

Literacy, Gender and HIV/AIDS Series

Open Your Eyes or Be Blind Forever

NAMIBIA

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Literacy and Non-Formal Education Section
Division of Basic Education

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**Product of a UNESCO workshop for the preparation
of Gender-sensitive booklets on HIV/AIDS**

**Adapted from a booklet produced at the UNESCO
Workshop for the Preparation of Gender-sensitive Materials**

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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.

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 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 the 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.

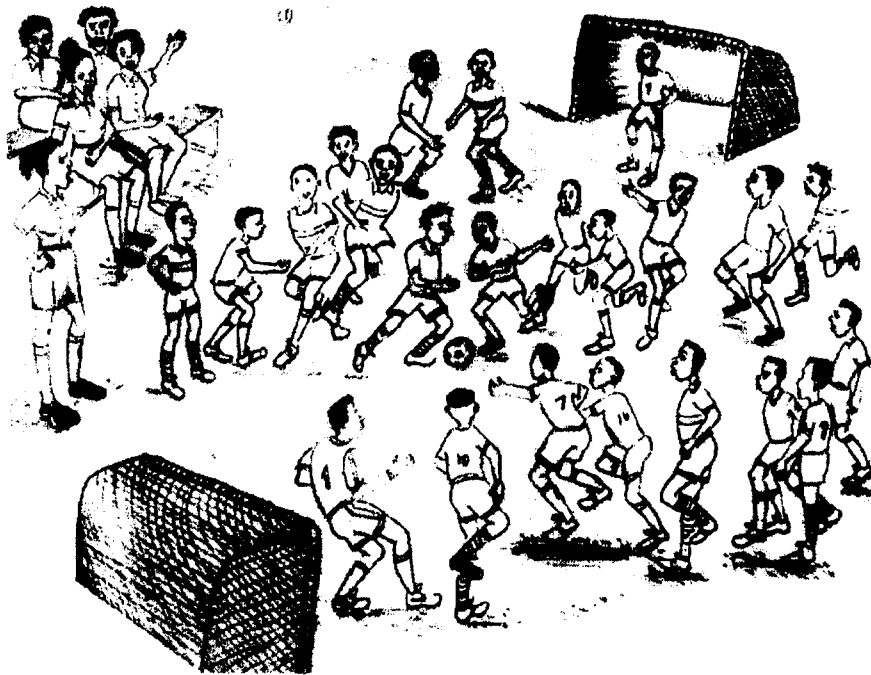
¹ The hyena practice is the custom of exposing young virgins to sex with an unidentified man as part of their initiation rites

Savina, Anna, and some other girls were students from Oshakati Senior Secondary School. They were very popular at school. One day at a soccer match

Come on boys!
Shoot the ball.
Yes, you're the
best. We're
proud of you.

Look at them!
They're so fine
boys. And they are
such sportsmen, so
muscular.

Take the ball.
Don't give it.
Come on boys!!!



Hi girls, how is the game? You're enjoying it? You're some good-looking group of girls!

You look great!
You're really cute.
Come and talk with us.

Hey boys! We don't need your company.
Leave us quiet!



The boys insisted and offered them some drinks. Later, the girls gave in and started making friends.

Yeah!! Whoosh! This is great. My name is Henock. My friends are Mika, Abraham, and Johannes. Take these drinks to celebrate the beginning of our friendship.

Oh thank you. Is this for us all? You're nice. But you should not have done this.



When the soccer match ended, the boys proposed that they go to the club. The girls refused at the beginning. But the boys kept on insisting until they gave in at the end.

Come on girls. It'll be only for an hour. Not that long. And there's some good music there, you know.



Ok, but please. We need to be back home before too late.

In front of the club, Henock met his cousin Thomas, who worked at Namdeb. He had a lot of money because he recently "hit the jackpot".

Hi! Thomas. Great to see you! What brings you here? Come; tell me about what's happening in your life.

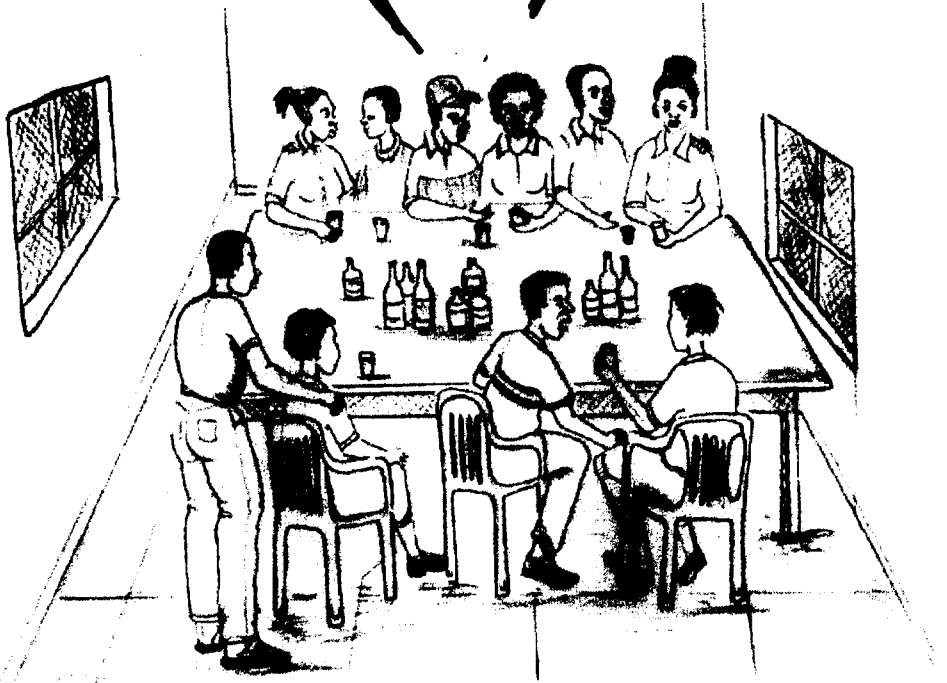
Hi! Henock. Long time no see. We have come for some fun. Come, then.



Thomas offered to buy the girls some drinks. The boys and the girls now seemed to be more familiar with each other.

It's a good place, isn't it Anna?

Oh yes! I love it. The atmosphere is very good. Let's have fun, Teresia.



When midnight came, the club owner asked the whole group to leave.



Oh, God! Is it midnight already? Where are we? Oh, my god, boys! You're getting me into big trouble!

Hey girls! We're just enjoying ourselves. What's the problem? Come on girls, let's sing!

Oh my God! What will my mother say? What'll I tell her?

They were too drunk. There were three bottles going around. They shouted, laughed, making a lot of noise

It's now too late to go home. We should all go to Hotel Chips. I know the owner.

You may be right. We'll go home tomorrow. So that, we don't wake our relatives.

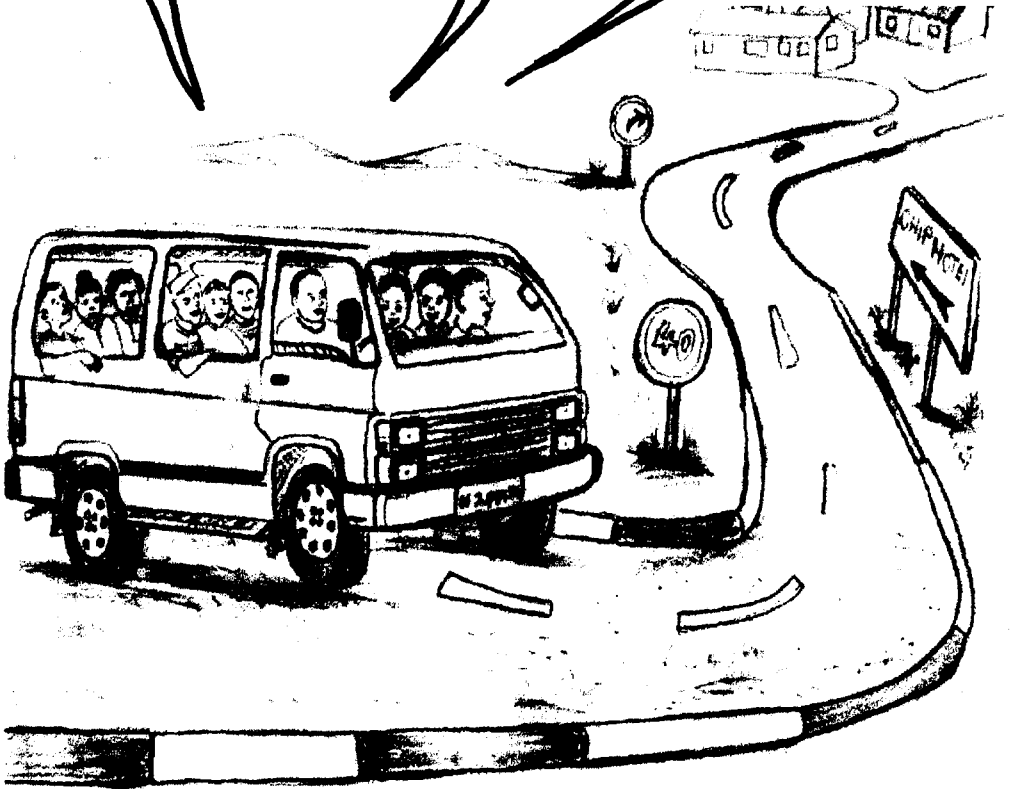
This is what we call having fun!



We are taking you to a very nice hotel in Oneshila. You'll never forget this place, you'll see.

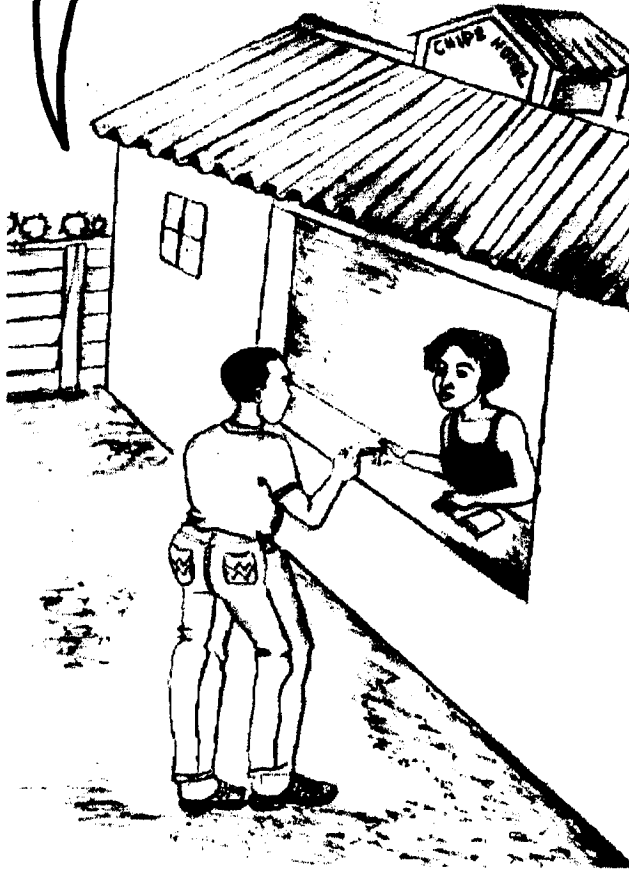
But we don't have money.

Don't worry. We'll pay for your room and everything. You'll like it.



Hi sister. I'm the owner's cousin. Sister, give me your best room. It's a very important night for us.

Don't worry. You'll be satisfied. This night will be unforgettable for you two.



Thomas paid the receptionist the required money.

The boys and girls paired up. Each couple took a separate room. Who knows what went on in the other rooms? But in Thomas and Teresia's room...

What's a condom?
What do you think of me? I'm a decent girl.
I am not a whore! I don't sleep around!

Having sex without a condom?
That's irresponsible! That's dangerous, just stupid. If you don't like it, let's call it off.

Teresia looks clean and all but no one knows.



Responsible men use condoms to protect themselves and their partner.

The next morning, the girls and the boys were so upset and worried. They drank too much and had slept with a stranger without condoms. Only Thomas was not anxious because he had used condoms.

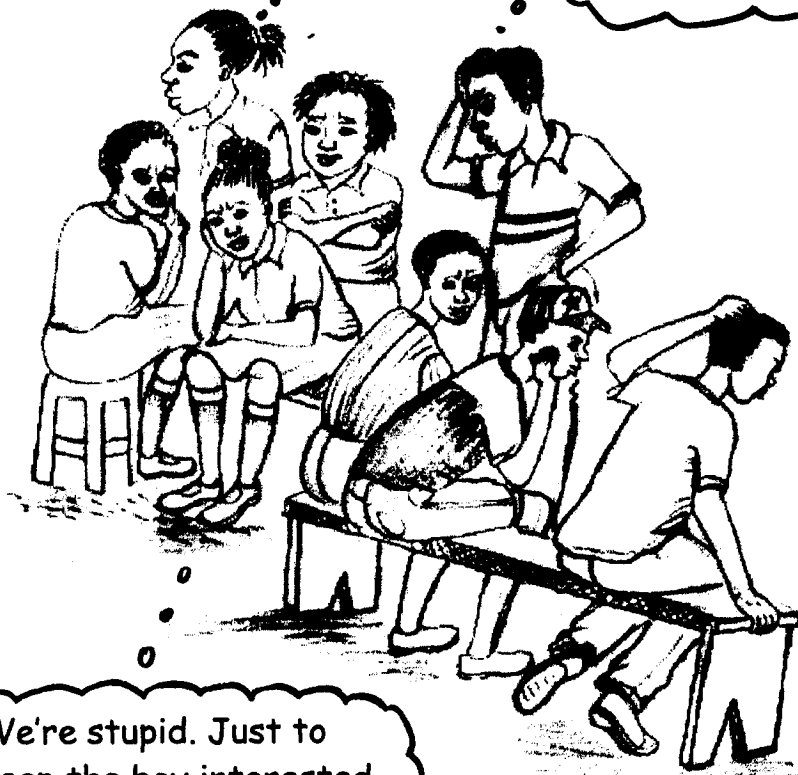
Oh, God! What did I do?
How did I come here? I
didn't use condoms because
I was drunk. How stupid of
me!

Why was I so stupid?
Why did I risk my life,
just for some fun? Now,
my life will fall apart.
What's the point of
knowing about condoms,
if I don't use them?



I only met this guy once. And I slept with him without a condom!

What I have just done? This was very stupid of me!

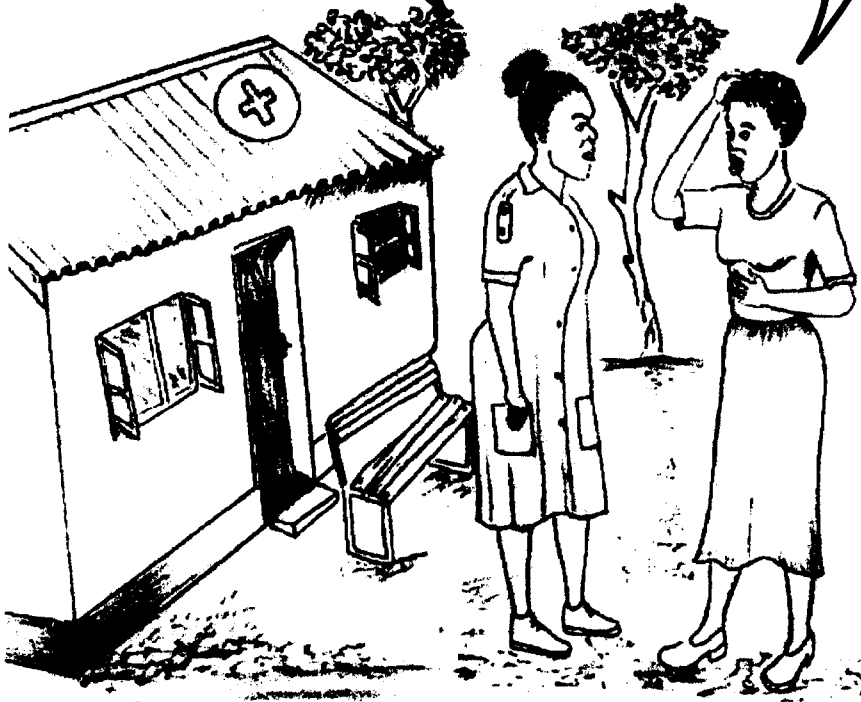


We're stupid. Just to keep the boy interested, we risked everything. Oh, God! Don't let me get AIDS!

One of the girls, Savina missed her monthly period for 3 consecutive months. She decided to go to the school clinic.

Savina, it will be good if you take the pregnancy and the HIV/AIDS tests.

What for? You think I might have AIDS? No, it's not possible. God, please help me. No, not me.

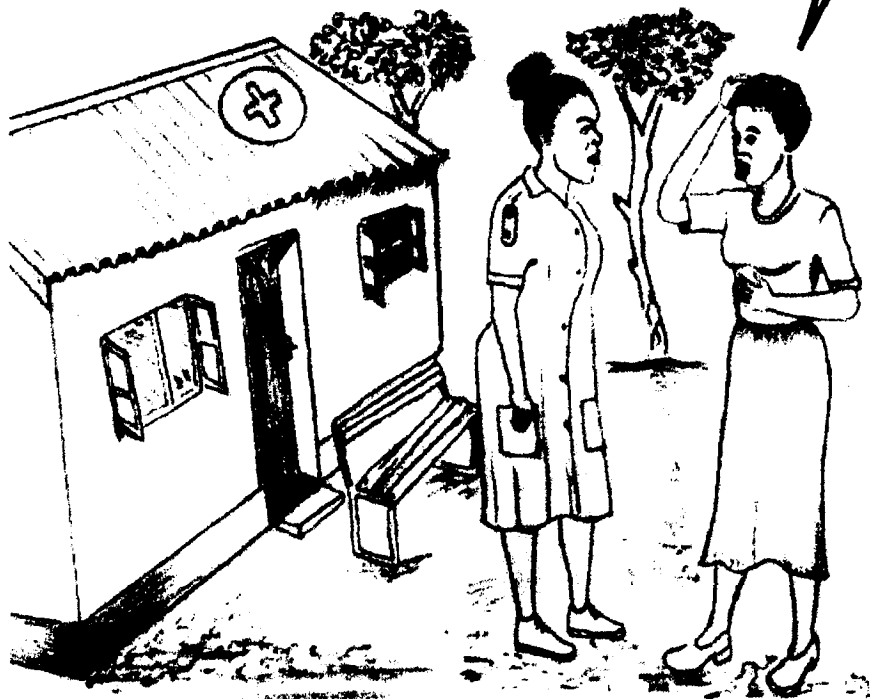


The nurse referred Savina to Oshakati hospital for a confirmation test.

After two weeks, Savina came to collect her results.

Savina, you're pregnant and you're HIV positive. Now, be calm. This isn't the end of the world. You must learn to live with it. We'll help you.

Wuu...Wuu
God, it could be true. It means I'm dead already. Oh, what about my family? Oh, no! What about my future? And my life? Just that one time! Why didn't I use my head?



What I have done to myself? I'm HIV positive. Oh, God! It can't be. Why me? What did I do? Why? I'm a good girl. Why did I sleep with Abraham? I don't know him. He looks strong and has such a nice body. How could he be HIV positive?



The nurse made Savina bring in her partner. She had to drag Abraham into the Ongwediva clinic. Abraham's blood sample was sent out for tests.

Abraham, your tests show that you have syphilis and you're HIV positive.

What? You must be joking! It was only one round. No; no nurse. There's a mistake somewhere. Are you sure you're not reading someone else's results?



Abraham was devastated and depressed. He ended up in a psychiatric section for six months. There, he received treatment and counselling.

Why was I so irresponsible and stupid? Why did I think that AIDS is only for other people? God, I'm an educated person, but I couldn't think clearly. All that mindless drinking!



After a time, Abraham ended up by accepting his status. He wanted to turn his experience into something positive. Savina and he went public about their HIV/AIDS status. They organized youth meetings and seminars to talk other to young people about HIV/AIDS.

HIV/AIDS is killing. But, it can easily be prevented. Use condoms with all your partners. Remember that looks can deceive. Strong people, good looking people can all be walking around with HIV/AIDS.

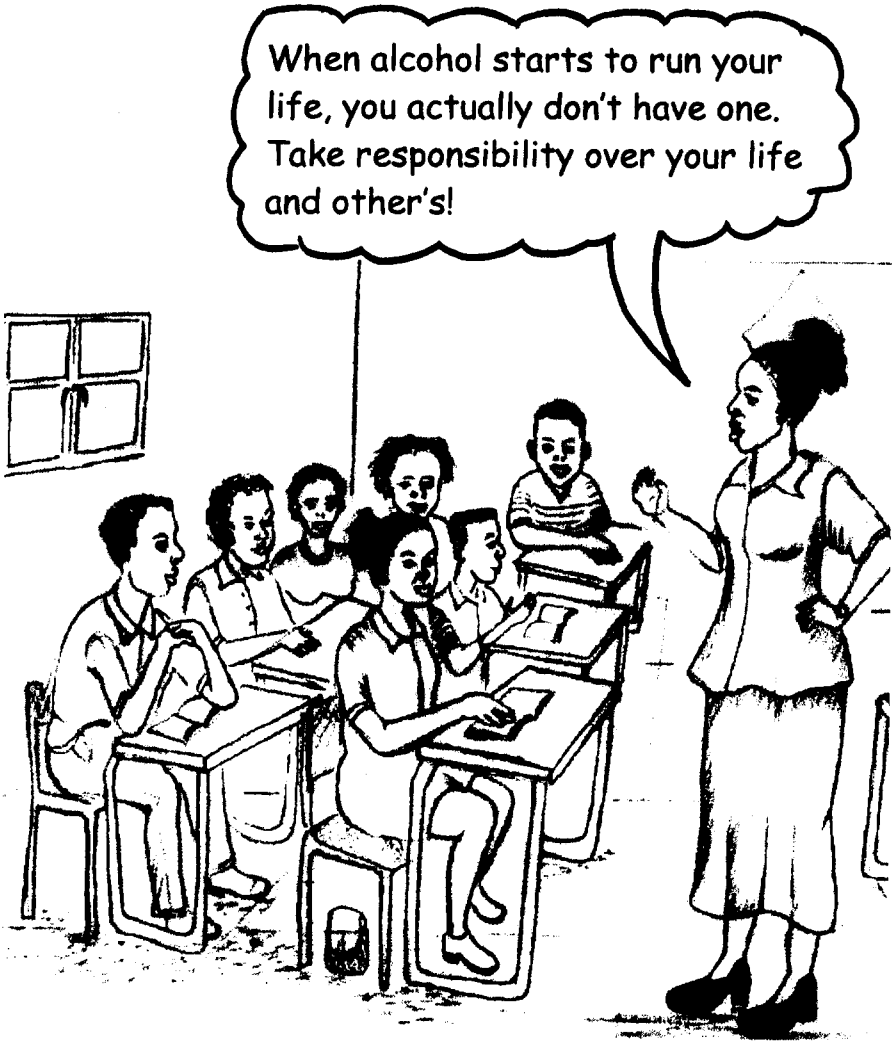
Don't drink too much alcohol. Too much alcohol can make you lose control of yourselves and do irresponsible things, like sleeping with a stranger.



Thomas, who used a condom when he had sex with Teresa saved his life and Teresa's life. Now, Teresa completed her Master's Degree in clinical psychology and became a professor at the University of Namibia.

The main message of Teresa's lecture was...

When alcohol starts to run your life, you actually don't have one. Take responsibility over your life and other's!



QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- 1) Why were the boys and girls irresponsible?
- 2) What should they have done to protect themselves from STDs (Sexually Transmitted Diseases) and HIV/AIDS?
- 3) Was it possible for Abraham and Savina to avoid contracting HIV/AIDS?
- 4) What does it mean to say that Thomas is a responsible person?
- 5) Is it safe to sleep with a stranger?
- 6) What did Savina and Abraham do to help other young people not get HIV/AIDS?
- 7) Why did these young people have sex casually like that?
- 8) In your opinion, is it possible for students to wait until they are adults before having sex? Why or why not?

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 – to raise issues and seek answers to questions concerning their risk of contracting HIV/AIDS.