

Using a Mix of Old & New Media to Teach Social Good

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What happens when new media and old media collide?

Kenyan-based Media Focus on Africa, an organization which is finding innovative ways to use media and communication for development, might just have found the 'golden mean' between the use of both types of media.



In the post Kenyan-election violence, a lot of hurt and mis-understanding still exists, especially amongst the young people. Media Focus for Africa in collaboration with US-based <u>Search for Common Ground</u> found a nice way of meeting this challenge. Through a TV program called 'The Team'.

This series is a metaphor of Kenyan society. The team members and the coach have been brought together from many of Kenya's tribal groups to play together on a co-ed league. The league has been formed and financed by a group of wealthy international philanthropists and businessmen who believe sport will be a way to neutralize the ethnic hatred that shook Kenya after the last elections. The characters are from broken families, even as Kenya itself is a broken country. In that way, the team becomes a surrogate family for our players. They all want a 'family' but no one knows how to reach out and get it. Each of the players, and the coach, struggle to overcome ethnic hatred that sparked violent confrontations after the elections. The purpose of the series is to show that it is possible for people to overcome their differences for the good of all.

Through the show, messages of such topics as stereotyping, bribery/corruption, leadership, justice, relationships and more are passed on to the viewership; which is mostly targeted at the youth. The use of a local slang language called 'sheng' (a mix of local languages, english and swahili) sets the show apart as they speak the language of their audience. They actually have a sheng dictionary for the different sheng terms used on the show.

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[You can read more about the show on the Search for Common Ground site here as well]

That's the old media part. Now let's talk New Media!

Facebook

Media Focus for Africa maintains two Facebook locations. A <u>Facebook Group</u> dedicated to the show and a <u>Facebook account</u> dedicated to Imani Football Club (the actual football team on the show). Between the two, the show commands an audience of 5,000+ members. What's even more interesting is the fact that they still continue the same 'sheng' trend on their Facebook (and other social media channels). They actually have people asking for sheng terms for english words!

Twitter

You can find the ImaniFC twitter page here. They have a good 578 followers so far. Again, sheng is a key language here.

The team also does photo sharing via Google's Picasa and video sharing via YouTube. Here's the first season trailer:



According to a source from Media Focus for Africa, they have employed someone full time to work on and keep track of the social media engagement with viewers.

This is an awesome example of leveraging different media channels to propagate social change. We'll definitely be seeking out Media Focus for Africa for an interview soon!

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Social Media

social, the team, TV

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