

LEARNING BRIEF

Action Learning from application of the ENGAGE Programme's

ADOLESCENT BOYS LIFE SKILLS TOOL



The **'Adolescent Boys Life Skills' Tool** is part of Norwegian Church Aid's (NCA) holistic programme, called **ENGAGE** – *Enhancing Girl's Agency and Gender Equality*, that aims for preventing, mitigating, and responding to child, early and forced marriage (CEFM).

The **'Adolescent Boys Life Skills' Tool** was piloted in Somalia and Iraq, with a total of 115 adolescent boys participants engaging in the programme. Groups were formed based on the age status of adolescent boys, including younger (10 – 14 years), older (15 – 19 years). To learn about the effectiveness of the tool, the evaluations were conducted with both facilitators and beneficiaries after each of the 13 sessions. Additionally Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were facilitated with the staff and participants at the end of the programme.

Significant findings on how well the tool was working, include:

WHAT WORKED?



ADOLESCENT BOYS

- The adolescent boys particularly stressed the importance of the Sexual and Reproductive Health sessions. They mentioned that they have learnt many things and got important information that they would not be able to get from anywhere else. They stated that it will help them in the future, particularly for setting up and committing to healthy practices and behaviours.
- The boys mentioned that the exercise with the use of red/green cards was a simple and practical one, helping them to easily identify safe and unsafe actions.
- Adolescent boys also emphasised how important was for them to be intentional to recognise their emotions and feelings and learn the ways to calm themselves down in stressful situations.

NCA staff, who facilitated the piloting of the tool, stated:

- With each session the participating boys engaged more actively in the training process; they gradually built trust, were more open and willing to ask questions, got the confidence to intensively participate in the sessions.
- The sessions related to Sexual and Reproductive Health were particularly interesting for the adolescent boys. These sessions gave the boys a lot of information they did not know about.
- *'Making decisions about sex'* session helped the participants to realise the importance and understand better the concept of 'consent'.



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- The facilitators emphasised that the section about ‘Contraception, the Responsibilities and Rights of Boys and Girls’ was critical. It was important for the participants to understand the ways to prevent pregnancy because men and boys usually do not think about it.
- The training for facilitators on the Life Skills curriculum built staff capacity to confidently and accurately deliver the sessions.



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WHAT CAN BE IMPROVED?



**ADOLESCENT
BOYS**

The boys admitted that the ASRH information they have got was necessary for them. However, they still felt uncomfortable during the various sessions’ presentations. Many of the boys admitted that they were introduced to the topics that they have never discussed before in a group. They were more receptive and open to discuss when the sessions were conducted by male facilitators and/or health care professionals.

- Some of the content, particularly related to Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health, was difficult to introduce to the participants. Adaptations for younger and older age groups of boys were needed and different types of activities should be used.
- The facilitators admitted that the sessions on ‘Contraception, the Responsibilities and Rights of Boys and Girls’ was one of the most challenging to facilitate with boys. The boys felt shy and sometimes refused to participate in the discussions. They also felt shy looking at the pictures of male and female reproductive organs demonstrated by the facilitators. The facilitators felt that inviting health specialists to co-facilitate the sessions could have eased the environment.
- Some of the sessions had to be facilitated online. However, the online platform was not the best avenue for discussing such sensitive topics with adolescents.
- There were female facilitators involved in conducting various sessions, which did not allow space for boys to be fully open during the discussions.
- The order of some sessions needed to be changed, putting for example, ASRH related sessions towards end of the curriculum.



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⚠ NOTE: *The feedback received as a result of the tool piloting was considered, and further adjustments were done to various sessions, including to ASRH, as well as to the activities used in the curriculum, to better serve the participants’ needs.*

IMPACT



- The adolescent boys shared the information about the sessions with their peers and encouraged them to participate as well whenever there is such an opportunity.
- The sessions created more opportunities for the boys to share and engage with their parents and caregivers. The caregivers were interested to know what kind of conversations were happening during the sessions, while the boys were eager to share what they have learnt and discussed.

“The sessions helped us a lot in dealing with difficult situations in our lives. We learnt that we can also give our opinion concerning household matters. We started to get more involved in family decision-making. We also learnt that we better focus on our education rather than think about marriage.” – Adolescent boy from Somalia.

“After attending these sessions, I started to take more care of my sister and I help her inside the house whenever needed. I also support her with her education, help with her homework as much as I can.” – Adolescent boy from Iraq.

The participation in the **‘Adolescent Boys Life Skills’** sessions allowed the boys to gain critical information, which they were previously unaware about.

