



SUCCESS STORY: SOUTH AFRICA

TV Channel Improves Rural HIV/AIDS Knowledge

Mindset Health Educational TV Brings Latest Health Information to Isolated South African Communities



Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health
Center for Communication Programs, Wayne Alexander,
Civil Society Program Officer, South Africa

The actor who plays Nurse Zitha, a popular character in a *Soul City* health series, addresses the community at the nationwide launch of *Mindset Health* at the Mandela Sisulu Phomolong Clinic in Soweto.

Minister of Health Dr. Manto Tshabalala-Msimang said the channel, "... promises to provide a way of sharing medical skills and cutting through problems caused by the geographic isolation, scarcity of doctors and skilled nurses, and poor transport and infrastructure" of the country's rural clinics.

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MINDSET HEALTH HAS BROADCASTED pilot programs about prevention, care, and management of common illnesses and major diseases—including HIV/AIDS—to 185,000 health care workers and patients at 56 clinics in all South African provinces. In September 2004, Minister of Health Dr. Manto Tshabalala-Msimang formally launched the channel nationwide at the Mandela Sisulu Phomolong Clinic in Soweto, and said the channel "... promises to provide a way of sharing medical skills and cutting through problems caused by the geographic isolation, scarcity of doctors and skilled nurses, and poor transport and infrastructure" of the country's rural clinics.

"This network will be critical in supporting both the training of health care workers and mass public education about key health issues facing the citizens of our country," she said. The channel is expected to reach all 4,000 public health care sites in South Africa within five years, thus serving 97,000 nurses and 36 million South Africans who depend on public sector health care.

The Minister's confidence in the *Mindset Health* channel is buoyed by pilot clinic reports. Ann Lamont, *Mindset Network* chief executive officer, said feedback is overwhelmingly positive, with viewers increasingly seeking HIV testing and counseling to help manage their illnesses. Research regarding program content, conducted by the Medical Research Council and Johns Hopkins University, is also positive. Findings indicate that 88% of health care professionals who viewed the channel felt that the information provided was relevant and that it successfully addressed the challenge of educating the public on health issues.

Mindset Health's programming runs weekdays 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., and includes dramas, documentaries, interviews with real patients, and public health announcements. Programs are aired in English, Afrikaans, Sotho, Zulu, and Xhosa. Information transmitted through the channel can be stored on-site at each clinic, so health care workers can view programs on demand.

The President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief through USAID provided \$2.7 million to enable the Health Communication Partnership to work with the *Mindset Network* under Johns Hopkins University leadership to develop health channel content, and to monitor and evaluate its impact. The funds provide the foundation for a major, sustainable, mass-medium, public health intervention that addresses all significant health issues in a nation battling the HIV/AIDS epidemic.