

Summary report on the

# **Regional training workshop on reproductive health counselling**

Beirut, Lebanon  
4–8 December 2011



**World Health  
Organization**

Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean

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## **1. Introduction**

A regional training workshop on reproductive health counselling was held in Beirut, Lebanon, from 4 to 8 December 2011. The workshop was organized by the World Health Organization (WHO) Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) Regional Office for Arab States, and attended by 28 participants from 8 countries of the WHO Eastern Mediterranean Region (Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Morocco, Somalia, Sudan, Tunisia and Yemen). It was also attended by staff of UNFPA and the Population Council and WHO staff from headquarters, the Regional Office and the country office in Lebanon.

The objectives of the workshop were to

- Review and exchange relevant experience on existing practices of counselling for reproductive health, with specific focus on maternal and newborn health and family planning services;
- Train a team of regional and national trainers in advanced counselling skills, including client information, assistance in decision-making and emotional support;
- Introduce complementary concepts and framework for the integrated curriculum on comprehensive counselling for reproductive health;
- Provide guidance on methodologies for adapting counselling frameworks and practices to help providers effectively assess and address client's family planning and comprehensive reproductive health needs.

The message of Dr Hussein A. Gezairy, WHO Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean, was delivered by Dr Sameen Siddiqi, WHO Representative, Lebanon. In his message, Dr Gezairy emphasized that counselling was a key component for improving the quality of maternal and neonatal health care and family planning services and their expected impact on public health. Thus the current workshop was being held to

build national capacity in Member States in reproductive health counselling, and would include discussions and exchange of information, experience and advice.

Dr Magdy Khaled, Assistant Representative, UNFPA Egypt, addressed the participants in the opening session. He emphasized the need for building the technical know-how of the service provider in reproductive health counselling as a fundamental approach to improving service uptake and minimizing unmet needs of maternal and neonatal health and family planning. Such efforts were expected to enhance reproductive health quality care, and improve chances of achieving the Millennium Development Goals in Member States.

Dr Haifa Madi, Director, Health Protection and Promotion, WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean, briefed the participants on the workshop methodology and expected outcomes. The methodology would include updates on the basic steps of counselling process; counselling guiding principles and counselling skills. It was expected that the workshop would acquaint participants with the concepts of the integrated curriculum on reproductive health counselling and advance their counselling skills and knowledge in maternal and newborn health and family planning. During the workshop, a regional team for reproductive health counselling was formulated to support and sustain the quality of reproductive health counselling services in Member States. Draft country workplans for addressing reproductive health counselling issues in the participating countries were developed and future steps were outlined at the final day.

## **2. Conclusions and next steps**

The participants expressed appreciation for the training workshop on reproductive health counselling and expressed interest in advancing this

effort in the Region. The steps below were outlined to ensure follow-up action at country level and maintain technical support.

- The participants are requested to discuss the draft workplans aimed at strengthening national capacity for reproductive health counselling and finalize them with the concerned officials at the Ministry of Health and other relevant stakeholders. The workplans should be submitted to the WHO and UNFPA Regional Offices no later than 16 February 2012.
- The participants are expected to share with the WHO and UNFPA Regional Offices printed and audiovisual materials on reproductive health counselling developed in their own countries.
- WHO and UNFPA will finalize the workshop training package based on the suggestions received in the proceeding of this activity and will make it available to the participating countries by 29 February 2012.
- In order to facilitate national efforts aimed at strengthening local resources for reproductive health counselling, WHO and UNFPA will translate into Arabic the publication *Counselling for maternal and newborn health: a handbook for building skills*. Translated texts will be available by 30 June 2012.
- Technical support will be available through WHO and UNFPA to backstop implementation of the national workplan activities.
- The identification of core regional resource persons has been initiated in this workshop, and will be expanded accordingly.
- WHO and UNFPA will develop a monitoring framework to facilitate follow-up of country activities. The tool will be shared with the participating countries once finalized.
- WHO and UNFPA are exploring the feasibility of conducting similar training, at the regional or country level, for francophone countries in the Region.
- WHO and UNFPA will examine the possibility of holding a second intercountry training workshop on reproductive health counselling for the remaining countries.