

Adolescent Reproductive Health: Project of Tunisian Scouts

Theme(s):

- Reproductive Health

Type of Program:

- Raising Awareness

Country/Region:

- Tunisia (national)

Project Duration: ?

Submitting/Executing Organizations:

- Tunisian Scouts Organization

Author:

- Ezzeddine Derbel
- Abdelaziz Zouari, Medical Doctor and Member of Scouts organization

Donor:

- UNFPA

Human Resources:

- Team leaders
- Volunteers
- Scouts

Partners:

- National Office for Family and Population (ONFP) - a government institution
- The Young Doctors Without Borders association (JMSF) - provides health services

Initiative overview: The initiative was established in Tunisia to enable youths to obtain information and services relating to sexual and reproductive health. The aim is to achieve a synergy between three regional and national programmes. The initiative is part of a regional endeavour initiated by the United Nations Population Fund to integrate reproductive health in scouts programme in eight Arab countries, including Tunisia. The second project covers 10 Tunisian regions and targets 16,000 adolescent girls and boys. The third project covers 14 Tunisian regions and targets 28,000 adolescent girls and boys via educational programmes.

Social discriminatory practices targeted: In spite of the major progress made in Tunisia at the level of gender equality and the establishment of women's participation in public life, youths remain marginalized in relation to access to reproductive health services. Society still looks at youths as minors and not as individuals with independent needs and opinions, which limits this group's empowerment.

Socio-cultural context: Tunisia has witnessed important progress, resulting from the reforms which introduced gender equality in state policy regardless of the governing authority. As a result, women are present in the political and social spheres and have achieved more progress than men in some areas. The international community presents the Tunisian experience and achievement as a model for developing countries in combining economic development and social progress.

National laws and policies: The principle of gender equality is a principle explicitly recognized in the Tunisian constitutional and legislative texts. The Code of Personal Status (issued on 13 August 1956) prohibits polygamy, regulates divorce, sets the minimum marriage age at 17 for consenting girls, and grants the mother the right to minor children's custody in case the father defaults in his responsibility or passes away. Several measures have been taken to protect children's rights in various fields in Tunisia (reproductive health, education, national culture, health, and leisure) to ensure the appropriate conditions for healthy growth. At the legislative level, and following the ratification of the International Convention on the Rights of the Child, Tunisia was in 1995 the first Arab and Muslim country and the first country in the world to have issued the Child Protection Code .

Objectives and Goals

The adopted general objective of the initiative is to capitalize on all the efforts to provide youngsters with information, education and counsel. But in the long-run, the objective is to raise awareness, inform about reproductive health, and introduce reproductive health and communication topics in large adolescent groups and within well-established frameworks such as scouts and educational institutions. The initiative also aims at building capacity for decision-making among youths aged 18 to 24 in the area of sexual and reproductive health and HIV-AIDS prevention.

Good Practices

Innovative Approach

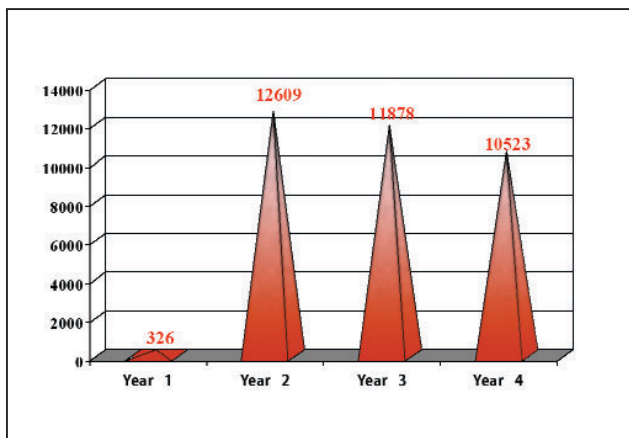
The initiative rehabilitated and trained youth peers aged 16 and above so that they can educate peers in large groups in unofficial educational contexts such as voluntary youth associations and youth clubs.

Participatory Approach

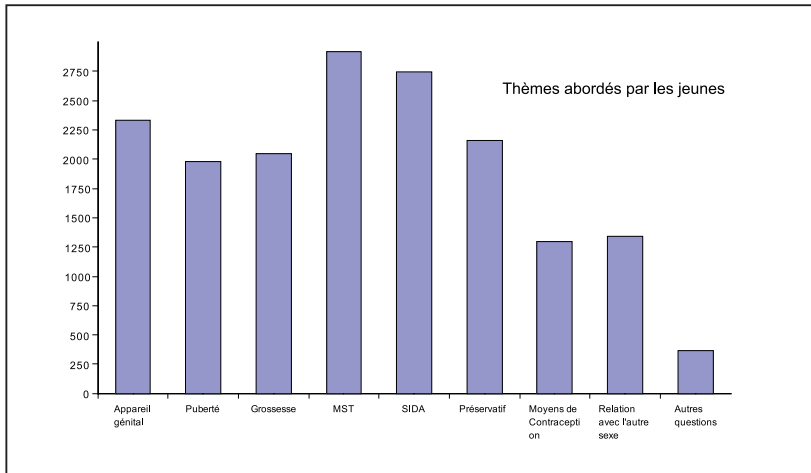
The subjects were chosen on the basis of youth needs and the formulated requests during training sessions and meetings.

Overcoming Challenges

In the design phase, the initiative faced the main challenge of selecting peer educators from scout leaders. The second main challenge was to maintain the quality of the scout leaders' performance in attracting youths. Such difficulties were overcome by monitoring activities and renewing the training tools in peer education.



Immediate successes: Results exceeded expectations. More than 35,000 youths had attended the educational sessions by the end of the five-year period.



Issues discussed at youth meetings:

- Sex organs
- Puberty
- Pregnancy
- Sexually transmitted diseases
- AIDS
- Condoms
- Contraceptives
- Relationships with the opposite sex
- Miscellaneous

Monitoring and Evaluation

Gender-sensitive indicators have been developed for the various initiative phases. The indicators include:

- Number of male and female beneficiaries
- Discussion topics
- Decision-making roles for males and females
- Most important topics according to gender and recurrent questions
- Support services according to gender

Ensuring Sustainability

Sustainability has been ensured by focusing on press interviews, specific groups, and surveys.

Contribution to Social Transformations

The meeting succeeded in:

- Consolidating youth awareness of sexual and reproductive health.
- Sensitizing institutions and stakeholders.
- Creating areas and mechanisms that should enable the target groups to express visions and participate in selected activities, initiatives, projects and programmes.

Lessons for Replication

Lessons for replication are mechanisms in the area of reproductive health, developed as attractive and entertaining formats for youths. In addition, youth-accessible language was used.