

APPRAISAL: SYNTHESIS

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Merundoi/HFLE Support Module 3, Episode 31 – 45, is a guide developed by the Merundoi Radio Serial in collaboration with the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, Global AIDS Program and with the support of Ministry of Education of Guyana in 2007. The module covers Episodes 31-45 of Merundoi. For each episode, the script and a list of issues for discussion and CDs of the episodes are provided. Each list identifies the topics in the Health and Family Life Education (HFLE) curriculum by grade for Grades 7-9 that can be developed using the episode. The subject, into which the topic can be integrated, is suggested and life skills that can be addressed using the episode are also identified. For each topic, at least one issue is identified. In this module, more attention is paid to developing refusal skills, assertiveness and negotiation skills. This activity workbook uses long-running serial dramas to show role models changing the behaviour. The dramas have interrelated stories, each one with key character(s) or role model(s) who represent people in the community. The characters face obstacles, overcome them and ultimately change their behaviour with support from other characters. Because listeners/viewers/readers identify themselves with the characters, the drama suggests reasons for change and motivate change.

The behavioural objectives being addressed by this guide are: delayed initiation/abstinence, monogamy/faithfulness, positive parent and child communication, alcohol reduction, correct and consistent condom use, adequate access to HIV and STI services, and reduction of stigma and discrimination. The multiplicity of social issues addressed by the radio series provides the opportunity to use this guide to teach life skills set out in the Ministry of Education's HFLE Curriculum. The goal of this activity workbook is to help to foster discussion about the particular scene/episode. The discussion will bring out the relevant life skills outlined in the HFLE curriculum. This manual does not focus specifically on HIV & AIDS. Indeed, this theme is briefly integrated in the manual.

Strengths

1) This document has been produced by the Merundoi Radio Serial and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Global AIDS Program who developed the MARCH (Modeling and Reinforcement to Combat HIV/AIDS) strategy. This document has the support of the Ministry of Education in Guyana because it is made within the framework of the HFLE national program for the inclusion of Life Skills lessons in the curriculum.

2) The goals of the material are clear and relevant. The module is designed to provide a wide range of relevant life skills within the framework of the HFLE curriculum established by the Ministry of Education of Guyana. This manual aims to provide lessons for teachers to implement life skills knowledge, specifically the HFLE curriculum lessons, in their classrooms.

3) It provides attractive and interactive activities supporting reflection and dialog rather than just explaining theoretical notions. It invites students to think about their own behaviour, feelings and emotions and to change if necessary, so they can become healthy, responsible and tolerant adults. It suggests that HIV prevention is more effective when it includes certain elements that are emotionally compelling, provides models of desired behaviours, addresses opportunities obstacles for change, and is linked to cultural stories found in communities. The module is accompanied by three CDs on which there are Merundoi radio serial short episodes easy to understand and which provides a pleasant and original support for young people to be more concerned on different relevant life skills.

4) The episodes are concrete and in accordance to Guyana's reality and culture. It puts relevant subjects into a realistic context. Activities, examples and language are appropriate to cultural and community context. The module explains that the radio Merundoi, launched in 2006, broadcasts those episodes twice weekly on the FM. The overwhelming response to the countrywide field test of the pilot episode suggested that Merundoi reflects the reality of life in Guyana and that embedded information on HIV/AIDS should be effective. Episodes are linked to cultural stories found in communities so that listeners/viewers/readers can identify with the characters, and can encourage interpersonal and community communication network, which reinforce intention to the drama episode.

5) Another strong point is that the module suggests ways for students to integrate the different topics and life skills so that teachers can easily conduct the lesson. This module looks at how it is possible to use interactive radio episodes to improve Life Skills based HFLE curriculum. It proposes 3 main ways to use this module depending on the school and teacher level : (i) focus on the relevant HFLE content for a specific grade and subject, (ii)

focus on a chosen theme (e.g. teenage sexuality), or (iii) focus on skills development. The activities associated with the different topics can be conducted in different ways but an order must be followed: (1) individual thinking/writing (to increase self-awareness and make a decision to act), (2) paired discussion/decision making (to improve communication, empathy and listening skills), and (3) finally whole class discussion making (to develop consensus building).

Weakness / aspects to be improved

1) The life skills education is very broad and some important subjects are not enough developed, like HIV and AIDS education. Even if the module is not specifically a document about HIV and AIDS education, the manual focuses too briefly and only in a limited way on HIV and AIDS, we however thought that this would be a central point when we read the introductory pages, in particular the one presenting MARCH strategy.

Suggestions for improvement

→ The document could include an episode specifically about HIV and AIDS and be sure that learners have good knowledge on the ways of transmission and protection of HIV, the relation between drugs and HIV, the treatment, the physical, psychological and social difficulties that people affected by HIV and AIDS have to endure, the myths (in a more precise manner than it is in the module). It should also offer precise information on Voluntary Counselling and Testing. Those are essential and basic issues that should be included in life skills education programme when focusing on attitudes and behaviours, sexuality, care and support, preventing STIs, decision making or empathy for example.

2) The module does not include gender issues. There is no episode about gender inequalities or anything challenging it, even if the life skills focusing on it (refusal skills, assertiveness and negotiation skills) could have been easily linked with this problematic.

Suggestions for improvement

→ It should be useful to include gender issues in the episode, in the debate and in the activities, to challenge stereotypes against girls and boys and to promote equity in the relevant life skills it focuses on (suggesting activities where learners have to know the difference between gender roles culturally determined and natural difference between men and women).

3) Even if the material offers an interesting place to personal reflection activities, it would have been useful to include means to assess learners before and after completing the program and allocate some time to each unit to evaluate progress for key points to remember.

Suggestions for improvement

→ It should be important to add an evaluation form at the beginning and at the end of each episode to assess learners before and after the programme, so that they can compare their responses and see if they improve their knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviour.

→ Description of activities could be improved by adding more details about approximate time, material, preparation, evaluation and learning outcomes.

4) This module is very general and has to be use with other more precise documents about the specific issues (in this case HIV and AIDS in particular.) Indeed, it doesn't explain, develop or inform but it just suggests ways to debate and thinking about those issues. It is based on the assumption that teacher and student already have basic knowledge on those

issues (which is probably the case at this age) but nevertheless it would have been useful to recall the most important and basic points.

Suggestions for improvement

→ Some important and basic points about specific issues have to be recall in a more precise way when some topics or life skills introduce them. They could be added at the end of the module, in annex for example, or in references, to be sure that all teachers and learners have access to essential information and don't need do search them by themselves. For example, in each HIV and AIDS lessons, HIV transmission and protection, treatment, discrimination, VCT and myths should be briefly recall or/and accessible.

Internal consistency

The First introductory pages do not provide any guidance and sometimes do not seem to be really linked to the following content of the module. The target group of the manual is clear and activities are adapted to this age.

Transferability issues and more suggestions for adapting the manual

The topics addressed in the guidebook are very relevant and can be used as a guideline to teach those life skills. Each episode includes a wide range of activities which could be used as examples for teaching life skills. The Merundoi serial episodes are specifically adapted to Guyana culture and societies. The language, the names and the accent of the character are in a typical English speaking Guyana.