

# Leveraging strategic marketing expertise to promote healthcare uptake in South Africa



Project Last Mile's partnership with the National Department of Health to initiate and retain men living with HIV on life-saving treatment and promote routine pick up of antiretrovirals and chronic medications.

## Context

South Africa has one of the world's highest HIV-positive populations, with an estimated 7.4 million people living with HIV. The South African government manages the largest HIV donor-supported program in the world with 4.2 million people on antiretroviral (ARV) treatment. The high numbers of people who require routine access to medicines for HIV and other chronic conditions has led to congested health facilities, overburdened health staff, and challenges in the quality of care. Many men in South Africa, particularly those living with HIV, are dying unnecessarily because, due to structural, economic, historical and social factors, men are often reluctant to take ownership of their health.

## Our response

In 2016, Project Last Mile was invited by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the National Department of Health (NDoH) to explore how to leverage best practices from the private sector to help improve the distribution of chronic medication to millions of patients across South Africa. Project Last Mile has supported the NDoH since 2016 to expand its Central Chronic Medicines Dispensing and Distribution (CCMDD) program to improve the availability of chronic medications, including ARVs.

In 2019, Project Last Mile was invited to launch a new project to leverage The Coca-Cola Company's marketing expertise to redefine the way the public sector recruits and retains patients on life-saving medication. The project specifically targets improving uptake of treatment by men living with HIV. It aims to initiate men who have not previously been on treatment onto ARVs, reintroduce those who may have lapsed in their adherence to a regimen, and retain those already on treatment. Project Last Mile's current strategic marketing work also includes supporting the NDoH to increase the number of stable patients moving out of the public clinic system into the CCMDD network for routine pick up of ARVs and chronic medications.



Global partners:



## Our approach

The strategic marketing project is being done in collaboration with the President's Emergency Plan For AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), United States Agency for International Development (USAID) South Africa, NDoH, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention and the MenStar Coalition, along with engagement with civil society and regional and national support partners. Leveraging the Coca-Cola approach, Project Last Mile has engaged FCB Africa, The Coca-Cola Company's communications agency of record in South Africa, and Olson Zaltman, a leading market research firm recommended through the Coca-Cola network, to develop a communications and media strategy, test the campaign with the target market and design compelling visuals and messages.

The aim of the strategic marketing campaign is to drive demand for treatment services, with an emphasis on the emotional benefits for people living with chronic illnesses and the advantages for the broader healthcare system.

To improve buy-in to healthcare services from men living with HIV, Project Last Mile has worked with its partners to develop a specifically targeted, insights-based brand that speaks directly to men on health and wellbeing generally, and on HIV care and treatment specifically. This is the MINA brand. The brand will be launched and maintained on various consumer media platforms, in clinic interventions and through direct engagement with the target audience. The approach to continually improving the availability of chronic medicines through the CCMDD will focus on the re-branding of the CCMDD. The Dablap Meds brand that has been developed as part of this work aims to appeal to stable chronic patients from different age groups and genders, including people living with HIV who are virally suppressed.

The rollout of the CCMDD initiative has two phases – the first includes rebranding the CCMDD program with the Dablap Meds identity, as well as continuing the current momentum of registering patients. The second phase involves a combination of data analysis and client engagement using a mobile messaging platform. These interactions will help identify specific issues or barriers to engagement and will create registration opportunities over the long term, contributing to sustained program retention.

## Progress and milestones

In the campaign to promote treatment retention among men living with HIV:



As part of the strategic marketing approach, an assessment of the current reality has been done using desk-based and in-clinic research.



The MINA communication strategy has been developed and aims to reconstruct men's relationship with healthcare by cultivating self-actualization and helping them take a deliberate step towards understanding their health and committing to long-term treatment.



Creative communication materials have been developed, including a Men's Real Stories campaign for MINA.



The rollout of the campaign and the monitoring and evaluation of its results will take place throughout the second half of 2020.

For the Dablap Meds campaign to promote the uptake of CCMDD:



An assessment of the current reality using desk-based and in-clinic research has been completed.



A communication strategy has been developed that focuses on motivating the target group to maintain their wellbeing over the long term.



Marketing materials have been developed in line with this approach.



Throughout the last six months of 2020 the campaign will be rolled out and its results monitored and analyzed.

