

Literacy, Gender and HIV/AIDS Series

Who Is the Real Chicken ?

Namibia

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

Some other titles in the Literacy and HIV/AIDS Series

- *Home, the Best Medicine* (Zimbabwe)
- *Inherit Me, Inherit My HIV* (Zimbabwe)
- *Who Is the Chicken?* (Namibia)
- *Positively Living* (Zimbabwe)
- *Real Men, Take Responsibility* (Malawi)
- *Me, You and AIDS* (Kenya)
- *Open Your Eyes or Be Blind Forever* (Namibia)
- *Nangi's Shattered Dream* (Namibia)
- *Breaking the Silence* (Namibia)
- *The Wicked Healer* (Namibia)
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- *Sugar Daddy, Sweet or Deadly?* (Malawi)
- *The Wicked Hyena* (Malawi)
- *If You Don't Have It, Don't Catch It* (Swaziland)

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Adapted from a booklet produced at the UNESCO national
Workshop for the preparation of gender-sensitive booklets
(Okashati, Namibia, August 2001)

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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 to how these affect people's risk of contracting 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 practice ¹, 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.

One Friday afternoon, after school
Annie chatted with her friends...

You will not believe what I'm about to tell you. John gave me N\$200 yesterday. I don't know what to do with it...

Wow. That's a lot of money. I hope you will share it with us. Annie, it's time for you to get a boyfriend.



Mmm, not me. Sorry. I've a lot of friends. Aaa..., I think that boyfriends can wait.

For weeks and months, Annie's friends tried talking Annie into having a boyfriend. They call her a chicken. They call her a chicken.



He-e-e-e? In this day and age with so many diseases around? Where are Mary and Diana now? All pregnant. They will not complete school. I'm not ready to have a baby now.



They're not as smart as I. I do it with a rubber all the time. What about you, Toini?

What? Condoms are only good for people who don't know each other. John and I used condoms for three months. Then, we decided to get married after we finish school. And now we are doing it onyama-konyama.*

**Onyama-konyama* - literally 'flesh to flesh' in Oshiwambo. The expression means unprotected sex.

But boys have different ideas about girls and sex.



John, that is not fair. You are changing girls like shirts and shoes.

No, we are still together. I can't eat rice everyday, can I?

I can't help it if I'm that popular. Ha! Ha!



Two years later, at Toini's home...

It... it is John.
A-a-a-a... He passed
away... yesterday.
A-a-a-a...
It's terrible.



What? It can't be true.
John is dead? Who told
you that? Oh, no! Not
John!

At John's funeral...

The Lord has given
and the Lord has
taken. May your
soul rest in peace.

Amen !!!

Amen



Two weeks later Annie came to see Toini

Toini, I've something important to tell you. I can't say it's true, but people are saying funny things about John.

Funny things ?!!
What do they say ?



Simon said John told him that he had a "*shameful disease*". He thinks John might have died of AIDS. He was sick and could not work the last two months before his death.

We also cannot say for sure, but it is possible.

What? It can't be true. Oh, my God! Tell me it's not true !!!



Why don't you go for an HIV test to be sure that you have the virus or not? Then you can plan your life around that.



I think it is important to take that test.

Oh, my God!
What will I do if I'm positive?

The people at the hospital will give you the best possible help.
We will also be your best friends.

Annie knew Toini needed a friend. She was always there for her.

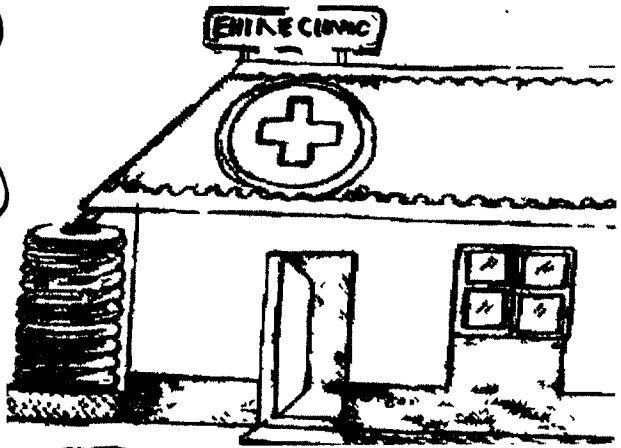


I think it is important to take that test.

Oh, my God!
What will I do if I'm positive?

The people at the hospital will give you the best possible help.
We will also be your best friends.

HIV positive people can still live a healthy life for many years. But they have to eat healthy food, exercise and rest enough.



Annie, I think we we're stupid calling you chicken.

It's me who is the chicken.

What is important now is to see that you're taken care of. If the test is negative, you'll have to change the way you live and protect yourself. Remember, we're responsible for our own health.

Questions for discussion

1. Is it necessary for Toini to go for HIV test? Why or why not?
2. Who is the chicken in the story? Why?
3. Why did Simon say that John was unfair? Do you agree with him? Explain.
4. Is it possible for girls to wait until marriage? Why or why not?
5. Is it possible for boys to wait until marriage? Why or why not?
6. Was John serious with Toini? Why?
7. Do you think that John knows about HIV/AIDS? Discuss.
8. Do you think that it is safe to stop using condoms once you decide to marry someone?
9. Is it easy to use condoms all the time?
10. What are the alternatives to using a condom?

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Written by Africans for Africans, this booklet is one of a growing series prepared during UNESCO training workshops to produce gender-sensitive materials for HIV/AIDS prevention for southern African countries.

When gender concerns are integrated into post-literacy materials which recognize local conditions, peoples' attitudes, values and beliefs, dreams and aspirations, they provide a powerful tool for tackling the HIV/AIDS pandemic currently ravaging southern Africa.

The series is an effort at filling the void left by medically-oriented and didactic materials. They are based on the assumption that effective materials can help people change their attitudes which, in turn, will bring about positive changes in their behaviour.

These booklets reflect the way people communicate in southern Africa in the 21st century—their images, customs, attitudes and beliefs. They are aimed at helping readers - women and men, young and old - raise issues and seek answers to questions concerning their risk of contracting HIV/AIDS.