
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Soul City is a multi media “edutainment” strategy which has been running since 1992 and which aims to empower people and communities through the power of mass media. The first series of Soul City was aired in 1994, the second series in 1996, the third series in 1997. The fourth series is going to be aired in 1999.

The ongoing Soul City strategy consists of five key elements:

1. Television Series

A 13 episode ½ hour television drama which is flighted at prime time (8pm) on SABC1. The show, called *Soul City*, has become one of the most popular programmes on television and has won the Avanti award for excellence in educational broadcasting two years in succession, and has won the SABC award for top programme. Soul City uses its dramatic power to impart health and development education messages.

2. Radio

The radio drama of the second series was called *Healing Hearts* and consists of 45 fifteen-minute episodes broadcast on eight different language stations and a further ten community radio stations. While the main messages are similar to those on the TV programme, the *Healing Hearts* was developed to appeal to more rural audiences.

3. Booklets / Newspapers

The Soul City campaign uses printed material to reinforce the broad messages conveyed by the electronic media, and to supplement knowledge with more detailed information. Three 34-page glossy booklets are developed each series and illustrated with characters from the television series. The booklets are serialised in two languages in 10 newspapers nationally and thereafter a total of 2.25 million booklets are distributed as inserts in these newspapers.

4. PR , Advertising and Advocacy

The public relations section includes a variety of activities intended to help popularise Soul City, as well as advocating for the particular health issues. Methods employed include the strategic release of articles about the particular health issues. A variety of competitions are run on the radio, television and through newspapers and magazines, encouraging healthy and community oriented behaviour, and each popularising the other media. There is a “search for a star” competition which looks for new actors to star in the next series of Soul City, and a Health Care Worker of the Year Competition.

5. Education packages

The mainstream media are effective vehicles for raising awareness and knowledge. Targeted and facilitated interventions amongst specific groups of people are even more effective. Soul City has built on the success of the mass media campaign, and

developed packages for use in formal and informal education settings. Catering for adult education groups, and youth between the ages of 11 and 16 years these packages are based on the issues tackled by the Soul City mass media. They build on the stories in the mass media and are high quality materials. The adult pack consists of a comic with information pages, posters, a facilitators guide and audio tapes. The Lifeskills pack consists of a comic, workbooks and a facilitator's manual.

This evaluation was performed in four representative sites around the country over a period of one year (1600 respondents, 20 focus groups and 15 in-depth interviews).

Some key results from the evaluation are:

- 61% of all respondents were exposed to the Soul City media
- 57% of TV viewers saw Soul City TV
- 41% of radio listeners heard Soul City radio
- 37% of newspapers readers saw the Soul City booklets

- The multi-media vehicle was appropriate for reaching rural and urban areas, and was effective in reinforcing messages.

- The television programme was one of the most popular programmes on TV, and reached nearly two million people every week.

- The power of edutainment was borne out: Soul City's popularity was due to its accessibility, entertainment value, and the fact that it contained educational messages.

- 95% of people who were exposed to Soul City reported that they had learnt something from it.

- Over half of those who accessed Soul City discussed it afterwards with friends, family or at school.

- The most memorable messages were those dealing with HIV / AIDS, safe sex and smoking. Messages around TB, land and housing were less well remembered. This is partly due to the fact that they were dealt with less extensively than other issues.

- Knowledge about transmission of the HIV virus increased significantly - particularly among youth, the primary target group. There was a reported increase in condom usage after the intervention.

- Soul City also tackled the issue of prejudice towards AIDS victims, and successfully changed attitudes towards people with HIV / AIDS.

- The humorous way in which Soul City addressed the smoking issue captured the imagination of its audience. Much of the knowledge gained was around the issue of passive smoking and its harmful effects on children.

-
- There was an increase in awareness and knowledge about tuberculosis, and particularly about its symptoms and treatment. Soul City successfully conveyed the message that anyone can get TB.
 - Storylines dealing with land and housing raised awareness of land reform programmes and processes for acquiring land.

BACKGROUND

South Africa is starting to recover after decades of strategic discrimination and enforced inequality. Though it is regarded as a middle income country, the majority of South Africans still live below the bread line and millions subsist in circumstances resembling the poorest countries in the world. National health statistics reflect the inequities of society, with large portions of the population suffering from preventable deaths and diseases. There is an urgent need to develop and expand health care facilities so that even the most marginalised people have access to adequate treatment. Simultaneously, it is important that people be educated about life-threatening diseases and health practices. Although there have been campaigns to spread knowledge, the backlog in resources and decades of poor education are difficult to eradicate.

There have been very few health education programmes aimed at challenging social attitudes and changing unhealthy behaviour patterns; Soul City set out to do precisely this - in an imaginative and entertaining way that would be accessible to a broad range of people.

THE SOUL CITY PHILOSOPHY

“Edutainment” as a popular vehicle for social messages

It is widely acknowledged that media is an efficient and cost-effective way of reaching large, dispersed and often illiterate audiences. The vast majority of South Africans, even in marginalised and remote areas, have access to at least one form of mainstream media – approximately 92% of South Africans have access to radio, 71% to television and 17% read daily newspapers. Development and educational initiatives increasingly use the media in an effort to spread knowledge widely, and educational programmes abound.

The use of **entertaining** programmes to empower people with knowledge, however, is a relatively new concept in South Africa. Soul City has pioneered this “edutainment” approach, contextualising educational messages within a dramatic genre.

There are a number of ways in which this approach serves the objectives of the Soul City campaign:

SOUL CITY OBJECTIVES

EDUTAINMENT FUNCTION

Reach as many people as possible within a broad target market, while specifically focusing on youth and women in marginalised and remote communities.



Some form of mainstream media exists in almost every home, no matter how rural. The entertainment function of the programme ensures broad appeal, reaching larger and more diverse audiences than conventional didactic education programmes.

Generate discussion around health and lifestyle issues.



Because of their entertainment value, the programmes are often viewed or listened to in social situations, increasing the possibility of spontaneous discussion.

Encourage changing attitudes and behaviour in relation to certain diseases and health risks. This often starts with acknowledgement of personal risk.



Serial dramas can provide audiences with role models and, as the drama unfolds, the characters can evolve in ways which challenge traditional conventions and beliefs. Drama enables the audience to identify with characters and their experiences, increasing the personal relevance of health issues.

The multi-media strategy

Soul City targets diverse groups ranging from metropolitan townships where access to television and newspapers is fairly common, to far-flung rural areas where many people only have access to radio. It is necessary to use a number of different media in order to ensure that messages reach the target audience.

While the mass media can be highly efficient in raising awareness and increasing knowledge, this alone does not necessarily result in changed attitudes and behaviour. However, the stronger the message, the more likely it is to stimulate discussion and shifts in perceptions and practice. Soul City uses a multi-media strategy so that each medium complements the others and messages are reinforced. The vehicle comprises electronic and print media, which run over a three to six -month period each series.

Ongoing vehicle

Soul City is unique in that it is an ongoing strategy. people get to know and love the series, so that each series gets a maximum audience from the first episode

Formative research & testing

Extensive consultation, research and testing are crucial to the development of a communications strategy of this kind, and have been important components in the Soul City design process:

Strategic planning

1. An advisory group which is established for each topic to oversee the initial research process, combines the skills of experts in media research, health promotion and adult education and the social sciences.
2. Literature reviews, audience research and wide consultation locally and internationally are undertaken to define the overall strategy.
3. Available audience research helped to identify major channels for communication and to inform the project of demographic profiles of prime-time audiences for the various channels.

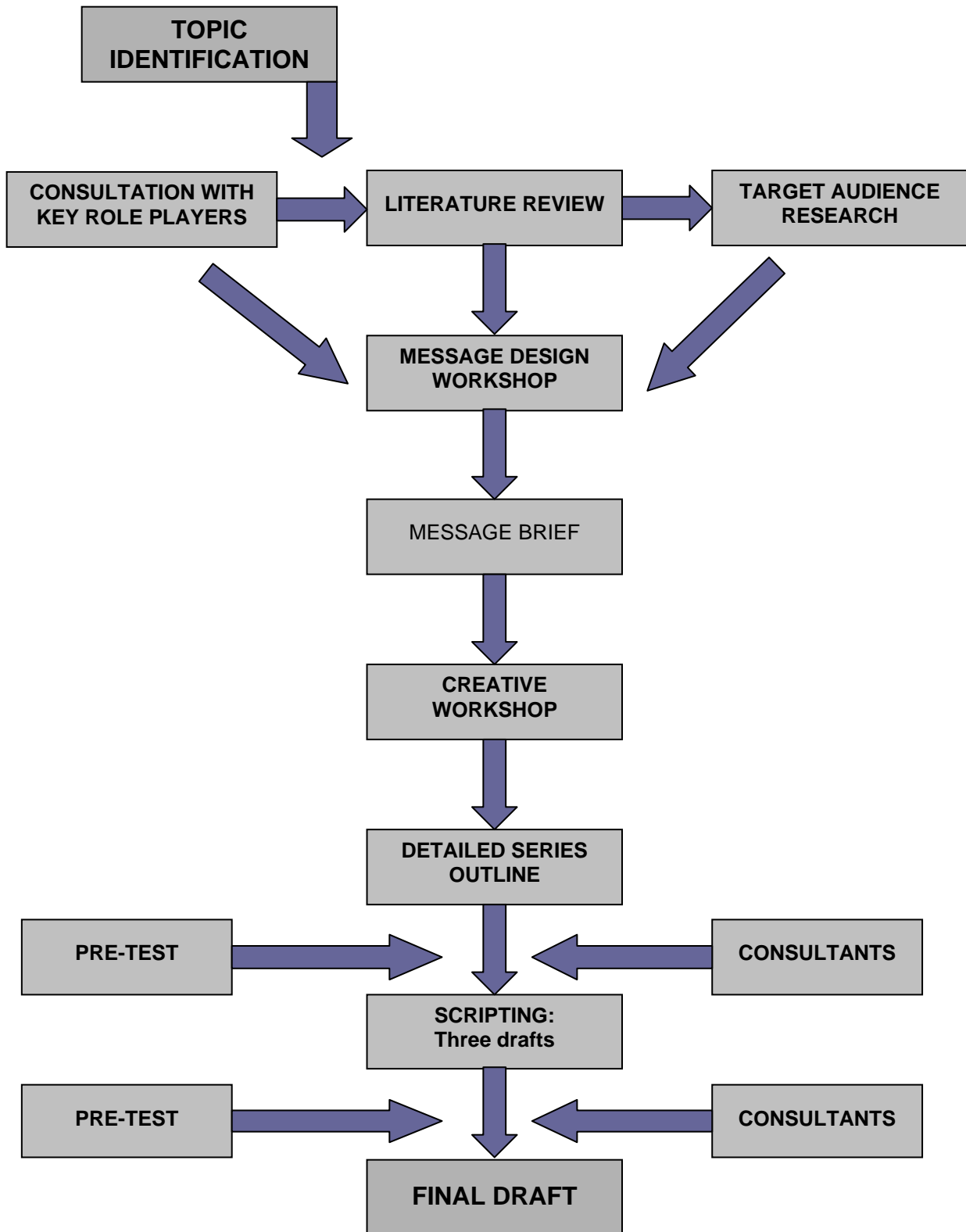
Development of materials

Before developing the messages and information around issues, Soul City conducts extensive research through focus groups to ascertain existing knowledge, attitudes and practices about the topics. This information shapes the message design.(see figure 1)

SOUL CITY 1	SOUL CITY 2	SOUL CITY 3	SOUL CITY 4
1994	1996	1997	1999
Mother & child health:	Tuberculosis	Violence	Violence against Women
Diarrhoea, accidents	HIV / AIDS	Alcoholism	HIV / AIDS and teenage sexuality
Child Abuse, nutrition	STD's	HIV / AIDS	Hypertension
Respiratory illnesses	Smoking	Household energy	Personal finance
Safe motherhood	Land & Housing		
Underlying sub-themes throughout:			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Empowerment of women ▪ Pro-social issues such as co-parenting, family values and nation building 			

-
- Community action for health and development

FIGURE 1: FORMATIVE RESEARCH PROCESS



THE EVALUATION OF SOUL CITY 2

Evaluation is an important component in the design of intervention strategies, and is an integral part of the Soul City campaign. Soul City commissioned the Community Agency for Social Enquiry (CASE) to conduct a longitudinal evaluation of the campaign over a period of two years, spanning Soul City 2 (1996) and 3 (1997). This evaluation reports on the first year of research (1996), in which the impact of Soul City 2 is assessed.

Aims of the evaluation

- To establish the overall penetration of the vehicle and the demographic profile of audiences accessing various media and combinations of those media. The stated target audience for the second series was previously disadvantaged South Africans with a particular emphasis on youth.
- To determine the impact of the series in terms of
 - Accessing the message, and message retention
 - Increase in knowledge
 - Change in attitudes
 - Change in reported behaviour
 - Ability of the material to catalyze interpersonal communication

Approach to the evaluation

Longitudinal

Changing knowledge, attitudes and behaviour are best traced over time. The evaluation was designed to obtain a baseline before the intervention and then to compare this with the post intervention survey, making it possible to explore the impact of the campaign. The sentinel sites are being used to track changes through the third series

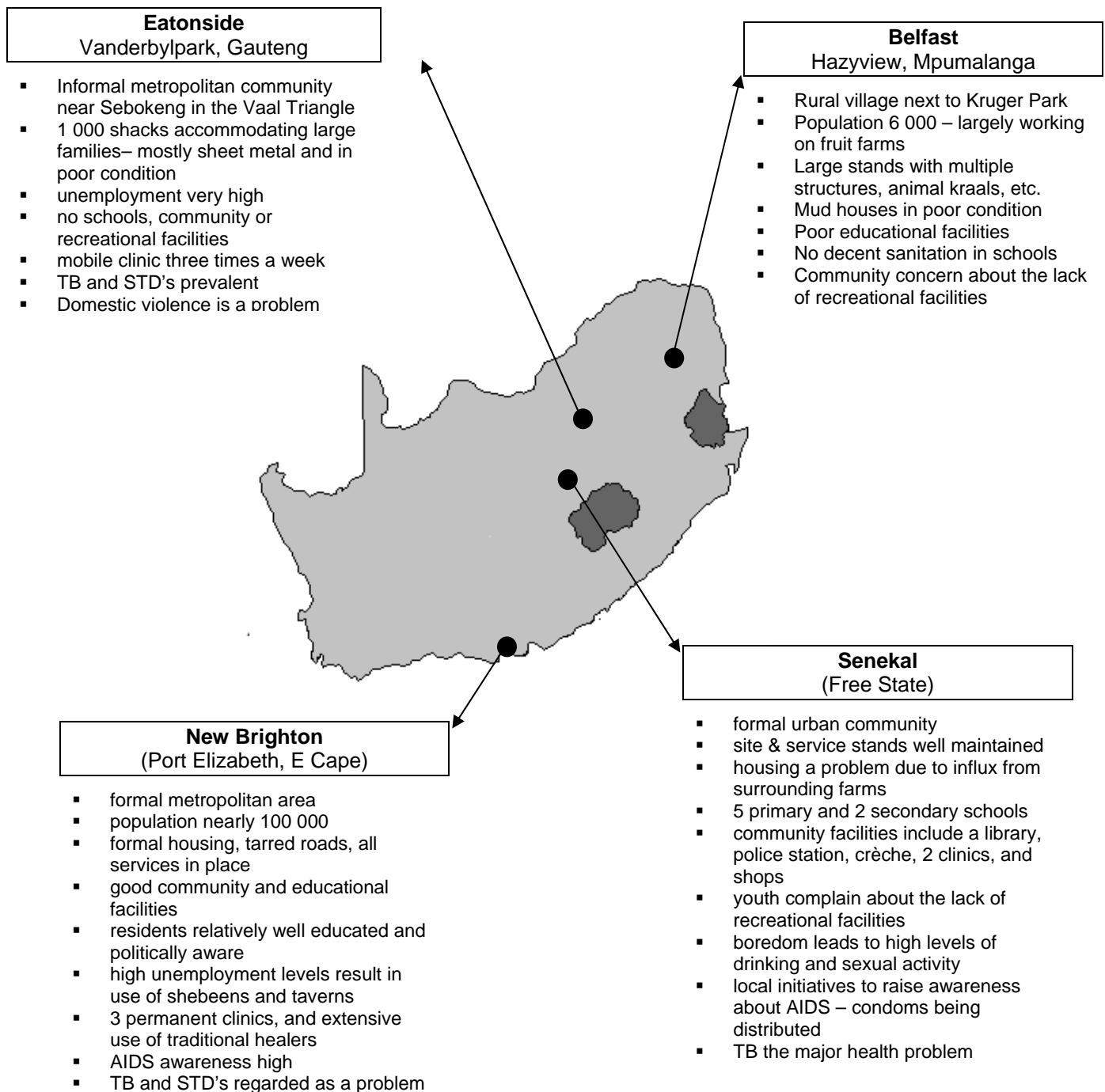
Focused research

Soul City's approach to the evaluation was based on the assumption that knowledge, attitudes and behaviour are shaped by a complex interaction of individuals' own experiences and the social context in which they live and learn. In this light, it was felt that depth would be more useful than breadth, and rather than undertaking a broad, nationally representative sample, Soul City conducted "deep" research focused in four sentinel sites over a two year period. The additional benefit of the site methodology was that it helped us to identify any other interventions which may have

happened at the same time as Soul City, ensuring that changes observed are due to Soul City and not to other interventions.

Sentinel sites

The sites were chosen to give us a range of different types of settlements, both formal and informal, ranging from metropolitan to urban to rural. They reflect a spread of language groups and varying levels of media exposure.



Research design

The research methodology combined a number of components and techniques, in order to gain the richest possible information.

In-depth interviews

Interviews were conducted with key role players in each site, including local government councilors, traditional leaders, civic and political leaders, teachers and representatives from youth and sports organisations. These helped to give the researchers a feel for the social dynamics and health issues in each area.

Surveys

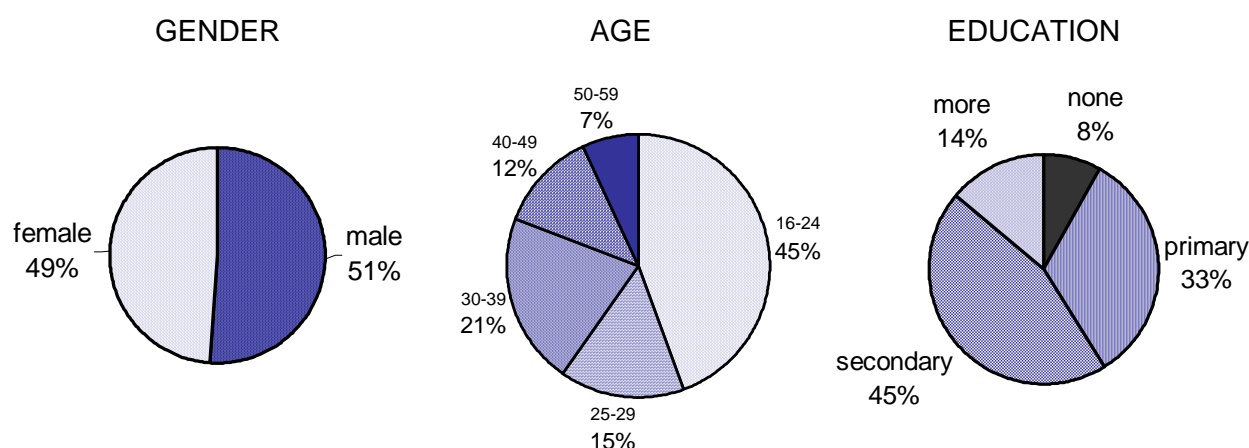
Two surveys were conducted in each of the four sites – a baseline survey before the Soul City intervention, and an evaluation survey 2 weeks after the end of the series. These were essential for monitoring individual changes in knowledge and attitudes towards the various health issues. Each survey comprised 200 black respondents of 16 years and above, giving a total sample of 800 respondents per survey. Local people were recruited and trained to carry out the fieldwork.

Focus groups

In the post intervention phase a series of group discussions were convened in each area to enrich the qualitative information. Qualitative material in Belfast was obtained via participatory rural appraisal.

RESULTS

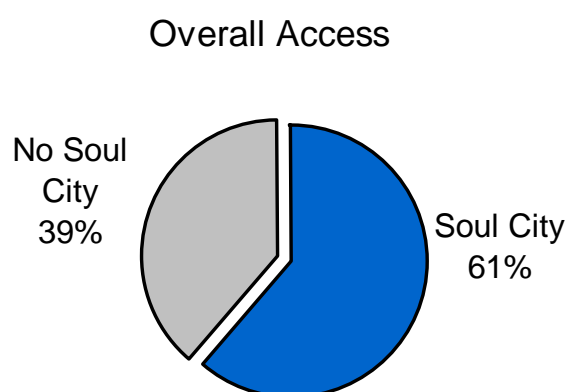
The sample



- Results were weighed against provincial population statistics, allowing us to circumvent any uneven distribution of responses with regard to gender.
- Respondents aged 60 or above were excluded from the surveys, since questioning about sexual health and activity was likely to be embarrassing for older people.

OVERALL PENETRATION

How many people did we reach?



“At school you will hear the students calling each other by the names of the characters in the story.” [Male, 16-25 yrs, informal]

“I found that once the children listen to only one episode of the story, they develop interest and listen to the story everyday...” [Female, 40+ yrs, metro]

“I listened from the beginning to the end.” [Female, 40+ yrs, urban]

- Nearly two thirds of those interviewed had been exposed to the second series of Soul City.
- The youth audience was particularly large, with 70% of the 16-24 age group accessing at least one of the Soul City media. This was important for Soul City, because it targeted the youth.
- Soul City was particularly successful in reaching people in rural and informal areas (Belfast and Eatonside). Although these areas are usually regarded as marginalised, particularly in terms of media, exposure was higher than in the formal urban areas.

Note: It was not possible to calculate exposure in terms of actual population figures, since the focused approach to the evaluation eliminated the possibility of a nationally representative sample. However, these results give a strong indication of the proportion of people who accessed Soul City, and the high exposure levels are borne out by the viewership figures for the television component.