



SUCCESS STORY

Teachers Write Stories for Students

Teachers learn to write stories that teach students about HIV/AIDS



Neshani Andreas, a published Namibian author, reading a passage from her novel, "The Purple Violet," at the USAID workshop.

"Working in groups to write a story was also challenging. It is a very useful strategy for cooperative learning," said one workshop participant.

Telling Our Story
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Teachers in Namibia took an important step to raising awareness of the HIV/AIDS crisis when they attended a USAID-funded Writing for Kids Camp. Primary school and language teachers from northern Namibia learned how to develop engaging stories for young students that incorporate lessons about the impact of HIV and AIDS on their lives. These teachers can then use the stories they write in the classroom. Since the stories reflect each local HIV/AIDS situation more accurately than stories written for wider audiences, they are more meaningful to the students, some of whom are likely affected by the disease.

At the workshop, experts worked with teachers on skills to develop a sense of audience and apply the concepts of plot and setting in story writing. They also worked on using local knowledge and introducing problem solving, dialogue, and illustrations to bring the stories to life.

But the workshop's benefits went beyond story writing. The training session was part of an effort to strengthen the quality of basic education in Namibia by improving teacher instruction skills and developing locally relevant learning materials. For instance, participants learned more skills for teaching writing to their own students, and several of the stories will be incorporated into a USAID-funded Writing for Kids series of educational books. Illustrated by local artists, the books are printed in major local languages and distributed to primary schools in northern Namibia.

The stories focus on challenges faced by children who have lost a parent to HIV/AIDS and families who have taken in other children due to HIV/AIDS-related illness and death, as well as ways in which children can begin to cope with these issues.

With help from USAID, Namibia is working hard to improve the quality of public education, which has long suffered from a shortage of well-trained teachers, high-quality and culturally appropriate curriculum, and resources. Together with USAID's other efforts, the writing camps are an opportunity to address these weaknesses and usher Namibia's schools into a new era.

Photo: AED/Donna Kay LeCzel