



health

Department:
Health
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

26 September 2011

The Educational Support Services Trust
9 Kommissaris Street
Welgemoed
7530

For attention: Prof AJL Sinclair

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

LETTER OF ENDORSEMENT

The National Department of Health NGO Coordination Unit has had the privilege of funding and working with the Educational Support Services Trust (ESST) for many years. This is an outstanding non-profit organisation that has implemented a range of salient and pertinent educational interventions throughout the country. Based on my dealings with ESST – with particular reference to its work in the field of HIV and AIDS – it is my pleasure to note certain key points, by way of endorsement.

1. The staff of ESST is of the highest calibre and always exhibits professionalism, dedication, competence and the keenest attention to detail, in order to offer an expert service.
2. ESST has the capacity to reach communities in rural areas, even remote villages and townships and is unrestricted in its scope of operations anywhere in the country, any province, district or ward. Hence, ESST has a **national footprint** in the true sense of the word.
3. The youth have been a key target audience, who benefited from interventions which promoted an awareness of HIV and AIDS within a life skills context, with a particular emphasis on prevention and abstinence. Feedback received from communities indicated that this was a **life-changing experience** and provided real hope, with the key message that it is never too late to change one's behaviour.
4. ESST has the ability to **initiate new and ground-breaking projects** from scratch, working in an innovative and creative manner to ensure projects are taken from the pilot phase to full implementation. One example was a project – the first of its kind – which sought to establish AIDS competent communities in different provinces.

5. ESST brings **disparate community sectors together** to cooperate in an integrated and holistic manner (traditional leaders, religious groups, men, women, youth, NGOs and state officials).
6. A salient point to note is that ESST always **builds bridges** between the community, elected officials (counselors, ward committee members) and local state departments and officials. Counselors, for example, play a key role in mobilising and informing the community, as well as serving on ad-hoc committees which are formed from time to time.
7. ESST works with a particular sector (e.g. health) at **multiple levels**. It ensures the cooperation, goodwill and buy-in from various officials ranging from clinic staff, local and district staff right up to senior provincial health officials.
8. By employing local, competent people as coordinators who reside in the areas where projects take place (not bringing in outside experts), further authenticity is added to ESST's work. Indigenous, cultural norms and values are always respected, which ensures that the projects are fully contextualized.
9. Their educational material is eye-catching, colourful, relevant, informative and simple to understand and lends itself to shared learning amongst family and friends. Hence, an investment in ESST's work is very **cost-effective** since one end-user publication reaches a wide audience, even including individuals who cannot read as part of the discussion.
10. The information sessions/workshops which are conducted by ESST's coordinators are dynamic, motivational, inspirational, experiential and **transformative**. People leave these workshops with a changed perspective on the subject matter being discussed, with new skills and resources with which to take charge of their own lives and act in a more responsible manner towards themselves, their families and their communities.

I therefore have no hesitation whatsoever in recommending the services of this excellent organisation to any entity who would so wish to partner with them or fund them.

Sincerely,



K. Mooketsi

Programme Manager: Partnership Support/NGO Co-ordination
HIV&AIDS and STI Cluster