Adolescent health, social cohesion and young women’s clubs: Stories from Soul City
PRESENTATION OUTLINE

- Background
- Methods
- Results
- Discussion
BACKGROUND
All programmes are based on our theory of change which recognises the importance of implementing a comprehensive “whole school/community” approach aiming to bring about change at multiple levels.
WHAT DO WE KNOW?

• Women face a greater risk of HIV infection.
  – Risk-enhancing factors include alcohol abuse, violence against women and socioeconomic insecurity, social exclusion

• On average in South Africa there are three women infected with HIV for every two men who are infected.
  – The difference is greatest in the 15-24 age group, where three young women for every one young man are infected

• Young women’s clubs are becoming an increasingly important approach to building resilience and shaping the lives of adolescent girls.
  – Social cohesion has been recognised as an important factor in community health outcomes.
  – Social capital: Cognitive Social Capital and Structural Social Capital are both associated with protective psychosocial attributes – including better communication, openness and participation in collective action. However, SSC seems to play a much more important role in shaping overall HIV risk
2014 Soul City Institute began implementing Rise clubs targeting young women between the ages of 15-24 years.

- The clubs bring together young women around social issues affecting them and offering peer support and sisterhood.
- Clubs help young women through promoting agency and increasing social capital to deal with issues affecting them.
- Additional 3.5 million young women who are not part of the core club network are reached through the Rise TV talk show.
METHODOLOGY
METHOD USED

• Qualitative research (Case study) used to understand the role played by clubs in shaping individual and communal lives
  – Method useful for testing whether scientific theories and models actually work in the real world
  – Quantitative evidence
  – This will be backed with a statistical method (to establish reliability and generality of findings)

• The data collection
  – The data collection focus was on the effectiveness of clubs in building social cohesion and social capital in communities
    • demonstrating how marginalised communities can be transformed through collective action
  – Clubs as the research objects
  – Multiple cases – each case as a single case with each result contributing to the whole study to answer the research question

Each club asked to submit stories from their communities demonstrating how they build social cohesion and social capital
The presentation will highlight how clubs were instrumental in creating a platform to:

- Report sexual abuse and support each other in accessing the law
- Provide increased food security for the more needy families amongst them
- Access health and social services in teams to overcome discrimination and intimidation
- Performing arts and self-entertainment and sharing talent
RESULTS
Case Study 1: Clubs Report sexual abuse and support each other in accessing the law

**Background**

November 2015, 2 young women were brutally raped on their way to school.
The incident took place in Bongweni Village (informal settlement), near East London in the Eastern Cape.
The incident made into the provincial paper, Daily Dispatch.

**Actions taken by club**

- Bongweni Young Women’s Stars took lead frustrated by the lack of action on the case.
- Started marching in the community every day in the afternoon - Their action gained momentum: other people joined them.
- Met with the families to chart a way forward.
- Met with police and different stakeholders of the community for greater action and support – resulted in rape victims provided a safe-house.
OUTCOMES

- The action culminated into a big march.
- No arrests made but the message was clear that the club managed to bring the community together to take action.
- The message was clear that the community of Bongweni will no longer be a safe haven for rapists.
- It also encouraged young women to come forward when raped ensuring that they would receive support.
- The Club has also supplemented their action with a couple of club initiated events in the area that address sexual abuse issues.
Case Study 2: Provide increased food security for the more needy families amongst them

• **Background**
  
  Rise Young Women’s Club from Thabong East in Welkom, Free State Province. These phenomenal young ladies recognised the unfavourable circumstances their community lives in and decided to get up and change them.

• **Actions taken by club**
  
  The club made up of sixty young ladies operates a feeding scheme for children in their community;
  The scheme is aimed at providing nutritious meals for young children from child headed households, struggling homes and children born to teenage mothers.
  Once a week on Thursdays, children from as little as toddlers line up to receive their free meals.
  The feeding scheme is run by three clubs under the Rise Young Women’s Club umbrella, namely; Matebele, Future Leaders and Go-Getters.
Case Study 2: Clubs Report sexual abuse and support each other in accessing the law

Background

Rise Young Women’s Club from Thabong East in Welkom, Free State Province.

These phenomenal young ladies recognised the unfavourable circumstances their community lives in and decided to get up and change them.

Actions taken by club

The club made up of sixty young ladies operates a feeding scheme for children in their community.

The scheme provides nutritious meals for young children from child headed households, struggling homes and children born to teenage mothers.

Once a week on Thursdays, children from as little as toddlers line up to receive their free meals. The feeding scheme is run by three clubs under the Rise Young Women’s Club umbrella, namely; Matebele, Future Leaders and Go-Getters.
According to all three chairpersons, the one thing they would love to do different is operate the scheme for more than one day a week. “I wish we could feed the children every day because I grew up in the same situation as them and understand what they are going through and the challenges they face”

Funding for the food scheme is sourced through local businesses
Case Study 2: Clubs Report sexual abuse and support each other in accessing the law

Background

Rise Young Women’s Club from Thabong East in Welkom, Free State Province.

These phenomenal young ladies recognised the unfavourable circumstances their community lives in and decided to get up and change them.

Actions taken by club

- The club made up of sixty young ladies operates a feeding scheme for children in their community.

- The scheme provides nutritious meals for between 120 – 140 young children from child headed households, struggling homes and children born to teenage mothers.

Once a week on Thursdays, children from as little as toddlers line up to receive their free meals. The feeding scheme is run by three clubs under the Rise Young Women’s Club umbrella, namely; Matebele, Future Leaders and Go-Getters.
DISCUSSION

As a descriptive term, social cohesion refers to the extent to which a society is coherent, united and functional, providing an environment within which its citizens can flourish.

As an explanatory term, *social capital* refers to the assets accumulated through various social networks and relationships, based on trust, which enable people to work together to achieve common goals.

Notwithstanding the limited data or empirical evidence available that deals specifically with social cohesion and social capital social justice;

– Clubs have demonstrated through the two presented case studies that social cohesion can be achieved and social capital can be built as a resource to tap into

– Clubs instill in individuals girls the sense of belonging to the same community and the feeling that they are recognized as members of that community and that they can flourish
CONCLUSION

To date the clubs have demonstrated how organised structures promote social cohesion amongst adolescents-what they coined Positive Peer pressure.

The increased social cohesion is associated with young women developing new aspirations, increase in self-confidence and efficacy and improved health and social outcomes.
THANK YOU