

## **Report on use of MTV film Shuga in Teacher Education and Community Programmes – Dr. James Lees**

Since 2010, Dr. James Lees has been using the MTV film 'Shuga' within teacher education modules and courses held for communities. The appended research with University of the Western Cape students by Dr. Lees' master's student, Halima Lila, gives clear indication of the impact of the film when used on its own and within a follow-up conversation.

Exploring and understanding how to contextualise the film for use has been part of Dr. Lees' successful use of the film. Of particular interest has been the use of the film as a component of each student and community member's Family Life Long AIDS Plan (FLAP) assignment. Within the FLAP assignment, participating students use the film within a process of exploring and strengthening family relationships; building a stronger sense of belonging within the family; acknowledging and building a sense of worth within family members; identifying family member's goals and dreams; and, finally, creating plans wherein family members work together to help each member avoid HIV infection or receive the care and support they deserve if they are HIV+. Belonging, self-worth, having goals and dreams and working together are all known variables that, when strengthened, increase the likelihood that one will avoid HIV infection.

Within teacher education, the driving notion is that if teachers have not done their homework and addressed HIV matters within their own families, they do not have the authority or legitimacy to discuss the issues within their classrooms. Teachers need to 'walk the talk' of HIV as their pupils learn from adults' behaviours, not simply their words, and understand when words and deeds contradict. Teachers' words and deeds need to be in alignment for HIV prevention work within schools to be successful. The FLAP assignment with Shuga works toward this alignment.

Communities deeply affected by HIV are able to use Shuga with family members to create their own FLAPs. Dr. Lees' experience is that community members often take Shuga on their own to groups beyond their immediate and extended families in attempts to improve the response to HIV, break stigma and break the silence that still surrounds the epidemic. Owning a copy of the film gives them the tool and the power to gather others and make a difference. Shuga can be used as a part of communities and families finding their own solutions to AIDS.

Embedding Shuga within contexts for its intentional use increases the impact of the film. I believe this means that those writing and developing the themes for subsequent episodes of the film should be working closely with those who are creating new and exciting methods to use the films within institutional settings like schools and teacher education institutions, within communities and through existing community organisations. MTV has done extraordinary work with Shuga and social media. While I believe this should continue, it also needs to be understood that many communities where Shuga can have great impact are too poor to have any access to social media and are at the same time highly affected by HIV. Inexpensive copies of Shuga in the hands of many people has had a great impact in the Western Cape of South Africa. It is reasonable to consider how to expand this way of expanding the impact of Shuga.

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