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Monitoring Men: An Analysis of the Representation of Men in the Media

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1. Background

Monitoring Men is a joint project undertaken by the Soul City Institute for Health and Development Communication and the Media Monitoring Project.

The Soul City Institute for Health and Development Communication is a multi-media health promotion project, committed to social change. The construction of manhood and gender, in general, has been identified as an on-going theme for Soul City to deal with in all its series. As a guiding principle, within each topic and each series, space for dialogue and reflection has been created to enable men and society to question men's prevailing attitudes and practices.

The Media Monitoring Project (MMP), an independent non-governmental organisation that monitors the media for the representation of human rights, including the representation of gender, has in a number of research initiatives, highlighted the importance of challenging some of the common gender stereotypes that are applied not only to women, but also to men. In addition, the MMP has argued for the improvement in the range of roles and positions that women and men are shown to occupy in the content of South Africa's media. In 2004, the MMP monitored the media coverage of the 16 Days of Activism campaign, an annual campaign that focuses on eradicating gender-based violence and woman and child abuse. One of the MMP's key research findings was the media's attempt to include men in the fight against gender-based violence, something that has traditionally been viewed as a women's fight.

While there has been extensive research into the representation of women in the media, limited research has focused on how the news media tends to represent men and the male role models offered by the media.

Media, government, and civil society organisations have tended to represent the abuse of women and children, and the violation of their rights, as firmly located in the women's domain. One consequence of this misrepresentation of abuse is a unilateral portrayal of gender-based violence as a women's struggle only, where almost the only roles available to (all) men in the media are those of perpetrator or policeman. Positively, in the last few years, government, civil society organisations, and the media have been pro-active in their approach to the fight against gender-based violence and woman and child abuse, and now incorporate the active participation of both women and men: "The efforts of...the media to include men and boys in the focus areas of the campaign are to be both welcomed and commended" (*Keeping an eye on the campaign*, 2005, p. 13).

Despite this positive inclusion of men in the attempt to "unite against women and child abuse", as the campaign message encouraged, the MMP found that there was

still a glaring absence in the provision of alternate roles for and representation of men within the media. It would appear that while men make up the majority of those sources frequently accessed for comment in the media, their representation is limited, and in many instances prone to similar stereotyping that women experience.

2. The statistics

- The MMP monitored 14 different print and broadcast media over a two-week period between the 29th of May and the 11th of June 2005;
- The data produced consists of just less than 1300 items, and 1900 sources.

3. Context

Not only is South Africa's society still in a state of continued change, but also notions of identity, gender equality, and masculinity are also continuously changing. The context of growing recognition and enforcement of the rights and roles of women in society has sometimes resulted in the perception that these rights somehow undermine men's rights, dignity, power, and masculinity. The MMP has undertaken this project on the assumption that addressing the representation of men in the media is not only compatible with, but also integral to an analysis of the representation of women in the media, and the concurrent struggle for gender equality. In supporting and promoting the rights of women, one is also supporting and promoting the rights of men.

The issues and findings also need to be viewed within the context of the media coverage during the monitoring period and the social, political and economic challenges that South Africa currently faces. Three of the most prominent stories that were covered during the period were controversial court cases. The first was the end of the Schabir Shaik fraud and corruption trial, where judgement was handed down and the future of Deputy President Jacob Zuma was questioned. The second focused on the jury deliberations and the handing down of a "not guilty" verdict in the Michael Jackson child molestation case. The third court case to make the news during this period was the *Mail & Guardian* gagging order, where a national weekly newspaper was prevented from publishing details of what was dubbed the "Oilgate" scandal, involving PetroSA, Imvume and the alleged use of taxpayers' money to fund the ANC election campaign.

In addition to child abuse, femicide and other violent crimes like street justice, rape and armed robbery filled the media. Political happenings included President Thabo Mbeki's visit to the USA, where he requested increased aid for Africa, the official adoption of Tshwane as the new name for Pretoria, and protests against

government's poor service delivery. Sports news focused on the success of the Springboks' first rugby test match against Uruguay, and the success of Bafana Bafana in the African Nations and World Cup qualifying match against Cape Verde. International sports news was dominated by tennis highlights from the French Open.

4. Key Findings

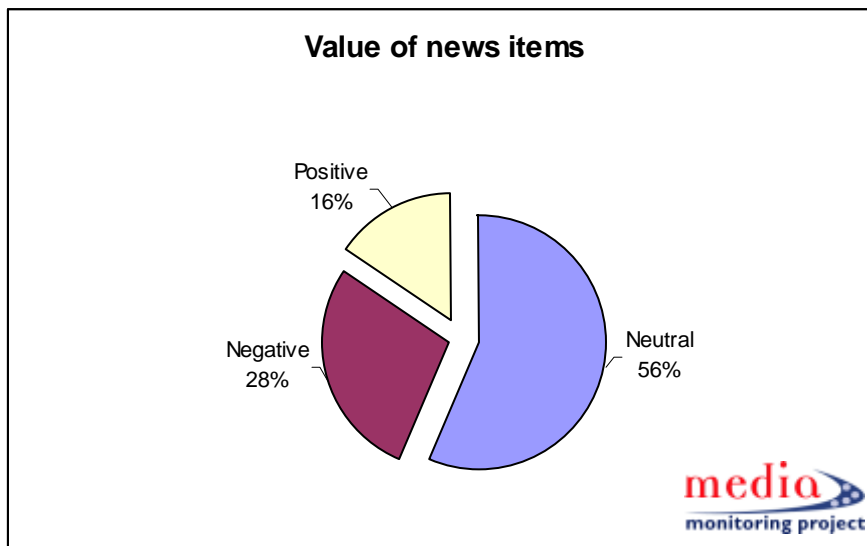
The challenge to address gender inequality, gender-based violence, and child abuse lies as much with men as it does with the media, as highlighted by the following key findings:

- The overall coverage of men is generally positive, and men are covered more than 3 times as often as women;
- The ratio of who speaks in the media, of male to female sources, was 74%: 26%, compared to a regional average of 83%: 17%(Gender & Media Baseline Study, 2003);
- There is a continued increase in the number of female sources;
- Men occupy a greater diversity of roles than women do in the media;
- Men are most commonly shown in sports;
- Men dominate in the political, economic, professional, and business spheres;
- Men are often absent and represented in limited and largely negative roles in the domestic and social spheres in the media;
- Femicide stories frequently lack content and analysis, which contributes to the men concerned being represented as rash, illogical, and irrational in their actions;
- Virtual absence of human rights discourse in the items monitored;

4.1 Overall

The overall representation of men is positive; they are represented as active and as achievers. Despite the nature of news being bad, that is, bad news tends to be newsworthy; men are still broadly represented. The overall majority of the representation of men is neither clearly negative nor clearly positive: 56% of all monitored items were deemed neutral in their representation of men, neither clearly

positive nor clearly negative in their representation of men. 28% of the representation of men was found to be clearly negative (where the men were represented as murderers, or corrupt politicians, for example), and 16% of the representation of men was found to be clearly positive (heroes, providers, leaders).



4.2 Sources

A source breakdown for the period showed that the overall ratio of male to female sources was 74%: 26%. This finding is an improvement on the MMP's research findings during the 2004 national elections, where the ratio of male to female sources was an unprecedented 77%: 23%. The media are to be commended for their efforts to improve the inequality in the representation of men and women. In an assessment of where men and women are seen in the media, the breakdown of the ratio between images of women and images of men in the media monitored showed that men were seen in 76% of all images, while women were imaged in 24% of images. It should be remembered that on average during the monitoring period men were three times more likely to appear in images and news stories than women were.

The ratio of male to female sources in news stories was slightly higher than in images at 73%: 27%. While this ratio is still inequitable, it is clear that the media are making a continued and concerted effort to improve the number of female sources.

Overall: Source breakdown sex

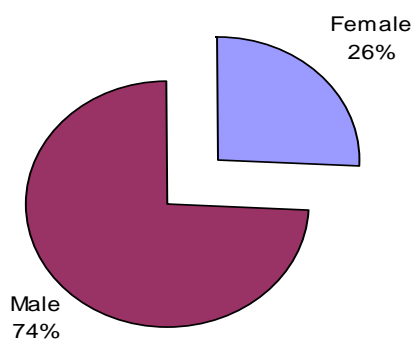
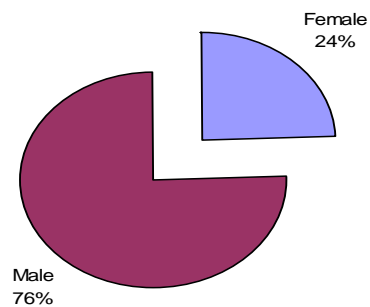
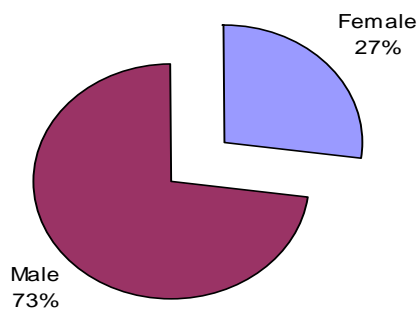


Image: Source breakdown sex



News: Source breakdown sex



The roles portrayed by men in the media tend to be far more diverse than those portrayed by women. This is partially explained by South Africa's patriarchal society, where men still tend to dominate in almost all areas. The top 10 roles for men, as listed below, show that men tend to be represented in the professional and economic sphere as businessmen, politicians, leaders, officials, and sportsmen. In comparison, the second most common representation for women is that of entertainer, which is in line with previous MMP research findings.

Top 10 roles for men	%	Top 10 roles for women	%
Sportsperson	15	Government official	10
Government official	14	Entertainer	9
Official	8	Politician	7
Legal profession	8	Professional	7
Professional	6	Victim	7
Spokesperson	6	Parent/Caregiver	6
Activist	5	Official	6
Politician	5	Sportsperson	5
Criminal	4	Resident	4
SAPS	4	Activist	4

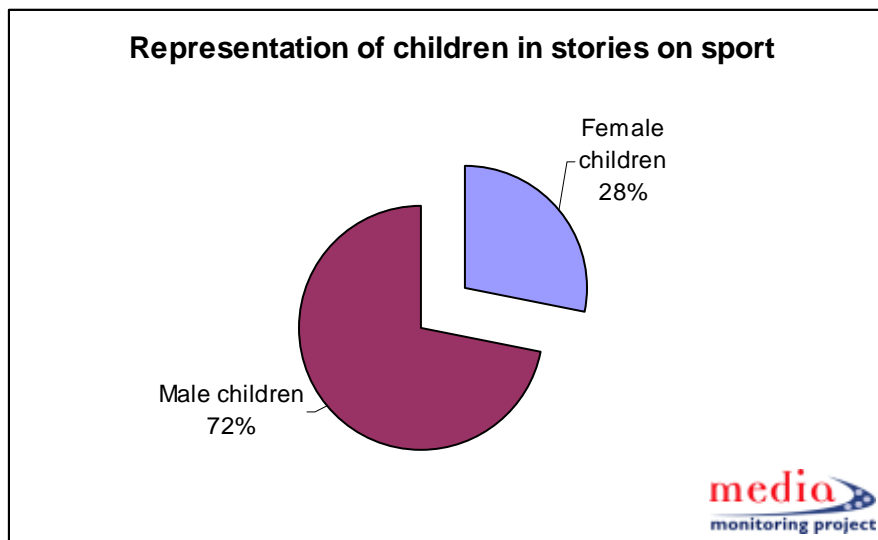
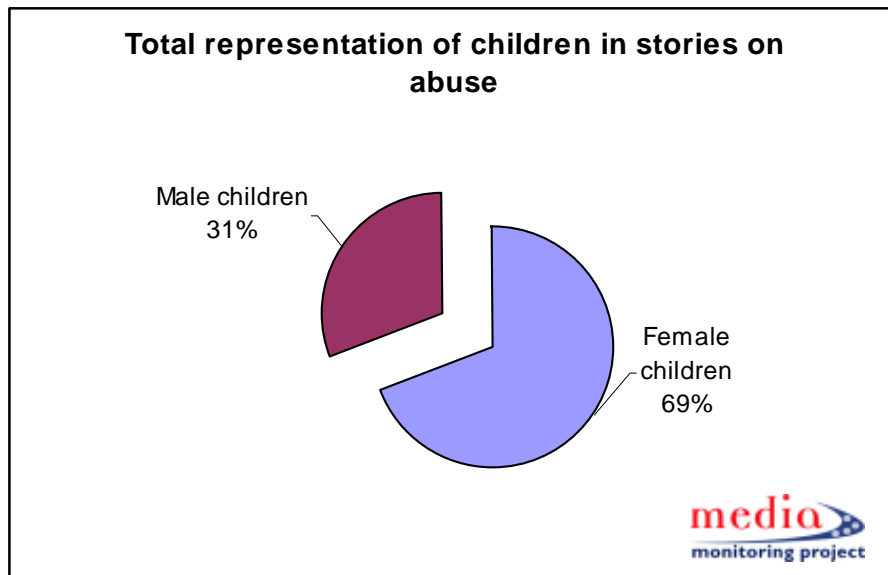
The tables indicate that while women are represented as parents and residents, men appear in limited roles in the social and domestic environments.

4.3 Sport

As in almost every other section of the media, like business and news, men dominate in the sports sections. Men are seen and imaged in the media as active, most commonly represented in sports stories as heroes and "doing things". This is in stark comparison to women, who are often represented passively in posed or sexualised images in sport stories. Often the media use in-action images of sportsmen, while sportswomen tend to be shown in images that focus on and highlight the length of their skirts, their features and physical attributes. In these instances, the women's physical appearance rather than their sporting abilities becomes the focus of the image. *The Star* newspaper is to be commended for its efforts to challenge these common representations of women in its sports coverage; for example, the non-sexualised images of female tennis players and golfers featured during the monitoring period.

Most sports coverage is positive in its representation of men, even if the actual news content is bad (e.g. South Africa loses at a soccer match). The representation of men as fit, healthy, energetic, and active, is a positive finding, which perpetuates positive roles for men both in the media and in society, but importantly, this must be addressed in relation to the largely passive representations of women in the media.

This finding is supported by previous MMP research in the Empowering Children & Media project, which showed similar trends in the roles attributed to children where boy children tended to be represented in sports stories at 72%: 28% girls, while girls tended to be represented in stories on abuse, at 69% to 31% boys.



4.4 Femicide

One of the key findings of the research was that numerous news items focused on violence, particularly extreme forms of violence. Femicide, the killing of women, was one such form of violence covered in the media during the monitoring period. The extreme nature of reported femicide, which included elements such as stabbings, hangings, burnings, sexual obsessions, child abuse, and physical injuries, was often elaborated on in gruesome detail within the items covered.

The lack of explanation and context provided in coverage of instances of femicide is concerning, such as the example in a popular daily tabloid headlined: "Murdered for her hairstyle!" (*Daily Sun*, 06/06/2005, p. 1). It must be noted that this lack of context may be as a result of the insufficient information provided to journalists, as Lisa Vetten, head of the gender programme at the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation explains. It is necessary to address the ways in which the media utilise the information provided to them as well as analysing what information is given to them.

Some of the reasons behind the perpetrators' actions appear to be explained in the media as men in "fits of rage", men losing perspective or losing control, and their grip on reality. The men in these stories are often represented as irrational, illogical and rash in their actions. Lisa Vetten points out that these men tend to be portrayed as threatened, fragile, and vulnerable, as many of their crimes are often represented as having been committed because they are men who "love too much". Vetten further points out that men often use these heightened emotions as a defence: "Being emotional can work to your benefit when you kill".

Ironically, the emotional character traits of irrational, emotional, rash and illogical are common stereotypes often attributed to women in society. This representation of men in the media challenges and contradicts the stereotype of men as rational, stable, and logical. By representing the actions or crimes in their most extreme forms, the stereotype is actually reinforced, as it is shown as out of character for men to act in such illogical and irrational ways. As the acts are represented as extreme and not those typical of a "normal" man, they indirectly reinforce that "normal" behaviour for men is rational and logical.

Another trend in the coverage of femicide that the MMP noted was that instances of femicide are seldom followed up in the media, with the exception of a few high profile cases, for example, the case of Anne Marie Engelbrecht (while covered in the

media, this story was the subject of controversy resulting in a complaint to the Press Ombudsman). Often only the original coverage of the crime is reported, with scant subsequent information provided.

The MMP also found that the femicide stories tended to be individualised, with the focus almost exclusively on the act of femicide and the emotional state of the person and reasons behind the act. Vetten raised the concern that in individualising the stories the media is prevented from asking the broader structural questions in relation to femicide. For example, how are the changing power relations between men and women to be understood? How are women's rights to protection and a safe and secure environment being undermined by state structures?

In addition, there was a virtual absence of any human rights discourse or language in many of the femicide stories. This can be linked to the lack of acknowledgement of child abuse in the stories on femicide and other violent crimes. In a number of instances, child abuse comprised a significant part of the femicide crime, but was not acknowledged as such within the item. ("Revenge by fire!", *Daily Sun*, 07/06/2005, p. 1 and "'Life' times three for daughter-killer", *The Citizen*, 03/06/2005, p. 13.)

4.5 Race

Interestingly, the MMP found that the perpetrators of the femicide crimes are represented as coming from different race groups, a finding that challenges the common stereotypes often perpetuated by the media that most perpetrators of rape and violent acts are black men. However, the monitoring sample of femicide stories is too small to be statically valid.

4.6 Domestic men

Another key finding is the severe lack of diversity in the representation of men in the domestic and social spheres within the media. Previous research by the MMP has shown that men tend to be negatively represented in the social or domestic sphere as perpetrators of the abuse against women and children. While men are guilty of these crimes, the dominance of these negative roles for men in the domestic sphere, both in reality and in the media, has resulted in growing concern. The Human Sciences Research Council initiative, the Fatherhood Project, aims to address the disparity in the representation of men as fathers, and to highlight the need for alternative roles for men, especially as caregivers.

The trend identified in this research is further supported by the MMP's 16 Days of Activism campaign research in 2004, which highlighted the limited roles available to

men. The representation of women in the domestic and social spheres amounts to 30%, while for men, similar roles in the top 10 account for a mere 5%. One in every four men represented in the media during the 16 Days of Activism campaign was a perpetrator. One of the key messages used during the 16 Days of Activism campaign, and in other progressive gender equality initiatives lies in bringing men into the domestic sphere in roles as loving fathers, caring brothers, and responsible caregivers. The aim is to make men aware of their responsibilities and in so doing, unite women *and* men in the fight against gender-based violence, woman and child abuse, domestic violence, and femicide.

5. Way Forward: The Challenge

It is clear that there are high levels of violence in the South African society and it is something that needs to be addressed. Challenging the deeply ingrained stereotype of men always resorting to violence to solve problems is one of the critical challenges that South Africa needs to face. Another stereotype that needs to be challenged is that of men as always active and doing things while women are represented as passive and are acted upon, as “victims in waiting”. It is important to challenge the stereotype that gender-based violence and woman and child abuse is a women’s problem, when in actual fact it is a challenge that both men and women, perhaps to an even greater degree, men, have to face and overcome.

What are the media’s roles and responsibilities in the challenge to eradicate gender-based violence? Clearly the media should report femicide. Gender organisations all over South Africa argue for better and more coverage of gender-based violence, domestic violence, woman and child abuse, sport, war, and other crimes. Does the media have a responsibility to challenge stereotypical representations of men and women? Does the media have a responsibility to actively improve coverage and alternate forms of conflict resolution? These questions are for the editors to decide, but what is clear if the media is to accurately represent the society in which they live and work, is that men need to be represented in a greater diversity of roles in the domestic and social sphere.

6. The MMP’s Monitoring Methodology

With such previous research findings taken into consideration, the MMP undertook to monitor the representation of men in print and broadcast media in South Africa. Select print and television media were monitored over a two-week period, from the 29th of May up to and including the 11th of June 2005. The print media monitored were either national papers or media based in Gauteng, and represented daily and weekly commercial print media from a number of media houses.

The methodology was designed to address both qualitative and quantitative elements of the representation of men, as well as both the content of the news stories and the visual images used by the media concerned to show men. As the study was limited, and the main news stories were considered of paramount importance; all of the items on the first three pages of each print medium were monitored. In order to address how men were imaged, photographs and images throughout the newspaper were monitored every alternate day.

For television media, all of the news items (excluding sports) on prime time television news bulletins across the three channels were monitored. The television news bulletins monitored covered the public service broadcaster's Xhosa and Zulu prime time news, as well as the English prime time news bulletins on the public service broadcaster and on the commercial, free-to-air station, e-tv.

The list of media monitored included:

Daily Print Media	Weekly Print Media	Television Media
Beeld	City Press	SABC 1
Daily Sun	Rapport	SABC 3
Sowetan	Sunday Independent	e-tv
The Citizen	Sunday Times	
The Star	Saturday Star	
	Mail & Guardian	

The monitors used for the project were all experienced media monitors, who underwent specialist training in the project methodology. The monitors all have degrees in media studies or equivalent tertiary qualifications and are first-language speakers in the language of the medium that they monitored.

Monitors were required to capture the relevant information on specially designed monitoring forms. 25 different pieces of information were captured for each item monitored, including a brief summary of each item or image, in order to determine the gist of the story or image. Details captured about each item included information about the sources accessed, especially the manner in which men in the story were represented. An analysis of sources, of who gets to speak, who is quoted and commonly asked for opinions in news stories, is a common indicator of patterns of gender coverage in the media. As such, in addition to an analysis of who is accessed in news items, how the sources are represented and accessed and

the roles that they play was considered part of the focus of the research, in order to determine how men are represented in the media. Such information was attained to determine the effect representations of men in the media have on concepts and notions of masculinity. Of particular interest was the extent to which commonly held stereotypes surrounding men inform media discourse.

In addition to who was accessed, the central topics addressed within each item were captured. Such information provided a useful indication of the type of story in which men and women tended to be sourced. The information captured was entered into a database specially designed for the project, which enabled the production of results through queries.

7. Limitations

The study was limited in a number of ways. Firstly, the research was limited to a two-week monitoring period, during which selected television and radio media were monitored for the representation of men. The print media monitored were mostly Gauteng-based and covered daily and weekly newspapers. The broadcast media monitored consisted of prime time news bulletins on the public service broadcaster channels SABC 1, 2, and 3, and the commercial, free-to-air channel, e-tv.

8. Assumptions

The project was undertaken within MMP's human rights framework, especially within the acknowledgement of the importance of gender rights and equal representation of both men and women. Analysing and assessing the representation of men in the media is inherently a gender issue. Addressing the representation of men in the media is not only compatible to, but also integral to an analysis of the representation of women in the media, and the concurrent struggle for gender equality. In supporting and promoting the rights of women, one is also supporting and promoting the rights of all people.

About the MMP

The Media Monitoring Project (MMP) is an independent Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) that has been monitoring the South African media since 1993.

a. Mission

The MMP aims to promote the development of a free, fair, ethical and critical media culture in South Africa and the rest of the continent.

b. Objectives

The core objectives of the organisation are as follows:

- To be the pre-eminent media “watchdog” in Africa.
- To inform and engage media professionals and other key stakeholders to improve the quality and ethics of news reporting in Africa.
- To influence the development of robust and effective communication legislation and media codes of conduct in Africa.

c. Activities

The MMP offers a wide range of services to civil society organisations (CSOs), media, government, and NGOs in South Africa and other African countries, including:

- Reviewing and analysing the content, selection process and presentation of news reporting to monitor the quality and ethical practices of broadcast, print and online media.
- Distributing regular reports on research findings and highlighting infringements to media duties and responsibilities.
- Conducting in-depth research on specific issues (commissioned reports).
- Developing training materials, tools and best practices on ethical and fair media reporting.
- Submitting proposals and other material for the development or amendment of policies and laws.

The MMP applies internationally recognised, state of the art monitoring and research methodologies. The MMP is the only independent NGO in South Africa that monitors the representation of human rights issues in the media, and the

only organisation that conducts in-depth, qualitative and comparative research in this field. The organisation's expertise is widely acknowledged by media stakeholders, and the MMP is regularly invited to provide comments and presentations on a wide range of subjects within the media.

The MMP has conducted more than 85 media monitoring projects in the last 12 years. Most recently, the MMP has been appointed as the data analyst and member of the planning committee for the 2005 Global Media Monitoring Project, the largest monitoring project ever undertaken, involving just less than 100 countries across the world monitoring gender for one day. In 2002, the MMP served as the technical advisor and provided all the quantitative analyses for the Gender & Media Baseline Study (GMBS). The GMBS analysed the representation of women in the media in thirteen countries across Southern Africa.

About Soul City: Institute for Health and Development Communication (IHDC)

The Soul City Philosophy and Methodology

The Soul City Institute for Health and Development Communication (SC IHDC) is a social change project, which aims to impact on society at the individual, community and socio-political levels. SC IHDC is South Africa's premier edutainment project. A non-governmental organisation, it was established in 1992 at a time when South Africa was on the cusp of democratic change. It is a health promotion organisation, subscribing to the principles of the World Health Organization's Ottawa Charter. According to the Ottawa Charter, health is a product of a range of intersectoral actions that include building an enabling environment, advocacy for health public policy, community action, developing personal skills and reorientating the health services towards the health promotion approach.

While many health projects focus on influencing the individual alone, Soul City IHDC views good health as a product not simply of individual choices, but as the product of an enabling environment in which the structural barriers to achieving health and development are removed.

Soul City IHDC also views health and development as integrally related: poor health impedes development and development is central to improving global health.

The diagram below represents the edutainment model that The Soul City IHDC uses to inform its programming. Edutainment has been defined as the art of integrating social issues into popular and high-quality entertainment formats, based on a

thorough research process. SC IHDC uses prime time television and radio dramas to engage mass audiences in a powerful way.

Key principles of our approach

Developing effective educational media is not just about **what** you do but **how** you do it. Two elements, **research** and the **creation of partnerships** are at the heart of our approach.

- **Research.** Through vigorous research SC IHDC consults both audiences and experts. All materials are thoroughly tested with audiences to ensure that the materials are effective. Through formative research the lived experiences and voices of the communities are captured, giving the materials resonance and credibility.
- **Partnerships.** Materials are developed in partnership with organisations active in the issues dealt with. This ensures shared ownership and involvement ensuring the material is both appropriate and will be used. Where possible, programmes are integrated into wider local initiatives and strategies to achieve maximum impact.