

# Aiming to change lives AND SAVE LIVES



**DRAMA DELIVERY:** Sis Noni (played by Florence Masebe), the key character in the latest incarnation of *Soul City* supports a patient in labour

'Soul City' makes a return to our screens and offers more than just medical drama, writes **SOMAYA STOCKENSTROOM**

**T**HERE are some exciting new story lines as well as fresh faces in the latest *Soul City* series.

The widely popular and influential drama series was originally created to communicate health issues. But the current chapter in the series – now in its eleventh year – aims to educate viewers on social issues as well.

The series forms a central part of the Soul City Institute's ongoing OneLove campaign that focuses on preventing HIV.

Prevention of HIV infection remains a major public health challenge in South Africa, and *Soul City* advocates that no child should

be born HIV positive when a programme to prevent this exists.

Set in a community with poor health and other social services, stalwart community health campaigner Sis Noni (Florence Masebe) is forever demanding improvements to the clinic. So, when it burns down, tensions rise.

Smokin Joe's, the local boxing gym owned by Noni's husband, Malusi (Dumisani Mbebe), becomes the venue for a temporary clinic where Noni can continue her important work of preventing mother-to-child HIV transmission.

And Noni's parents-support group promises to introduce viewers to such underlying issues of HIV-Aids as stigma and silence.

Noni's other passion is encouraging young men to undergo male medical circumcision (MMC) to protect them from getting HIV.

But her husband insists their sons, Mandla (Siyanda Sesimani) and Sam (Robert Mpisi) undergo traditional circumcision.

This conflict captures the debate

on MMC versus traditional circumcision as an HIV prevention measure.

The third theme in the current edition of the series is sound management of one's personal finance. This is conveyed to viewers by newcomers Grace (Leleti Khumalo) and her daughter Nkosazana (Samukelo Ndlovu) who have fled from their home to escape debt collectors.

Joy Khaole, Old Mutual's head of sponsorships comments: "A partnership with a successful edutainment series such as *Soul City* will maximise our efforts at promoting responsible financial management."

The show's producers have taken care to ensure that *Soul City* remains authentic to its viewers.

As head writer Brent Quinn comments: "*Soul City's* extensive research into the real life struggles of ordinary people inspires our story lines."

■ The series' new episodes start this Tuesday at 8.30pm on SABC 1.