



CATALYST Consortium

Development of RH Messages for Men in Literacy Classes Workshop Report



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Table of Contents

WORKSHOP REPORT ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF RH MESSAGES FOR MEN IN LITERACY CLASSES	1
DATE/LOCATION	1
PURPOSE AND/OR GOALS	1
OBJECTIVES.....	1
BACKGROUND	1
TECHNICAL CONTENT	2
RESULTS OR CONCLUSIONS	3
LESSONS LEARNED.....	4
PARTICIPANTS	4



Workshop Report on the Development of RH Messages for Men in Literacy Classes

Date/Location

27 May to 2 June; Movenpick Hotel in 6th of October City, Egypt.

Purpose and/or Goals

The goal of the workshop was to develop a reproductive health curriculum for use in General Authority for Literacy and Adult Education (GALAE) literacy classes for men. The long term goal of TAHSEEN's work with men is to raise their understanding and awareness of RH messages, enabling them to better support their wives' efforts to seek appropriate RH/FP medical care.

Objectives

Recognizing the vital role that men play as decision makers within the Egyptian society, and the impact of gender relations on health behaviors and outcomes, one of TAHSEEN's crosscutting strategies is to adopt a gender-equitable approach to reproductive health. The overall goal is to engage men, raise their understanding and awareness of RH issues, and emphasize the importance of supporting the reproductive health of their spouses.

The immediate objectives of this workshop were to:

- Develop RH messages based on identified topics;
- Develop relevant illustrations; and
- Develop notes for the instructors who will be teaching the messages in the literacy classes.

Background

In 1994, the Cairo International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) Programme of Action recognized that making women and men equal partners in reproduction and child rearing can improve women's reproductive health. Despite the Programme's endorsement of a gender-equitable approach to reproductive health, these ideas have been implemented on a very limited basis if at all.

Many reproductive health programs focus on women for a number of reasons, including the assumption that since women bear sole responsibility for *childbearing* they also bear sole responsibility for *childrearing*. Furthermore, development programs are reluctant to promote the ICPD's emphasis gender equity in reproductive health in order to avoid offending men by forcing them to change their role within the field of family planning and reproductive health.



In most societies, men are decision-makers in their households and their communities. Improving family planning and reproductive health awareness among men will therefore have an impact on men, women and the society as a whole. Working with women, to the exclusion of men, would be ineffective and may even put women in a vulnerable position.

Working with men, therefore, is essential to achieving significant improvements in maternal and child health. The goal is to improve their health seeking behavior and support women in changing their health seeking behavior and decision-making ability.

GALAE was chosen as a partner in this effort because it has the ability to reach a very large audience. According to May 2004 statistics they have 65000 literacy classes, reaching a total of 811,383 students, of which 294,383 are men.

The GALAE officials were approached and the concept of reaching men was extremely appreciated and well received since it filled a gap in the available material. TAHSEEN reviewed GALAE's national curriculum and identified several potential RH topics that could be integrated into the existing curriculum. Working with GALAE, a well-established national literacy organization ensures sustainability.

Technical Content

Introduction

Dr. Nagwa Samir, TAHSEEN's youth specialist, welcomed the working team on behalf of TAHSEEN/CATALYST and gave a brief note about TAHSEEN project aims and integrated approach and outlined the main objective of the workshop and the importance of designing and developing RH messages for men.

Ms Manal Eid, TAHSEEN's gender specialist, then explained TAHSEEN's gender-equitable approach to reproductive health and highlighted the lack of RH messages that reach men and hence the need to fill this gap.

Proceedings

The approach used to develop the curriculum, based on these themes, consisted of working in teams, and in tandem. This created a dynamism that enabled the groups to produce the entire curriculum in a single week.¹

Identifying RH Topics

The workshop started with the identification of RH topics that would be addressed by the curriculum. Participants settled on: early marriage and family planning, antenatal care, sexually transmitted diseases and gender.

¹Prior to the workshop, TAHSEEN specialists reviewed GALAE's curriculum to identify suitable RH topics that could be incorporated into the curriculum.



Message Development

Medical professionals played a key role during the technical design of the message. The university medical school professors developed medical messages and teachers' notes. Discussions about the acceptance of the messages by the target audience, clarification of the medical messages and practices behind it helped all the attendees (with and without a medical background) develop a sense of ownership of the messages.

Message Simplification/Lesson Plan Development

Once the messages were developed, they were passed along to the second group consisting of medical staff and a GALAE representative. After the messages were simplified, GALAE staff and the literacy teacher jointly studied them. Working together, they designed a lesson about the message to be integrated into the literacy curriculum using the RH messages. To ensure medical accuracy, the lesson plans were then re-examined by the medical staff to ensure the accuracy of the RH messages.

Illustration/Message Development

After the whole group approved the lesson plans, an artist, who had attended the discussions, conceptualized and developed the illustrations. The Ministry of Education (MOE) official from Minia and the folkloric poet (*zaggal*) from Qena in particular provided valuable input to the artist who helped tailor the drawings to the intended audience. In afternoon sessions, the artist shared the draft illustrations with all the participants, and then modified them based on feedback from the other participants.

To reinforce the messages in a culturally appropriate and attractive way, the zagaal (folkloric poet) developed catchphrases that could be integrated into the curriculum. Workshop participants repeated this process until all five modules were completed. By the end of the week a draft curriculum was completed covering antenatal care, sexually transmitted disease (STD), family planning, gender, and age of marriage/OBSI. Key features of the curriculum are its applicability, simplicity, replicability and sustainability.

Results or Conclusions

The workshop was successful in developing five detailed modules covering premarital counseling, early marriage, antenatal care, family planning, sexually transmitted diseases and gender. Tools for training of trainers were also developed.

Follow-up

Next steps include in-house editing and formatting. When the draft manual is finalized it will be tested with a target audience and then introduced as part of the overall GALAE curriculum for second-level literacy students.



Lessons Learned

- The intensive method used in the process of curriculum development forced participants to move beyond their areas of expertise, forcing them to concentrate on the work, helping the group produce the curriculum content in a single week.
- Bringing together experts in medicine, sociology, literacy and Arabic with youth ensured wide range of viewpoints, reduced the time needed for developing the curriculum, and enriched the discussion sessions.
- Involving GALAE representatives helped participants understand how long each session should last and where to incorporate them in the existing curriculum.
- Involving GALAE representatives from the beginning of the process helped foster a sense of ownership, ensuring that the curriculum with RH messages would be incorporated into the existing curriculum.
- It is advisable to follow the same technique whenever a material is to be developed that needs the contribution of many consultants with different expertise and commitments.

Participants

MOHP

His Excellency Dr. Yehia Hadidi, Undersecretary for Population and Family Planning
Dr. Samia El Shaffei, MOHP/Information, Education and Communications Unit

GALAE

General Hussein Lokya, Head of GALAE
General Abd El Fattah Saleh, Director of the Training Department
Mr Mohamed Abd El Hamid, teacher for men in the GALAE classes
Mr Metwali Mansour, Arabic editor for GALAE

University Staff

Dr Mahmoud Auda, Professor of Sociology and Deputy President of Ain Shams University
Dr Alaa El Etreby, Professor of Ob/Gyn, Ain Shams University
Dr Mohamed Ismail Sabry, Professor of Ob/Gyn, Menofia University

NGOs

Dr Magdy Helmy, public health degree, involved many times in the past in the development of health messages for illiterate people with the international organizations UNICEF and JSI.



Ministry of Education

Mr Mahmoud Kalafallah, Director of Minia MOE Directorate

Artists

Mr Abdalla Mubarak, *zaggal* (folkloric poet) from Qena

Mr Salam Yousry, young artist

CHL

Dr Samir Al Alfi

Dr Mahmoud Youssef

