

AUNTIE STELLA

FACILITATORS AND ADAPTATION GUIDE

ENGLISH VERSION



July 2006 (2019)
Developed by
Barbara Kaim and
Training and Research Support
Centre (TARSC), Zimbabwe



Auntie Stella: Teenagers talk about sex, life and relationships, also available as a printed pack with laminated question and answer cards, is an interactive toolkit targeted at young people in east and southern Africa aged 12-19 years, both in and out of school. The pack uses a series of 42 letters, each written in the style of a missive to a newspaper agony aunt, covering topics such as physical and emotional changes in adolescence, relationships with parents, peers and members of the opposite sex, social and economic pressures to have sex, gender roles, unwanted pregnancy, STIs, HIV and AIDS. Young people work in small groups to read and discuss a letter card. When ready, they read Auntie Stella's reply, doing a number of interactive activities along the way, including roleplays, games, quizzes, etc. During this process, participants not only share experiences and build a sense of comradery, but also increase their skills and confidence to communicate, negotiate, plan and strategise.

This PDF file includes **the 2006 version of the Facilitation and Adaptation Guide**. While the complete pack was first produced in 2006, note that the cards have been updated in 2019 to take into account new developments and issues in the field of youth reproductive health. This includes new information on antiretrovirals and living positively, menstrual hygiene, cervical cancer and more.

For a complete set of the *Auntie Stella* pack, please also download the following two PDF files available at <http://www.tarsc.org/publications/> :

- **the 2019 updated English version of the 42 question and answer cards**
and
- **the 2019 updated List of Topics and Themes**

Auntie Stella is available in English, Shona and Ndebele, and has also been translated and adapted into Chichewa, Portuguese and Swahili. You can access these translated versions, and other information about Auntie Stella, online at <http://www.tarsc.org>

To find out more about the *Auntie Stella* programme, to read some of the stories of change linked to using *Auntie Stella*, or to place an order for a copy of the printed toolkit, please contact admin@tarsc.org



Auntie Stella

Teenagers talk about sex, life and relationships



FACILITATOR'S AND ADAPTATION GUIDE



Training and Research
Support Centre, Zimbabwe

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John Snow International ● Europe
Promoting and Protecting Health

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Please visit our website at www.tarsc.org or contact us at admin@tarsc.org for further information on TARSC and on our other participatory training and research materials and programmes.



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Facilitators!

Read this guide before you start using *Auntie Stella*. It tells you what *Auntie Stella* is all about, and will help you to use the cards and plan your programme.

The key sections are:

- The facilitator's role (page 9)
- How to use *Auntie Stella* (page 12)

Two sections in this guide are designed to help organisations:

- Training and support for facilitators (page 28)
- Adapting *Auntie Stella* (page 32)

We hope you find this guide useful and that you and all young people using the *Auntie Stella* cards are inspired to work together to make a better world for yourselves; a world where young people have fulfilling and healthy relationships and participate actively in their communities.

PART ONE



Facilitator's guide

WHAT IS AUNTIE STELLA?

Auntie Stella: Teenagers talk about sex, life and relationships is an interactive reproductive health pack for young people. It is suitable for young people between 12 and 19 years old, both in and out of school. It was produced in Zimbabwe for youth in southern and eastern Africa but can be used and adapted throughout the continent and internationally.

The pack uses a series of question and reply cards. They look like problem page letters written to ‘agony aunts’ in magazines – a place that young people often look for information. The cards and their stories cover a wide range of personal and social issues that affect young people’s lives, sexual health and relationships (see the full list on page 8).

When young people use *Auntie Stella*, they usually work in small mixed-sex or single-sex groups. The group reads a letter card and then turns to the guided questions to discuss the problem it presents. Then they read *Auntie Stella*’s reply and do the related activities – roleplays and drama, games, quizzes, debates, interviews, research projects, support groups, creating songs and stories, maps and diagrams. Participants can use the cards in other ways too – some done in small groups, some with the large group working together.

‘I wanted the sessions to be very informal so I would just take a card and go to a soccer game pretending to be reading it. This would create curiosity from one or two individuals who would then approach me and I would give them the card to read for themselves. This would create an argument and also raise curiosity and with time people would gather and start arguing. I would give them the answer stressing that it is from a very knowledgeable person. In a nutshell, these cards are a really helpful lot.’

youth educator

The *Auntie Stella* pack aims to:

- create a relaxed atmosphere where youth can freely discuss issues related to their bodies, feelings, relationships, sexual health and behaviour;
- provide them with accurate information about themselves and their bodies;
- help them weigh up their options and support each other in making and maintaining wise decisions;
- provide them with the skills to plan, communicate, negotiate, ask for help, say firmly what they need and want, and interact with institutions, families, partners and friends;
- encourage young people to use health and community services and to play a role in ensuring these institutions meet their needs.

Young people usually know best what they need to be happy and healthy, and, with the right support, they can achieve this. *Auntie Stella*, therefore, seldom tells young people what they should or shouldn't do. Instead, the pack helps them to think critically about themselves and their relationships with their peers, family and community. They are asked to explore how they can work together, get involved in decisions that affect their lives and make their voices heard. And, in doing so, they are encouraged to imagine a better world and what role they can play in making it that way.

The *Auntie Stella* letters and methodology arose out of research with Zimbabwean youth, and reflect their experiences, needs and challenges. The cards were tested in other southern and east African countries, including Malawi, South Africa, Tanzania and Zambia.

The pack has 40 question and answer cards, this guide and two information cards – one lists the topics, the other explains difficult words. The pack was originally produced in 1997, and revised in 2004/2005. The cards are available in a number of African languages including Shona and Ndebele and a Portuguese version is in preparation. Visit the TARSC website for details.

Auntie Stella on the web

Auntie Stella is also available on the web at the TARSC site, www.tarsc.org or www.auntiestella.org and on CD-ROM.

The web version is designed for users working alone, or for pairs or small groups sharing a computer. Users move around the pack, and around each card, by clicking on the links they want.

AUNTIE STELLA CARDS AND TOPICS

- 1 Should I sleep with him?
- 2 Is my penis too small?
- 3 Must I sleep with my sister's husband?
- 4 I'm looking after someone with AIDS
- 5 I am the head of my family now
- 6 I want to have sex like all my friends!
- 7 I had an STI – am I infertile?
- 8 My teacher wants to have sex with me
- 9 My best friend's gay and loves me!
- 10 My girlfriend's pregnant!
- 11 I have strong sexual urges
- 12 I pay for lunch – don't I deserve sex?
- 13 Pimples on my penis!
- 14 I may be HIV positive
- 15 I'm worried about cervical cancer
- 16 I was raped
- 17 Should I have sex for money?
- 18 I have 'wet dreams'
- 19 What are antiretrovirals?
- 20 She wants to have sex with me
- 21 My periods are irregular
- 22 Should I tell him I'm HIV positive?
- 23 Will mbanje cure my shyness?
- 24 My parents are difficult
- 25 Must I tell her about my STI?
- 26 I'm HIV positive. Am I going to die?
- 27 Can I be pregnant?
- 28 My girlfriend's getting married
- 29 A teacher got my friend pregnant
- 30 My husband is unfaithful
- 31 I'm depressed for no reason
- 32 I don't want this baby
- 33 My church says condoms are wrong
- 34 I'm gay – will anyone love me?
- 35 I miss school when menstruating
- 36 My sugar daddy treats me badly
- 37 Love stops me from studying
- 38 My mother has HIV and says so
- 39 How can I cure my terrible pimples?
- 40 I'm HIV positive and pregnant
- 41 My brother was circumcised
- 42 Sex with more than one man

THE FACILITATOR'S ROLE

Many kinds of people can be facilitators – youth peer educators, teachers, community or health workers, counsellors or youth officers in government or non-governmental agencies. As facilitators, it is best if...

- you know a lot about adolescent reproductive health issues and know where to find extra materials and information;
- you feel comfortable interacting with young people and can talk to them easily about issues related to sex and relationships;
- you can lead without dominating and can help groups work through many different activities;
- you are happy to leave young people working on their own in small discussion groups; you don't always need to control or correct them, or know everything they're saying;
- youth trust and respect you because you understand them and want to help strengthen their relationships with individuals and their community.

“I felt younger and learnt a lot from the youths. They know much more than the elders assume they know. They made me think with an open mind, and there wasn't much pressure because the process generally drives itself.”

facilitator

Your role in the *Auntie Stella* sessions is therefore vital. Your most important job is to organise the sessions and encourage participants to share ideas, information and questions, talk as freely as possible, and learn better ways to make choices and decisions. You want them to talk, argue and laugh a lot – they play games, do quizzes, act out situations, do plays, songs and stories. And the answers to problems don't come from you; but from the participants themselves.

Some facilitators are already experienced and don't need special training to work with *Auntie Stella* – though this guide will still be useful. However, if you feel that some training would be helpful, discuss it with your organisation and look at the suggestions on pages 28–29.

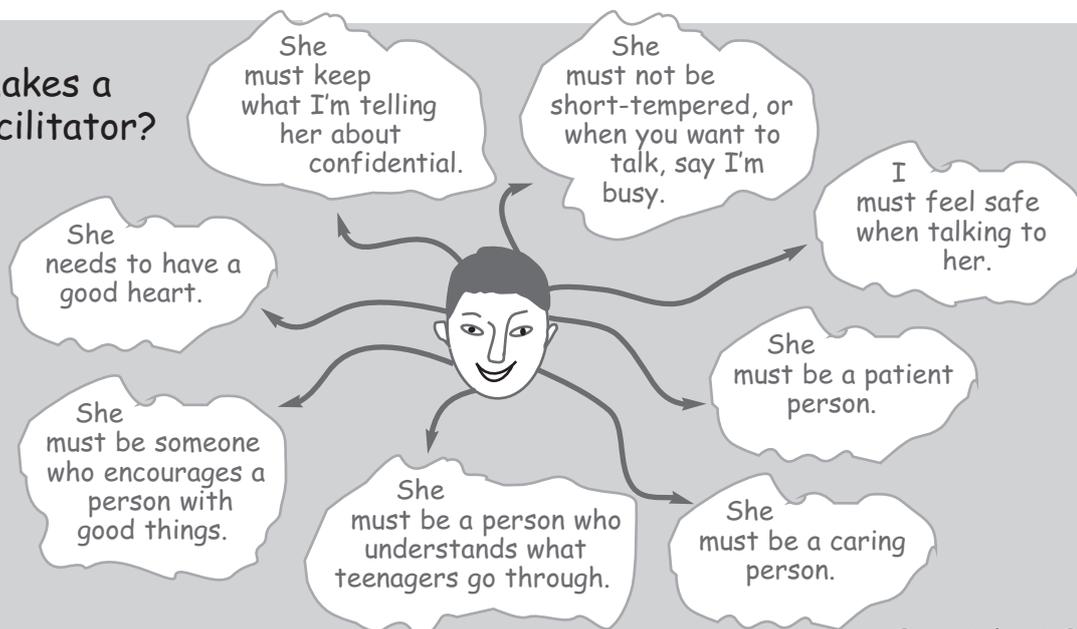
SOME GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR FACILITATORS

‘What our youth facilitators found helpful was finding out the difference between facts and opinions. Then they realised that you need to know all the facts about HIV and STIs and adolescence, but that everyone had a right to their opinions.’

trainer

- Prepare what the youth will do in each session – but don’t worry if you have to change this while it’s happening. Be flexible.
- Make the atmosphere informal so everyone feels free to talk. Don’t worry if discussion gets heated and noisy.
- Give clear simple instructions and check that everyone understands what to do.
- Encourage and respect everybody’s ideas, and don’t impose your own opinions.
- Everything you hear is confidential (secret). Never gossip about what anyone said in the sessions. If you do, they won’t trust you.
- Remind participants to respect others in the group, not laugh at anybody’s ideas, and keep everyone’s stories secret. Group leaders can help to stress this.
- Let the group choose what language they want to use.
- Contact useful organisations, individuals and community leaders in your area. Tell them about the programme and ask for their support. Read the cards to see what information and contacts participants will need.
- Find extra material about the topics on the cards – from ministries and organisations, the internet, magazines, books, videos or DVDs. Help participants with suggestions when they’re doing research.

What makes a good facilitator?



Bonginkasi Bhayi

WORKING WITH GROUPS

In most *Auntie Stella* sessions participants work in small groups, but the large group can also work all together. You have a different part to play in the two different kinds of sessions.

Small-group sessions

In these sessions participants look at the cards in small, private, mixed groups. In these sessions you:

- Start everything off, but then keep at a distance;
- Let groups work at their own speed;
- Hand out new cards when participants complete the card they are using;
- Encourage participants to consult you – for factual information, when they are not sure what to do, or with difficult words or ideas on the cards. The section on getting started on page 13 gives detailed instructions;
- Don't listen in to the discussions or ask what they said;
- Don't give your own opinions.

'A lot of our youth educators didn't put their young people into small groups to discuss the cards. They preferred a plenary that they could control, though they did sometimes divide it into a girls' group and a boys' group. But when we all got together at the end of the programme, I saw that lots of the problems they raised – not enough time, everyone wanting to talk at once, sometimes nobody speaking – could be solved if they used small groups of 4 or 5 people.'

trainer

Large-group sessions

Organise some sessions where the large group works together. These may be theme sessions, review sessions – where they discuss the impact of *Auntie Stella* – and special activity sessions. (The guidelines for these are on pages 16–22.)

- Prepare and plan these sessions carefully, but be ready to make changes according to how long they take for different activities;
- Direct the discussion and activities;
- Check that the facts participants are sharing are accurate, gently correct false information or myths and tell them where they can find out more;
- Set some time limits for activities but warn groups before the time is up and change your plan if necessary.

HOW TO USE AUNTIE STELLA

Auntie Stella can be used in a variety of situations, for example, in classrooms, youth group meetings, AIDS or sports clubs, counselling sessions or sessions for parents. Sessions can vary from 40 minutes (usually in schools) to half a day.

Before you start

- Read all the cards and activities so you can explain to anyone who needs help.
- Read the notes on different kinds of sessions on pages 16–22.
- Plan your programme, but be ready to change it according to what happens in the sessions. There is an example of a 12 session programme in the box opposite.
- When you are planning, note that some cards may not be relevant to your group because of urban or rural, cultural or country differences. In this case, skip these topics, or discuss similar problems young people face in your area – see Part Two on adapting *Auntie Stella* for more ideas.
- Read through the time management box below for help with planning.

Time management

Planning and flexibility are both important. It's better to do one activity thoroughly if everyone is involved in it, than to rush through several activities – even if this wasn't what you originally planned.

The bigger your group, the longer a discussion will take, so use small groups for most of the sessions – and just come together to work on special themes and to sum up and check information (see the theme and review session guidelines on pages 17–22). If different groups work through cards at different speeds, that's fine. Remember that some of the Action Point activities can be reserved for large-group sessions.

When doing quizzes, roleplays and debates, limit the number of activities in a session and set time limits for the different steps in the process. When groups work to a time limit, warn them when they have five minutes or so left – and be as flexible as you can.

When you plan your sessions, have some options, so you are ready if an activity finishes quickly, or takes longer than you imagined. In large group sessions, always leave five minutes at the end to summarise learning points and, if necessary, decide what people want to do in the next session. It's important to close a session well, never in a rush.

Getting started

You need flipchart paper or large sheets of paper and pens.

- Do a warm-up or energiser to get everyone relaxed. If participants don't know each other, use an introduction warm-up.
- Ask if anyone reads letters to 'agony aunts' columns in magazines and what they think about them.
- Show some question and answer cards and explain how they will use them.
- Explain that the Talking and Action Points are important because they make the link between the stories on the cards and what happens in their own lives. New sessions start with a report-back on the activities or research done since the last session.
- Read out some topics and hold up the **topic list card**.
- Work out 'ground rules' with the group, for example:
 - Never laugh at anyone.
 - Give everyone a chance to talk.
 - Never discuss anyone's stories outside the sessions.Participants write up the rules and pin them up for each session.
- Stress that you won't listen in to their discussion but they can ask you for any help they need. Show them the **What does that word mean? card** and leave it somewhere central for participants to use. Tell them you can explain too.
- Participants choose their own groups of 4 to 6 people. If anyone is left out, fit them into a group. Ask everyone to choose names for their groups.
- Each group makes a **group record sheet** where they list the cards they've finished. You keep these between sessions. Keep your own record of the sessions, too, as shown in the example on page 14.
- Ask each group to choose a leader. Explain that the **group leader** helps the group keep to the rules, fills in the group record sheet and reminds the group to report back on the Action Points they do between the sessions.
- Arrange groups so they can't overhear each other. Tell them they can talk in the language they prefer.
- Begin with the basic session and progress to other ways of using the cards once everyone is more familiar with *Auntie Stella*.

EXAMPLE PROGRAMME GUIDE FOR 12 SESSIONS

Sessions

- 1 Getting started
- 2 Basic session
- 3 Basic session
- 4 Pair reply session
- 5 Basic session
(or finish pair reply)
- 6 Review session
- 7 Theme session
- 8 Own letter session
- 9 Basic session
- 10 Theme session
- 11 Theme session
- 12 Review session

Sample record sheets

Facilitator's group record sheet			
Groups	Cards and date completed	Activities done	Comments
			<p><i>These comments should include observations on what methods worked well, what problems you had, issues you need to re-visit and what you would do differently next time.</i></p> <p><i>If you set up a facilitator's support group, this record will remind you of some of the things you want to discuss.</i></p>

Group record sheet			
Group name		Place	
Date	Cards completed	Activities done	Comments and questions
			<p><i>Participants can make their own observations on the sessions here which may prove useful to you too.</i></p> <p><i>They don't have to be extensive comments – for example: we enjoyed this session or need more time for this, and so on.</i></p>

The basic method is to work in small, mixed-sex groups. Each group reads a question letter and uses the guided questions in the Talking Points to discuss the problem. Then they read *Auntie Stella's* reply and do the Action Points. Some of these Action Point activities are done during the session and others are done outside the session with report backs at the next session. The Action Points help participants move beyond the particular story under discussion to explore how that issue affects their lives and what they can do about it.

It takes a group between 15 minutes and an hour to finish a card, depending on their interest and the types of activity.

Here is the suggested procedure:

- Give each group a question card. The order does not matter, but one way is to stagger them. For example, if you have five groups, start with: 1, 9, 17, 25, and 32, followed by 2, 10, 18, 26 and 33, and so on. Or groups can choose whichever card they want.
- Groups work on the cards at their own speed, coming to you when they need the answer card or a new question card, or if they have queries.
- Ten minutes before the end of the session, ask groups to stop their discussion and fill in the group record sheets. They list the finished cards, any unfinished cards (they can continue them next session) and any Action Points they need to do between sessions.
- Collect the record sheets and keep them with the *Auntie Stella* pack.
- Ask if they have any questions about using the cards.
- In the next and every session, ask someone to pin up the ground rules sheet. They will work in the same groups as last time (unless there is a good reason to change the groups in any way). Remind group leaders to help the groups keep to their rules.
- Then groups collect their group record cards, and any unfinished cards. They start the new session by talking about any Action Point activities they have done since the last session.

'The form 1 pupils were very shy but the older ones asked more questions because they were keen to know everything, unlike out-of-school youth who already knew some of the things.'

youth educator

PAIR REPLY, OWN LETTER AND SINGLE-SEX SESSIONS

There are different ways to use the cards. These make the programme more dynamic and give you an opportunity to check that everyone has correct information. These different sessions are described below.

Pair reply sessions (small groups)

Participants start in their normal groups and then split into pairs (or threes). Each pair reads a question card and its Talking Points, and writes their reply together. They get back into the small group and take turns to read the questions and their replies. They discuss each one, then check *Auntie Stella's* reply and the Action Points. This may take more than one session.

Own letter sessions (small groups)

Working individually, participants write letters to *Auntie Stella* about their own, a friend's or a relative's problem. Make it clear that nobody will know who wrote which letter and that they shouldn't sign their names. Give 20–25 minutes for the letter-writing. Anyone who finishes quickly can write two letters. Then everyone gets into their normal groups, folds their papers and puts them into a bag. Each group member in turn takes one out and reads it aloud. The group discusses what to reply. Remind them that the ground rules are especially important here. Make sure no-one laughs at anyone or is nasty about their letters. You may need more than one session to cover this.

Single-sex sessions (small groups)

Most participants enjoy working in mixed-sex groups, but for some cards they may prefer girls-only or boys-only groups. Using the full list of card topics, they can select the cards they would like to work on in single-sex groups and you can specify a session when they will use these cards. Ask them to make new single-sex groups, then carry on with a normal basic session. At the start of the next session, they can tell their regular groups what they talked about.

Suggested cards for single-sex groups (there may be others):

- 2 Is my penis too small?
- 15 I'm worried about cervical cancer
- 18 I have 'wet dreams'
- 21 My periods are irregular

THEME SESSIONS

Theme sessions (large and small groups)

In theme sessions, the whole group works together on a particular theme, using several related cards. The page overleaf shows ten possible themes to work with; some are divided into different topics. You may think of others too. When you choose themes and topics, ask participants which are most relevant to them.

Many cards are relevant to several themes and themes are often linked so the theme sessions usually focus on particular aspects of the cards.

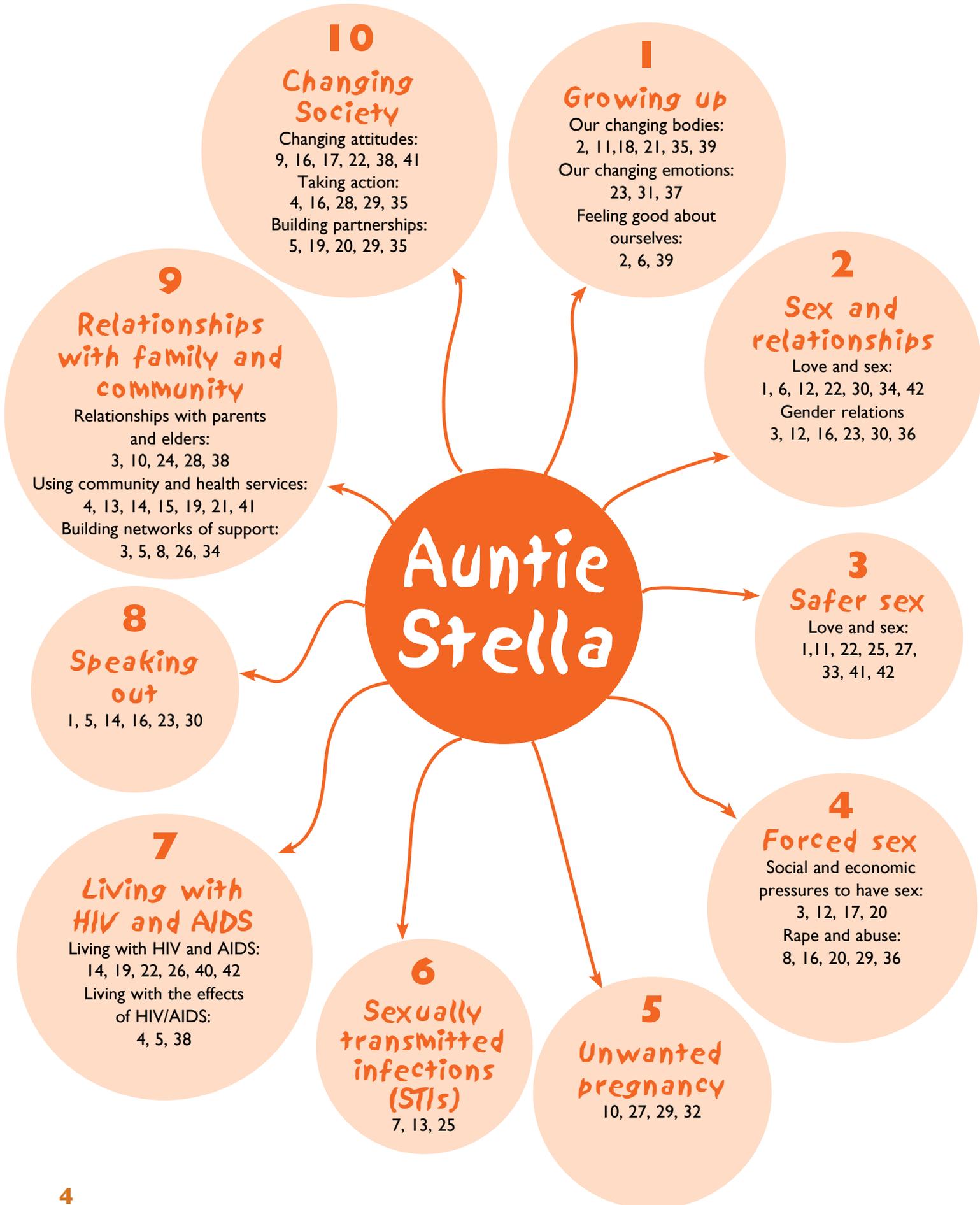
Before you begin:

- Choose your theme. Themes work well when they're part of a larger programme, not only *Auntie Stella*. So it's good to find other material and activities to use with the cards (see the additional resources section on page 30).

Remember that in some cards, the whole card is relevant to the theme. With others, only one activity is relevant. Check this when you're planning.

- There are several ways you can do theme sessions. Consult the methods on pages 19 and 20 and choose the one you want to use. You may be able to develop your own methods once you are familiar with the programme and your group.
- Plan each different part of the session and estimate how long these should take. You may need two or more sessions to cover one theme.
- Decide which activities to do in small groups and which to do with the large group. Work out how many groups you need.
- Plan what to do if activities take more or less time than you thought they would.

Ten suggested themes



‘On the crucial day, I storm into the class, face beaming with a ‘guess what I have’ look. I read out one card to the whole class, and raise my head to see eyes which reflect the cracking brains of my pupils. Before I know it, questions are thrown at me. No problem, I throw them back to the whole class.... Brilliant, here come the answers. Time to read out *Auntie Stella’s* answer. A volunteer is chosen. I enquire of satisfaction, they respond that it is total. I read one more card then leave them in suspense of the answer. Next day all will be revealed. *Auntie Stella*, you came as a mind opener to the youths, and thanks for saving my days.’

youth educator

Method 1

- 1** Collect the background material you need and plan the session, as described on page 17.
- 2** Before the session starts, outline the issues relevant to the chosen theme to create a focus and explain any ideas or terms that may be unfamiliar or unclear. For example, you may need to define terms like ‘communication’ and ‘partnerships’.
- 3** At the start of the session, working in pairs, participants write any questions they have about the theme. Write the questions on flipchart paper and put this up while they work on the cards.
- 4** Divide participants into the same number of groups as there are cards in that theme (4 cards = 4 groups). Give a card to each group; later they swop cards so that everyone works on all or most of the cards. If you’ve marked any Action Points for large group activities, ask them to leave those out.
- 5** When everyone has seen most of the cards, ask them to tell you the main topics the cards cover. Write these on a flipchart or other large paper. Then do the outstanding activities from the cards and any other activities you’ve identified. Relate the activities to the topics the participants listed.
- 6** At the end go back to all the questions the participants prepared at the beginning. Can they now answer them? If there are still outstanding issues, discuss where to find any information they need, if you can’t provide it for them. (You may find that some of the outstanding issues really fall under another theme and this will give you some direction in planning the next theme session.)
- 7** Finally, ask them what they want to do as a result of working on this theme – as an individual, in their relationships (friends, family, partners) and in society? This last step is important so make sure you leave enough time for it.

Method 2

- Do steps 1, 2 and 4 from the first method.
- When everyone has seen most of the cards, ask these questions:

- What did you learn from your discussion?
- How were the ideas raised on the cards relevant to your lives or the lives of people in your community?
- Are there any people or organisations you know who are dealing with these issues? What are they doing?
- What changes would you like to make in your lives and society as a result of working on this theme?
- What help or skills do you need to make these changes and how will you get them?

- Then do the activities you have chosen.

Method 3

- Do steps 1 and 2 from the first method.
- Each group works on a different card related to the theme (set a time limit), then reports back to the big group by answering these questions:

- What was the problem or issue raised on the card?
- What do you now see as the best advice for the problem? Why?
- How is the card important for your own lives – as individuals, in your relationships and in your community?

- Then you do one or more activities related to the main theme.

Method 4

- Choose relevant Action Points from your cards to do with the whole group.
- Towards the end ask the youth to discuss these questions in pairs first, then with the whole group.

- What information and skills have you gained from doing these activities?
- What do you want to do as a result of working on this theme – as an individual, in your relationships (friends, family, partners) and in society?

REVIEW SESSIONS

Review sessions (small and large groups)

In a review session, participants discuss what they have learnt so far and how it is affecting their lives. They can also ask any questions they want. It helps you assess how the programme is going and what they have gained from it. It's a good idea to do a review session every five or six sessions, especially if you have been working in small groups for a while. Your role is to supply missing information (or direct them to where they can find it) and to correct wrong information and misconceptions. Write the questions below on the board or flipchart before the session:

Questions to ask in review sessions

- What do you enjoy most and least about the *Auntie Stella* cards?
- What are the most important things you've learnt or done from the cards you've looked at?
- Do you have any questions about the stories you discussed?
- What were the most helpful activities in the Action Points?
- Are there any changes in your life – your feelings, relationships, attitudes or behaviour – as a result of doing the programme? If yes, what are they?
- How have you worked as a group or with organisations to change your lives and environment?



It's often easier for people to discuss these questions in small groups first, especially if there are more than 15 participants. Then they report back to the whole group about their ideas.

During the large group discussions, summarise the feedback according to the following:

- 1 Card content**
Comments on what they learnt, and questions
- 2 The Auntie Stella process**
What they liked and didn't like
- 3 Action resulting**
Any changes or decisions made – in their own lives, families and relationships, in their society or country

Be sure to treat all comments with respect, even if they seem wrong or stupid. Never laugh at anyone. And remember to distinguish between fact and opinion.

More questions to choose from for later review sessions

- What did you discover in this part of *Auntie Stella*? What was most helpful?
- If you wrote your own letters, are there any stories you want to share, or questions you want to ask the whole group?
- What did you find out about the ideas and experiences of the opposite sex from doing the cards together?
- How has *Auntie Stella* influenced the way you think about: yourself and your body; relationships with your peers and partners; relationships with your family and community?
- Has *Auntie Stella* made a difference to what you do in your life? How?
- What have you learnt about people and organisations who try to help young people in your community (including schools, clinics, community leaders and home-based care programmes)? Has *Auntie Stella* influenced your attitude to them?
- What ways have you found to work together for change?
- Have you become more involved in organisations and decisions that affect your lives? How?
- What changes would you like to work towards in the future?

Roleplay

Participants act out a given situation, as themselves or as somebody else, for example, a girl trying to get her boyfriend to use a condom, or a boy pressuring his girlfriend to have sex. The focus is what happens in the conversation and how it relates to real life, not how well people act.

Either two or three people can act in front of the rest of the group or everyone can act the same situation and report back.

If the participants are working in small groups on their own, let the questions on the cards guide them through the roleplay. If, however, it is a large group session, you can be more involved. At the end of the roleplay, praise the actors and the usefulness of their roleplay. Always take actors out of their roles by asking: *How did you feel as your character? How did the others react?* This is especially important if someone has been acting a negative role.

Then everyone discusses: *What happened? Why? Could this happen in real life? Did the actors reach the best conclusion? What information or skills did you learn from the roleplay, and What help do you still need to handle situations like this?*



Role play in action

The stop/start game

This is a special kind of roleplay. Some of the group act and the others watch. Those watching can raise their hands and stop the drama if they want to take over a role and do it differently.

At the end, don't discuss who was the best actor but which was the best way of achieving the aim of the roleplay, for example, of asking advice from an elder.

Discussion statements

These are sentences that participants mark either true/false or agree/disagree. Participants first write their answers individually. Then in pairs or small groups they discuss each statement and try to reach a consensus – even if it is that they're not sure.

Another way for a whole-group activity is to label three corners of the room as **agree**, **disagree** and **not sure**. Read out the statements one at a time then participants 'vote' by standing in the relevant corner. Have a brief discussion about why they chose their sign but keep it short so they don't get bored.

Quizzes

These should be fun, not like school tests. Do them in pairs or small groups, or read out the questions and let everyone write down their answers and scores individually. The discussion is the most important aspect of these quizzes especially since some of the quizzes look at opinions rather than facts.

Drawings and diagrams

Participants can do these on paper, board, or in the sand. Emphasise that they don't have to be good at drawing – just to show their ideas. Use drawings as alternatives to writing – for example, a 'problem tree' can focus on any topic, with the roots as the causes and the branches as the results.

Debates

Choose a relevant topic, preferably one that is controversial among young people. Ask for two volunteer speakers for the topic and two against. Give them time to prepare their argument. Ask for a volunteer to chair the debate.

Or you can have six groups, three for and three against the topic. Each chooses a speaker and helps prepare arguments, so everyone is involved. Set times for everything – the preparation, speeches, and questions.



From a drawing by Mkhululi Khumalo

‘Sometimes these youth would offer to give us their real testimonies, because they weren’t shy. There was a girl who had sex with her boyfriend because he gave her presents, just like in the card. And then she got pregnant and he dumped her. She told the group not to be cheated by these small things like presents that will ruin your lives forever. I was so pleased with these testimonies and I also learnt something.’

youth educator

Drama and stories

These can be prepared by each group and then presented for the bigger group – you give the topic or situation (for example, teenage pregnancy or whether to go for an HIV test) but no details. Follow both drama and stories with discussion. Leave time for everyone to do their presentation – use two sessions if necessary but also set a time limit. Always summarise the information and skills they have learnt in the session.

Speakers

Try to find and invite speakers sympathetic to young people and aware of their rights. Get the group to prepare questions on the topic in advance.

Research

By visiting local services like clinics young people gain the confidence to ask questions and use the services later. Invite local services and organisations to be part of the *Auntie Stella* programme, so they will be helpful and informed. Encourage participants to contact appropriate organisations and individuals.

When they report back on any research and projects, allow plenty of time.



CHALLENGES FOR FACILITATORS

What if participants are sharing wrong information?

This could happen in small-group sessions where you don't listen to the discussions. To counter this, *Auntie Stella's* answer gives correct information, and in review and theme sessions you can find out what people think and deal with any problems.

Also, make sure you distinguish between facts and opinions. You may need to correct facts (like how HIV is transmitted) through true/false quizzes or by giving small groups material to read and report back on. But with opinions (like whether we should follow tradition) there is no right answer, and everybody's opinions are equal – yours too. The important thing is to encourage youth to discuss their ideas. If you give your own opinion, make it clear that they don't have to agree.

What if I think it's wrong to talk about some topics or get embarrassed by them?

Many people are uncomfortable discussing sexuality but we really need to try. It seems difficult at first but gets easier each time. Young people's lives will be at risk if we don't give them the information and skills to live more safely. They need the chance to discuss important and sometimes private issues; so be as open-minded as you can and encourage them when they're shy. Silence leads to misunderstanding and prejudices. Openness can bring about constructive action and change.

It might help to work in pairs – a man and a woman. The man works with the boys and the woman with the girls, but come together from time to time and share ideas.

What if I or the participants disagree with *Auntie Stella's* reply?

This is fine – there are no right or wrong answers (except on purely factual matters), and the Action Points often ask what the group thinks of *Auntie Stella's* ideas. What's important is that participants learn to weigh up different ideas and make choices wisely. Try not to force your own opinions onto them.

What if one of the participants gets really upset?

Many topics relate to worries in people's lives so this is normal. If a person is very upset, you or one of their friends can take them somewhere private to just listen if they want to talk – or just be with them. Contact a counsellor if you need to. Find good counsellors in the community before you start – these are people trained to work with youth. Good counsellors help people make their own decisions, and don't just give advice.

'Sometimes it was so hard to discuss some of the cards. I felt so embarrassed because I was very shy. If it was not for my partner i think I would have walked out of some sessions The out of school youth were very free to talk and even use vulgar words. But I was glad to hear what they experienced in life.'

youth educator

‘Our youth educators really appreciated the way that *Auntie Stella* got everyone talking and arguing, but they were scared of the noise. They were in school and sometimes they were nervous of what the other teachers would say because they didn’t teach *Auntie Stella* like the traditional subjects. They saw noisy discussions and zealous arguments as problems and advantages at the same time. Maybe one solution is to do sessions with school students somewhere out of school.’

trainer

‘The biggest challenge for our facilitators was learning to let go, trusting the youth they worked with, knowing when to be an expert and when to let everyone have their own opinion. It’s hard to accept that you don’t have to be in control all the time, and that, especially when everyone is working in small groups, you can just leave them alone and deal with any problems in the round-up at the end’

trainer

What if the participants get too argumentative?

This isn’t always a problem – remember *Auntie Stella* is meant to get everyone talking. If you’re working in a big group and everyone wants to speak at once, break into small groups giving everyone more opportunity to be heard.

Give each group a ‘talking stick’ – only the person with the stick can speak and it’s passed around the group so everyone gets a turn. Make this like a game and ask group leaders to make sure it works. Set a time limit, too, and make sure they come to some conclusion before the time is up.

If the noise disturbs other people, take your groups outside.

What if the participants don’t want to talk?

This may happen in large-group sessions. First, make sure everyone understands the task and knows what to do. Are the questions too difficult? Simplify them, or leave them out.

If they’re shy, let them discuss the questions in small groups with their friends, or ‘buzz groups’ of two or three. Then ask if anyone wants to share their ideas with the large group.

If it’s a topic nobody is interested in, don’t worry – leave it and go on to the next one.

What if we don’t have the time to do all the activities planned for the session?

This often happens in large-group sessions. It’s not a problem. Be flexible and ready to change plans depending on what the participants are enjoying and are involved in. Some suggestions:

- Take more sessions to do one theme;
- Keep one session especially for activities linked to a particular card or theme;
- Plan longer sessions – check first what the participants would like to do;
- Start with the most important activity;
- Vary the method when you do themes – start with a quiz, for example.

See the time management box on page 12 for more ideas.

TRAINING AND SUPPORT FOR FACILITATORS

‘Sometimes facilitators believe the myths as well. One common one in Zimbabwe is that if you squirt breast milk on a baby’s genitals, they won’t be promiscuous later. Many people learn that from their grandmothers. We all need to look at where we get our information, and how we can find out what is really true.’

trainer

‘And some people who have studied science and finished school still believe that a man’s semen is full of nutrition, so that when you have sex, the woman absorbs all this ‘food’ through her vagina. So they say that when you get married, the husband gets thin because he’s losing his semen, and the wife gets fatter!’

trainer

If you are already experienced in participatory training and know about, or have access to, information on a range of adolescent reproductive health issues, you will be able to use *Auntie Stella* without much additional training and information. Others will benefit from well-designed training sessions. Here are some guidelines on what trainees should do in the sessions:

- Do the *Auntie Stella* cards as normal participants, covering all session and activity types.
- Discuss information on key factual topics. (We need to dispel our own myths.)
- Experience and conduct sessions using participatory training techniques, and explore and discuss the advantages and disadvantages of these approaches.
- Have the opportunity to practise facilitating – individually or in pairs. Each participant should have the time for feedback and guidance.
- Discuss the importance of strict confidentiality and understand that participants must be able to trust you. Gossiping can put the whole programme at risk.
- Develop basic leadership and counselling skills and the realisation that good counsellors help people to come to their own decisions rather than tell them what to do.

A sample two or four day training programme is given in the box on the next page but every training programme will depend on specific needs, and on the time and resources available.

If facilitators have no experience in youth health, a longer training programme is recommended.

Sample training programme outline

Two or four day training programmes

DAY 1:

Session 1: Introduction:

Introductory warm-up activities, hopes and fears, ground rules

Session 2: What is participatory facilitation?

Participants' experiences (roleplays), characteristics of a good facilitator, importance of participatory facilitation when working with youth sexuality and relationship issues

Session 3: What is Auntie Stella?

Small groups use the cards for 45–60 minutes, then tell plenary: what they learnt, what they liked, didn't like or found difficult. The organiser then introduces the pack and methodology

Session 4: Review of the pack

Small groups review the whole pack; cards and guide. They then choose two or three cards from the list, focusing on those cards which cover topics they are either uninformed about, worried about including in the pack or most interested in using. Groups work on them and then report back on potential use of *Auntie Stella* in their working environment

DAYS 2-3: Technical information (optional)

On HIV, AIDS and youth reproductive health; use of community and health services; youth as advocates for change. Relevant *Auntie Stella* cards used throughout to emphasise a point.

DAY 4:

Session 1: Review of previous day/s discussions

Session 2: Role of facilitators

In small and large group sessions. Value of review sessions and when and how to lead them.

Session 3: Talking and action points

Difference between the two, range of activities offered. Volunteers present and discuss.

Session 4: Theme sessions

Discussion on themes and different ways of using them. Participants work in small groups preparing outlines for theme sessions.

Session 5: Challenges for the facilitator (optional)

Review of notes in the guide. Volunteers run an *Auntie Stella* session in plenary with two or three people in the group 'playing out' some of the challenges (argumentative, passing on wrong information, for example). Group reviews facilitation techniques.

Session 6: Planning

Session on use of *Auntie Stella* in their work. Revisit hopes and fears. Round up.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

We recommend the following additional resource material:

Choices: A guide for young people

Written by Gill Gordon and available from Teaching Aids at Low Cost (www.talcuk.org).

If you can afford only one book, this is the top of young people's lists. It covers a range of sensitive issues in a lively, positive style. It's easy to read, has varied activities and an attractive design.

ABC of all the questions we never dare to ask

Published by Kwela Books, South Africa (www.kwela.com) and Weaver Press, Zimbabwe (www.weaverpresszimbabwe.com)

Presented as questions from young people, with straightforward answers. It's easy to read, realistic, attractive and includes a lot of useful information.

Bodywise: Sex education, health and advice for South African youth

Published by Sached Books
P O Box 396 Cape Town 8000 South Africa

This is an interesting and informative book with easy to read and relevant stories and opinions from young people, good cartoons and pictures.

You, your life, your dreams: A book for adolescents

Written by Caroline Watson and Ellen Brazier and published by Family Care International (Kenya) and Straight Talk Foundation (Uganda). Email: fcipubs@familycareintl.org

A large book which is packed with valuable information on issues related to growing up.

You asked... We answered! : Answers to questions on HIV and AIDS asked by youth in Southern Africa!

Available from SafAIDS at info@safaids.org.

Three booklets in question and answer form about different aspects of HIV and AIDS.

Stepping stones

Written by Alice Welbourn and available from TALC (www.talcuk.org)

This is an excellent training manual on HIV and AIDS, communication and relationship skills for women and men of all ages.

Don't forget!

Every country has organisations that can provide extra information on key topics related to adolescent sexuality, life and relationships.

PART TWO



Adapting Auntie Stella

ADAPTING AUNTIE STELLA

IMPORTANT NOTE ON COPYRIGHT

TARSC holds the copyright on *Auntie Stella* but we encourage the use and adaptation of *Auntie Stella* in any non-profit making project that aims to improve people's reproductive health.

However, in return, we request that you use the following procedure:

- **Contact us about your project; we can help you.**
- **Acknowledge authorship and copyright of TARSC and Barbara Kaim and include our name, contact details and logo in the front of your material.**
- **Send us a copy of your adapted version.**
- **Keep us informed about your project and any feedback you have received.**

In this way we will all gain from the experience.

Adapting *Auntie Stella* means changing it to suit the people you are working with, their situation and particular needs. In fact, the structure, activities and methodology of *Auntie Stella* are flexible and users can adapt the pack automatically as they go along. However, you can also adapt it more formally to make it more relevant to your audience and context.

Whatever kind of adaptation you choose, two things are vital:

- Make sure that young people and representatives of any other target groups are involved at every step; and
- Make sure that everyone working on the changes has already participated in some *Auntie Stella* sessions

There are several different types of adaptation and some of these are mentioned below:

Translation

For translations, it's best to work with a team which includes young people and popular, lively local writers. Translation also often achieves any necessary cultural shifts.

Cultural adaptation

Auntie Stella is set in a Zimbabwean context of Shona and Ndebele cultures. You may want to change only the names of the characters (as in Sierra Leone where *Auntie Stella* became *Sissy Aminata*). Or you may want to make more extensive changes to the content, for example, dropping some cards, changing others and creating some entirely new ones.

Different religions and urban or rural settings also have different needs. *Card 28 My girlfriend's getting married*, for example, raises the issue of arranged marriages when the dowry is paid by the husband and his family. In other cultures, the bride's family pays the dowry and a new card may be needed to cover the different problems arising.

Adapting for other issues

The issues and themes you cover will also vary. Because of the extent and stage of the AIDS pandemic in Zimbabwe, *Auntie Stella* focuses on these issues. In other societies, other issues may be more important.

Adapting for particular groups of people

You can use *Auntie Stella* with people of different ages, experiences, concerns and education. Even in-school and out-of-school youth are different. All these factors affect the relevance of the cards and how you use them. *Auntie Stella* can also be adapted for parents, sex workers, health workers and others.

Adapting where you have limited time

You may have groups who want to work with *Auntie Stella* but have time for only a few sessions. You and the groups need to select the most important issues or themes. See ‘*Auntie Stella* in 6 hours’ below for one example.

Adapting for other constraints

You may be working under other constraints imposed from outside. Don’t let the problems posed by a few of the cards threaten the use of the whole programme. Choose the cards that are relevant and omit the others.

Auntie Stella in 6 hours

Regai Dzive Shiri, a youth reproductive health research project based in Manicaland, Zimbabwe, developed a shorter *Auntie Stella* programme for parents. This consisted of two sessions of three hours each. The first started with participatory introductory activities, hopes and fears and ground rules, then went on to the selected cards and topics. The second session ended with a round-up of what they achieved, action plans for the future, and an evaluation of the meetings.

They selected key themes and cards relevant to parents of adolescents and allowed around an hour to present each theme. The themes chosen were:

- Adolescence – cards 18 and 31
- Communication – cards 10 and 24
- STIs – cards 7, 13 and 25
- Sexual relationships and adult abuse – card 16
- Sexual relationships and peer pressure – card 1

BASIC PRINCIPLES FOR WRITING NEW LETTERS AND REPLIES

Overall aim

Your overall aim is to encourage and empower young people and other participants. The cards you write should help them build up their skills, use what they know and support each other in protecting themselves and those they love.

Another aim is to encourage them to link up with helping institutions and networks and challenge any harmful aspects of their society and culture.

Key principles

Here are some key principles to use when you adapt:

- Involve young people in adapting the cards – giving realistic stories, contributing ideas about *Auntie Stella's* replies, and pretesting the cards before they're used.
- Involve other organisations and community leaders in research and pretesting.
- Be clear about what you want each card to achieve.
- Keep the language simple, instructions clear and the tone informal.
- Make sure the stories are realistic.
- Be truthful, give accurate information and correct any myths and misconceptions.
- Increase their skills – to access services, communicate, plan and strategise.
- Give young people opportunities to assess risks and weigh up the pros and cons of different courses of action. Don't preach about what they should do.
- Encourage young people to believe in themselves and their ability to change, and to set goals for what they want in life.
- Encourage them to act to improve their sexual health and relationships.
- Praise health-seeking behaviours.
- Help them understand what they can change on their own and where they need support or to be part of a larger movement.
- Increase awareness of stigma and discrimination – for example, against girls, people living with HIV or AIDS, gays and lesbians and people from other cultures.

'We read that card where the boy says he can't talk to his difficult parents, but I really wish I'd read it a week ago. I had saved up some money and bought my son new shirts for school. I was so happy, but when he saw them he was very angry and shouted at me. "How could you buy shirts?" he said. "My shorts are all torn and useless!" Now I have read the card I realise I should have asked him first, I should have said, "Son, I've got this much money, what uniform do you need?" Now I know I must listen to my children and work things out together with them.'

mother

INVOLVING YOUNG PEOPLE IN WRITING NEW CARDS

If you are planning to adapt, you will already have ideas about the issues affecting the young people you work with but check these ideas by using the following methods:

- Use the session described on page 16 where participants write their own letters to *Auntie Stella*. Before they begin, tell them their letters can reflect not only their own worries and concerns but those of siblings and friends. Ask them afterwards if you can keep their letters and tell them why. Assure them that they are anonymous, and explain that they will help other young people in similar situations.
- Do research among the young people who will be your target group. The original *Auntie Stella* research was carried out with in-school and out-of-school youth in Zimbabwe. We used discussions and other participatory activities to explore a variety of topics relating to their lives and concerns. Use this process to clarify the key issues affecting young people, and produce the stories you can use in the letters.
- Ask groups of young people to pre-test the cards so you find out their opinions on their authenticity, language, relevance and interest. This is vital.



GIVING THE BEST ANSWERS

Consult young people Consult young people about *Auntie Stella's* replies. Use the pair-reply session described on page 16, using their own letters. Once again, ask if you can keep their replies.

Imagine Auntie Stella In the replies, *Auntie Stella's* 'persona' is important. She is on the side of the young people who write to her and never criticises them. She wants them to work out themselves how to follow the path which is best for them. She is sympathetic and encouraging, open-minded and non-judgmental, giving options not instructions.

She is aware of young people's rights – what they all ideally deserve, even in difficult environments. She sees them as individuals and as part of communities which affect their lives, and which they, in their turn, can influence and change.

Use up-to-date information Use up-to-date information from specialists but simplify the language. Avoid medical and other jargon and explain essential terms clearly. Specialists know everything about their subject – participants need just the basics. The Action Points direct participants to find out more too. Also, you can invite a specialist to answer their queries.

Avoid judging Give plenty of information but avoid lecturing and judging. For example, don't tell them not to have sex – rather give them the skills to decide themselves. Give positive suggestions, rather than negative actions to avoid. Try not to use *must*, *should* or *ought to*. Instead, say *It's important to...* or *You need to*

Encourage action Urge individual and collective action. Encourage young people to see themselves as part of a community, to network with other youth groups and others involved in health care – and to see what they can do together.

Answer the question Make sure that you reply to the query in the letter – users are reading a story, and want a narrative answer. But also cover and integrate queries raised in the talking points. Make your message clear at the start. For example: *People should not have sex if they don't want to* or *You can work together for change*.

Be neutral on culture Encourage youth to evaluate their cultures and traditions. Unless a practice is clearly harmful – in which case you must say so – avoid supporting or attacking practices described. Let them decide what is helpful (and how to preserve it) and what is harmful (and how to change it).

TALKING POINTS AND ACTION POINTS

What's the difference?

The Talking Points encourage young people to discuss the letter and issues related to it, to consider how these relate to their own lives and communities, and to assess what risks they are taking.

The Action Points help participants to move from the story on the card to the reality of their own lives, where they put into action, individually and collectively, what they have discussed.

The tips on pages 23–25 will give you more ideas, too.

Guidelines for Talking and Action Points

- Use open-ended rather than yes/no questions: *What difficulties do you have with your parents?* NOT *Do you have difficulties with your parents?*
- Personalise the issues raised by asking questions about participants, their friends and their community, like this:
 - *Does this often happen in your area? Why?*
 - *Do you, or young people you know, ...*
 - *How would you feel in this situation?*
 - *What's the worst thing that could happen if you ...*

But AVOID any questions that could get too personal, make participants uncomfortable or allow anyone to identify individuals.

- Include questions that encourage young people to assess their actions and the society, services and institutions around them, to see what meets their needs and what can be improved. For example, the availability of health information or condoms (card 25) or the attitude of clinic staff to youth (card 13).
- Encourage them to assess which information and values passed on to them are relevant and helpful and which are harmful. For example, assessing information about adolescence and sexuality (cards 1 and 21), or cultural practices and respect for elders (card 3). When working out possible solutions, encourage them to analyse what is most viable and what would hinder this course of action or make it easier.
- Encourage thinking for change and critical thinking. For example, comparing their society to an ideal rape-free world (card 16), fighting stigma against the HIV-positive (card 38), attitudes to sex-workers (card 17), making action plans for change (cards 29 and 35).
- Encourage 'collective' thinking – how they can help each other and others. Urge them to find organisations they can work with to achieve a better life for young people.

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PLEASE CONTACT US

Please contact us. We welcome any feedback and comments you may have about the cards and the *Auntie Stella* pack.

We want to hear:

- how you're working with them
- how the youth respond to them
- ways you have adapted them
- what you like and what you don't like
- how we can make them more useful for you.

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