

Literacy, Gender and HIV/AIDS Series

Real Men, Take Responsibility

Zimbabwe

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A product of a UNESCO-DANIDA workshop for the preparation of gender-sensitive booklets on HIV/AIDS

Adapted from a booklet written at the
UNESCO-DANIDA sub-regional workshop for
the preparation of gender-sensitive materials
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with active participation of
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Written by Tokozile Ncube

Graphic design by Jarupan Chaianandana

Workshop organization by Dorothy Littler and
Tirso Dos Santos

Project Co-ordination and training by
Namtip Aksornkool

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INTRODUCTION

This booklet is one of an ever-growing series of easy-to-read materials produced at a succession of UNESCO workshops partially funded by the Danish Development Agency (DANIDA). The workshops are based on the appreciation that gender-sensitive literacy materials are powerful tools for communicating messages on HIV/AIDS to poor rural people, particularly illiterate women and out-of-school girls.

Based on the belief that HIV/AIDS is simultaneously a health and a social cultural and economic issue, the workshops train a wide range of stakeholders in HIV/AIDS prevention including literacy, health and other development workers, HIV/AIDS specialists, law enforcement officers, material developers and media professionals. Before a workshop begins, the participants select their target communities and carry out needs assessments of their potential readers.

At the workshops, participants go through exercises helping them to fine tune their sensitivity to gender issues and how these affect people's risks of HIV/AIDS. The analysis of these assessments at the workshops serves as the basis for identifying the priority issues to be addressed in the booklets. They are also exposed to principles of writing for people with limited reading skills. Each writer then works on his or her booklet with support from the group.

The booklets address a wide-range of issues normally not included in materials for HIV/AIDS such as the secondary status of girls and women in the family, the "sugar daddy" phenomenon, wife inheritance, the hyena practice¹, traditional medicinal practices, superstitions, home-based care and living positively with AIDS. They have one thing in common-- they influence greatly a person's safety from contracting HIV/AIDS.

We hope that these booklets will inspire readers to reflect on some of life's common situations, problems and issues that ordinary women and men face in their day-to-day relationships. In so doing, they might reach a conclusion that the responsibility is theirs to save their own lives and those of their loved ones from HIV/AIDS.

¹ The hyena practice is the custom of exposing young virgins to sex with an unidentified man as part of their initiation rites.

After Sibanda's funeral, MaKhumalo and MaNdlovu talked about the three deaths in his family. Buhle, Sibanda's little girl was the first to die two months ago. Then her mother followed. Finally, it was Sibanda himself.

What is going on in this village? The Sibanda family is finished. The homestead is closed.

That woman was a Christian. It's her husband that wiped out the whole family!



I might not be a doctor but I know they all died of AIDS. Mrs Sibanda was straight. But how could she protect herself from her husband? After all, he paid lobola to her parents in full.

I know she was his property. How could she refuse? But we must think of our health in this time of HIV/AIDS. Women have to take even more care. Our children could be left in a mess.



You have to think, MaNdlovu. Be careful. Your husband works in town. He only comes home at the end of the month. Is he faithful to you? Are you not going to protect yourself just because he paid lobola?

How can I say NO? He'll just leave me. What will I do with the children? If I say 'use a condom', he will say I know too much about sex and have been playing with other men.



MaKhumalo and MaNdlovu continue...

You'll find a way, my friend. Your health is your responsibility. Take it seriously, MaNdlovu.



Hmmm...I'll think about it. Maybe you're right.

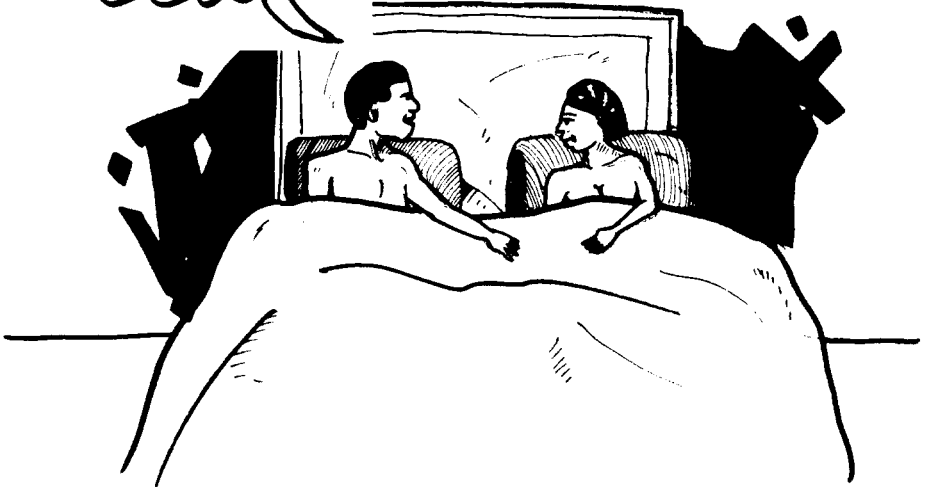
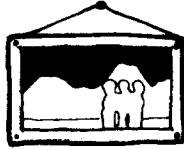
MaKhumalo is just jealous of my family. She wants my husband to desert me like hers did. But then again, HIV/AIDS is killing people left and right. Hmmm... I'd better think hard and do something about it.

Ndlovu arrives two weeks later.
MaNdlovu used Sibanda's funeral to
start talking about HIV/AIDS.

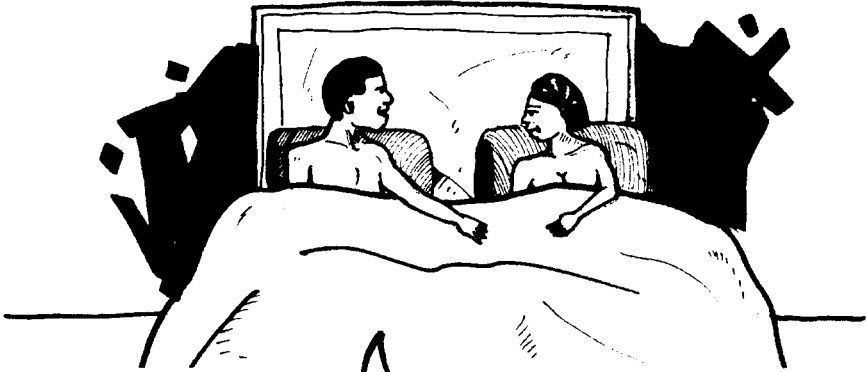
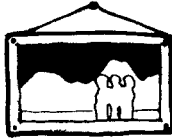


I don't know what you do out there in the city. But you must protect us. People who work in town are coming back to die in the village. Every Saturday, a funeral...

Wait... What are you saying, woman? Are you saying I go around with other women?!"



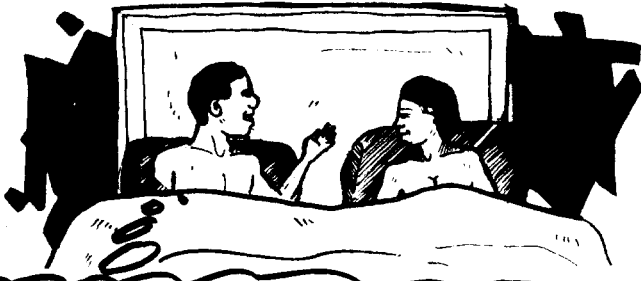
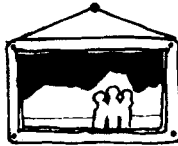
Oh, you! No, I never said that. All I want to say is that we need to protect each other, you and I. For our own lives and for our children's sake...



The Sibandas could have died of malaria, or pneumonia or meningitis or all kinds of other diseases. Why do you keep talking about this AIDS thing all the time? Sleep, woman...

It could also have been AIDS.
But no one wants to admit it.
And people still sleep around
and spreading it. They say it's
witchcraft. Haaa!!!

Shut up,
woman. I
want to
sleep.



*Could I have HIV/AIDS? No not me!
I couldn't possibly have it! I chose my
girlfriends carefully. Busi is clean and
beautiful. She sleeps only with me. Hmmm...
But how do I know for sure? And this
condom? No, its embarrassing. I don't even
know how to use it. I will ask Mpofu
tomorrow.*

Ndlovu visits Mpofu, his best friend.

Condom? Ahhh, if you don't want to die before your time, learn to use condoms. Ndlovu, protect yourself and your family. Their health and their life is in your hands. So is yours. Their survival might depend on your using the condom. We, men, must be more responsible.



Mpofu, this condom thing, I've never used it. Is it really safe? People say the AIDS virus is actually in it. I'm confused. I'm also scared. It's difficult to be a man, these days.

You know, Sibanda could have protected his family. I know you have girlfriends, Ndlovu. Each time you sleep with one, you'd better use it. Always. Clean people, nice people can have the virus, too. You'd never know. You cannot be too careful. And no AIDS virus lives in condoms. That's a lie. Times have changed, my friend. You must be man enough to protect your wife and your children. That is your real responsibility.



Questions for discussion

1. What do you think of *lobola* ?
2. Why can't Ma Ndlovu persuade her husband to use condoms ?
3. Why must women learn to talk about condoms these days
4. Is it true that the that the HIV virus lives in condoms ?
5. Why do some men have more than one wives or partners ?
6. Have times changed ? Discuss.
7. Is it easy for men or for women to protect themselves from HIV/AIDS ? Discuss .
8. What does this sentence mean "Real men take responsibility" ?
9. What about women, how can they be responsible for their own health ?
10. Will you still take *lobola* for your daughters ? Why? Or why not?