

Dear friends and colleagues,

Thank you for your interest in this online discussion Forum, entitled: “Strategic Communication for Behaviour Change Globally: The Power of the Media”.

My name is Srdjan, and I will be your moderator over the next 6 weeks. I view my job as that of a host, whose responsibility is to facilitate a productive exchange amongst a large group of amazing people. Should you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me at [srdjan.stakic@yale.edu](mailto:srdjan.stakic@yale.edu)

Firstly, I must thank you – participants – for signing up for this Forum. The key to its success is in everyone’s comments, examples from experiences and questions and challenges to points made by our facilitators. Thus, I invite you to participate actively.

Secondly, I thank the sponsors and organizers of the Forum, including the Adolescent and Youth Team of the Division for Arab States, Europe and Central Asia of UNFPA, headed by Dr. Aleksandar Sasha Bodirosa. Ms. Ann Pettigrew of UNFPA has put hours preparing this Forum and my gratitude goes to her. In addition, I thank everyone with the Information and Knowledge for Optimal Health Project at Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. It is clear that their skill at organizing these types of fora is unique globally.

Thirdly, allow me to go over a few simple ground rules that we should keep in mind over the upcoming weeks in order to facilitate a fruitful discussion (any additional suggestions are welcome):

- \* The working language of the Forum is English. Thus, please send your comments or questions in English, however, do not worry too much about grammar or style – as long as you are clear.
- \* Please introduce yourselves briefly when sending any and all comments (information such as country and place of work/study, area of interest, age, etc. may be of interest to others).
- \* Please keep your comments brief and to the point (unlike this email).
- \* Please use as many examples from your personal and professional experiences, or from the published literature, to support your points.
- \* Please be respectful to various professional and cultural standpoints.

Fourthly, let me present to you how the forum will operate in practice. Currently, we have over 200 participants from over 20 countries around the world, with various professional and personal backgrounds. Thus, we will follow this pre-tested Forum model to facilitate discussion:

- \* Each day will be started with a few comments from our facilitators.
- \* Your comments, questions, additions and subtractions to their statements are encouraged as soon as you receive their statements.
- \* Your emails will be compiled by the moderator (that’s me) and summarized in order not to fill your email boxes with numerous emails throughout the day.
- \* Our experts will review the summaries and will respond jointly to your feedback. In addition, they will present additional points for discussion for the following day. Facilitators will post relevant resource materials, such as published articles or short videos online for your review.

In summary, on a daily basis (Monday to Friday), you will receive one or two email messages from the Forum, and you are encouraged to email us back with your feedback as soon as possible – simply reply to the email that is sent to your inbox. All of this will become much clearer as we go along, and by the end of the week 6, all of us will be Forum discussion experts!

Finally, it is a great pleasure, and a humbling experience, to introduce to you to a group of amazing facilitators who have agreed to serve as topical experts over the next few weeks. For their biographies, please click on this link: <http://tinyurl.com/ypjoyu> (this document can also be found on the Library section of the Youth and Media Forum's website).

Our first facilitator is Tim Thomas, the Executive Director of MTV's Staying Alive Campaign. Tim will facilitate week 1 (26 March–01 April) in which we will discuss basics of media use for behaviour change communication, as specific to adolescents and youth.

During week 2 (2-8 April), Vicki Beck, Director of Hollywood, Health and Society project will provide us with a Hollywood insider's view and share a model of working with producers, directors, writers and actors on incorporating health-positive messages into TV shows and films.

Bill Ryerson, Founder and President of the Population Media Center (PMC), along with his PMC colleagues, Kriss Barker, Vice President for International Programs and Katie Elmore, Development and Communications Manager, will lead week 3 (9-15 April), in which we will discuss the power of radio in health promotion and behaviour change.

Week 4 (16-22 April) will be facilitated jointly by Dr. Cydelle Berlin, Executive Director of the NiteStar Program and Colin Dixon, Head of Global Partnerships and Development at Dance4Life. Cydelle and Colin will lead us through practical aspects of using live performances such as acting, singing and dancing as tools of behaviour change communication.

The innovative topic of interactive media, such as video games, will be covered by Amil Husain the Youth Coordinator with the United Nations Millennium Campaign and Todd Murray, the Executive Director / Founder of Hope's Voice and Executive Producer of the documentary Road to Hope (23-29 April).

Finally, I will facilitate week 6 (30 April–4 May), during which we will review all that was covered to that point, highlight additional areas that need further attention, and discuss how to take lessons learned and translate them into practice.

Once more, on behalf of everyone behind this Forum, I thank you – both participants and facilitators alike – for your interest in this Forum, and more importantly for your ongoing dedication and efforts in the field of young people's sexual and reproductive health promotion. I wish us all a fruitful and productive 6-week discussion.

Srdjan Stakic

Forum topics and facilitator biographies: <http://tinyurl.com/ypjoyu>