Radio Serial Drama

SSDI-Communication collaborated with the Ministry of Health, Malawian radio producers and broadcasters, representatives from NGOs, and representatives from SSDI-Systems and SSDI-Services to design the drama.

The team made an effort to develop a drama that was firmly grounded in the realities of Malawian life. To achieve this, the design team developed a map of life events that occur during an average lifespan in Malawi, created a map of the fictional village in which the drama was to take place that mirrored a typical village in Malawi, and developed a 12-month calendar of events that normally take place in Malawi in any given year. These tools acted as a rich, detailed, and realistic background onto which the stories could be painted, allowing the program to better reflect the daily realities of Malawian life.

The Moyo ndi Mpamba radio serial drama was a weekly interactive program designed to inspire behavior change on priority health issues among adolescents and adult Malawians through radio, a trusted and easily accessible format. The program used an engaging drama as the key vehicle to address problems around malaria, child survival (including diarrhea and other illnesses), safe motherhood, reproductive health, family planning, HIV and AIDS, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), and nutrition.

In collaboration with its partners, SSDI-Communication designed the program to be interactive and entertaining. The program facilitated an interactive dialogue with listeners on health and wellbeing through compelling drama, in alignment with the Moyo Ndi Mpamba, Usamalireni (Life Is Precious, Take Care Of It) campaign. The program’s target audiences included adolescents (10-19 year olds), young married couples, parents of young children (0-5 year olds) and parents of older children (6-9 year olds).

Background

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The Drama Program

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The Plot

The drama had three main plotlines:

- A young married couple, Ritchie and Nasilina, struggle as Richi maintains his relationship with his old girlfriend Esmie.
- Ndaziona, a 16 year old girl, has a terrible secret that she is hiding from her mother and two brothers.
- Mrs. Nabetha Gama, a very religious woman married to a very traditional man, strongly believes in traditional healers and superstitions.
Listener Engagement

The program encouraged interaction with listeners in a variety of ways. Questions were incorporated into each program, and listeners were encouraged to send responses via SMS. Additionally, listeners were asked to send SMS that detailed the impact of the program on their lives. The program also established a Facebook page where interactive content was posted regularly.

The drama was also backed by other strategies and support materials, and involved collaboration with community groups and organizations, in order to reinforce the messages of the radio program.

Achievements

- Produced and aired 52 serial drama episodes broadcast on 14 radio stations (two national stations and 12 community radio stations) across the country. The program was essentially on air almost every day for a full year.
- Over 13,300 SMS received from listeners, 12.3% of which acknowledged the impact of the drama on their lives.
- The programs’ Facebook page received over 5,000 followers during the 52 weeks of broadcasting.

“Moyo ndi Mpamba radio drama strengthened our love. Through Ritchie and Nasilina (a couple in the drama) we learnt that it is important to visit the health center as a couple… and we did exactly that. Through the life of Gama (a character in the drama) we understood bad effects of not using modern contraceptives. We discussed as a couple and chose to use implant,” Kamwenje’s of Lilongwe.