

APPRAISAL, SYNTHESIS

Title: Health and Family Life Education (HFLE) Resource Guide for Teachers. Lower Division Empowering Children and Adolescents in Belize with the Knowledge and Skills for Health Living

Type of document: Material for teachers

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Summary

The purpose of this guide is to provide teachers with materials and resources to implement the Health and Family Life Education (HFLE) Curriculum. This guide builds on the foundation of the Regional Curriculum Framework for HLFE, which sets out the HFLE philosophy and standards for teaching and identifies the desired knowledge, skills and behavioral outcomes for students. Unit themes and the content of lessons are responsive to the many health and social challenges in the region, including HIV/AIDS, violence and substance abuse. The Guide thus provides schools and teachers with a concrete tool for HFLE implementation. Through the implementation of HFLE lessons in diverse school settings and communities, the goal is to have a positive impact on student health, which in turn, relates to school attendance and learning.

Drawing upon lessons learned and needs expressed by teachers over the past few years, the contents of this manual include the following:

- Background resources and information for teachers on HFLE, Life Skills Education and Interactive Teaching Methods, including developmental tasks of children and adolescents, behavioral theory supporting life skills education, and information for setting ground rules and a respectful classroom atmosphere
- A comprehensive overview of the revised HFLE Curriculum
- Sample Lesson Plans for HFLE
- A list of resource persons/organizations for HFLE

Note:

The content of the curriculum is organized around four thematic areas:

- Sexuality and Sexual Health;
- Self and Interpersonal Relationships;
- Eating and Fitness and
- Managing the Environment.

This appraisal aims to evaluate the relevance of the part of the document related to HIV & AIDS education and Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH). Therefore, only the first two themes will be considered in this appraisal.

Strengths:

- 1) The material results from a joint project between the Ministers of Education of the Caribbean Community CARICOM and UNICEF and benefits consequently of the official endorsement. The Pan American Health Organisation and other members of the HFLE Regional Working Group also supported the initiative.
- 2) The material is part of the HFLE curriculum which includes the HIV & AIDS topic; especially through the thematic “Sexuality and Sexual Health”. The document was developed based on the need of children and young people from the Caribbean region to acquire the skills to face problems and challenges they encounter in their daily life. This curriculum is also based on findings of a survey made in 2005 which revealed that teachers didn’t receive an adequate training to teach the HFLE program and that it was not delivered properly. Consequently, the present curriculum is a modified and improved version which considers the needs and concerns of teachers and school staff. However, the involvement of learners, school staff, parents and representatives of the community in the development of the curriculum is specified.
- 3) The material was developed based on a wide body of theory-based research which have found that people learn what to do and how to act by observing others and that their behaviors are reinforced by the positive or negative consequences which result during these observations. Therefore, the main objective of this curriculum is to change not only a student’s level of knowledge, but to enhance his or her ability to translate that knowledge into specific and positive behaviors concretely. A summary of behavioral theories should be available in a module inside the document.

- 4) In general, the document is clear, up to date, relevant and non-discriminatory. Therefore, it obtained high results in the appraisal. It is easy readable, accessible and provides complete lessons plans with the skills to be developed.
- 5) The main objective of the curriculum is to help students to develop the skills they need for their life such as communication, decision-making, managing emotions, assertiveness, self-esteem building, resisting peer-pressure, and relationship skills. These skills are essential for a comprehensive HIV & AIDS education which should be treated in a broader scope. It includes the development of the whole individual, so that a person will have the skills to make use of all types of information, whether it is related to HIV & AIDS; reproductive health, safe motherhood, other health issues as well as communication and decision-making situations.
- 6) The Life Skills approach is built on the assumption that opportunities can be created for youth to acquire skills that will boost their protective factors and enable them to avoid being manipulated by outside influences. The use of life skills is to enable youth people to be able to recognise the coercive forces of social pressures in their immediate environment that promote behaviours that can jeopardize their health, emotional and psychological well-being
- 7) The delivery of the curriculum is very flexible depending on the needs as well as human resources, material resources and time resources constraints of each school. Thus, the delivery of HFLE as a discipline based (HFLE is taught as a separate subject) an integrated (HFLE is integrated with other subjects in the school curriculum) or a mix of both methods is suggested.
- 8) The curriculum addresses four thematic areas for the whole lower division covered in a logical sequence depending on the age and level of the students. The period to cover the themes is realistic and many issues will be repeated over the years which is a good aspect. Indeed, the document focuses on the importance of sustainability of the curriculum, in particular by the creation of a portfolio, which is essential for an effective and comprehensive HIV & AIDS and SRH education. To integrate the skills properly, students need the teachers to repeat and review the topics in accordance with their development, age, literacy level, cultural context and sexual experience (mainly virgin or possibly sexually experienced).
- 9) An entire part of the document is dedicated to HFLE assessment methods. It stated that there are a lot of different methods to enable students to demonstrate they have acquired the knowledge, understanding, skills, attitudes and behaviors after completing the programme. It suggests the methods of "performance tasks" which are assignments that ask students to undertake a task or a series tasks to demonstrate proficiency with health knowledge and skills.

- 10)** The document encourages observation and practice negotiation or refusal skills to resist friend's pressure to smoke, use drugs or drink alcohol without losing face or friends. A sample lesson plan, provided as an example, analyses the impact of alcohol and other illicit drugs on behaviours and lifestyle. The main goal of the lesson is to provide students with the ability to identify reasons people abuse drugs; acknowledge the consequences of drug use on a person's life; and Use decision-making skills to determine the consequences of drug abuse on various aspects of a person's life. However, It would have been useful to add a part explaining the possible warning signs that a learner is taking drugs and what to do in such a situation.
- 11)** The document promotes positive attitudes and behaviors, including greater sociability, improved communication, healthy decision making and effective conflict resolution. The final outcome is to help student to acquire the life skills to prevent high risk behaviors such as use of tobacco, alcohol and other drugs, unsafe sex, teenage pregnancies and violence. The thematic "Self and Interpersonal Relationships" in particular deals with the personal development and relationships issues and tries to develop social, cognitive and emotional skills such as: decision making, problem solving, creative thinking, effective communication, interpersonal relationship skills, self-awareness, empathy, coping with emotions, coping with stress, negotiation skills, refusal skills, assertiveness skills or health self management skills.
- 12)** The document explains that teaching a life-skills programme includes leading in advance what help and services are available in the community in order to suggest the learners which services can help them if needed. It also focuses on the importance of confidentiality and to listen to the student without imposing any value, moral, judgment or opinion.
- 13)** The material tries to overcome discrimination and stigma by introducing discussion about behaviors towards people infected or affected by HIV, sexual orientation or gender issues. It also invites teachers to respond to any statements that put down or reinforce stereotypes by discussing the implications of such statements and to avoid making value judgments.
- 14)** An entire part addresses the subject of sexual abuse. It describes how to recognize a situation of sexual coercion, harassment or abuse and encourages teachers to stay vigilant in case of any student's suspicious behavior that might results from a child sexual abuse. The document provides strategies and examples for students to avoid sexual abuse by recalling them they have the right to say "no" if they think somebody touches them inappropriately, they can scream, run away, find help and support and last but not least, they are not guilty of what happened. It is very important for a child to be able to differentiate good and bad touches and to develop a sense of assertiveness and respect of self, in order to prevent any sexual abuse and to become confident, healthy and responsible adults.

- 15)** A lot of teaching methods are suggested in the material in order to improve the quality and interactivity of the lessons like: “ice breaker” activities to acclimate students to the subjects to be addressed, discussions by encouraging shy students to participate and keeping overly zealous participants from monopolizing, or promoting peer education by learning in groups and so on. With this aim in view, the document provides a complete chart with various interactive and participatory methodologies fully explained (description, benefits and process) and provide tips to encourage discussions.
- 16)** The document provides various lesson plans properly structured and complete. It is a good example on how to build a comprehensive lesson on a specific theme. Detailed and clear instructions are provided to teacher on learning goal and objectives (purpose), target group (class), time and material required (time and resources and materials), how to facilitate the activities (methods and strategies) and learning assessment at the end of the lesson (assessment). The activities and exercises are suitable and sufficient considering the objectives of the lesson, the age group and literacy level.
- 17)** Examples, situations and images are appropriate and linked to the culture and society of Belize. The document contains references to the law, men and women inequalities, diet or environmental activities in Belize. The HFLE curriculum was developed to fit the Caribbean region with its specificities and context. Therefore, this document should not be transferred as a whole to another country without a good understanding of the HFLE program. However, some parts of the document can serve as good practices on how to address some sensitive issue related to SRH and provide examples of complete and relevant lessons plans. In order to facilitate the access of the material for other countries, it could be useful to specify the age for each class level. Indeed, someone who doesn't have knowledge on the educative system in Belize might be interested in taking a leaf out of a lesson plan but wouldn't know the age of the intended target group.
- 18)** The material is attractive and contains images. The font is readable with an appropriate use of space. Size and weight of material are reasonable and the document should be quiet durable and reproduced relatively economically.

Weakness/ aspects to be improved:

- 1) The document provides complete and relevant explanations on how to assess students after a lesson. However, the material does not provide information on the importance to assess learners not only after but also before completing the programme.

Suggestion for improvement:

- Including means to assess learners before the programme on knowledge/understanding of SRH, HIV & AIDS, skills, attitudes/values, behaviors. By doing so, it is easier to measure students' progresses or difficulties, and consequently the effectiveness of the teaching, by comparing the assessments made before and after completing the programme.

- 2) In general the document is clear and all the important issues related to SRH and HIV & AIDS are addressed in the programme. However the structure of the document is sometimes difficult to understand and it becomes difficult to navigate through it.

Suggestions for improvement:

- To improve this aspect, it might be useful to enhance the table of contents which is not complete enough. Indeed, adding pages numbers would facilitate the information search. More details could be provided in the table of contents for section 5 in order to find easily the class level and the relevant lesson plans. Moreover, session 5 structure, as presented in the table of contents, does not correspond to the content of the material. Actually, session 5 is divided into class levels, not themes. This model, for example, would be more suitable:

Section 5: HFLE Lesson Planning.....	p. 56
• 5.1 Infant One Lesson Plans.....	p.57
5.1.1 Sexuality and Sexual Health.....	p. 58
5.1.2 Self and Interpersonal Relationships.....	p. 74
• 5.2 Infant Two Lessons Plans.....	p. 85
5.2.1 Sexuality and Sexual Health.....	p. 86
5.2.2 Self and Interpersonal Relationships.....	p.103
• 5.3 Standard One Lessons Plans.....	p. 113
5.3.1 Sexuality and Sexual Health.....	p. 114
5.3.2 Self and Interpersonal Relationships.....	p. 137

Finally, the part which provides an overview of the scope and sequence (pages 14-26) could also be placed in Section 5 in order to understand the structure of the curriculum better.

- 3) For Infant 1, Infant 2 and Standard one, the thematic area on sexuality and sexual health focuses on hygiene and sexual abuse prevention which is a good point. However, the HIV & AIDS issue is introduced in the curriculum for Standard 1V, Standard V and Standard VI only. Given that, the document doesn't provide lesson plans further than Standard One, so it was not possible to assess these courses.

Suggestions for improvement:

- A learner should be able to acquire and make use of core knowledge related to HIV & AIDS and SRH in order to protect his/her health and well-being and to know where to seek support if needed. It is important to speak about HIV & AIDS with students in an age, developmentally and culturally appropriate language. HIV & AIDS is a sensitive issue but it is not only related to sexuality.

It is essential to explain that HIV is the virus which causes AIDS and that HIV can affect or infect anybody. Even a very young child has to know that all people, including people living with HIV, need love, affection and deserve respect, care or support. In order to avoid fear, discrimination and stigma as well as exclusion, children need to know that HIV can be transmitted through blood and not through casual contact. Therefore, they must not touch needles or any sharp object they may find and ask for an adult if somebody is injured. Finally, they should know that there is no cure for HIV but there is a medical treatment called antiretroviral treatment to help people living with HIV to live a happy normal life.

It is important that HIV & AIDS education starts at an early age, at primary school, and be sustained throughout secondary school because it is easier to adopt new values and behaviours than to change them once they are acquired. Of course, a balance should be found between crucial skills and knowledge for young people living in a world with HIV & AIDS and what is acceptable for the community.

For more information and suggestions on topics and learning objectives for a SRH program, please see the "International technical guidance on sexuality education" developed by UNESCO available on the following link: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001832/183281e.pdf>

- 4) The document correctly addresses gender issues. It tries to empower girls and to guide boys towards respectful values. It makes a clear distinction between "sex" which is the biological and permanent features of being either male or female, and "gender" which refers to differences between men and women that are learned and can differ within/between cultures/societies. It stated that the assumption that women are and will always be weak causes a lot of problems in the society and is a major challenge. Power relationship, stereotypes related to gender, gender discrimination and gender based cultural practices are addressed and challenged in the document. In general, the overall presentation of the document is adapted to gender issues. Images, situations, examples and language are nondiscriminatory and implies girls as much as boy.

Suggestions for improvement:

- However, it would have been important to underline more clearly in the activities that in spite of the differences, boys and girls are equal. In the document, we have to wait for standard VI to read something about “equity” which is however a crucial key word when addressing gender issues. Each lesson addressing the question of gender should emphasize on equality.

- 5) The material states that HFLE is a good way to develop the acquisition of democratic, civic, and ethical aptitudes. It also reinforces values like respect for self and others, empathy and tolerance, honesty, kindness, responsibility, integrity and social justice. These elements are essential components for a better understanding of Human Rights. The document also encourages young people to strive towards accepted ideals of democratic, pluralistic society such as self-reliance, capacity for hard work, cooperation, respect for legitimately constituted authority, and ecologically sustainable development.

Suggestions for improvement:

- However, in terms of Human Rights, it would have been useful to be more precise on some basic points, in particular on the fact that each person, man or woman, child or adult, rich or poor, everywhere in the world, has rights and duties inherent to their status of human being. Students need to know they have the right to be treated with respect and to complain if they feel their rights are infringed in accordance with the children’s rights and universal human rights.

- 6) The table of contents indicates a session 6 with a glossary of terms. Unfortunately, it was missing from the version used for this appraisal.

Suggestions for improvement:

- It is important to provide definition of key words and sources of background information & support in any material, because teachers need to know the correct meaning of each word they use in order to avoid lack of understanding or misunderstandings. Therefore, it is not possible to say that the document is fully complete and sufficiently documented to be used alone. At this point, recourse to other documents may be useful.