

AMPLIFYING YOUNG WOMEN'S VOICES

SUPPORTING MEDIA FOR COMMUNITY HEALTH



COMMUNITY MEDIA TRUST



AFRICAN
WOMEN'S
DEVELOPMENT
FUND

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South Africa has one of the highest HIV rates in the world and the KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) province has the highest concentration of HIV in the country.

In short 12-minute inserts, *Siyayinqoba*, a television documentary series, helps young women claim their spaces by telling their own stories to other young women. Using popular media such as television and social media outreach, the programme makes substantial gains in the fight to give South Africa's youth enough information to make informed decisions about their health rights.

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world and the KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) province has the highest concentration of HIV in the country. It continues to record consistently high prevalence of the HIV in the age cohort of 15-49 years.

Rising HIV rates are attributed to declining knowledge as well as an increase in risky sexual behaviour. Research shows that young women have a disproportionate risk compared to their male peers with adolescent girls ages 15-19 eight times more likely to be infected with HIV. Young



women ages 20-24 are more than three times likely to be infected with HIV than their male peers.

Young women's risk for HIV is further exacerbated by high rates of violence against women as well as rape, income and gender inequalities and other harmful cultural practices that target women.

Siyayinqoba is a media product of the Community Media Trust (CMT) which promotes knowledge, transparency, accountability and democracy through the production of multiple forms of media, training and communication "in order to capacitate communities to improve their quality of life in South Africa".

CMT was founded in 1998 by a group of HIV and AIDS activists who believed that the epidemic was reaching a crucial stage as it moved from a period of high infection rates to a period of high rates of illness and death. As the epidemic became more visible, the idea of taking simplified scientific information on all

aspects of the disease to broad audiences through television was born.

Today the CMT is a not-for-profit organisation that specialises in communication in the fields of health, human rights and violence against women. The Cape Town based team produces media across all platforms – radio, television, print, film documentaries, social media, online and outdoor campaigns, etc – as well as providing communication training to marginalised communities.

CMT executive director, Lucilla Blankenberg, explains that the success of the programme is built on the credibility of the product.

Trusted health brand

"*Siyayinqoba* is a trusted health brand. People know the brand and understand that we are scientific and evidence-based. So having the issues that the young women wanted to focus on as part

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-Lucilla Blankenberg (Left)

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of *Siyayinqoba* ... gives them the voice that they might not have had in the past,” said Blankenberg.

Siyayinqoba has two documentary inserts of 12 minutes each – these are the stories being told by young women for young women.

The crew is currently in production for Season 10’s episodes in which five of the episodes as well as the the production interns are funded by the African Women’s Development Fund. The project empowers young women through seeing the stories of others like themselves and learning from how they have dealt with the issues faced.

It supports an urgent need to bolster young women in order to reduce their risk for HIV and violence. In addition, the partners of the adolescent young women

and girls who are most at risk, are also presented with specific messaging and interventions aimed at reducing their risk of contracting and transmitting HIV such as medical male circumcision and access to anti-retroviral therapy which will help make the viral load undetectable.

The programming also reaches out to communities who need to understand that young women are at risk of contracting HIV and are at high risk of violence. With such information and messaging, young women can increase their individual and collective security.

This season of *Siyayinqoba* is being filmed primarily in KwaZulu-Natal which is hardest hit by the HIV epidemic. As with previous seasons, it will tell the stories of real South African young women who are at high risk for HIV infection and show

how they deal with growing up in South Africa, highlighting positive interventions and ways to change gender norms, increase self-esteem and decrease the risk of exposure to HIV and violence.

This time, the organisation is also training six new community journalists to ensure that young women’s voices are heard and their stories are told from their perspective.

“We sourced six people to be trained for mentorship through the Dreams Project in KwaZulu-Natal and we trained them in everything from identifying the story, the research, the script writing. Once they are ready to shoot, we send a crew to film with them so that they go through the entire process in producing the documentary insert,” Blankenberg explained.

By training women as content producers, the programme

provides real life role models as well as increases the pool of women with media skills who can bring an awareness to the myriad issues women face.

“We asked the mentors to write and apply to be part of the programme and to tell us if they had a story to tell.”

Generated by Young Women

The content of the inserts are generated by the young women themselves. The season is still in production phase but already one of the mentees has been appointed to a media position in Johannesburg. Expectations are high for the programme.

“The last season reached 1.3 million viewers a week. It does give a lot of information on how to deal with your health as a poor person in South Africa.

The programming also reaches out to communities who need to understand that young women are at risk of contracting HIV and are at high risk of violence.



These five episodes (funded by AWDF) are even more targeted to young women,” she noted.

“After SABC (the national broadcaster) airs *Siyayinqoba* then we also broadcast on community television. The last season is still being aired,” explained Blankenberg. The programming information is also shared on social media.

Siyayinqoba also has a health literacy training series that is not broadcast but broken up into a learning format that is used in the classroom. Material from the television series is used to create a health literacy training manual and DVD set that is translated into most South African languages. This is made available to other NGO organisations.

CMT reaches millions of youth through high end dramas which imbue positive messaging about growing up in South Africa. CMT employs community mobilisers and trainers who work to inform, educate and inspire people and communities about how they can take an active part in managing and improving their own health.

Siyayinqoba was first developed in 1998 to promote a mass understanding of HIV treatment and prevention literacy. Initially broadcast on eTV, it has been on the national broadcaster channel SABC1 since 2004 with the last season broadcast on EDTV (channel 190 on DSTV).

In 2014, the eighth season was honoured as the best educational series by SABC Education.

Siyayinqoba tells the stories of South Africans affected by the quadruple

burden of disease - HIV/ AIDS, underdevelopment, chronic diseases related to environmentally unhealthy lifestyles, and injuries – through a documentary format that promotes healthy living and disease prevention. It seeks to influence the demand for and uptake of HIV prevention and treatment services.

Stories of Marginalised and Vulnerable Groups

The programme has taken viewers across the country to both rural and urban areas to tell the often ignored stories of marginalised and vulnerable groups such as young women, children, migrant workers, etc.

The programming is designed to contribute to a positive shift for adolescent girls and young women with a reduction of HIV infection and teen pregnancies and an increase in levels of education.

“The behaviour change we are looking for is a sense of worth and self-esteem. A lot of the time you find transactional sex in that group – ages 15 - 24 - (and) the reasons for having sex early is that there does not seem to be another option,” Blankenberg explained.

“*Siyayinqoba* has given people the information that they need. If you are living with HIV, you know that there are antiretrovirals. You know what they are and how to take them. You also know what HIV is and how it works in the body. *Siyayinqoba* had a lot to do with making that information available,” she said.

As with previous seasons, it will tell the stories of real South African young women who are at high risk for HIV infection and show how they deal with growing up in South Africa, highlighting positive interventions and ways to change gender norms, increase self-esteem and decrease the risk of exposure to HIV and violence.

Grantee Information

CMT's Outreach team conducts face-to-face communication and training in communities. Community Media Trust (CMT) is a not-for-profit organisation that specialises in communication in the fields of health, human rights and violence against women. It produces media across all platforms and are skilled in interpersonal communication and training. It was founded in 1998 when a group of HIV/AIDS activists believed that the HIV/AIDS epidemic was reaching a crucial stage as it moved from a period of high infection rates to a period of high rates of illness and death. As the epidemic became more visible, the idea of taking simplified scientific information on all aspects of HIV/AIDS to a broad audience through television was born.

CMT aims to inform and inspire. It believes in promoting transparency, accountability and democracy in all areas affecting quality of life of communities in South Africa. The media productions of CMT includes: Radio; Television; Film; Documentaries; Print; Outdoor; Web-based and Social Media; Brand Development; Educational / Training Materials Development.

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CMT's work can be broadly divided into two categories, the production of media and outreach work in communities. CMT is governed by a 7 member board and has 72 staff members. CMT's head office is situated in Rondebosch, Cape Town with satellite offices in Durban, Pietermaritzburg, East London and Queenstown. This is a women led organisation (80% of decision makers are women).

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