

Training Tools



August 2003

Training is a major component of LINKAGES' comprehensive program to bring about rapid change in infant and young child feeding behaviors. The LINKAGES Project has supported training activities in more than 15 countries. This issue of *Experience LINKAGES* describes the project's training modules, methodologies, and performance monitoring tools.

Training Modules

LINKAGES developed training modules in response to specific programmatic needs of country programs and partner organizations. These modules draw upon the results of training assessments, findings from formative research, principles of adult learning, and scientific evidence.

LINKAGES and its local partners developed six generic or regional modules that were tested in more than one country. All the facilitator and participant materials needed are contained within these modules. Table 1 on page 4 briefly describes each module's audience, purpose, training time, and language.

LINKAGES' programs in Bolivia and Madagascar developed country-specific modules that could be adapted but depend, at present, on the use of local examples and materials. LINKAGES also provided technical assistance for the development of modules produced by other international organizations.¹

Purpose

The modules support the overall purpose of LINKAGES' training program, which is to inform, prepare, and motivate participants to:

- ♦ effectively share accurate information on infant and young child feeding and
- ♦ encourage, counsel, and support mothers so that they will try, adopt, and maintain new behaviors.

LINKAGES focuses on in-service and pre-service training to ensure that current and future health workers are knowledgeable about infant and young child feeding and equipped to support breastfeeding women and their families.

¹ • Infant Feeding in Emergencies Module 1 for Emergency Relief Staff (WHO, UNICEF, LINKAGES, IBFAN, ENN)
 • Improving Breastfeeding—Everyone Can Help (Freedom from Hunger)
 • Infant and Child Feeding—Helping Young Children to Eat and Grow (Freedom from Hunger)
 • Nutrition and HIV/AIDS: A Training Manual (RCQHC, FANTA, LINKAGES, SARA)

Audience

The primary audiences for the modules are health and family planning service providers, community-level volunteers, and program staff. In Ghana and Madagascar LINKAGES invites journalists to participate in trainings to increase their awareness and understanding as well as their interest in reporting on infant and young child feeding.

LINKAGES creates and adapts learning sessions based on the characteristics and needs of the training audience. The audience's literacy level, educational background, job responsibilities, and expectations help to determine the content and activities of the training.

Content

Technical updates, an emphasis on counseling and communication skills, and practice using these skills characterize LINKAGES training. The content of the modules reflects the needs of the participants, their organizations, and the communities. For example, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in Ghana working with women's groups requested training in facilitation of mother-to-mother support groups. A needs assessment in Bolivia revealed that NGO staff were highly motivated and experienced in community work but needed technical updates on infant feeding and training in interpersonal communication.

The topics of LINKAGES' six generic or regional training modules are:

- ♦ Behavior Change Communication for Improved Infant Feeding
- ♦ Formative Research for Infant Feeding Programs
- ♦ Mother-to-Mother Support Groups for Infant Feeding
- ♦ Lactational Amenorrhea Method (LAM)
- ♦ Prevention of Mother-to-Child Transmission (PMTCT) of HIV
- ♦ Essential Nutrition Actions for Women and Children

Experience LINKAGES is a series of publications on the strategies, tools, and materials used by the LINKAGES Project to achieve results.

Infant feeding basics. The core technical content of these modules covers the basics of breastfeeding: anatomy and physiology of breastfeeding, advantages of exclusive breastfeeding, positioning and attachment of baby to breast, optimal breastfeeding practices, solutions to common difficulties, and the lactational amenorrhea method of family planning. The modules also introduce the elements of complementary feeding: timely introduction of appropriate complementary foods, feeding frequency, quantity, variety, nutrient density, safe food handling, and responsive feeding.

Skills training. The skills content of the training focuses on communication of key messages, the use of visuals and other job aids, group facilitation techniques, negotiation during home visits and counseling sessions, and community mobilization methods.

Methodology

The training modules with their performance-based learning objectives incorporate principles of adult learning and include participatory learning activities. Participants analyze, test, and practice the skills they are to master and then reflect immediately on their experience. Participants practice using the skills in the classroom and then in the community or health center to ensure that they are able to perform the skills and apply their learning.

Role-plays, case studies, food demonstrations, group work, problem-solving discussions, visualization exercises, peer observations, brainstorming activities, and community visits engage participants throughout the training program. Action planning sessions require participants to reflect on what they have learned, determine how they will use the new information and skills on the job, and identify needed resources to realize their plan.

The following three learning activities illustrate how LINKAGES involves participants in the learning process and provides them with an opportunity to immediately apply what they have learned in a realistic setting.

Positioning and Attachment

The BCC and mother-to-mother support modules feature demonstrations, role-plays, and a practicum to help participants provide counseling on good breastfeeding skills such as proper positioning and attachment. Participants look at drawings, discuss, and then observe a facilitator demonstrating the techniques with a doll. Sometimes mothers of infants less than two months come to the classroom and demonstrate the techniques with their babies. Participants then simulate positioning and attachment with a doll and receive counseling from their training partners. During a visit to the community or maternity ward, they observe mothers feeding their newborns and counsel them on positioning and attachment, if necessary.

“Going to Market”

LINKAGES uses a hands-on activity called “going to market” to help participants visualize appropriate complementary foods for different age groups. During this exercise, facilitators display several items from the market on a table (fruits, vegetables, grains, meat, nuts, oils, common snacks, prepared foods, bottled water, and other drinks) along with models or pictures of breasts. Participants combine foods to create a meal for a child 0–6 months, 6–9 months, 9–12 months, or 12–24 months and explain why they selected those foods.

Preparation of Replacement Feeds

In the basic PMTCT course in Zambia, participants prepare replacement feeds (commercial or home-prepared formula) under conditions similar to those faced by most women in their communities. In doing so they realize that replacement feeding requires fuel, time, safe water, financial resources, and basic literacy skills. Participants discuss the risks and benefits of various infant feeding options in a low resource setting with high HIV prevalence and the challenges of finding a feeding option that is safe, feasible, affordable, acceptable, and sustainable.

Materials and Tools

All of LINKAGES training modules include materials and tools for both facilitators and participants. Facilitators receive an instructional plan with learning objectives, detailed guides for learning sessions, a list of supplemental reading materials, slides or transparencies, case studies, role-plays, observation checklists, pre- and post-tests, and training evaluation forms.

Participants receive handouts to reinforce key content and skills along with guidelines, observation checklists, LINKAGES technical publications, and examples of tools such as monitoring forms and discussion guides that they can adapt for use in their programs.

Duration

Course content, participants’ job requirements, and local realities determine the length of the training. A behavior change communication module developed for volunteers in Bolivia consists of nine sessions that are approximately 3½ hours each. These sessions can be completed in one week of training or offered one morning per week or month over a period of time, which allows participants the opportunity to apply their new knowledge and skills between meetings. The mother-to-mother support training requires two weeks; the first is spent in the classroom and the second in the community practicing what was learned the previous week.

In Madagascar LINKAGES offers three short trainings (one or two days each) over several months for nutrition volunteers. The advantages to this approach include shorter periods away from job or home, the opportunity to review and reinforce information from the previous training, and discussion of successes and constraints in applying the skills learned.

LINKAGES/Madagascar also provides self-learning modules on technical topics, advocacy, and information, education, and communication. These modules were developed in response to government restrictions on in-service training. They allow health workers to learn at their own pace and monitor their progress through pre- and post-tests. Some health facilities use the content of the modules for monthly staff updates and discussions.

Country and Regional Applications

LINKAGES and its country partners use the generic and regional modules to support their behavior change strategy. Some of the modules are being offered through national or regional training centers. In Jordan LINKAGES helped to establish the National Breastfeeding and LAM Training Unit within the Ministry of Health's Maternal and Child Health Directorate. This center is responsible for ongoing training in lactation management and LAM.

LINKAGES' Africa Regional Infant Feeding and PMTCT Program offers a 12-day course at its training center in Zambia. The purpose of the course is to help health workers and community service providers introduce and sustain infant feeding counseling, voluntary counseling and testing services, and antiretroviral prophylaxis in integrated PMTCT programs. Health officials and program managers from more than 10 countries have participated in the course.

LINKAGES also works with training institutions to incorporate technical content on infant and young child feeding in their courses.

- ♦ The Ministry of Health and LINKAGES integrated nutrition with the pre-service curricula of the medical school and the nursing and midwifery schools in Madagascar.
- ♦ A Pre-service Task Force established by the Ghana Health Service and LINKAGES revised the curricula of all medical and paramedical programs to ensure that they adequately addressed breastfeeding and other nutrition issues.
- ♦ The Regional Centre for Quality of Health Care at Makerere University in Uganda collaborated with LINKAGES in designing courses and curricula.

Performance Monitoring Tools

LINKAGES uses three types of tools to evaluate the effectiveness of its training activities: knowledge tests, observation forms, and exit interview guides. These tools have been used in Bolivia, Ghana, and Madagascar.

Knowledge tests. One way of evaluating participants' understanding of the course content is to administer a knowledge test to participants before training, at the end of training, and several months after the training. The format of the knowledge tests is either multiple-choice or true/false questions, depending on the educational level of the participants and the content. Each country program sets its own targets and determines what constitutes an adequate, average, or below average score.

Observation checklists. A second tool for performance monitoring is the observation checklist. Four to six months after training, the evaluator observes a participant negotiating with mothers during a home visit, facilitating a mother-to-mother breastfeeding support group, or facilitating a participatory group talk. For an adequate rating, the participant must perform a minimum number of skills shown on the checklist.

Exit interview guides. Exit interviews provide additional information on performance four to six months after the training. The evaluator selects one woman at random to interview after a group talk or after a mother-to-mother breastfeeding support group meeting. He or she also interviews mothers after a home visit by one of the trained health promoters. The evaluator asks the mothers to repeat the messages communicated by the promoter at the group talk, support group meeting, or home visit. The skill level of the trained promoter is considered adequate if mothers can repeat the messages given during their contact with the promoter. A mother's recall is rated adequate if she can recall a minimum number of messages.

LINKAGES modifies training content and activities based on the findings from performance monitoring. For example, in Madagascar LINKAGES conducts refresher training six months after a training workshop. At the beginning of the workshop, participants take the same test that they took six months earlier. Facilitators use the test scores to focus the refresher training on knowledge and skill areas needing improvement.

The training modules and performance monitoring tools developed by LINKAGES are tested, technically sound, and user friendly. Organizations can request a CD with the modules or download them from LINKAGES website www.linkagesproject.org.

Table 1 LINKAGES Generic and Regional Training Modules

Title	Audience	Purpose	Time	Language
Generic Modules				
Behavior Change Communication for Improved Infant Feeding	Trainers - Health care personnel and program staff	Train trainers in behavior change communication skills (negotiation, experiential learning cycle, participatory group talks), training techniques, and infant feeding. Includes practice training using community module and action planning exercises.	11 days	English
Formative Research for Infant Feeding Programs	Program staff	Prepare participants to conduct formative research (trials of improved practices, in-depth interviews, and focus group discussions) and to use effective communication skills to plan and improve programs.	5 days	English
Mother-to-Mother Support Group Methodology and Infant Feeding	Trainers - Health care personnel and program staff	Prepare participants to train health care providers/community health volunteers to organize and facilitate mother-to-mother support groups on infant feeding.	10 days	English Spanish
LAM: A Postpartum Contraceptive Method for Women who Breastfeed	Trainers - Health and family planning service providers and program staff	Train health care personnel and community health workers to provide LAM within their child health, reproductive health, or family planning services.	1.5 - 2 days	English French Spanish Arabic
Regional Modules				
Integrated Infant Feeding and HIV/AIDS Basic Course to Prevent Mother-to-Child Transmission (PMTCT) of HIV	Clinic-based health personnel and supervisors	Provide participants with a basic understanding of HIV/AIDS facts and prevention, mother-to-child transmission of HIV, current MTCT risk reduction interventions, infant feeding in the context of PMTCT, and nutritional recommendations for pregnant women and new mothers in areas affected by HIV/AIDS.	12 days	English
Essential Nutrition Actions Approach to Improve the Nutrition of Women and Children in Africa	Program planners	Prioritize nutrition behaviors for children and women in vulnerable communities and integrate these behaviors into policies, communications, and interventions in health facilities and communities.	5 days	English

For more information visit our website at www.linkagesproject.org

or contact us: email: linkages@aed.org

phone: (202) 884-8221

fax: (202) 884-8977



Experience LINKAGES: Training Tools is a publication by LINKAGES: Breastfeeding, LAM, Related Complementary Feeding, and Maternal Nutrition Program, and was made possible through support provided to the Academy for Educational Development (AED) by the Bureau for Global Health of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), under the terms of Cooperative Agreement No. HRN-A-00-97-00007-00. The opinions expressed herein are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or AED.

