Future Connect: Social Networking and AIDS Communication

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AIDS Communication and Social Networking

The remarkable growth of social network sites/services (SNS) such as Facebook, MySpace, Orkut and their many relatives across the world is one of the clearest indications that digital technologies are changing radically the communication landscape. Many active users spend hours on the Internet working and socialising using SNS, and they are perceived by some of these active users as a virtually indispensable form of communication. The principles of social networking are being woven increasingly into the very fabric of the Internet. While the current public debate around SNS is often dominated by concerns over their potential role in undermining privacy, or enabling bullying or predation, these platforms perform important roles in the lives of their active populations. There are many examples of how development and social change organisations are beginning to engage productively with such networks. This report gathered learning from experiments -– and other relevant research -– as a basis for forward-looking recommendations on their potential use in AIDS communication.

The full report includes sections outlining:

- How young people are engaging with online social networking and the significant impact that social networking services are having on their users' activities and behaviours. Please note that it is not the intention of this work to provide a statistical overview of behaviour change, but rather to highlight trends and to give a broad indication of their intensity based predominantly on case study observations;
- Approaches that communicators and individuals are using in social networking to share messages about health and social change issues. We also include recommended principles for social-network-aware communicators;
- A survey of the features of social networks and an analysis of how the design of different social networks creates a range of challenges and opportunities for communicators;
- The take-up and the different dynamics of online social networking in different parts of the world in the context of trends in the spread of digital technologies including the impact of mobile telephony;
- An outline of some of the drivers for change and trends and conclusions from the material we have gathered about how young people are using SNS along with recommendations on how AIDS communicators can use online social

networking to engage with young people, including some tangible next steps suggested by the research.

Scope: A Connected Generation

The report focuses particularly, though not exclusively, on people aged 15-25 in 2009, often referred to as "digital natives."[1] Digital communication technologies have not been something they have adopted after learning about organisations, methods of communication and society and after developing their own identities and friendship groups, but have often been pervasive during their early years, during their formative experiences and whilst they are making important life decisions.

The differences between this “always connected generation” and older generations are in some cases greater than conventional North-South digital divides. This is especially significant in the context that the average age of the population is 37.2 years in the developed world, while in the developing world, it is just 24.1 years. Younger consumers tend to have different tastes than their parents and in the main to be more adventurous.’[2]

Definitions: online social networking and social network services

In the *Future Connect* report we use the term online social networking as shorthand for *communication between groups of people mediated at some point by Internet technologies*. This mediation often (but not exclusively) takes place through social network services (SNS) such as Facebook or Orkut, accessed via computers or, increasingly, mobile phones. More and more SNS are not accessed only as destination websites but the features of particular SNS are made available in “widgets” which can be embedded on different web sites and in devices such as televisions, games consoles and other Internet access devices. We have this multi-platform nature of social network services in mind when we consider them, and SNS should not be read as simply referring to a collection of web sites. We also include in our definition of online social networking communication that may start on non-Internet channels but which at some point makes significant use of the Internet such as the popular South African platform MxIT as well as mobile phone text-message based access to Twitter and "Southern" equivalents such as the Nigerian micro-blogging service, Naja-Pulse[3].

The chumby device is one example of a new generation of Internet access devices which can access SNS through ‘widgets.’ The chumby device is an Internet connected digital picture frame and media access device.

Widgets can be thought of like a window onto a SNS or other online service placed within another website or device. Widget platforms for televisions and phones are being actively developed.

Methodology: a global picture

This report is one component of the work being carried out by the Communication Working Group of the aids2031 initiative (www.aids2031.org/). The core question for the group is how social networking technology has changed and will change the way people communicate about issues and behaviours that impact on HIV vulnerability.

The research behind this report has been carried out by a group of people working in Brazil, India, South Africa, Thailand and the United Kingdom. We have drawn upon established literature on social networking and SNS from the United Kingdom, United States and Europe, and seek to complement this with direct field research (including focus groups and one mini-survey), case studies and analysis from non-OECD countries.

Glossary of Terms

The diagram below illustrates some key terms used in the paper:

Connected Generation

We are, above all, social animals. Throughout the history of digital communication ordinary people have used or subverted digital technology to communicate and make connections, and will only adopt them when they meet such primary needs.[4] The success of modern SNS is due to the fact that they exist simply to cater to our sociability.

It is common to talk about activity in SNS as "virtual communication" but this should not lead us to think virtual is the opposite of "real." This is a crucial point for understanding the nature of behaviour in SNS and other forms of online communication media. The communication that takes place through SNS is generally very real to those directly involved in the communication. For many users, SNS communication is woven into their day-to-day lives, with conversations continuing seamlessly between face-to-face meetings, on mobile phones and SNS.

SNS are becoming an entry point to the wider web and are adding a distinct social layer to users' experience of the web. In some areas SNS are also starter applications, in the sense of being the first online tool that people become used to.

For example, “[in Brazil]…a significant percentage of Orkut users are relative newcomers to the Internet … . Orkut provides a simple, immersive experience that allows users with a low level of Internet literacy to gradually integrate the Internet into their lives with a minimum of expertise and training. … The result is that a significant percentage of the Brazilian user base relies on Orkut as an alternative to the larger Internet. ... in the Brazilian context Orkut plays an essential role as an intermediary in the process of non-users transitioning from non-use to literate use of the Internet.”[5]

Online social networking is changing the way people keep in touch and who they keep in touch with. Young people have been described as part of a “constantly connected”[6] generation. They are as likely, if not more so, to use SNS to carry on conversations with friends who they see every day face-to-face as they are to communicate with old friends or with acquaintances who they do not meet regularly.[7] Activity in SNS often reinforces and enriches physical connections.

> *Corners, corridors and kitchens: people 'hang out' in SNS, interacting with the online community throughout the day, often as a way to fill otherwise dead time. Online hanging out overlaps with and intermingles with offline hanging out.*
>
> *For many SNS users in the United Kingdom, particularly young people, SNS are acting as a more significant messaging platform than e-mail – with users checking their SNS messaging inboxes daily, and e-mail far less frequently. In the United Kingdom in 2008 the growth in Internet traffic SNS for the first time exceeded email traffic growth, which in fact fell. Nielsen reported that in the countries it tracks[8] 'social networks and blogs are now the fourth most popular online activity, ahead of personal email. Time spent on these sites is growing three times faster than overall Internet rate, and now accounts for almost 10 percent of all Internet time.'[9]*
>
> *SNS can change the scope, nature of friendship and relationship formation and how friendships and relationships operate.*

For its regular users SNS are becoming major media publishing and consumption spaces, key spaces of identity exploration and self-expression, as well as spaces for gaming and play. Users are becoming skilled in using a variety of media and forms to communicate and interact. SNS have become a central place for constructing, negotiating and mediating group norms. Some SNS users are putting themselves at risk through their social networking activities

Social networks are being used functionally, to organise events, activities and campaigns or to manage professional networking. SNS users are creating, joining and engaging with groups and communities within the SNS to access and share information. A search on any of the major SNS of the term World AIDS Day is likely to turn up a number of groups or events posted to the site, often with many members. Many of these groups have been created by individuals operating independently of

Social network sites have facilitated the organising of large real-world gatherings, from political protests to just-for-fun flash mobs.
Photo Credit: http://www.flickr.com/photos/mrlerone/

any campaign or communication organisations, and contain messages and discussions between SNS users about issues connected to HIV/AIDS. SNS contain a myriad of groups on just about any topic and SNS users may turn to the groups and user-contributed knowledge within the networks rather than to search engines and official information sources to help them explore an issue.

Engagement: how are different organisations using SNS?

Increasing numbers of individuals and organisations promoting and campaigning for social change have been experimenting and learning how to include them in their communication. Both SNS platform providers and agencies with an interest in health promotion have been part of this trend, actively exploring the role of SNS for health promotion and social-cause outreach. The report offers a number of examples of engagement with SNS as communication platforms. The examples draw mainly from the U.K. and U.S. markets, which in many ways have been developing parallel to each other. Civil society in all four of the "Southern" countries examined in this paper is only just beginning to use SNS in this way.

Organisations are creating their own SNS profiles, using and commissioning applications to spread their messages within SNS, and developing content for SNS. They are using the targeted and media-rich advertising features of SNS and using SNS to get better metrics, to listen to and dialogue with supporters, and to crowd-source ideas for their work or communication. Organisations are using SNS as a locus for counselling, influencing and caring interventions -– including facilitating peer-to-peer support -— and using SNS for coordination and team support as well as to identify problem issues and to carry out targeted interventions.

SavvyChavvy.com is an example of an SNS that connects gypsy and traveller communities. They have put up videos on blip.tv, a video sharing service.

Organisations are building niche SNS and special interest groups and marginalised groups are using spaces within SNS platforms, and are creating their own social network sites/services.

Specialist organisations have been established to address risks to young users of SNS.

It’s not just organisations: virtually all of the approaches to SNS engagement listed above are fully within the means of individuals. Lone individuals or small un-constituted groups are responsible for many more of the interventions on SNS than established organisations are.

For example**,** the image above shows a Brazilian based HIV/AIDS community on Orkut. The group, which has more than 5,000 members and a predominantly gay constituency, provides a space for discussion and for media sharing – and for individuals with shared interests, issues or concerns to connect.

The image below shows a series of profile pages created on Piczo, a SNS used predominantly for home-page creation by young teenagers, which are returned to when searching for HIV/AIDS. These pages have been created by a man who has been living with HIV/AIDS for 20 years and are intended to provide advice and support. The pages mention unsuccessful attempts that their creator has made to get support from formal agencies.

Piczo, a social networking site which provides advice and support to teens on HIV/AIDS.

Principles for Social Network-aware Communication

For more effective communication in social networking spaces organisations need to:

Brazilian based HIV/AIDS community on Orkut

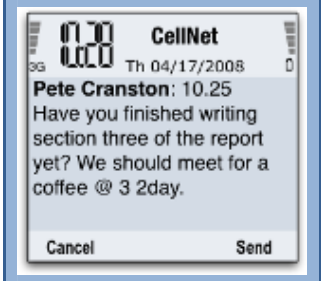
- Be social: interact personally and actively with user communities;
- Accept decentralised peer-to-peer organisation;
- Respect the personal, informal, playful culture in SNS;
- Weave together online and offline activities;
- Be interesting, support content, support remixing; and
- Take advantage of media alliances.

Understanding SNS: the architecture of Social Network Services (SNS)

Social networking tools range from those like the South African MxIT mobile phone-based instant messaging and group messaging tool which allow their users to manage their own social networking activities by keeping in touch with friends more easily and cheaply; through to full social network services like Orkut and Facebook, which are based explicitly around the idea of a centrally maintained, digitally stored and navigable network of people, media, conversations and other content

accessible because it is stored digitally, sometimes in one network but increasingly accessible across networks and Internet platforms.

Features available in different social networking tools significantly affect the way their users behave and the potential opportunities for success in different communication approaches. The table below shows how some of the technical and feature set differences between text messaging (SMS) platforms, instant messaging, chat rooms and social network sites (SNS) affect the forms of social interaction they support.

SMS or Phone	Instant Messaging e.g. MxIT	Chatrooms & Forums e.g. Hi5	Social Network Sites
			
Users have a phone number which they give to anyone who wants to contact them.	Users have an IM name and they create a mutual friend connection with people they want to talk to.	There is a persistent 'chat' or 'forum' space which users choose to visit. Their messages may remain in that space after they leave it.	Users create a public or semi-public profile and link to others by making mutual friend connections[10]. Others can browse the connections. An action feed keeps a user informed of the messages and media their friends have posted.
• Text messages are sent to a particular individual. Each additional person contacted adds additional cost. • You have to explicitly choose who to share what information with. You don't know if the person who you message has their phone on them. It cots for the person you message to reply.	• Messages are sent to particular individuals selected from a contact list which shows who is currently available and who is not. • It is possible to add multiple people from your contact list to an ad-hoc group discussion, or to create ongoing discussion groups. You only pay for the costs of connection / data transfer – far cheaper than an SMS.	• Messages can be posted in a shared space of synchronous & asynchronous discussion around a given topic, or in order to meet new people. • You can watch the conversations taking place between people you do not already know, and you can start private conversations with these people also. • You can post messages without having a set idea of who will read them – but expecting other current participants to read them.	• Messages and media can be posted to your own profile page. Using privacy settings this can be public, accessible to selected friends, or to friends of friends (who may be strangers to you). • The network will show your latest updates to your friends in an action feed along with the updates of all their other friends. • You post messages and media knowing that people in your 'network' may see them. It is possible to browse the network, from person to person – seeing who is friends with whom – and who has posted what.

• Messages are exchanged for: organising; asking short questions of particular friends; expressing ideas, views or feelings to a particular chosen friend. You don't always expect a reply. • Group conversations are rare. Conversations end up being one-to-one and are personal or transactional in nature.	• Messages are exchanged with people who you can see are online and only and free to talk creating more opportunities for 'chat' and informal conversation. • Conversations can be private and personal, or can be group conversations following the norms, dynamics and patterns of a groups offline discussion.	• Messages are posted to discuss topics, or for individuals who did not already know each other to get to know each other. • The possibility of anonymity and the existence of private chat rooms may support deeply personal discussions between friends and strangers. • Users may feel ownership over the chat room space. New users can be invited to the space.	• Messages are posted to public/semi-public spaces to share something of interest, to spark discussions, to share information & to relive shared experiences. Users can comment on each others shared messages and media. • You can 'overhear' other conversations taking place between friends and people you don't know. New conversations and contact can be formed with 'friends of friend's. • Loosely bounded group conversations can form, and users can keep weakly in touch with a large number of friends and acquaintances.

SNS can be understood as channels, but also, more importantly, they can be understood as platforms on which a range of activities take place and as locations of interaction between groups and communities. While a large number of a communicator's target audience may be using a particular social tool, each of those individuals will be operating in and engaging with very different aspects of the network, from their own private view of the network (linked to a profile) through to a wide range of different public and semi-public communities, groups and media-sharing spaces.

The majority of social network services do a lot more than just allow individuals to have a profile and a friends list; they build upon and integrate many prior communication tools and technologies (*e.g.* email like messaging, instant messaging, and video sharing). This inheritance of characteristics means communicators must similarly mix traditional communication strategies with newer approaches.

Most SNS also include a wide range of other features, both built into the platforms directly and provided by third-party applications. These can plug into and use the information the network holds about an individual’s friendship network. Features commonly found in SNS include tools for organising events, sharing photos and videos, joining interest-based groups (often with individuals outside your immediate friendship network), playing games and accessing information sources.

As well as allowing features and tools developed by third-parties to be added to their platforms, a number of major SNS providers (Facebook, Google) are allowing aspects of their SNS to be layered on top of other web sites and Internet-connected services (such as digital TV and mobile services) meaning that SNS users can take their digital identity with them across a wide range of online spaces and platforms, sharing content, conversation and information from a wide range of different places with their friends.

Amplifiers of action

Wider conceptual frameworks which help us understand the impact of social networking tools:

- Networks operate in non-linear ways: transmission is viral, growth exponential.
- The value of a social networking tool to a user depends upon it linking them into a network which is meaningful to them. At present most SNS are relatively limited in their interoperability but increasing interoperability is currently the locus of the most intense competition between the networks.

SNS, like other networking trends, "is likely to be one of those elements of the Internet where the winner takes nearly all: if your friends have a MySpace and a Bebo and a Facebook account but are spending more and more time on Facebook, where will you go? The outcome is inevitable, even if it only happens slowly."11

Features specific to SNS include that they:

- Increase the velocity and persistence of information;
- Are as much about localising as they are about globalising;
- Lower the burdens of organising group activities;
- Can impact on the distribution of power and influence;
- Are involved in remaking key social concepts, notably privacy and 'friendship';
- Create new models of metrics, measurement and evaluation; and
- Are increasingly mobile.

Global Social Networking

The report is based on case studies of five very different country contexts: South Africa, United Kingdom, Brazil, India and Thailand.[12] It looks at the impact of technological and demographic factors on ICT penetration rates and how these in turn impact on SNS engagement.

In **Brazil** the development of ICT-aware public policies, including the provision of free or subsidised public access centres, and the natural fit of SNS to Brazil's intrinsically conversational popular culture means that since 2003 Orkut, Google's social networking tool, has gone from a highly elitist club-style project to being almost universally used by people at all levels in society to chat to their friends and family across the country. Being connected and in touch was found to be more important than content. The natural tendency of Brazilians to absorb and mix/remix processes if available -- particularly by means of dialogue and networked communication, online or offline -- meant that this system was readily absorbed and taken probably in directions that Google were initially unable to conceive.

India has one of the fastest-growing Internet populations in the world and online social networking has caught up very fast with Indian Internet users. Sixty percent of Indian Internet users -- comprising young users largely in the age group of 15 to 25 who are studying or have just started their careers -- are on some or the other social media platforms. This aggressive enrolment into social networking platforms is seen more from users in tier II and tier III cities in India.

South Africa illustrates the power of the social driver in determining how populations appropriate technology. The "first world" reality is that economically strong South Africa socially networks in the same way as its counterparts in the rest of the world. Facebook dominates and South Africa is the eighth largest user of

Facebook globally. Our research focused on the other South Africa, the vast majority whose primary -- and usually only -- digital device is the mobile phone and the evidence that young people in particular are using actively their mobile phones for social networking, primarily on MxIT. Set up in 2003, MxIT processes 250m messages daily, sent primarily via mobile phone by young people. According to BMI-TechKnowledge Group's Digital Lifestyles Predictions, South Africans between 16 and 24 years old prefer using MxIT to using Facebook (61 percent MxIT vs. 27 percent Facebook among 16 to 24 year olds). In 2007 Facebook users who identify with a South African network numbered 87 000, while MxIT boasted 5.2 million South African users in the same year.

As a more developed, mid-scale Asian economy, **Thailand** illustrates an area where social networking has expanded enormously in the last two or three years, but where civil society and government have yet to engage with the phenomenon. There has been a drastic jump of hi-speed Internet users in Thailand since 2007. The rapid uptake of SNS has created a contemporary social phenomenon. Using SNS, together with other online activities, is a significant new routine among school-age youngsters. The most popular SNS in Thailand in 2008 are: Hi5 (47.5 percent), Wikipedia (14.4 percent), Youtube (12.6 percent) and Myspace-MSN (0.3 percent). Among the teens in the focus group discussion, 90 percent of them use Hi5.

In the UK, 78.4 percent of web users ages 15 and older visited a social network site in September 2008 while 54 percent of 16-25 year olds report having profiles on social network sites. The highest SNS penetration rate is currently amongst 16-17 year olds, with at least 67 percent owning a profile. U.K. Internet users on average make 23 visits and spend an average of 5.3 hours a month on SNS. For a younger audience some studies have anecdotally cited teenagers spending upwards of two hours every night connected to SNS. The main social network site platforms (the big three) in the United Kingdom are Facebook, Bebo and MySpace.

The disparity between those with Internet access and those without can no longer be put down to cultural barriers or general lack of interest (as was the case in Brazil when the Internet was first catching on), but is rather the result of persistent disparities holding back economically disadvantaged populations. Although recently opened markets have led to a huge increase in access to hardware in developing countries, poor technological infrastructure and high costs are slowing the growth of Internet access.

For more than a quarter of India's subscribers, for example, their Internet is too slow to connect to broadband and the majority of users are unable to benefit from many of the functions now available via Web 2.0. The Internet infrastructure in Brazil follows the general characteristic of economic centralisation: a few, bigger urban centres have a good variety of broadband providers, while in most small cities there usually is not more than one company and rural areas depend on very expensive, slow and unreliable satellite connections.

Cost is the second major constraint to access. Perversely, the higher a country's level of Internet penetration, the lower the cost. This roughly translates to "the poorer the population the more they will have to pay to get online."

In terms of demographic patterns, the newer Southern SNS markets, as in the earlier days of SNS in United Kingdom and the United States, is primarily taken up

by the 15-25 age-band. However, the major area of growth in these more mature markets is in older age-segments, often in more specialised niche SNS.

In mature markets SNS are an area of Internet use where as many women and girls are active as men and boys. More men are early adopters in all markets and so more are SNS users in India and Thailand.

Conclusions

Our research confirms that the interaction between people and social networking technology has changed and will change the way people communicate about issues and behaviours that impact on HIV vulnerability across the globe.

It provides evidence that young people in non-OECD countries actively social network using digital technologies when it becomes affordable and practical for them. Our four case studies -- from Brazil, India, South Africa and Thailand -- show that this is not restricted to the affluent or the middle classes, and that young people will use whatever technology or access route is possible and affordable. Importantly, the material from South Africa illustrates how mobile phones are an effective platform for social networking.

Cost or technical constraints limit people's access to such tools in many parts of the world but these limitations are slowly becoming less significant. Access to digital communication is likely to improve at faster rates in the medium term.

There is sufficient evidence from the United Kingdom and the United States, developed markets for social networking sites (SNS), to be able to describe, interpret and -– to a certain extent -- predict patterns of behaviour in those markets. The evidence from the focus groups and other material in the case studies is that general patterns of behaviour are replicated to a large extent in newer markets, albeit influenced in specifics by culture and language.

There is a growing body of material showing how individuals and organisations can pursue social goals effectively within SNS. However, there is not yet a similar level of take-up outside the OECD countries -– and indeed, even within many OECD countries. While there is limited hard data relating to return on investment and impact of these activities, there are many, many case studies that illustrate the possibilities for impact. SNS are a possible window into the world of genuine communication with young people in general and with communities at greatest risk in particular.

There is ample, chilling evidence that there is risk to both organisations and individuals in these new spaces, although the level of risk is sometimes dramatised or exaggerated in media reports. Organisations in particular need to operate within a carefully thought-through risk management framework.

Equipping individuals and communities with the information and life-skills they need to protect themselves is a complex and subtle challenge because evidence indicates that large-scale mass-media or even community communication does not seem able to intervene during those private, intimate moments when people are most at risk. Broadcasting that people should wear condoms or not share needles does not mean that they will listen and act. Effective communication must likely be

more sophisticated, less direct, and based on the recipient choosing to engage. SNS live in exactly such spaces and can provide clues on how individuals and communities consume, share and participate in online content, not necessarily directly related to AIDS but from which we can draw lessons. The key is to find ways of working within such communication environments and not to try to overtly manipulate them.

Recommendations

1. **Engage wholeheartedly in these spaces and devote significant resource to developing and sharing good practice**. Engagement should happen along two axes:

	ORGANISATIONAL Strategic, capacity building, collective large scale interventions	INDIVIDUAL Practitioner level / interventions led by single actors / local interventions.
Public (open / group experience of SNS)	See U.K. government development department, DfID on Facebook	Burma campaign on Facebook
Personal (closed / individual SNS experience)	Cell-Life South Africa are experimenting with outreach on MxIT	HIV Help & Advice pages on Piczo, referenced above

2. **HIV/AIDS communicators must learn about and adapt to the radical nature of the changes in the digital communication environment.**

   SNS can be very public spaces. This dimension of SNS offers enormous opportunities for organisations and movements. It can appear that a traditional broadcast-model communication is effective here but, although loud one-to-many messaging will generate a response, the most effective forms of communication combine this with more sophisticated approaches that are sensitive to the culture of the spaces and the way that people operate within them.

   SNS also provide very private places. This dimension of SNS is important territory for supportive outreach and counselling services. It is also a crucial area for HIV/AIDS communication because it offers opportunities for engaging at a more intimate level than many traditional modes of communication, one where the intensely personal centre of sexual behaviour -- with its confused supporting assembly of myth, identity and personal knowledge -- might be navigated by peers or professionals alike. It is certainly one where crass trumpeting of simplistic messages simply drives people away.

   SNS are a central part of the new online environment known as Web 2.0. The central point for communicators is that Web 2.0 reflects a state of mind as much as a set of technical features: informal; participative; playful; careless of copyright and applauding innovative re-combinations of content; encouraging of self-promotion while developing and negotiating new norms of privacy, social and

many more. The combination of features and mindset results in an identifiable culture within which traditional communication can appear clumsy, alien and forced.

We include fuller recommendations and guidelines in the main paper.

3. **Invest in building capacity and sharing learning in non-OECD countries where social media are taking off**. Our research shows that people and organisations in the South are only just beginning to use social media for social change purposes. From activity in the United Kingdom and the United States during the past five years, there is a growing body of evidence of how organisations and individuals can use new media effectively. New media itself makes connecting such constituencies easier and more cost effective than traditional capacity building activities since regional, national and local face-to-face activities are more easily facilitated and supported. Specifically, we suggest:

   A. Develop a social network/group within SNS for practitioners involved with aids2031 and associated programmes and commit resources to community management to help this grow as a knowledge and practice sharing hub.

   B. Establish programmes to test and innovate in SNS-based outreach, bringing together people who work in social media with those experienced in working with young people in specific locations. The experience and good practice standards that youth workers bring to the table needs to inform application and programme development while enabling them to operate without having to scale a long social media learning curve.

4. **Research the known unknowns.** While it is traditional for research reports to recommend new areas of research we sincerely believe that this area of work is both growing in importance and changing so rapidly that continued primary research is essential to be able to keep pace and identify the most promising areas for AIDS communicators to develop. Specifically, we suggest:

   A. Develop a social media monitor (research programme) focused on HIV/AIDS education. This would aim to:

      Update and maintain the information we have gathered on our target areas; develop similar data sets for other locations of specific interest to the HIV/AIDS activists or where usage is exploding.

   B. Research in more depth and over a longer time period behaviour and usage patterns in non-OECD countries than we have been able to do in this first rapid study.

      Continue to monitor technological and business driven innovations in both developed and newer markets, reporting on their implications for health communicators.

   C. Develop a lightweight monitoring and evaluation framework to calculate the ROI of SNS based interventions.

   D. AIDS communication to date has brought very limited benefits in terms of changing behaviours or increasing our understanding of the motivations of at-risk groups and individuals and we don't really know why. SNS, because of their interactive, buy-in nature, can at least provide an indication of whether

individuals and communities are engaging with content, which is an important step in understanding what works and what doesn't.

E. Develop a risk assessment framework for engagement with SNS.[13]

F. Try again. Fail again. Fail better.[14]

G. Engage in a structured way with major players, particularly in the area of cross-media applications, including in mobile phone environments. We refer in the main paper to the important trend within SNS of integrating broadcast and online media in multi-platform productions. Soap operas and community narratives are formats that have been used for development communication via radio and television. We believe that extending this approach into SNS is a major opportunity. We also believe that there would be interest from major platform players, who have already shown their preparedness to work in the HIV/AIDS field and for whom such a partnership offers increased access and reach in critical developing markets.

H. Establish innovation funds to pilot new ideas for SNS-based outreach and communication. As we note above, working with social media in particular and Web 2.0 in general requires a very different approach to traditional principles for engaging with technology. We argue that organisations and campaigns should engage with established social networks, and this needs to balance working to a standard structured, managed framework with relaxing control in terms of content and engagement activities. Many of the most successful activities started informally, often with an “amateur” look that gave space to more informal conversations. Establishing funds, possibly channelled through competitions, is an effective way of encouraging innovation “at arms length.”

Transitions

This section is underpinned by a telecommunications trends briefing paper from Balancing Act Africa discussing the major improvements in access that are taking place globally, albeit unevenly, as well as their impact on a range of media. We focus on three sets of drivers whose interplay has influenced the development of SNS.

Technological innovation where the evolutionary trends we highlight include *platform convergence* -- the galvanising of the specialist mobile phone applications sector by the iPhone and location based applications -- a particular feature of Internet and other services provided on mobile phones.

Monetisation, by which we mean the search for commercial return by the innovators and their backers. We argue that this driver is displayed in trends that include the *complete online experience*; increasing functionality within a SNS to keep users within a site; the intense competition to achieve *platform interoperability; rich media channels* -- the mixture of social and media typified by in-SNS soap channels, or the interconnections between TV and SNS soaps and their characters; Massively Multiplayer Online Games (MMOG); and *micro-purchases and content platforms*, typified by the iPlayers impact on music buying behaviour.

Behaviour: one of the fundamental tenets of the paper is that people’s behaviour is both influenced by and influences the development of technology and its associated business models. This is illustrated in continual changes in people’s notions of *privacy, openness and transparency* and the *interplay between*

communities on SNS, sometimes converging in self-reinforcing exclusive groups but also converging and interacting around issues, media and entertainment.

Endnotes

[1] Prensky, M – Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants, In On the Horizon (MCB University Press, Vol. 9 No. 5, October 2001).
[1] Balancing Act Africa contributed two components of the research: statistical data on telecommunications and connectivity patterns in the research areas as well as a commentary written by Russell Southwood, Balancing Act's founder Director.
[1] http://www.naijapulse.com/ is a Nigerian micro-blogging service similar to Twitter, based on the Open Source Laconica platform.
[1] This is not the same as saying that people will adopt technology when it is presented to them. As Ann Kao notes from her field survey in rural Sri Lanka in 2006, the government officers who had the highest socio-economic status didn't ICT adopt as fast as those working in the private sector.
[1] Jeremiah Spence, abstract of paper for Association of Internet Researchers (AOIR) conference later in 2007, http://conferences.aoir.org/viewabstract.php?id=1104&cf=6
[1] Clark, 2005 in Livingstone et al. 2007
[1] Davies, T, Cranston, P, Youth Work and Social Networking (The National Youth Agency, 2008) Accessed from http://blogs.nya.org.uk/ywsn/ March 2009
[1] Only UK, USA and Brazil from our survey sample
[1] http://www.nielsen-online.com/pr/pr_090309.pdf
[1] Boyd, http://jcmc.indiana.edu/vol13/issue1/boyd.ellison.html
[1] Charles Arthur and Jemima Kiss, Guardian Technology, 11/06/09
[1] This section draws on data collected for the project by *Balancing Act Africa,* on a commentary added by the founder-director of *Balancing Act Africa* Russell Southwood. Lara Cumming prepared this section using these sources and the case study material.
[1] See "Safe & Effective Social Network Site Applications", paper from Practical Participation/Substance, 2009. http://isp.substance.coop/files/Summary_Discussion_Doc-Safe_and_Effective_Social_Network_Site_Applications_for_Young_People.pdf
[1] Samuel Beckett, Worstward Ho, 1983

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[6] Clark, 2005 in Livingstone et al. 2007
[7] Davies, T, Cranston, P, Youth Work and Social Networking (The National Youth Agency, 2008) Accessed from http://blogs.nya.org.uk/ywsn/ March 2009
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[10] Boyd, http://jcmc.indiana.edu/vol13/issue1/boyd.ellison.html
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[13] See "Safe & Effective Social Network Site Applications", paper from Practical Participation/Substance, 2009.
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[14] Samuel Beckett, Worstward Ho, 1983