

How *Vencer el Miedo* Reached Millions of Viewers and Improved Adolescent Reproductive Health

REALITIES IN MEXICO

Mexico has made impressive strides in addressing teen pregnancy since the 1970s, and yet one out of every five pregnant women in Mexico was 19 years old or younger between 2009-2014. That's 20% of all pregnancies.

Teen pregnancy comes with increased health risks for both mothers and their children, and it often causes spikes in abortion rates, many of which are performed in unsafe conditions. For example, 44% of abortions in Mexico between 2009-2014 were conducted on women 15-19 years old. Beyond health risks, teenage pregnancy also affects other aspects of a woman's quality of life, such as female education rates, which in turn impacts job opportunities and socioeconomic status.



POPULATION
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Acting for Change



Paulina Goto and Danilo Carrera as Marcela and Omar in *Vencer el Miedo*.

Adolescent pregnancy is rooted in many things, including a widespread lack of reproductive health information, in part because adolescents often possess insufficient personal agency to seek counseling and other types of support. Adolescents need information and agency to make healthy decisions — to access reproductive health services and contraceptives.

Delivering accurate health information to teens can be a significant challenge, in part because it's often difficult to break through the noise of modern media and really capture their attention.



HOW *VENCER EL MIEDO* REACHED ADOLESCENTS WITH ENTERTAINMENT

In an effort to connect with young audiences, Population Media Center (PMC) worked with Televisa (the largest mass media company in the Spanish-speaking world) to create *Vencer el Miedo* (“**Overcome the Fear**”), a show designed to encourage healthier behaviors and attitudes about reproductive health. The overarching goal of the program was to increase contraceptive use among adolescents in Mexico and reduce the number of unplanned pregnancies.



Jade Fraser played Cristina Durán, a star swim athlete who is raped by her massage therapist.

VENCER EL MIEDO ("OVERCOME THE FEAR")

The 47-episode show aired weekdays in Mexico beginning January 20, 2020, and it garnered the highest viewership numbers of any show in its time slot, with an average of 3.5 million nightly viewers.

The show also successfully reached the target audience, ranking among the top three most-watched programs for viewers ages 13-21.



3.5 MIL
nightly viewers,
with a top draw among
audience ages 13-21



Producers achieved this level of viewership by maintaining the hallmarks of quality entertainment programming:

- Authentic and relatable characters and storylines
- Plot twists and cliffhangers
- Top-tier acting

These key entertainment factors were infused with **behavior change theory** to allow viewers to learn from the protagonists' mistakes and understand a variety of sexual and reproductive choices. Viewers developed emotional bonds with the main characters, who went on a “hero’s journey” throughout the episodes, making various choices and suffering the consequences or rewards. The characters showed the challenges of initiating and maintaining different choices—navigating difficult scenarios and conversations with a mixture of success and failure—before finally settling on a healthier path. Episodic storytelling allowed viewers to try out behaviors for themselves at a reasonable pace for real-life change.

VIEWERS DEVELOPED EMOTIONAL
BONDS WITH THE MAIN CHARACTERS

Paulina Goto as Marcela and
Emmanuel Palomares as Rommel Guajardo.



Vencer el Miedo also made health resources easily accessible, engaging and empowering viewers offscreen. At the end of each show, the phone number for OrientaSEX, a hotline operated by professional counselors from MEXFAM (the Planned Parenthood affiliate in Mexico) was displayed with an invitation for viewers to call in with questions. The hotline was more popular than anticipated, receiving a weekly average of 2,868 calls.

In addition to the show, the Televisa Foundation developed a social-awareness media campaign (*Gánale a las Ganas*, or “Overcome the Desire”) to encourage adolescents to adopt positive behaviors around sexual and reproductive health. This social-awareness campaign had an overall reach of 41.8 million people—demonstrating the scale of intentionally designed entertainment and social impact campaigns.



ORIENTASEX HOTLINE

The hotline was more popular than anticipated, receiving a weekly average of
2,868 calls



SOCIAL-AWARENESS CAMPAIGN

The campaign had an overall reach of
41.8 MIL people



THE SHOW'S IMPACT ON REPRODUCTIVE ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIORS

The endline survey, which was conducted after the show had completed broadcast, demonstrated measurable change in attitudes and behavior toward sexual and reproductive health among the target teen audience.

Adult viewers were 1.5 times more likely than non-viewers to discuss contraception, including condoms and other contraceptive methods, with their adolescent children during the run of the show.



AUDIENCE IMPACT

1.6x MORE

Young adult viewers were 1.6 times more likely than non-viewers to have searched for information on contraception.

1.8x MORE

Young adult viewers were 1.8 times more likely than non-viewers to have used dual contraception to prevent unintended pregnancies and STDs.





Paulina Goto as Marcela Durán

FOR PARENTS OF ADOLESCENTS, 62.4% OF VIEWERS TALKED TO THEIR ADOLESCENT CHILDREN ABOUT SEX, COMPARED WITH 43.9% OF NON-VIEWERS.

These numbers showcase the power that entertainment can have when it comes to encouraging positive behavior change. In addition, the show's commercial viability led to broadcasts in Honduras, the Dominican Republic, Nicaragua, El Salvador, and on Univision in the United States. Clips from each episode are also available on [YouTube](#).

Popular entertainment can and should address issues like teen pregnancy by fighting against root causes, such as the widespread lack of reproductive health information, and by giving teens the agency they need to seek counseling and support.





Paulina Goto as Marcela and
Danilo Carrera as Omar Cifuentes

BE PART OF THE SOLUTION

If you would like to support programming like
Vencer el Miedo, consider donating to PMC today.

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