

# LISTENER FEEDBACK

LETTERS, EMAILS, AND TEXTS



"Yam Yankre opened my eyes. It allowed me to change my life and my family. The advice in soap operas helps for the future."

- Soumalia Nagre, Burkina Faso (Listener of *Yam Yankre*)

"Drama is a way of correction and advice that everyone in the world can see...I see the disadvantages of early marriage. When our children are rushed into early marriage, they will not have time to educate themselves."

- Balikisu Ahmed, Nigeria (Listener of *Hannunka Mai Sanda*)

"That girl [in the drama] that was pregnant and the parents insisted she must not go to the hospital, rather she should use their local herbs, but the husband refused. We love that because it is what has been happening in real life."

- Jummai Abubakar, Nigeria (Listener of *Hannunka Mai Sanda*)



30 KIMBALL AVENUE, SUITE 301 | SOUTH BURLINGTON, VT 05403 USA

Population Media Center (PMC) works worldwide using entertainment-education for social change.

POPULATIONMEDIA.ORG



30 Kimball Avenue, Suite 302  
South Burlington, VT 05403  
802.985.8156  
info@populationmedia.org  
www.populationmedia.org

NEWSLETTER // SUMMER/FALL // 2014



## EAST LOS HIGH SEASONS TWO AND THREE

Sex, revenge, love...plus information about HIV/AIDS, birth control, and nutrition. This upbeat, provocative, and exciting TV drama brought Population Media Center (PMC) to Hollywood and confirmed the power of using transmedia storytelling to support dramas for social change.

In early 2014, Hulu announced that it had ordered 12 new episodes of Population Media Center's award winning English-language series *East Los High*, which features an all-Latino cast and explores real-life issues such as teen pregnancy. In 2013, the series consistently ranked among Hulu's most popular programs. Season two launched in July 2014 and is performing even better, prompting Hulu to announce it will be picking up *East Los High* for a third season.

"We are thrilled with the success of both Season One and Two of *East Los High* in terms of both the social impact and the large and dedicated audience. And to be green lit for Season Three just days after launching Season Two speaks to the tremendous success of the show," says Katie Elmore Mota, Executive Producer.

*East Los High's* popularity has led to media coverage in the *Los Angeles Times*, the *Huffington Post*, *NPR*, *Cosmopolitan*, and many more, but it's not only *East Los High's* big audience that's drawing attention. In the first month of broadcast last year, more than 30,000 people used the Planned Parenthood widgets on eastloshigh.com to connect with information or services. More than 98 percent of those who watched the episodes and used the transmedia

elements said that they found *East Los High's* resources incredibly helpful, and 76 percent said they shared those resources with friends.

This United States series came about when PMC realized that 52 percent of Latinas in the United States were becoming pregnant before the age of 20, which prevented many of these young women from completing high school.

PMC produced *East Los High* in association with Wise Entertainment, led by Mota, former PMC Vice President of Communications and Programs. Mota recognized the power of transmedia, creating video blogs by characters, extended scenes, and key character social media profiles to enhance the drama. The show was co-created by Carlos Portugal and Kathleen Bedoya.

"We've had a role in entertainment programming in more than 50 countries," says Bill Ryerson, PMC President, "but when we realized that Latinas in the United States have such high teenage pregnancy rates, we realized we could and should be providing sex education in our own backyard." ■

## CHANGING THE WORLD, ONE SOAP OPERA AT A TIME

HELP CHANGE THE WORLD, MAKE A DONATION TODAY : [WWW.POPULATIONMEDIA.ORG/DONATE](http://WWW.POPULATIONMEDIA.ORG/DONATE)



## “AGASHI” AND PMC’S BURUNDI OFFICE GET TWO GLOBAL HEALTH CORPS FELLOWS

“I can’t believe we’ll be in Bujumbura on Friday,” says Alex Bozzette, a 2014-2015 Global Health Corps fellow. Bozzette was sitting with his co-fellow, Jean Sacha Barikumutima, in the offices of Population Media Center (PMC) in Vermont.

Two days later, on July 17, the two made the 27-hour trip to Bujumbura, Burundi for their year-long placement in PMC’s Burundi office.



One of the many events in Burundi celebrating *Agashi*

“For me, this is the perfect opportunity at the perfect time,” says Bozzette. “It combines my experience in international public health project management with my interests in design and communications.”

This is the first time US-based PMC has teamed up with Global Health Corps to offer year-long paid fellowships in Burundi, one available to a US citizen and one available to a Burundi citizen.

“We are so excited to partner with Population Media Center on this project,” says Jean Marie Karikurubu, the Burundi Program Manager at Global Health Corps. “Their mission and their communications strategies have been shown to be very effective, and we’re excited to offer fellows the opportunity to get involved in this project.”

PMC’s radio drama, *Agashi* (“Hey! Look Again!”), launched in Burundi in January 2014 and will run for approximately two years. Airing two episodes per

## CHRISTINA GUÉRIN’S UNLIKELY PATH TO WORKING ON PMC’S HAITIAN DRAMA

When Christina Guérin was a child, she decided she didn’t want a career in radio soap operas. As a young girl, she spent many days and nights in a Haiti radio studio watching her mother work long hours.

In September 2013, Population Media Center (PMC) launched a new radio soap opera in Haiti addressing child slavery, reproductive health, and family planning. Guérin found herself, once again, in the studio, but this time, she’s the producer.

“It’s something that I enjoy,” Guérin says laughingly. “I had to admit that. Plus, I realized that my mother was doing everything. We have six people doing what she did.”

It was Guérin’s work in a radio station that brought about the existence of *Zoukoutap* (“To Limp”), PMC’s serial drama in Haitian Creole. In her late 20s, Guérin unexpectedly found herself face-to-face with an important issue: child slavery. In Haiti, young children

are sent to work in another household when their family is unable to provide for them, making kids servants, with no regard for their education, well-being, or happiness.

“I was working at a radio station,” she says, “when a young girl was brought in. We were going to announce her name on air to find her family, but she didn’t want to. She was a restavek and didn’t want to return to her life.”

Guérin helped get that young girl to a shelter, just one of roughly 300,000 children caught up in the restavek system. Guérin realized that she wanted to help address this issue.

“I realized that if I want to help, it doesn’t have to be opening a home or protesting – *Zoukoutap* was the best way I could help.”

But it would be another six years before *Zoukoutap* would come to fruition. Guérin and Joan Conn, Executive Director of the Restavek Freedom Foundation, met with Bill Ryerson, President of PMC, in 2011 to discuss the idea of a soap opera to address child slavery in Haiti. It seemed like a perfect fit, since PMC creates radio soap operas for



Jean Sacha Barikumutima and Alex Bozzette

week, *Agashi* addresses issues such as child nutrition and family planning through intriguing storylines and plot twists. Over the course of the episodes, characters demonstrate choices and consequences, learning from their actions and teaching listeners as well.

“I believe [PMC’s] approach has the ability to address cultural mindsets,” says Barikumutima, who had been interning in PMC’s Burundi office when he was awarded the fellowship. “It draws people in, and as they listen to the drama – they understand the message themselves.” ■



Christina Guérin and Joan Conn

social change all over the world.

“This was an opportunity to address crucial topics in a country where we had never broadcast,” says Ryerson.

*Zoukoutap* finished broadcasting in July 2014, but response to the program has been so strong, PMC is planning to rebroadcast *Zoukoutap* while actively working to secure funding for a follow-on Haitian program.

“Fans are stalking us – in a good way!” says Guérin. “They are clamoring to know what happened to their beloved program.” ■

## PMC IN AUSTIN, TX: JOIN US FOR SXSW ECO

The people have voted! Population Media Center (PMC), a global leader in entertainment-education for social good, has been chosen to be part of the program line-up at the 2014 South by Southwest Eco (SXSW Eco) conference taking place October 6-8 in Austin, Texas.

SXSW Eco attracts several thousand members of the global community to explore, engage, and co-create solutions for a sustainable world each year. This piqued the interest of Population Media Center’s Texas-based state chapter (PMC-TX) – which works to engage local elected officials, community leaders, and the Texas public on population and sustainability issues, explaining how PMC addresses these issues in ways that enhance human health, human rights, the environment, and economic justice.

PMC submitted a proposal for the panel “Women First: Improve Society and Protect the Environment” featuring four female panelists from a diverse group of organizations that focus on entertainment-education, technology for social good, and women’s rights and empowerment.

“It’s an honor to be part of this event and take a leadership role in convening this panel,” says Keith Annis, the Director of PMC-TX. “SXSW is well known and respected around the world, and we’re pleased to be selected as one of the panels.”

PMC’s idea for the panel had to be voted on by the general public to gauge interest. Response was so strong that the panel was selected to be included in the first wave of programming. The panel will feature Missie Thurston from PMC, Kelly L’Engle from FHI 360, Katie Mota from Wise Entertainment, and Diana Lugo-Martinez from the National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health.

These women, experts in their field, will discuss and address:

1. The definitions of sexual and reproductive health and rights for women and the challenges being faced locally, nationally, and internationally in realizing them.

## POPULATION MEDIA CENTER GETS RECOGNIZED AS A HIGHLY REPUTABLE CHARITY BY TWO RATING ORGANIZATIONS

In February 2014, Charity Navigator announced that for the second consecutive year, Population Media Center (PMC) has been awarded the coveted 4-star rating for sound fiscal management and for commitment to accountability and transparency. More and more donors have come to rely on Charity Navigator, the nation’s largest and most-utilized evaluator of charities, for its unbiased, objective, numbers-based ratings of over 7,000 American charities.

“Only 19 percent of the charities we rate have received at least two consecutive four-star evaluations, indicating that Population Media Center outperforms most other charities in America,” says Ken Berger, President & CEO of Charity Navigator, in his congratulatory letter. “This



A woman and her child in Ethiopia

2. How the attainment of sexual and reproductive health and rights for women locally, nationally, and internationally translate into healthier societies and improved environmental protection – in addition to the individual benefits for each person.
3. What innovative methods are being used to address these incredibly personal, cultural, and often controversial topics. Powerful behavior change communications examples that will be discussed include, but are not limited to, entertainment-education, gaming, and targeted use of technology.

“This promises to be a panel that anyone who cares about the environment won’t want to miss,” says Annis. “It’s an angle of environmental protection that’s not often discussed and, in addition to protecting the planet, it improves the lives of men, women, and children today.”

If you want to be part of this lively and enlightening conversation, register at [sxsweco.com/attend](http://sxsweco.com/attend). “Women First: Improve Society and Protect the Environment” is scheduled for 9am on Wednesday, October 8th. ■

‘exceptional’ designation from Charity Navigator differentiates PMC from its peers and demonstrates to the public it is worthy of their trust.”

In June 2014, GuideStar also announced that PMC had achieved gold status. GuideStar’s goal is to make it easy to figure out what nonprofit organizations are really doing, what their missions are, and whether or not they are having an impact.

“By achieving GuideStar’s gold status, PMC has shown again that it’s a highly credible organization,” says Paul Ugalde, PMC’s Director of Development. “We are doing what we say we’re doing, and it’s having significant impact. We deal in trust, transparency, and accountability.” ■

Support the work of PMC:  
[www.POPULATIONMEDIA.ORG/DONATE](http://www.POPULATIONMEDIA.ORG/DONATE)



## Kriss Barker

Vice President of International Programs

When Kriss Barker first met Bill Ryerson in Washington DC, she thought he must be mistaken. It was 2001, and Barker, an expert in public health communications, didn’t think the numbers Ryerson was reciting were possible. Ryerson was discussing a communications effort in Tanzania that had used a strategy Barker was unfamiliar with: the Sabido Methodology.

“I was blown away,” says Barker. “Those of us in the business of public health communication knew that you couldn’t get real behavior change in a short time-frame.” But Ryerson insisted, citing statistics like 82 percent of listeners saying they changed their behaviors to avoid HIV by limiting number of sexual partners and using condoms, and independent data from the Tanzanian government showing a 153 percent increase in condom distribution in broadcast areas during the first year.

Barker had heard about Ryerson and his organization, Population Media Center (PMC). She was interested in learning more about how PMC worked to improve the health of people with entertainment-education, specifically Sabido soap operas.



## AN UNEXPECTED CONSEQUENCE FOR PMC ACTOR NORBERT REGERO

When Norbert Regero was awarded a role in a radio serial drama being produced and aired in his home country of Rwanda, he was ecstatic. Not only was it a job, it was a job in theatre – his first professional role doing a job he loved. Regero didn’t yet know that this role would threaten one of his friendships.

Regero was chosen to perform in PMC’s serial drama *Umurage Urukwiye*

“This is a really dynamic methodology,” says Barker. “The stunning results are what drew me to PMC and to Sabido.” By the end of 2002, Barker was the Vice President of International Programs at PMC. Since that time, she has trained producers and writers for more than 30 different TV and radio shows.

## What is Sabido?

Take a well-written, engaging, emotional soap opera and then add an underlying framework that unobtrusively yet obviously weaves in social issues like HIV/AIDS, women’s rights, family planning, or environmental preservation and you may have found an example of a Sabido soap opera.

The stories feature “positive,” “negative,” and “transitional” characters that realistically model behavior in long-running serial dramas, relying on extensive formative research to develop the characters and storylines. Over the course of broadcast, which can be years, audiences develop bonds with characters and learn vicariously through each character’s decisions and the repercussions.

According to Barker, the Sabido Methodology works for a number of reasons, but she emphasizes that it must be a thrill for the audience to listen to or watch the program – otherwise it won’t work.

(“Rwanda’s Brighter Future”) addressing issues such as reproductive health, family planning, HIV/AIDS, deforestation, and animal habitat preservation.

Regero played the character of Cyungo – a young man at university on a scholarship who finds himself failing in his classwork and in trouble with sex and drugs. At his low point, Cyungo earns money by bringing young girls to a wealthy man for exploit.

This character’s story became problematic for one of Regero’s real-life relationships.

“My classmate came to me one day and said ‘Did you tell the writer my story?’” Regero says explaining. “He said he could never be my friend because I played his life

Behind the entertainment, though, these soap operas are based on proven psychological theories. Barker explains that Miguel Sabido, who pioneered the methodology in the 1970s, worked to understand why his methodology was so effective. For instance, Sabido’s insertion of a “transitional” character drastically increased behavior change adoption. Sabido strove to understand why and found Albert Bandura’s Social Learning Theory, which explained the importance of observational learning.

“It’s actually highly formulaic but that’s why it’s replicable,” Barker says of PMC’s approach to serial dramas. “It works for all people in all places.”

These steps have achieved incredible results. For example, married women who listened to *Yeken Kignit* in Ethiopia increased their use of family planning by 31.2 percentage points (12.3 percent to 43.5 percent). In Nigeria, 72.4 percent of the population listened to PMC’s show, *Ruwan Dare*. One impact of this incredible listenership was 67 percent of new clients at clinics naming *Ruwan Dare* as the direct or indirect source influencing them to seek family planning or reproductive health services for the first time.

In addition to PMC’s creation of serial dramas, PMC also trains others to implement the Sabido Methodology for social change. ■

story. I tried to explain that I never spoke of him. I talked to him about how theatre works, how the story was put together, and that I was an actor, not a writer. But it was more than a year before he spoke to me.”

PMC uses extensive research to create realistic dramas, and Regero’s friend saw himself reflected so much that he thought the character was modeled on him.

“If someone like Cyungo changes his life,” says Regero talking about playing the transitional character, “then others can learn how to be better.” And, luckily, Regero’s friend came to understand that Regero played a character – one that symbolized common challenges and showed that change is possible. ■