Training of Family Planning Counselors in Jordan: Developing Human Resources through Adult Education

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ABSTRACT

This paper briefly describes the development and status of family planning (FP) services, including counseling, in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. It also reports extensively on a FP counseling training course organized by the Jordanian Association for Family Planning and Protection (JAFPP) which is a local NGO. A field survey approach, with qualitative and quantitative dimensions, was adopted. Questionnaires were used to solicit information about the trainees’ backgrounds, the course material, the methods and techniques of presentation employed by the trainers, and the benefits derived from the course. The findings provide statistical results which shed more light on FP in Jordan, and lay the foundation for specific measures for improvement which the author recommends at the end of the paper.

Keywords: Adult Education, Family Planning (FP) Counselors, Human Resources, Jordan, Jordanian Association for Family Planning and Protection (JAFPP)

INTRODUCTION

This research paper focuses on family planning (FP) in Jordan, specifically the counseling function undertaken by the Jordanian Association for Family Planning and Protection (JAFPP), which is a non-governmental organization (NGO) whose mission is to raise youth awareness on health issues, social problems and potential risks and to inform women about the fundamentals of family planning, reproductive health, and their human rights.

JAFPP was initially established in Jerusalem in 1964. Later, it restructured its operations because of the separation of the West and East Banks of Jordan in 1967. At present, JAFPP has 16 clinics in 9 governorates which provide comprehensive family planning services to women including premenopausal services (periodic checkup, gynecological checkup, sexual health counseling, osteoporosis counseling and supportive diagnostic services), breast and cervical cancer detection, familiarity with contraceptives, sexually transmitted diseases

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management and, last but not least, providing counseling relating to all those services.

JAFPP is funded from internal and external sources. The former includes service fees (symbolic fees paid by clients in the clinic), donations, subscriptions, bank interests, training fees (paid by the Ministry of Health) and endowments; the latter includes grants from organizations such as the US Agency for International Development (USAID), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF), The Embassy of Japan in Amman and the Jordanian Ministry of Health.

A BRIEF PROFILE OF JORDAN

The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan is surrounded by the River Jordan in the West, Syria in the North, Iraq in the East and Saudi Arabia in the South. Its population as of July 2011 was 6,508,271. The age structure was as follows: 0-14 years: 35.3%, 15-64 years: 59.9% and over 65 years: 4.8%. The median age was 22.1 years and the life expectancy at birth was 80.05 years (78.73 years for males and 81.45 years for females). Most people, 79% of the population, lived in urban centers in 2010.

The population growth was 0.984%, the birth rate equaled 26.79 births per 1000 population and the death rate was 2.69 deaths per 1000 population. The total fertility rate was 3.39 children born per woman, and the infant mortality rate was 16.42 deaths per 1000 live births.

The population of Jordan is approximately 98% Arab, 1% Circassian and 1% Armenian. Christians, mostly Greek Orthodox represent 6% of the population (2001 est.) whereas the rest are Moslems, mainly Sunni. The official language is Arabic, but English is widely understood.

The literacy rate for the total population was 89.9% (male: 95.1%, female: 84.7%). The school life expectancy for either males or females was 13 years in 2008.

FAMILY PLANNING (FP) IN JORDAN

Jordan has progressed significantly in the area of reproductive health and family planning. According to a study conducted in support of USAID, fertility rate dropped from 6.6 children per married woman in 1983 to 3.6 in 2007 (USAID, 2010). The promotion of family planning “the planning of when to have children and the use of birth control and other techniques to implement such plans”, reducing the total fertility rate and increasing the Contraceptive Prevalence Rate (CPR) have been some of the main goals of the Government of Jordan’s National Agenda (El-Khoury & Murad, 2008). The 2007 Jordan Population and Family Health Survey (JPFHS), shows that 57% of married women ages 15-49 were using family planning (42% were using modern methods and 15% relied on traditional methods such as periodic abstinence and withdrawal) compared to 26% in 1983 (20.8% using modern methods and 5.2% relying on traditional methods). However, despite the advances made so far, the unmet need for family planning is still significant and the discontinuation rate among FP users is also high. An unmet need is defined as “the percentage of married women who desire to space their births at least two years apart or limit childbearing entirely but are not using contraceptives” (USAID, 2010). Thus, according to the 2007 Jordan Population and Family Health Survey (JPFHS), 12% of married women had an unmet need for family planning, (5% for spacing the next birth at least two years and 7% for limiting childbearing) (USAID, 2010).

The FP system in Jordan includes public, nongovernmental and commercial entities which in the past contributed equally to providing and financing FP services. However, the role of the private sector in providing FP services has been declining over the last decade, and the government became the main provider of FP services, serving 42% of FP users in 2007.
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