

Does Swaziland Have Enough Information Education Communication (IEC) Material on HIV/AIDS Targeting Children?



RESEARCH FINDINGS ON IEC MATERIAL
AVAILABLE FOR CHILDREN IN SWAZILAND

Conducted by ULARN



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Background

Swaziland is currently facing a major challenge with the high rate of HIV/AIDS sweeping across the nation. It is estimated from the latest sentinel survey data that a prevalence rate of 38.6% among ANC attendees was recorded (Sentinel Survey 2002). In Swaziland as elsewhere, studies have shown that the younger population is the most vulnerable to the scourge of the virus. Currently about fifteen percent of children below the ages of 15 years are orphaned. It is projected that this figure will rise to 24% by 2025. Specific projections have shown that there were 32,000 AIDS orphans in the country and this figure will rise to about 120,000 by 2010 (NERCHA 2004).

The NGO community has been at the forefront against HIV/AIDS from the start. CANGO together with its partners are now focusing the attention of the nation's efforts to deal with issues affecting children. In this regard, the agency in partnership with UNISWA's Community Services Centre has developed a research agenda that aims to provide information and data to help develop and strengthen innovative strategies to help children better cope with the impact of the epidemic in their lives.

Problem statement

Since the discovery of the first AIDS patient in 1987 in Swaziland, a number of programmes have been put in place in order to deal with the problem. One major strategy that was used was Information Education and Communication (IEC).

Data from the 1997 census shows that about 56.6% of the population is aged between 0-19. These children are either infected or affected by HIV/AIDS. Children are also targeted by the IEC strategy however little is known about the types of HIV/AIDS materials available for children and their relevance to the needs of children.

Goal of the study

To investigate the availability of HIV / AIDS Information Education and Communication (IEC) materials to children.

Specific Objectives

1. Conduct a desktop review of available IEC materials.
2. Solicit the knowledge base of children on HIV/AIDS.
3. Determine the available IEC materials and their content.
4. Find out what IEC materials are developed and used by various organizations working in HIV/AIDS.

Methodology

The methodology for collecting the data involved the development of two sets of questionnaires: one was an interview guide for the children and the other for key informants from NGOs and other institutions

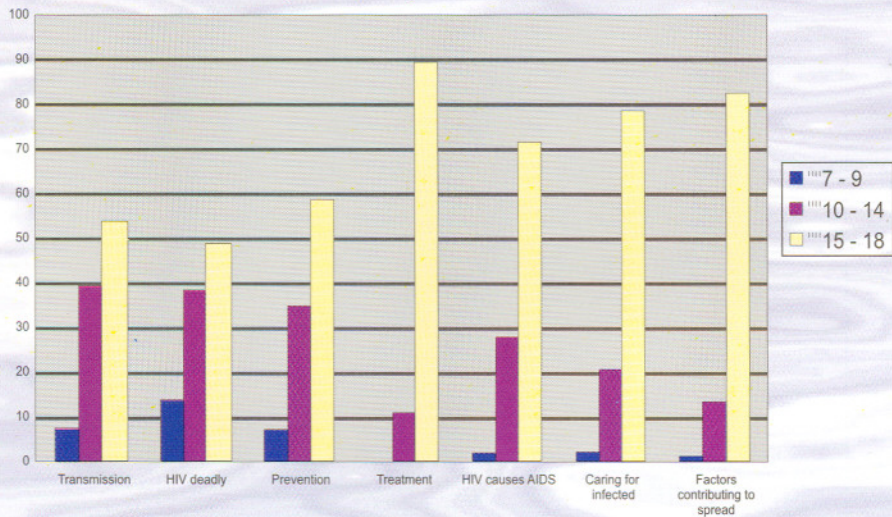
A desktop review of available information in terms of content and type of materials was also done. Purposive sampling was used in selecting an initial 40 areas to be covered from which twenty (20) were randomly selected. Consideration was given to issues of accessibility and representativeness of the four regions and the urban rural divide.

Four Hundred and eighty eight (488) children were randomly selected and interviewed and these covered both in and out of school children. In order to assess the suitability of the materials to children, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were conducted among selected institutions that house orphaned and vulnerable children.

Key findings

- In general, children now know about the nature of HIV transmission (87%), and also that it is not curable (95.9%).
- Their knowledge varied according to age where the older age groups displayed higher knowledge compared to the younger age group

Figure 4 : Knowledge on HIV by age



- Also worth noting is the variation in HIV knowledge between the in and out of school children where those attending school had superior knowledge of HIV compared to those who were out of school.

HIV Knowledge of in and out of school

Knowledge	In School (%)	Out of school (%)
Transmission	52.9	47.1
HIV deadly	50.9	49.1
Prevention	54.7	45.3
Treatment	85.7	14.3
HIV causes AIDS	57.1	42.9
Caring for infected	64.7	35.3
Factors contributing to spread	56.9	43.1

- A majority of the respondents (95.5%) identified the radio as the main source of information on HIV/AIDS.

Specifically children indicated that they need information on the following issues:

- How to protect themselves from being infected.
- On basic facts about the virus such as the mode of transmission, prevention, treatment, care and support.
- How to care for those infected.
- How to deal with the issue of stigma and discrimination.
- Additional and evolving information on the virus.
- Issues of nutrition and diet.
- The symptoms of HIV.
- The origins of HIV/AIDS.
- What to do to live longer?
- What makes HIV/AIDS incurable?
- Why are the pills so expensive?



Key informants results

- only eleven (78.6%) organizations out of the 14 indicated that they have an HIV/AIDS programme.
- In terms of whether the existing programmes focus on children, Most organisations did not have a specific programme addressing issues that affect children.
- Only five organizations indicated that have developed IEC materials specifically targeted at children.
- The age groups targeted are 10-12; 13-15; 13-19; and 16-24 years of age.
- This is useful information because it shows that the very young children (7-10) years) do not have IEC materials developed specifically for them.
- The type of materials developed for children ranged from general information sources such as: brochures, T-Shirts, banners, newsletters, facts sheet, games, playing cards, stickers, rulers, posters, stories, books, magazines and websites.
- The topics covered by these materials, included abstinence, basic facts about HIV/AIDS, care and behavioural change, life skills, sexuality, Sexually Transmitted Infections, contraception, teenage pregnancies, dating, communication, growing up, gender issues and sexual abuse
- Institutions further reported that children were involved in the development exercise of the IEC materials

FGD results

- Respondents had some knowledge on HIV and AIDS such as the basic facts, how it is spread, prevention and the consequences of the disease such as “AIDS is a Killer Disease”.
- In terms of transmission the rural respondents emphasised on the sexual modes of transmission as opposed to others such as contaminated sharps and mother to child transmission (MTCT), which the urban group knew about.
- It is worth noting that in rural areas their main source of information was the school whereas in the urban areas they had multiple sources of information like radio, Television, flyers, banners etc
- A majority of the sources of information emphasized on issues of abstinence
- Information provided by urban schools seemed to be comprehensive and scientific in the approach whereas the emphasis in the rural areas is on sexual matters e.g. Sexual intercourse could lead into STIs
- The respondents also pointed out that the media has been sending contradicting information regarding HIV and AIDS.



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