

Engaging young people on digital discussions about HIV and discrimination: how the initiative #UNAIDSChallenge caused a buzz in Brazil

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Background

The increase in the number of AIDS cases among young people aged 15-29 in the past decade remains a major concern in Brazil. From 2006 to 2015, the AIDS detection rate among men aged 15 to 19 years almost tripled (from 2.4 to 6.7 cases per 100 thousand inhabitants). Among young men aged 20 to 24, the rate more than doubled (from 16 to 33.9 cases per 100 thousand inhabitants), and among those aged 25 to 29, there was an increase of 17.5% (from 41.1 to 48.3 cases of AIDS per 100 thousand inhabitants). Albeit lower among young women rates also went up in the same decade: from 3.6 to 4.1 cases per 100 thousand inhabitants.

In addition, recent indicators from the Brazilian Ministry of Health also show that people living with HIV who are young, are in a more vulnerable position: they present lower adherence to treatment and consequently lower proportion of them achieve viral suppression. The vulnerability of young people increases if they are part of key population. New studies also show that HIV prevalence among gay men and other men who have sex with men is at almost 20 percent in Brazil, whereas among transgender people, HIV prevalence is estimated over 30%.

Young people are the main audience of video content produced for pages on YouTube, Facebook and Instagram. Therefore, in order to reach young people with key messages, UNAIDS Brazil developed the #UNAIDSchallenge, a quizz that aims to:

- 1) mobilize youtubers and digital influencers from different backgrounds and outreach capacity to use their creativity and promote new ways to debate HIV among their followers;
- 2) translate technical and formal language into messages relatable to young audiences;
- 3) provoke reflection on how society and especially young people are debating HIV-related issues on the internet.



Since 2014, UNAIDS has approached several young digital influencers, specially those living with HIV, to offer guidance and voice to their work.

Methods

In December 2017, it encouraged the engagement of digital influencers from diverse audiences to promote in an informal and innovative way, an informed debate on HIV, AIDS, stigma and discrimination, mostly focused on reaching out to young people. For that, a #UNAIDSChallenge box was sent to dozens of digital influencers, containing:

- 15 cards with different questions taken from the internet on topics directly related to HIV/AIDS, sexuality and discrimination;
- 3 tokens allowing the player to 'jump' 3 of those 15 questions in case the player did not know the answer;
- one 'google it' token allowing the player to go find the answer on Google (also to be used if the player did not know or was not sure of the answer);
- and one telephone hook-headset from the 80's to call a specialist and ask for help. UNAIDS suggested two doctors with channels on Youtube, Jairo Bauer and Vinicius Borges (known as Dr. Maravilha), to be the official specialists for the initiative but youngsters were also allowed to call friends, parents, teachers etc;

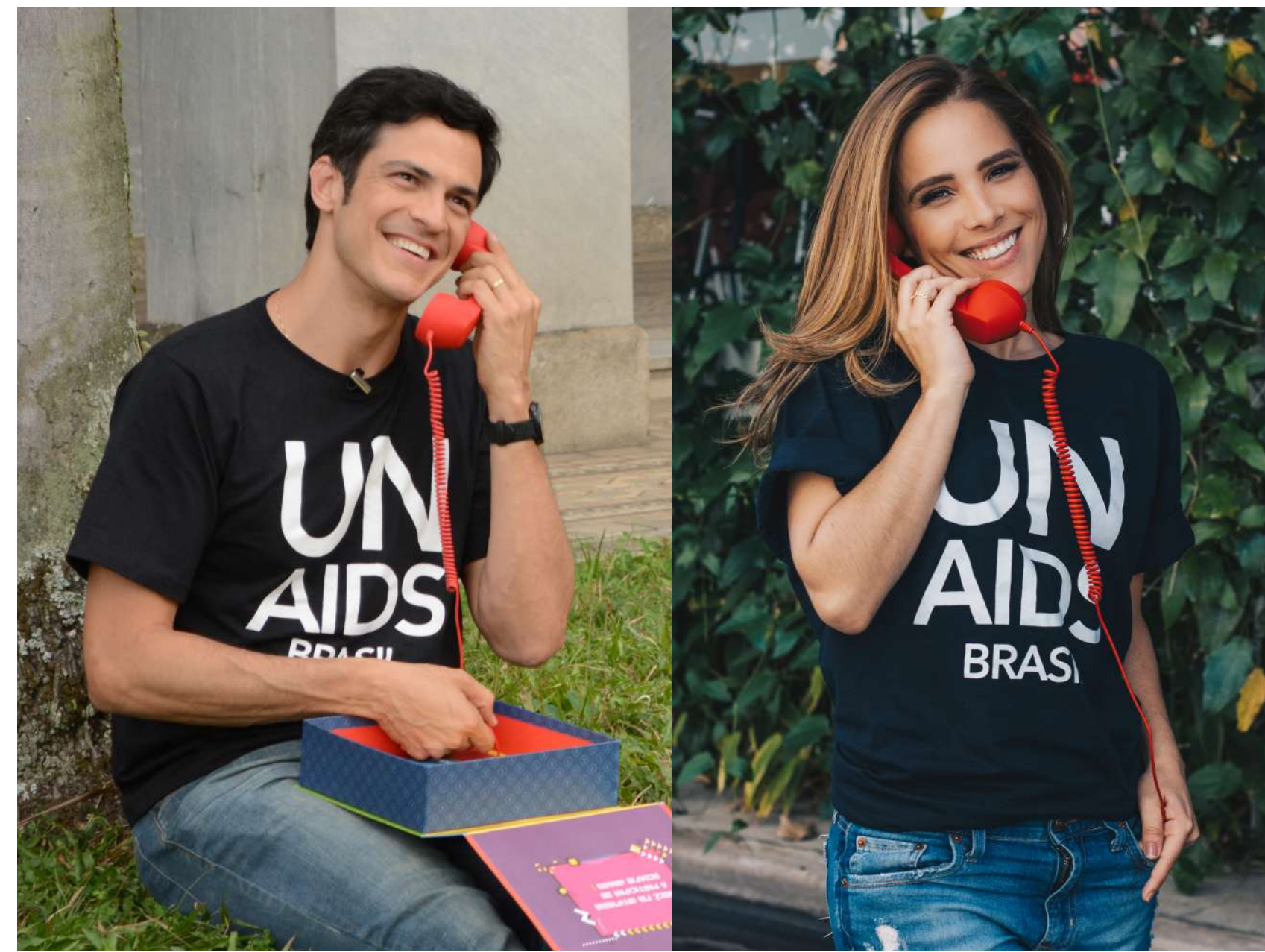


The other ten questions needed to be answered without any kind of help. That is where knowledge, information, and creativity come together to help them face the challenge. The idea behind the tokens was to show that the famous 'Dr Google' doesn't always have the most appropriate answer, or doesn't always know the correct answer.

Results

Altogether, 38 digital influencers accepted the challenge and produced videos for the initiative #UNAIDSChallenge reaching more than 1.3 million organic views, seven thousand positive comments and 200 thousand likes. Together these 38 digital influencers have more than 30 million followers on their main social media platforms.

The videos rekindled an important debate on HIV prevention, testing, treatment as well as discrimination on social media, especially among young people. Mobilization was on a voluntary basis, proving that young influencers are open to this type of dialogue and that their followers welcome this initiative. Social media monitoring tools have shown acceptance and positive evaluation at almost 100%.



UNAIDS Goodwill Ambassadors, actor Mateus Solano (left) and singer Wanessa Camargo (right) helped mobilize online influencers with videos and teasers, and also by accepting the challenge

In this process, it was important to count on the support of UNAIDS Goodwill Ambassadors Mateus Solano and Wanessa Camargo, who also posted materials to promote the #UNAIDSchallenge and provoke digital influencers on their social media channels. They have also accepted the challenge and played the game with other digital influencers.

For the challenge, UNAIDS mobilized almost all Brazilian digital influencers openly living with HIV with channels on Youtube or institutional pages on Facebook, and also connected with key LGBT online content creators to make sure that key populations were addressed and had their voice heard during this initiative. Between February and April 2018, the #UNAIDSChallenge website hosted a poll for 'Favorite #UNAIDSChallenge video'. More than 10 000 people voted and the winner was LubaTV, an openly gay digital influencer with more than 5 million subscribers. Transgender youtuber Leandrinha Du Art, who also lives with disabilities, and HIV positive youtuber, Mateus Emilio, were among the finalists.



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Conclusion

Innovative approaches to break down barriers and promote a discussion about HIV with young people are feasible when tailor-made strategies are built with and for youth. Although intergenerational dialogue on HIV will continue to be a challenge, young people have proven to be open to the debate as long as it happens according to their preferences, languages and perspectives.

The #UNAIDSChallenge box included an instruction booklet, sharing some key ideas on zero discrimination, new terminologies and pieces of advice that would help content creators to avoid spreading the wrong messages or concepts. In addition, some videos were shared on a dedicated microsite and the players were also given the opportunity to access online the complete answers to all the 50 questions online. These initiatives are not without risk. Despite the effort to minimize the risks, the office was aware of the fact that the internet is also a space where hate speech is a practice, and was ready to intervene. To our surprise, the interactions were very constructive and positive.



Several instructive tools were developed, carrying important messages key terminologies and on Zero Discrimination.

Participants found their own way to respond to the challenge, using the language that was more suitable for their followers and demonstrating that every person, including those who are not specialists or know little about HIV, can start a conversation with a friend, in the community, at church, in school, and at home.



One box with condoms was distributed to all partners with a thank you note; this initiative was done in partnership with Hi Technologies and DKT Brazil.



Use the QR code to access the
#UNAIDSChallenge playlist on youtube