

## **MAC AIDS Fund Leadership in HIV Prevention (MAFLIP) Programme Summary**

Building on the successes of the MAC AIDS Fund Leadership Initiative (MAFLI) the MAC AIDS Fund Leadership in HIV Prevention (MAFLIP) aims to build on the skills of emerging young leaders in South Africa to address HIV prevention and gender equality as a joint programme developed and implemented by the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), the Human Science Research Council (HSRC) and Columbia University's HIV Center. Under both programmes, funded entirely by the MAC AIDS Fund, over 65 Fellows have been trained and supported.

### **Programme Goal**

To support the emergence of new leaders who will contribute to the development of effective approaches that reduce the spread and impact of HIV & AIDS and gender-based violence, and to promote gender equality.

### **Programme Objectives**

The training aimed to provide participants with the opportunity to:

1. expand knowledge regarding HIV transmission with an emphasis on obtaining relevant, useful information and developing effective, evidence-based intervention strategies in HIV prevention;
2. develop leadership skills that incorporate vision, purpose and clarity;
3. expand knowledge of the impact of gender inequality and gender-based violence on the spread of HIV and develop skills for gender empowerment and advocacy;
4. develop skills to provide effective, non-judgemental communication about human sexuality with different target populations in professional settings;
5. develop skills to conceptualize, design and implement an effective, feasible HIV and gender-based violence prevention plan with concrete goals, objectives and evaluation components;
6. develop skills to sustain a programme (e.g., budgeting, working with the media, capacity building, networking, and facilitation skills).

Under the project's first objectives, an intensive 3-week training course combining key aspects of HIV prevention, leadership skills and gender equality was conducted and a further 2 three day training workshops were held over the year long fellowship period.

A key aspect of the training curriculum included the HIV prevention arm that incorporated modules on the nature and drivers of the epidemic in South Africa, introduction to HIV transmission and prevention, and effective intervention strategies. Under the leadership arm of the training modules included approaches to effective leadership, communication tools and strategies, and financial and project management. Under the gender-based violence (GBV) arm modules included values clarification, linkages between GBV and HIV, gender, sexuality and sexual orientation as well as sessions on stigma and discrimination. To assist fellows' development of unique and deliverable prevention plans training modules included community engagement and participation strategies, HIV prevention communication and messaging, capacity building and facilitation skills.

At the level of prevention plan implementation, participants were required to develop and implement innovative HIV prevention and gender-based violence prevention plans, and to develop a range of partnerships with organizations working in these fields. Various community settings were targeted through prevention plans, including clinics, treatment support groups, schools, out-of-school youth, soccer clubs, women's groups, LGBTI and faith-based organizations.

The unique success of this programme lies in the top-level instruction delivered by expert lecturers, the up-to-date evidence-based information on HIV and AIDS and materials provided to Fellows, and the continuous support from mentors and programme staff. An independent evaluation of MAFLI found that the unique integration of HIV prevention, gender and leadership fills a critical gap in South Africa for skills and capacity development among young people who show strong potential for leadership, but lack access to the levels of education, training and support which would enable them to reach their potential.

While the foundation of the fellowship program focused around HIV and gender based violence prevention and leadership development the most prominent outcome was its transformative nature. Unlike many programs that provide training, help develop pilot programs and then request final reports the MAFLI program focuses on building people up. This is done with one on one support during the training period and dedicated mentorship throughout the implementation in the form of monthly check-ins and site visits. This in turn positively impacts their lives and the lives of the people they interact with. Fellows exit the training and fellowship more prepared, confident and assertive often times seeking promotions and higher degrees.

Comments from program graduates:

“I now trust my judgment and take decisions based on that without the fear of failure or being wrong but with the hope of being directed and supported. This [my self confidence] was always disturbed by inferiority complex and the failure of seeing myself as a leader but through training I learnt to acknowledge the fact that I am a leader.” – SM, Gauteng

“Whenever I contacted my mentor and programme staff, I was always assured of their availability. This happened through emails, calls and Whatsapp. This was amazing because they brought the sense of being there and knowing that despite the plan being mine, someone out there was with me throughout.” CN – KwaZulu-Natal

“The programme gave me an opportunity to grow as a leader by converting my idea into an implementable plan that can improve the lives and share it with government officials to gain their support.” PM, Eastern Cape

“It has boosted my confidence in trusting and articulating my ideas better. The leadership training was a wonderful experience of self-discovery, creating new friendships and comradeship, it gave me so much more than just the training and information.” NP, Gauteng

Following the success of the programme and as an integral step to ensure its sustainability, the programme is currently being offered as a certified short course at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN.) Based on lessons learned, the project partners (HSRC, UCLA and UKZN) the curriculum will include an increased focus on the intersections between HIV and GBV, and on the value of using transformative processes to achieve meaningful, lasting change.

Future plans consist of establishing an accredited 1-year diploma program that will be offered by UKZN, with continued technical support from the HSRC and UCLA. A combined tuition/bursary model will be tested to ensure an inclusive and sustainable program. The ultimate goal is to have a unique, annual post-graduate program on leadership, HIV and GBV established at UKZN.