

APPRAISAL: SYNTHESIS

Title: Sexuality and Life-skills. Participatory activities on sexual and reproductive health with young people.

Type of document: Teaching materials

Year of publication: 2008

Author/publisher: International HIV/AIDS Alliance

Number of pages: 169

Date of appraisal: October 2008

Abstract:

This toolkit was developed with International HIV/AIDS Alliance, Planned Parenthood Association of Zambia, Young, Happy, healthy and safe, the Ministries of Health and Education, peer educators and young people in rural Eastern Province, Zambia in 2008. It is the result of teamwork between sexual and reproductive health practitioners working with young people in Zambia, Malawi, Zimbabwe and Uganda.

This toolkit is written for anyone who wants to facilitate participatory learning activities with young people to equip them with the knowledge, positive attitudes and skills to grow up and enjoy sexual and reproductive health and well-being. This includes peer-educators and leaders, outreach workers, teachers, community workers and others. It aims to assist facilitators to provide accurate and complete factual information for young people, plan appropriate educational activities for groups of young people in order to analyse their own situations, resources and needs, to apply their knowledge to their own lives, to increase awareness of their own values and attitudes, to develop their self-esteem and confidence and to develop life skills, for example communication and assertiveness, problem-solving and decision-making. The toolkit contains 65 topic sessions with aims, key facts and a number of different interactive and participatory activities such as role-play, stories, theatre, drawings, etc.

Strengths

- 1) The objectives of the manual are clear and relevant. It aims to provide anyone who wants to facilitate participatory learning activities with young people with the knowledge, positive attitudes and skills to grow up and enjoy sexual and reproductive health and well-being. Peer educators,

leaders, outreach workers, teachers, community workers and others can use this educational approach to behaviour change. Young people are more likely to adopt healthy behaviours if they see that this will have positive effects on their lives than if they are asked to give up something to avoid a bad consequence.

- 2) In general terms, the material emphasizes all the following points: to provide accurate and factual information to young people, to apply new knowledge to their own lives, to increase awareness of their own values and attitudes, to develop their self-esteem and confidence, develop life skills, for example, communication and assertiveness skills, problem-solving and decision-making, build trust and taking collective action as a group, follow up and evaluate their work.
- 3) This toolkit contains a lot of activities concerning all these topics: identifying sexual health-healthy and unhealthy sexual behaviours, risky behaviours or perceptions, sexual intercourse; practising safe sex, use of condoms, having faithful partners, saying no; changing sexual behaviours to reduce risks; avoiding consequences of risk-coercive behaviours; managing stress and risks that may come during the adolescence, like early marriage, premarital sex, unsafe sex, unsafe sex and unplanned pregnancy; communicating problems and feelings to parents, family members and peers; building self-esteem and providing empathy to PLHIV; developing interpersonal skills involving expression of feelings, as well as giving and receiving feedback; analysing the attitudes and values within community social norms/beliefs, cooperation and team work..
- 4) Activities are very well designed and explained. Educators plan each session with its aims, key facts and a number of different activities. They also decide on the age and sex of the group and the amount of time they have for the session. The toolkit shows that there are three age bands: 9-12, 13-17 and 18-24 years. It is part of educators' tasks to choose which information and activities a particular age and sex group will enjoy. Each activity defines a target group and a time frame.
- 5) The method used in the document encourages active participation of learners, critical thinking, and learning through experience. The material aims to plan appropriate educational activities for groups of young people that enable them to analyse their own situations, resources and needs.
- 6) Overall and precise knowledge about HIV and AIDS (ways of transmission and protection of HIV, ARV treatment, drugs, psycho- social aspects of HIV) is provided as well as comprehensive and clear information on sexual health and related issues, such as contraception and pregnancy.

- 7) The material also emphasizes the importance of working with parents, guardians and community members. Working with parents, guardians and community members is one of the main important points in the document. If parents learn to praise more and criticise less, to be good role-models to their children, to teach with love and to critically think about their changing cultural norms, then they can strengthen the socialisation that they already do.
- 8) The document is based on internationally and nationally agreed rights of the child, of women and of human beings in areas of sexual and reproductive health. The topic of discrimination and stigma is well explained in the toolkit.
- 9) It also confers a huge importance to the process of decision-making (making decisions, keeping to your decision, ways to stay strong, saying No to sex until I'm ready). It helps to resist pressure by different ways (what to do when people try to stop you from being strong, what to do if someone tries to persuade you to do something you don't want to do). Different activities explain what are love, friendship, the difference between strong, weak and fighting behaviour, respect.

Weaknesses / aspects to be improved

- 1) The evaluation is not systematic.

Suggestions for improvement

→It should be useful to introduce more complex means to assess learners before and after the programme on knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours. There is no means to assess learners before the programme. The topics are covered in a logical sequence. The material first deals with life skills and sexuality in general and then HIV & AIDS and STIs (protection, transmission, prevention, treatment, stigma, discrimination).

- 2) The document deals not with Voluntary Counselling and Testing.

Suggestions for improvement

→It should be useful to introduce elements on the test and why it is important to make it. Facts on the VCT are very important and ignoring them can lead to mistakes and wrong attitudes. That's why the toolkit will only be complete with that information.

- 3) Relations between boys and girls should be more explained and developed.

Suggestions for improvement

→ Some activities deal with that topic but do not insist on girls' vulnerability. The document should introduce activities only based on gender and its implications. Even though, the document respects and sometimes emphasizes the differences between boys and girls, it could be interested to theorize the concept of gender and propose specific activities.

- 4) One topic not addressed in the toolkit is "help, support and counselling".

Suggestions for improvement

→ It could be useful to add some information about that topic in order to show that it is possible to find help, how and where.

Internal consistency

The contents of the toolkit are generally in line with the learning objectives/outcomes.

Transferability issues and more suggestions for adapting the manual

The material is designed for community facilitators' using. The topics addressed in the guidebook are very relevant, and can serve as model on how to teach about sexual and reproductive health at schools. The lessons on SRH include a wide range of activities which could be used as examples for teaching youth in other settings. That's why this toolkit could be adapted for the official curricula of the relevant countries or serve as a resource for educators working with in- and out-of-school youth in the field of SRH, learning about sexuality, coping with emotions, parenthood, sexual harassment and so forth.

If used in other contexts, the material will need to be adapted as it is currently designed specifically for learners in Sub-Saharan African countries (Botswana, Malawi, Mozambique, Zambia, and Zimbabwe). Names, examples, situations, descriptions or pictures are linked to the cultural context.