



Virtual demand creation for more effective condom promotion:

A structured approach to social media campaign planning in Zambia



Case Study
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An innovative social media campaign to increase condom awareness in Zambia demonstrated opportunities for collaborative approaches to designing and implementing cost effective virtual condom promotion campaigns targeting Adolescents and Young People (AYP). The campaign was implemented from November 22 to December 31, 2023, and leveraged advertisements via Facebook and Instagram and a chatbot feature that enabled interactive access to messaging via peer educators. The campaign, endorsed by the Ministry of Health (MOH) and the National AIDS Commission (NAC), was implemented in Zambia by SRHR Africa Trust (SAT) and Copper Rose in partnership with BBC Media Action. The campaign was designed and implemented with support from FHI 360's technical guidance and Quickstart Toolkit. **It leveraged existing messages, partners on the ground, and platforms already in use to reach ~1.9 million social media users.** This approach and tools leveraging social media demonstrate promising practices to generate condom awareness in Zambia, with potential for replication across Africa.

Insights

Virtual demand creation is a powerful, cost effective way to reach a diverse audience:

Social media is an effective channel for promoting sexual and reproductive health (SRH) products and services. This is especially true for young populations that have embraced social media, and are particularly susceptible to HIV infection and poor SRH outcomes. In Zambia, the campaign used social media to **cost effectively complement existing platforms** and to target audiences based on gender, age, motivation, interests and language with **customized, culturally appropriate messages**. Analytics tools monitored effectiveness and generated insights that could be used to optimize the impact of the campaign in real-time.

Virtual campaign planning benefits from a structured approach:

Virtual channels for health promotion campaigns are often an after-thought to more expensive, traditional media. In Zambia, a structured approach was used to campaign planning leveraging FHI 360's Quickstart Toolkit to identify context specific challenges and opportunities based on rates of connectivity, mobile penetration, social media use, and the potential for paid advertisement promotions. Rigorous planning allowed the campaign to effectively reach AYP at scale with **compelling content, messaging, and placement that resonated**.

Opportunities linking awareness to action increases effectiveness:

The campaign in Zambia demonstrated significant potential to link clients to peer educators through social media chatbots. The campaign provided one-on-one counselling to clarify questions on condom use and linked to a **call to action navigating users to condom distribution sites**. A key learning was that reach could have been extended if users were also linked to online platforms where condom orders could be placed for delivery or pick up.

Significant results:

The condom promotion campaign in Zambia demonstrated compelling results. In a period of 2 months, approximately 1.9 million social media users were reached with campaign materials promoting awareness about condoms, and about 74,000 of these users initiated WhatsApp or Facebook messenger chats with peer educators.



Best and Promising Practices

This case study is part of a series documenting promising and best practices supported by the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria's (GFATM) Strategic Initiative (SI) on Condom Programme Stewardship (2021-2023) in the East and Southern Africa region implemented through a UNAIDS/UNFPA partnership engaging private sector entities including FHI 360. Condoms continue to be one of the most cost-effective ways to reduce HIV/STI infections, yet condom use is declining, particularly among AYP. Virtual demand generation via social media channels offers an opportunity to increase condom education and uptake among this target population, but there are few effective virtual campaigns promoting condoms with documented results.

This case study outlines a key behavior change intervention targeting a priority population as per the UNAIDS Technical Guidance. *It demonstrates how virtual demand creation via social media campaigns aimed to increase awareness about condoms among AYP ages 16-24 years in Zambia. While every country and context are unique, our hope is that lessons identified in this case study can be drawn on to inspire and inform programs in other countries.*

Background

Despite gains made in HIV prevention, 660,000 people in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) were newly infected with HIV/AIDS in 2022 alone; of these 400,000 were in East and Southern Africa¹. Approximately 1 in 4 women have an unmet need for family planning², contributing to about 14 million unplanned pregnancies annually in SSA. An estimated 150 million cases of curable sexually transmitted infections (STIs) occur annually in SSA³. Adolescent girls and young women are particularly at risk of contracting HIV/STIs or having an unplanned pregnancy. In 2022, adolescent girls and young women accounted for more than 77% of new infections among young people aged 15-24 years in SSA.⁴

Condoms are one of the most cost-effective methods to reduce HIV/STI incidence and unintended pregnancies. Recent data indicates condom use by young populations is declining in many countries in SSA⁵. In 2021, the prevalence of condom use among AYP in SSA was estimated to be only 40%⁶. The decline of donor funding for condom social marketing programs means that **innovative solutions are now needed to promote consistent condom use among AYP.**

A 2020 systematic review of global condom promotion programs identified several interventions that used a wide range of health communication and marketing strategies, including mass media (52% of studies reviewed), interpersonal communication through community outreach (44%), and visits to households by health workers. Programs included in the study were demonstrated to be effective in changing attitudes, social norms, and beliefs in favor of condom use.⁷

However, especially as more AYP go online, there are relatively few studies on condom programs that use social or other digital media and the real-time feedback mechanisms that virtual channels offer to promote condoms to AYP. The campaign in Zambia offers a significant data point for virtual condom promotion.

Social media has proven to be an important **complementary channel to reach AYP** in Zambia. A regional landscape analysis conducted by FHI 360 at the beginning of this work demonstrated that social media use - particularly via Facebook- was the highest in Zambia with over 2.6 million users.⁸

¹ UNAIDS. [2023 Epidemiological Estimates](#). UNAIDS Fact Sheet 2023.2 PHIA, 2021

² Teshale AB. [Factors associated with unmet need for family planning in sub-Saharan Africa: A multilevel multinomial logistic regression analysis](#). PLoS One. 2022 Feb 10;17(2); PMID: 35143584; PMID: PMC8830726.4 UDHS, 2016

³ Ameyaw EK, Budu E, Sambah F, Baatiema L, Appiah F, Seidu AA, Ahinkorah BO. [Prevalence & determinants of unintended pregnancy in SSA: A multi-country analysis of demographic and health surveys](#). PLoS One. 2019 Aug 9;14(8):e0220970. PMID: 31398240; PMID: PMC6688809.

⁴ Shewarega, E.S., Fentie, E.A., Asmamaw, D.B. et al. [STI related care-seeking behavior and associated factors among reproductive age women in East Africa: a multilevel analysis of demographic and health surveys](#). BMC Public Health 22, 1714 (2022).

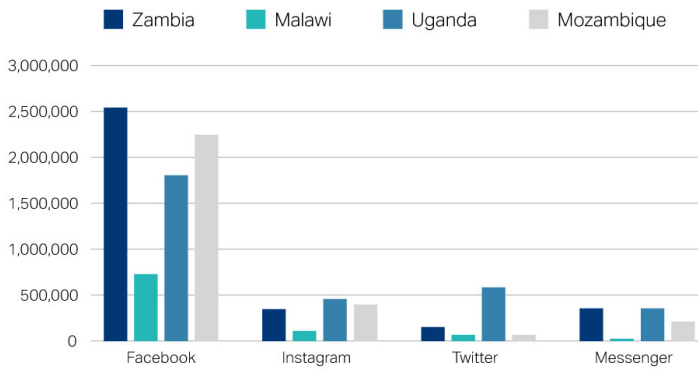
⁵ UNAIDS. [Condom Use Declining](#) (2020).

⁶ Davids, E.L., Zembe, Y., de Vries, P.J. et al. [Exploring condom use decision-making among adolescents: the synergistic role of affective and rational processes](#). BMC Public Health 21, 1894 (2021).

⁷ Evans, W.D.; Ulasevich, A.; Hatheway, M.; Deperthes, B. [Systematic Review of Peer-Reviewed Literature on Global Condom Promotion Programs](#). Int. J. Environ. Res. Public Health 2020, 17, 22622

⁸ [Virtual Interventions Situational Analysis \(VISA\)](#). FHI 360

Figure 1: Regional Analysis of Social Media Use⁸



The assessment revealed an existing platform, Youth Wyze, reaching AYP via virtual channels with information on SRH and HIV, including condoms, that was already vetted by the MOH and NAC. This presented an opportunity to build partnerships and cost-effectively expand the reach and effectiveness of existing condom promotion efforts to reach AYP in Zambia.

Approach to Virtual Condom Promotion in Zambia

With technical support from FHI 360, a **Local Steering Group** was formed. It consisted of: implementers responsible for campaign execution (SAT & Copper Rose); “learners” or organizations aiming to enhance their capacity to design and implement their own social media activities (YWCA, D-Tree, & CIDRZ); and experienced partners and advisors to provide oversight and strategic guidance and validate key project outputs (NAC, FHI 360, & BBC Media Action). Implementers were supported by the advisors to develop campaign plans via bi-weekly **capacity-building sessions** on campaign planning. Key phases in the process were:

Prioritize and Planning: Information was gathered to develop a **social media campaign brief** to guide the campaign. The brief outlined behavioral goals, understanding of the motivations, ability and values of the target audience, communication objectives, key messages, messengers, channels, creative approach, monitoring plan, timeline, and budget. Tools used to support this phase included an **online survey** to learn about the target audience’s motivations and ability to use condoms and their unique service preferences through virtual channels, and a **Virtual Intervention Situational Analysis (VISA)** to gain insight into existing virtual initiatives, internet penetration levels, and the prevalence of social media including who uses it and how much, and the facilitators and hindrances associated with online campaigns in each context.

Create and Implement: This phase was focused on using the campaign briefs generated to **guide the creative process to develop visual content** for social media platforms and paid advertisements. Key decisions on implementation plans including campaign duration, channels for paid ads, and messaging were made. SAT & Copper Rose collaborated with a **creative agency** to think through creative elements of the campaign including tone, style, messages, colors, and placements. Relevant design assets such as videos and graphics and customized content for platforms were tested with target audiences. Importantly, the campaign was centered around a **call to action** encouraging users to access condoms at distribution sites.

Monitor and Adjust: The campaign was monitored using **key performance metrics** to understand audience engagement with the campaign and **evaluate the impact of the campaign** on communication and behavioral objectives. Insights generated were used to modify visual content and posting strategies. Social media platform **ad managers and analytics tools** were the primary source of data to measure and manage campaign effectiveness, providing precise data disaggregated by audience age, gender, and interests,⁹ as well as allowing customizable ad scheduling and location-based display.



⁸ **Reach:** The total number of unique users who saw your content; **Impressions:** The total number of times your content was displayed, regardless of clicks or engagement; **Click-Through Rate:** The percentage of people who clicked on the content after seeing it; and **Conversion Rate:** The percentage of users who take a specific action.

Campaign Implementation Deep-Dive

The campaign in Zambia aimed at reaching a **target population** of AYP with a focus on 18–24-year-olds using social media. This was driven by the 2.6 million Facebook users in Zambia, ~30% of whom are between the ages 18-24 years.¹⁰ The **communication objectives** for the campaign were to:

- Improve understanding about the safety and efficacy of condoms in preventing unintended pregnancies and STI's including HIV/AIDS;
- Foster positive attitudes towards condoms, eradicating stigma and misconceptions, and emphasizing condoms as a normal and necessary aspect of sexual health;
- Promote various channels through which condoms can be accessed, increasing their perceived availability; and
- Promote safe and consensual sexual practices that empower individuals to communicate about safe sex openly and assertively.

The campaign was implemented for 5 weeks in November & December 2023. The **geographic focus** was in Lusaka, which accounts for 58% of Facebook users in Zambia, and Kabwe which was a focus for last mile distribution of condoms for the Condom SI.

SRHR Trust (SAT), Copper Rose and BBC Media Action partnered to implement the campaign in the last quarter of 2023. **Copper Rose** supported the development of the creative strategy, including messaging and placement, ZAMMSA was responsible for managing the traffic/responses to the campaign via the Youth Wyze platform, **BBC Media Action** provided technical assistance to SAT on “boosting” their promotions on social media, and **FHI 360** provided guidance on

using the QuickStart Toolkit for campaign planning and implementation, and on leveraging paid advertisements for condom promotion. The **Local Steering Group** consisted of these partners, and others including NAC who collaborated via frequent touch points to ensure existing messages and platforms were leveraged where possible, that local ownership was enhanced, and that opportunities for joint learning were prioritized.

Audience insights and an understanding of the context were gathered through online surveys, a situation analysis, and focus groups with AYP. Condom promotion was initiated via the existing SAT-owned [YouthWyze](#) platform. **Paid condom advertisements** were run on Facebook and Instagram. Headlines were developed by adapting pre-vetted messages provided by NAC for social media and in response to insights on AYP attitudes and behaviors. For example, the tagline “Let’s talk about it!” was developed in part because 36% of survey respondents thought it was hard to bring up the issue of using condoms with their sexual partners. Similarly, the headline “No glove, no love”, was used in part because ~40% of survey respondents were motivated by the fact that friends would think poorly of them if they did not use a condom. Youth Wyze also has a feature that allowed clients to engage with **peer educators** and service providers via Facebook messenger or WhatsApp chats for education on condom use, referrals and follow up services. Peer educators were also able to refer clients to Copper Rose/SAT condom distribution sites such as hospitals, pharmacies, retail stores, dispensers, SAT offices, and peer outreach workers.

Government engagement and leadership was critical. The campaign built on NAC-approved condom messages developed under the Zambia Ending AIDS (ZEA) campaign, partnered with Zambia Medicines and Medical Supplies Agency (ZAMMSA) to ensure condoms were available at the distribution points, and linked campaign data to the National AIDS Council Management Information System (NACMIS) for tracking condom demand generation and distribution interventions across the country.



¹⁰ [Virtual Interventions Situational Analysis \(VISA\)](#), FHI 360

Results

Over the 4-week period, about 1.9 million social media users were reached with campaign materials promoting awareness and accessibility of condoms via Facebook and Instagram ads; of these 71% were AYP 18–34 years, and 50% of these AYP were female. A total of about 74,000 social media users initiated a WhatsApp or FB messenger chat with a peer educator to learn more; of these, 61% were AYP 18–34 years, and 46% of these AYP were female. The campaign was also effective at supporting “learners” like D-Tree who were aiming to increase their capacity to design and implement social media campaigns.

Emerging Lessons

- **Partnership with the MOH is critical for sustainability:** Integrating with the national program ensured the campaign incorporated existing priorities and aligned with national policies, guidelines, and messages. In Zambia, the MOH’s role as a **convening and oversight authority** was critical in facilitating joint partner action for cost-effective programming and scale. MOH engagement and ownership of efforts to demonstrate the effectiveness of virtual demand creation will likely also facilitate increased allocation of resources towards these efforts.
- **Steering groups build buy-in:** In Zambia, engaging implementers, learners and advisors in campaign design and execution was important to secure buy-in from key leaders, influencers, and gatekeepers. This **facilitated ownership of the campaign**, input from AYP, faster approval of messaging, and the creation of champions to promote virtual demand creation. Regional advisory support (e.g., FHI 360, UNFPA, UNAIDS etc.) across the Condom SI countries was also critical to ensure cross-country collaboration and learning, so Zambia could adopt strategies that were working elsewhere.
- **Planning to integrate last mile distribution is key:** Integration of last mile distribution requires thoughtful planning to ensure steady supply at promoted distribution sites. In Zambia, the campaign partnered with ZAMMSA to ensure condom supply at key distribution points. However, time constraints meant that partners were not able to optimize all avenues for condom distribution at the last mile (e.g., there was an app available for online condom orders and delivery/pick-up, but it was not promoted in the campaign materials). While there was an intention to facilitate increased condom uptake at the last mile, the campaign also did not track condom uptake at specific distribution sites as a result of the campaign.

- **Social media requires specialization:** In Zambia, graphic designers and content creators were essential to develop the nuanced content required for social media. The tone and length of headlines and grabbers spoke to AYP, was in line with the sociocultural norms, beliefs, and trends, and were easily recalled to track campaign outcomes. The creative agency was also able to ensure that the implementing partners were abreast of privacy guidelines to protect users in an environment where the algorithms and ad policies of social media platforms are constantly evolving.

Tips for Effective Implementation

- **Use a programming guide to support structured campaign planning:** In Zambia, it was effective to adopt a structured approach to campaign planning guided by the QuickStart Toolkit. This was developed by FHI 360 to support the design and implementation of effective social media campaigns, building off a strong understanding of target audiences and cultural contexts. The guide proved to be useful for campaign planning, particularly because it mapped out how to link findings from the learning phase to **thoughtfully design the campaign with the right tone, messaging, and connection with AYP to be effective.**
- **Build on existing content and platforms:** Having a virtual presence is key to lending legitimacy to a campaign—the sentiment *“are you even real if you are not online?”* is true, especially among AYP. In Zambia, social media proved to be a cost-effective way to reach new AYP, because implementers were able to bring existing and effective, trusted campaigns online, using an existing platform. They built on pre-vetted messages by NAC and used the existing Youth Wyze platform to ensure a resource conscious, seamless extension of reach to new AYP, recognizing that those who don’t use social media still need to be reached via other channels.
- **Use human centred approaches to develop relatable content:** In Zambia, the campaign benefited from involvement of community, including AYP, from the beginning to test materials and co-create via tools like the online survey, VISA, Local Steering Group, and focus groups. This ensured that communication strategies and messages resonated with AYP, especially since they are typically more candid and looking for genuine, humorous, and relatable messages to be motivated to change behavior.

- **Consider virtual campaigns even in environments with lower connectivity:** In Zambia, only 22% of the population are internet users, 84% are mobile users, and 13.5% are Facebook users.¹¹ The campaign showed that even in countries with lower internet connectivity, social media use can be good places for successful virtual campaigns. A lot of marketers avoid investments in virtual channels in these countries due to perceived low reach. However, the flipside is that this often makes it less competitive and a powerful way to reach existing engaged social media users, with appropriate targeting where other companies are not advertising as much.

What's Next

Implementing partners in Zambia will continue to document detailed best practices and lessons learned from their virtual campaigns to inform decision-making around further investments in social media campaigns for condom promotion in Zambia. In addition, more research, experience, and structured guidance is now needed on how to successfully encourage condom use among AYP audiences in SSA using virtual marketing strategies. Tools such as the QuickStart Toolkit will also be critical to providing standardized guidance for expansion and roll-out of similar campaigns in Zambia and across other countries in SSA.



Tools and Resources

- [QuickStart Toolkit](#) to Design Social Media Campaigns that Promote Condom Use, FHI 360
- [Virtual Interventions Situational Analysis \(VISA\)](#), FHI 360

Suggested Citations

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¹¹ [Virtual Interventions Situational Analysis \(VISA\)](#), FHI 360



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