

SWEDD SERIES: OPERATIONAL BRIEF

CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT FOR SAFE SPACES

The research informing this brief was led by the Population Council and focused on the SWEDD project. The information will guide the implementation of SWEDD+



This operational brief is one of a series that retrospectively documents the process of implementing the interventions of the Sahel Women's Empowerment and Demographic Dividend (SWEDD) project, and describes good practice, challenges and lessons learned on curriculum development for Safe Spaces (SS).

It presents a summary of a literature review and conversations with key respondents in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger between March and April 2022, as detailed in a guide of the same name. The implementation experiences described in this brief and the guide serve to inform curriculum development for SWEDD+ Safe Spaces, as well as other Safe Spaces projects in countries in the Global South, particularly in West and Central Africa.

The Safe Spaces curricula serve to improve knowledge, skills and attitudes in life skills, reproductive health, gender and human rights, financial capability and economic empowerment, and literacy for out-of-school and never-educated adolescents from disadvantaged backgrounds.

The Safe Spaces curricula in the various countries were developed participatively in three phases.

According to global good practice, "education about sexuality and HIV can help adolescents develop the ability to form healthy and respectful relationships and to protect themselves from unwanted and unprotected sex, unwanted pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections."

Haberland and Rogow (Ed.) 2009; Haberland 2015.

Phases of curriculum development

Phase 1: Design and planning

- Design and develop a regional curriculum with international experts selected by the UNFPA Regional Technical Secretariat (RTS) of the SWEDD project and the World Bank.
- Select content based on the specific skills to be developed according to the different age groups in the Safe Spaces and meetings with stakeholders.
- Design a country version involving local players specific to each country and using global evidence.

Phase 2: National adaptation of content

- Involve the technical services of the relevant ministries engaged with youth.
- Make a point of using simple, accessible language to explain gender equity in adapted materials.
- Take account of national specificities, cultural norms, local sensitivities and the laws of the country, without diluting the messages of gender equity.

Phase 3: Preparation for implementation

- Ensure that each country's laws and codes are fully considered.
- Assess the extent to which mentors and participants in the Safe Spaces feel that they have ownership of the curriculum material.



Adaptation must be a supervised exercise to ensure that what is produced is consistent with the reference manual.

Regional expert



BANQUE MONDIALE





Resources need to be invested in national adaptations to ensure that they do not reinforce inequitable gender norms.

Regional expert



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SUMMARY OF KEY LESSONS

Phase 1: Design and planning	1	Base the content and structure of Safe Spaces curricula on global standards and good practice.
	2	Effective planning, time management and budgeting are essential.
	3	Include curriculum assessments in wider MEL (monitoring, evaluation and learning) planning.
	4	Ensure that material is relevant and appropriate for mentors and participants at regional and national levels.
	5	Ensure that the curriculum remains appropriate and relevant at national level, even as it evolves at regional level.
Phase 2: National adaptation of content	6	Use simple language that takes account of the mentors' level of education, in order to ensure that curriculum material is accessible to them.
	7	Ensure that the adapted material contains sessions that are relevant and appropriate to both mentors and participants.
	8	Take account of important cultural and religious factors during national adaptation, but without diluting the key messages or the monitoring of good practice.
	9	Take the time needed to fully – but strategically – engage key local and national players.
Phase 3: Preparation for implementation	10	Ensure that communities are well informed.
	11	Allow sufficient time and preparation for training.
	12	Take the time to run a comprehensive pilot before implementation on a national scale.
	13	Use the results of the pilot to make any necessary changes before implementation.
	14	Provide an operational manual or guide to improve or correct problems in real time.

Sources: Nicole Haberland and Deborah Rogow (Ed). 2009. A single programme: guide and activities for a unified educational approach to sexuality, gender, HIV and human rights. New York Population Council; Haberland, N.A., 2015. The case for addressing gender and power in sexuality and HIV education: a comprehensive review of evaluation studies. *International perspectives on sexual and reproductive health*, 41(1), pp.31-42.

This operational brief documenting the process of developing the curricula for the SWEDD Safe Spaces is based on a guide that sets out the process in detail (see link below). It was developed by the Population Council with the technical support of UNFPA and the World Bank.

For more information, visit the SWEDD Project's virtual resource platform: www.sweddknowledge.org