

Community influencers on the frontline of the fight against HIV in Vietnam

Harnessing the power of social media to reach at-risk populations

MY FUTURE. MY CHOICE.

“My Future. My Choice.” This is the message that has been embraced by men who have sex with men (MSM) and transgender women (TGW) leaders on the frontline of the fight against HIV in Vietnam. The “My Future. My Choice.” campaign was launched in 2015 to channel the connectivity and leadership of MSM and TGW communities to promote HIV prevention and routine testing as an integral component of living a healthy life.

The campaign is part of the PATH-led Healthy Markets initiative, funded by the U.S. President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) through the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). The project is leveraging market solutions to promote more sustainable approaches for the delivery of HIV-related goods and services in Vietnam, in collaboration with public- and private-sector partners and community-based organizations.

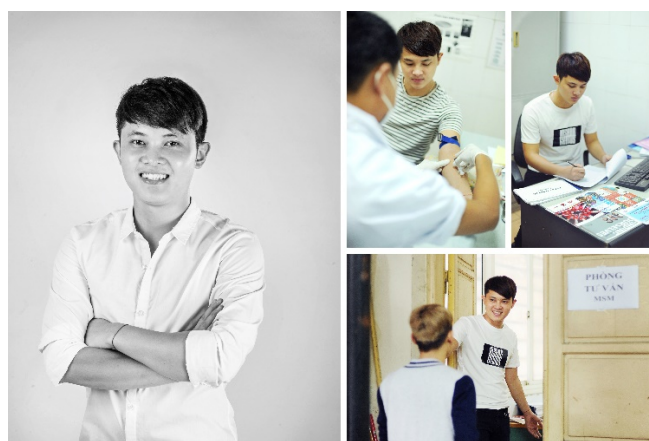
COLLABORATING WITH COMMUNITY INFLUENCERS

MSM and TGW are at high risk of acquiring HIV in Vietnam, with prevalence among populations in urban centers as high as 16 percent.¹ This new-generation campaign seeks to normalize and increase lifesaving condom use and HIV testing through change driven by the community itself.

The secret to the campaign’s success is the inspiring exemplars supporting it—leading influential figures in the community who are sharing their personal stories of overcoming adversity to illustrate the importance of safe sex and regular HIV testing.

“We are working to create a healthy playground, providing knowledge on HIV prevention while generating meaningful communication that leaves a strong impression in the community.”

Nguyễn Anh Phong, a campaign exemplar



Đoàn Thanh Tùng, an MSM community leader and “My future. My choice.” exemplar promoting safe sex and HIV testing. Photo: PATH.

HARNESSING THE POWER OF SOCIAL MEDIA

The campaign’s platform is the thriving online community of “Xóm Cầu Vồng” (Rainbow Village), a Facebook page operating as an open and safe space for MSM and TGW to engage in frank discussions about their life aspirations, with a focus on the importance of safer sex and HIV testing. The response to the campaign and exemplars has been tremendous, with the page growing a network of more than 137,000 followers by September 2016.

“Xóm Cầu Vồng is not just about a safe sex campaign, it’s an online world. It attracts many young MSM and TGW, even those who have not yet ‘come out.’ The real-life stories encourage MSM and TGW to connect and support each other. Here, the community is leading the change.” Đoàn Thanh Tùng, a campaign exemplar

The page continues to attract new followers with its dynamic content on sexual health, safe sex, and HIV testing. The content is interactive, engaging followers in discussions on real-life dilemmas and experiences using HIV products and services.



Xóm Cầu Vồng recently celebrated reaching 100,000 followers. The Facebook page aims to promote and normalize HIV testing through aspirational messaging. PATH.

Now that the campaign and its channels are firmly established, PATH is leveraging its reach to promote community-based HIV testing. MSM-TGW followers are now able to contact Online Change Agents via the Xóm Cầu Vồng page. The agents are trained to provide HIV counseling as well as referrals to HIV testing or direct lay/peer-provided HIV testing services (at a time and location convenient to the client). This model is dramatically increasing rates of HIV testing among the MSM-TGW community of Vietnam.

BUILDING A SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY RESPONSE TO HIV

“My Future. My Choice.” and Xóm Cầu Vồng were publically launched in 2015 at an event in Ho Chi Minh City. The launch attracted more than 200 MSM, TGW, media representatives, and celebrity ambassadors.



Props and a festive atmosphere led to plenty of photo opportunities at the launch of “My Future, My Choice.” Photo: PATH/Matthew Dakin.

Several local companies endorse and sponsor the campaign, seeking collaboration with exemplars and offering prize donations for online contests. In 2016, MTV Vietnam collaborated with PATH on a linked television series, “MTV I Live.” The program is based on the exemplar pillar of “My Future. My Choice.”—profiling influential TGW and MSM exemplars, with a focus on inspiring and promoting safe sex and HIV testing. The six episodes aired from June to August, and trended heavily on Vietnamese social media, including the Xóm Cầu Vồng Facebook page. A second season of MTV I Live is now in development.

PATH continues to support the growing network of exemplars to build a sustainable community response to HIV, mentoring them in innovative behavior-change and demand-generation skills.

Learn more: For more information about “My Future. My Choice.” or Xóm Cầu Vồng, contact the Healthy Markets team at HM@path.org.

Reference

1. National Committee for Prevention and Control of AIDS, Drugs and Prostitution (NCADP). *Viet Nam AIDS Response Progress Report, 2014*. Hanoi, Vietnam: NCADP; 2014.



HEALTHY MARKETS



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PATH is the leader in global health innovation. An international nonprofit organization, we save lives and improve health, especially among women and children. We accelerate innovation across five platforms—vaccines, drugs, diagnostics, devices, and system and service innovations—that harness our entrepreneurial insight, scientific and public health expertise, and passion for health equity. By mobilizing partners around the world, we take innovation to scale, working alongside countries primarily in Africa and Asia to tackle their greatest health needs. Together, we deliver measurable results that disrupt the cycle of poor health. Learn more at www.path.org.

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