

## **The Voices Behind *Porque Sí* and *Love Exchange*: Our Community Participatory Video Development Process**

Too often, educational materials—including videos—are based on developers' assumptions about what information should be provided as well as how the product should look. By contrast, the two videos included in the VOICES/VOCES package were shaped by an extensive community participatory process. Here we briefly describe this process to help you and others who view *Porque Sí* and *Love Exchange* understand why the two videos may “look” and “feel” different—but still provide the same key HIV prevention messages.

*Porque Sí*, for Latino audiences, was the first video developed by the EDC team. We took multiple steps to assure that the video incorporates key messages using a theme and dramatic stories that are culturally relevant for both men and women. These included:

- Establishing a community advisory board, with representatives that included local service providers, church and community leaders;
- Conducting extensive formative research, including focus groups with about 200 men and women who were drawn from the target audience of STD clinic patients;
- Obtaining input from advisors and community members on all key aspects of the video, including the thematic approach, storylines, character development, and scripting of verbal and nonverbal communication and negotiations about sexual safety and condom use;
- Hiring, through a competitive process, an experienced filmmaker from the community to guide overall production;
- Scheduling auditions for actors, both professionals and community members, and collaborating with the community advisors on casting decisions;
- Holding an “open rehearsal,” in which community advisors and others, provided input to the director and actors, and made scenes and dialogue more realistic and engaging;
- Sharing “rough cuts” of the video with community advisors, making editing changes (including to music and other background material) and finalizing the video.

The subsequent development of *Love Exchange*, for African American audiences, followed a similar participatory process. Again, steps included the formation of a community advisory board to guide the process; getting input from focus groups on themes, storylines and scripts; collaborative casting of actors; open rehearsal; and incorporating editing suggestions and approvals for the final product.

However, when developing *Love Exchange*, we had the added advantage of being able to show our new group of advisors and community members *Porque Sí*. Therefore, while we were testing different approaches to the overall theme, storylines, characters and scripts

during meetings and groups, we were also able to ask: *What changes would make this type of video speak to your community?*

In sum, all aspects of the videos were discussed multiple times with community members. For example, *Porque Si* incorporates the theme: *Protect Your Family*. It models same gender communication about condom use (e.g., between sisters). It also avoids direct confrontations between male and female sexual partners, showing instead more subtle, even non-verbal, ways that condom use can be negotiated. By contrast, based on community input, *Love Exchange* is more sexually explicit. "It needs to be hotter" to have an impact, community members told us. Using a culturally familiar radio-talk show format, the video reflects the theme: *Save Our Community*. A scene that was especially important to community members, for instance, was the one that portrays a man admitting making a mistake and telling his partner that he is committed to maintaining a long-term relationship. In turn, his female partner shows that she, too, is invested in him.

When you watch the two videos, you will thus see much is different, including the ways that men and women are shown talking and interacting with one another. But you will also hear some things that are the same: *Protect Yourself, Protect Your Partner, Use Condoms*. These are the messages underlie the discussions and skill building that will occur in your VOICES/VOCES groups.

Citation:

O'Donnell, L., San Doval, A., Vornfett, R., DeJong, W. (1994). Reducing AIDS and other STDs among inner-city Hispanics: The use of qualitative research in the development of video-based patient education. *AIDS education and prevention*, 6(2): 140-153.