

Speak!: A Sexual Assault Campaign in Lesotho

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### Abstract

This paper will outline our group project for our COM 475 international campaign for the country of Lesotho. It will lay out our intervention plan that we chose to name "Speak!" which aims to increase awareness of resources and confidence in reporting cases of sexual assault in young women in Lesotho. It will identify the problem we are seeking to address, our anticipated outcomes, our plan of action and our methods for evaluation. Finally, it will offer a conclusion of our work and provide examples of our communication materials to help illustrate our campaign.

## Introduction

Sexual assault is a problem plaguing Lesotho, a small country that is an enclave of South Africa. Lesotho has one of the highest rates of HIV/AIDS prevalence in the world and “according to the UN, the highest rate of rape” (True African Woman Magazine Website, 2012). These are startling statistics and are a result of several cultural traits and norms, with traditional gender roles and general sex education being two of the biggest influencers. The lack of formal sex education in schools leads to children seeking the information elsewhere, including initiation schools and relying on community norms that tell them sexual assault is common and accepted. The negative stigma surrounding sex and specifically the problem of sexual assault contributes to underreported cases of sexual assault. People have been taught not to talk about sexual assault, giving it a shameful connotation. Most of the population is unaware of sexual assault laws and how to respond in these situations leaving victims in silence and the trend to continue.

The target audience of this campaign will be adolescent females ages 12 to 18. We intend to focus on young women that are attending school because they will be less difficult to reach than young women who do not attend school and because this campaign will be beneficial to those who attend school given the high rate of sexual assault and violence in schools. Secondary audiences include adolescent males, who could take away information about protection and respecting the opinions and bodies of their female peers.

Our campaign will reach this audience through the following materials:

- A curriculum taught in schools
- A situational feature on a popular soap opera
- Promotional posters with our messaging and spokesperson

- An informational brochure

The following sections of this paper will address the theories we considered during the development of our campaign, the process and impact objectives guiding our campaign, the intervention plan itself, and our methods for measuring the effectiveness of our program.

### **Theories**

Our group will use three different concepts within our campaign to accomplish our objectives. We will use Social Learning Theory and its model of Education-Entertainment, and the Communication Framework for HIV/AIDS to shape our intervention.

#### *Social Learning Theory:*

Our first concept is the Social Learning Theory. Social Learning Theory uses role models, audience involvement and self-efficacy as components to create or change a behavior (Bandura, 1986). We address this theory, first, in our campaign by using teachers as role models for their students. The teachers will have to complete a certification process before they are allowed to teach the course, giving them the proper tools and expected behavior for students to observe as they are learning the curriculum material. Having the teachers act as role models will further cement the material that the students are learning because they look up to their teachers as people of influence. Through this method, they lead by example. A common implementation of this theory is found in the DARE program taught throughout schools in the United States. The police officers teach the curriculum and the students who participate see the police officers as a credible source because of their profession. The impact will be similar in Lesotho because of the status of teachers and the value of education in Lesotho.

Furthermore, within Social Learning Theory is the concept of Entertainment-Education, which we plan to use in the soap opera element of our campaign.

Entertainment-education “is the process of purposely designing and implementing a media message to both entertain and educate to increase audience members’ knowledge about an education issue, create favorable attitudes, and change overt behavior” (Singhal & Rogers, 1999). Having Sophie Ndaba, the star of Generations soap opera, as the main character and spokesperson, and showing her in situations that involve sexual assault will give viewers of the show someone to identify with. As she experiences sexual assault our audience who has experienced, or could potentially experience similar situations will be motivated to take action in their own lives. This provides an interesting and entertaining way to convey information and give our audience a role model. A good example of how Education-Entertainment is implemented would be a show like Law and Order SVU. This show often portrays characters in real-life situations that require legal action. By watching this show, viewers learn the appropriate response to the situations that they will be able to recall if they ever face the experience themselves. Typically at the end of the show, there will be a character saying, “If you have ever experienced [topic of show] call this number for further information...” Even though the programs are fictional, there are still very real messages addressed that people can learn from while being entertained. The soap opera will need to be tweaked a little from a Law and Order-type format to account for cultural differences and the Generations plotline. However, the idea that the audience will learn the proper response and action from the model character remains the same.

*Communication Framework:*

The second concept we based our campaign on is the Communication Framework

for HIV/AIDS. The Communication Framework addresses issues such as government & policy, spirituality, culture, socio-economic status, and gender (Airhihenbuwa, Makinwa & Obregon, 2000). This model is critical for our campaign because it looks at all factors that influence a community. An example of this model would be the HIV/AIDS research performed by Airhihenbuwa during the creation of this framework. We will look at these categories when implementing our campaign in Lesotho. Our campaign addresses the government and policy element by working to clearly communicate the existing laws in place regard sexual assault in Lesotho. By taking a religiously neutral stance on sexual assault, our campaign respects all forms of religion and spirituality. The entire campaign and its materials are culturally relevant to only Lesotho. The entirety of the campaign was created by taking into account norms, popular forms of media and entertainment, and situational issues in Lesotho culture. Our campaign respects the low socio-economic status of Lesotho residents by offering the free curriculum to students and utilizing the accessibility of a widely disseminated television show. Finally, the campaign addresses gender by focusing only on females as the primary audience, and recognizing the gender constructs of the area.

### **Impact and Process Objectives**

Our objectives include:

- Increasing the rate of sexual assault reports by women ages 12 to 18 in communities where Speak! is implemented by 10% by 2015

We will do this by:

- Increasing the perceived ability and willingness to report cases of sexual assault in students who participated in the campaign

- Increasing the knowledge of rights/laws and proper actions to take with regards to sexual assault

Because there are so few women reporting their sexual assault, we want to educate young women of their rights as women and the laws regarding sexual assault in Lesotho. Since the law recently changed in 2003, we want to make sure that they are aware of the new changes. We are targeting young school-aged Lesotho women between the ages of 12 and 18. We are targeting a broad range of ages, because this is information that needs to be disseminated throughout school-age girls. We want to start out the program in a smaller rural community, so we hope to see changes within this community. If we start the program in a smaller community, we can get feedback before we implement this program in a larger community. After the young women finish the program, we specifically want them to be aware of the laws regarding sexual assault in Lesotho and their rights if they are sexually assaulted and how to deal with everything that happens afterwards. To find out if the girls in our study are learning what we want them to learn, we will give them a survey before the program to establish a baseline and then give them the same survey after the program to see if their understanding has improved. These survey results will be recorded for each semester of implementation until 2015 where we will determine the overall success of the campaign.

### **Intervention**

#### *Curriculum:*

The first element of the Speak! campaign is a curriculum that will take place in schools in Lesotho to educate young women on the laws, effects and perceptions of sexual assault in the country. The goal of this curriculum, as well as the entire campaign, is to

increase knowledge in young women about their rights and proper actions to take regarding sexual assault a safe, judgment-free environment. Furthermore, the curriculum seeks to increase self-efficacy in these women when it comes to reporting cases of sexual assault and making sure to receive the proper medical attention after a sexual assault encounter.

The curriculum is divided up into eight lessons, each 30 minutes long. The ideal time frame would be for the teacher to do one lesson each week for eight weeks. This will allow time for the students to absorb the material and ask follow-up questions before being introduced to more, sometimes uncomfortable information.

Each lesson is divided up into weekly topics including:

- “What is Sexual Assault?” which explores all the definitions of sexual assault and discusses cultural understanding of the terms
- “Respecting Yourself and Others” which teaches methods to avoid unwanted sexual encounters and how to treat others who have been assaulted
- “Myths About Sexual Assault” which discusses local cultural myths about women and their sexual powers, and the cultural perceptions of sex
- “Family and Generational Differences” which addresses different viewpoints and acceptability of sexual relations and how to discuss sexual assault with people who hold different views
- “Your Body and What It Does” which gives an overview of the reproductive organs and how sexual assault can affect the body
- “Sexual Assault and the Law” which explores the laws currently in place related to sexual assault and where and how to report it



- “Health Care Options After Sexual Assault Occurs” which offers information about the importance of receiving medical attention after a sexual assault
- “Gender Equality” which examines the social and cultural norms regarding sexual assault

Every lesson is made up of an introductory activity or discussion, a lecture about the lesson’s designated topic, and another activity or discussion ending with an opportunity for students to ask questions, give opinion or explore the topic further. See Appendix A for the Speak! curriculum and an example of a full lesson.

Activities include short quizzes to gauge perceptions of the topic before and after the lesson is taught, role-playing sessions where students act out what they would do in a real situation, and activities where students are divided into groups and given a situation with their task being to come up with a solution using what they learned during the curriculum. Discussions involve talking about the activity that was just done, or asking students a few beginning questions to get them thinking while encouraging discussion or debate. In addition, clips from the soap opera episodes will be shown and discussed as relevant to the topic of the week.

Each instructor is also provided with a government document, The Government Gazette Extraordinary (2007), as a reference of the law changes in Lesotho to help answer specific question the students may have. They will also be responsible for attending a daylong seminar about how to teach and approach these topics with their students before they are permitted to teach the lessons to help accurately answer any questions a student might have. See Appendix B for a consolidated version of the instructor resource included with the curriculum.

*Soap Opera:*

Inspired by the Social Learning Theory, we have established a “spokeswoman” for the Speak! campaign. Sophie Ndaba is a highly recognized actress on the popular South African soap opera, *Generations*. Soap operas are a very popular form of entertainment in Lesotho and are broadcast via television as well as radio. They reach a broad audience in both urban and rural communities and provide a great platform to spread the message of Speak!.

As supporters of Speak!, *Generations* has agreed to implement our messaging in a few of their episodes. Sophie Ndaba’s character, “Queen”, will experience sexual assault. Her encounter will be similar to what many young women in Lesotho face, but “Queen” will be encouraged by her family and peers to report the assault to the authorities. Throughout a brief series of episodes the cast of *Generations* will support “Queen” as she learns how to cope with her assault both emotionally and physically. The show will clearly explain women’s rights to report sexual assault and the legal ramifications for the perpetrator. Each episode focused on sexual assault will end with Ndaba giving a brief public service announcement, encouraging any women who have gone through similar experiences to seek help by directing them to their local health center, where Speak! campaign materials will be available.

By having a character deal with a real life scenario about sexual assault, Speak! and *Generations* will work together to provide entertainment education. Utilizing an already popular T.V. show guarantees an audience that is emotionally attached to the characters on the show and will pay attention to the scenario. Young women who have seen the episodes featuring “Queen’s” sexual assault will hopefully be able to recall the positive way that the

character dealt with the situation and will feel more empowered and prepared to act similarly if they were to ever experience sexual assault. See Appendix C for a synopsis for the shows.

*Posters:*

As a representative of Speak! Sophie Ndaba will be featured on a poster that includes Speak!'s campaign messaging. In addition to Ndaba, the posters will also feature other influential icons in Lesotho culture. For example, Thabo Masualle of the Lesotho national football team and Lucia Mthiyane, an actress on the popular soap opera *Rhythm City* will be featured. These posters will be hung up around classrooms and schools where the Speak! curriculum is being taught. The posters will also be provided to health centers in areas where the curriculum is being taught. Using highly recognizable actresses and athletes will create automatic attention to the message of our campaign. See Appendix D for examples of the Speak! posters.

*Brochure:*

Along with the posters, a brochure containing the vital information from the curriculum will be given to each student involved with the lessons as well as placed in health facilities and other public places to help supplement the posters. This brochure provides a synopsis of information covered in the curriculum including laws, health center locations and resources for reporting sexual assault. This gives students who have completed the curriculum a tangible resource for their reference after the course has been completed. See Appendix E for the Speak! brochure.

## **Evaluation**

*Process Evaluation:*

We will be starting this program in a smaller community before we bring it to other communities. This way we can be sure that our materials are reaching the people we want them to reach. We will do this by seeing if people recognize the messages on the Speak! campaign posters during the duration of the campaign by recall testing the students that participate in the curriculum. We will also try to keep track of which students are attending every session and see if having each session once is effective or if enough people miss the sessions regularly, if we need to change the time or offer more than one session of each lesson.

We will also be evaluating the teachers partway through the program to see if they think that the information that they are presenting is being conveyed to the students properly and if the teachers are being effective and appropriate role models and information disseminators. We will do this by having a meeting with the teachers partway through the program and talking with them about the curriculum and how they think the campaign is going. We will also be randomly coming to lessons to make sure the teachers are teaching what we want them to teach.

*Summative Evaluation:*

To test the effectiveness of our messaging, we will be examining the reported rates of sexual assault before and after the campaign. If the rates go up then we know that our audience's self-efficacy has gone up. In addition to having pretests and posttests at the school we are implementing the program, we want to test another school as a control. We will also test girls between the ages of 12 and 18 at this school too. We will give them the same posttest and pretest that we will give our test school. This way we can be sure that if there are differences between the two tests at the test school, we can look at the results

from the control school and determine whether our curriculum has been effective and the girls learned from the program. If the test scores improve between the pretest to the posttest then we know that our program objectives have been met. We can use the scores from the control school to make sure that the changes aren't due to chance. Our tests will ask our students about laws regarding sexual assault and other topics that we cover in the class. We want to make sure that the students are retaining the information that we are teaching them. See Appendix F for an example of a Pretest/Posttest survey.

The soap opera we are using is shown in South Africa as well as Lesotho, so another way for us to test our campaign is by surveying viewers on their understanding of the message. We will ask those in our program and those not in our program if they understood the storyline and PSAs and compare their answers. We will also compare the show's ratings after the new storyline was introduced to the ratings before it was introduced. If our students are able to better understand the storyline and the ratings for the show go up than we will know if our messages are having an effect on our students and viewers.

Our brochures are meant to complement our curriculum. We will keep track of the people who have taken our brochures and survey them with a questionnaire sent to their home on what they learned from the brochure and see if they can recall the main messages the brochure is trying to convey. We can also keep track of the number of people interested in our brochures by keeping in contact with the healers and other sources where they are available. Since the students are bringing the brochures home after the program, we will keep track of them and after six months survey them and ask them about their

perceptions of the helpfulness of the brochure and whether they ever referred to it after the completion of the curriculum.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, we hope that our campaign will help to change and better the lives of young women in Lesotho. We believe it is important for young women to be aware of their resources and rights, and feel that they are able and willing to take a stand for themselves regarding sexual assault. Our campaign materials aim to provide a unique and fresh view to a controversial, and perhaps overdone issue by attempting to bring about the topic in new, interesting, and comforting ways. Sexual assault is a very real issue in Lesotho and we hope we have been able to address it in a culturally sensitive and positive manner as if this were a real campaign.

## References

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