

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Contrary to the fears of many, the end of apartheid has brought with it the undertaking from communities to take charge of their own lives. The principles of democracy are taken seriously at community level. Community members are mindful of their situations that need improvement and they need to be part of finding solutions to address their needs.

Over the years and many studies, the importance of satisfying basic needs became clear. Provisions have been made for material solutions by "outsiders" and the legacy of the past contributing, members of the communities have not been engaged in the planning processes.

One of the key priorities expressed in the White Paper on Reconstruction and Development, is the promotion of a healthy society. The Department of Health is faced with an enormous task of developing a health policy and strategy that is all encompassing and cost-effective.

The overall strategy needs to take into account the varying levels of the socio-economic status of various communities. The delivery of effective primary health programmes presents a big challenge not only for government but also for all stakeholders.

The Department of Health at both national and provincial levels, in partnership with business, parastatals as well non-governmental organisations are committing substantive resources to contribute towards preventative programmes to include the promotion and education on primary health care. It seems every opportunity is seized to help place health on the public agenda.

One initiative to have been embarked upon in the history of South African health promotion was the launch of the "Multi media Health Promotion" strategy. The strategy involves or utilises the concept of "edutainment" that asserts that people learn while being entertained. One of the major goals of the project was to undertake practical health education through the appropriate use of radio, television and print media. The project attempted to prove that mass media have an important role to play beyond the obvious function of providing campaigns to inform and entertain.

The screening of "Soul City" as an educational vehicle is being welcomed not as the absolute solution but should be seen as an integral attempt to highlight some of the problems requiring national attention. "Soul City" ran a set of themes and consisted of a thirteen part television drama; a 15 minute, daily radio drama in eight languages; serialised booklets as inserts in the ten newspapers and public relations and advertising. The messages conveyed in the Campaign need to be taken further by respective communities and use them as the basis for identifying their own pressing needs and jointly find appropriate solutions.

In all the messages it became clear that water is central to good hygiene and health practices. Without access to clean water and proper sanitation, the circumstances become health risks and eventually cause diseases that would otherwise have been prevented.

An evaluation of "Soul City" was done during 1995 by the Centre for Applied Social Enquiry to establish the overall penetration of the vehicle as well as to determine the impact on behavioural change.

The pilot study in Mamelodi was initiated to establish whether the messages of "Soul City" had a long-term impact. The study was done more than two years after the second screening of the first series of "Soul City". At the time of the study in 1997, Soul City 3 was running – heightening the confusion.

The field workers administering the questionnaires encountered difficulties, in that they had to first explain the series that carried messages being investigated. Questionnaires were administered to 384 households, at varying levels of socio-economic status. Men and women, individually and in groups, were interviewed. The fieldworkers and the project leader were received in a friendly and co-operative manner.

The results of the pilot study confirmed the power of multi-media in the promotion of health and hygiene practices. The results further confirm that the messages carried by "Soul City" need to be used in the context to give personal relevancy. The messages should be used to highlight substantive debate on health issues enjoying priority to inform processes to establish a participatory health strategy for the community of Mamelodi. The findings of this pilot study attempt to indicate how important it is to involve the communities in their own development programmes, giving cognisance to the existing strengths, weaknesses and opportunities.

A significant number of respondents have indicated that they viewed the series on television as well as in newspapers as nothing beyond fiction entertainment.

The report recommends that national initiative like "Soul City" need to be supported by localised health and hygiene programmes to ensure easy acceptability and retention. The Health promotion programmes need not be costly; the available resources could be used to maximise the benefits. This would involve graffiti, billboards, community radio stations and the existing social clubs "Burial Societies".

Programmes and projects should be undertaken with community consultation at all times and every step of the way.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the community of Mamelodi, especially those who participated in the study. My sincere gratitude to Dr. Willem Schurinck and his wife Evanthe for their valuable comments and assistance in the study. Notwithstanding the valuable assistance of the Geographic Information Systems Unit of the Human Sciences Research Council.

This study would not have been possible without funding received from the Water Research Commission