eAfrica
The electronic journal of governance and innovation

Highlights:

Fostering Constructive Change with Television

THE global development debate focuses on tangibles: investment incentives, governance and corruption, among others. As important as those factors are, the speed with which an economy grows depends even more on one vital intangible – its relationship with uncomfortable truths.

Societies that advance quickly, identify and solve problems quickly – even when those are awkward or politically difficult. In stagnant societies, problems are greeted by officialdom with denial and punishment for the messenger. It is easy to say Africa should avoid a denialist culture, but how do we forge the kind of constructive, problem-solving political culture we need?

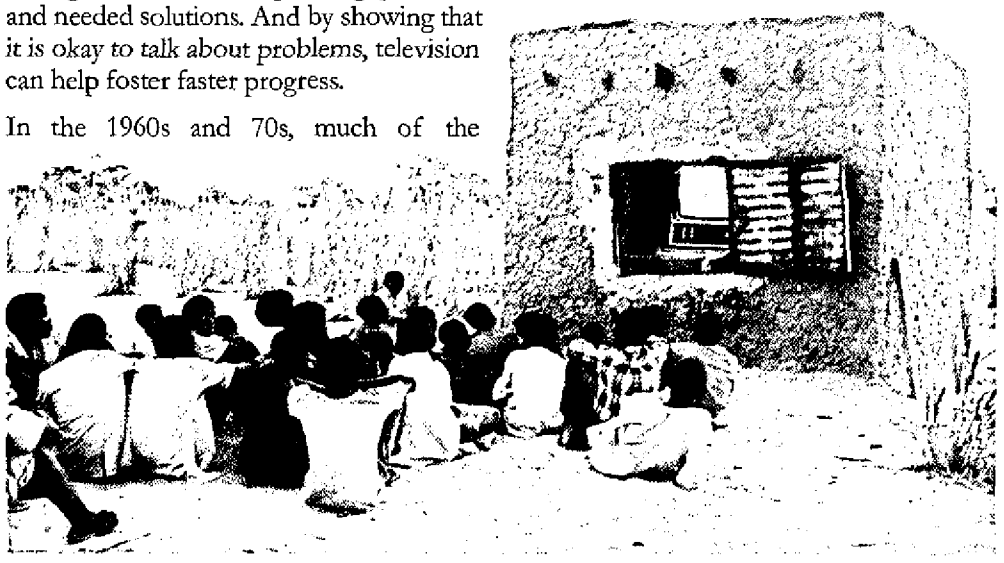
The first requisite is courageous leadership, which must let people speak out about problems without fear of punishment.

Television is one of the most misused, but potentially positive forces for change. It has the potential – through news, discussion shows, dramas, and various forms of educational programmes – to get Africa talking about its most pressing problems and needed solutions. And by showing that it is okay to talk about problems, television can help foster faster progress.

In the 1960s and 70s, much of the continent experimented with various forms of educational television with that goal in mind. For example, Niger built some 1,500 solar-powered television kiosks, like the one below, to get educational programmes to isolated rural villages. But Niger gave up on the expensive business of producing educational programmes and now mainly broadcasts cheap imported entertainment.

However, Africa is again getting creative with television. This issue looks at a range of African projects to assist education through television and it profiles Soul City, a creative initiative that uses drama to increase understanding of health and social issues and urge society to embrace constructive change. Africa has the television professionals, but governments must give them airtime and the determination to maintain their funding.

This issue also includes an analysis of Nepad, peer review and Africa's development strategy by Elizabeth Sidiropoulos, the new national director at the South African Institute of International Affairs.



INNOVATIVE: *A solar-powered television kiosk in Tchin-Tabaradene village, Niger.* *Photo: Touchline Photo*

This journal is part of the South African Institute of International Affairs Nepad and Governance project, funded by the Royal Netherlands embassy to South Africa.

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ISSN: 1728-0621

Volume 3, October 2005

Verbatim

"Unfortunately, I see bloodshed in Zanzibar." – Ahmed Rajab, editor of *Africa Analysis* magazine, on the 30 October elections in Tanzania and Zanzibar, where the pre-election atmosphere has been tense.

"The greatest danger now is that expectations are too high. The euphoria of the end of the conflict will soon be forgotten." – Alan Doss, head of the UN mission in Liberia on the eve of the first-round of elections in that country.

"We have to forgive and move on... Sometimes I laugh when people talk about the good and the bad people. Everyone was involved in this war." Jewel Howard-Taylor, wife of Liberia's former president Charles Taylor. She won a seat in the senate in the recent elections.

"You know a situation better than them, but they analyse it to you. They even analyse you." – Jacob Zuma, South Africa's former deputy president, taking a swipe at political analysts as the schism between him and President Thabo Mbeki continues.

"What South Africa really needs is a gun-free society, not a car-free society." – Sello Molekwa, a South African, on the government-driven Car-Free Day organised in October.

"But they can build the fences [in Ceuta and Melilla] as high as they like, they can have as many soldiers as they like – nobody can stop us from getting through." – Precious, one of many Nigerian migrants who scaled razor wire fences to reach the Spanish enclave of Melilla in North Africa.

"Who told them that if I was diagnosed with HIV I would die tomorrow? I would live longer than those who look normal."

– Levy Mwanawasa, President of Zambia, rejecting calls that presidential candidates should be tested for HIV/AIDS to determine if they are fit for office.

"I didn't touch a girl in two years. When I'm feeling restive, I run in the mountains and kick the rocks." – Sejeng Leotla, a 21-year-old shepherd from Lesotho, on how scared he is of contracting HIV/Aids. Lesotho has the third highest rate of HIV/Aids in the world, with an estimated 29% infection rate.

"Tell those speculators to go and jump in the bloody lake because they are talking rubbish." – Trevor Manuel, South African minister of finance, refuting claims that South Africa covertly helped Zimbabwe out with a cash loan.

"Cycling should be practised for the sake of enjoying, not for the sake of surviving." – Laster Chihuri, a Zimbabwean security guard, on how Zimbabweans have been forced to resort to bicycles as fuel shortages intensify.

"The ambassador must consider himself very lucky that he is dealing with a professional army that the Zimbabwe National Army is. Elsewhere, and definitely in America, he would have been a dead man. His adventure is really dangerous." – George Charamba, Zimbabwe's information and publicity secretary, on US envoy Christopher Dell, who entered a restricted security zone in the National Botanical Gardens in Harare.

"Must we allow these men [George Bush and Tony Blair], the two unholy men of our millennium, who in the same way as Hitler and Mussolini formed [an] unholy alliance, to form an alliance to attack an innocent country?" – Robert Mugabe, President of Zimbabwe, referring to Iraq. He was giving an address at a conference to mark the 60th anniversary of the UN's Food and Agriculture Organisation in Italy.

Taking Africa Seriously From Within and Without

This is an abridged version of the 20 October 2005 inaugural speech by Elizabeth Sidiropoulos, the new national director of the South African Institute of International Affairs.

SOME weeks ago I spent several hours in a café in meetings. On my way out, the cashier asked: 'So, did you do good business here today ma'am?'

I said yes and she asked about what products I sold. As head of a public policy research institute, I momentarily struggled to find an answer. 'Well, I don't really sell products. I sell intellectual products.'

'Oh, like intellectual property rights? So what exactly do you do?'

I replied a little tongue-in-cheek: 'I look at how we can solve Africa's problems.'

'Oh, that's easy ma'am', came the reply, 'Just get rid of all the governments.'

I am not advocating anarchy. But the point made by the cashier reflects an ordinary person's assessment of an unfortunate reality: In many cases in the past, African governments have been a hindrance rather than an agent of development.

On the world stage, we demand that the continent be taken seriously and our diplomats frequently complain that the world sees a distorted image of Africa as a continent only of problems. Before we can hope to engineer a change in perceptions in the world, we as Africans need to take ourselves seriously. And that requires an open and frank self-assessment.

What this means is we do not externalise the causes of our problems and avoid perceiving ourselves as victims of fate. That we are ultimately responsible for our fates – not only as leaders but equally importantly as citizens. That we should hold African lives and quality of life as dear as those of any other. That our discourse should be determined by common values and principles – based on global benchmarks – and not sensitivities about labels and political correctness.

There has been a significant shift in the

African discourse since the 1990s, and more so in the past five or six years. In building a strategy for Africa's future, three trends deserve mention.

Progressive, visionary change

Firstly, 20 years ago there would have been no African peacekeepers in Darfur under African auspices; there would have been no denouncement of unconstitutional changes of power; there would have been no discussion about 'good governance' and that the rights of people should be more important than those of states. Much of this change has been brought about by progressive and visionary leaders. And while it has picked up substantial momentum, sustaining it and applying it uniformly is always going to be difficult because of resistance from entrenched interests and elites.

Secondly, the renewed interest in the continent from the North, primarily as a result of the successful marketing of the New Partnership for Africa's Development. But Nepad's brilliant marketing may well be its biggest undoing if expectations created do not start being realised.

Thirdly, there is also a recognition that the world around us is changing fast. New powers are emerging, with new commercial interests, new challenges and competitors, and new political alignments. The power balances are shifting; these may not be obvious yet, but power relations globally will be quite different over the next decade from those we've grown accustomed to since the end of the Cold War. Key among those are the rise of China and India.

How should Africa maximise the opportunities and minimise the threats that these developments present?

Taking Africa seriously from within necessitates a clearer sense of accountability of African leadership for the reform process to their people. Five years into Nepad, African leaders need to make the meaning and benefits of Nepad more evident to the populace. Too often it seems like these reforms are a discussion between the African political elite and the G8. Benefits can be made more tangible by identifying key priorities that should be addressed in each state and setting about doing that in a focused way because the point about the Nepad vision is that ultimate actualisation rests at the national level.

It is in this regard that the African peer review process is one of the most tangible and potentially most effective tools developed. It is a mechanism which hopes to address some of the important challenges facing African states and their citizens – those of leadership accountable to the people, sound policies, which have both the intention and the outcome of eradicating poverty and improving the lives of citizens, protecting human rights and eliminating government by diktat.

This year marked the completion of the first APRM reports on Ghana

and Rwanda. Other assessments are proceeding apace and South Africa is also beginning the process.

The biggest test of the efficacy of the APRM process will, however, be the extent to which African leadership is bold enough to publish the full reports conducted on each of the countries; the degree to which these reports are frank and forthright in their assessment; and what plans of action emanate from them and how each government sets about addressing the shortcomings – because that is what APRM is about.

If citizens and leaders are serious about moving their countries they will not let the opportunity of APRM slip by. Both the governors and the governed are at a crossroads between taking a path which places inordinate emphasis on aid as Africa's salvation or one that is based on an internally-generated dynamic, of which aid may be a part, but only a part. This means Africa must recognise that the responsibility for development and good governance is rooted firmly in the leadership and society of Africa. Leaders should be trying to identify interventions that are within our powers and capabilities that will make some difference to poverty and suffering, given the resources we already have.

Early assessments of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) tell us that it is likely that most of Africa will miss the deadline of 2015. MDGs go to the heart of governments' abilities to deliver improvements on the socio-economic level. Their significance lies not only in the externally-imposed 'deadline', although this has helped to generate the dynamic.

We should also be thinking beyond the MDGs because these are not an end in themselves. Their achievement presupposes good infrastructure and good governance, and the skills to implement and maintain both. In many ways we need to aim higher than the MDG minimums. For example, a population where most only have primary education is not going to prepare you for development in the 21st century.

In the past 50-60 years about $2 trillion has been spent on development worldwide. Roughly half of that went to Africa. There is agreement that over this period it has accomplished little.

'Leaders should be trying identify interventions that are within our powers and capabilities'

There are many to blame – the recipient governments; the institutions providing aid; Cold War politics, which saw aid driven by geopolitical imperatives rather than the degree to which it was being used to help development; and the fact that development is a complex and multifaceted issue.

Time for smarter aid allocations

But I am not convinced that throwing more aid, more quickly, over a shorter timeframe at Africa will help any more, given some of the reasons for its inefficacy before. Aid should be a spur for creating and sustaining productive capacity, not a means of entrenching the privileges of the elite. At this juncture we should say that aid allocations don't have to be greater, they have to be smarter.

Directing more aid to the good performers – where it can make a difference because they have better infrastructure and capacity – is a *sine qua non.*

'Aid should be a spur for creating and sustaining productive capacity, not a means of entrenching the privileges of the elite'

There also has to be recognition that we can't fix everything and shouldn't try to fix everything that is fixable all at one time. So where can money be spent most effectively? Where can we work to create pockets of excellence? If these aid institutions were private companies, they may very well have been more meticulous in how they monitored efficacy and the geography of their investment. Aid has measured performance by the amount spent rather than whether it actually brought about the desired result. Having said this, we should engage more actively in these debates with donors and we should not be embarrassed about advocating a differentiated approach in Africa. All states are not equal in actual political and economic power or in capability and willingness to undertake difficult policy choices.

Sub-Saharan Africa has not done badly in the past few years. Non-oil producing countries are expecting average growth of about 4.5% in 2005, similar to 2004. The number of countries achieving growth in excess of 5% is expected to increase. Real GDP growth in SSA is projected to improve to 5.3% in 2006. Yet, growth in SSA remains below the levels observed in other developing country regions and, as we know, is still insufficient for most countries to achieve the income-poverty MDG. Only Mozambique, Ethiopia and Sierra Leone will grow by more than 7% in 2005.

Despite this good growth, sub-Saharan Africa still makes up only about 2% of world trade and its total economy is 1.3% of the global total.

While many countries in Africa are making good progress, this is not happening nearly as quickly as in the rest of the world. The 21st century will be Asia's. Whereas South Korea lagged Ghana in GDP per capita in the late 1950s, it is now a member of the developed countries club, the OECD.

The past few years have brought to the fore a new scramble for Africa over resources, often led by China's voracious appetite for raw materials. To ensure that Africa has a viable economy when those resources eventually dwindle, Africa must experiment in new approaches to husbanding revenue from oil companies so that it is spent on developmental matters and the communities. The Chad pipeline for example, is a positive

case. We also need to apply our mind to how resource-based economies can channel export-generated income from huge Chinese demand into domestic development. And we must develop and implement proper, industrial policies in areas where we can be competitive.

Ingredients of success

Africa's ability to profit from increased offers of aid and higher demand for resources will depend on several key variables.

Leadership: Political leadership includes encouraging innovation, which is about skills, education and strategies based on finding our niche markets and sectors to develop industrialisation/beneficiation capacity. But it necessitates being able to think ahead and being proactive in anticipating change.

Seeking to insulate Africa from globalisation is not a long-term sustainable option. At the same time, open economies, without skilled management of policies and their implementation, do not ensure prosperity for all citizens. That requires both a political leadership that anticipates the threats and opportunities and a capable state that intervenes effectively in areas where markets may not be the best vehicles for delivery.

We also need a mind-set change away from the politics of 'Brotherhood' and the 'lowest common denominator', which have long characterised African politics and have provided protection for 'rogue' leaders.

It is equally important to have good leaders in the many spheres of civil society. Around the continent civil society is becoming more vocal and demanding that governments deliver on promises. Civil society played an important role on the third term issue in Zambia; it has been strong in mobilising on HIV/Aids in South Africa, and more recently on municipal service delivery; one can argue that the crackdown in Zimbabwe since 2000 was a result of the successes of the civic movement in opposing Mugabe. But principled causes without good leaders will not win wars.

Ownership of successes and failures: In many ways it is about re-asserting control over out own destiny. Perhaps the analogy of a patient going to a therapist may be a good one here. He may have had a crummy upbringing, but nobody's going to live his life for him. Let not our epitaph be: 'Here lies a victim of his past.'

Building more capable state institutions: Progress has been made in improving state institutions, whether it is in fighting corruption or in improving accounting systems and transparency, but it is far from complete. When the state is largely absent, incapable or unwilling, there emerges the 'social justice' deficit that so many countries face. A critical problem that some African states face is their inability to exert power over their entire territory.

'Our challenges will not be overcome through external assistance only. We have leaders in Africa who have recognised this'

Adopting pragmatic policies: Not ones driven by ideological agendas, which avoid 'grey areas' and elevate one ideology (whether that is rampant free-marketeering, or state-centric socialism) to 'sacredness', as Ernest Gellner puts it.

Harnessing partnerships with the private sector: And dispelling the predisposition to question the profit motive of companies. Africa, after all, is not the world's single largest market with ever growing potential. It is small, fragmented and with little buying power. Creating hurdles for investors or onerous conditionalities may not dissuade some, but it makes it more difficult to attract others. The fact is that Africa needs foreign investment, simply because its saving ratios are so low, but is also needs to develop the domestic private sector more.

Developing infrastructure: Attempts at macro-economic stabilisation in African countries in the 1980s and 1990s were made in some cases at the expense of investment in long-term capital expenditure, especially in the area of infrastructure, which is vital for realising higher rates of economic growth and development. For example, the World Bank estimated in 1995 that some $1.5 billion a year was required for a decade to restore the existing road network to an appropriate level.

Improving the position of women: Paul Wolfowitz, the new president of the World Bank, said in a recent interview with the *Financial Times*: 'It seems ... an almost arithmetic equation that if half of the population is held back, then your development is going to be held back.'

I would like to end with a quote from an African poet of Hellenic background, Constantine Cavafy. His poem, Waiting for the Barbarians, talks about a city and its inhabitants, who prepare themselves for a big event – the advent of the barbarians. Everything is geared up towards their arrival.

Why suddenly should all this uneasiness begin,
And this confusion?
(How grave now have all faces become!)
Why are all streets and squares so quickly
emptying now, and why is everyone returning
home so lost in thought?

> *Because night has fallen, and the*
> *barbarians have not come. And a*
> *few men who have returned from*
> *the frontiers tell us that there are no*
> *barbarians anymore.*

And now, what's to become of us without
barbarians?
These people were some sort of a solution.

Africa needs to be prepared to take its own future in its hands. We have heard many promises in the past, of more aid and a greater focus on Africa.

Our challenges will not be overcome through external assistance only. We have leaders in Africa who have recognised this. Some of our partners in the North are serious about helping Africa. But if we take ourselves seriously we need to start changing what we can today.■

SPECIAL FEATURE

An Underused Development Force - African Television

TELEVISION has been hailed, at least since the 1960s, as one of the most powerful forces of social change in the developed world.

Images of police dogs and water cannons turned on peaceful African-American protestors helped transform American consciousness on race in the 1960s in ways that the written word had been unable to do. Television shortened the Vietnam War, changed US policy on Somalia and, on several occasions, produced massive outpourings of famine relief for Africa. It has also played a vital educational role, allowing for new forms of distance education.

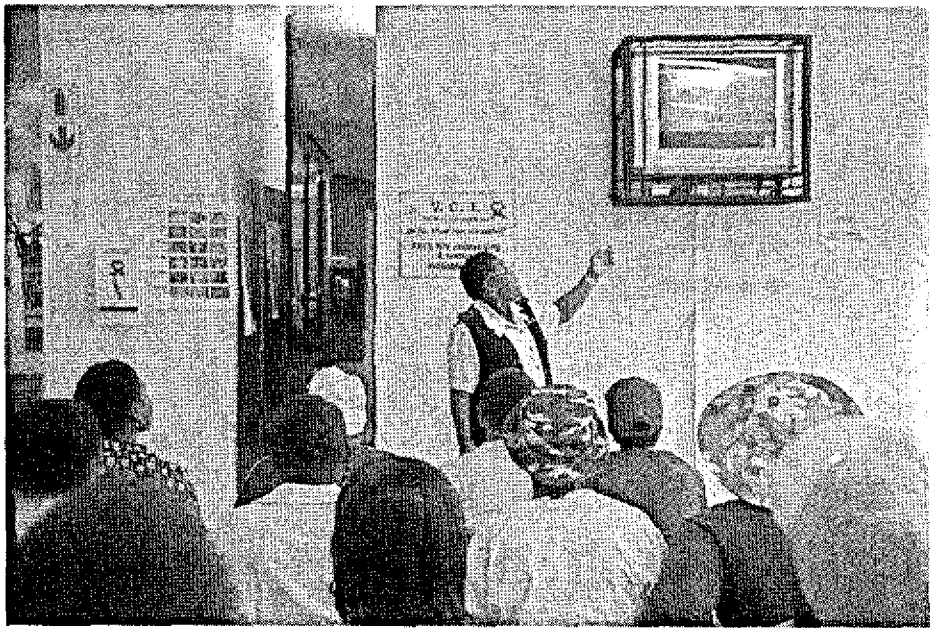
Yet in Africa it remains an under-exploited medium.

'I hear people praise the growth of the internet and how amazing it will be, but it was the same with television,' said Hassen Lorgat, a media activist from the South African NGO Coalition in Johannesburg. He expressed frustration at 'television's unfulfilled promise' to educate and inform, and said it is an overlooked resource more readily accessible to the public than computers.

'If it is in the public interest, television will achieve a lot more than the internet can in the short-term,' he said.

'Critical for success is the choice of the right ICT tools and their right use. Images of farmers using laptops in the paddy field or fishermen navigating with the aid of GPS may look good on magazine covers, but have limited utility in the real world,' said Nalaka Gunawardene, founder of a Sri Lanka-based NGO that promotes developmental use of television.

In the years following independence, many African governments began to experiment with the then young medium of TV. For example, Côte d'Ivoire launched a campaign called *Projet Televisuelle* in the 1970s, a short-lived attempt to add a television component to all primary education.



TECHNO ASSIST: *With the help of television, areas that do not necessarily have the best infrastructure and personnel can supplement their health education by delivering the latest through television programming.*

Photo: Courtesy of Mindset

'UNESCO was behind the move to get every nation in Africa to build a television station, and they convinced countries to do this because they said it would be educational,' said Louise M. Bourgault, professor of mass communications at Northern Michigan University.

'When the world was giving the colonies their independence, there was a lot of talk about how media was going to be used to help African nations catch up'

'UNESCO was very idealistic. ... When the world was giving the colonies their independence, there was a lot of talk about how media was going to be used to help African nations catch up with the rest of the world.'

In the late 1970s that wave of experimentation waned as Africa battled rising oil prices, falling exports, rising debt and unsustainable budget deficits. As a result, many stations ended up broadcasting the least expensive programmes – old reruns from international markets. As old Kung fu films, soap-operas and American action movies proliferated on African airwaves, educational programming fell by the wayside.

'In the end, entertainment was the cheapest thing to put on,' Bourgault said.

Politics played a crucial role. Without the ability to show a clear impact,

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educational programming often lacked political support when budgets had to be cut. And governments insisted that the limited funds available should showcase presidential activities. The desire to use television to bolster government stripped the airwaves of inquisitive public affairs programming and turned newscasts into turgid propaganda.

EXPOSURE: *The use of multimedia has helped to expose school children to much more content than they would have had access to.* *Photo: Touchline Photo*

Although government control of the airwaves remains the norm in most of Africa, some countries have begun to re-experiment with more constructive forms of educational, public affairs and development broadcasting.

One of the most popular television shows in Angola is creatively simple. The Orion show helps re-unite families divided by the nation's 27-year civil war. Every Friday, families queue in the capital and get to record a 30-second video appeal to lost relatives.

In Nigeria and Ghana, public affairs and political debate shows have flourished, often calling government ministers to appear and face robust questions from studio audiences and callers.

Today, a few television networks across the continent support their own educational departments, with varied levels of institutional backing and success. One of the most comprehensive programmes is in South Africa.

'South Africa – probably most notably with *Soul City* – proved beyond a shadow of doubt that you could make incredible, educational serial dramas," Bourgault said, adding that content and ideas from South Africa are leading the continent in educational television. **(See Soul City story on page 9.)**

In 1996, the government-run South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) redeveloped its education unit for the newly-democratic nation. The organisation structured its educational unit into four focus areas: early childhood development; curriculum support; youth education; and public adult education. Content includes programming on a range of topics, from literacy to consumer education; health to civic education; sports to self-esteem.

'We're linking what's on television or radio to a particular audience and to specific outcomes,' said Ingrid Bruynse, editor of formal education at the SABC. 'We're trying to inform or educate viewers, and we're doing good television with the aim of creating a change in the user or learner or teacher. That's what differs between educational and general broadcasting.'

Offering supplements

As part of its effort, the SABC has created printed educational materials to accompany school curricula. Teachers who are interested in using television in their classrooms can request free 'print packs,' made up of posters, worksheet booklets and picture books that accompany the daily broadcasts on SABC's three television stations.

'More than 20,000 teacher's packets have been distributed to a total of 6,900 schools in South Africa,' Bruynse said.

Last year, Ethiopia began installing televisions in 420 high schools. They will be used to broadcast 30-minute programmes in physics, chemistry, biology, math, English, and civics. Kakama Luneta, an educational consultant who worked on the project until earlier this year, said the project had developed 2,979 television programmes for students in grades nine through 12. The programmes are intended primarily for schools that do not have qualified teachers in the classroom. Every school has been equipped with a satellite dish, Luneta said, and pre-recorded lessons are broadcast via both the nation's terrestrial infrastructure and satellite according to a fixed schedule. Once the nation's combined fibre-optic and satellite internet network is complete, the government expects to broadcast the programmes via internet-streamed MPEG2 digital video, which would allow teachers to fast-forward, slow down or pre-screen the broadcast.

Each of the segments mimics an actual lesson with the on-screen instructor referring students to exercises in accompanying guide books and leaving time for students to work on problems. As the televised teacher goes through the questions, Luneta said learners mark their own work against the answers on the screen. At the end of the lesson, the on-screen instructor assigns homework.

Because broadcast courses can be designed centrally and presented in a standard way on-screen, television courses offer the potential to develop more vivid, effective courses. But poor quality has been a common problem in African educational television.

Even when broadcast lectures are of good quality, they lack interactivity, which makes them a weak substitute

for a real teacher. 'The advantage [of the Ethiopian system] is the universal aspect of it; every child is receiving almost an equivalent instruction,' said Luneta, who now teaches physics at the University of Johannesburg. 'At any time, there is a television programme going on for every grade. So while grade nine might be having English, grade 11 might be having biology.'

'The other advantage is that, where the learners have absolutely no teacher, at least there is something for them,' he said, adding that the programming is not intended to take over the job of the teacher.

To get around the interactivity problem, the African Virtual University (AVU) uses television in conjunction with internet laboratories and electronic mail. High-quality technical lecturers transmit their lectures via satellite. Satellite dishes at each AVU school download the programmes, which are shown on classroom televisions. Students can ask questions via e-mail. AVU, which is established in 57 education institutions in 27 African countries, was designed to offer courses in technical subjects where Africa is short of the needed lecturers. It offers degree and certificate courses from several US, Canadian and Australian universities.

In similar fashion, South Africa's Mindset Network tries to assist secondary schools. Since 2002, it has provided under-resourced schools and health clinics with televisions, computers and satellite dishes. Using a satellite network, the organisation distributes its curriculum-based content through television and the internet, reaching even South Africa's most rural areas.

The network transmits to 2,000 public high schools, reaching more than 110,000 educators and 750,000 learners. Funded in part by the US Agency for International Development and donors, it provides each school with 74cm colour televisions, computer equipment, and a satellite – worth about $7,000. Programming airs on a dedicated satellite television channel and teachers are provided schedules for regular segments in English, maths, science, financial literacy and technology.

The organisation's spokeswoman Busi Koloi said the use of television has 'a far greater impact' than print interventions alone. 'A lot of other NGOs will focus on print, but to distribute print materials is such a hassle,' she said. 'By using multimedia by satellite, we can reach a whole lot of people in a short space of time. These students are exposed to far more content than they would've been before, and they don't have to rely entirely on textbooks.'

Early next year, Mindset will launch a 'Livelihoods' channel, on job-seeking and life skills, targeted at individuals who've finished school, and Mindset expects to start a higher education channel in 2008. It also hopes to provide their free educational content to the neighbouring nations of Swaziland, Lesotho, and Namibia in the near future.

'The other advantage is that, where the learners have absolutely no teacher, at least there is something for them'

Such programmes can present education ministries with a difficult choice. If ample foreign funding is available, they can make effective supplements to well-managed schools. But in most of Africa there is inadequate funding for basics like chalk, books, desks and adequately trained teachers. Given such shortages, should Africa invest in expensive broadcast education, internet education or the basics?

Gunawardene cautions that technology is 'not a panacea that can fix deep-rooted ills. ICTs cannot turn bad development into good development. They can only make good development better.' – **Gretchen Wilson**

Briefly

In a bind: The Special Court for Sierra Leone, set up to try those charged with war crimes in the west African country, is running out of money and urgently needs $25 million to keep it going. Appealing for donations, UN Deputy Secretary-General Louise Frechette said: 'By doing so states will make clear that those who commit heinous crimes against international law, wherever they may be, must be held accountable.' Established in 2002, the court was funded through voluntary contributions until the end of 2004. UN funds are keeping it afloat for the rest of this year. So far the court has indicted 11 defendants, while two key suspects – Johnny Paul Koroma, the former leader of the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council and former president Charles Taylor – still have to be brought before the court.

Signs of hope: Southern Sudan set up a new autonomous government in October after signing a deal with the Islamist northern government, agreeing to a federal system, wealth sharing, transition to democracy and a referendum on secession after six years. Members of the former rebel Sudan People's Liberation Movement dominate the new administration. Rebecca Garang, the wife of the late John Garang, has been appointed as the minister of transport and roads, a sector that is expected to have massive investments as the region reportedly has less than 10km of paved road.

In transit: Mauritania's new military rulers, who ended two decades of President Maaouiya Ould Sid Ahmed Taya's rule in a bloodless coup in August, have issued a provisional electoral calendar aimed at returning the country to democracy in two years. After working behind closed doors for weeks, the military junta released the results of its caucus on how to organise the transition to democracy as well as measures to improve good governance and reform the justice system. They have now invited various political actors to debate the results, in a bid to encourage transparency and grassroots political involvement.

SPECIAL FEATURE

Soul City: A Strategy for Small-Screen Education

A FEW years ago, *Soul City*, one of South Africa's leading prime-time television dramas, rattled viewers with a slap.

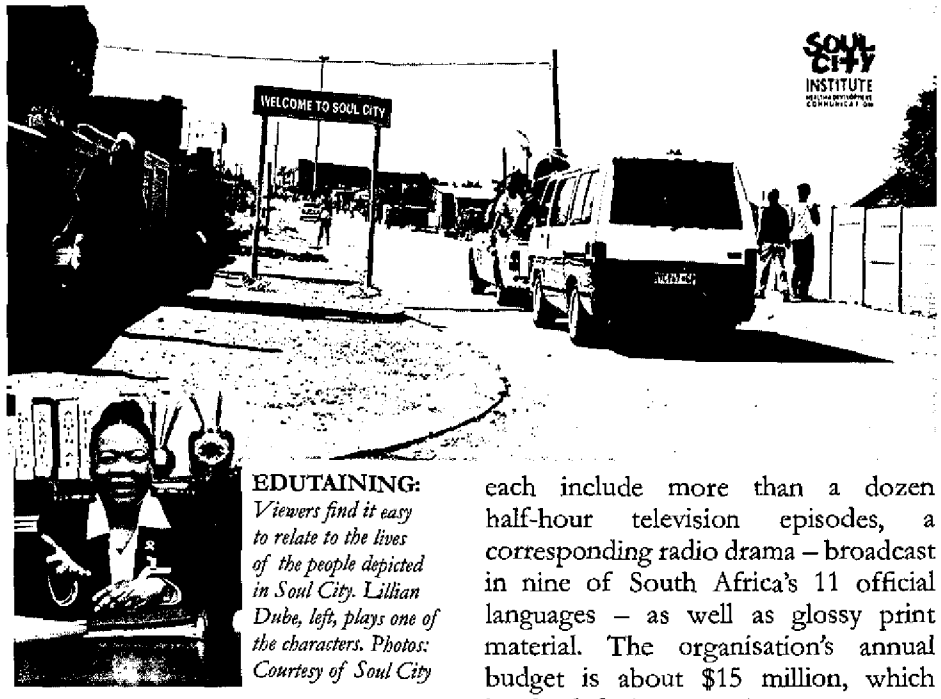
On the show, a well-respected teacher, Thabang, repeatedly abused his wife, Matlakala. When she told her mother about the abuse, she was told she must 'bekezela' – endure the abuse – because it's a woman's duty to make a marriage work. Thabang's father agrees, and says husbands must discipline wives 'according to tradition.' But Matlakala's father disapproved, arguing that violence against women has never been condoned in traditional culture.

Opening up eyes

Matlakala's beatings got worse – until she was hospitalised. There she learned about South Africa's new Domestic Violence Act, and found out how to get a protection order. She and her father asked for help from the community, and when Thabang begins to beat Matlakala again, neighbours took action by beating pots and pans in front of their home to make it clear they disapprove. Thabang ultimately was arrested and convicted for abuse and for breaking the protection order.

'Before those episodes, I used to think domestic violence happened because the woman causes problems with the husband,' said Zonke Ntshwanti, 29, a security guard from Johannesburg. 'But Matlakala on *Soul City* was so nice and kind; she was an African woman. And it wasn't her fault at all.'

Soul City is one of two television series produced by the Johannesburg-based Soul City Institute for Health and Development Communication, a not-for-profit organisation often regarded as an international leader in public health communications. Its multimedia communications strategy uses drama to impart social norms, attitudes and



EDUTAINING: *Viewers find it easy to relate to the lives of the people depicted in Soul City. Lillian Dube, left, plays one of the characters. Photos: Courtesy of Soul City*

practice – bridging the gap between education and entertainment in a field now known as 'edutainment.'

Eleven years after South Africa's transition to democracy, edutainment is creating a new field of social leadership in this nation of 47 million. *Soul City*, and a corresponding series for younger viewers, *Soul Buddyz*, expose the nation's diverse communities to depictions of cultural expectations and norms.

'Cultural beliefs may make it difficult for an individual to change their behaviour,' said Thuli Shongwe, senior research officer at Soul City. 'We knew from our research that women said, "In our culture, women are supposed to endure abuse." And other women endorse abusive behaviour. It is cultural.'

'It's a very powerful tool, the edutainment approach, in dealing with societal beliefs and cultural things that inhibit people from changing,' Shongwe said.

The *Soul City* and *Soul Buddyz* series each include more than a dozen half-hour television episodes, a corresponding radio drama – broadcast in nine of South Africa's 11 official languages – as well as glossy print material. The organisation's annual budget is about $15 million, which is funded in part by government departments. But it remains largely dependent on international donors, including the European Union and the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID), as well as corporate sponsors such as British Petroleum and Old Mutual.

Yet its award-winning research methodology, television programmes and print materials are now being exported to SADC nations and beyond, providing a possibility for similar education programmes throughout the developing world.

Born from reality

Fifteen years ago, Dr Garth Japhet was working as a medical doctor at a neighbourhood clinic in Alexandra, a township just north of Johannesburg.

This was when South Africa was also perched on the edge of what would rapidly become a major epidemic: HIV was becoming more and more common among patients.

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'It was at the point where people were projecting a huge epidemic,' he said.

Japhet worked primarily with mothers and children, and over time he noticed that patients came in repeatedly for the same conditions – largely because they had limited knowledge about how to stay healthy.

'The number one cause of child death at that point was diarrhoea,' said Japhet. 'At least on a weekly basis, either a child died of – or was dying because of – dehydration' – an easily preventable death, particularly in an urban area.

'The solution is a really simple one, it's about teaching mothers about rehydration,' he said.

But Japhet found that simply conveying clinical information wasn't enough.

'It also has to do with complex cultural issues,' he said.

Japhet teamed up with Dr Shereen Usdin to develop what would become Soul City, a health education programme that addresses common problems while exploring the cultural barriers that sometimes prevent healthy choices. Their idea was to create a television drama series, in conjunction with a corresponding radio series and print material.

It was a creative revolution in South Africa. 'Decades of apartheid had created both a pervasive distrust of national broadcasters and a 'massive education gap,' according to David Jammy, head of Curious Pictures, a Johannesburg television production company that has produced three series of *Soul City*.

'Immediately, it was an absolute phenomenon,' Jammy said. 'In that climate, Soul City was a drama that reached out to the majority of the population. It was educative at a time when there was a real hunger for education, and it was reliable.'

TABLE 7: WHAT I LIKED ABOUT SOUL CITY

	N	%
It educates our children	192	21.4
It teaches the community how to deal with AIDS	191	21.3
It is real	160	17.8
It helps us to solve problems	114	12.7
It shows how people take care of each other	63	7
Everything	54	6
Adult basic education	40	4.4
It teaches children to respect elders and one another	23	2.5
It has a message	18	2
We must not allow abuse	14	1.6
Not to be embarrassed when parents are uneducated	11	1.2
It contributes to psychological growth of people	10	1.1
It eliminates racism	9	1

There were very few dislikes expressed. When asked, 76% of respondents said that there was nothing they they disliked about Soul City. The next most common dislike was that Soul City 6 was flighted in a late time slot. *Source: Soul City*

Creating social change

Initial episodes of *Soul City* addressed issues such as HIV/Aids, mother and child health, smoking and alcohol abuse. Subsequent series have address various aspects of the Aids pandemic, to which *Soul City* dedicates about 60% of its content, Japhet said. Later storylines included health-related issues such as depression and rape, as well as life skills such as personal finance, small business development, and adult literacy.

'The objective of *Soul City* is different than other television dramas, because we want to create social change. Largely that's in the health field, but we see that in a broad lens,' said Dr Sue Goldstein, the programme's senior manager for research.

'For example', she said, '*Soul City's* topics include economic issues and personal relationships because they're related to health behaviours.' While the current *Soul City* series addresses AIDS and treatment, its characters also explore assumptions about masculinity and male behaviour. Some characters promote volunteering, while others tackle unequal access to health services. The fiction is all part of the organisation's transformational aim.

'What's wonderful about drama is that we've used it for centuries to educate people,' Goldstein said.

More than a decade after its debut, *Soul City* is now in its seventh series. In 1999, the organisation launched *Soul Buddyz*, tailored for children aged 8 to 12, which is in its third series. The two television programmes alone have a combined audience of 3.5 million, Goldstein said.

Soul City's edutainment model has also inspired similar programmes, transforming the landscape of dramatic educational television in South Africa. *Yizo Yizo*, a television drama that debuted in 1999, tackled issues facing students and teachers in the nation's public schools and townships, including rape, murder, prostitution and HIV/AIDS. The show was produced by the Johannesburg-based production company called The Bomb Shelter and ran for three seasons.

In 2002, the South African Broadcasting Corporation's education division commissioned *Tsha Tsha*, a series about young people in the impoverished Eastern Cape province. Now in its fourth season, the drama is again produced by Curious Pictures and the Centre for AIDS Development, Research and Evaluation (CADRE), a non-profit research and communications organisation.

Other educational television initiatives in South Africa, including the SABC's *Takalane Sesame* children's programme and new government-interface talk show programmes, are providing models of educational programming that have

heretofore been relatively unheard-of in Africa.

Research is the key

The popular appeal of Soul City's health education programme isn't a fluke. The organisation uses an exhaustive research methodology to ensure its messages are both effective and compelling.

Soul City chooses three or four health and development issues around which to develop each series. They then consult experts on the chosen topics, including local and international NGOs, civil society groups, doctors, and academics. Researchers, including rural field workers, then consult the public, asking about their knowledge of the issue and locating the barriers that often prevent positive change.

'We don't know the answers always; we don't necessarily know how people feel about the issues,' Goldstein said. 'We try to involve as many people as we can.'

Scripts are then developed collaboratively, with the NGOs, other development partners, and audience members giving feedback on both the messages and entertainment value. After a series is distributed and broadcast, materials are then independently evaluated to determine their impact on the public.

Such exhaustive research isn't cheap; Goldstein said it costs about $5.3 million to produce a *Soul City* series, including all the research, production, and follow-up evaluations. And while it takes about 18 months to develop and produce each series, Soul City says the calibre of its research is what makes it so powerful.

TOUCHING LIVES: *The members of the cast of Soul City have done their bit to change perceptions, even though some experts agree that edutainment may not work as well in all developing countries due to poor reception in rural areas and the lack of electricity, among other problems.* *Photo: Courtesy of Soul City*

'The qualitative part of our research, the depth required, the way we do it – it all helps us understand the target audience much better,' said Shongwe.

However, that high cost limits the growth of the *Soul City* idea unless there is major government or donor funding. 'Television is extraordinarily expensive, and drama is the most expensive form of television,' said David Jammy of Curious Pictures. He said the 'window has closed somewhat for these shows' as funders are looking for more viable, cheaper forms of educational and entertaining television.

'The qualitative part of our research, the depth required, the way we do it – it all helps us understand the target audience better'

Other less expensive formats include talk-show formats and reality shows. Jammy said an idea is being developed for a reality show that asks South African communities to compete by giving a 'make over' to their own neighbourhoods.

Soul City's television dramas are at the heart of the organisation's outreach strategy in South Africa. Goldstein said that is because television access 'shot up' after apartheid and quickly became an important medium for education.

'We only use television and other vehicles to reach people,' Goldstein said. 'The cheapest intervention is radio, but because of the huge influx of television, we've found people listen less to radio.'

In fact, two-thirds of South African adults watch television every day, according to a nationwide survey commissioned by Soul City in October 2004. The poll of 1,500 adults from both urban and rural areas said another 16% watch between one and four times a week, while only 15% watch hardly ever or never. For children aged eight to 15, the rates are even higher; a poll of 1,800 children showed 70% watch television every day or almost every day.

But Goldstein concedes that television-based edutainment may not work as well in all developing countries.

'Often, reception is isolated to the capital cities and many people don't have electricity,' she said.

Yet for those with access, the popularity and didactic message have a lot to offer viewers elsewhere, according to Anton Harber, professor of journalism and media at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg.

'There's isn't anything like that elsewhere in the whole continent,' Harber said.

Still, others point out that even with *Soul City's* successes, edutainment has a limited capacity to transform personal behaviours.

'Complex social behavioural change is never going to happen through a drama series,' Jammy said.

Extending the reach

Because of *Soul City's* undeniable popularity, other African nations have launched similar television programmes, often with the assistance of international funders. In June 2004, Nigeria launched a television series

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called *Behind the Seige* as part of the IMPACT Project coordinated through the NGO Family Health International and funded in part by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The locally-produced drama programme encourages viewers to get tested for HIV and includes information on the prevention of mother-to-child-transmission, just as in the storylines of *Soul City*.

'There's an enormous amount of knowledge and skills that have developed here in South Africa over the last 10 to 15 years,' Jammy said, adding 'a lot can be done to package and export that format elsewhere.'

And that's Soul City's next step. The organisation's products have already been used in local health programmes in many non-African nations, including Papua New Guinea, Surinam, and Romania. It has also advised programmes in India, Vietnam, New Zealand and Colombia.

Soul City is currently collaborating with eight other nations in the region – Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Swaziland, Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe – as part of a five-year project to build capacity among the region's health communications programmes.

Most neighbouring countries have started to air the original *Soul City* television programme – sometimes dubbed into another language or aired with subtitles. The broadcasting isn't free – the airtime is actually paid for by Soul City's $34-million regional programme budget. Broadcasters then follow *Soul City* with a locally-produced documentary, news, or talk show programme that addresses the same health issues covered in the drama.

'Many people in the black community still don't believe that ARV treatment works, so *Soul City* is an eye opener'

'There's a lot of evidence that homegrown role models work best,' said Harriet Perlman, a regional manager at Soul City, adding that capacity is varied from country to country. 'Having Soul City work within the regional countries is beneficial because we have a lot of exposure, we do it well and we have a bank of materials,' she said.

'There's a lot of evidence that homegrown role models work best'

Each nation chooses which Soul City materials (television, radio and/or print) to adapt to their country under its own brand. For example, Namibia's programme is called *Desert Soul,* in Malawi it's *Pakachere,* and in Zimbabwe it's *Action Pals.* Perlman said about a third of the print materials are changed to reflect local customs, practices or values.

New audiences

Mozambique's national broadcaster debuted *Soul City* in March 2004. It was the same show broadcast in South Africa a few years earlier, but now dubbed into Portuguese. After each episode, the broadcaster ran a local documentary produced by Soul City's partner in Mozambique, *Vida Positiva.*

'For example, if the show is focusing on violence against women, we'll try to localise and contextualise the issues,' said Denise Namburete, communications director for *Vida Positiva.* 'And we'll tell people the organisations in Mozambique that are promoting advocacy and equality for women.'

Namburete said it costs about $90,000 to locally-produce 13 half-hour documentaries to follow each episode in a *Soul City* series. She said this year *Vida Positiva* and the national broadcaster plan to air two more *Soul City* series and related documentaries.

Yet not all SADC countries are choosing to air Soul City's television programming.

Botswana Television, the national broadcaster, turned down offers to air Soul City programming, according to Busi Butale, project manager of the 'Choose Life' programme of Population Services International, the local partner for Soul City.

There is currently only one health-based educational programme on Botswana television, called *Talk Back,* according to Butale. But the government-sponsored station has said it wants to promote locally-produced programmes, with culturally appropriate and language-specific programming.

'They don't want to have a lot of foreign programmes,' Butale said. 'They think that if it's an educational programme it needs to cover the content and context of Botswana.'

In particular, Butale said, the government broadcaster has claimed Soul City programming isn't relevant to local residents. For example, Butale said since Botswana has rolled out a nationwide anti-retroviral treatment programme, previous series dealing with limited access to treatment are outdated.

For now, Soul City will continue to develop programming primarily for a South African audience, where new statistics suggest 6.5 million are HIV positive. With millions of regular viewers, though, the programme continues to be a major source of information for the public, according to Thuli Ndlovu, 32, a jobseeker from South Africa's Soweto township.

'Many people in the black community still don't believe that anti-retroviral treatment works, so *Soul City* is an eye opener,' said Ndlovu. 'It's a show about real life that showed us as a community, so that's why you find people glued to the screen.' – **Gretchen Wilson**