

LEARNING BRIEF

Action Learning from application of the ENGAGE Programme's

ADOLESCENT GIRLS LIFE SKILLS TOOL



The **'Adolescent Girls 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 Girls Life Skills' Tool** was piloted twice, in both Somalia and Iraq, with a total of 129 participants engaging in the programme. Groups were formed based on age and marital status of adolescent girls, including younger (10 – 14 years), older (15 – 19 years), girls at imminent risk of CEFM, married, widowed or divorced. To learn about the effectiveness of the tool, the evaluations were conducted with both facilitators and beneficiaries after each of the 14 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?



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Participant adolescent girls considered the following sessions of the tool as particularly useful and engaging:

- **Session 2: Our Emotions** – girls understood the importance of being aware of their emotions and how this can impact on their daily lives.
- **Session 4: Decision Making and Problem Solving** – girls realised they have the right to make decisions for themselves.
- **Session 9: Our Health Part 1**– girls learnt information that was new about reproductive health, menstruation and pregnancy. They learnt how and when to seek medical support.

Participated girls also shared:

- ✓ The activities and topics were relevant to adolescent girls age group and marital status.
- ✓ Group ground rules were helpful for creating a safe environment and encouraging participation.
- ✓ The most commonly reported skills and knowledge gained included communication, confidence sharing opinions with family, adolescent sexual and reproductive health (in particular information related to menstruation) and girl-led advocacy initiatives.
- ✓ Variety of activities, including crafts, role plays and discussions, made sessions interesting and fun to learn new information.

“I loved doing the recap quiz since it helped me remember what I had learnt and also gave me the confidence to stand in front of my peers. Becoming a teacher is my dream, and this activity gave me skills that teachers have.” - Adolescent girl from Iraq.

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

- The implementation guide was clear and useful.
- The recap quiz worked very well, with girls able to demonstrate the key lessons learnt from the previous session. The recap also enhances the girls’ confidence in speaking in front of peers.
- The training for facilitators on the Life Skills curriculum built staff capacity to confidently and accurately deliver the sessions, including on sensitive topics, such as related to Adolescents Sexual and Reproductive Health (ASRH).
- Girls displayed more confidence and felt part of a group that can work together to make positive change.
- Girls in need of specialised services, including case management, were easily identified and referred. Girls became more aware of their rights, plus services available to meet their needs and were able to ask for support if needed.
- Girls frequently commented how safe and clean the space was, where they felt comfortable to discuss issues knowing that boys or men would not come in.
- Girls enjoyed using their learning journals as a reflection tool, plus also to refer back to for reference to previous lessons learnt.



WHAT CAN BE IMPROVED?



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Participating girls thought that ASRH needed further adaptations as girls said they had no interest in child spacing, period tracking, or contraception. Unmarried girls reported that they should get such SHR information at a later stage, when they are older or when they are married. At the this point they thought that such information was not relevant to them.

- Implementation guide needed a stronger tool to support identification of the most vulnerable girls in community.
- The order of some sessions needed to be changed, putting for example, ASRH related sessions towards end of the curriculum.
- There was a need to guide facilitators for procurement of dignity kits, to distribute for ASRH session in order to support learning outcomes, not just non-food items (NFIs) distribution.



- Clearer guidance was required to invite a health professional to co-facilitate various health related sessions.
- The curriculum missed an opportunity for girl-led advocacy sessions which needed to be added.
- The results from the pre-assessment tool, initially included in the curriculum, were difficult to analyse. A new tool from the International Rescue Committee's (IRC) [Girl Shine](#) programme¹ has been adapted and included in replacement.



⚠ NOTE: As the tool was finalised, participants' and facilitators' observations were 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



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- The **ENGAGE 'Adolescent Girls Life Skills'** Tool changed the way girls respond to challenging situations, as they improved communication skills and confidence. Girls are able to identify emotions better and react in a constructive manner. This will have positive impact on their lives, will help to finish school and achieve goals.
- The sessions related to menstrual hygiene were helpful in understanding physical and emotional responses during menstruation. Prior to learning this, girls would not attend school during their period, but since gaining this information they felt in control and empowered to go to school.
- Girls shared lessons learnt with friends who were not engaged in the sessions. They also discussed favorite topics and new ideas with their mothers. Girls were hesitant to share sensitive information with their fathers, but enjoyed explaining the recap quiz, warm up activities, using their learning journals.
- Parents asked NCA for additional sessions, as they witnessed the positive change in their daughters. Parents explained that they better understand the negative impacts of CEFM and the importance of girls completing their education.
- Girls felt empowered to conduct girl-led advocacy in their community. They reported that this was the first time they had been asked to lead or participate in something that affects their lives and others.



- The inclusion of the girl-led advocacy sessions in the second pilot round significantly improved the programme. It allowed for the girls to put their new skills into practice and further develop the peer networks they established. The action plans created will have real impact on their lives and will bring positive changes in their communities for other girls.
- Girls are now seen with more respect from their family, and community members, including men and boys. They respect themselves more also and are determined to work towards personal goals.



¹ IRC, GIRL SHINE Programme: <https://gbvresponders.org/adolescent-girls/girl-shine>