

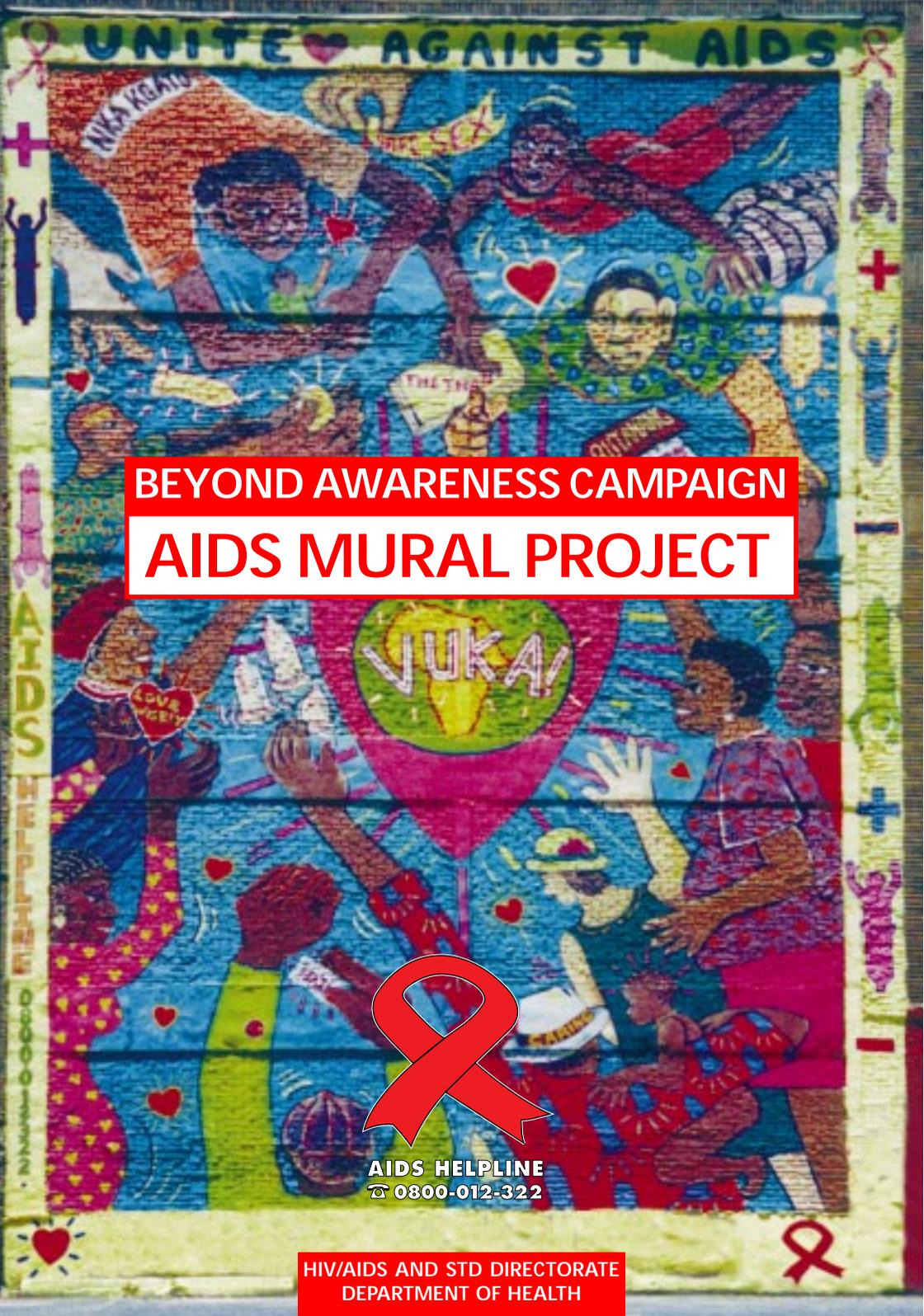
UNITE AGAINST AIDS

BEYOND AWARENESS CAMPAIGN  
AIDS MURAL PROJECT



AIDS HELPLINE  
☎ 0800-012-322

HIV/AIDS AND STD DIRECTORATE  
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH



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0800-012-322

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## The Beyond Awareness Campaign

The Beyond Awareness Campaign is a project of the HIV/AIDS and STD Directorate of the national Department of Health and is overseen by the National HIV/AIDS Communications Forum (NCF). It includes a range of communication activities that promote and support action around HIV/AIDS. The campaign runs from November 1998 to October 2000.

Activities include:

- ❑ **Research** into understanding the epidemic and the impact of HIV/AIDS communication during the campaign period.
- ❑ **Advertising** on radio, television, print and outdoor media focusing on promoting the toll-free AIDS Helpline (0800-012-322), the red ribbon, condoms and rights related to gender issues.
- ❑ **AIDS Action Projects** to promote and support a shift from awareness to social mobilisation around HIV/AIDS. Projects include:
  - **An AIDS Action Office**, that has items such as multilingual leaflets, posters, stickers information booklets, and red ribbon badges which are available free on request (contact details at the back of this booklet).
  - **An AIDS Memorial Quilt** made up of cloth panels made by

friends, lovers and family members in memory of people who have died of AIDS.

- **A Tertiary Institution Campaign** which involves working with youth at universities, colleges and technikons by promoting action on campuses and in surrounding communities. Activities include participation by members of the National Association of People living with HIV/AIDS (NAPWA).
- **An AIDS Mural Project** that promotes mural painting in conjunction with tertiary institutions and in surrounding communities.
- **A Radio Training Project** that trains community and other radio producers in developing HIV/AIDS programming.
- **A Mediaworkers Project**, that works with journalists, photographers and broadcast producers to promote wider coverage of HIV/AIDS issues. See [www.lifanet.co.za](http://www.lifanet.co.za) for further information
- **A Care and Support Project** that works with NAPWA to promote information around treatment and care issues.



***Public art can offer resolutions and awareness of human concerns, and place art in its true context... life itself.***

The Beyond Awareness Campaign will be funding and promoting mural projects with students at tertiary institutions.

Students will be trained in mural painting, and murals will be developed on and around campuses.

This booklet gives an overview of the power and potential of AIDS murals, as well as providing guidelines for mural painting.

### **AIDS Murals in South Africa**

Murals are a powerful public medium that use artistic interpretations to convey information. They add colour to often drab urban environments

and bring art to street level. Murals are open to many different interpretations and can stimulate debate around social issues.

In 1995, the Department of Health commissioned a *seven-city mural project* to raise awareness around AIDS.

The use of murals to convey HIV/AIDS messages is extremely effective. The *seven-city mural project* chose high density urban areas close to taxi ranks and train stations in various cities and townships. The murals were highly visible to pedestrians and road users and served as a powerful daily reminder of AIDS issues.

Each mural was strikingly original and different, reflecting the individual interpretations of the artists and their communities.

An interactive approach to painting the murals allowed the general public to become involved in shaping their content.

Educational activities including pamphlet and condom distribution took place while the murals were being painted.

### Approaches to participatory mural development

The core idea behind the development of the *seven-city mural project* was the emphasis given to participatory approaches that included local artists. This ensured that each mural was unique, and reflected the language,

imagery and consciousness of each geographic area. Sensitivity to the community where the mural is painted is important. Consultation, collaboration and a sense of ownership can ensure the success of the mural.

### Funding and budgets

Painting murals can be a costly exercise and it is important to review costs before starting. Expenses include paint, equipment such as buckets and brushes. High murals require ladders and scaffolding, and in some cases, payment may have to be made for renting the site.

Artists/participants may also need to be paid, and refreshments and meals should be provided during the process.

Costs of murals can range from R2 500 for a small scale “volunteer” project, to R100 000 for an elaborate, large scale project.

### Site location and permission

Choosing the right site involves careful research,



*Different concepts can be brought together within a single mural.*

with an emphasis on public visibility, as well as access by the artists.

The surface of the wall should also be considered. Rough surfaces absorb more paint, and are difficult for detailed art. Walls that are damp, or that have rough, poorly finished surfaces, can shorten the lifespan of the mural.

Murals can be sited on the sides of buildings, along perimeter walls, on shops and even private houses.

Permission must be obtained from the relevant authorities or owners. This may include working through municipalities, government departments or private owners. In some cases traffic regulations may forbid siting of murals near intersections or along roadways.

## Choosing the group

Working with experienced artists allows for strong, aesthetically pleasing images. However, artists should have an interest in public art and must be committed to group work.

Murals can however be painted by inexperienced “artists” or children, provided that the process is overseen by an artist/facilitator.

Depending on the “artists” and the duration and scale of the project, consideration can be given to payment of participants.

It is preferable to use local artists, and also to ensure that the group is not too large. The *seven-city* project used groups of 5 to 8 artists.

## Workshops

Workshop sessions can be divided into two focus areas:

- educational sessions with AIDS workers to ensure correct and appropriate messages and images;
- collaborative planning around themes, images and styles of the mural. This can include sketching ideas to come up with an overall design.

In some cases designs may need to be submitted for approval, and it is useful to review concepts with people working in the HIV/AIDS field. Designs developed during this phase are often modified during painting.

It is extremely important to review content carefully and it is useful to work to certain principles – for example, avoiding fear-based messages, or ensuring that helpline numbers and logos are included on each mural.

## Materials and equipment

Check the site for availability of running water as this is necessary for mixing and clean up. If a tap is not available, 25 litre containers can be sourced fairly cheaply.



*Refreshments should be provided during painting.*

The ideal paint for murals is good quality exterior acrylic PVA. Oil-based paints tend to be impractical because they take a long time to dry, and they are messier than PVA.

Any colour can be mixed from a combination of red, yellow, blue, black and white paint. Exact colours can also be purchased.

Assorted sizes of brush are needed, ranging from narrow hard brushes for fine detail and line work, to larger brushes and rollers for flat colour areas.

Cans and jars are ideal for holding and mixing paint. Sealable buckets should also be available for mixing large quantities, and for keeping paint overnight.

## **The painting process**

Painting a mural is hard physical work, so it is important to have a

cooler box of cold drinks and water, as well as other refreshments and meals on hand.

A copy of the pre-planned design should always be on hand, and consultation emphasised, before any changes are made.

The entire design should be sketched onto the wall with chalk or thin brushes at the outset.

Care of paint and equipment should be emphasised – especially keeping the brushes washed, and preventing paint in containers from drying in the sun.

Artists should be encouraged to work on different sections of the mural, rather than becoming focused on a particular section. This allows the mural to work as a whole, rather than a collection of individual styles.

As far as possible, a sense of working together as a group should be instilled. It is useful to spend time during the process, stepping back and reviewing progress and ideas together.

Always consider the timing. Ideally, the mural should be completed within the planned timeframe, and within budget. It is difficult to finish off a mural at a later stage.

## Documentation

Wherever possible try to record the process with photographs, and even notes of your experiences.

Taking “before” and “after” pictures provide for a sense of achievement, and are useful for promoting new projects. Consider the lighting when taking the photographs. The wall may be in shadow at certain times of the day

and it is better to take photographs when there is a strong even lighting across the mural area.

A written report on the process is useful for funders/promoters and your own records.

It is also important to promote the project to local media. AIDS murals make colourful photo-stories, and can be discussed and promoted on radio and television.



*Murals have the power to transform at community level. This mural in Orange Farm was painted by members of the Orange Farm Anti-AIDS Club at the home of the club co-ordinator. The process took a single day to complete, and the house has become an important landmark for AIDS action in the local community.*



## East London • Eastern Cape

This mural was painted on the side of the Nestlé factory in the city centre and was two stories high and 50 metres long. The mural used a combination of styles including informal line figures. The project was opened by the mayor of East London and school children from many schools attended the festivities.

The images on the mural were developed through workshops with artists from the region. During production ideas that had been discussed were further developed and included the painting of condom images on abstract silhouetted figures.

This issue was debated by the artists and public opinion reviewed and it was decided to keep the images, as the mural was intended to focus on youth, and in particular, to

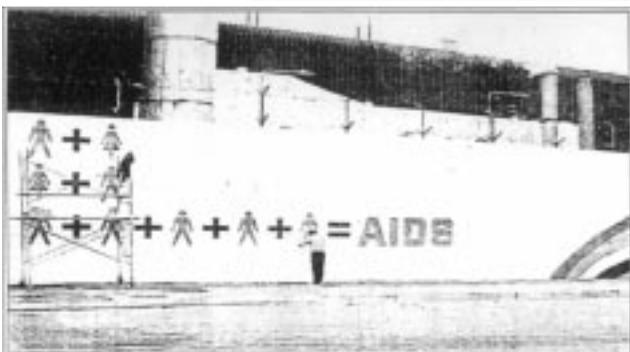
promote and normalise condom use.

Although the mural as a whole was well received by the public, a vocal minority objected to the “explicit” condom imagery.

This debate was carried out in the media, and many people in the community visited the mural to get first-hand impressions of the work.

After some months, as a compromise, the artists painted hearts over the offending images. The mural remained in place for a year, and following representations by the group who objected to the mural, permission was granted to replace the image. The “alternative” mural is depicted in the newspaper article on the bottom right. It clearly shows differences in aesthetic “style” and perceptions of how HIV/AIDS educational messages should be promoted.





**INOFFENSIVE:** A new Aids awareness mural replaces the previous colourful work which offended some East Londoners for being 'pornographic'.

## New EL Aids mural on view

**By Graham Mackinn.**

**EAST LONDON** — A new Aids awareness mural has been painted on the South Quay wall in St John's Road, projecting a simple message that having multiple sexual partners leads to the deadly disease.

"A small committee has been struck to oversee the new mural which will be cleaned off at the end of April when our contract with Nestlé expires," the regional co-ordinator of the East London Aids Training Centre, Ms Rose Ingher, said.

The Assembly of God Church, which is represented in the small committee, said they supported the new mural because they believed in the divine authority of the Bible which propagates that the correct sexual relationship is that which takes place between a husband and a wife.

"All other sexual relationships are contrary to God's word and are therefore sinful," said Pastor Dennis Salomon.

The abstract depiction of erect con-

dominated posters on the previous colourful Aids Awareness mural was criticised as being offensive and pornographic.

Although minor alterations were made to the previous mural, protests from upper East Londoners continued and vandals painted over parts of it with white paint.

The Aids awareness campaign comes at a time when East London is reportedly recording about 200 new HIV infections monthly, Ms Ingher said.

## Durban • KwaZulu-Natal

The Durban AIDS mural was painted in Alice Street which joins the bus rank and market area to the city.

It is over 150 metres long and depicts a range of images that include text in English and Zulu.

It provides an excellent example of the way murals can change the environment. In this case large areas of drab grey concrete were transformed into colourful images with affirmative messages. The mural contributed to the overall transformation of the area with litter being removed by the municipality, and local hawkers taking greater care of the cleanliness of their sites.



## Johannesburg • Gauteng

The Johannesburg mural was painted on the side of the government Customs and Excise building at the corner of Sauer and Market streets in the city centre. It is six stories high and half a city block wide.

The centrepiece of the mural is a large pink heart with the word “Vuka” which means “wake up” in Zulu. The heart is surrounded by floating figures reaching towards it.

The artists decided to develop a single striking image that can be viewed from a long distance away and can easily be seen by approaching traffic.

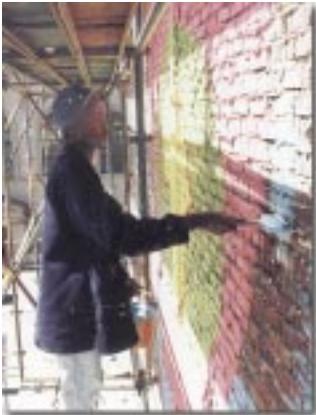
The nearby library gardens are frequented by thousands of people, particularly at lunchtimes.

Because of the prominent position of the mural, it generated wide press coverage, allowing for widespread



awareness of AIDS issues.

All the murals in the *seven-city* project utilised space that was provided free by various authorities. In the case of the Johannesburg mural, permission was provided by the Department of Public Works.



## Guguletu • Western Cape

The Guguletu mural was painted on a 70 metre long wall opposite the main taxi rank and shopping centre, and with Table Mountain as a backdrop.

It provides a unified vision of the response to AIDS with a series of characters with hands interlinked.

Initial workshops with artists showed a clear need to explore issues of AIDS imagery and to move beyond fear-oriented images of graves and figures of death, to images of action, support and hope.



## Pretoria • Gauteng

This mural was painted at Belle Ombre Station in Marabastad, central Pretoria.

It covers some 100 metres of the main walkway from the station and taxi rank. The mural depicts images of caring and non-discrimination. Slogans incorporate locally appropriate languages – English, Afrikaans, Sesotho and Sepedi.

The area was desperate for renewal, so the mural was well received. Street hawkers also became involved in condom distribution.



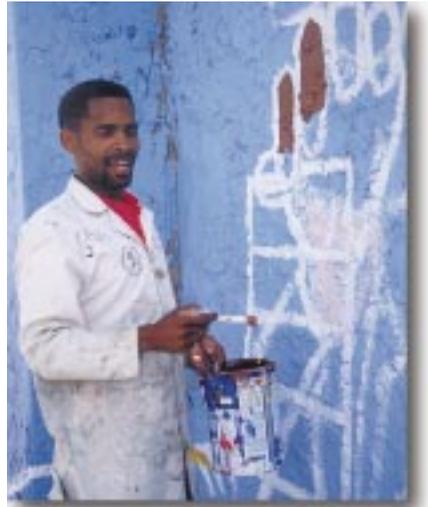
## Port Elizabeth • Eastern Cape

This mural was painted on the side of Bristow House in the bay area of the city. The building had previously gained notoriety during the apartheid era when it housed security police offices.

It now houses the AIDS Information and Training Centre and is opposite one of the main taxi ranks. The mural is two stories high and 70 metres wide.

This mural drew on the prominence of political activism in the region and strongly promoted the notion of AIDS as the “new struggle” and incorporated anti-apartheid “struggle imagery”.

The local artists had previously worked together and this allowed for easy conceptualisation of the mural theme and images, and the mural was painted in a relatively short time.



## Bloemfontein • Free State

This mural was painted on the wall of the Mongaung Sports Club on the main road in the Batho township.

The wall is 120 metres long and depicts a series of circular motifs with AIDS

messages in local languages.

Staff from the local clinic took the initiative to distribute condoms and leaflets, and answer questions from the public during the process.



## **Beyond Awareness Campaign • AIDS Mural Project**

This booklet provides information on mural painting with a focus on experiences and images from the 1995/96 *seven-city mural project*, and is useful to anyone interested in developing an AIDS mural. The Beyond Awareness Campaign focusses on developing murals at and around South African Tertiary institutions.

For more information on the Mural Project contact Professor Lynn Dalrymple at:

Tel: (0351) 939-11 ext 2185

Cell: (083) 653-2053

Fax: (0351) 929-140

e-mail: [lynndal@iafrica.com](mailto:lynndal@iafrica.com)

To obtain HIV/AIDS educational materials contact the Beyond Awareness Campaign Action Office at:

The Media Mill, The Annex  
7 Quince Road, Auckland Park  
Johannesburg 2006

Tel: (011) 482-6737

Fax: (011) 482-2099

e-mail: [wba@icon.co.za](mailto:wba@icon.co.za)