

**Soul City Television Series 12
Terms of Reference
October 2012**

1. Background

Soul City: Institute for Health & Development Communication (SCI) is a non-profit organisation (NPO) which was initiated in 1992.

Most development initiatives attempt to empower people through knowledge and so enable them to make positive, informed decisions concerning their lives. With the myriad of issues facing South Africa and the developing world, the question is how to reach the people who need this knowledge.

Mass media is the most powerful communication tool at our disposal, having far reaching influence. Unfortunately, many of these influences are negative.

South Africa is ideally suited to use mass media to promote health and development since approximately 92% of South Africans have access to radio, 85% to television and 55% to newspaper.

History has shown a number of attempts to use media constructively. Many of these attempts, however, have had a limited impact. To utilise the media to its maximum potential the following should be taken into account:

- Each medium should be used in its most *popular* form. For the electronic media, this means accessing prime time.
- A *multi media* approach should be adopted since each medium reaches different audiences and can complement and reinforce the others.
- All materials should be thoroughly *researched* through ongoing consultation with the target audience, together with key experts in the field.

It is against this background that Soul City Drama has been developed. The project is unique in that, instead of responding to one particular issue (such as HIV and AIDS) and developing a specific “once off” media intervention around it, Soul City is a powerful *media vehicle* that can be used to address a variety of issues on an ongoing basis. The advantage of the “ongoing vehicle” approach is that it is the vehicle that becomes popular and credible over time so that instead of having to try to build audience and credibility from the beginning of an intervention

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and only ending up with large numbers at the end, the popular vehicle will draw audience immediately and confer legitimacy on the issues to be covered. Hence there is no lag phase and no waste of resources.

Soul City 1 was screened in 1994. We aim to screen the 12th series of Soul City in 2014.

The Soul City vehicle consists of the following components:

1.1 Television

Drama captures people's imaginations like no other television genre. Soul City, our television drama, has a prime time slot on SABC-1, (the most popular channel) and is produced in a series of 13 half-hour episodes. The series uses the power of drama to impart health education messages. This technique is known as "edutainment", whereby educational messages are conveyed through an entertainment programme. Soul City has attracted a large and loyal audience.

1.2 Radio

Along with Soul City television, we usually run a weekly talk show to discuss the issues relating to the series. The extent of the radio intervention depends on funding.

1.3 Print

We develop 32 page colour high quality booklets illustrated with characters from the television series, thus contracts with actors need to include photo shoots.

1.4 Public Relations and Advertising Strategy

The glue that holds the three media together is a carefully thought out strategy that seeks to popularise the aforementioned communication vehicles and to raise further awareness of the issues they tackle. This is achieved through a public relations campaign that places the programmes and their issues on the public agenda through editorial space, competitions and a range of actuality programmes in the various media. The extent of the PR and advertising is dependent on funding.

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1.5 Research and Development

The core of Soul City is the commitment to a vigorous research process. Our research process is followed for each topic. The raison d'être of Soul City is health and development and thus the drama cannot impinge on this in any way. This sometimes means that the director does not have artistic autonomy, and Soul City has been known to insist on changes being made to conform to the health and development ideals. We have recognised that there is a very delicate balance between the drama and the educational content and while we have the utmost respect for our creative partners, the success in health promotion relies on our participating fully often even to the editing phase.

- a) A local and international literature review is commissioned
- b) Simultaneously, the major players in that field are consulted to ascertain what they feel the major national messages should be on the topic
- c) On the strength of the information obtained from steps a) and b), focus groups are conducted with members of the target audience
- d) All the information obtained in steps a), b) and c) are brought to a message design workshop which is attended by our material developers as well as the people consulted in step b). We together agree on a national message for the topic
- e) A written brief is drawn up for our material developers
- f) The creative team and the consultants together with the researchers and the Soul City team come together in a creative workshop to develop ideas for the series.
- g) Our material developers develop an outline of the series and the first drafts of the written material
- h) Pre-testing is performed on the outlines and on each episode thereafter.
- i) We send copies of the first drafts to consultants who have been nominated as such at our message design workshop and pre-test the drafts with focus groups of members of our target audience
- j) On the strength of the feedback received, our material developers re-work the scripts and written material
- k) Steps j) and h) are repeated until Soul City is happy with the final draft
- l) Material is then produced through an interaction with the producer/ director to ensure that the final product adheres to the spirit of the message brief, and the Health Promotion principles of the Soul City project
- m) After national lighting an impact evaluation is conducted

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The first series of Soul City was flighted over a three month period in 1994 and concentrated on eight crucial “Mother and Child Health” issues. All Soul City series were contextualised within broader development concerns such as community mobilisation, the empowerment of women, gender sensitivity and non-racism. The project has generated acclaim both locally and internationally. Each additional series has won accolades and has been evaluated to be effective in improving and maintaining positive health behaviours such as condom use and going for HIV tests.

2. Intervention

2.1 Overall Objective

To improve health and development in sub-Saharan Africa through social change, creating a supportive environment and shifting social norms in relation to positive health.

2.2 Project Purpose

To use the mass media, specifically television to create social change in the following priority areas:

- 2.2.1. Primary health care – the involvement of the community in achieving quality health services, both in supporting and holding them accountable, as well as promoting health at a primary health level such as encouraging immunization and preventing deaths from dehydration through the use of oral rehydration (for babies).
- 2.2.2 Supporting survivors of sexual violence by informing them of their rights and the services available to them.(Specifically the Thuthuzela Care Centres)

2.3 Project Results

Thirteen 26 minute TV drama episodes to be produced and broadcast on SABC1 January to March 2014 (depending of airtime accessed from SABC)

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3. Implementation

- 3.1 The production team will need to oversee the scriptwriting process, including integrating testing and expert feedback.

- 3.2 The production house will have to translate the scripts into a few South African languages.

- 3.3 The production house will have to arrange sub-titles.

- 3.4 The production team will have to produce promos for airing on SABC

- 3.5 The production team will be fully responsible for pre-, production and post production of the series.