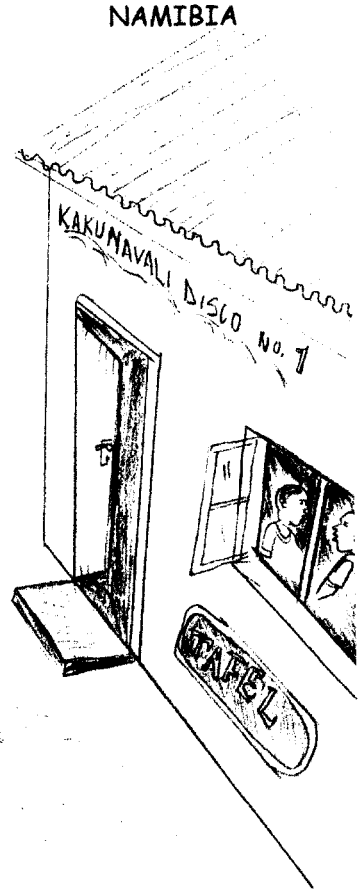
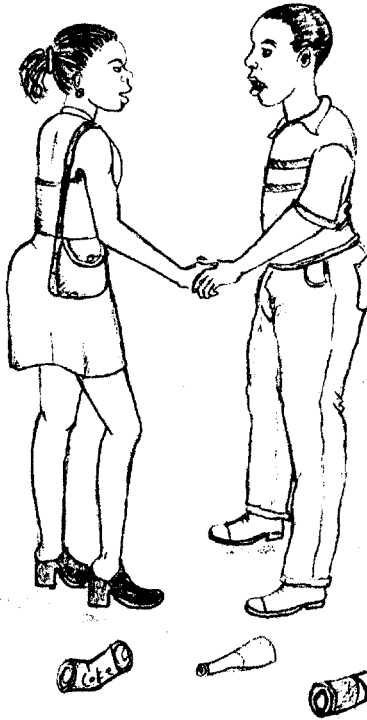


# *Don't Play with Your Life!*

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Literacy and Non-Formal Education Section

Division of Basic Education

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*Literacy, Gender and HIV/AIDS Series*

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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-DANIDA  
Workshop for the Preparation of Gender-sensitive Materials**

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**Revised by the  
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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 practice<sup>1</sup>, 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.

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

That evening after the meal, Maria wanted to have fun with her friends.

Mama, can I go to disco with my friends this evening?

I do not mind you going to the disco, Maria. But you must also take responsibility for your studies and yourself as a young girl.



Maria's mother gave her some advice before letting her go to the disco.

Maria, you must take care of yourself. Don't trust boys. They just want to have fun with you. They're not serious. They don't even respect girls.

You know, mama, I am going to dance and talk to my friends. That's all!

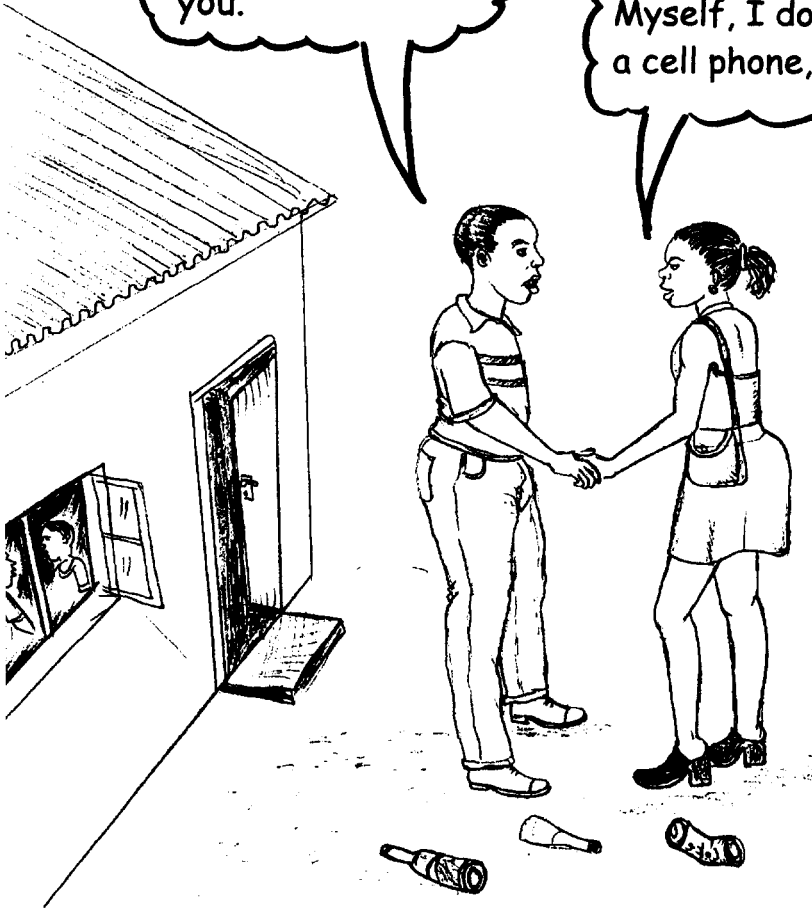




At the disco, Maria met John.

Hello Maria, where have you been? I have been missing you.

Hi! John, how can you say that to me? Don't you know that I lost my brother who has been sick? Hey you are rich. Myself, I don't even have a cell phone, or a cent.

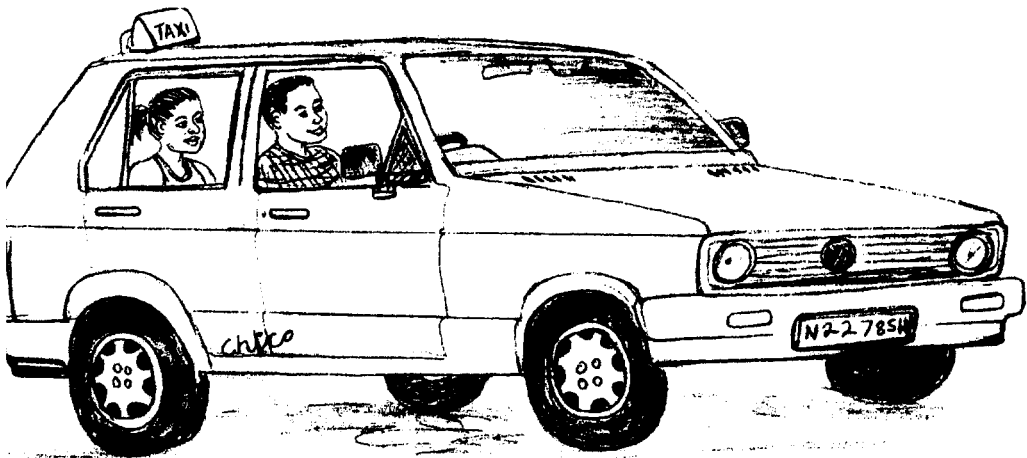


Both Maria and John went into the nightclub where they met their friend, Sara. She was with a young boy.

Ha, ha! Maria, we have also just arrived. Let me introduce you to my friend, Sam. We're in love.



At the disco, Maria was excited. Everything around her was very nice. The music was loud and fast. The coloured lights flickered all around. The boys looked smart, drinking and smoking. It is a different life. But she remembered her mother's words. Maria decided to go home.



At home, Maria's parents were very worried.

Maria, why are you coming back so late? Don't you know that it is dangerous for a girl to be around late at night? Some one could attack you. You could be raped!

We were so worried! We told you not to come back so late. You broke the rules. Don't do it again.



The following evening Maria left for the same disco without telling her parents.

Hey, baby! I am Leon. I am so happy to see you again. You want to see my cell phone? Try it! Call your friend.

Oh! What a wonderful offer! Thank you. Why? You're spoiling me!



Leon tried to make Maria trust him. He was ready to spend money on her. Maria felt so important.

What's your name again?  
Let's have something to  
drink. Do you like music?  
What groups do you like?  
How about Ndilimani?

Oh, wonderful! Anything.  
Could you please buy me a  
beer? You're so nice to  
me.



Sara and Sam came to join them.

Hallo, Maria. You are enjoying yourselves. You found a boyfriend, ah!

Oh, no. I have just arrived and found this man here. We're just getting to know each other.



Sara still wondered how Maria knew the young man. She wanted to put her friend on her guard against some risks.

Maria, do you know this boy?  
Well, aren't you afraid of this  
HIV/AIDS?

No. Do you think such a nice looking  
man will have AIDS? He's big and  
strong. He looks so rich!





As they are enjoying beer and music, Maria started to feel dizzy. Maria became drunk. She felt like she was floating around.

Sara, I am feeling very strange. I am getting drunk or what?

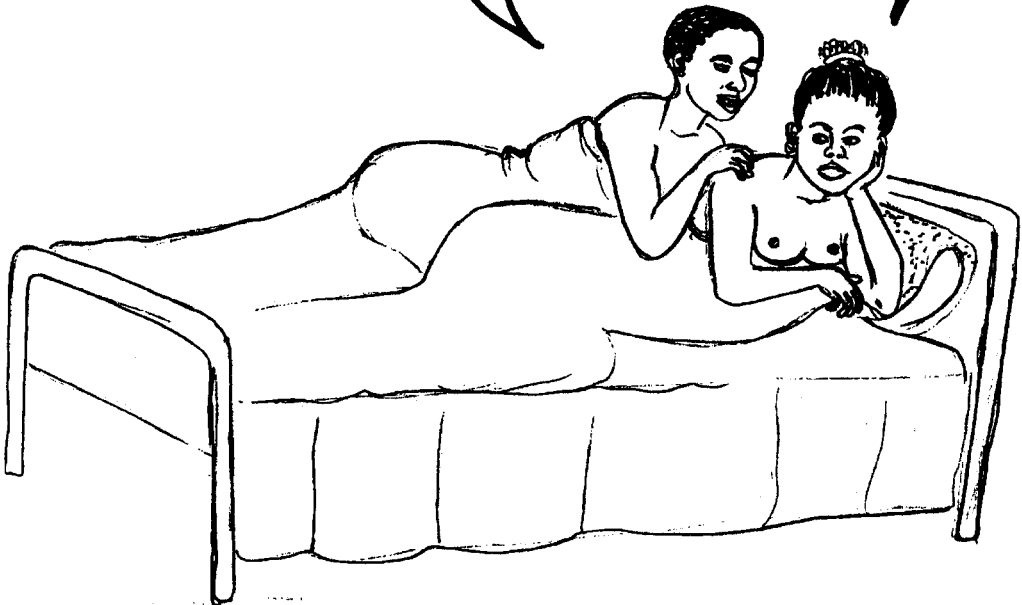
Let's just drink and be happy. That's the way things go.



Leon called a cab for them to go to his house. The next morning, Maria surprised....

Don't worry sweet darling. Maria, you'll be my only one.

Why am I here? Don't talk about love. We don't even know each other. Oh! God have pity on me. What will my parents do?



At home, her parents were too upset to talk to her. They guessed she was with a man all night. Auntie Elena soon came to see Maria. She was very angry.

Maria, you are showing a bad way. You have to take care of yourself. Nowadays, AIDS is killing thousands of Namibians. And you aren't afraid? No one is really safe from this disease. You hear? You could get yourself killed. I'm taking you for a test.

Oh, Auntie, please. Help me. I didn't think about AIDS. But am I going to die? What about my studies? Enough of my dream! I'll never get to be a doctor. Believe me, Auntie. I only did it once. Oh, can you help me?



During the three months required to be absolutely sure of the HIV test result, Maria lived in hell. She was worried. She couldn't eat. She couldn't sleep. She was crying all the time. She forgot about Leon. She only thought about herself. Finally, Maria and Auntie Elena went to find out.

Oh my dear Maria! I am so happy. You don't have AIDS. Thank God! We're so lucky. From now on, you must use condoms when you sleep with a boy.

Oh, Auntie Elena, oh nurse. Thank you. Thank God. I'll not do this again. I was stupid to play with my life just to have fun. Now, I'll listen to my parents.



Now Maria knew that she could not play with her life. To be safe, she would always use condoms. And you?

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- 1) What do you think about Maria and Leon's behaviour? Discuss.
- 2) How could young people enjoy themselves without endangering their life?
- 3) What do you think about Maria's mother's advice? Do your parents talk to you like hers?
- 4) Do you think parents should advise their children about sex? Why? What kinds of advice should they give them?
- 5) What do you think about Elena's reaction?
- 6) What do you know about AIDS? How does it spread?
- 7) Do you know where you can go for an HIV test?
- 8) Why do people who know about HIV/AIDS still not use condoms? Discuss.

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.