Transmedia in Entertainment-education

Entertainment-education, the strategy used by Population Media Center, utilizes the power and influence of highly entertaining programming to draw audiences in with cutting-edge content, relevant stories, and identifiable characters while seamlessly weaving social and health issues into storylines and character lives. Studies have shown that emotion is the most powerful change agent, and by developing programs with a strong emotional connection to the audience, we are able to inspire social change.

The media landscape has changed drastically over the past decade and continues to change every day. Therefore our communication strategies are also changing. With the introduction of high-speed internet and mobile devices, people are consuming content in new ways and interacting with it more than ever before. Entertainment-education can take advantage of these technological advancements with the help of transmedia storytelling, which is the spreading of a narrative and character lives across multiple platforms. This approach has the benefit of allowing viewers to encounter parts of the story through various media extensions, which draw them further into the fictional world. It also increases and diversifies the interaction with the characters and allows viewers to participate and learn from varying perspectives.

“Transmedia storytelling represents the future of entertainment and education”

Katie Elmore, PMC’s Vice President for Communications and Programs, has developed an innovative strategy for behavior change communications that draws on PMC’s years of experience while utilizing the power of transmedia storytelling and various popular forms of communication. PMC is currently in production with the first ever Sabido-style transmedia program and is breaking ground by putting this new theoretical approach into practice. The program consists of 26 half-hour dramatic television episodes designed to inform, educate, motivate, and inspire positive behavioral changes around reproductive health and other issues affecting teens in the United States. Transmedia extensions, such as character blogs, social media launch pads, discussion forums, texting campaigns, mobile apps, and video diaries, are then developed to extend the characters and storylines. This ultimately creates more opportunities to convey important social and health messages, while providing teens with tools to help them make healthy decisions in their own lives.

Transmedia storytelling is increasingly prevalent in Hollywood, and our team for this program is composed of some of the industry’s leaders and pioneers. The Alchemists, a Los Angeles based company collaborating with PMC to create our transmedia platform, has experience with successfully implementing transmedia strategies for some of the biggest U.S. networks, brands, and shows. “Transmedia storytelling represents the future of entertainment and education simply because it allows us… to reach more people in deeper ways. And we can make things today with the tools and audiences that storytellers of the past didn’t have and never imagined,” says Mauricio Mota, Chief Storytelling Officer and Co-Founder of The Alchemists.

PMC has been producing successful award-winning programs across the world for over a decade. Incorporating transmedia with our entertainment-education programming is a natural next step for PMC, especially when focusing on youth audiences who are highly involved in multi-platform media. Transmedia opens a gateway to communication which allows us to deliver our message in the most effective way possible and reach our audience with amazing stories that can change their lives.

Photo: James R. Reda
**NEW PROGRAMS**
Burkina Faso & Sierra Leone

**PMC - Burkina Faso Produces Two New Dramas**

PMC-Burkina Faso is pleased to announce the launch of two new radio dramas, *Yam Yankre* and *HērēS'ra*. Each program will run for the next 18 months.

*Yam Yankre* ("The Choice") is broadcast in the Mooré language, and covers issues such as family planning, female genital mutilation (FGM), maternal and child health, prenatal counseling, handwashing, breastfeeding, and malaria.

*HērēS'ra* ("The Road to Happiness"), broadcast in the Dioula language, focuses on education of girls, fistula, domestic violence, and gender equality.

At its current rate of growth, the population of Burkina Faso (17 million) is doubling every 20 years. The total fertility rate, currently at 6.0 children per woman, is the 8th highest in the world. Population growth and population dynamics are important challenges that must be addressed in order to reduce poverty and improve overall health and welfare in Burkina Faso. The PMC-Burkina Faso team, comprised of Burkinabése, is thrilled to be part of an effort to bring significant social change to the country with the broadcast of *Yam Yankre* and *HērēS'ra*.

**MEET THE CHARACTERS OF “SALIWANSAI”**

**Abu** is a newly married farmer who lives in the rural village of Kabonko. He never completed primary school. Pressured by the wishes of his mother, Mami Dora, Abu aspires to have a large family. But when his wife’s first pregnancy puts her very life in jeopardy, how far will Abu go to realize his dream?

**Hingah**, a bright and studious young man, faces a promising future as a student at Polytechnic College—until Monica enters. Tempted by her beauty and pressure from his friends, Hingah risks falling behind in his studies and losing his scholarship. Will Hingah continue to be led astray by the beautiful Monica?

**Gibo** and his older brother, Joe, live in the same house in the town of Dodo Wharf. Gibo idolizes his older brother, and when he witnesses Joe beating his wives, Gibo embraces similar attitudes on how women should be treated. Even when Gibo falls deeply in love with a woman, he feels conflicted, as he finds it difficult not to abuse her. Can this new relationship change Gibo’s attitude towards violence against women? Or does he risk following in his older brother’s footsteps forever?

**Wara**, a 15-year-old girl haunted by the disappearance of her mother, is the transitional character in the story set in Magbenah Village. She lives with her father who is neither willing to discuss the whereabouts of her mother nor pay the fees for Wara to go to school. Instead, Wara’s father intends to marry her to a shopkeeper who already has three wives. Desperate to find her mother and solve the mystery of her disappearance, Wara will stop at nothing to uncover the truth. Will Wara ever find her mother, or will her impending marriage make her efforts futile?

**“Saliwansai” an Instant Success in Sierra Leone**

PMC-Sierra Leone premiered a 208-episode radio drama series, *Saliwansai*. Weaving together the lives of the main characters from four storylines, Abu, Gibo, Hingah and Wara, the writers of *Saliwansai* have created an intricate drama, with suspenseful plot twists that have captivated audiences across the country. The title *Saliwansai*, meaning “puppet on a string,” represents the tough decisions the characters are faced with on a daily basis. The characters are influenced by the conflicting messages they receive from family, friends and society, and like puppets, they are often pulled in different directions by them. Each character faces their own personal journey, with challenges revolving around health, education, relationships, and family.

In preparation for *Saliwansai*, PMC opened a brand new studio in Freetown, equipped with state-of-the-art recording technology. PMC staff provided training for local production staff and additionally, PMC teamed up with Hollywood actress Alexandra Paul to hold acting workshops for the cast of *Saliwansai*.

Programs such as *Saliwansai* are vital to countries like Sierra Leone, where issues of public health, overpopulation, and poverty present challenges to its 6 million citizens. With a staggering population growth rate of 2.2%, Sierra Leone is on track to double its population within 29 years. Limited use of modern contraceptives, combined with the desire for large families, contributes to a total fertility rate of 5.1 children for every woman, one of the highest in the world. In Sierra Leone, where literacy levels are low, most people obtain their news and entertainment through radio broadcasts.

Through positive messaging and role modeling, *Saliwansai* aims to encourage new social norms and provide correct information regarding the relative safety of contraception compared to early and repeated childbearing. With audiences already praising *Saliwansai*, PMC is prompting and enlivening discussion on these important social issues.

Photo: *Saliwansai* (PMC-Sierra Leone) writers and actors pose for a photo during workshop training.
World Population Reaches 7 Billion in 2011 - Have You Spoken Out?

7,000,000,000 is a big number.

The global population reached 7 billion on a fitting date in 2011 — Halloween. If adding another billion people to the planet in just 11 years wasn’t scary enough, there were also the accompanying celebrations worldwide. Population Media Center marked the occasion in another way - by launching a new campaign with the Global Population Speak Out: “Population 7 Billion – It’s Time to Talk.”

This campaign is urging visitors to the website (www.populationspeakout.org) to pledge to become part of the conversation about population growth, a subject which has been avoided in public discussions for far too long. Visitors are encouraged to talk about the ecological, social, and health ramifications of an ever-increasing population, “because as each person discovers how 7 billion people on the planet affects their life, we hope they will share it in a global effort to better our world.” Seven billion may seem like just a number, albeit a number so big that many of us cannot even picture it (try envisioning almost six Indias). But in this globalized society, each one of the 7 billion will be touched by what this means for climate change, health care, global poverty, social justice, job availability, or access to resources.

Other aspects of the campaign include a new public service announcement from PMC, titled “Find the Balance,” which was shared across social networks and posted by other organizations supporting our mission. It was even featured for the entire day of October 31, 2011 on the World News page of NYtimes.com.

Population growth and the availability of family planning and reproductive health information and services are issues that affect all of us, regardless of where we’re from. PMC will continue to provide this vital information through our international programs and our campaigns in the United States, and we will continue to encourage people to SPEAK OUT about population to their friends, family, neighbors, and politicians.

“Mother: Caring for 7 Billion”

Mother, the film, breaks a 40-year taboo by bringing to light an issue that silently fuels our largest environmental, humanitarian and social crises - population growth.

Interested in having “Mother: Caring for 7 Billion” screened in your community or on your campus? Visit motherthefilm.com to learn more, or contact PMC office manager Cecelia Angelone at angelone@populationmedia.org.

Help Spread the Word. Help Build the Movement. Help Find the Balance.

Make your voice heard and pledge to SPEAK OUT today: http://www.populationspeakout.org/pledges

PMC STUDENT ADVISORY BOARD

This select group of students provides support to PMC in our effort to bring population and related issues into focus.

Chris Franklin - Masters in Regional Planning, State University at Albany

After school plans: Researcher/Consultant/Public Sector Employee researching and developing social norm campaigns to influence climate change and solid waste reduction behaviors and norms

Any wisdom you would like to impart?: While we humans invariably operate with our own self satisfaction in mind, we must always be mindful of all others with whom we interact; both seen and unseen.

For more information on PMC’s Student Advisory Board go to: www.populationmedia.org/who/student-advisory-board

To join: Contact us at 802.985.8156 or email at info@populationmedia.org
Tackling Violence Against Women

Football, known as soccer in the United States, is an incredibly popular sport throughout the world. Its matches and players are followed by hundreds of millions of passionate fans at stadiums, on television, and online. Another worldwide phenomenon, completely disconnected from football but of severe scope, is violence against women and girls. This damaging social convention crosses all cultural and geographic borders.

Population Media Center (PMC), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), and the Emergent Media Center at Champlain College (EMC) realized a remarkable opportunity in using the popularity of football to engage youth and provide education about the ongoing issues of violence against women. The product of the collaboration, BREAKAWAY, is an educational electronic game and facilitator’s guide that addresses the long-standing social and cultural challenges of gender-based violence. It was developed in support of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals to end poverty and violence.

PMC adapted the Sabido methodology, the strategy it uses in creating long-running entertainment-education serial dramas, to the video game format. BREAKAWAY is a thirteen chapter “narrative scenario” series that uses interesting characters and storytelling to promote attitude and behavior change. The plot is based on the perspective of a boy aiming to make the local soccer team. His little sister plays a role as his supportive fan throughout the story and when a new girl comes to town and joins the soccer team, the story heats up. He witnesses both his sister and the new female player on the team being treated poorly. He has to make critical decisions about how he reacts to the girls and his peers as the incidents of disrespect, bullying, and violence escalate.

The mouse and arrow keys are used to execute moves in the football mini-games and practice sessions. During the narrative portion, multiple options are given in how the player interacts with characters. BREAKAWAY is unique because its storyline gives users the opportunity to consider the implications of peer pressure and the consequences of violence against women and girls.

The BREAKAWAY game debuted during the 2010 FIFA World Cup in South Africa with the endorsement of world-famous soccer player Samuel Eto’o. Eto’o is Africa’s most decorated football player and has played on European club teams and in the 2010 World Cup. Eto’o’s endorsement was a major force in promoting BREAKAWAY and attracting audiences to the electronic game. BREAKAWAY has engaged thousands of young individuals from 183 countries around the world. The game is available to play for free online at www.breakawaygame.com in English, French, Spanish, and Portuguese.

The official release of the BREAKAWAY Facilitator’s Guide, a companion to the game for educators and others working with youth that enhances and builds on the lessons of the electronic game, occurred this summer.

The BREAKAWAY game and the BREAKAWAY Facilitator’s Guide were introduced to adolescent boys and girls as a summer program in the Palestinian Territories. Mahmoud Jabari, Palestinian peace activist and student at Champlain College, brought BREAKAWAY to his 5000 year-old city of Hebron. Jabari learned about the electronic game when he began working at EMC. Recognizing the game’s global presence and influence, he seized the opportunity to bring BREAKAWAY to Hebron as part of a three-week program that encourages young people to have thoughtful discussions about gender issues and violence against women. Jabari’s goals were to introduce the game and “plant the seeds” of positive and respectful discussion among local youth about all forms of inequality.

BREAKAWAY’s concepts provide important lessons in critical thinking, decision-making, and gender equality. The game serves as a vital preventive approach to diminish violence against women and achieve the UN Millennium Development Goals of ending violence and poverty. The game and the Facilitator’s Guide toolkit offer great potential to create respectful attitudes when discussing injustice and inequality. The game holds many exciting possibilities to promote a more socially just and healthy world.

Mahmoud Jabari training camp leaders in the use of the Facilitator’s Guide.

Stephanie Tholand Program Development Associate

After deciding in 2005 that cultural photojournalism was not my ideal career path, I chose to move towards nonprofit work, specifically international development work. I had worked for many years in the private sector, and knew that it was not where I wanted to devote my energy and life’s work, so I chose the opposite side of the spectrum. I am a natural organizer, manager, coordinator, streamliner, and communicator, so I decided to capitalize on those skills by getting my Masters in Public Administration, so that I could strengthen nonprofits from the inside and help them be as impactful as possible.
My name is Meirem. This is a story of how I lost my innocence as a young girl and became a servant to a polygamous husband and his wife.

It was late in the afternoon. I asked my mother if I could dress well for singing and a group dance on the eve of my niece’s wedding. My mother was engaged in preparing various kinds of dishes for the next day’s event. I told my mother that it was a special night and that I had to spend it with the bride. My mother did not like my intention to leave, because soon it would be dark. I decided to use a shortcut and to pass through a farm field. When I went into the field, I became afraid because someone was following me. He was running to catch up with me. When he came close, I easily knew him.

“Meirem, where are you going?” he asked. “I saw you from a good distance and decided to accompany you.”

“Why do you accompany me? I can take care of myself. Leave me alone!” I said.

“It isn’t safe for you to go through the woods alone.”

“What are you looking for?” I asked.

“For you!” he said.

Not a soul was to be seen. He got hold of me by the neck and forced me to face him. I cried for help, but no one came to my rescue. I slapped him. He slapped me back, but with such force that it made me lose all my senses. I couldn’t see, I couldn’t breathe. I scratched his face with my fingernails near his eyes. I ran away from him, but he caught me and hit me with a stick, banging my head against a tree. I fell down and lost consciousness. It was a nightmare!

“Thus, my fate was sealed. My mother accepted the ‘Shenen Fefa’ in spite of the injustice imposed on me against my will.”

When I opened my eyes the next day, mother was sitting near my bed. She was crying and weeping. I was weeping, too, for the shame I felt I brought upon her and myself.

The villagers gathered. Some said I was unscathed, while others ran to the house of the man who had attacked me. They could not find him - he was hiding somewhere until matters settled down.

A few days later, a group of elders came to ask my mother’s forgiveness. “We know he has done wrong. But what has been done cannot be undone. There is no use in crying over spilt milk. Let him pay the damage and let bygones be bygones,” they said. “Impossible,” said my mother. “He will have to be prosecuted and be penalized for what he did. He had practically killed my daughter - my only child!” “How would that be of benefit to you? He’ll be imprisoned,” they said. “Think of what this means to you and your family - a lasting rift that time will never heal. Please, accept the ‘blood-price’, otherwise we will never come to your house again.”

I had never seen my father all my life, for he died soon after I was born. I grew up under the care and protection of my mother. My mother said that, if only I had a father, what had happened to me would not have ever happened. My mother told the elders that my uncle had reported the case to the police. But one of the elders said:

“Please listen to our words of advice. We are bowing down before you. Accept the ‘Shenen Fefa’ and let peace reign in our village.”

“Shenen Fefa,” as mother told me, is compensation to a girl’s mother for a daughter who had lost her virginity in the manner that occurred to me. The elders came next day and gave the money to her, 500 birr (about $28 USD) – the blood-money known as “Shenen Fefa.” My mother was poor and she lived by handling chores on a nominal wage especially during weddings and other joyous occasions.

Thus, my fate was sealed. My mother accepted the “Shenen Fefa” in spite of the injustice imposed on me against my will. I was ostracized wherever I went. I felt I carried the shame around so much so that even my friends stayed away from me. I chose to spend my time at home. I became sick. My mother felt sad and was unwilling to work.

Another day the elders came. They told my mother that they had arranged a marriage ceremony for me with a certain man in our village. I was chosen to be a second wife of a man who had already been married and had a number of children. In exchange, I was told to offer him a dowry - the same “blood-money” that I got from the elders as compensation was now to be paid to this man.

In any case, I began a new life. At least, at the beginning, I thought so. The man’s wife began to nag me day-in and day-out. She had four children, but all of them were girls. The man wanted a son and I was chosen as a candidate to produce the child. I soon realized that, far from being a wife, I was a maid-servant, working tirelessly for the man and his spouse. I cursed the day I was born.

Furthermore, he beat me. As a result, I fled to my mother. Since I was pregnant, he sent elders to take me back to him, hoping that he would have a son. I gave birth to a daughter. Again, I became pregnant, and again it was a girl. I thought the best place to wait for death was at my mother’s house. So, with my two children with me, I went to her.
Stories from Ethiopia related to violence against women and female
PMC-Ethiopia. The goal of this project is to provide
addressing violence against women published by
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