Africa have written to us and asked how the drama, young people across South in their communities. Since we aired and become active agents of change encounter challenges as young citizens club. It’s a force for good in which they group of young children who develop a intervention called Soul Buddyz club. It centres on a television drama series for children aged 8 to 12 years about a role-models are people who do not stigmatize people with HIV, who do not believe people with HIV are sinners. We try to portray people who go through journeys, so people can relate to it, instead of dividing the world into people who are good and bad.

Q: Is there two-way communication with your audiences?
A: Our social mobilization work is premised on multi-directional commun-ication. It is about creating dialogue and debate. There is a lot of social networking. We also have a wonderful intervention called Soul Buddyz club. It centres on a television drama series for children aged 8 to 12 years about a group of young children who develop a club. It’s a force for good in which they encounter challenges as young citizens and become active agents of change in their communities. Since we aired the drama, young people across South Africa have written to us and asked how to set up their own Soul Buddyz clubs. As a result, we formed a national club movement.

Q: What happens when your messages go against those coming from the govern-ment?
A: South Africa went through a very difficult period when public figures questioned the link between HIV and AIDS and the role of antiretroviral medication in treating the disease. While South Africa has had a very comprehensive HIV strategy on paper, the government in the past has lacked the political will to implement all components and has sent out very mixed messages. This made our partnership with government difficult. South Africa has entered a new era with a shift in power within the ruling party. We have a new minister of health, who is highly committed to addressing all aspects of the country’s HIV strategy.

Q: Is your work just confined to South Africa?
A: The Soul City Institute works with partner nongovernmental organizations in eight other southern African countries. These partners have launched large-scale national social change communication strategies and we have done a lot of capacity strengthening with partners to do so. Together we recently launched a regional campaign across southern Africa called One Love. Its aim is to get the region talking and thinking about the practice of having more than one partner at the same time.

Q: Tell us about the new Division in Social and Behaviour Change Commu-nication at the School of Public Health in the University of the Witwatersrand?
A: Over the years, we have been asked to undertake capacity building and strengthening by countries such as Colombia, Egypt and Suriname. These are also key components of our regional programme. Our motivation to set up this division was in large part based on the request by our southern African partners to accredit the training we provided. Another major impetus for the division was the urgent need to scale up such interventions across the region to reach the Millennium Development Goals, including HIV prevention. We have set up this division as a centre of excellence in health and development communications, in the South, by the South and for the South.