

# INVOLVING YOUNG MALES IN SOUHAG, EGYPT IN FAMILY PLANNING

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## BACKGROUND

- Recent increase in Egypt's fertility rate, following decades of progress in lowering fertility levels, highlights the need for renewed attention to the country's voluntary family planning (FP) program.
- The Survey of Young People in Egypt 2014 showed that more **unmarried young men desired three or more children in 2014** compared to 2009 (59% versus 48%).
- Men have much of the power but often lack comprehensive understanding of FP benefits despite being decisionmakers in Egyptian families.
- Earlier interventions such as the Family Advancement for Life and Health (FALAH) Project in Pakistan focused on engaging men, which demonstrated significant results in increasing contraceptive use by 8% in just four years as well as decreasing unmet need for birth spacing from 14% to 10% over the same period.

## METHODS

- Over a 24-month period, the *Expanding the Role of the Private Sector in Addressing Family Planning Needs of Young People in Egypt* project aims to reach a total of 3,000 participants of both sexes.
- Thirty young men from six districts in Souhag attended a one-week training on livelihood skills in addition to family planning and reproductive health (FP/RH). **These young men were trained as peer educators for young men from the same districts.**
- Two educators facilitated the 5-day training courses for participants in their districts.
- Trainings focused on the **use of social media as an entry point for job seekers to the job market and as a credible source of FP/RH information through the partner platform, Ma3looma.** Trainings also included an introduction to various business models and other skills that would properly equip participants for the current job market.
- The FP/RH curriculum included modules that cover an array of relevant topics for young people such as premarital counselling, FP methods, nutrition, misconceptions around FP and women's health, gender-based violence and the role of men in FP.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

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## PROGRAM INTERVENTION

The Population Council/Evidence Project is integrating FP/RH information into livelihood training program using peer education in Souhag, Egypt.

FP/RH has been integrated into livelihood training programs. Recent graduates and university students attended a livelihood training course that provided young people with skills to help them in finding a job. In addition the training course included basic FP/RH information to help them practice healthy timing and spacing of pregnancies as well as plan their current and future families. **The integration of FP/RH messages into livelihood training programs was done in order to attract a large number of young men who may lack comprehensive information about FP/RH.**

## RESULTS

- Thirty young men received the initial one-week training course that included both livelihood skills and FP/RH information. 90% of these young men scored 80% or more on their post-training assessments indicating high levels of knowledge gained and improved understanding of FP concepts. Many misconceptions were dispelled by the end of the trainings. **Less than 5% continued to believe that women should refrain from using voluntary contraception until she had given birth to a boy**, for example.
- Competent peer educators who were recruited as trainers developed a sense of social responsibility and moral imperative allowing them to personalize FP messages and tailor them to the needs of their peers.
- Ten trained peer educators have found job opportunities after attending this training, while the remaining 19 have gone on to be advocates of FP/RH in their respective districts.
- To date, these **peer educators conducted 19 five-day integrated training courses that reached around 530 young men in the six districts of Souhag.** These young men with seemingly negative views towards contraception said that the training corrected misconceptions they had about FP methods and highlighted the importance of their engagement. The average score of the young men attending the trainings was 90% on the post-training assessment.



## PROGRAM IMPLICATIONS

- **POTENTIAL FOR SCALE-UP:** The integrated livelihood and FP/RH trainings were well received by young males and showed a potential for scale-up. Trainings attracted a large number of unemployed youth who were seeking employment opportunities, especially young men who are deemed as breadwinners in this context and who would have otherwise not attended a training on FP, a topic that they may not perceive as important. Roughly 17% of women make up the labour market while men make up around 79% (SYPE 2014).
- **SUSTAINABILITY:** The use of social media will promote sustainability of the intervention through Ma3looma and online livelihood platforms. The use of social media to link trainees to jobs, credible FP/RH information and to each other was a key factor that attracted male trainees as reflected in their training evaluation.
- **DIRECT INVOLVEMENT:** The employment of an active learning approach that used several methods including: (a) role play exercises, (b) case-studies, and (c) other forms of experiential learning, helped young men better understand the issues.