

Population Media Center Enews

This spring, PMC completed the evaluation of our program in Brazil and we are very excited to share some of the highlights with you.

Brazil is Latin America's most populous country, with a population of 186.8 million. Although its fertility rate has declined significantly in the last 15 years, large families persist in a number of rural and impoverished regions of the country. Additionally, teenage parenthood remains a critical issue. Brazil also has one of the highest rates of HIV infection in South America.

Telenovelas (television dramas) encouraging social and health changes work particularly well in Brazil, where 88 percent of households in Brazil own a color television set. Brazil is also an important country because it is increasingly a source of TV programs worldwide, including all of Spanish-speaking Latin America.

Because of the popularity of the commercially-sponsored serialized dramas of TV Globo, PMC is working in partnership with Comunicarte, a Brazilian NGO, and with TV Globo to provide suggestions and background information on social and health issues that can be interwoven into the serialized dramas. These issues are predominantly focused on reproductive health.

One of the *telenovelas* TV Globo produced and broadcast was a 203-episode telenovela titled *Paginas da Vida* (*Pages of Life*) which completed broadcast on March 2, 2007. PMC/Comunicarte and BEMFAM worked with TV Globo to incorporate social messages into the *telenovela* about family planning and Down Syndrome.

At the conclusion of the program, women were interviewed at reproductive health clinics throughout Brazil to monitor the effects of *Paginas da Vida* on decisions to seek family planning services. The data points to the widespread effects of this popular telenovela.



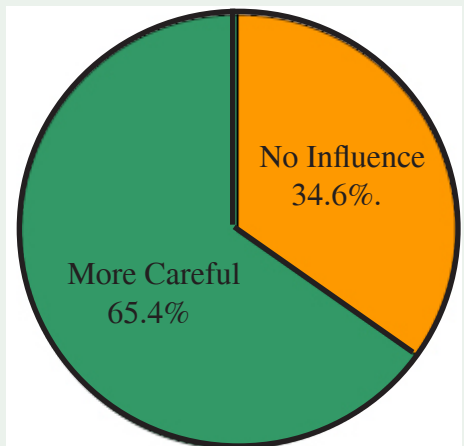
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83.3% of women interviewed watched *Paginas da Vida* at least twice per week.

There was more than a 50% increase in knowledge among women interviewed with regard to various reproductive health issues such as: contraceptive methods, family planning, maternal health, maternity/paternity, unwanted pregnancy, adolescent pregnancy, and HIV/AIDs.

60% of women, age 18-24 said that scenes in *Paginas da Vida* served as a stimulus for them to seek a health service.

The graph below shows the percentage of women interviewed who said that the telenovela influenced whether they would take care to prevent unwanted pregnancy.



Additionally, the issue of Down Syndrome was especially important to include in *Paginas da Vida* because it is rarely discussed in Brazilian general discourse. Qualitative research was incorporated as part of the impact evaluation. The main objective of this phase of the research was to use focus groups to evaluate the changes in viewers' knowledge, attitudes and practices regarding people living with Down Syndrome.



A focus group participant named Anne drew this sketch to represent what she learned from watching *Paginas da Vida*.

"I drew a sun with Down Syndrome rising on the horizon. The biggest impact of the telenovela was seeing the awakening of a series of questions and sensitizations that were made relating to Down Syndrome. Moreover, the image of a person with Down Syndrome on television, during prime time, opens space for a new set of opportunities which are represented in my drawing with the rainbow of colors."

During 2006, TV Globo incorporated a total of 1,148 social and health themes in the ten prime-time novelas, 600 of these (or about 52%) dealt specifically with sexual and reproductive health, sexuality and related gender issues. The air time TV Globo has donated to issues of social concern would have cost tens of millions of dollars within the last year alone. We are excited by the dramatic results and look forward to continuing our relationship with Comunicarte and TV Globo.

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