



"TRUE LIFE STORIES: GIRLS SPEAK OUT!"

Policymakers and NGO leaders acknowledge that education and outreach is not enough to halt the spread of HIV/AIDS, especially among women and girls. Young women are desperately in need of mentorship and support services that boost self-esteem. Orphans and vulnerable children (OVC's) of which there are more than one million in South Africa, are even more pressed to find support services to keep them safe from HIV/AIDS and other at-risk behavior.

Video can play an important role in changing behavioral norms by encouraging young women to share their true-life stories with other girls like them, who are healing from loss and building a brighter future for themselves.

"True Life Stories: GIRLS SPEAK OUT!", was a ten-day workshop, held April 24th – May 7th, 2007, to give eight girls, orphaned by AIDS, a voice through filmmaking. The workshop also trained two staff members from NOAH (Nurturing Orphans of AIDS for Humanity), Kate Radebe and Albert Musiye, to integrate video into a powerful peer-to-peer counseling program, whereby young women, ages 13-17, encourage their peers with testimonies from their own lives.

The videos were presented by the girls on May 7th, World AIDS Orphans Day, in a digital videoconference between the UN Mission in NYC, the State Department in Washington DC and US Consulate in Johannesburg, to address how "participatory media" can play a role in a combating HIV/AIDS.

Since May 7th, we have taken the results of the DVC, and established a framework for the first national HIV/AIDS media library, produced in partnership with media-interested groups, such as YouthAIDS, loveLife, and Desmond Tutu HIV Foundation, who outreach into communities where interactive education and prevention strategies are most needed.

Over the next eighteen months, Barefoot Workshops will train organizations in how to create "participatory videos", media by the people for their own communities- to build out the media library. We will also spearhead the creation of a steering committee to take local ownership of the project.

We invite your leadership, participation and support. Together we hope to harness the power of an NGO media collective, to quickly raise the visibility of root causes of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, and spread the most effective strategies and solutions together, one person at a time.

To join the SA Media Collective or to order a DVD sampler, contact: Barefoot Workshops – www.barefootworkshops.org Email: Alison.fast@barefootworkshops.org

