

Report: Khayelitsha Youth programme: mobook workshop
Prepared by Louise McCann, 10 January 2012
Email: Louise@thecontentstudio.co.za

About the project

A pilot youth story creation project developed and run by Louise McCann with the goal of collaboratively creating one made-for-mobile youth fiction mobook (book published on a mobile/cellphone platform) with a small group of workshop participants in Khayelitsha.

Programme Goals:

- Writing and publishing one collaboratively created made-for-mobile youth fiction book authentically rooted in Khayelitsha. Each of the four workshop participants / story contributors is attributed as a co-author.
- One mobook, many platforms: Distributing the story to different publishing platforms to allow the story to be accessible to as many teen readers as possible, with a particular focus on keeping the book accessible to teen readers who live in poverty.
- Experimental:

Someone Like Me <http://www.yoza.mobi/stories/39/>

It's the 16 December, the biggest party day of the year in Khayelitsha, and 16-year-old Buhle Mbeko is ready to step out and be someone. But when her best friend leaves town, Buhle is left to begin this new chapter of her life all on her own. With no money, the wrong clothes, lots of booze, new friends to impress and love interest Themba temptingly close, Buhle has a lot to face up to. Especially when a Sugar Daddy starts to take an interest in her...

READER RESPONSE: Beginning to end story reads: 7581 Page views generated: 129 947

Uptake is impressive given that no marketing was done around the story.

COMPARATIVE: Funder Cost to Readership Achieved

An interactive mobook has been put in the hands of readers at no cost to these readers (in Yoza's case, a few cents of airtime per chapter). If the funder cost of this project is purely measured in Rands per complete reads, then the funder has given each reader a complete, interactive book at a cost of R4.20 per book. As more readers read these books (and they are, daily) the cost of the mobook continues to decrease. Compared to the cost of producing and distributing a print version, the mobook costs are negligible.

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VALUE

The input of the young Khayelithsha workshop participants from The Gold Peer Development Agency (GOLD) enabled the creation of a story that is a genuine reflection of life and issues faced by teens that live in such a township environment. A story validates and provides new perspective on real life situations and seeds communities with ideas. The interactive nature of mobooks grows this experience, creating a community where teen readers are encouraged to give voice to what they've taken from the story, and participate in a discourse around the characters' lives and issues. Mobile platforms such as YOZA and Young Africa Live bring this opportunity to teens in a way that is economically and geographically accessible and age group 'cool', while providing fun, imaginative entertainment.

Publishing Platform	Dates
Young Africa Live	From 16 December to 28 December only. All chapters were live for 24 hours, from 6am to 6am. The first episode went live on December 16 th and the last on the 28 th . Each chapter was linked, on YAL, to the previous chapter. I.e. you could read Chapter 2, which would be linked, to Chapter 1 so you could read the previous chapter and catch up.
Yoza cellphone library: Published on Yoza.mobi and on Mxit.	Rolled out 1 chapter per day from 16 December to 28 December. <i>Someone Like Me</i> remains housed in library, available for reading anytime.

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Detailed results: Yoza and YAL

Chapter	YAL views	Yoza views	Combined Page Views	YAL* comments	Yoza comments	Combined comments
	n/a	Story homepage: 13329.	13329	n/a	56	*See note on YAL comments
1	9 504	5755	15259	404	98	502
2	6 063	4399	10462	98	31	129
3	6 018	3479	9497	141	22	163
4	5 807	3549	9356	148	11	159
5	5 640	3409	9049	177	29	206
6	4 820	3663	8483	112	26	138
7	4 517	3356	7873	108	27	135
8	4 698	3167	7865	107	10	117
9	7 258	3026	10284	373	38	411
10	3 933	2859	6792	77	18	95
11	4 593	2677	7270	104	13	117
12	4 489	2538	6847	122	32	154
13	4 640	2941	7581	209	165	374
TOTAL	71980	58147	129947	2180	576	2700

Current estimated beginning to end reads: 7581

***YAL comments: the number of comments is generally significantly higher than the comments specific to the story. A lot of comments include the users having their own conversations or discussing topics outside the story.**

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FEEDBACK

From Yoza

"Amazing and inspiring. Well done! Really hope that you get to do more of these." Steve Vosloo, founder of Yoza.

From YAL

"I like that you showed that you're opening people's eyes to the fact that serum-discordant couples can exist safely and happily. That you're aiming a blow at stigmatizing people living with HIV is great - especially young people with HIV." " Nobhongo Gxolo, Content Manager at Young Africa Live.

Reader Comments

- Wow wat a story i like it shame it realy uplifts da spirits of those livng with HIV it shows tht being hiv+ is no death sentence wow am so touched as im also livng wit hiv
- Big up 4 da author da story ws rily amazing,touchin at da sme tym.it hs taught me a lot abt love nd sugadadies coz im also ws a victim of dating sugadadies.and i cudnt c anyprblm wit dat.until ive read da story nw i c hw my lyf ws in danger.
- Wow this story its so inspiring...im going 2 test b4 da end of da year, Yoza dis story its awesum! Kip em cumin
- Wow this is an amazing story really an eye opener
- That was the most awesome story i've ever read. Two thumbs up to the author.
- diz stOry 4me iz an inspiring bible 4da y0uth 0of s0uth africa nd als0 africa..wo0w i l0ved it. it t00k me 2days 2finish da wh0le stOry bt itz g0n take me a lifetym 2f0rget it..

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- Wat a great nd sad story at da same tym.it hs taught me alot bwt love,life nd choosin gud friends
- Wow the dude(Themba) is so cool and i have actually learned something(honesty,trust,hope and how to support others) from thes story....i think these kind of stories need to be read world wide so that we could all have a change of heart and care for othershallelujah Yoza
- yhe man...i admire these kids yaz kanjan..they hve amazing courage...wsh ths upcuming twitter nd fb generation wuld read such insipirational ish..myb then thre wuld b fwer ministers*
- Its a very nice educational story learnt a lot. they jst need to both g to the clinic n b careful.
- Tht ws an awesome story wth so mch 2 learn,i admire Themba 4 hs honesty n Buhle 4 her courage 2 stand tall no hw the circumstances ws.VRY VRY VRY NYC STORY-Wsh my folks cn learn 2 accept tht m also HIV postv thn lyf wuld b superb. bt al in al i lv t,big up 2 the auther
- Dat wz a great story, i think . Themba wz a man enough 2 b honest abwt his status
- M also HIV positive 21yr old nd married, dis story gave me hope aftr wat I've been through. Tnx Yoza 4 encouragng story.
- I really commend Yoza for finding such great writers and publishing such stories I think we learn a lot..Someone like you teache's a important message about honesty and how Themba was honest about his status proves that he is a man that care's..This story highlights a lot of issues facing our society today..Love it lots and hope there is a sequel that follows. Alex 19,joburg.
- Im very glad i read ths stori coz it made me realise dat thez mor 2 life 2 enjoy ,than tryin 2 b lyk othr ppl who hav bd influences
- SEE MORE BY CLICKING THROUGH, AND THEN SCROLLING DOWN TO 'COMMENTS AT:
<http://www.yoza.mobi/stories/chapter/747/?p=13>

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BACKGROUND TO STORY WORKSHOP

Project run by Louise McCann.
Organised by Keith Wimble of Ikamva Labanutu
Nov 16 to Dec 28

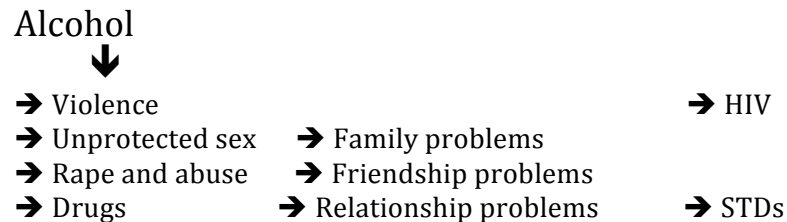
Participants: from GOLD Peer Education Development Agency
Anthony Baatjies
Zandile Ntlatli
Christopher Mzamo
Lamla Nyikila

About the project

- A pilot youth story creation project developed and run by Louise McCann with the goal of collaboratively creating one made-for-mobile youth fiction mobook (book published on a mobile/cellphone platform) with this small group of workshop participants in Khayelitsha.
- The workshop created a forum where, based on their experience as peer-to-peer educators in Khayelitsha, the workshop participants:
 - identified a local South African youth audience. In this case: age 13 upwards, living in a township.
 - brainstormed topical issues and scenarios such a readership might typically experience.
 - used their personal insight and experience as inspiration for character choices, story ideas and plot scenarios that would resonate with the identified readership.
 - With the help of a writer the team created an original piece of contemporary made-for-mobile fiction in the soapie/drama/romance genre.

ISSUES IDENTIFIED

Alcohol abuse as a cultural norm and a root problem leading to other major problems.



SCENARIOS

- Peer pressure, which is all about teens wanting to 'be someone'. (This is where the title 'Someone Like Me' came from.)
 - I want to be someone known to my peers, so I will
 - Do what they do.
 - Make myself visible.
 - Engage myself in certain activities (even if not emotionally ready for it).
 - If I'm not in a group I'm called names so when it eventually gets to a point where I have a chance to prove myself I'll do it worse and more. Decide to get it over and done with.
- Guys buying girls drinks and then expecting something from these girls in return. This creates a scenario where: girls are taken advantage of; girls feel they can't say anything because of what they wore (i.e. they 'deserved' it); guys get away with this so behaviour is perpetuated.
- Sugar Daddies – Older men giving girls money, airtime, transport etc in return for sex.

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- Culture of 'Sugar Daddies' seen as cool. Sugar Daddies seen as a desirable prospect to many teens. Essentially this is prostitution but often not seen like that by naïve teens.

STORY CREATION PROCESS

The story 'Someone Like Me' revolves around the issues and scenarios put forward by the workshop participants as pertinent to the audience they had identified for the story, as detailed above. Participants used their personal insight and experience as inspiration for character choices, story ideas and plot scenarios that would resonate with the identified readership.

The premise was that in collaborative creative writing there are no 'bad' ideas. Ideas need to be shared. From the contributing and distilling of ideas, a story will come.

QUESTIONS ASKED TO PROMPT THE PROCESS

- Who are these people?
- What do they look like?
- Where do they come from, where are they going to?
- What do these characters want most from life?
- What is the flaw that stops them from achieving that?
- What gets in the way of them achieving their goals?
- What are they wearing?
- What music are they listening to?
- When should the story begin?
- What should happen?
- What should happen next?

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FEEDBACK ON STORY WORKSHOP

- The team's ideas and input exceeded my expectations. Although none of them are great book readers nor come from home with books, they had a good understanding of what makes for a good story. The story was shaped around the characters, scenarios and issues they put forward.
- Each member of the team watches local soapies, and this was a good, safe, commonly understood point of reference from which to grow a compelling, interesting story.
- There was some shyness and resistance to sharing ideas initially, but as the story grew the participants forgot themselves, and got so caught up in the story itself that the ideas began to flow without any self-consciousness, which was wonderful.
- Very useful to begin each new workshop period by repeating the team's ideas from previous workshops back to them, and checking I had understood correctly, and that we were on the same page. This created a comfortable space to both consolidate, warm up and then move forward with the story.
- A good idea to have an MOU in place before the workshop process begins so that expectations are agreed upon and time management is more effective. Breakdowns in this regard meant workshopping times needed to be curtailed, and that the workshop participators didn't get the full benefit of the intended impact of the workshop process. The story would also have benefitted from travelling through the full workshop process.
- It was a great pleasure and privilege to work with the peers from GOLD. The experience of working with them and hearing what they had to say revealed many aspect of life as a teen in a township that were completely foreign to me. It was also so useful to run these workshops in the township themselves, so that the place itself could also be explored and expressed in the story. It was wonderful to use the age-old process of story telling to build bridges over this cultural divide, and to weave all this knowledge, insight, and inspiration into a story that tackles some important local issues. 'Someone Like Me' has been very well received by the South African teen public, and will continue to travel and be enjoyed by even more readers. Well done and thank you to them.
- I think that what has been learned could be successfully taken forward, leading to a succession of these mobook story workshops being run in local townships, with the goal of nurturing more mobooks into life to share with readers. The reader take up over such a short period would suggest that there is a high demand for these stories.
- Following on from the success of this pilot project, the goal is to secure funding to run six story workshops and story rollouts in 2012. For details please contact Louise@thecontentstudio.co.za