sector partners.

**Partners** included China National Population and Family Planning Commission, UN agencies, Aaron Diamond AIDS Research Centre and MTV. Participants included a number of media and advertising agencies in China, Global Business Coalition on HIV/AIDS (GBC), Bayer, and communications departments from many more companies.

### “Life is too Good” Public Service Announcements (December 2007 – 2008)<sup>4</sup>

**Activities** included production of three cutting-edge AIDS awareness Public Service Announcements (PSAs) featuring Jackie Chan, Pu Cunxin, and Chinese folk singer Peng Liyuan. Produced by Academy Award winning producer and director, they were developed in cooperation with the Chinese Ministry of Health. UNDP was able to arrange nationwide distribution channels forming a coalition of commercial media partners.

**Partners** included Chang Ai Media Project (CAMP), Chinese Ministry of Health and five commercial media companies.

### “Red Scarf” and “Truth is a Virus” art exhibitions (November 2008)

**Activities** included the launch of a 10-minute short film, produced by Humphrey Wou, which documents the lives of 5 individuals living with HIV in five provinces.

3 For more information visit: <http://www.undp.org.cn/modules.php?op=modload&name=News&file=article&catid=14&topic=7&sid=4161&mode=thread&order=0&thold=0>

4 For more information visit: <http://www.undp.org.cn/modules.php?op=modload&name=News&file=article&catid=14&topic=7&sid=4230&mode=thread&order=0&thold=0>



**Chinese commercial media agencies that joined the “Life is too Good” PSA campaign**

**Air Media** has shown the PSA’s on 18,000 video advertisement screens in 52 Chinese airports including Beijing, Guangzhou and Shenzhen, including during the Beijing Olympics.

**Beijing City TV Media** has shown the PSA’s on 15,000 TV outlets in office buildings, shopping malls and LED big screen displays.

**Towona Mobile Media** reaches 200 million people daily via 80,000 video advertisement outlets on 50,000 buses in 32 Chinese cities.

**EPIN Media Holdings Ltd (current name is Universe Media)** reaches 600 million passengers annually with over 50,000 TV displays on 700 trains and 2 large LED screens in Beijing west and Luoyang train stations.

**www.56.com**, China’s largest online video sharing website with over 20 million registered users between 18-30 years old placed the PSA’s on their website, getting 3 million hits in the first three months.

A multimedia art exhibit was organized, featuring five large hand knitted scarves representing different populations affected by HIV in China (women, farmers, children, minorities, and men who have sex with men), as well as the launch of the Dandelion Online Support Network for Women living with HIV. The exhibition hosted slide shows featuring the “positive lives” of people living with HIV from around China through their own eyes. University students displayed imaginative graphic and computer designed animation pieces on HIV and Stigma. The “Red Scarf” exhibit then traveled to Shanghai to participate in the “Truth is a Virus: 2008 2nd Annual Touch Without Danger” Contemporary Art Exhibition at the River South Art Centre.

*“I can’t overstate the importance of the UNDP joining in. Suddenly, the work that we’d done got a whole new set of legs: the spots appeared on buses, trains, in airports, via all these private companies brought in by UNDP -- an audience measured in hundreds of millions.”*

- Thomas Lennon Co-Founder of Chang Ai Media Project and Academy Award-winning producer  
[www.campfilms.org](http://www.campfilms.org)

**Partners** included UNICEF, Zeshan Foundation (Hong Kong), and Yuanfen New Media Art Space (Beijing), the “Positive Talks Project”, Marie Stopes International, China, Communication University of China, the Beijing Film Academy and the River South Art Centre (Shanghai).

**AIDS Candlelight Memorial and Art exhibition (May 2009)<sup>5</sup>**

**Activities** included the Annual Candlelight Memorial and the opening ceremony for a contemporary art exhibit to pay tribute to lives lost to and affected by HIV. The exhibit was part of the “AIDS. Art. Life” project and part of “Positive Talks”, a PLHIV leadership training project supported by UNDP and Marie Stopes International, China.

**Partners** included Kathleen’s 5 Restaurant (Shanghai), The Zeshan Foundation (Hong Kong), Yuanfen New Media Art Space, Zoe Zhang Bing, the “Positive Talks Project”, Marie Stopes International China and UNAIDS.

**“Charity: from Noun to Verb” and “Absolute Distance” Art Exhibition (2010)**

**Activities** included “Charity: from Noun to Verb,” a pilot program started in early 2010, which sent Chinese artists to the Guangxi, Yunnan and Shanxi provinces to explore and experience the daily lives of PLHIV. These artists lived with families in the communities and gained insight into the daily triumphs and challenges facing the PLHIV community and used their experiences to interpret and transform disease, discrimination and life into artwork. With a new perspective, they were inspired by everyday life and a better understanding of the PLHIV community. Seventeen pieces were displayed at the “Absolute Distance” Art Exhibition that opened on 28 November 2010.

**Partners** included UNDP, Marie Stopes International China, Zoe Zhang Bing.

<sup>5</sup> For more information visit: <http://www.undp.org.cn/modules.php?op=modload&name=News&file=article&catid=14&topic=7&sid=4410&mode=thread&order=0&thold=0>

**“Everyone, including the private sector, is responsible for fighting AIDS. A company should not avoid its social responsibilities.”**

- Tang Lixin, president of EPIN Media

## What Made this Project a Success?

There are a number of important factors involved in the success of this initiative. First, UNDP and its partners reached out to both traditional and non-traditional media, creating a much broader coverage and more “mainstreaming” of the HIV prevention messages. Unlike most public information campaigns in China, this initiative utilized commercial media and advertising methods, such as video advertisements on bus and subway transport, to access millions of potential new viewers. In most Chinese cities, bus and subway passengers are ideal captive audiences for public service announcements due to long travel times and traffic congestion.

Second, both the message and the messenger were designed for maximum impact. PSAs were delivered by international superstars such as NBA All-Star Yao Ming, film star Jackie Chan, as well as Chinese celebrities Pu Cunxin and Peng Liyuan, all household names in China.

More importantly, the messages, designed by people living with HIV and young people, challenged viewers to *accept* PLHIV as people who are able to lead “normal” lives as friends and family members, not as people deserving extraordinary sympathy or living conditions. The messages “We are Friends” and “Life is too good” are simple and powerful.

Finally, the *process* was critical. UNDP made an initial investment of time and effort to approach and negotiate with each of the media and advertising companies, which helped engage this often overlooked sector. UNDP also organized a media conference as part of the initiative, and spent considerable time and effort building and maintaining ongoing relationships with Chinese advertising companies. An investment that paid off with increased avenues for distribution of public service announcements. Importantly, these companies responded with an estimated US \$5 million contribution of donated advertising air time.

## Innovation and Outcomes

Though the long-term impact of HIV information campaigns with commercial media on stigma and discrimination is difficult to directly measure, the success of this initiative is visible in the successful key approaches it took to overcome perennial challenges to effective public education about HIV in China.



First, it formed successful coalition of public-private partners, working with a broad range of stakeholders to design, launch and distribute innovative and cutting edge public information messages. The participation of multiple partners ensured ownership and sustained engagement by all partners.

**Public Sector Partners** include the government, NGOs, CSOs, educational institutions, internet and new media. They help to bring clout and credibility, technical expertise, talent, local networks and volunteers, as well as access to distribution channels. In return they receive access to resources, increased visibility, technical expertise, international and national networks, contacts, and support for mission goals

**Private Sector Partners** include media and advertising agencies, film production companies, magazine publishers, companies, prominent individuals, and the internet. They help to bring access to distribution channels, in kind services or products, brand name, customer base, visibility for communications, advocacy, volunteers and funding. In return, they can generate technical expertise, brand recognition, increased sales, goodwill of society and social impact, employee attraction and retention.

The **UN System** and its specialist agencies can convene a diverse range of partners, offer international expertise and groundbreaking research according to their individual mandates and core competencies as well as global networks and resources. In return UN agency supported projects benefit from greater coverage and impact of initiatives and a wider network of partners.

Second, the use of media and art celebrities to be the “face” of these campaigns was a breakthrough for China. This engaged a much larger range of partners, especially commercial media and advertising, who understand that celebrity recognition is an invaluable means to attract large audiences.

Third, this initiative sparked the innovate use of traditional media platforms (such as billboards and television spots), multi-media platforms (such as video advertising on public transport), and new media (such as internet search engines and websites).



**“Important partnerships like these give the NBA an opportunity to use the international power of our brand and the celebrity of our players to have a direct impact on the critical issues facing communities all over the world.”**

*- Kathy Behrens, NBA Senior Vice President*

Finally, mobilizing a broad range of partners allowed this initiative to succeed with a minimum of UNDP funding. UNDP invested only US \$75,000 for the two main campaigns and roundtable, but mobilized an estimated US \$5 million worth of donated advertisement time on television, multi-media advertising platforms, websites and internet search engines across China.

This approach was not without challenges, namely private companies were historically hesitant to link their brands and products with HIV information campaigns. However, two factors were pivotal to their acceptance of this initiative: the use of celebrities and government endorsement of messages. For many private sector partners, the endorsement by government authorities of the media friendly materials gave companies the policy backing, and partnership with UNDP gave them the opportunity and tools with which to achieve their own goals under existing corporate social responsibility frameworks.

## Sustainability

Following the successful building of an Arts and Commercial Media coalition of partners, UNDP along with the Chinese Hepatitis Foundation, the Zeshan Foundation and the Chang Ai Media Project came together and produced a Hepatitis B (HBV) Anti Stigma public service announcement. By working with UNDP’s Commercial Media partners, the PSA has aired on Chinese television over 4,200 times by end of 2009. The estimated commercial value for the airings will reach US \$2.7 million (RMB 18.5 million). This includes television channels with national coverage and 14 provincial channels, 8 airports covered by Air Media, and 8 city bus systems covered by Towana. Based on the marketing

data from these companies, the PSA is estimated to reach over 700 million people over the next year. During the 2010 spring festival season, the PSA was aired through the railway media system— Universe Media (formally EPIN Media), a group running more than 75,000 LCDs on 500 trains. According to data from Universe Media, the PSA had reached a population of 118 million throughout the spring festival transportation season.

UNDP’s engagement of government, private sector and civil society partners has helped create a new paradigm to scale up public information campaigns targeting HIV in China. In late 2009, the Chinese Ministry of Health joined with UNAIDS to launch a nationwide campaign to reduce HIV-related discrimination employing the public private partnership strategy development by UNDP. The campaign culminated on World AIDS Day 2009 and utilized broadcasts of the videos and distribution posters featuring Yao Ming on more than 20 giant outdoor screens in 12 cities. More than 30,000 posters were distributed and the video was shown in hotels and websites across China.<sup>6</sup>

Working with the government of China, harnessing the innovation and reach of the private sector, and drawing on key competencies from within the UN system, UNDP has demonstrated the effectiveness of this public private partnership (PPP) strategy in China. Such coalitions of multi sector partners are crucial to ensure that the message is not confined to project sites, but given blanket coverage to hundreds of millions of people across China.

## Websites:

### Chang Ai Media Project

<http://www.campfilms.org>

### “Life is too Good” PSAs

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y67uiXNwl8g&feature=player\\_embedded](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y67uiXNwl8g&feature=player_embedded)

### “The Scarf” Trailer

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OtAi6BMDa3s&feature=player\\_embedded](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OtAi6BMDa3s&feature=player_embedded)

<sup>6</sup> [http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2009-11/27/content\\_12551670.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2009-11/27/content_12551670.htm)

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