

Children and Adolescents Sexual & Reproductive Health Rights Toolkit

User Guide

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Background:

Interest in sexual and reproductive health has become more prominent since the convening of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo in 1994. The concept of sexual and reproductive health evolved from a rights standpoint, and challenges have been raised as to the knowledge of children and adolescents about sexual and reproductive health and their right to protection from the consequences of insufficient knowledge, misconceptions, and acts that endanger the growth and well-being of children and adolescents.

“The sexual and reproductive health needs felt by adolescents differ from those of adults, and are inadequately served in many parts of the world”¹.

- Knowledge and information play an important role in ensuring health options related to an individual’s sexual and reproductive health through their families, communities and governments.
- Enabling all youth to make the right decisions and options based on knowledge in regards to their sexual and reproductive health².

The International Conference on Population and Development laid out a plan of action acknowledged by 178 countries and based on making the concept of protection and activation of Human rights the essential principal of population and development policies. Thus, the definition of reproductive health became wider and clearer in regards to that the reproductive health is an acknowledged right.

On the other hand, the United Nations organized several meetings and international conferences concerning development and reproductive health during the previous decades such as: the International Conference on Population (Bucharest, 1974), the World Summit for Children (New York, 1990), the Conference on Environment and Development (Rio de Janeiro, 1992), the World Conference on Human Rights (Vienna, 1993), the World Summit for Social Development (Copenhagen, 1995) and the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995).

During all these conferences, youth were considered the priority group and the most in need for special attention concerning sexual and reproductive health. Most of these conferences also insisted on providing youth rights and a good quality of services in regards to sexual and reproductive health.

Starting from this reality, and from the vision of Save the Children, the Regional Office of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Organization undertook a preliminary study to evaluate the level of knowledge, attitudes and acts relating to reproductive and sexual health among children ages 10-17, and among their parents and service providers, and this in three Arab countries: Yemen, the occupied Palestinian territories (OPT), and Lebanon. The results of this study show how important it is to implement several steps in order to raise the level of awareness of rights relating to reproductive and sexual health among children and adults, correct attitudes, improve acts, and thus provide the greatest possible protection from the risks threatening children and adolescents in sexual and reproductive health. This kit stands out as one step in a series of steps contributing to achieving the general goal of the Reproductive Health Project.

The preliminary results (Baseline KAP Survey³) indicate the following:

- ✓ Lack of knowledge in bathing and cleaning genital organs.

¹ http://www.who.int/reproductive-health/adolescent/Adolescent_intro.en.html

² Strategic Planning Framework For Adolescents.-IPPF Governing Council, IPPF, May 2003

³ To review the full results of the detailed study, go to: <http://mena.savethechildren.se/MENA/What-we-do/Protection/Regional-Projects/SRRH/>

- ✓ Mothers' lack of knowledge regarding their children's personal hygiene and the need to enhance their skills in transferring knowledge to their children in an efficient way.
- ✓ Lack of knowledge in the causes of genital organs infections.
- ✓ Lack of knowledge in personal hygiene during menstruation.
- ✓ Lack of knowledge in physical changes occurring during puberty.
- ✓ Lack of knowledge about adolescence problems and worries and the need to enhance the skills of dealing with these problems (such as efficient ways of communication).
- ✓ Lack of knowledge in the necessary parental skills in transferring information regarding their children's sexual and reproductive health.
- ✓ The need to rectify the wrong believes concerning Human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS)
- ✓ Lack in the ability and willingness of children and adolescents to ask for clarifications and information from parents and service providers.
- ✓ The need for friendly services for children and adolescents.
- ✓ The need for a legal approach on sexual and reproductive health.
- ✓ Lack of knowledge in the dangers of early marriage and importance of education.
- ✓ Lack of knowledge in the dangers and problems linked with early pregnancy.
- ✓ The need to train service providers to the essential principals on child protection.
- ✓ The need to enhance the ability of service providers to handle violence and its effects.

This kit stands out as one step in a series of steps contributing to achieving the general goal of the Reproductive Health Project – which is providing as much knowledge as possible to children and adolescents concerning sexual and reproductive health.

Why this kit?

This kit on the rights of children and adolescents to reproductive and sexual health aims to provide guides and tools for facilitators to help them:

- ☑ Increase awareness of the importance of sex and reproductive education for children and adolescents by linking it to the rights of the child.
- ☑ Provide the necessary knowledge for enhancing the safety and sexual and reproductive health of children and adolescents and avoid the risks that threaten their health.
- ☑ Enhance positive attitudes and sound skills relating to sexual and reproductive health among children and adolescents.

The Target Group:

Mindful of the importance of integration in interventions affecting the life of the child or adolescent, this kit targets children ages 10-17 on the one hand, and their parents and service providers on the other. The results of the preliminary study showed that parents are the more important source children and adolescents turn to for information on sexual and reproductive health. The study also showed that parents do not have sufficient knowledge of topics in sexual and reproductive health, and they have mistaken beliefs concerning certain notions in this regard. On the other hand, the study identified some gaps relating to the capacity of service providers to respond to the needs of children and adolescents. Hence the importance of working with parents and service providers for the sake of integration and achieving optimum results.

In light of all this, the kit targets the following groups:

- Children 10-13 years of age
- Children/adolescents 14-17 years of age

- Parents
- Service providers.

The approach:

The kit is based on the following:

➤ **The legal approach on sexual and reproductive health:**

The legal approach on the sexual and reproductive health is based on the following:

- The international Human rights especially the right to justice and non-discrimination.
- The close correlation between civil, social, economic, political and cultural rights and the relations binding them.
- The dignity of every Human being.
- The right of every Human to demand for his rights and be inquisitive (participation and enabling).
- The responsibility of the government and other duty trustees to respect, protect and implement Human rights.

Duty trustees are those entrusted with obligations within the UN convention on the rights of children and other treaties concerning Human rights. Governments are considered the main duty trustees. Parents and others care providers are also considered duty trustees and have responsibilities towards children. These are sometimes referred to as secondary duty trustees.

The right to knowledge:

The right to knowledge is an essential right in taking the right decisions concerning sexual and reproductive health among many essential Human rights acknowledged internationally such as:

- The right to free speech and knowledge.
- The right to equality and non-discrimination.
- The right to life.
- The right to health.
- The right to respect the Human dignity and the body unity as well as personal safety and freedom.
- The right to take free decisions based on knowledge and concerning the different sides of private and family life.

The main treaties and conventions insisting on the rights of reproductive health, knowledge and freedom of choice were drawn from:

- ✓ Charter of Human rights.
- ✓ Charter of civil rights.
- ✓ Charter of economic rights.
- ✓ International convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against Women.
- ✓ International convention on the rights of children.
- ✓ Universal declaration on Human rights.

Commonly used expressions:

Mindful of the right to non-discrimination and diversity and in order to establish these rights as a value to the participants, we chose some expressions to be the jargon that respects Human rights including children and adolescent and include everyone regardless of affiliation and values.

Partner (instead of spouse): when referring to a couple in a relationship whether romantic or sexual, temporary or sustainable.

Other person (instead of other gender): referring to any relation between two people (feelings, relationship...)

Pregnancy (instead of fertilization): the word fertilization in Arabic may implement that it was a one side act.

➤ **The overall approach on health:**

This approach considers health an essential Human right and deals with the different elements affecting it. Given that health depends on the way an individual copes with his domestic, social and cultural environment in constant change, it is considered to be a dynamic concept constantly evolving. Therefore, the kit insists in its approach on sexual and reproductive health on the overall approach that deals with all the elements defining health and well-being and affecting them.

➤ **Methods aiming to modify knowledge, attitudes and practices (KAP):**

The basic study performed by SCS on sexual and reproductive health focused on children, adolescents, parents and care providers was based on the method aimed at three levels: knowledge, attitudes and practices (KAP). This method distinguished studies aiming to gather information concerning knowledge, believes (attitudes) and practices related to a certain issue.

This study helped evaluate the gapes in knowledge, information, cultural believes and attitudes/common positions. In light of this, the kit aims to enhance three levels: healthy knowledge, attitudes (positions) and practices.

Active learning methods:

Ensure children's involvement and links their lessons with their real life thus enhancing their health, well-being, growth, and improve their relation with their families and societies. Children's participation in these activities enhances their physical, social, emotional, moral and intellectual growth.

- ✓ The activities and issues discussed take into consideration the different sides of children's physical, psychological and social growth.
- ✓ Social conditions affecting the children and being affected by them is always taken into account.
- ✓ All activities carried out during sessions should enable children, help them attain group working skills, make the right decisions, plan, evaluate and communicate.
- ✓ Children should play an active role in all activities and steps undertaken during the implementation of activities.
- ✓ All activities should involve all children without discrimination.
- ✓ All activities and steps should be a source of joy for all children and adolescents involved.
- ✓ Emphasize on the children's ability to acquire learning skills more than teaching them the information.
- ✓
- ✓ In addition of using this active learning approach with children and adolescents, this approach should also be used with other target groups like the parents and service providers believing in their capacity of sustaining education through their value in their participation in the active learning methods.

Who Can Use the Guides in this Kit?

Those benefiting from the guides are health enthusiasts, health and social workers in health and social services centers and educational and community centers, and school counselors.

It is necessary that the user of the guides:

- Have in-depth knowledge of the topics of sexual and reproductive health.
- Be fully acquainted with the principles of the rights of the child.
- Know the stages of growth and development of children and adolescents and the specifics and requirements of each stage.
- Have experience in working with children and adolescents and in dealing with parents.
- Be skilled in group motivation and management.

- Awareness of the personal values and situations related to sexual and reproductive issues and ease and comfort in talking about them from a legal point of view.

For effective use of this kit, those desiring to use it should participate in an orientation workshop for acquainting participants with its guides and units, methods of managing the exercises and discussions, and addressing possible challenges.

Design of the Kit:

The kit was designed in the form of five application guides:

1. Scientific/information guide to aid the facilitator
2. Activities guide for children age 10-13
3. Activities guide for adolescents age 14-17
4. Activities guide for parents
5. Activities guide for service providers.

Every guide is divided into 4 interdependent units:

Unit one: introduction to sexual and reproductive health rights

Unit two: puberty – our growing bodies

Unit three: personal hygiene

Unit four: puberty – psychological and social changes and life skills

How to Use the Kit:

The kit contains forms for carrying out the sessions in the addenda. By these the facilitator will benefit from the application guide for each target group when designing a sufficient number of sessions for each unit so as to achieve the objectives of this unit.

The facilitator will benefit from the scientific/information material guide to aid the facilitator, when preparing his/her sessions, in terms of precision of the knowledge content of each unit.

In order to insure an effective use of these tools, the following steps should be taken:

- ☑ Participating in the trainers training workshop aiming to increase the knowledge of the guides user, explore his position and enhance his ability in transferring information and letters in an efficient and appropriate way as well as broadening his knowledge in both sexual and reproductive health and rights (user can benefit from the list of resources available in the appendix).
- ☑ Constant exploration of their positions and orientations in regards to sexual education and related subjects as well as contemplating their personal values affecting the way they discuss these issues.
- ☑ Reviewing the guides and fully grasping their content.
- ☑ Coordinating with the team and partners to put a plan of action and follow-through especially in the mechanism of referral in case need be.
- ☑ Making sure to fill the consent forms for parents and teens alike.
- ☑ Reviewing the appendixes especially the stimulation, acquaintance and evaluation exercises.
- ☑ Organizing a purposeful session (review the session example in the appendix – introduction – acquaintance exercise – main activities – summary – evaluation).
- ☑ Resorting to the pre-test to detect the knowledge of the beneficiaries about the issues under discussion.
- ☑ Resorting to the post-test to detect the efficiency of these sessions and their affects after they are through.
- ☑ Participating in the constant development of the guides by referring to the suggestions and feedback forms as well as all the faulty expressions and examples to add and study them in the forms.

During the preparation of the session, the user should review the information about the subject determined by the information guide and benefit from the list of suggested resources if in need for further information.

Afterwards, he should review the suggested activities in the activities guide related to each targeted group as well as the special guidelines for the facilitator, the main letters to the targeted group and distributed papers.

You will find in the information guide a list of all the useful websites with the list of resources and local publications related to all the subjects discussed in the four chapters has been added. The user of the kit may add information concerning other resources of information or suggest more books, publications and resources.

The kit also includes clarifying labels when implementing some activities as well as appendixes containing pre and post-tests for each of the targeted groups, not to mention an earlier parental approval form and a children's protection form (SCS) and additional information and documents concerning the subject, a sessions organizing form and examples of icebreakers and energizers and evaluation.

General Guidelines for the Facilitator:

The following points were introduced to help you expedite the sessions. Keep in mind that the various activities mentioned in the sessions were designed to encourage dialogue, dynamic and critical thinking, and sharing ideas and feelings on topics in sexual and reproductive health.

- ☑ Know the socio-cultural milieu of every community we work in.
- ☑ Know our target group: Who will we train, empower, and involve? Know the character traits of the participants.
- ☑ It is necessary that we have an idea about the participants in the workshop (or any other activity) before preparing the work. This will help us in organizing the activities and

discussions. For example, an activity that targets children is different from an activity that targets parents.

- ☑ To collaborate with the working group and to trust their participation
- ☑ Prepare the materials necessary for each activity.
- ☑ Revise all the information and prepare all the materials needed for each topic
- ☑ Remember that the different activities mentioned in the sessions are designed to encourage dialogue, dynamic and critical thinking and sharing thoughts and feelings related to sexual and reproductive health.

In the course of implementation:

- ☑ Acknowledge different points of view: Each individual is unique. We need to respect and appreciate this uniqueness, exchange experiences with one another, and learn from one another.
- ☑ Acknowledge the prior experience, knowledge and skills of every participant: This includes encouraging participants to relate the topics to their daily lives and previous experiences, and building on the strong points of each participant.
- ☑ Encourage evaluation and rethinking: It is important to encourage availing repeated opportunities for thought, expression, and evaluation of the experience of the participants.
- ☑ We must always be sensitive and constantly pay attention to the moods and feelings of the participants: We may resort to a refresher exercise whenever we feel the energy of the participants is flagging.
- ☑ Recourse to various technologies, methodologies, and activities: Every participant has a different way of learning. Diversity keeps everyone interested and enhances learning.
- ☑ Introduce the necessary strategies for expressing feels and thoughts, safely and effectively of all the participants.
- ☑ Avoid dispute and encourage lively discussion.
- ☑ Refrain from passing judgment on others: We must not forget that there are “different” opinions, not “wrong” opinions.
- ☑ Listen: Ideal learning is achieved when every participant feels that we are listening to him/her, and understanding and appreciating.
- ☑ We need not be experts in all the topics: If we do not know something, we should say so, and think along with the participants on possible ways to find the answers.
- ☑ Form discussion groups of the same sex: You may need to form such groups when the participants prefer to express themselves before individuals of the same sex.
- ☑ Encourage full participation by posing questions and listening instead of speaking: The facilitator should encourage participation, not impose it.
- ☑ Pose open questions and encourage participants to reach by themselves solutions to the problems or issues.
- ☑ Listen to and encourage discussions, while at the same focusing on the core points.
- ☑ Address the presentations of the group and summarize the basic points and correcting the misconceptions.
- ☑ Encourage participants to work in groups and trust in the team’s participatory approach.
- ☑ Serve as example or guide for the participants: Assure assistance and feedback, and exercise communication skills that are effective (and non-violent).
- ☑ Enhance learning by preparing the written material displayed during the training, and save it and pursue it: The sessions were designed to be in sequence; the facilitator needs to save points already discussed so as to build on them.
- ☑ Allow the participant’s time to pose questions and make presentations.
- ☑ Provide the chance for participants to ask questions or propose additional topics to be discussed in future sessions. We can add a suggestion box so that we can collect all the suggestions and topics that needs to be addressed.

- ☑ Provide a cheerful and easy-going atmosphere, without making dirty or inappropriate jokes.
- ☑ Maintain an environment that allows participants to work fruitfully and in an atmosphere of cooperation.
- ☑ The facilitator should be flexible: He should be prepared to adapt to changing circumstances.

Remember that this kit in your hands is a “collection of guides”, i.e. an essential manual on the units presented concerning each target group. Consequently, this material will not be effective except through your personal skills in managing sessions and listening to new needs of the participants, and your capacity to innovate and renew. By drawing on the scientific knowledge and grasping it, you may find yourself in a position to develop the exercises or invent new exercises that meet the needs of the target groups in ways suited for their particular cultures.