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Theatre for development: A tool to enhance access to drugs uptake and HIV related services

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Barefeet is a Zambian local NGO working with vulnerable youths on the street and those with potential to get onto the street for various reasons and very exposed to contracting HIV. Barefeet uses and empowers these identified youths with theatre and art skills in a transformative manner in 40 centers working with over 15,000 target audience. The youths then step out into target communities to engage the community members (normally average of 500 per community audience) and through a process participatory performance (PPP) approach using theatre, key messages on HIV are shared with the communities among other themes. The trained youths act as change agents and role models to discuss the HIV issues using creative performance theatre. The youths remain as community creative theatre groups to conduct continuous awareness creation and knowledge providers on HIV/AIDS, STIs and STDs among other health issues. The use of by participatory and creative theatre by Barefeet has proved very effective and has achieved several outcomes including; increased access to testing, access to medical checkups, reduction of stigma, improved community support of the HIV affected and infected community members, especially youths who see the fellow youths performing as role models.

Biography

Ireen Kapaba Silweya has completed her BA in Education from University of Zambia and a Diploma in Management for International Public Health from Emory University/SMDP. She is currently pursuing Masters in Leadership and Administration. She has previously managed several projects focusing on HIV and AIDS working with vulnerable groups and communities. She currently also facilitates as a part time Lecture at the University of Zambia, School of Medicine, under the Community Medicine Department. She has previously presented papers on effects of HIV on vulnerable groups (school children etc) at the Global Health Council, Reproductive Health Conference among others. Currently she is the CEO of Barefeet Theatre, Zambia.

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