

Safe sex ringtone sings 'Condom, condom!'

There are many features that make India a vulnerable country as far as a sexually transmitted infection (STI)/HIV epidemic is concerned. Vast numbers of people in India are severely disadvantaged in terms of income and education. Nonetheless, India continues to show strong commitment in the field of HIV/STI control. Besides it never lacks innovation!

Safe sex ringtone sings 'Condom, condom!'

Ever heard a safe-sex promo sung in multipart harmony? Have a listen to the 'condom a cappella' ringtone. Just launched in India -- where approximately 2.5 million people are living with HIV -- its part of a three-year ad offensive aimed at making condom use there more socially acceptable. And it's actually quite catchy.

The ringtone marks the latest phase in the mass-media campaign, which has placed ads on television, radio, and film, and in print and outdoor media. Ultimately, the HIV-prevention messages are expected to reach an estimated 52 million men.

According to international charity BBC World Service Trust, which is producing the ads, the idea behind the condom ringtone is 'jo samjha wohi sikander' ('the one who understands is a winner').

An ad promoting the new ringtone depicts a wedding, where a mobile ringtone buzzes with a loud "Condom! Condom!" Embarrassing for the man holding the phone? Not even. The reaction of those around the red-faced guy is to see him as smart and responsible.

"Ringtones have become such personal statements that a specially created condom ringtone seemed just the right way of combining a practical message with a fun approach," said Radharani Mitra, creative director of the BBC World Service Trust India.

The campaign is funded by a grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. The National AIDS Control Organization is also using the ads to support its condom promotion efforts.

The ringtone, which can be downloaded both via SMS and from the website www.condomcondom.org, has reportedly been downloaded more than 60,000 times in the last 12 days. And trust us; it's much better than that other safe-sex ringtone: We Don't Have to Take Our Clothes Off.