
Media by and for Youth and Children



The Ama Buruxa group participated in a children's radio programme at the Voice of Tembisa radio station
Credit: Mariette Van Dijk



Celebrating Youth Media and Proposing a Way Forward By Mimi Brazeau

Abstract

Plan West Africa has been engaging with children and communities to create radio programmes by and for young people to promote and protect children's rights. The programmes aim to not only inform the larger community about rights issues, but also to empower young people to effect change

Key words

media, children's rights, participation

An idea to reality

"This will never work." Thirteen years ago, these were the words of one of the national radio station's most influential Directors in West Africa. Plan^e wanted to initiate the first ever radio show travelling in villages and recording in front a large audience to produce a weekly "live show" exclusively with children. After weeks of lobbying, preparation, training and research, the project was developed and twelve children produced the first Radio Gune Yi "Youth Radio" show in Senegal.

Even the producers had their doubts: can children lead a one-hour show, say interesting things and have a genuine impact on the promotion of their rights? Research done prior to the programme's launch revealed that the majority of the population were reluctant to allow children to freely express themselves. 1995 seems like many generations ago.

Since that year, Plan West Africa has continued producing radio shows and extended the production and broadcast of youth radio programmes in 11 West African countries. Hundreds of committed people, radio stations and thousands of youth have contributed for children and youth voices to be heard.

They even "dared" having an impact on the way people perceived children and youth and on the audiences' intentions (let's be realistic) and actions to respect children's rights. The vivid testimonies and reaction about the programmes with youth provide undeniable incentives to do even more and the lessons learnt from evaluations, a framework to focus on quality both for content and process for such projects.

I am a child but I have my rights too! in West Africa

"I'm a child but I have my rights too!" is an awareness campaign on the rights of the child, initiated and produced by Plan and broadcast on radio stations in seven countries across West Africa since 1998. The campaign promoted children's right to go to school, to grow up healthy, to have access to potable water and so on. The messages were designed to attract children and their parents by being both informative and entertaining. They defined roles and responsibilities in the defence of children's rights and gave concrete advice on child survival issues.

Burkina Faso was the first country to launch the radio campaign in 1998. Since then Plan Togo, Senegal, Mali, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Benin and Cameroon have produced the drama spots in more than 20 different languages and with the active participation of hundreds of young people. Presenters, journalists and technicians from more than 90 radio stations have been trained to host the show. "I'm a child but I have my rights too!" won several international awards. The campaign contributed to breaking taboos surrounding excision and raised the awareness about issues such as girls' education, discrimination of disabled children and ill-treatment of step-children.

Project's Impact

"You cannot change people's behaviour just like that. But at least we have tried and I would say that something has happened. Before nobody ever talked about children's rights." (Radio Director, Benin)

The positive impact on children of meaningful participation in projects that concern them has been repeatedly documented. This experience confirms the results of earlier studies: there are many positive changes in the lives of children who have participated in the radio campaign and its related activities. "The first time I heard my voice on the radio? It was fantastic. The best thing that has happened in my life!" (boy, 16, Togo).

The first and most obvious effect on children who participated in the project is that they have acquired *communication skills*. This means they can and dare to express themselves, also in the presence of adults: "I learned how to talk to adults without being afraid" (girl, 9, Togo); "Before I did not dare to talk in front of an audience but now that is as easy as nothing" (boy, 13, Togo).

Related to this are *technical/vocational skills*; children who participated in the productions worked with professional actors and learned acting techniques, as well as how theatre and radio productions work. Children learned how to act on stage and in front of a microphone, to use their voices, articulate, and interpret their lines.

The participants have also acquired *problem-solving skills*, which closely relate to the increased ability to communicate. Many of the young actors from the productions said that they had changed the way they behave towards siblings and younger children. They have learned to discuss instead of fighting. "I used to beat my younger brother but I don't do that anymore. I try to talk to him instead. You know, even the youngest children have the same rights as we" (girl, 12, Guinea Bissau).



Launch of Bibir Radio, Burkina Faso

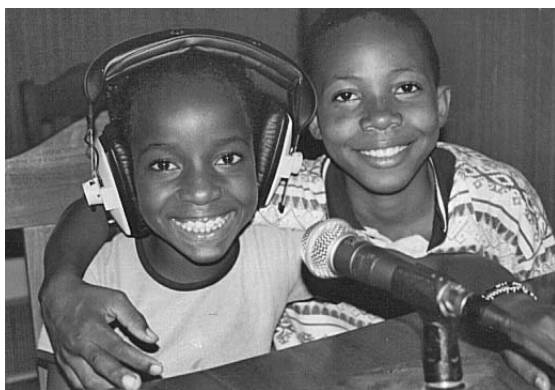
Credit: Mimi Brazeau

Children have gained *self-confidence*. The theatre activities have helped many children discover their own talents. They have also received the recognition of others. Teachers describe participants in the school

theatre groups in Togo as *role models* in the eyes of the other children. "Through this project children discover what they are able to do. There is now a group of young people who make themselves seen and heard. The other children want to be like them" (school inspector, Togo).

Parents often witnessed an *increased dialogue* between them and their children because of their participation. With new confidence and an awareness of their right to express their views, children have started to bring up issues that concern them at home. Several other media projects of this type have proved that there is a correlation between the interpersonal dialogue on an issue and a positive change.

Participation in the project gives children *hope for the future*. They have seen that they are able to achieve something concrete. For example, children who participated in theatre activities had the opportunity to see the reactions of the audience and could sometimes witness the direct impact of their work on others. After a theatre performance about child trafficking by Club Anié'8e, Togo, a boy from the audience stepped forward and said that he had his bags packed and was about to leave for Nigeria. Having seen this performance he had decided to stay in his village. The children from the theatre group were very proud of this. They had managed to change something in somebody's life. For them it has been important to help other children: "If children know their rights they can react when something is wrong" (girl, 15, Togo).



Child presenters in Guinea

Credit: Mimi Brazeau

Children who participate in this project often become *active in other domains*. Participation gives children a feeling of responsibility and importance and a sense of being useful in the community: "I remember hearing it [the campaign] on the radio and I wished that everybody would listen so that some things might change in our society" (child actor, girl 14, Togo). *Empowerment* in this context is about children learning skills and capabilities to take on new roles and responsibilities for the development of their communities and for the promotion and defense of their rights and others. One good example of empowerment is the young people in Britam, Guinea Bissau, who created an association in order to raise funds for a village school (see below).

"We children learned a lot, but I think our parents learned even more," says a 12-year old girl in Guinea Bissau. In Burkina Faso, the number of adults who said that they had been informed about child rights through the radio campaign rose from 17% in 1998 (the first year of the campaign) to 60.7% in 2002.

Empowerment and change

Evaluations have also repeatedly proved the impact of this project on its young listeners, their parents and their communities. Numerous examples show how the increased knowledge and awareness of children's rights have led to a strong mobilisation for their defence – which means that the project has reached parts of its global objective. The obvious follow-up question is: how sustainable are these changes? The first step in a social change process is generally recognition of a problem, which can lead to the identification of a solution.

For Plan in West Africa, this campaign is an encouraging experience to draw on in the development of new media initiatives, further exploring how children can be involved and earn the skills and confidence necessary to take on new responsibilities in their communities.

Kids Waves West Africa

Today in West Africa, Plan, partners and youth in 9 countries broadcast radio shows replicating the positive lessons learnt from Radio Gune Yi Senegal and the radio campaign on child rights broadcast in West Africa. New programmes have been created involving young artists in creating songs highlighting youth issues and children rights.

In 2006 in Mali, Plan organised the Youth Media Development Forum (YMDF'06) where more than 400 delegates, experts and youth from more than 60 countries (most of them developing countries) discussed how to do more and how to improve what we do. The 5th World Summit on Media for Children held in South Africa also allowed for fruitful discussions on high quality responsible media. Plan, partners and youth played a major role in arguing that media programs with youth should expand in all parts of the world.

Children and youth have to be part of the discussions on matters that affect them. The media have the responsibility to involve them in the social dialogue. The acknowledgement of their potentialities will lead to the recognition of their capacities. Children and youth know best how to reach their peers, and they also attract an "older" audience interested in knowing what is going on with one third of the world's population who have not yet reached the so called "majority." That is two billion individuals with dreams, concerns, aspirations and ideas – most of them desperately seeking for a better world, a better life. Changing things, improving things will happen with them – or will not occur.

Youth need to understand that their voice is of interest to the general public if it raises the debate to better understand what they live and experience; they need to ensure that what they say helps the audience make informed choices. They need to ensure that the messages conveyed are easily digested; they need to influence the audience to ensure they understand the dangers linked to ignorance that leads to mistrust, incomprehension and chaos.

Talking about youth issues is very important; having

youth voices taken into account is vital. However, all this has depth and meaning if actions follow the dialogue. Broadcasters and producers should consider this as part of their mandate to produce more high-quality responsible media programmes with youth and for youth; to be ethical and child-aware; to assist and put pressure on governments to honour children rights; to share resources and skills with those requesting assistance.

The public media should honour their mandate concerning the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child while the private sector should not hide behind the fact they are profit-oriented and that they themselves did not sign or ratify charters or legal documents stating their social responsibilities.

Ten years ago, the World Bank (1999) asked thousands of people what they desired most. Having a "voice" was one of the most frequent replies; second after to improve income and basic necessities. Not being able to have a say in decisions that affected their lives was identified as a key element of poverty in itself (Panos 2007).

Today, with new technologies growing and expanding to the most remote areas, the desire to be part of the social dialogue has probably increased. Youth should continue to request to be heard, but they



Having a voice also important for children and youth.

Credit: Mimi Brazeau

should also ensure they convey their messages with accuracy, in their own words, from many angles, and with the creativity and seriousness needed to reach and convince as many people as possible. Today, youth express themselves as young citizens, demanding their rights and trying to understand why positive changes do not occur as fast as they grow up. The Millennium Development Goals and the promised results for 2015 are not close to being achieved. Engaging into the debate those who will be the first target of today's failures is one way of ensuring they will feel not only part of the problem also but of the solutions.

References

Panos London (2007) 'The Case for Communication in Sustainable Development,' in *Illuminating Voices*, London, UK
World Bank (1999) *Voices of the Poor*, Washington, DC, USA

Writers Bio

Mimi Brazeau is the Plan West Africa Regional Media Programs Development Advisor.

Notes

¹Plan is an international NGO working in 66 countries worldwide to achieve lasting improvements for children living in poverty in developing countries. Plan's vision is of a world in which all children realise their full potential in societies which respect people's rights and dignity.



Child and Youth Participation in Health Media

By Daniel Walter

Abstract

Involving children in media to raise awareness about health-related issues is not only essential to creating good programmes, but also to empowering young people to be active members of the community. Examples of programming by and for young people show that children and youth bring unique perspectives to media programmes, and that once empowered, can successfully create programming that can impact positively on themselves, families, and communities.

Key words

children, participatory media, health

Involving young people in health issues

There is little doubt that children and youth need to be a key target group in work addressing problems related to health issues such as HIV/AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis and other diseases largely resulting from poverty in Africa and around the world. There are numerous factors contributing to children's access to good health. Most are related to their lack of access to power and decision-making, as well as access to resources, both material and information.

The lower status of young people in many societies means that they are usually the last thought about when making crucial decisions, especially in developing communities. An overwhelming number of children are living in poverty in Africa. Children play a very important role in the family and community, often with many

responsibilities within the household. They often wake up first, work the hardest, yet are the last for dinner, and to bed.

Many children and young people are without families at all, facing a difficult reality of life on the streets, leaving them vulnerable to exploitation, no access to education, hunger, disease, unwanted pregnancy, drugs and the list goes on. Often considered the "lowest rung" of community and society, they are often the hardest hit by the social problems that face it.

According to the World Health Organization, each day, some 1500 children under 15 years of age become infected with HIV, an estimated 90% of whom live in sub-Saharan Africa. In 2005, there were 2.3 million (1.7–3.5 million) children living with HIV worldwide, most of whom acquired the virus *in utero*, during birth

or while being breastfed, ways of contracting HIV that can be prevented. For many children infected with HIV, the chances of survival are slim. In 2005, some 380 000 HIV-positive children younger than age 15 years died—almost of all them in sub-Saharan Africa (WHO 2006).

The growing numbers of orphans and vulnerable children are also a problem. In sub-Saharan Africa, AIDS-related illness is the leading cause of death among adults ages 15–59, and as one consequence, an estimated 12 million children ages 0–17 have lost one or both parents to the disease (UNICEF 2006).

Children and youth vulnerability extends across almost all health-related issues. Just as a few examples:

- African children below the age of five account for 75% of those who die from malaria. Malaria accounts for one in five of all childhood deaths in Africa;
- 27% of children under five in developing countries (1996-2005) are underweight; and
- primary school attendance is at 62% in West and Central Africa, 70% in Eastern and Southern Africa, 82% in South Asia and 85% in the Middle East and North Africa. The largest out-of-school population is in sub-Saharan Africa, where around 41 million children of primary school age are out of school.

(UNICEF website – Facts about children)

If we are to turn the tide against many of these health problems, it is imperative to not only educate and inform young people, but to engage in a process of social change that encourages the value of a young person both to the community and to themselves.

This will not only impact on their own individual health, but also the future of communities when they themselves take leadership positions later in life.

Participatory radio

Media is widely recognised as essential to the larger goal of protecting children's rights. On the 10th anniversary of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child - at a meeting in Oslo organised by the Norwegian Government and UNICEF -

children, young people, media professionals and child rights experts met to discuss the development of children's rights and their relation to the media throughout the world.

From their discussions emerged the Oslo Challenge, issued on 20 November 1999. This declaration acknowledges that "the child/media relationship is an entry point into the wide and multifaceted world of children and their rights - to education, freedom of expression, play, identity, health, dignity and self-respect, protection - and that in every aspect of child rights, in every element of the life of a child, the relationship between children and the media plays a role."

It is important to involve young people in creating media for many reasons. Let us look at the example of participatory radio programmes. Radio has the power to reach wide target audiences, as it is very accessible, relatively inexpensive, and requires no literacy skills. In creating a good radio programme that aims to target young people, one must incorporate the views and attitudes of young people.

Young people rarely want to listen to the advice of their elders, and information from their peers is more accessible and influential. Young people know how to speak to young people. And, surprising to many, young people have new and fresh ideas that the rest of us may never think of and they really want to share them!

Research conducted by the Media Monitoring Project in South Africa showed that young people have opinions and concerns about important social issues. Many children identified basic needs such as food, water, clothes and homes as important issues. Others identified larger social problems such as racism, unemployment and HIV/AIDS. The children explicitly expressed that they would have liked to see information about these larger social problems represented in relation to how they affect children. Other issues raised pertained to emotional well-being, such as love and respect, friends, looking after yourself and parents. The children also identified child abuse and rape as important issues (Daya 2003).

Recalling one of the first participatory programmes that I did with a group of young women in Ghana, I came prepared with back-up scripts, sure that there would not be enough ideas to fill the airtime. Not only was there more than enough ideas, but the issues brought up that addressed HIV and power relations between boys and girls were ones that none of the facilitators had thought of.

Along with being important in creating good, relevant programmes, participatory media programmes can begin a process of social change. These young people are not only the leaders, but also the mothers and fathers of tomorrow; influencing them means influencing future generations. More immediately, as the young people become involved in such participatory projects, they are demonstrating to their communities that young people do have things to say, and can accomplish a lot.

This begins a process whereby society must begin to accept that children and young people have value in the society. As they address issues that are important to them - HIV, Malaria, TB, and also their rights, and problems in their community as they see them, young people are carving out their own space in their societies.

According to Alfonso Gumucio-Dagron in the Radio Manifesto created by the World Radio Forum, "Any radio station that claims to be serving the interests of the community and representing the democratic values of a society, has to integrate children and youth into their programming. It is not just an issue of programming 'for the children' (something that usually adults do), but allowing the young to express their voices and acquire little by little the experience and commitment that will make them opinion leaders and responsible citizens."

He further adds, "The fact that children take in their hands the radio waves is a logical consequence of any democratization process. Young people may not vote, and many of their rights may be restricted because of their age, however they are the pivotal force in any society that looks ahead for 10 or 15 years. The more



Caption: Ingrid Nkosi and Zamile Mabuza working on putting together report from interviews at 5th World Summit on Media For Children.
Credit: Cindy Dzanya

responsibilities they have in participating in community life, the more today's children will become leaders of tomorrow's communities and nations."

What is participatory?

So if we agree that participatory children's media is valuable, what does this really mean and how do we go about it? What is the best way to tap into some of what youth have to offer?

Children's participation means not just giving children the opportunity to be involved, but also to be at the forefront of the decision-making, planning, and implementation process. Guiding young people through the process of developing a radio programme means providing skills, training, and the resources to create a programme, but with the young people having the power to set priorities, create scripts, and have their voices heard. This means putting the programme in the hands of the children, guiding a process that ensures good quality, accurate information, while offering a full range of freedom of expression.

It is a mutual learning process, a collaboration based on respect between young people and those with the technical know-how to make their voices heard loud and clear.

The most visible and successful youth participation programs are usually those that incorporate the ideals of "genuine and effective" participation, i.e. an environment in which young people are involved in every step of the process from planning to evaluation. Challenges to "genuine and effective" participation include: getting adults to let go; creating an environment at home or school where participation is serious and encouraged; overcoming cultural norms that children should be seen and not heard; and generating enough funds to sustain projects (Gigli 2006).

Working with children in practice

CMFD (Community Media for Development) Productions works with communities that do not often have access to media, including children and young people, to create media programmes that speak to issues identified by these groups as important. Following are a sampling of how children and youth are producing media for their peers.



Cover of CD produced by children at the Summit.

World Summit on Media for Children

CMFD Productions was present at the 5th World Summit on Media for Children from 25-27 March 2007. A group

of children at the summit produced a series of radio programmes to provide an opportunity for young voices to be heard, while reaching a wider audience with the issues that were being addressed during the summit. Working in groups of 2-4, the volunteer participants were a young dynamic group that put together some very creative programmes focusing on globalisation and the internet. The programmes include voices from South Africa, Lesotho, Swaziland, Trinidad, United States, Mozambique, Brazil, Angola, Haiti, and Angola. Ideas based on the conference themes were presented to the group, but the young people were encouraged to develop their own ideas and explore the issues how they felt best. Each team worked through the ideas, and then found interviewees. Once the interviewed a number of people, they then developed narrative scripts to glue the programme together.

Alertas Da Vida Anti- Trafficking Spots

To help build awareness about trafficking and encourage Mozambicans considering traveling to South Africa for employment to seek more information, a series of Portuguese language radio public service announcements were produced for the IOM, to be aired in Mozambique. The PSAs were developed in a participatory process with Mozambican youth living in Johannesburg. The scripts were written, voiced by the group and produced into the PSA. Each is made up of a short mini-drama, the tag line "Get the facts before you go!" as well as an announcer explaining human trafficking and encouraging people to contact the IOM in Maputo. The spots aim to encourage people to think about where they are going, get as many facts as they can, and contact the IOM for more information or advice.

National Children's Radio Seminar (Mozambique)

CMFD Productions collaborated with IBIS - Mozambique to bring together children, accompanied by adult presenters working on children's programmes, from 42 radio stations across the country to participate in the National Children's Radio Seminar 2004. The goal of the seminar was to work with children and their adult facilitators to create a series of magazine style radio programmes produced by and for young people.

Participants gained first hand knowledge in interviewing, creating spots, putting together reportage, and developing radio dramas. The magazines address the right to education, the right to health, and the right to play. The programme also included a manual on producing participatory radio with children, as well as a children's sound effects CD, to help promote good quality participatory programme development.



National Children's Radio Seminar, Chimoio, Mozambique, 2004.
Credit: Daniel Walter

Mozambique Street Kids Radio

In collaboration with GOAL Mozambique, CMFD developed a radio programme with a group of youth living on the streets in Maputo, Mozambique. The group created and recorded songs, skits, and messages about HIV/AIDS, sexual abuse, and children's rights in Portuguese and Xhangana. CMFD produced the audio programme and also be an accompanying Portuguese language activity book, to be used in literacy programmes. The activity was undertaken as a follow-up to the Stepping Stones programme being used by GOAL to develop knowledge and skills among the street youth.

In each of the above mentioned programmes, the young people involved were not only consulted, but given decision-making opportunities to identify what and how they wanted to approach an issue. Children's participatory radio is an incredibly effective way to include young people in a process that shapes their futures, while educating other young people and reflecting on obstacles that society as a whole must come to face. When children and young people have access to media, they have a voice in their world, and are able to advocate on issues that effects them.

References

- Daya et al.** (2003) *Media Wise - The Children's Participatory Process: Children make a difference*, South Africa: Media Monitoring Project
- World Health Organisation** (2006) 'Taking stock: HIV in children', www.who.int/hiv/pub/advocacy/children/en/ (last checked by author March 2008)
- UNICEF** (2006) 'Africa's Orphaned and Vulnerable Generations: Children Affected by AIDS', http://www.unicef.org/media/media_fastfacts.html (last checked by author March 2008)
- Gigli, S.** (2006) 'Children, Youth and Media Around the World: An Overview of Trends & Issues', www.unicef.org (last checked by author March 2008)
- World Radio Forum** (2004) *The Radio Manifesto*.

Writers Bio

Daniel Walter is the Director of CMFD (Community Media for Development Productions, a Johannesburg-based media for development initiative that focuses on using participatory media and communication for social change.



Media Literacy for Learners

By Sikhonzile Ndlovu

“Catch them young,” goes the old adage. When it comes to media, this also holds true. Media makes up a large part of culture and society, both shaping and reflecting issues, perspectives, and attitudes.

Youth in South Africa are a very important part of media consumers. They make up the large majority - 70% - of the population.

These youth find themselves in a very fortunate position as they live in an “information technology” era where they can access information and interact with people globally at the click of a button. However, are these youths enlightened enough to make decisions about their lives? Do they know how to interact with the media or even make their own media?

Gender Links realised there was a gap among youth when it came to media, and in June 2007 launched its first ever Gender and Media Literacy course for young people. The aim of this course was to equip young people with skills to look critically at the media as well as use it to their advantage. This is part of creating an active citizenry that does not passively consume the thousands of media messages that they are subjected to every day.

Gender Links brought together 20 young people from four provinces in South Africa for a week-long course that was to change the way that they look at media forever. These youth, who had never in their lives engaged with the media, saw themselves visit media houses and become part of the news

making process. In a sense, they became activists, as they were able to articulate their views on various issues affecting them.

This is important, especially considering that media is a very powerful tool in shaping a people’s destiny. Like the old saying goes, information is power. Media literacy not only equips youth with critical media skills, but it empowers them to be active citizens. Media literacy builds an understanding of the role of media in society as well as essential skills of inquiry and self-expression necessary for citizens of our democracy. Audiences can take engage with, and influence, media.

“It is high time that the culture of accepting without questioning stopped. Youth should take control of their lives and use the media for their benefit,” said Ntshiteng Rakgwadi, one of the participants.

In this age, we are bombarded with thousands of media messages that we cannot ignore. For example, almost everyone in South Africa has access to the radio. Television is also accessible to many people. Billboards are everywhere and they communicate many different messages. Cell phones also transmit messages across the globe daily.

Some youth are not passive media consumers. They are very much aware of the gender biases that abound in media. Course participant Kgalalelo Kedijang observed that most media have confined women to the private domain while men remain as powerful figures of authority in the public sphere.



Media Literacy class hard at work.

Credit: Rochelle Davies

During an interview with Kaya FM on the representation of women and men in media, Kedijang was quick to point out that media often presents women in stereotypical ways that limit their potential in life. She observed that media rarely portrays women and girls in challenging positions and roles.

They mostly appear as beauty queens or cooking in the home, while men are represented as powerful and authoritative. She added that girl children are often not aware that they have the same capabilities as boys.

Strategies to ensure that both girls and boys are encouraged to realise their full potential are important. Kedijang applauded the "Cell C Take a girl child to work" initiative, saying that girls are often prejudiced of learning opportunities because of gender imbalances within our societies. Another participant, Tsholofelo Kgosana, noted that empowering girls does not necessarily mean that boys should be ignored.

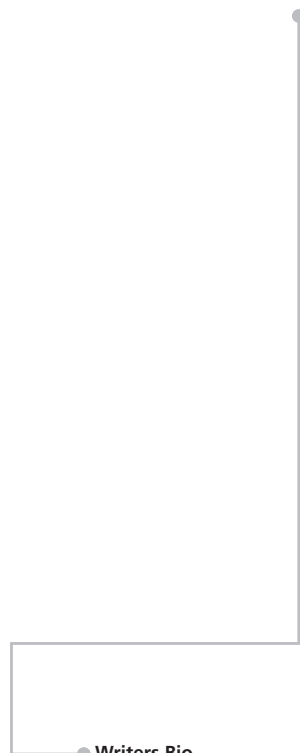
These young people also expressed a desire to create their own media in their respective provinces. They also wanted to feel they are part of the 'global village.' Internet has been able to link people from across the world. One can only communicate through the internet and surf it if they are 'internet literate.'

Gender Links ensured that these youths went through the steps of opening emails and communicating with other people. Thus began their journey into cyber-space.

They are now able to do cyber-dialogues and engage in debates on the many issues affecting the world at large and South Africa in particular.

While the main aim of the course was to expose youth to the gender dynamics in the media, the course opened the youth's eyes to many other issues that South Africa faces, such as HIV/AIDS. As such, a moving digital photo story of Orange Farm's 'Let us Grow' project was done.

As our future leaders, youths have to be able to take a leading role in taking the media to task, create their own media and also raising awareness among other consumers. There should be a gradual shift from just being consumers of media to creators of media. Change can only be achieved when we have an enlightened citizenry.



Writers Bio

Sikhonzile Ndlovu is a researcher at Gender Links.



In Practice: Together We'll be Ok - Children in Distress Network (CINDI)

Founded in July 1996 and based in Pietermaritzburg, The Children in Distress Network (CINDI) brings together over 100 member organisations (NGOs, CBOs, government agencies and individuals) who collaborate in the interests of children affected or orphaned by HIV/AIDS. As a collection of independent initiatives, CINDI members retain individual character, flexibility and the ability to respond to individual children, but are strengthened and guided by their link to the Network. Members work together in clusters that allow close collaboration among members with expertise in a particular area to provide a continuum of HIV/AIDS care and support to beneficiaries. The clusters are a) Community Development Cluster (CD), b) Home-Based Care Cluster (HBC), c) Psychosocial Support/Schools and Youth Development Cluster (PSS), and d) Children-in-Care Cluster (CIC).

Over the last five years, members have reported their concern about the growing incidences of child sexual abuse, especially in rural areas where protection and support services are difficult to access. Consequently, members of the PSS Cluster decided to develop a guideline that would support and empower practitioners in the field – together with a companion poster for the local press.

Process

Various members of the Cluster pooled their knowledge and compiled the booklet (in English and isiZulu): "What to do when you or someone you know has been sexually abused" /iZinyathelo okumele uzithathe uma wena noma umuntu omaziyo ehlukemezeke ngokocansi." Staff from LifeLine and Rape Crisis, the Child Advocacy Centre, Childline, Umvoti AIDS Centre, Rob Smetherham Bereavement Service for Children, SAPS KZN Midlands FCS, Northdale Hospital Crisis Centre and Ethembeni gave freely of their time; the booklet was reviewed by Dr Neil McKerrow, Chief Specialist and Head of Paediatrics and Child Health, Pietermaritzburg and Metropolitan Hospitals Complex. The booklet was sponsored by Irish Aid, a donor partner of the CINDI Network. The poster, "Together, we'll be ok: Help, Hope, Healing – from Sexual Abuse," was compiled by Dr Neil McKerrow and Joan van Niekerk of ChildLine, designed by Hilary Kromberg Inglis of Jive Media and sponsored by the Mayor and Councillors of the Msunduzi City Council (Pietermaritzburg).

Distribution

The booklet and poster were launched on World AIDS Day, which is during the Sixteen Days of Activism. One thousand copies of the booklet were distributed to CINDI Members and the poster appeared in *The Witness* – the local daily newspaper with a circulation of 135 000. Both publications are also available freely on the CINDI website www.cindi.org.za.

Next steps

Demand for the booklet has been such that there are no copies left and it will be reprinted in March 2008, after a consultative review by members that will ensure that the 2nd edition includes any amendments and additions that they wish to see.