Endless Hope or a Hopeless End? Constructing Ownership and Evidence through the Development of an HIV Prevention Campaign for Young Women in South Africa

Kerry Mangold

0615123w

Abstract

The following dissertation explores the development of the national She Conquers HIV prevention campaign for adolescent girls and young women in South Africa. In 2016 when the research for the thesis was conducted almost two thousand young women between the ages of 15-24 years were reported to be infected with HIV every week in South Africa. This led the South African government to initiate the development of a national campaign to address the vulnerabilities of young women and significantly reduce the number of new infections. I examine the complex policy-development process for this campaign using insights from three worlds: the young womens world; the policy world and the NGO world. I use the grounding policy principles of "evidence", "ownership" and "hope" to guide my analysis. I explore the meanings and dynamics of each principle and compare this to its enactment. I suggest that the enactment of the core principles is constructed by policy makers in an attempt to build hope and mobilise funding from donors for the implementation of the campaign. I suggest that the mismatch in ideology and lived experience of these notions undermines the intention of engaging the young women in the development of the campaign and silences them. I argue that their silence perpetuates a feeling of hopelessness amongst young women, whilst simultaneously building hope amongst donors and development partners, and leading NGOs into despair.