



NATIONAL EMERGENCY RESPONSE COUNCIL ON HIV / AIDS

P O Box 1937
Mbabane
Swaziland

Tel: (+268) 404 -1703
Tel: (+268) 404 -1720/6
Fax: (+268) 404 -1692
Web: www.nercha.org.sz
E-mail: info@nercha.org.sz

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Many thanks for the opportunity to provide a reference for SADAG and the Speaking Books.

My name is Busi Dlamini and I am the manager for the National HIV and AIDS Information and Training Centre (Info Centre) which is under the National Emergency Response Council to HIV and AIDS (NERCHA) which is the National AIDS Council in Swaziland. One of the main functions of the Info Centre is to disseminate information on HIV and AIDS to meet the information needs of all populations. A glaring observation that was made by the Info Centre soon after its establishment in 2007 was that there was absolutely not IEC for children aged 12 years and below, yet there were equally traumatized by HIV and AIDS as other population groups.

The Info Centre was first made aware that Speaking Book that were already being distributed and used by South African NGO's and the various Government Departments, through the director of NERCHA who brought a few copies home from a meeting South Africa. No sooner were the books displayed at the centre, many clients that visited the Centre requested that we borrow the books to use in their communities and church meetings. Although it is against the rules, the Centre ended up lending out the books because of the desperate plea. This was clear evidence that Speaking books are an effective way for presenting information.

The Info Centre then started interacting with SADAG about the possibility of producing speaking Books on HIV and AIDS for the Swazi population. Once funding was available the Info Centre, together with the Ministry of Education facilitated the process of producing two books for Children ages between the ages six (6) to twelve (12) years through SADAG. One book is entitled "**What you need to know about HIV and AIDS**" and is meant to provide basic information on HIV for this age group. The second book is entitled "**Coping with HIV and AIDS**" and it provides skills and other information on how to deal with problems for children that are infected or affected by HIV and AIDS.

The books have since been disseminated, mainly to schools, Neighbourhood Care Points (feeding points for OVC's), the Domestic Violence Unit within the police force and to other organizations that work with Children. The responses are overwhelming. As people get exposed to the books, more requests from individuals and organizations are received. Some partners have written not only to thank the Centre for the books, but also to requests that more books covering other topics be produced for children.

Indeed, should funding be available, the Info centre desires to produce more speaking books for children and other population groups such as Home Base Carers. Worth noting is that Speaking Books are an African solution to African problems. They require no electricity and are appropriate for populations with low literacy levels. Speaking books are very appealing because they engage more than one sense. Also, each book reaches a greater number of people as the messages are played over and over again. All these qualities make speaking books an answer to the challenge of spreading information on HIV and AIDS to the people of Swaziland.

The Info centre fails to adequately express the gratitude to SADAG for such an effective innovation. Speaking Books are doubtlessly a major break through in the response to HIV in Swaziland which is still largely depended on disseminating information. Speaking books are an effective tool for dissemination critical information to all populations.

Thank you.

Yours Sincerely

Busi Dlamini
Manager – Information Centre (NERCHA)