Speaking Books with Soundtracks for Suicide and Depression

South Africa
Cassey Amoore

Organization type:
nonprofit/ngo/citizen sector

Budget:
$250,000 - $500,000

Website:
http://www.sadag.co.za

- Communications
- Community development
- Health education
Project Summary

Concise Summary: Help us pitch this solution! Provide an explanation within 3-4 short sentences.

A book with 16 recorded messages, in languages understood by rural communities, giving guidance and care for mental health and AIDS and for Teen suicide Prevention. The books, which are battery operated, are designed for low-literacy or rural communities.

About Project

Problem: What problem is this project trying to address?

Rural Communities have huge challenges in accessing key mental health information due to their low level literacy or limited reading abilities. The Home-Based Careworkers are usually older women who did not complete their basic education during the often disruptive liberation struggle and violent student uprising. The innovative education and communication tool, the Speaking Book has opened windows of opportunity to help communities understand the health messages, procedures, prescriptions and navigate health systems to access the much needed services. People with low level literacy are more likely to confuse their medical regimen. Illiteracy is a potentially life-threatening issue that can be prevented through the distribution of the cost-effective speaking books in different topics and in the local languages of the different communities. The speaking books are distributed free of charge to households to empower them to take care of their health as their health is their right and responsibility.

About You

Organization:
The South African Depression and Anxiety Organisation

First Name
Cassey

Last Name
Amoore

Email
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Website URL
http://www.sadag.co.za

Country

Section 2: About Your Organization

Organization Name
The South African Depression and Anxiety Organisation

Organization Phone
+27112626396

Organization Address
171 Katherine Street, Liberty Life Office Park, Building 1, First Floor

Organization Country

Your idea

Country your work focuses on

Innovation

What makes your idea unique?

SADAG has created an interactive patient education tool for low literacy communities across the globe using what we had and adapting it to our needs, and those of our patients. A simple children’s book, usually used to teach basic arithmetic or sing lullabies, has now been modified to teach people who cannot read and write about health care. SADAG has taken an existing medium and is using it in a unique and creative way that engages healthcare professionals, patients, caregivers, and the pharmaceutical industry, and truly makes an impact. SADAG is the only NGO in the World using the unique speaking books as an educational tool, and are now sharing it with other health care needs apart from mental health. For example, Malaria, TB, Rotavirus, Diabetes, etc. The advantage of this invention is that it does not need electricity or computers, it can be used by anyone in the most remote community and is free standing device. Many people benefit from using the speaking books, whether they are partially sighted, children and very old or frail people learn from this product. Through our research, each speaking book is read by 27 people.
Do you have a patent for this idea?

Impact

What impact have you had?

The Speaking Books are effective for a number of reasons: visual messages accompanied by sound are doubly effective at conveying accurate messages and messages that are heard as well as seen are more readily retained; in the absence of trained personnel, the Speaking Books allow information dissemination and open discussion on stigmatized health care; the Speaking Book is not dependent on electricity or transmission range, and battery availability is high; the Speaking Books are user-driven and can be played and re-played at any time, and as often as required to reinforce the message; and messages are relevant, readily available and don’t expire, and may offer answers to questions the listener hasn’t yet asked. Each book reaches 27 other people.

In South Africa, 9.5% of all teen deaths being due to suicide. Our Book “Suicide Shouldn’t be a Secret” is targeted at children and the response has been very enthusiastic and it is interactive and educates yet doesn’t judge – and 82.1% of learners found the book helpful and easy to understand. “It is fun to listen to. When I feel lonely it keeps me company – I love it. I wish you could make more of them, they really help”, said a 15-year-old Limpopo girl. Research of our teen suicide prevention book, showed a 58% knowledge gain and empowerment of where to get help. The Speaking Book is totally free standing and effective. This is very important for areas that can’t afford trainers and where there are no other services.

Actions

It’s not just South Africans who are benefiting - the world over, immigrants, rural uneducated people are ignored or by-passed on the road to health; in every city, in every country, there are those who are unable to access or understand basic healthcare. It is for those people the Speaking Book was created. SADAG has worked with national governments and departments, companies like Publicis, Merck, Lilly, Anglo Gold, AED, and De Beers, and other NGOs to create Speaking Books on topics from HIV and Depression, to road safety, and the importance of vaccinations. Our Books have reached markets from Sub-Saharan Africa, to Asia, and South America, and have been recorded in 10 languages.

Results

The Speaking Book offers – and delivers – an innovative, interactive, and influential alternative to patient awareness and learning. Through the medium of a hard-covered, 16-page book with an accompanying 30-second-per-page audio track, the Speaking Book literally talks to the ‘reader’, in his own language, about vital health care issues. Local celebrities lend their voices, and status, to this innovation giving it even more authority among locals, and the Books are recorded in various languages to meet the need of the community they will be serving. They’re pretty, colourful, interactive, multi-lingual … the Speaking Book is a tool that can be seen, read, heard and understood regardless of reading ability. And being battery operated, they’re not dependent on electricity either. Finally, thanks to a tiny, gutsy NGO, everyone can have access to critical healthcare information – and have their questions about health and treatment answered even in the absence of trained professionals.

What will it take for your project to be successful over the next three years? Please address each year separately, if possible.

1st Year: Designing the messages, content, approval from stakeholders, designing the artwork, identifying the voice, recording the voice, creating the sound chip, designing the mould, printing and production of the books, shipping from China, drawing up a distribution plan, drafting the presentation to demonstrate the book to the communities and identifying the target groups in the communities.

2nd Year: distribution of the books in the identified target areas, keep a register of distribution, designing measurable research tools to ascertain the impact and effectiveness evaluation. Then administer a random field study in selected communities.

3rd Year: analysis of the data, compiling of the research findings, planning workshops to disseminate the findings of the impact and effectiveness of the speaking books. Identifying stake holders such as NGO’s, Government departments, support group leaders, leaders of community based organizations, sponsors and other interested agencies.

What would prevent your project from being a success?

The speaking books would be easily distributed free of charge to disadvantaged communities with low literacy levels. By building partnerships with other NGO’s, we would be able to reach a larger spectrum of the population who would be able to benefit from the books. One of the only challenges would be the lack of access to replace the batteries for the speaking books in rural communities if not supplied by the government or other NGO’s. Since we would be distributing the speaking books to remote communities in rural areas, having to rely on the local postal services will also be a challenge as the South African Postal Services can be unreliable at times.

How many people will your project serve annually?

More than 10,000

What is the average monthly household income in your target community, in US Dollars?

$50 - 100

Does your project seek to have an impact on public policy?

Yes

Sustainability

What stage is your project in?

Operating for 15 years

In what country?

Is your initiative connected to an established organization?

Yes

If yes, provide organization name.

The South African Depression and Anxiety Group

How long has this organization been operating?

More than 5 years.
Does your organization have a Board of Directors or an Advisory Board?
Yes

Does your organization have any non-monetary partnerships with NGOs?
Yes

Does your organization have any non-monetary partnerships with businesses?
Yes

Does your organization have any non-monetary partnerships with government?
Yes

Please tell us more about how these partnerships are critical to the success of your innovation.

These crucial partnerships are enriched through the networking, coordination and collaboration with other government departments and NGO’s in recognition of our innovation. It also improves Government engagement with other NGO’s throughout the country. It broadens the spectrum of issues currently undertaken by Government reaching a diversity of communities. Smart partnerships with Government Departments open the opportunity whereby we are invited to partake on different Government Advisory Boards, planning and implementing committees, parliamentary portfolio committee on Health in public hearings on the improvement of mental health services. We are also actively involved in lobbying and advocacy on mental health issues that impact negatively on consumers. We are also active on Medical Aid Scheme committees acting as the voices for the voiceless to fight for more rights and coverage for patients suffering from chronic mental health issues.

What are the three most important actions needed to grow your initiative or organization?

1. Publicity of the concept of the tool, the speaking book by acknowledging the impact and effectiveness by implementers of different projects and organizations.
2. The build up of interest from different organizations, social partners, sponsors and government departments through the appreciation of the tool in making a difference to the lives of communities. This will be achieved through a list of endorsements from National, Regional and International Social Partners.
3. Sustainability of the speaking book production by keeping up a monitoring and evaluation exercise to constantly network or interface with prospective groups, existing groups or organizations and drawing up marketing strategies for sustainability. Exploring alternative ways of further improving the presentation of the speaking book that is looking at producing a dual-language book.

The Story

What was the defining moment that led you to this innovation?

Seeing people throw away simple brochures and pamphlets after a talk, even when they were in their own language. Watching people trying to follow what was written on a screen in a community hall and having no comprehension, but never ever saying anything about the fact that they couldn’t read or write. Knowing there had to be a cost effective, exciting way of leaving mental health messages with communities. Believing that people needed an opportunity to learn in a non-judgmentally about their own mental health inspired us to develop the tool of the speaking book.

Stigma, misunderstanding, fear, low literacy, poverty… All these factors restrict access to treatment and care for mental illnesses. According to the WHO, depression will be the most common health problem within 20 years and will be the biggest health burden on society both economically and sociologically, yet most developing countries spend less than 2% of their national budgets on mental healthcare. With some of the poorest communities in the world, some of the worst health care facilities (one province in South Africa has a 60-bed psychiatric facility for a population of 5.8 million people but no state psychiatrist although 14 positions are vacant) and a severe shortage of trained medical staff, Africa is experiencing the most critical health care crisis in the world with pandemics of AIDS, Malaria and TB. A recent by the DFID-funded Mental Health and Poverty Project (MHaPP) showed a strong link between social deprivation, poverty and mental illness. One in five South Africans will suffer from a mental health problem at sometime in their life yet only a small fraction of people in need of treatment have access to care in their communities.

Tell us about the social innovator behind this idea.

I am the Founder of The South African Depression and Anxiety Group (SADAG), the country’s most well known NGO for Mental Health. I started mental health work over 15 years ago after hearing a rural GP say African people don’t get depression! I, myself, was a patient suffering with Panic Disorder for many years. I later branched out into depression, then bipolar and now the whole realm of various mental health issues such as trauma, schizophrenia, and OCD throughout South Africa. SADAG has grown over the last 15 years with a call center boasting over 15 toll-free helplines with over 100 volunteers from various University Psychology Departments completed Honours and Masters and 180 support groups for various issues in all 9 provinces.

SADAG is really proud that as a small South African mental health NGO, we have maintained our integrity and commitment to patient education, have evolved in order to help those most in need through the development and creation of a simple yet groundbreaking innovation, and have been celebrated and rewarded – and through that recognition have been able to help so many more communities around the world.

How did you first hear about Changemakers?

Newsletter from Changemakers

If through another, please provide the name of the organization or company

Source URL: https://www.changemakers.com/mentalhealth/entries/speaking-books-soundtracks-suicide-and-depression#comment-0