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The Tangled Lives of Philip Wetu

A Namibian story about life choices and HIV

A publication in the German Health Practice Collection

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German Health Practice Collection

Showcasing health and social protection for development

■ Goal

The German Health Practice Collection (GHPC) aims to share good practices and lessons learned from health and social protection projects around the world. Since 2004, the Collection has helped assemble a vibrant community of practice among health experts, for whom the process for each publication is as important as the publication itself as it is set up to generate a number of learning opportunities: The community works together to define good practice, which is then critically discussed within the community and assessed by independent peer reviewers.

■ Scope

The Collection is drawn from projects, programmes and initiatives supported by German Development Cooperation (GDC) and its international and country-level partners around the world. GDC includes the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and its implementing organisations: Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) and KfW Development Bank (KfW). The projects are drawn from a wide range of technical fields and geographical areas, at scales running from the local to the global. The common factor is that they make useful contributions to the current state of knowledge about health and social protection in development settings.

■ Publications

All publications in the Collection describe the projects in enough detail to allow for their replication or adaptation in different contexts. Written in plain language, they aim to appeal to a wide range of readers and not only specialists. Readers are also directed to more technical resources, including tools for practitioners. Available both in full reports and summarised short versions, Collection documents can be read online, downloaded or ordered in hard copy. Versions in languages other than English are made available if the projects operate in countries where other major languages are widely spoken.

■ **Front cover photo:** Philip Wetu is a young, successful IT consultant with a complex love life. Involved in sexual relationships with several different women simultaneously, Philip puts himself and those he cares about at risk of infection with HIV. The fictional character was invented five years ago as the protagonist in a locally produced film designed for use as a social and behaviour change tool in Namibian workplaces. Philip's story has since been adapted for use in different media, expanding its reach to more and more target groups.



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More information can be obtained from the Managing Editor at ghpc@giz.de.

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Acronyms

AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
BCC	Behaviour Change Communication
BMZ	Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, Germany
GIZ	Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH
GTZ	Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (now GIZ)
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
MCP	Multiple and Concurrent Partnerships
MOHSS	Ministry of Health and Social Services, Namibia
NBC	Namibian Broadcasting Corporation
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization

The Tangled Lives of Philip Wetu

A Namibian story about life choices and HIV

Executive Summary

This publication tells the story of *Three and a Half Lives of Philip Wetu*, a multi-platform behaviour change communication product developed in Namibia by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH on behalf of the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).

Situation

An estimated 13% of Namibians aged 15 to 49 are infected with HIV. Forty percent of new infections occur among young people, the majority among women. Multiple and concurrent sexual partnerships and intergenerational sex are among the key drivers of the epidemic. Despite widespread awareness of HIV, levels of HIV testing are low in Namibia. After two decades of prevention campaigns and a rising 'AIDS fatigue,' the challenge is to find creative ways to help people perceive their actual risk and to adopt their behaviours accordingly.

Approach

In 2009 the Multisectoral HIV and AIDS Response Programme collaborated with Namibian partner organisations to produce *Three and a Half Lives of Philip Wetu*, a 30-minute interactive film about a middle-class Namibian man who has sexual relationships with several women simultaneously. Screened to groups of 20–30 participants by a trained facilitator, the film follows a decision-tree format in which the audience helps the main character, Philip Wetu, make important decisions with implications for his own health and well-being, as well as those of people close to him. These include decisions such as whether to get tested for HIV, whether to have unprotected sex, and whether to disclose his HIV status to his partners. At three decision points the film is stopped, the audience discusses what Philip should do, and the film then continues according to the audience's decision.

In discussing the situations which Philip faces, participants are encouraged to reflect upon the choices they make in their own relationships. The film aims to increase knowledge of HIV transmission and to change attitudes towards, and ultimately practice of, risky behaviours such as multiple and concurrent partnerships.

Since its launch the film has been screened in workplaces, schools, universities, military facilities and community centres across Namibia. It was broadcast on television as part of a national campaign to reduce multiple and concurrent partnerships and has been distributed to community groups across southern Africa.

Philip's story was subsequently adapted into a 13-episode comic strip for young people and published in *The Namibian* newspaper. Readers were encouraged to send feedback on Philip's dilemmas by SMS and to join into discussions about love, relationships and life choices on a Facebook page. The comic strip along with an educational guide for life skills teachers is being distributed to schools countrywide.

Results

Two independent peer reviewers have confirmed that the Philip Wetu approach is state of the art, has produced valuable results and provides important lessons for the response to HIV. Key results include:

- **Reach.** More than 20,000 people in Namibia and neighbouring countries have seen the film through facilitated sessions or on television. The comic strip will reach several thousand young people, while hundreds more have engaged with Philip's story via social media.
- **Audience reactions.** Viewers praise the film's high-quality production values, local setting, use of Namibian actors, and realistic story line. The film's interactive format effectively draws participants into discussion and reflection about their own relationships.

- **Improvements in knowledge, attitudes and intended behaviours.** Following the film statistically significant improvements in knowledge were recorded in relation to questions about the ‘window period’ for re-testing, the risks of acute infection and the possibility to prevent infection after possible exposure to HIV. In some regions the film also generated positive shifts in participants’ attitudes to people living with HIV and led to significant improvements in intentions to test for HIV. Viewers report that the film helps them to personalise what they already know about HIV through its depiction of characters and situations which they encounter in their everyday lives. The film is particularly effective with urban audiences; results are generally stronger among males than females and among adults than young people.

Lessons learned

Three and a Half Lives of Philip Wetu was intended as a stand-alone tool for workplace programmes, but over time has grown into a multi-platform behaviour change communication intervention. Key to its success was the decision to invest in good quality, locally-made products which reflect familiar situations and typically Namibian ways of speaking and thinking. Collaborative relationships with local organisations were also important at all stages.

The film is enjoyed by many different audiences, but is most effective among participants who can identify with the characters and have a good grasp of English. High-quality facilitation is another condition for success. When these conditions are not met, there is a risk that audiences can interpret the film’s messages in unintended ways.

You can find clips from the video, the comic strip and other tools of Three and a Half Lives of Philip Wetu online at www.health.bmz.de/good-practices/GHPC/three-and-a-half-lives-of-philip-wetu/index.html

Another important lesson relates to the need to develop a sustainable implementation plan for behaviour change communication products. Although *Three and a Half Lives of Philip Wetu* has been widely praised, its continued use has largely depended upon German financial support. To guarantee independence from external finances, one promising approach is to identify ‘champions’ within private sector companies and government institutions who can ensure the products’ regular use in workplace programmes which reach large numbers of employees.

Box 1. Key Messages

Situation. Namibia’s generalised HIV epidemic is partly driven by widespread multiple and concurrent sexual relationships and intergenerational sex. Despite high levels of HIV awareness, many Namibians do not perceive themselves to be at risk of infection.

Approach. GIZ worked with local organisations to produce *Three and a Half Lives of Philip Wetu*, an interactive film which engages audiences in discussions of life choices which put one at risk of HIV. The film has been shown in facilitated screenings throughout southern Africa and was subsequently adapted into a comic strip with social media tie-ins.

Results. More than 20,000 people have seen *Three and a Half Lives of Philip Wetu*. The film generates positive changes in audiences’ HIV-related knowledge, attitudes and intended behaviours, demonstrating the potential of locally-developed behaviour change communication tools for HIV prevention.

Lessons learned. The film is more likely to achieve its desired effects among audiences who can identify with the characters. Support for the development of behaviour change communication instruments should also encompass the design of a realistic plan for their sustainable use following the end of external assistance.

Life choices in the age of HIV



■ Inatu Indongo (second from left) facilitates a discussion of *Three and a Half Lives of Philip Wetu* with a group of secondary school pupils in Windhoek.

Laughing and slightly out of breath, two dozen pupils crowded into a small room where plastic chairs had been arranged in half circles facing a large screen on the wall. It was mid-afternoon in Windhoek, Namibia and the winter sun was already low in the sky. Inatu Indongo, a slim, energetic woman who works as a facilitator for the Namibian non-governmental organisation (NGO) Positive Vibes, had just led the group in an ice-breaker exercise on the small driveway outside the organisation's offices. Ranging in age from 13 to 17, the teenagers hailed from four different secondary schools and didn't know one another: the game helped to put them at ease. Once back inside, they settled down into their chairs. Girls dominated the front of the room, while a small contingent of boys clustered in the back corner.

The group quickly got down to business. 'We're going to watch a film this afternoon,' Indongo said, standing before the pupils at the front of the room. 'Its purpose is to give you a chance to reflect on decisions you make in relationships, and to give you information about HIV.'

'The film is about multiple and concurrent partnerships,' she continued. 'It's about a man named Philip who is involved in sexual relationships with several women at the same time.'

Indongo paused. Then: 'Do we know men like Philip? Are multiple and concurrent partnerships something we experience in our culture?' she asked the pupils.

'Yes!' they answered in chorus, loudly and without hesitation. 'You're right,' Indongo agreed, matter-of-factly. 'And sometimes it results in situations where you have step-sisters and step-brothers who come from relationships outside the marriage. Do any of you here have step-brothers or step-sisters as a result of your mother or father having another relationship? Let me see hands.'

Nearly a third of the pupils raised their hands. She nodded. 'This is the reality in our country. This is something that is happening in our communities,' Indongo said frankly, meeting the pupils' eyes. 'OK guys, let's start watching the film. Then we'll stop and discuss what you think about it.'

Taking responsibility for decisions

The teenagers who gathered at Positive Vibes that afternoon were participating in a facilitated screening of *Three and a Half Lives of Philip Wetu*, a 30-minute interactive film produced in Namibia in 2009 by the former Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ), which later integrated into the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ).¹ A relatively small and little-known genre, interactive films are structured according to a decision tree format which allows viewers to determine, at key points, how the story will proceed. In *Three and a Half Lives of Philip Wetu*, the audience follows the film's protagonist, a young,

¹ The Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH was formed on 1 January 2011. It brings together the long-standing expertise of the Deutscher Entwicklungsdienst (DED) gGmbH (German development service), the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ) GmbH (German technical cooperation) and InWEnt – Capacity Building International, Germany. Throughout the remainder of this publication, we refer to GIZ as the organisation responsible for the production and distribution of *Three and a Half Lives of Philip Wetu*.



■ *Three and a Half Lives of Philip Wetu* was designed as an interactive tool for use with urban middle-class adults. Over time, it has reached a much broader audience.

HIV communication interventions, *Three and a Half Lives of Philip Wetu* is not an overtly 'educational' product. It does not lecture, nor does it preach. In a direct, vivid and sometimes humorous way, it brings to the screen situations and characters which Namibians recognise from their everyday lives. HIV is not about other people 'out there,' the film seems to say, but about each one of us. Relationships can be complex and the choices facing us may be difficult, but this is all the more reason to think through the consequences of our actions and to take responsibility for ourselves.

An innovative approach to behaviour change communication

middle-class Namibian man, as he navigates a complex set of personal relationships. At three different points during the film, the audience – in discussion with a trained facilitator – has to help Philip make an important decision with implications for his own health and well-being, as well as those of people close to him. These include decisions such as whether to get tested for HIV, whether to have unprotected sex, and whether to disclose his HIV status to his partners. After the audience discusses what they have seen and decides what Philip should do next, the film continues, the story unfolds and the consequences of the choice become clear.

In discussing the situations which Philip is facing, participants in the facilitated sessions of *Three and a Half Lives of Philip Wetu* are encouraged to reflect upon the choices they make in their own relationships. Like other behaviour change communication (BCC) interventions in the field of HIV, the film is ultimately aimed at reducing risky practices which fuel the spread of the virus, including unprotected sex, multiple and concurrent sexual partnerships (MCP), cross-generational sex, reluctance to get tested and failure to disclose one's HIV status to sexual partners.

In a country like Namibia, where 13% of the population between the ages of 15 and 49 is infected with HIV (UNAIDS, 2013), the epidemic is very real for many people. Unlike some

This edition of the German Health Practice Collection tells the story of *Three and a Half Lives of Philip Wetu*, a multi-channel, multi-platform BCC product developed under the auspices of the GIZ-implemented Multisectoral HIV and AIDS Response Programme in Namibia, which is hosted by Namibia's Ministry of Health and Social Services and funded by Germany's Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).²

The publication traces the evolution of the Philip Wetu product from its early days as a tool for use in small-group facilitated discussions to its broadcast on national television, its distribution throughout the southern Africa region, and its eventual adaptation as a serialised comic strip linked to interactive social media. It describes the factors which have contributed to the success of the film and comic strip with audiences, and highlights some of the lessons which have been learned along the way about the distribution, use and monitoring and evaluation of BCC products.

We begin, in the chapter which follows, by looking at the main trends in the field of behaviour change communication since the start of the HIV epidemic, illustrated with examples from Namibia. The remainder of the publication considers the Philip Wetu products against this backdrop.

² Important contributions to the Philip Wetu products have also been made by the Goethe Centre in Windhoek, Positive Vibes and NawaLife Trust with financial support from the US President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR).

Three decades of behaviour change communication

Alongside the search for a vaccine, effective strategies for bringing about behaviour change have been the holy grail of HIV prevention efforts for almost three decades. Reducing the sexual transmission of HIV depends in large part upon individuals making choices which will lessen their chances of becoming infected. Getting this to happen on a large scale has proven to be no easy task, however: human sexual behaviour is incredibly diverse, it is motivated by many different factors – from love and desire to peer pressure, sense of obligation or even coercion – and the social and cultural norms surrounding it vary greatly across contexts (Coates et al., 2008). Against this complex backdrop, the quest for successful behaviour change approaches has been one of continuous learning and adaptation.

Raising awareness

Over the past 30 years, as our understanding of HIV and the factors which enable it to spread have improved, behaviour change strategies have evolved to become more sophisticated and more comprehensive. The earliest approaches focused on raising awareness about HIV and how it could – and could not – be transmitted (Bertrand et al., 2006). The underlying premise was that HIV was spreading largely because people didn't yet know how to protect themselves (Krenn & Limaye, 2009): once people had correct information about infection risks, the thinking went, they would take steps to reduce their risk. These strategies saw information as a powerful tool which individuals could use to make rational decisions about their behaviour.

Yet in Namibia, as in many other countries, it soon became clear that information alone was not leading to changes in behaviour. The first cases of AIDS were identified in Namibia in 1986 when the country was still under the control of apartheid South Africa; in 1990, shortly after independence, the National AIDS Control Programme was established to coordinate HIV prevention activities nationwide. The Programme used print and electronic media, as well as interactive events, to raise individual and public awareness of HIV, and millions of condoms were distributed free of charge throughout the country (MOHSS, 1999).

During these early years, awareness of HIV was building among the Namibian public, but so were new infections. By 1992 there were 1200 documented cases of HIV in the country; this jumped to more than 7700 cases in 1995. By 1996 AIDS was the leading cause of death (MOHSS, 1999). The prevention challenge – not only in Namibia, but in many countries with burgeoning epidemics – became how to translate growing awareness into behavioural changes that would avert new infections.

Changing individual behaviour

Over the course of the 1990s 'second generation' HIV prevention strategies began to focus more explicitly on behaviour change, urging individuals to adopt specific practices to protect themselves from infection (Bertrand et al., 2006). Abstinence, faithfulness and the regular use of condoms – the so-called ABC approach – led the list of suggested actions. Ministries of health, international agencies and non-governmental organisations in countries around the world developed and disseminated HIV prevention messaging through multiple channels, including television and radio programmes, billboards, drama productions, printed leaflets and posters, community events, World AIDS Day celebrations and public service advertisements. Over time, the scale of communication campaigns grew and mass media became a favoured way to reach national audiences.

Namibia's behaviour change efforts moved to a new level with the establishment in 1999 of the Take Control task force. The task force brought together governmental and non-governmental organisations under the leadership of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting to organise and implement a series of coordinated national campaigns. The first of these was *Safe Sex Saves Lives* (1999–2001), which used television, radio, posters and billboards to promote condom use among young people.

In certain countries and among specific high-risk populations, locally-designed communication messages combined with strong political leadership and active community engagement brought about striking results. Declines in HIV incidence were recorded among gay men in the United States and other high-income countries and among the general population in Uganda, Thailand, and Senegal. Brazil and a number of countries in Africa also recorded drops in HIV transmission attributable to widespread changes in behaviour (Coates et al., 2008). In Namibia, however, the effects of behaviour change interventions were not immediately apparent. HIV prevalence among adults aged 15–49 continued to rise throughout the 1990s, peaking at 22% in 2002 (MOHSS, 2005).

After a decade of HIV prevention campaigns, only a quarter of adults in Namibia had ever been tested for HIV and condom use statistics were worrying: more than four-fifths of young people of both sexes reported having sex with a non-marital, non-cohabitating partner in the previous year, but of these only 48% of the women and 70% of the men had used a condom. Despite relatively high levels of awareness of ways to prevent HIV transmission – by 2000 almost 80% of women and 90% of men knew at least two of the three major ways to avoid infection (MOHSS, 2003) – enough people were continuing to engage in high-risk behaviours that infections continued to spread.

Tackling the social and structural dimensions of risk

By the mid-2000s, the inherent limits of individual-level behaviour change strategies were increasingly apparent and thinking about HIV prevention and the role of behaviour change strategies was shifting again. Systematic reviews of HIV communication programmes showed that well-designed and implemented interventions could produce statistically significant improvements in people's knowledge of HIV transmission and reductions in high-risk sexual behaviour (Bertrand et al., 2006), but that the effects sizes were usually marginal and changes were often not sustained over time (Coates et al., 2008). Messages urging behaviour change seemed to be effective for some people, but less so for others, who may not have had the motivation or the ability to protect themselves from HIV risk, even if they understand in theory how to do so. In other words, individual-level interventions alone would be unlikely – on their own – to turn the tide of new infections.

As HIV researchers and practitioners developed a better understanding of the epidemiological drivers of HIV in various settings, greater attention came to be paid to the social norms and structural factors which underpinned risky sexual behaviour. These included multiple and concurrent partnerships (MCP), which were identified as a major driver of HIV transmission in southern Africa, along with gender inequality, HIV-related discrimination, low levels of economic empowerment among women, transactional and intergenerational sex, alcohol abuse and population mobility (see Box 2 for a summary of the drivers of the HIV epidemic in Namibia). To stem new infections HIV prevention strategies needed to reach beyond the individual level, pay greater attention to the role of sexual networks, and engage much more directly with the specific factors enabling the transmission of HIV.

Box 2. Social norms, social networks and the drivers of HIV in Namibia

HIV in Namibia is spread primarily through heterosexual sexual contact. An estimated 13% of Namibians aged 15–49 are HIV-positive and more than 9000 people still acquire HIV every year. Forty per cent of these new infections occur among young people and, of these, 60% are among young women (MOHSS, 2012).

Research into the epidemiological drivers of the HIV epidemic in Namibia has revealed multiple vulnerability and risk factors which have converged into a ‘perfect storm of HIV-related risks’ (Piot et al., 2008; also: MOHSS, 2009). These include:

- **Early sexual debut and multiple sexual partners.** Many Namibians become sexually active at a young age and have multiple sexual partners over the course of their lifetimes, which is a strong predictor of HIV infection (Piot et al., 2008). In 2006 18% of men reported that they had sex for the first time before they turned 15 and 16% reported that they had more than one sexual partner in the past year (the corresponding figures for women were lower – 7% and 2.5% respectively) (MOHSS, 2007). Namibia’s long history of labor-related migration, in which men leave their wives and families for long periods of time, has contributed to a situation in which multiple and concurrent partnerships are viewed by many people as ‘normal.’
- **Low levels of HIV testing.** According to 2006 data, only 29% of women and 18% of men had an HIV test during the previous year and knew their status (MOHSS, 2007); among young people these figures are 13% and 6% respectively (UNAIDS, 2013). This points to low perceptions of individual risk of HIV in the context of a generalised epidemic.
- **Fewer Namibians are getting married or living together as cohabiting partners.** Approximately one-third of Namibian adults aged 35–39 have never been married or lived with anyone, according to 2006 data (MOHSS, 2009). This is one of the lowest marriage and cohabitation rates in Africa.
- **Poverty and unemployment.** Only 43% of the population over the age of 15 is employed and more than 80 percent of those have been continuously unemployed for a year or longer (World Bank Development Indicators from 2012 and 2008, in: World Bank, 2013).
- **Alcohol abuse.** More than half of Namibian adults use alcohol and 26% can be classified as binge drinkers (Adams, 2011). Alcohol use starts early: young people have easy access to alcohol at shops in their communities and almost one-third of 10–14 year-old children in Namibia have been given alcohol by a parent or guardian (UNICEF, cited in: LeBeau & Yonder, 2008).
- **Cross-generational sexual relationships.** It is common for Namibian women to have sexual partners older than themselves: 7% of single 15–24 year olds and more than a quarter of married women the same age have sexual partners at least 10 years older than themselves (MOHSS, 2009).
- **Gender-based violence.** 40% of women aged 15–49 have experienced physical or sexual violence from a male intimate partner in the previous year (MOHSS, 2012).

Reflecting the cumulative lessons learned over nearly 30 years, current HIV prevention campaigns continue to feature behaviour change strategies, but also emphasise the roll-out of biomedical interventions (such as male circumcision and ‘treatment as prevention’) and advocacy efforts aimed at legal and political issues (e.g. the criminalisation of homosexuality). Prevention strategies are informed by the view that multiple risky behaviours work together to enhance the risk of HIV infection, and that these need to be addressed at multiple levels: with individuals, but also among couples and within family units, in institutions and communities, and in the policy realm (Coates & Caceres, 2008).

From behaviour change communication to social change communication

In the sphere of HIV communications, the term ‘behaviour change communication’ has gradually been supplanted by ‘social and behaviour change communication’ or, simply, ‘social change communication.’ This reflects the belief that prevention must address not just risky behaviours, but the underlying causes of those behaviours and other factors which increase people’s vulnerability to infection. Social change communication strategies differ from more traditional BCC activities in their emphasis on social mobilisation and advocacy. Effective social change communication campaigns are tailored to the dynamics of the local epidemic, employ consistent messaging through multiple communication channels, and are implemented ‘at scale’ with contributions from a wide range of partners (Krenn & Limaye, 2009; Byrne & Vincent, 2011; C-Change, n.d.).

In recent years, HIV prevention campaigns in Namibia have increasingly reflected this approach. Addressing issues of stigma and disclosure, the *Be There to Care* campaign (2007–2008) moved away from a sole focus on individual behaviours and emphasised the importance of healthy relationships and family support. A major two-year campaign called *Break the Chain* (2010–2011) targeted multiple and concurrent partnerships: in its first phase it built awareness of sexual networks;

in the second it aimed to reduce the risks of MCP by encouraging people to disengage from sexual networks or to protect themselves if involved in one. Another campaign, *Stand Up against Alcohol Misuse* (2010), was informed by evidence that widespread alcohol use and abuse was contributing to an environment in which risky sex was commonplace (LeBeau & Yoder, 2008). *Stand Up!* sought to create social pressure against the irresponsible use and sale of alcohol in the country and to advocate stricter implementation of existing alcohol regulations.

“What makes the difference between a growing and a diminishing HIV epidemic is not merely net changes in individual behaviours, but dynamic shifts in sexual and social networks.”

Peter Piot, *The Lancet*, 2008

All of these campaigns shared a similar model:

- they were locally designed and addressed issues of particular importance to the Namibian epidemic;
- they were planned and implemented in a coordinated way by multiple organisations, each playing to their own strengths;
- they combined use of traditional media (TV, radio, newspapers, billboards) with community outreach and interpersonal communication (e.g. door-to-door visits, training programmes, community meetings); and
- they sought to both educate and change social norms.

The Philip Wetu approach described in this publication reflects many of these recent shifts in thinking about how to bring about social and behavioural change, as well as the growing role of new technologies in this quest. The next section focuses on the tools themselves. It traces the evolution of the Philip Wetu products from the original interactive film through its adaptation as a comic strip with social media tie-ins, and explains how these have been used with audiences in Namibia and beyond.

Philip Wetu: A Namibian story

Exploring life choices: the Philip Wetu interactive film

■ A serendipitous start

The idea for a film about HIV and multiple and concurrent partnerships in Namibia first arose in 2008 when Kathrin Lauckner, the head of the Multisectoral HIV and AIDS Response Programme at the time, came across a copy of an interactive film called *Life Choices* at a regional meeting of health sector personnel working for German Development Cooperation. *Life Choices* had been produced in Uganda by the former GTZ in 2005 as a tool for engaging rural youth in discussions about HIV, teenage pregnancy and relationships.

Lauckner was struck by the film's innovative format and immediately saw its potential application in Namibia. The Multisectoral HIV and AIDS Response Programme was working closely with public sector institutions, such as the Ministry of Works and Transport, on workplace programmes which provided employees with information about HIV, access to prevention supplies (such as condoms), and referrals to HIV-related services. These programmes targeted a population of middle class adults who, at that time, generally did not see themselves as being at risk of contracting HIV. While there was no hard data on HIV prevalence levels among Namibia's public sector employees, studies from neighbouring countries – as well as anecdotal information from HIV focal points and peer educators working in Namibian institutions – suggested that HIV was already a serious problem. Moreover, there was growing attention to multiple and concurrent partnerships as a major driver of the epidemic in the country. Concurrency and intergenerational relationships (the 'sugar daddy' phenomenon) were issues which directly affected – and involved – the professional classes in Namibia.

As a result of 'AIDS fatigue,' it has been challenging to find ways to improve Namibians' perceptions of personal risk.

The challenge was to find ways to improve people's perceptions of personal risk in a country experiencing a certain degree of 'AIDS fatigue': twenty years into the epidemic Namibia was practically saturated with HIV messaging and surveys showed high levels of HIV awareness. Lauckner thought that an interactive film about multiple and concurrent partnerships, aimed at middle class adults, could be a fresh and inventive tool for use in HIV workplace programmes

and in community settings, as well. 'Behaviour change communication too often tries to drive home scientific messages,' Lauckner said recently, when reflecting back on the period when the film was developed, 'but if people aren't emotionally involved, it just doesn't work.' From the very start, the idea behind *Three and a Half Lives of Philip Wetu* was to create a story which people could relate to – and which was entertaining at the same time.

■ Producing a local story, locally

Creating a film which people could relate to meant producing it locally. At the time *Three and a Half Lives of Philip Wetu* was made, there was no shortage of educational films about HIV available in Namibia, but all of these were produced in other countries and were immediately identifiable as such to audiences. *Three and a Half Lives of Philip Wetu* drew upon – and showcased – local talent. The Multisectoral HIV and AIDS Response Programme collaborated with several Namibian organisations which had been working on HIV and behaviour change communication for many years to develop the content of the film and to plan its roll-out. Production was overseen by the Windhoek-based company Media Logistics Namibia, which hired a scriptwriter, director (the filmmaker Richard Pakleppa) and a team of local actors.

Audiences see the Windhoek license plates and the familiar street scenes and feel that they have a stake in the story – that it is relevant to their lives.

'People are curious to see something on the screen that comes from a place they know,' said Samuel Taapopi, who coordinates the Employee Wellness Programme at the Walvis Bay Corridor Group, a public-private partnership which promotes the use of transportation routes linked to the Namibian port of Walvis Bay. From his experience using *Three and a Half Lives of Philip Wetu* in workplace settings, the fact that the film is set in Namibia makes a huge difference: the Windhoek license plates, the familiar street scenes, the well-known bar where Philip meets with his friends – all of this gives audiences the feeling that they have a stake in the story and that it is relevant to their lives. Casper Erichsen, the director of Positive Vibes, notes that the local content 'clicks' with viewers. 'There are insider jokes and people behaving in ways that are uniquely Namibian,' he said. 'Philip Wetu filled a gap – a desire for local products.'

The second task – creating an entertaining product – meant coming up with an engaging story and bringing it to the screen in a professional way. The first step was to identify key themes for the film and to flesh out a story line which both reflected local issues and fit with the decision-tree format. In addition to staff at the Multisectoral HIV and AIDS Response Programme, colleagues at Media Logistics Namibia, Positive Vibes, NawaLife Trust – a health and development communications organisation originally founded by the Johns Hopkins University Center for Communication Programs – and the Goethe Centre in Windhoek helped to shape the initial concept of *Three and a Half Lives of Philip Wetu* and to review and comment on scripts.

■ The story

Because men are more likely than women in Namibia to have had multiple sexual partners in the past year, and to have sexual partners ten or more years younger than themselves, a decision was taken early on to focus the film on the actions of a male protagonist. It was important that he would be an aspirational figure who embodied a lifestyle which many in Namibia – both men and women – found appealing. Philip Wetu – the name ‘Wetu’ means ‘Everyman’ – was conceived as an attractive, yet contradictory character whose professional success also enables him to engage in relationships with multiple women simultaneously. The title of the film speaks to Philip’s parallel lives and the confusion that erupts as these worlds collide.

Philip is a 28-year old man who works as an IT consultant in Windhoek. He is not fabulously wealthy, but he is successful enough to be able to afford a BMW and lovely home, which he shares with his partner, Genevieve, and her young son, Romeo, whom he raises as his own. Philip loves Genevieve and sees a future with her, but is easily distracted by other women.

Viewers first meet Finelda, a feisty woman who has been dating Philip for the past few months and believed, mistakenly, that she was the only woman in his life. There is also Jacky, a self-confident young woman with big dreams who, like Philip, has multiple partners. Jacky and Philip enjoy each other’s company, and are open with one another about the fact that they are involved with other people. In the course of the film, Philip meets two new women: Nailoke, an unusual and self-possessed woman who is attracted to Philip, but resists his advances; and Tulonga, a school girl, who is flattered by Philip’s attention and has her first sexual experience with him.



■ The main characters (from top to bottom): Philip Wetu; Genevieve, Philip’s long-term partner; Finelda, the scorned woman; Jacky, Philip’s occasional lover; Nailoke, Philip’s intriguing new acquaintance; and Tulonga, the innocent schoolgirl.

HIV enters into this sexual network – first indirectly, when Genevieve asks that they stop using condoms so that she can become pregnant with Philip’s child, and then directly, when Philip learns that Jacky might be HIV positive and that he may also be at risk. These plot developments form the basis for the decision points facing Philip: Should he agree to go with Genevieve for an HIV test? Should he have unprotected sex with Genevieve, knowing that he may be HIV-positive? Should he warn Tulonga that she may be at risk of acquiring HIV after a condom breaks during sex? Should he confess to Genevieve that he’s been unfaithful?

Because of the decision-tree format, there is no one ending to the film – in any given screening what happens to Philip and the other characters is conditional on the decisions he makes along the way. However, none of the story lines have what one might consider a happy ending: in all eight scenarios Philip’s infidelities do serious harm to his relationship with Genevieve and in certain versions he and/or his partners learn they have become HIV positive through the sexual network.

■ Philip Wetu as a tool for HIV prevention

As a tool for HIV prevention *Three and a Half Lives of Philip Wetu* works at different levels. It provides important factual information about HIV transmission, it prompts viewers to re-assess their own risk of HIV, and it stimulates broader discussions of social norms. Although the film is focused first and foremost on multiple and concurrent partnerships, this is presented as one of many overlapping risk factors which act synergistically to enable the spread of HIV.

The main messages of the film can be summarised as follows:

- HIV is not a disease of the poor: it can affect any one of us;
- Being in a sexual network increases one’s risk of getting infected with HIV;
- Correct and consistent use of condoms can protect against HIV;



- Taking responsibility for one’s sexual behaviour means getting tested, knowing your HIV status and taking steps to protect others if you are infected (including disclosing status);
- Open and honest communication is important for a healthy relationship; and
- Men can and should play a greater role in HIV prevention. In doing so they become positive role models for their children and peers.

The film pushes viewers to think about the customary role of men and women in society and the consequences of women’s economic dependence on men.

In many ways *Three and a Half Lives of Philip Wetu* reflects current thinking about HIV prevention and communication: it tackles both individual behaviours which put people at risk of infection, and also draws attention to the social norms and structural factors which perpetuate certain risky practices. Individual choices stand at the heart of the film – the choices Philip makes in his relationships with his partners, the choices the female characters make in turn – but this is embedded in a broader, critical examination of aspects of the social and cultural context which are enabling HIV to spread. Through the plot device of Philip’s multiple partnerships, the film pushes viewers to think about the customary roles of men and women in society, the acceptability of women being assertive in relationships, the power imbalances which inevitably exist between ‘sugar daddies’ and younger women, and the consequences of women’s economic dependence upon men.

‘This film makes you question very intimate things,’ noted Inatu Indongo, when reflecting back on her experience facilitating the film with audiences across Namibia. ‘It generates very strong reactions among viewers because it questions every aspect of personal relationships, traditional views and values, and gender issues. These are things that are uncomfortable for people to talk about.’ She continued:

‘Some people become angry when seeing the film. There’s a lot of anger among women, in particular. They’re being confronted with a reality that’s uncomfortable, but which they’ve made peace with. The film hurts them

- *Depending on the choices they make, some audiences see this scene, where Philip agrees to go for an HIV test with Genevieve, while others see different scenes showing the consequences of his decision not to test.*

emotionally, it affects their self esteem. “Why am I in this relationship?” they ask. One begins to question the society that pressures you to stay in risky relationships, the society that confers status in the community upon married people. Things get re-awakened in you during the group discussion. People become willing to discuss culture.’

While the film depicts the harmful consequences of certain behaviours, it does not moralise. It acknowledges that relationships are complex and that good people can make bad choices. Carmen Pérez Samaniego, the current head of the Multisectoral HIV and AIDS Response Programme, believes that one of the great strengths of the film is the way Philip is presented as an attractive, yet contradictory character. ‘Viewers are emotionally attached to Philip,’ she said. ‘You can disagree with his behaviours, but still sympathise with him.’ Philip is an engaged and loving father to Romeo, for example, and in certain versions of the film he demonstrates that he can communicate openly and honestly with his partners.

■ Screenings across Namibia

Although *Three and a Half Lives of Philip Wetu* can be watched like a conventional film from beginning to end (in addition to the decision-tree ‘segments,’ the DVD also contains four complete films, based on different decision routes), it is intended to be used interactively with small audiences of 20 to 30 people. At each decision point, the film stops and a trained facilitator leads the group in a discussion of what they have just seen. This allows the audience to interact with the story, but also to relate Philip’s decisions and their consequences to their own lives. The sessions provide the oppor-

tunity for participants to exchange views on issues raised by the film, as well as to learn from one another and from the facilitator.

In the final minutes of each facilitated session, participants are asked to develop a personal action plan which applies the film’s messages to their own lives. Each participant receives a piece of paper and is asked to complete the following four sentences: ‘I will continue to ...’ / ‘I will work towards stopping ...’ / ‘I will start to ...’ / ‘I plan to ...’ Inatu Indongo, the facilitator from Positive Vibes, tells participants to ‘see it as a love letter to yourself.’

Rolling out facilitated sessions of *Three and a Half Lives of Philip Wetu* in Namibia required close collaboration between the Multisectoral HIV and AIDS Response Programme and partner organisations with expertise in training, facilitation and community outreach work. NawaLife Trust was a natural partner, given its longstanding work in video facilitation in communities through its NawaCinema programme, and Positive Vibes brought expertise in training and video facilitation, with a particular focus on participatory approaches involving people living with HIV.

Between April and December 2009, Positive Vibes trained 130 individuals to become facilitators for *Three and a Half Lives of Philip Wetu*. These included both experienced video facilitators – drawn from NawaLife Trust’s and Positive Vibes’ own networks – as well as new trainers identified through HIV support groups, youth organisations and GIZ partner



■ Hundreds of people have been trained to facilitate screenings of *Three and a Half Lives of Philip Wetu*, including this group of students at the University of Namibia.

organisations. At their request, several of the actors from the film were also trained to facilitate sessions. Each trained facilitator was equipped with a set of DVDs and a detailed facilitation guide to support their work. Facilitators could use *Three and a Half Lives of Philip Wetu* 'in house' – within their own institutions – or could 'freelance' by undertaking sessions at the invitation of other groups in their area.

Three and a Half Lives of Philip Wetu was officially launched at the Goethe Centre in Windhoek on June 30, 2009. In the six months following its launch, the film was seen by more than 1000 people across the country during sessions held in workplaces, youth clubs, support groups, health centres and schools. The Multisectoral HIV and AIDS Response Programme advertised the availability of facilitated sessions of the film through brochures and leaflets distributed widely through partner organisations across the country.

The film quickly proved itself to be a successful and versatile product, popular with a wide range of audiences. It was screened to hundreds of students at the University of Namibia and the Polytechnic of Namibia, was used extensively by the Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Forestry with employees at its Windhoek and regional offices, and was integrated into the HIV prevention work being carried out by US Peace Corps volunteers countrywide. The Namibian Defence Force used the film actively in its HIV workplace programme – with both active duty soldiers and civilian employees – and prisoners were reached with the film through the initiative of local NGOs.

■ Audiences' responses

Three and a Half Lives of Philip Wetu was received warmly by audiences. The film immediately distinguished itself with its high-quality production values. 'When they saw the film, people couldn't believe that it was made here,' observed Kennedy Lifalaza, a facilitator with Positive Vibes. The cinematography and soundtrack gave the film a cool, modern feeling and the Namibian characters and settings instantly lent it credibility with viewers.

The interactive element was also a hit with audiences. 'The winning thing about Philip Wetu,' said Laurence Dworkin, the CEO of STEPS for the Future which has helped to distribute the film throughout southern Africa (see 'Use beyond Namibia' below), 'is that the acting is good, scripting is good, options for audience choices are good, and people really like it. It's not as passive as watching a film on its own – it's almost an empowering act to be able to choose what happens with the story. It creates another whole dimension.'

'Often the films that we see about HIV are about someone getting infected and then getting sick. This one is different. It shows you the consequences that lifestyles have in increasing the risk of HIV infection.'

– Adult viewer, Ohangwena

Kennedy Lifalaza agrees. 'The film reflects the adult learning cycle: you see the film, relate its contents to your own life, and think about the choices you would make.' Lifalaza had previously facilitated sessions with documentaries and could see the strength of the interactive format: 'Film can be really powerful if you invite the audience to engage with the characters and to use this to talk about real-life experiences,' he said. Samuel Taapopi, of the Walvis Bay Corridor Group, put it more directly: 'People are tired of HIV,' he said. 'There has to be some kind of different recipe. The food in there might be the same, but the recipe has to be different. Otherwise they assume that they know, and tune out.' In his view, *Three and a Half Lives of Philip Wetu* delivers this new recipe: 'I don't see the film as being about HIV per se, it's really just about modern life.'

Three and a Half Lives of Philip Wetu isn't a film about HIV, it's a sort of prism for examining modern life in Namibia.

The idea that *Three and a Half Lives of Philip Wetu* is a sort of prism for examining modern life in Namibia seems to be borne out by the types of discussions which it provokes. According to facilitators, the film generates reflection on a wide range of topics, many of which go beyond a narrow focus on HIV:

- Multiple and concurrent partnerships: Is this 'normal' and part of our traditions?
- Intergenerational sex: Does poverty explain why this is so common in Namibia?
- Culturally accepted roles for men and women: Do traditions still play a role in the decisions Namibians make in relationships today? What is the reaction of the community when a woman leaves her male partner?
- Privacy, trust and communication in relationships: Is it better to be honest with a partner, even if there is a risk of losing them? How and when can one share difficult information?

■ **The Break the Chain Campaign**

The development and launch of *Three and a Half Lives of Philip Wetu* happened to coincide with the start of *Break the Chain*, a two-year-long national HIV prevention campaign focused on partner reduction and the risks of MCP. Andre Kloppers of NawaLife Trust, which led the media component

of the campaign, recalls that ‘Philip Wetu fit very snugly into our messaging.’ The film was formally embedded as an element of the campaign, which brought together contributions from a number of different organisations under a common rubric.

■ *Facilitated sessions of Three and a Half Lives of Philip Wetu were an effective complement to the mass media elements of the national Break the Chain campaign (2010–11).*

WHO ARE YOU CONNECTED TO?

Your sexual network could give you HIV

If you have more than one sexual relationship at the same time, or within a short period of time, you can easily be connected to a sexual network. This means you can get HIV from your partner's partner, or that partner's partner, and so on. Know the risks of sexual networks and stop HIV.

Break the Chain
take control!

C-CHANGE GTZ INTRAHEALTH NAWALIFE UNAIOS UNICEF



■ During the national broadcast of *Three and a Half Lives of Philip Wetu*, a programme host (standing, far right) moderates an in-studio discussion about the film with (from left to right) Carmen Pérez Samaniego, Director of the Multisectoral HIV and AIDS Response Programme; Matthias Hansen, Chargé d’Affaires at the German Embassy, Windhoek; Nahum Gorelick, Director of NawaLife Trust; and Albertus Aochamub, the Director General of the Namibian Broadcasting Corporation.

Break the Chain made extensive use of mass media to spread messages about partner reduction, and coupled this with community mobilisation activities in many regions of the country. Starting in December 2009, a network of trained volunteers from *Break the Chain* partner organisations led small-group interpersonal communication sessions in many communities. *Three and a Half Lives of Philip Wetu* was integrated as tool for use in these outreach sessions, bringing the film to new audiences at a community level.

In June 2011 the film reached by far its biggest audience to date when it was broadcast on national television. Under the auspices of *Break the Chain*, NawaLife Trust negotiated with the Namibian Broadcasting Corporation (NBC), the country’s public broadcaster, to dedicate five episodes of the weekly youth magazine programme *Off the Hook* to showing and discussing *Three and a Half Lives of Philip Wetu*. Financial support for the broadcast was provided by PEPFAR.

Off the Hook was an ideal platform for the film, because its regular format included an in-studio audience, a panel discussion with invited guests and an interactive element in which viewers could offer feedback via text messages. During each 30-minute episode, broadcast on Wednesday evenings, the host would introduce a segment from *Three and a Half Lives of Philip Wetu*, show the excerpt, and then moderate a discussion of the issues raised in the scenes with a group of experts. Panel members were specifically chosen in accordance with the themes covered in the broadcast segment. During the first

episode, in which Philip’s girlfriend Genevieve presses him to get an HIV test, the in-studio panel featured a site manager from an HIV testing facility, who spoke about how to discuss HIV testing with a partner and explained how couples testing works.

Viewers were encouraged to send text messages at the end of each episode, giving Philip advice on what he should do next; in this way, the interactive element of the film was partially retained. Unlike in face-to-face sessions, however, the audience feedback did not determine how the storyline unfolded: the five episodes of *Off the Hook* needed to be planned out in advance, and producers used a pre-determined sequence of scenes which emphasised *Break the Chain*’s messaging priorities (e.g. the importance of HIV testing and disclosure).

NBC does not capture ratings data, so there is no way to know for certain how many Namibians saw the broadcast of *Three and a Half Lives of Philip Wetu*. However, according to the NBC website,³ 64% of the population is reached by NBC television programmes and market research data indicates that more than 750,000 Namibians over the age of 16 watch television on a typical evening.⁴

Whatever the actual numbers, anecdotal evidence suggests that the television broadcast greatly increased the profile of *Three and a Half Lives of Philip Wetu* and brought the character of Philip Wetu a step closer to becoming a household name. Ricardo Goagaseb, the actor who played Philip in the

3 http://www.nbc.na/co_aboutus.php?id=16&title=About%20NBC

4 Personal communication, Multisectoral HIV and AIDS Response Programme.



■ *The facilitation guide for Three and a Half Lives of Philip Wetu is a compact and attractive resource which facilitators can use prior to and during screenings of the interactive film.*

film, experienced first-hand the effects of the film's growing visibility: one afternoon while ordering a meal at a fast food restaurant in Windhoek, he was accosted by another customer, an older woman, who shoved her ice cream cone into his chest and shouted, 'It's because of people like you that my daughter is sick. Why couldn't you just stay with your girl?'

■ Use beyond Namibia

While *Three and a Half Lives of Philip Wetu* has found its main audiences in Namibia, it has been well-received outside the country as well. Through a distribution partnership with STEPS Southern Africa, the film has been shown to hundreds of viewers in Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe since early 2012.

STEPS is a non-profit organisation based in South Africa which brings contemporary documentaries and broadcast media products on social issues to audiences across the region. One of its projects, called *Steps for the Future*, features a selection of more than 50 films about life in southern Africa during the HIV epidemic. These are used by trained facilitators in STEPS partner organisations to engage audiences in discussion and reflection about HIV risks and consequences.

When GIZ first approached STEPS about the possibility of including *Three and a Half Lives of Philip Wetu* in its film repertoire, STEPS expressed some hesitation about the length of the film and the complexity of the facilitation guide. As Laurence Dworkin, the CEO explained, 'We were used to showing short documentary films in sessions that could be

facilitated easily with audiences.' STEPS saw that Philip Wetu would require a somewhat different approach and that facilitators would need to be trained to work with the interactive format. Dworkin and his colleague Elaine Maane, the regional training coordinator, also felt that the facilitator's guide could be simplified and made more user-friendly. Over a period of several months they worked closely with the Multisectoral HIV and AIDS Response Programme to revise the guide for widespread distribution.

Under an agreement with GIZ, STEPS has subsequently produced 2000 copies of the film and the facilitator's guide and has been distributing these through its network of partner organisations. It has integrated a special component on *Three and a Half Lives of Philip Wetu* into its standard facilitation training and has trained approximately 350 people to work with the film, including 150 in Botswana alone. *Three and a Half Lives of Philip Wetu* is now available to STEPS' entire network of video facilitators across the region and will continue to be distributed through the network even after the formal agreement with GIZ comes to an end.

Dworkin and Maane agree that the film has been a great addition to Steps for the Future. 'My reaction when seeing people working with the film,' Dworkin said, 'is that they have a lot of fun with it. It's something that people laugh at – it can be humorous, people can engage, it generates a lot of emotion.' Maane concurs. 'Once we got used to the format, it was readily accepted by partners,' she said. 'It complements our other films extremely well.'

People have fun working with the film, because it's humorous and generates a lot of emotion.

Although *Three and a Half Lives of Philip Wetu* tells a Namibian story, viewers outside the country have had no difficulty relating to the film. According to Dworkin, 'In southern Africa most young urban audiences are fine with it. There's very little difference from Lusaka to Gabarone – it's become so globalised that there's a common identity now, not a sense of "them and us."' Kennedy Lifalaza, the facilitator from Positive Vibes, encountered a similar reaction when he had the opportunity to work with the film once in Malawi. At the end of the session, hosted by a local NGO, the reaction was: 'We're touched by this film.'

Reaching new audiences: Philip Wetu in the papers, on social media and beyond

Although *Three and a Half Lives of Philip Wetu* was originally created for an adult audience, it became clear that it resonated with young people as well. With the start of a new programme phase in 2011, the Multisectoral HIV and AIDS Response Programme began to focus greater attention on HIV prevention among youth. Given the success of the *Three and a Half Lives of Philip Wetu* interactive film, it was natural to think about how to expand the product's reach to new audiences, particularly young people.

Philip Wetu: The Comic Strip

In late 2011 GIZ began brainstorming with Dudley Viall, a Namibian filmmaker and artist, about ways to follow up the interactive film. Viall, who has had a long and fascinating career at the intersection of art and social activism in Namibia, had worked on a number of projects with GIZ, including a travelling theatre production on HIV aimed at farmworkers. He understood the issues involved and – perhaps more importantly – had a vision for how to convey them to young audiences.

'There's been a dire lack of local comics on social issues in this country,' Viall recently said. He saw the prospect of adapting *Three and a Half Lives of Philip Wetu* onto the page as something that could be relevant to a young audience, but also knew from experience that it would be extremely expensive to produce a stand-alone comic book. In his capacity as a founding member of *The Namibian* newspaper – as well as its political cartoonist – he was able to arrange with the editor to have space set aside in *YouthPaper*, the youth supplement of *The Namibian*, for the serialisation of Philip's story in comic strip form. *The Namibian* is the country's largest circulation newspaper, with a national readership of approximately 60,000 people.

Viall worked with facilitators at Positive Vibes to distil the key plot points from the film into one concise story line which could be told over the course of 13 episodes. To retain the interactive element, they agreed that each episode would end with Philip posing a question to readers. *The Namibian* was one of the first newspapers in the region to allow readers to send feedback, questions and comments by text message, and this format was ideally suited for the adaptation of *Three and a Half Lives of Philip Wetu*. Because Viall needed to prepare the episodes in advance, it wasn't possible to use the SMS feedback to influence the course of the story; instead, reader feedback would be reprinted the following week with the next

episode of the story. The telephone number for LifeLine/ ChildLine Namibia – a free telephone counseling service – was also printed next to each episode for young people who wished to speak to someone or ask for advice about the issues being raised in the story.

A week before the publication of the first episode, an article in *The Namibian* introduced the series and encouraged young people to read and reply to the story by SMS. As an incentive, it was explained that one text message would be selected as the winner and its author would be invited to meet Philip Wetu (the actor Ricardo Goagaseb) in person.

The comic book version of Philip's story presents a 'lower-tech' way of stimulating discussion on the same themes which are explored in the film.

Three and a Half Lives of Philip Wetu debuted as a comic series in February 2012; Dudley Viall recalls that there was 'quite a buzz' when it appeared. Messages immediately flowed in by SMS, and comments were left on the Philip Wetu Facebook page (see below). In the final frame of Episode 1, Philip asked readers to tell him how many partners they had, and how they keep it secret. Detailed replies followed:

'I have two boyfriends: the one I love so much, the other is just there for pleasure and they live in different places. Am trying so hard to let go of one, but it's hard and I know it's wrong to have a lot of partners.'

'I have two because I cannot trust one girl. I do also think they cheat too. I keep it secret because they are far from each other, but I always make sure I condomise.'

Over the course of the 13 episodes, more than 160 messages were received from all over the country. Some of them reflected a clear understanding of the risks of HIV and gave Philip sensible advice:

'U should go 4 an HIV test not 2 please ur girlfriend, but 2 know ur own status. Even after the HIV test u should always use a condom regardless of ur status.'

'The looks of a person shouldn't blind you, so please stick to your partner. You are even not sure how many lovers Jacky has.'

'Mr. Super Cool & Lovin: Lesson number one – AIDS has no face and no manners. It infects all: young, old, fat, skinny, black, yellow, white, hot and not.'

The story involving Tulonga elicited by far the greatest number of messages, with most but not all readers warning Philip off a relationship with the school girl. A sample of the feedback:

'Are you crazy! You cannot want to date a school girl regardless of her beauty. Be the bigger man and make the right choice. She has a future in front of her, let her fulfill it. Don't you think your partners are enough already?'

'No. It is not right to take advantage of an adolescent. If you are really interested wait for her to mature. As an adult you should be an example.'

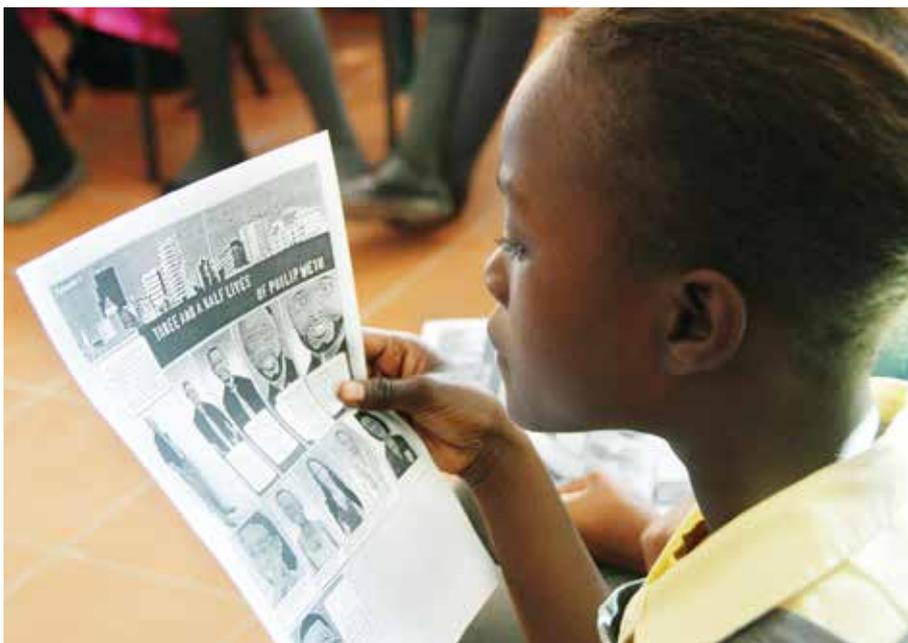
'Dear Philip, I really think that it's not a wise idea to go out with a school girl. You are just destroying her future by doing so and you can never hide this forever. If you have a heart please let the school girls focus on their study. How will you feel if someone goes out with your child at such a young age?'



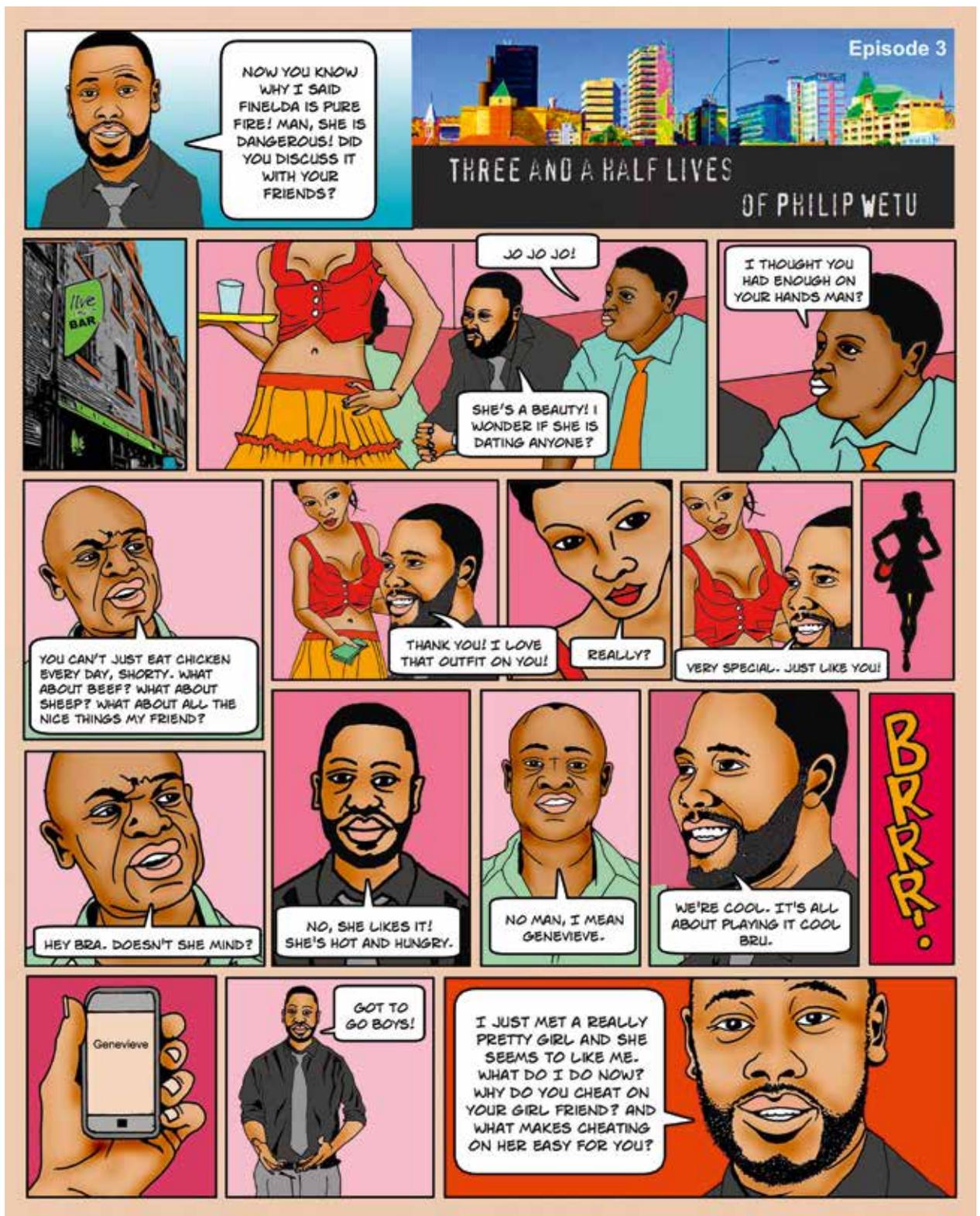
■ *The winner of the SMS competition, Paulina Malulu, meets Ricardo Goagaseb. The meeting drew further attention to *Three and Half Lives of Philip Wetu*, including in the local press.*

The winner of the SMS competition was Paulina Malulu, a youth activist and aspiring model. Before joining Ricardo Goagaseb for lunch at a Windhoek restaurant, she met with representatives of the Multisectoral HIV and AIDS Response Programme to discuss the ideas behind the behaviour change product. After the event, Malulu concluded: 'It opened my eyes more on the issues of stigma and discrimination. Because apart from discussing the fictional character and his journey, we also talked about Namibia's journey and how far we have come fighting the AIDS pandemic.'

The comic strip attracted attention at a high level: the Ministry of Information expressed interest in distributing the comic through its regional offices and also encouraged the Multisectoral HIV and AIDS Response Programme to consider having the comic translated into additional languages. By late 2013, 40,000 copies of the *Three and a Half Lives of Philip Wetu* comic series had been printed for distribution – a portion of these in Oshiwambo and Afrikaans, which will make the story accessible to a wide range of young people in different parts of the country.



■ A school pupil meets Philip and the other characters as she reads the first episode of the Philip Wetu comic book during a facilitated session in Windhoek.



■ In the third episode of the comic strip, Philip confidently boasts to his friends that he has his complicated personal life under control.

■ **Teacher's Guide**

Following the positive reaction to the Philip Wetu comic strip, the Multisectoral HIV and AIDS Response Programme saw the comic's potential as an HIV prevention tool in its own right. While the interactive film could only be used under certain conditions – namely, in venues with electricity and a projector – the comic book presented a 'lower-tech' way of stimulating discussions on the same themes. As such it represented an obvious resource for life skills classes in Namibian schools.

GIZ hired a consultant to develop a teacher's guide to accompany the comic strip and then piloted the tool in a series of facilitated sessions. Rather than watching the interactive film, young people would read episodes of the comic strip and discuss the issues they raised. Elize de Wee, the consultant who tested the tool with several groups of teenagers, was amazed how well it worked. 'The comic raises so many questions that are relevant to adolescents,' she said. 'The issues are exactly those that are of greatest concern to them at this stage of development – how to manage different types of people and different kinds of relationships.'

After revising the guide, GIZ submitted it to the Namibia Institute for Educational Development (NIED), the agency responsible for approving educational resources. The guide was ultimately approved in late 2013 and 3000 copies will be distributed to schools countrywide by mid-2014. In the meantime, the comic strip has already been used by Positive Vibes in facilitated sessions with groups of young people in different parts of the country.

The comic strip has certain advantages over the film when it comes to younger audiences. The film includes some explicit scenes which are not appropriate for all viewers, and facilitators sometimes opt to show only excerpts of the film depending on the composition of the group in question. Andre Kloppers of NawaLife Trust is one who feels that a great strength of the comic strip is its ability to address sensitive topics in a controlled, age-appropriate way. 'The film was shot tastefully,' he said, 'but was still perceived by some as a bit risqué.' He believes that the comic strip format allows for more control over the way messages are conveyed.

Both he and de Wee agree that the educational comic has the potential to be a powerful tool, but that the key is to have good-quality facilitation. 'It all comes down to how it's used,' said de Wee. She feels that if life skills teachers are open to using the comic to stimulate discussion on sensitive issues, it can be a success, but that all too often the relationship between school pupils and life skills teachers lacks sufficient trust and respect for this to work. Kloppers agrees. 'You need someone skilled to contextualise the risks and to address misconceptions with young people,' he argues. In small group discussions there are often individuals who try to dominate the conversation and to force their opinion on others. 'The facilitator needs to have the skills to manage these things,' he cautioned.



■ *Use of the comic strip version of Philip's story doesn't require electricity or special equipment. Along with the teacher's guide, the comic strip represents an obvious resource for life skills classes in schools.*

■ Philip Wetu on Facebook

‘Young people in this country are sitting with a lot of things to share,’ mused Kennedy Lifalaza one afternoon at Positive Vibes’ offices. ‘There’s a need for more space to have “honest chats” where people can also be anonymous,’ he said.

Increasingly that space is being found online: Internet usage is rising quickly in Namibia and social media is affording more and more young people the opportunity to meet and to speak freely with one another. ‘Facebook is what young people are using nowadays,’ said Lifalaza. His colleague Inatu Indongo agreed: ‘It’s a way of communicating that’s hip, new and not boring.’ While the greatest density of users in Namibia is found in urban areas, it is far from exclusively an urban phenomenon. Mobile-based access is making it possible for people in remote areas to access the Internet.

In May 2011 Philip Wetu joined Facebook and started encouraging his followers to discuss love, relationships and life choices with one another. ‘Hello everybody, I am Philip Wetu,’ the first post went. ‘You want to know more about me? Watch the trailer of my film on YouTube.’ Philip Wetu’s debut on Facebook was timed to coincide with the national broadcast of the interactive film the following month. The page was used to promote the broadcast and to encourage people to tune in, but also to generate discussion among young people about the issues raised in the film. Philip would post questions every few days, or describe a situation affecting him, looking for replies and advice.

The page slowly built up its reach over the course of 2011, accumulating 88 ‘likes’ by January 2012. However the publication of the comic strip starting in February 2012 gave the page new material and helped to jump start discussions. After each new episode was posted, feedback flowed in:

‘I don’t think that you’re a bad person but you need to get your priorities straight. Do you want to not be in a relationship? Then leave Genevieve and you can do whatever you want as long as you play it safe. If you want to be with her, dump the other girls. What does everybody else here on FB think?’

‘Having another child could give you the feeling of being a real “MAN” ... maybe this is what u’re looking for in all your affairs ... maybe a child will change your behaviour and u take responsibility and you start thinking about being a role model for ur child ... just think about it.’

In addition to comments posted on Philip’s page, some people began sending messages directly to Philip’s Facebook inbox, looking for help with a specific problem. Luise Haunit

of the Multisectoral HIV and AIDS Response Programme thinks that ‘the beauty of the Philip Wetu brand is that he became the *Kummerkasten Onkel* for young Namibians’ – using the German term for an advice columnist whom people can write to for help resolving a personal problem. The fact that Philip is a stylised, fictional character did not prevent people from coming to him with personal issues. When such messages were received, the staff at the Multisectoral HIV and AIDS Response Programme would either reply directly (if the query was straightforward, such as where one could go for testing) or would refer the query on to other organisations with relevant expertise.

Social media is affording more young Namibians the opportunity to meet, share and speak freely with one another.

By June 2012 the site had 212 ‘likes,’ two thirds of which came from females. Young people aged 18–24 were the most active visitors to the site, followed by those aged 25–34. Most ‘likes’ originated from users in Windhoek, but young people from Walvis Bay, Swakopmund, Oshakati, Ongwediva and Okahandja also visited the page.

Following the publication of the comics, the page remained active and has been updated regularly with links and questions for discussion. Philip’s account has been used to advertise events (such as a screening of the film and the launch of the comic book at the Goethe Centre), to promote National HIV Testing Day, and to share information on topics ranging from violence against women and suicide to the re-issuing of Cool Ryder socially marketed condoms. By early 2014 the site had more than 1400 ‘likes.’

Although Philip Wetu’s page continues to be maintained, it has proven challenging to find the right combination of material to keep the page fresh and interesting. As is the case for many organisations entering into the realm of social media, the team at the Multisectoral HIV and AIDS Response Programme is learning what works through trial and error. According to Mustafa Mor, a *weltwärts* volunteer⁵ in Namibia who has been maintaining the page since June 2013, they have learned that Philip’s postings on HIV don’t always get shared, while those on other topics, such as faithfulness, are more likely to be passed on. By broadening Philip’s postings to cover a wider range of topics, the team is searching for ways to increase the page’s reach and to generate more interaction through personal messages.

5 *weltwärts* is the BMZ-funded volunteering programme for young Germans.

Keeping social media content alive and innovative is a cross-cutting challenge. Andre Kloppers, of NawaLife Trust, believes that Namibian companies and organisations are only starting to come to terms with how to integrate these new tools in their communications strategies. ‘It is more popular than our leading newspapers in circulation and certainly has more interactions than your average television viewing audience,’ he observed, ‘but the challenge is actually coming up with a workable strategy that will generate the interaction and sheer volume of following that would make it effective.’ Othilia Mungoba, of the Ministry of Health and Social Services, agrees. The Ministry has attempted to use social media to promote HIV testing and to publicise its various campaigns. ‘Everything comes down to how well it’s used,’ she said. ‘One has to be innovative with the messaging or people lose interest. You need celebrities or prominent people, new material, and links to partners.’

For Kloppers, the key is keeping word of mouth interactions going. He thinks that for this to happen, Philip Wetu needs to become a more controversial figure – ‘the way he was at community level’ – in order to get people excited. ‘When the people who follow him log on at the office and have their coffee in the morning, they have to be looking forward to seeing what he has to say.’

There is reason to believe that this may happen in the coming year. A new edition of the Philip Wetu comic strip is currently under development (see ‘A new chapter begins’ below) and it promises to attract plenty of attention.

All tools developed around Three and a Half Lives of Philip Wetu are showcased online at www.health.bmz.de/good-practices/GHPC/three-and-a-half-lives-of-philip-wetu/index.html



Philip Wetu’s Facebook page was used to publicise the television broadcast of the film and the publication of the comic strip, but it was also a place where young people could share their views on sensitive issues.

Results

Having described the development and use of the Philip Wetu products, this section now turns to the question of results.

Reach

Since its debut in June 2009, the *Three and a Half Lives of Philip Wetu* interactive film has been seen by more than 5000 people in Namibia and neighbouring countries via facilitated sessions. When taking into account the film's broadcast on national television in 2011, it is reasonable to conclude that at least 20,000 people have been exposed to the film – and the number may well be higher.

Why is it so difficult to say with precision how many people have seen the film? *Three and a Half Lives of Philip Wetu* is a 'floating' behaviour change communication product in the sense that it has been used with varying degrees of regularity by a large number of different organisations over a period of years. While the Multisectoral HIV and AIDS Response Programme received facilitator reports and participant lists for all sessions conducted during the initial roll-out of the film, it does not have an overview of the sessions which take place independent of its direct support. Once the film is in the hands of trained facilitators, or has been distributed to organisations who have requested copies, it becomes very challenging to track its use. Requests for periodic reports on numbers of screenings and audience sizes often go unheeded, and significant staff time must be dedicated to pursuing such information.

It is equally difficult to say how many young people have read the *Three and a Half Lives of Philip Wetu* comic in the youth supplement of *The Namibian*. Yet given that the paper has a circulation of 60,000 it is reasonable to conclude that several thousand young people have likely been exposed to the story. Beyond this, thousands more will potentially be reached through facilitated sessions in life skills classes in schools.

Effects on audiences: a review of monitoring data

The objective of *Three and a Half Lives of Philip Wetu* is to generate changes among audiences in four specific areas: knowledge of HIV transmission; attitudes towards HIV risk behaviours; the actual behaviours which put one at risk of infection; and personal perception of HIV risk. What effect has the film actually had on the thousands of people who

have seen it? Has it been successful in changing how audiences think about HIV and how they act in their personal relationships?

To shed light on these questions, GIZ and Positive Vibes undertook a thorough review of the monitoring data collected during 54 facilitated sessions of *Three and a Half Lives of Philip Wetu* between July and November 2013. During this period, Positive Vibes conducted sessions reaching more than 1000 young people (aged 15-24) and adults, and pre- and post-session questionnaires were collected from 619 of them (365 females, 254 males). Over half came from the predominantly urban areas of Khomas (Windhoek) and Erongo; approximately thirty percent were reached in Oshana, a rapidly developing semi-urban area in the north of the country; and the remaining fifteen percent came from the rural Ohangwena region, which borders Angola. Two months after the sessions, Positive Vibes re-convened 54 of the participants (22 males, 32 females) from Khomas, Oshana and Ohangwena for a series of focus group discussions. The key findings which emerged from the questionnaires and focus group discussions (Positive Vibes, 2014) are summarised below.

■ Namibians are well informed about HIV ...

Twenty years into the HIV epidemic most Namibians know about HIV, how it is transmitted and how to prevent infections. Thanks in large part to the *Break the Chain* campaign (described above), which communicated aggressively about the risk of sexual networks, there is also widespread awareness that multiple and concurrent partnerships increase the risk of HIV infection. Before the sessions more than 80% of participants knew that one cannot determine a person's HIV status by their appearance, that multiple partners increase HIV infection risk and that a negative HIV test result should be confirmed after three months. Large majorities (at least 70%) expressed disapproval of cross-generational sexual relationships and the practice of having multiple partners, and supported a woman's right to insist on condom use with her partner. More than three quarters agreed that it was important to disclose one's HIV status to a sexual partner, and nearly as many expressed that they were comfortable around people they knew were HIV positive.

■ ...but Philip Wetu improved their HIV-related knowledge in a number of areas

Despite these relatively high baseline values, participation in facilitated sessions of *Three and a Half Lives of Philip Wetu* led to some significant improvements in knowledge, attitudes and intended behaviours among respondents. Following the

sessions, participants demonstrated a better understanding of the need to re-test for HIV after a three month 'window period' – a topic which is treated explicitly in the film through the story of Philip and Jacky's relationship. Improvements in understanding were also seen in relation to two topics which have not been heavily emphasised in HIV programming in Namibia, but which feature prominently in the film: that people newly infected with HIV carry a high virus load, thereby increasing the chance of transmitting the virus to others in the sexual network; and that there are ways to prevent HIV infection after exposure to the virus (i.e. use of post-exposure prophylaxis). All of these improvements were statistically significant.

■ **Philip Wetu shifts participants' attitudes**

In Khomas and Erongo the film also generated a positive shift in participants' attitudes towards HIV and behaviours which put one at risk of HIV. Changes were most pronounced in Erongo where, following the film, there were statistically significant improvements in participants' attitudes towards people living with HIV, the right of women to insist on condom use, and cross-generational sex. In this region there was also a significant improvement in participants' intention to test for HIV prior to starting a new relationship.

■ **Watching Philip Wetu sparks personal action**

The focus group discussions provide corroborating evidence that the facilitated sessions can act as a 'spark' for personal action. Several participants mentioned concrete steps which they had taken in their own lives since participating in the session two months earlier. Getting tested with a partner was

one of the most frequently cited actions taken by participants and directly attributed to their attendance at the facilitated sessions. Others spoke about their decisions to confront partners about suspected infidelity, or to speak to friends and family about behaviours that might be putting them at risk. For example:

'I asked my partner to go together for a test. I did not force him. We both discussed and agreed first and then we went together.' – Adult, Khomas

'I talked to my big brother. He is a player. I told him the story of Philip and how he ended being HIV positive. I think that he listened to me.' – Young person, Khomas

'After the film I was able to tell my family that I am HIV positive. My partner knew, but not my family. This was because of the film.' – Adult, Khomas

■ **Viewers can relate to the story and it helps them to 'personalise' their HIV knowledge**

Participants in the focus group discussions reported that it was easy for them to relate to elements of the story, since they mirrored situations from their own lives:

'I relate to the situation between Philip and Genevieve. My own experience is here in the North, when my husband left for work. I found out that I was HIV positive, and I have not had any other partners. Many men are like Philip.' – Adult, Ohangwena

'The scene of the schoolgirl dating the sugar daddy – it is very touching to me. I can put myself in those shoes. My girlfriend dated a sugar daddy. It is very bad.' – Young person, Oshana.



■ *During a facilitated session in Windhoek, Inatu Indongo shows how a sexual network increases the HIV infection risk for all of its members by configuring a group of participants into a 'chain.'*

The focus group discussions made clear that the film does not break ‘new ground’ for many viewers who already have a good basic understanding of the facts of HIV and the behaviours which make infection more likely. However it does reinforce existing perceptions of HIV risk and personalises these. It also seems to promote open discussion about social norms which may be widely accepted, yet harmful:

‘My views on the risk of HIV are the same, but the film helps to be more aware.’ – Young person, Khomas

‘For me the film teaches about the importance of having one partner and also to question the traditional belief of having more than one partner, because it is dangerous.’ – Adult, Oshana

■ Philip Wetu is more effective with some audiences than with others

While the above findings provide encouraging evidence of the effectiveness of *Three and a Half Lives of Philip Wetu*, the data tells a more complex story, as it appears that certain audiences respond more positively to the film than others. Improvements in knowledge were generally more pronounced among males than females, and among adults compared to young people. Changes were also greater among participants located in urban settings (Khomas and Erongo), compared to those in semi-urban and rural regions in the north of the country. The film’s strongest impact was recorded in Erongo, where the audience was comprised of adult employees of the Ministry of Defense, two-thirds of whom were male.

These findings suggest that the ‘natural audience’ for *Three and a Half Lives of Philip Wetu* is the one for which it was originally produced: urban, middle-class adults. It also suggests that the film is successfully reaching male viewers – an important result, as the choices made by men in their sexual lives and relationships are crucial for limiting the number of new infections among young women in particular.

■ The Philip Wetu intervention needs to be adapted to the needs of particular audiences

While the film can be used with a variety of audiences, the analysis of monitoring data suggests that the film can generate unintended effects among viewers, particularly where audiences are not highly proficient in English. The focus groups conducted in the more rural regions of Oshana and Ohangwena revealed that many participants – particularly the older ones – found it difficult to follow nuances of the storyline in English. They struggled to summarise key plot points and to identify characters from the film. An analysis of monitoring data at the individual level shows that in these areas a sizeable proportion of participants demonstrated poorer knowledge and a negative shift in attitudes after they had seen and discussed the film (for example, post-test questionnaires showed a decline in the proportion of respondents who agreed that it is important to disclose one’s HIV status to a partner). It appears that low levels of English proficiency led to audiences interpreting the film’s key messages in unintended ways.

This finding points to a need to produce versions of the film in languages other than English to ensure that audiences with limited English are able to engage fully with the film and accompanying discussions. Facilitators fluent in those same languages should be assigned to facilitate in those areas and there should be on-going supervision and mentoring of newly trained facilitators to ensure that they are capable and confident to facilitate the complex discussions which emerge from the film.

Thought should also be given to adapting the film’s use with younger audiences. The focus groups showed that young participants are particularly interested in the storyline about cross-generational sex, which features Tulonga, a character of their own age. When working with young people, it might be more effective for facilitators to show only those sections of the film which are particularly relevant for school-age Namibians and to focus the discussion on the specific concerns and interests of adolescents.

Lessons learned

When staff at the Multisectoral HIV and AIDS Response Programme first discussed the idea for *Three and a Half Lives of Philip Wetu*, they had no inkling of the journey they were about to embark upon. What began as the development of a stand-alone HIV prevention tool for workplace programmes in Namibia evolved, over time, into a versatile multi-platform behaviour change communication product which has been used in various ways throughout southern Africa.

‘One of the greatest aspects of this experience,’ said Carmen Pérez Samaniego, the current head of the Multisectoral HIV and AIDS Response Programme, ‘has been the decision at various stages to identify opportunities and to take them.’ She believes that *Three and a Half Lives of Philip Wetu* has become a ‘living product’ which has repeatedly shown its potential to open up new doors. Her colleague, Luise Haunit, adds that GIZ’s links with key partner organisations and with individuals in Namibia’s creative community were particularly important in this respect. ‘Something like Philip Wetu is difficult to plan,’ she said. ‘There’s been quite a lot of coincidence in this process and we’ve been lucky to talk to the right people at the right time.’

Does this mean that *Three and a Half Lives of Philip Wetu* is too context-specific to be replicable in other contexts? Samaniego doesn’t believe so: ‘Many other countries can do this,’ she argues. ‘They just need to be open to the idea of local talent and to finding the right partners who can use the tool productively.’ For organisations interested in pursuing a similar approach in other settings, this section of the publication considers some of the main lessons learned over the past five years as the Multisectoral HIV and AIDS Response Programme has overseen the evolution of the Philip Wetu products.



Invest – locally – in good quality products

Arguably the most critical factor in the success of the Philip Wetu approach was the decision to create a film locally, using Namibian talent. Because the Namibian film and television industry is relatively small, there are few high quality, locally made products available to audiences: *Three and a Half Lives of Philip Wetu* immediately stood out for its excellent production values and its authentic flavour. Those involved in producing both the film and the comic strip were deeply embedded in the Namibian context and had an intuitive understanding of how to create a product which reflected local ways of speaking and thinking. Audiences responded enthusiastically: the film mirrored what was going on in society.

Ensure high-calibre facilitation

While both the film and comic strip version of *Three and a Half Lives of Philip Wetu* can be used on their own, the real strength of the products lies in their application in facilitated sessions. Over the past five years, the Multisectoral HIV and AIDS Response Programme has learned much about the conditions necessary for facilitated sessions to work effectively. These include:

- the presence of qualified facilitators, capable of working with audiences on sensitive issues;
- a protected, safe environment where participants feel comfortable to speak and share openly;
- ensuring that the number of participants is kept to a manageable size (e.g. not more than 30);
- adequate time for discussion and interchange; and
- the availability of additional information and resources for participants on key topics.

■ *Young people seize the opportunity to talk about the challenges of modern relationships. Good quality facilitation is essential for creating an atmosphere where participants feel comfortable sharing openly and honestly.*

According to Elaine Maane, the regional training coordinator for STEPS Southern Africa, the key to successful sessions is ensuring that facilitators understand the subject matter and are able to connect with audiences. Facilitators are encouraged to identify goals for the sessions they run and to think in advance about the points they want to convey to the audience. When the facilitation is good, participants often share quite personal reflections, relating experiences from their own lives to those of the characters in the film or comic. The facilitator's job is then 'to take these sharings into a learning process,' explains Maane. 'In our experience this has worked very well.'

Plan an approach to monitoring and evaluation from the very outset

It is challenging to monitor the use of BCC products, especially when these are distributed in a decentralised manner through networks of partner organisations. And measuring behaviour change itself is a notoriously difficult task. As with any type of development intervention, however, it is important to adopt a systematic approach to monitoring and evaluating behaviour change communication tools. In the absence of such an approach, it is impossible to understand how effectively a tool is being implemented in practice and whether or not it is generating changes among target audiences.

Planning for monitoring and evaluation should begin prior to the roll-out of the BCC intervention and the choice of methods used should be guided by a clear articulation of the intervention's intended results. Process monitoring should focus upon the reach and quality of facilitated sessions, while efforts to measure results among audiences might involve the use of treatment and control groups to isolate the effects of the intervention. It is desirable to address these issues relatively early on in a project cycle so that the information generated through the monitoring and evaluation system can be used to refine the use of the tool.

Develop a sustainable implementation model

Before making a sizeable investment in a tool such as an interactive film, it is essential to think about the product's longer-term sustainability. How will the use of the film be guaranteed beyond the initial project phase? Where will the resources come from to cover the costs of screenings, facilitator trainings, and the duplication of DVDs and facilitator guides? It is tempting to assume that an effective product will ultimately find a suitable institutional 'home' – an organisation which will take it over and ensure its continued use – but the experience of *Three and a Half Lives of Philip Wetu* suggests that in practice this can be quite challenging.

The Multisectoral HIV and AIDS Response Programme collaborated with institutional partners right from the outset, both to guarantee the quality of the product and to ensure that it would reach a range of audiences. With an eye towards the film's sustainability, the Multisectoral HIV and AIDS Response Programme worked closely with Positive Vibes and NawaLife Trust to train a cohort of video facilitators qualified to bring *Three and a Half Lives of Philip Wetu* to audiences across Namibia and, starting in 2012, it partnered with STEPS Southern Africa to distribute the film more widely in the region. These partnerships have been fruitful and have been responsible for the fact that *Three and a Half Lives of Philip Wetu* has reached such wide audiences.

The success of this distribution model, however, has largely depended upon on-going financial support from GIZ to train facilitators, to provide copies of DVDs and facilitator guides, and to pay for screenings (e.g. venue rental, equipment, refreshments etc.). Apart from the *Break the Chain* campaign, in which the Philip Wetu film was integrated into community-level activities and broadcast on national television (through financial support from NawaLife Trust via PEPFAR), most of the facilitated sessions of *Three and a Half Lives of Philip Wetu* have been paid for by GIZ. This has presented the Multisectoral HIV and AIDS Response Programme with a dilemma: how can it continue extending the reach of an effective HIV prevention tool without financing it indefinitely? GIZ sees its role as developing innovations and supporting partners to incorporate these into their on-going work. The question therefore arises: when is the right moment to hand a product over, and how does one find the right partner to use a tool like this productively?

Casper Erichsen of Positive Vibes sees the dilemma in similar terms. 'Three and a Half Lives of Philip Wetu is a unique tool,' he said, 'but it's difficult to get partners to buy into it and own it.' He laments that Namibia is full of products which have been developed and which sit on shelves, under-utilised, because of a lack of investment in their roll-out and use. There are few organisations in Namibia which are in a position to cover the costs of video facilitations at any scale, unless this is done as part of donor-funded activities.

Promoting the film within government ministries and private sector companies is one approach which has seen some success. Companies belonging to the Walvis Bay Corridor Group have made extensive use of *Three and a Half Lives of Philip Wetu* in their workplace programmes, and the Ministry of Defense and the police force have also used the film on a regular basis with their employees. In these instances, the key has been to identify 'champions' in large institutions who are keen to integrate the tool into existing workplace structures and to ensure its continued use. Over the coming year the Multisectoral HIV and AIDS Response Programme intends to follow a similar approach with the Ministry of Youth and Sport, which administers youth centres in every region, including Ohangwena, one of the programme's pilot regions.

Be mindful of the trade-off between quality and reach

Behaviour change communication tools used in small group sessions are believed to be more effective than those used without facilitation (Ross et al., 2006), but their reach is also necessarily limited by the fact that they need to be used in a prescribed manner. For the first 18 months after the launch of *Three and a Half Lives of Philip Wetu* the film was only available via a trained facilitator. Organisations could hire a freelance facilitator, trained by Positive Vibes, to carry out a facilitated session of the film, or could have staff members trained to become 'in house' facilitators.

While this model worked reasonably well in areas where there was a pool of trained facilitators, it meant that the film was less likely to reach audiences in areas further removed from Windhoek and other urban centres where the majority of trainees were based. In rural areas, in addition to a lack of trainers, it was also difficult to locate suitable venues, including ones with power and projectors.

Recognising that the need for facilitation training was a steep barrier for those simply interested in seeing the film, the Multisectoral HIV and AIDS Response Programme eventually began to make the film available upon request. While this has broadened the film's distribution, it has also meant loosening control over the way in which the film is used. If this approach were to be replicated elsewhere, it would be advisable to think about whether a simplified version of the facilitation guide could be prepared for general audiences who are interested to see the film, but who have not received facilitation training.

Consider ways to work around language barriers

English has become a unifying language throughout Namibia (and indeed across the southern Africa region) and most urban viewers have no difficulty following the dialogue in *Three and a Half a Lives of Philip Wetu*. As the review of the monitoring data revealed, however, this is not necessarily true for rural audiences. The film appears to be less effective among audiences which are not proficient in English: participants in such groups struggle to follow the storyline and may misinterpret the film's core messages.

Given these findings, the Multisectoral HIV and AIDS Response Programme now intends to develop versions of the film in languages other than English. Those interested in replicating this approach in other contexts should consider the languages used most widely among potential audiences and consider budgeting resources for dubbed or subtitled versions of the film to broaden its reach.

Strengthen linkages to HIV counselling, testing and psychosocial services

Better integrating the Philip Wetu intervention into other HIV-related services could help to reinforce the effects of the film beyond the sessions themselves. Facilitated sessions of *Three and a Half Lives of Philip Wetu* should be more closely linked to HIV counselling and testing services. Testing could be offered on the spot via a mobile testing facility located next to the screening venue, as has sometimes been done by the Walvis Bay Corridor Group, which uses the film regularly with its employees. Alternatively, a representative from a nearby VCT facility could be invited to speak to participants at the end of the facilitated session and to describe the services which are available. For groups of young people it is particularly important that information about youth-friendly services be provided.

The discussions which accompany viewings of *Three and a Half Lives of Philip Wetu* can touch upon topics which are highly personal and sometimes even painful. For some participants the intervention sparks a constructive process of introspection and self-appraisal that can lead them to take specific actions in their personal lives. In other cases, the intervention may bring to the surface difficult issues which the participants – particularly young people – may not feel able to manage on their own. Facilitators currently provide youth audiences with information about the free Lifeline/Childline counselling service which focuses on the concerns of children and adolescents, but information about local organisations, including HIV support groups, which can assist with follow-up questions and support should also be provided.

Think strategically about social media as a platform for HIV prevention

The staff at the Multisectoral HIV and AIDS Response Programme recognised the potential of digital technologies to bring Philip Wetu products to new audiences, and to stimulate discussions about relationships, communication and HIV risk among those audiences. By creating and maintaining a Facebook page for Philip Wetu and using *The Namibian's* and NBC's existing text messaging capability to encourage viewers and readers to share their views on Philip's dilemmas, they gradually transformed Philip Wetu from a character on the screen into a 'brand' with a presence on multiple platforms.

While this foray into social media confirmed its potentials as a platform for HIV prevention, it also revealed inherent difficulties. Building an active online presence for a product like Philip Wetu requires a significant organisational commitment. For the Facebook page to continue attracting visitors, it needs new material and regular updates – in other words, reasons for visitors to return regularly. To generate real and sustained discussion among users, it may even require more 'edgy' contributions from Philip than those which have come thus far. The main lesson here is that the threshold for entering the realm of social media is relatively low, but merely establishing a presence online does not guarantee success. Organisations thinking about promoting a behaviour change communication product through social media are well advised to develop a strategy for their approach and to commit adequate resources to maintaining and growing this aspect of their work.



■ The messages promoted by the Philip Wetu intervention are still well-aligned with national HIV prevention efforts in Namibia. Strengthening links with HIV testing services could reinforce the positive effects of the film.

A new chapter begins

Five years after the character of Philip Wetu first appeared, there is no sign that his story is losing its relevance. Multiple and concurrent partnerships are highlighted as a major challenge in the current Namibian National Strategic Framework for HIV and AIDS Response and the Ministry of Health and Social Services continues to focus on this issue in its HIV prevention campaigns. According to many familiar with the product, *Three and a Half Lives of Philip Wetu* is still a timely and effective tool for use with various audiences in Namibia.

Carmen Pérez Samaniego, the head of the Multisectoral HIV and AIDS Response Programme, sees the future of *Three and a Half Lives of Philip Wetu* as lying first and foremost in its use with young people. ‘Investing in young people is the best investment we can make,’ she said. ‘This film focuses on the behaviour of adults, but in ten years today’s young people will be adults. The Philip Wetu products encourage young people to reflect on adult behaviour and to ask themselves, “Is this the way I want to be in ten years?”’

In the coming year, the *Three and a Half Lives of Philip Wetu* interactive film will continue to be available for facilitated screenings countrywide and the educational comic strip and teacher’s guide will be distributed to schools across Namibia for use in life skills classes. Apart from this, however, an exciting new chapter in the story of Philip Wetu is set to begin.

Tulonga’s Story

For young people exposed to *Three and a Half Lives of Philip Wetu* for the first time, there is little question that the subplot involving the schoolgirl Tulonga is the one which generates the most impassioned reactions. The ‘sugar daddy’ phenomenon is well-known to Namibian young people and its depiction in the film and comic touches a nerve.



■ Philip Wetu’s relationship with Tulonga elicits strong reactions among young viewers and readers. A new comic strip, with Tulonga at its centre, will be published in *The Namibian* in 2014.

In mid-2013 the Multisectoral HIV and AIDS Response Programme entered into a new collaboration with the cartoonist Dudley Viall to develop a second comic strip – a spin-off of *Three and a Half Lives of Philip Wetu* with Tulonga as its main character. The comic, which will be published in *The Namibian* in May 2014, will use Tulonga as an entry point to explore the complexity of cross-generational and transactional sexual relationships in Namibia. Philip Wetu will appear as a peripheral character; primary attention will centre on Tulonga – her life circumstances, her motivations for getting involved with an older man, and the consequences of this choice.

Othilia Mungoba of the Ministry of Health and Social Services applauds this move. She thinks that messaging around sugar daddies needs to be repackaged and made more relevant to today's young people. 'Women in Namibia talk about "Triple C" – Cash, Clothes and Cell Phone – and whether a boyfriend can satisfy all three,' she says. 'Young women accumulate partners who can satisfy them in different ways and this starts as early as high school.' Inatu Indongo of Positive Vibes also feels that young people are hungry for greater treatment of these topics. 'A story like this can be very important if it focuses on issues of self-esteem and how to navigate relationships, break-ups and peer pressure,' she says.

Tulonga's story will highlight pressing cultural and social issues, including the risks of intergenerational sex and the role of parents in keeping young people safe.

For Carmen Pérez Samaniego, part of addressing the sugar daddy phenomenon is to treat it realistically, as a multi-dimensional issue. This means bringing boys' perspectives into Tulonga's story: How do boys feel about relationships between young girls and older men? What are they able to offer their female peers in the absence of money and cars? How do they understand masculinity and what it means to be a man?

Dudley Viall and the consultant Elize de Wee have already convened single-sex focus group discussions with young people to explore these and other questions. 'The discussions were incredibly useful in terms of understanding what kids are thinking about,' said Viall. 'Starting from the age of 10 or 11, kids need their parents more than ever before, but the parents aren't there for them. It's not culturally acceptable to speak directly to adults about personal issues. There's a huge need for intergenerational dialogue in this country.' Thus, Tulonga's story – like Philip Wetu's before – will bring into focus a whole set of cultural and social issues: not only the risks of intergenerational sex, but also the role of parents and the older generations in keeping young people safe.

The Multisectoral HIV and AIDS Response Programme anticipates a big reaction to the comic and intends to prepare carefully in advance of its publication. The head of LifeLine/ChildLine in Namibia is lending support to the development of the new comic by reviewing scripts for accuracy and appropriate messaging. GIZ is also soliciting expert advice on how best to use Facebook to promote the new strip and to how manage the issues and discussions which arise. The free telephone counselling services offered by LifeLine/ChildLine will again be promoted alongside the comic when it appears in *The Namibian*, and will also feature prominently on Philip Wetu's Facebook page. The team recognises that there are many young people who are in need of help – whether this be counselling, HIV testing, treatment or psychological support – and who may be prompted by Tulonga's story to articulate these needs.

As Philip Wetu and his story move into a new phase, there is much to celebrate in the road which has been travelled thus far. The experience of the past five years has shown that locally-produced behaviour change communication products which reflect the reality of people's daily lives can be a powerful tool for changing people's attitudes to HIV and promoting behaviours which reduce risk.

Peer review

To be included in the German Health Practice Collection, a project or programme must demonstrate that it comes close to meeting most if not all of the criteria that would make it effective, transferable, participatory and empowering, gender aware, well monitored and evaluated, innovative, comparatively cost effective, and sustainable.

In reviewing this publication, two experts on HIV who work at UNAIDS and the World Health Organization have concluded that the Philip Wetu approach developed and implemented by the Multisectoral HIV and AIDS Response Programme in Namibia can be considered a 'promising practice' whose lessons are worth documenting and sharing widely. They offered the following reflections on the specific criteria used by the Collection to identify a 'promising practice':

Effectiveness

Three and a Half Lives of Philip Wetu has shown itself to be a powerful tool for facilitating discussion of the sociocultural norms which influence sexual behaviour and risk-taking. Particularly effective when used with small groups of people, the film helps participants to examine the choices they make in their own lives. A formal evaluation of the approach would help to generate the systematic evidence of its impact which would be needed to recommend *Three and a Half Lives of Philip Wetu* more broadly as a successful, evidence-based approach to preventing HIV.

Innovation

The Philip Wetu approach is innovative in that it is not a typical 'HIV film' which people watch passively in order to learn something, but an interactive experience designed to provoke engagement, discussion and personal reflection. Combining a film with a facilitated discussion has proven a popular way to get audiences to discuss real life scenarios.

Three and a Half Lives of Philip Wetu's focus on urban middle class populations as a target audience sets it apart from other community-based programmatic approaches to discussing gender norms and HIV. It is also innovative in the way it has continuously re-invented itself into new products aimed at new audiences. By highlighting topics of interest to young people and capitalising on their interest in the forms

of communication popular at the time (e.g. Facebook), the Philip Wetu interventions have moved beyond traditional approaches to HIV prevention which focus on training, mass media campaigns and peer education.

Transferability

Three and a Half Lives of Philip Wetu is clearly transferable, particularly – as has been shown already – to other countries in southern Africa where multiple and concurrent partnerships are a main driver of HIV and where audiences can easily relate to the film's setting and backdrop. Other factors which contribute to its transferability include the high quality of the product and the opportunity to tailor the film and discussion to the needs of different types of audiences.

Empowerment

By their very design, the Philip Wetu interventions are participatory and empowering. The products engage participants emotionally, help them to discuss sensitive issues, and encourage them to explore the implications of different life choices with other people in a safe environment. For some participants, this can trigger a process of reflection which is the first step towards changing their behaviour. Notably, *Three and a Half Lives of Philip Wetu* helps to empower participants in two distinct, but related realms: first, in their knowledge and understanding of HIV risk, and second, in relation to improving the way they communicate in relationships.

Gender-sensitivity

The Philip Wetu interventions are gender-sensitive in that they focus attention on men's role in multiple and concurrent partnerships and on the norms of masculinity which underpin this practice. Despite the fact that a man's story is at the heart of *Three and a Half Lives of Philip Wetu*, both male and female viewers are able to identify with the characters and storylines. Moreover, the Philip Wetu interventions – including the forthcoming comic strip about cross-generational sex – have been important vehicles for challenging gender norms and power dynamics which have put young girls in Namibia at particular risk.

Box 3. Publication process of the German Health Practice Collection

Each year, experts working in GDC-supported initiatives propose projects that they regard as good or promising practice to the Managing Editor at ghpc@giz.de. Proposals are posted on the Collection website and several specialist fora to allow GDC experts and the interested public to compare and rate them. Informed by this initial assessment, an editorial board of GDC experts and BMZ officers select those most worthy of publication. Reports are written by professional writers following on-site visits, working with the local partners and GDC personnel who jointly implement the projects. Draft reports are peer reviewed by independent scholars and practitioners, emphasising eight criteria:

- Effectiveness
- Transferability
- Participatory and empowering approach
- Gender awareness
- Quality of monitoring and evaluation
- Innovation
- Comparative cost-effectiveness
- Sustainability.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Tracking the longer-term impacts of behaviour change interventions can be complex and expensive, even within relatively small, controlled settings such as workplaces. While efforts have been made to monitor the effects of the Philip Wetu interventions on participants, there is room to strengthen the monitoring and evaluation of the approach. A thorough external evaluation using case and control groups would produce more robust evidence about the intervention's effects.

Cost-Effectiveness

There is not enough information available to assess the cost-effectiveness of the approach. However the initial investment in a film for use in workplace settings has led to a product with significantly broader application, suggesting a strong return on investment. The fact that the film was produced in Namibia, using local talent, further speaks to its relative cost-effectiveness.

Sustainability

To be fully sustainable the Philip Wetu approach would have to be integrated into strategies and programmes which are part of Namibia's national HIV response, or taken up on a long-term basis by ministry structures or other partners. Efforts have been and continue to be made in this respect. By their very nature, however, social and behaviour change communication interventions are rarely fully sustainable as they need to be updated regularly to reflect changes in the issues they seek to address, as well as shifts in technology, generational outlooks and people's realities.

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