

# Using Mobile Technology and Enhanced Counselling to Improve Family Planning Among Syrian Refugees and Host Communities in Lebanon and Jordan

## Project Information

- ◆ Department: Center of Excellence for Applied Epidemiology
- ◆ Unit: Research and Policy

## SCOPE OF WORK

The overall goal of this project was to develop, implement, and evaluate contextualized, culturally sensitive, data-driven, and evidence-based strategies to encourage the adoption of quality FP services. The project aimed at developing and evaluating the feasibility and effectiveness of an intervention aimed to encourage contraceptive use through high-quality, effective couples counseling and the use of digital technologies.

## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The *Family Planning* project supported comprehensive qualitative research around family planning accessibility to Syrian Refugees and vulnerable host communities, to be utilized for better informed policies and strategies to provide healthcare services. Moreover; the project supported the digitalization efforts of family planning services to enhance the accessibility of the family planning services among the clients and to assure better and sustainable data that can be utilized for better evidenced based action-oriented, and human rights-based decisions. Following the formative phase of the project; co-design workshops in both countries was conducted through engaging healthcare providers to provide solid approach to develop the intervention packages on couples counselling and family planning services. The project continued with the package implementation followed by intervention package evaluation exercise. The project team ensured good dissemination of projects results in each phase through production of manuscripts and communicating the projects outputs on regular basis.

## BENEFICIARIES

The targeted audience were vulnerable citizens in host communities and Syrian refugees with special focus on women and girls. The project also targeted healthcare providers.

## GEOGRAPHICAL COVERAGE

*The project* was implemented among vulnerable citizens in host communities and Syrian refugees living in Lebanon and in Jordan mainly the three major governorates in Irbid, Al-Mafraq, and Al-Ramtha.

<b>Project Start and End Date</b>	<b>November 1, 2019 – July 31, 2023</b>
<b>Partner Organizations</b>	<b>Ministry of Health in Jordan, American University of Beirut, and Jordan University of Science and Technology</b>
<b>Funded by</b>	<b>International Development Research Center (IDRC) Canada</b>
<b>Collaborators</b>	<b>The American University of Beirut and Jordan University of Science and Technology</b>

## **PROJECT PHASES**

*The project involves five phases:*

Phase I – Initial framework development and formative research phase: This phase implemented during the first 10 months of the project period. It focused on understanding the decision-making processes around family planning in fragile situation and developed a participatory design process for rights-based digital health strategies.

Phase II – Co-design and development of interventions phase: Workshops was conducted in each country with local stakeholders (researchers, Community Advisory Committee members, and partnering organizations) to co-design and develop a starting set of digital health solutions to promote FP among clients, based on the evidence collected in phase I and in consideration of the local contexts.

Phase III - Capacity building of healthcare providers: This phase enhanced the participating healthcare providers to provide adequate couples' counseling based on the best available evidence and where the process is culturally sensitive, gender-appropriate, and equitable. The training package included effective FP counseling. Blended learning format (a combination of face-to-face and online) was used to train health professionals and community workers, in combination with the self-paced, on demand mobile app resource (OppiaMobile.)

Phase IV- Implementation and evaluation of the Intervention for clients: This phase was research focused; adopting a stratified parallel-group pilot cluster randomized clinical trial (RCT) design to compare the intervention package targeting clients alone. An intervention including enhanced counselling plus digital health support for clients compared with an intervention including enhanced counselling alone.

Phase V- Dissemination: Several reports, publications, and presentations were prepared to share the findings with policy makers, media, the general public, and academic beneficiaries in both countries. Some preliminary findings was shared after the first phase once the formative research phase is concluded.

## Currently . . .

The pre-identified gaps for the initiation of this project were: the lack of family planning services, especially those related to provision of couples counselling and digital tools in several segments of the local communities in Jordan and Lebanon, specifically in the rural areas of both countries. Also, it has been reported that there is still a confusion among the refugees and vulnerable individuals about the accessibility for family planning services. The ultimate goal of this project was to support those who are in need and/or poor to make informative decisions about their reproductive lives.

## What's next . . .

The project collaborators focused on developing a participatory- contextual understanding of the targeted audience needs in relation to family planning services; through different scientific methods of studying and analyzing the relevant literature. Also, through conducting operational research and stakeholders' mapping analysis. The project team supported the capacity building of health care and community professionals to enhance the accessibility and quality of family planning services. The project also focused on providing digital based tools that will be used by health care providers and clients.

## OUTCOMES BY NUMBERS

### The followings were conducted:

- Two Community Advisory Committee meetings
- Eight Field visits to eight PHCs
- Four focus group discussions
- 17 interviews.
- One Scientific Advisory Committee meeting

- Two co-design workshops in two healthcare centers where 20 married women (10 Syrian and 10 Jordanian) and six midwives participated.
- Training session for nine Family Planning Healthcare Providers

- Designed Training Manuel
- m-Ayla Website
- Arabic-Based Mobile app.
- Randomized Control Trial conducted.
- 5 manuscripts of which Two were published.

**EMPHNET Information:** Eastern Mediterranean Public Health Network (EMPHNET) works at achieving its mission by responding to public health needs with deliberate efforts that allow for health promotion and disease prevention.

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