



Urban Adolescent SRH SBCC I-Kit Pilot

MUTUELLE DE JEUNES CHRÉTIENS POUR LE DÉVELOPPEMENT:
REDUCING ADOLESCENT PREGNANCIES IN BENIN

September 2017

ABOUT THIS BRIEF

The Urban Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) Social and Behavior Change Communication (SBCC) Implementation Kit (I-Kit) is a resource created by the Health Communication Capacity Collaborative (HC3) project. The I-Kit is a tool for program managers or youth organizers to: expand staff and youth capacity, develop new programs and project proposals, revise existing programs to include SBCC and set organizational research agendas. The I-Kit provides overviews of SBCC and youth development (Part 1); offers examples from a fictional setting, called Zanbe; proposes seven Essential Elements (EEs) of SRH SBCC program design for urban adolescents (Part 2); addresses specific implementation challenges (Part 3); and encourages users to share what they have learned (Part 4). Each EE is accompanied by interactive worksheets allowing users to apply what they learn to their own work:

Essential Element	Worksheet
1. Collecting Helpful Information about Urban Adolescents	#1: Making Sense of Primary and Secondary Research
2. Navigating the Urban Environment for Youth	#2: Urban Assessment #3: Community Mapping
3. Segmenting Your Audience	#4: Segmenting Your Audience
4. Creating an Audience Profile	#5: Summarize Key Information about Your Audience #6: Audience Profile
5. Establishing Behavioral Objectives and Indicators	#7: Behavioral Objectives #8: Behavioral Indicators
6. Identifying Communication Channels in the Urban Environment	#9: "Day in the Life" #10: Reviewing Available Communication Channels #11: Selecting Communication Channels
7. Developing Messages for Urban Adolescents	#12: Creative Brief #13: What Youth Say

To understand real-world application of the I-Kit, HC3 partnered in 2015 and 2016 with five Pilot Partner (PP) organizations in Benin, Madagascar and Kenya. Each organization applied and adapted the I-Kit to one existing adolescent SRH project in its portfolio. In 2016, HC3 conducted field visits to each PP; lessons learned were distilled into an [I-Kit Supplement](#). In 2017, HC3 conducted quantitative research to understand each PP's I-Kit experience. The results are summarized in this case study.

INTRODUCTION

Founded in 1993 by Catholic youth, Mutuelle de Jeunes Chrétiens pour le Développement (MJCD) is a secular and apolitical organization working in three main domains: community health, women and youth autonomy and education/training. Since its inception, MJCD has implemented various behavioral health communication projects targeting different population groups, including adolescents and youth. MJCD operates in all 12 geographic departments (regions) of Benin.

Seeking specifically to strengthen efforts to reduce teen pregnancy, MJCD chose to apply the I-Kit to its ongoing project titled *Promouvoir l'égalité de genres pour réduire les grossesses non désirées chez les adolescents* (Promoting Gender Equality to Reduce Unintended Adolescent Pregnancies—hereafter referred to as *Promouvoir*), which is conducted in partnership with Plan International Benin in the Department of Couffo, Klouékammè commune. MJCD's I-Kit pilot activities took place between December 2015 and July 2016.

I-KIT PILOT OBJECTIVES

MJCD identified three internal objectives while using the I-Kit:

1. Reinforce the implementation of *Promouvoir*
2. Improve the effectiveness of *Promouvoir's* field activities, especially those addressed to adolescents and youth
3. Inform/refine an internal reproductive health database

USING THE I-KIT

A technical team was established to apply the I-Kit to the *Promouvoir* project. The team included a technical manager, the supervisor of the project selected for the pilot, an animator and two facilitators. The MJCD director and administrative manager were also involved in the project, but were not part of the technical team.

MJCD's I-Kit activities included an initial I-Kit orientation seminar, a literature review, five team workshops to complete selected I-Kit worksheets and repeated visits to *Promouvoir* sites to meet with youth. During the initial orientation meeting, the technical team studied the entire I-Kit, analyzed each EE and accompanying worksheets and chose the pieces that were most relevant for the activities anticipated over the following six-month period. MJCD chose to use **EEs 1, 5, 6 and 7** and all worksheets from the selected EEs, finding these most relevant to the *Promouvoir* project. Once the EEs were selected, MJCD organized the aforementioned workshops to review and complete the worksheets, traveling to project sites as needed to obtain the required information.

SUCCESSSES AND WHAT WORKED WELL

MJCD members stated that the I-Kit worked for them as presented. They did not modify any I-Kit sections as they found it “clear and adaptable to the Benin context.” The worksheets were easy to use. The team especially appreciated the fictional Zanbe example, which guided the MJCD team throughout with illustrations of how to apply the I-Kit tips and tools. The I-Kit helped MJCD



The MJCD team with HC3 representatives during a technical assistance visit to Benin. © 2016, Mohamad Sy-Ar, all rights reserved.

develop its individual skills and strengthened its teams' collective capacity to develop effective SBCC strategies for SRH among adolescents and youth. These new skills had a direct impact on the *Promouvoir* project implementation and its intermediary and end results.

- **Communicating with youth.** Through the I-Kit, the MJCD team was able to identify youth's needs and wants and get acquainted with the language that they use to talk about sexuality. This resulted in more symmetrical, two-way communication processes between MJCD field staff and youth, and increased mutual trust. Field staff realized the importance of being polite and flexible in its interactions with youth in contrast to using an authoritarian tone. Even experienced field facilitators used to working with youth felt that the I-Kit enhanced their understanding of youth and improved their communication skills, which was a great source of satisfaction. Knowing and understanding youth's terminology about sexuality, identifying relevant topics for them and showing mutual respect during interactions enabled dialogue on delicate topics such as physical changes during adolescence and sexual needs.
- **Identifying stronger communication strategies and channels.** The I-Kit helped MJCD scrutinize its own assumptions and develop communication strategies based on youth's needs and wants and the context in which they live. The PP technical team realized that youth's preferred communication channels may be different from what MJCD originally thought. The I-Kit helped the MJCD team better design a communication strategy for youth that fits their beneficiaries' lifestyles—that includes which communication channels to use and “when to approach youth, to what extent [and] at

what time of day” they can best reach them. They learned, for instance, that out-of-school kids like posters; even if they cannot read the content, they try to understand it. The identification of preferred channels led the MJCD technical team to initiate an interactive SRH radio program by youth for youth, broadcast at an hour determined alongside youth.

“ [MJCD field facilitators] ... have worked with adolescents for years, but using certain worksheets ... allowed them to better understand these youth. Above all, when one facilitator ... witnessed when she discussed with youth their language and their different ways of talking about love, she was really surprised. ... This allowed her to better understand our audiences, our beneficiaries, with whom we've worked for so long.”

- **Understanding audience segmentation and primary and secondary audiences.** Learning about audience segmentation was particularly instrumental in strengthening MJCD’s capacity to reach the most disadvantaged youth in ways that are effective and equitable. As one participant put it, now they no longer place all adolescents and youth under the same umbrella. The I-Kit’s audience segmentation principles and techniques helped the team identify specific intended audiences and craft distinct messages for each. MJCD selected out-of-school adolescents as a primary audience, for example, due to their special vulnerabilities, including the social conditions and behaviors that increase their risk of teen pregnancy. This group was further segmented by age (10 to 14 years old and 15 to 19 years old) and sex (female and male). Although *Promouvoir* focused on youth as primary audiences, the I-Kit spurred MJCD to include secondary audiences (e.g., parents, headmasters) to enable youth to join radio listening sessions on youth sexual health and/or take time from work to go to the health/youth center.
- **Understanding gender differences.** I-Kit worksheets also strengthened MJCD’s gender approach at the core of the *Promouvoir* project. Using [Worksheet 9: “Day in the Life,”](#) for instance, helped the project team pinpoint girls’ heavier workloads in relation to boys’ as a key underlying risk factor for teen pregnancy. This finding resulted in tailored approaches and messages for each sex, including messages that encouraged boys to help girls with their daily chores before they go to school or work.

- **Clarifying behavioral objectives and indicators.** Participants stressed that the I-Kit allowed them to better understand and define the work they wanted to do. *EE 5: Establishing Behavioral Objectives and Indicators*, was a key new learning, considered “an important planning and monitoring tool,” because one participant professed that previously, they “were not used to defining behavioral objectives.” This tool has had an important impact not only on the *Promouvoir* project, but on the way MJCD works in general. Individual staff now use I-Kit worksheets on other projects, and the I-Kit has been integrated into MJCD’s overall strategic plan. Prior to the pilot, MJCD had a database of SRH indicators; the team said the I-Kit has helped it refine these indicators and add new adolescent SRH-specific behavioral indicators to its platform. With more specific target audiences, behavioral objectives and indicators, they can now better monitor progress over time.

“ We use the I-Kit not only for [*Promouvoir*], but in the context of other projects. We have shared it with all of our program officers. It’s clear that we work differently today compared to before.”

- **Involving youth.** Applying the I-Kit’s more participatory approaches of involving adolescents in program planning has changed how MJCD interacts with them. Now, MJCD says, its young beneficiaries have become agents of their own change, playing more active roles in program design and implementation and having a more active input on the selection and use of communication channels and messages. MJCD has signed contracts with radio stations for the broadcast of interactive programs/serials with youth radio hosts, whereas, prior to the I-Kit pilot, these programs were animated by adults. Likewise, MJCD no longer offers education sessions facilitated by adults, but rather supports peer-to-peer discussions about sexuality.

CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED

Participants stressed that HC3’s technical support helped them to better understand the application of some of the worksheets as the program evolved. They did face some challenges, however, detailed below.

- **Lack of data.** “To work well with the I-Kit, we need information,” one of the participants explained, but in Benin local information and data are “a very rare commodity.” The lack of systematized information

at the local level made it difficult to complete some of the worksheets, especially the first few, which focus on research. This was not a problem related to the I-Kit, participants stressed, but rather to current information and data gaps in their country. Outside the scope of the HC3 pilot project, MJCD took the initiative to organize some discussion meetings with youth to help fill in these information gaps.

- **Involving youth.** Involving the intended audience, namely adolescents and youth, was challenging because it requires excellent facilitation skills, a high degree of professionalism and the ability to develop trust and make youth feel safe and comfortable. The capacity of MJCD's facilitator to make youth feel at ease and not to present herself as a patronne (boss) was essential in getting the detailed information it needed to develop an SBCC strategy for SRH that responded to youth needs and wants.

CONCLUSIONS

MJCD's I-Kit pilot approach included literature reviews, team meetings and repeated interactions with young people. This was not its regular way of working, but the main advantage of this process, participants stressed, was that it facilitated collective learning. The dialogue and debate elicited during the I-Kit pilot helped them better develop a common understanding of the I-Kit and modify their intervention model accordingly.

The main advice that MJCD would give to other organizations interested in using the I-Kit would be to develop a collective understanding of the resource before attempting to apply or implement it.

Participants also considered teamwork key to their I-Kit pilot success. They recommend completing the worksheets collectively, within a team, as opposed to assigning the task to a single staff member. This approach prevents mistakes while ensuring the inclusion of different points of view and specific information on given topics.



MJCD team members with colleagues from another Pilot Partner, Organisation pour le Service et la Vie/Jordan, at an I-Kit experience exchange workshop. © 2016, Mohamad Sy-Ar, all rights reserved.

As a crucial next step, MJCD strongly recommends broad dissemination of the I-Kit in Benin and throughout Africa. Many non-governmental organizations (NGOs) work on SBCC and could benefit from the I-Kit. MJCD has decided to apply the I-Kit to all its projects and is committed to sharing this experience with sister organizations, and it suggests that HC3 and donors should initiate activities for even wider dissemination.

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