

MHM 'Training of Trainers' in schools; our future student leaders

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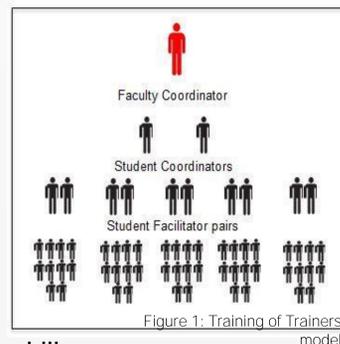


BACKGROUND

In Cambodia menstrual health is part of the national curriculum, however the topic is still associated with shame and is subject to cultural taboo. Several teaching sessions are carried out on the topic of MHM in schools. However, the approach of training the key target audience to develop advocates for the issue, can be more effective and sustainable in the long term than simply providing one-off teaching sessions.¹

The benefits of this include:

- Developing student leaders that can be a point of confidence to other girls
- Enhancing the learning process and understanding of key concepts, when students are able to share and teach information to others
- **Developing the students' leadership skills**



ACTIVITIES/INTERVENTIONS

The programme included the following stages:

- **Stage 1:** Student survey in two secondary schools (forty students, aged 12-15 years old, were selected at random by their teachers). Information gathered on the following: knowledge, access to information, sanitary protection and behaviour related to menstrual hygiene management as well as impact on school. Based on the information collected we were able to develop the workshop to address **the girls' specific needs**- both in content and in approach. Top priority topics identified:

1. Why girls have periods
 2. Managing period symptoms, including personal sanitation and hygiene
 3. Eating and exercising during menstruation
- Responses when asked on training and leadership:

"Being a student leader means sharing good and current

knowledge to friends and relatives for them to know the correct knowledge that I have learnt"

"It is important to teach each other, because with friends we are close and able to share ideas together"

- **Stage 2:** Deliver training session to 13 female students and 9 teachers (engaging them as supporters and facilitators).

- **Stage 3:** Practice session- trainee student leaders to deliver to each other. Pre and post training assessments to evaluate knowledge of key topics, as well as their presentation skills.

- **Stage 4:** Trainee students deliver to fellow students in their own schools. Sessions prepared and led by the students themselves. Teachers and training staff facilitated and supported when needed.

- **Stage 5: Evaluate and assess the students' performance and provide feedback to aid with future progress.** Public recognition and celebration of students and teachers.



OBJECTIVES

Long term goal: To empower young females in managing their menstrual health in a dignified manner

Short term outcome: To increase the number of young females in Samlout commune target schools (North-West Cambodia) who are exposed to education regarding the importance of menstrual health hygiene.

Indicator: Number of students exposed to MHM education by trained community members (senior female students/teachers) in Samlout target schools.

Training programme key objectives:

- To train older students to teach and deliver engaging menstrual health sessions
- To develop health advocates and leaders in the student population
- To train well informed young girls on key menstrual health topics who are able to share and deliver this information to other students
- Encourage and facilitate peer to peer learning

LEARNING AND IMPLICATIONS

- **This process can develop students' confidence, enable them to openly discuss sensitive issues and empower them to make changes in their community.** Following the training session participants reported: *"After learning about infections, I should make a change by preparing a game or session to teach my classmates"*

"Although I was very nervous at first, I feel more brave now to talk about this in front of my class"

- Although a small group of students were initially trained, they were collectively able to reach and influence a much wider audience (shared teaching with 149 secondary school female students across both secondary schools).

Potential future developments/suggestions:

- Structured sessions to friends and family by the student leaders, as well as male students in schools.
- Student leaders to teach older primary school students. This would help them be better prepared for puberty.
- A final assessment for all the students after they received the teaching from the student leaders would have been an accurate way to assess knowledge and understanding of the topics covered.

CONCLUSION

- Training young girls to deliver teaching sessions to fellow students can be a more engaging and pro-active process to educate them on MHM related issues, as well as contributing to their personal development and sense of responsibility towards their own health.
- This is a simple approach and can be more sustainable once trainers have been trained and observed- it can then be handed over to the local community/school to continue replicating the process in other settings to reach a wider audience. It has the potential to be duplicated elsewhere.

REFERENCES

1. Yarber, L. et al., (2015) 'Evaluating a train-the-trainer approach for improving capacity for evidence-based decision making in public health', *BMC Health Services Research*, 15(1). doi: 10.1186/s12913-015-1224-2.
2. Figure 1- available at: <https://blogs.reading.ac.uk/engage-in-teaching-and-learning/files/2015/01/Paddy-Woodman-21-01-2015.jpg> (Accessed: 1 September 2016)

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