



Shamseya
for Innovative Community
Healthcare Solutions



The Women Friendly Services Project

Provided by:

Shamseya for Innovative Community Healthcare Solutions



ABOUT

Shamseya is a problem solver to challenges facing healthcare. Established as a social enterprise in Egypt since 2012, works on finding innovative healthcare solutions that put patients front and center. We have created programs that improve the quality, accessibility, effectiveness and affordability of healthcare services provided to people in Egypt and beyond, e.g. the Youth friendly service project implemented in Tunisia, covering over a hundred healthcare service providers with a particular focus on healthcare services provided to young women.

With a participatory, human-centered approach, Shamseya was able to implement 5 different projects aligning with national and international initiatives, including, e.g. Eghospitals, El Naseh, that directly serve the sustainable development goals (SDGs) such as : good health and well-being (3), gender equality (5), and partnerships for the goals (17).

In 2018, we carried out a massive intervention, promoting solutions to address sexual and reproductive health services in upper Egypt, by organizing a competitive program for youth groups, providing them with the mentorship, tools, and support to develop youth-centered interventions to increase access to these services among their local peers. This project was implemented in partnership with the UNFPA and included 63 local projects focusing on SRH and youth.

Project Context

We designed the Women Friendly Services (WFS) project to capitalize on our earned knowledge and the lessons we learnt. In partnership with the New Zealand Embassy, the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, the John Snow Initiative and local NGOs, we succeeded to pilot this project within the scope of a primary healthcare unit and a hospital in the Mansheyet Nasser informal area in Cairo. We are now proceeding in full power into the next phase of this project, where we plan on scaling up the reach of this project in an exponential, structured way. The project will actively work to achieve the expected goals, mentioned in detail later in this concept note, which are expected to help in the fulfillment of Egypt's Women Strategy as part of the 2030 Agenda of Sustainable Development, ensuring universal access to sexual reproductive rights and health for all women. The project also seeks to embark a step forward towards reducing gaps in gender equality.

Designing the WFS project came as an answer to major concerns regarding equality in healthcare services provision for women in general. In Egypt, gender inequality risks the life of millions of women and girls, especially as a country ranked 108 out of 165 according to the Gender Equality Index¹. In a more specific overview, in 2014, 68.1% of women reported at least one problem in accessing healthcare².

¹ Gender Inequality Index (GII) | Human Development Reports, 2015.

² Egypt Demographic and Health Survey 2014. Cairo, Egypt: Ministry of Health and Population and ICF International, 2015.



This is where the WFS determined, following of a comprehensive mapping phase, the barriers to healthcare; which include the scarcity of equipped and prepared healthcare facilities, difficulties dealing with the medical staff, scarcity of necessary information on these services, poor quality infection control measures, and unclear complaints pathways for harassment in healthcare facilities.

Added to that, in the wake of COVID19, global health care services have been exposed to unprecedented levels of strain, and individuals have had to cope with new isolation precautions. This is has meant higher levels of violence against women and girls (VAWG). In one survey, 33% of women reported an increase in family problems, and 19% reported increased violence towards family members in the household³. This highlights the rising need for a coordinated GBV response from healthcare facilities, and the need for GBV reporting and referral pathways on a primary care level, now more than ever.

VISION / WHAT WE DO / OVERVIEW

The WFS project supports the healthcare facilities to provide safe, accessible, acceptable, and good-quality sexual reproductive health (SRH) services for women living in Egypt of all ages and socioeconomic strata while primarily focusing on gender equality and women empowerment. This would, thus, ensure that women get access to SRH services that suit their needs and be empowered to make informed decisions about their health without stigma and discrimination for any vulnerable groups including women living with HIV and disabilities and women subjected to gender-based violence (GBV).

The project's innovative idea revolves around creating a community women-led movement that endorses and is aware of the "women friendliness" concept as a human rights-based and women-centered approach for SRH services provision. The concept was identified through multiple and extensive research activities to understand the needs and experiences of women when seeking SRH services in Egypt.

Objectives:

- 1) Evaluating, training and equipping healthcare providers around the country with the needed skill-sets, knowledge and best practices that allow them to provide women-friendly SRH services of good quality and hence be granted the "women friendly services" label
- 2) Raising awareness among the healthcare services provision on women friendliness
- 3) Empowering women in Egypt with knowledge of the SRH services available, and the quality of healthcare they're entitled to.

³ Women and COVID-19 Pandemic, The Egyptian Center for Public Opinion Research - Baseera, 2020.



The previous strategy and objectives were clearly reflected in the pilot phase of the project, in 2021, the project succeeded in delivering a set of training and capacity building activities as well as establishing a referral protocol for Gender Based Violence cases as well as any other specialization that may not be provided on the facility. The project also restructured the awareness session program in the facility by creating a specialized and targeted program to increase the utilization of the awareness programs as a service in the Primary Healthcare Unit (PHCU). The project has provided needed equipment and infrastructure modifications like: painting and equipping the awareness sessions room, installing an AC, procuring a Complete Blood Picture device for the lab, providing needed chairs, curtains, bed covers and weight scales as well as cabinets and storage sets.

Along with designing and implementing the training sessions, the team delivered a training program tackling topics such as; Patient centered care, Gender Based Violence and Sexual and Reproductive health concept. The project is currently implementing a referral system for the GBV cases as well as designing and training healthcare providers on a pregnancy and delivery program that will improve the acceptability and quality of these services.

IMPLEMENTATION / HOW WE DO IT/ FIRST YEAR PLAN

The project's goal is to develop a comprehensive support program that equips the healthcare facilities with the tools and guidance to meet the needs of women in Egypt in six health priorities which are: General Health and Wellness, Family Planning and Sexual Health, Pregnancy and Childbirth, Violence Against Women and Girls, and HIV/AIDS and specifically builds the capacities of the healthcare facilities to provide women-centered SRH services.

The facilities receive the women friendly services (WFS) label following the completion of the program, which is granted through evaluating a set of standards in the facility-developed by the WFS research team- and are incorporated in a comprehensive assessment tool.

The facilities who succeed to receive the WFS label will be featured on a website that will incrementally list the Women-Friendly facilities in Egypt, hence, providing information to women on where best to access the SRH they seek and eventually support the movement the project aims to create towards achieving women friendliness in healthcare provision in Egypt.

The program is expected to be fully developed in the first 3-5 month of 2022 including designing comprehensive and detailed capacity building training modules, specialized tools, knowledge products and infrastructure reforms as equipments. In parallel, the WFS team is actively seeking partnerships and funds to adopt the program implementation in governmental and non-governmental facilities. The following 3 months would involve mapping and recruiting the first round healthcare facilities to provide the program for, including a charity NGO hospital, a private clinic and a public institution whether a hospital or PHU. Based on the developed program, the implementation period is expected to take from 3 to 6 months for each of these facilities before they are assessed and finally granted the WFS label and be featured on the dedicated website to be developed by the WFS team. The project is expected to build the capacities of 3 different healthcare facilities in its first year of operation, serving thousands of women living in diverse geographical areas in Egypt.



COMPONENTS

1- Assessment Tool

The WFS comprehensive tool was created by the WFs research team based on women's feedback, personal expectations, lived experiences, and the perceived quality of services rather than on internal and external experts-oriented indicators during the research phase. It was tested and adapted during the project implementation in the pilot phase. This tool is aligned with the standards of the General Authority for Healthcare Accreditation and Regulation (GAHAR) in Egypt and is used to evaluate the capacities and needs of the healthcare facilities to provide women friendly and centered SRH service and hence plan the actions and activities to address these needs.

It is planned to further develop the tool to enable the service providers to carry out self-assessments and regular follow-up as part of granting the WFS label to them and building their capacities to sustain and incorporate the changes achieved on a long term.

2- Capacity building activities and infrastructure reforms

The Women Friendly Services "WFS" program includes a number of capacity building activities and trainings that would help to improve the skills and knowledge of the service providers on SRH relevant topics and key issues like respectful maternal care, dealing with GBV, HIV patients needs, shared decision making, sexual health awareness, and others. It would also work to address their technical needs in terms of management, quality control and administration functions.

Some of these trainings were developed during the project pilot phase while others would be created in the next planning phase together with ensuring building a pool of SRH trainers and experts who are capable of providing these trainings to the healthcare facilities during the program implementation phases.

Parallel to that, the program works on infrastructure reforms and equipping the facility through a comprehensive needs assessment. These equipment and modifications have a purpose to increase the material capacity of the facility and the service providers in order to enhance their ability to deliver proper and women friendly SRH services. These equipment, in some cases, can be in the form of donation or rewards to the facility with the WFS Label to ensure the continuity and sustainability of impact of the project.

3- The guidebook

The guidebook we developed comprises an exhaustive list of issues that SRH service providers and practitioners face in Egypt at the primary healthcare level and the possible evidence- and community-based solutions and recommendations to address such challenges. This guidebook will be disseminated as an online resource for public use with possible conversion into an offline version after adapting the content as needed.



It is divided into two major sections. The first incorporates background and contextual analysis of the SRH issues including affected groups and right to health components, scale of challenges and its depth. The second section includes discussions on the available local and international applied solutions and work to provide new solutions and recommendations to drive both policy and practice actions within SRH service provision.

This guidebook serves as a substantive reference on SRH services provision in Egypt yet is continuously adapted and updated to respond to the unmet needs of women in terms of SRH and hence the demands of service providers to fulfill these needs. It was created based on the project outcomes in its pilot phase and revised by the key stakeholders involved in its execution namely the health care facilities and NGOs' managers, SRH trainers and a team of researchers involving local community members.

The guidebook is planned to be updated following every implementation of the WFS program with a new health care facility with possible incorporation of new challenges and innovative ideas from the affected communities. Additionally, any relevant changes at policy level will be referred to the people involved in its enforcement and the people affected by it to include their inputs. This would ensure keeping the unique nature of having this guidebook as a comprehensive tool responding to changes and needs of SRH service provision.

It will additionally form the basis for creation of other complementary practical guidebooks and knowledge products for specific women's health priority areas. The overall aim of these knowledge products is to be transferable and adaptable to the communities' needs and reassure the role of practice in bringing about a sustainable impact following the program completion and informing policy changes.

Click [Here](#) to go through our guidebook.

4- The WFS Website

The website to be created is specially dedicated to provide knowledge to the healthcare managers, service providers and decision makers on key information of Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) services provision in Egypt.

The website will be used for the dissemination of the guidebook to be utilized as a reference for facility managers and for knowledge sharing. It would specifically incorporate all the practical tools produced as an output for the key improvement areas that are developed for each healthcare facility supported by the WFS program. These tools may include: referral pathways, training modules and awareness curriculums, monitoring and evaluation tools, publications, etc.

Additionally, the website will feature detailed information of healthcare facilities who are granted the WFS label and have fulfilled the quality standards for SRH services following receiving the WFS support program, including their address, contact information and information on the services provided. This information will be promoted to be utilized by the women in Egypt to make informed decisions when seeking SRH services and to mobilize other unfeatured service providers to actively work on improving the quality of services they provide. It will advocate for women empowerment and embark women friendliness in healthcare service provision as one of its concepts.



This would be the first website in the MENA region that is specifically dedicated to provide information, knowledge and transferable tools on SRH service provision. The website is expected to introduce the concepts of shared decision making in healthcare, patient-centered care and women friendliness and will provide resources and practical tools for the service providers on areas related to Gender-based Violence (GBV), sexual health education, family planning, HIV support and makes it accessible for public use. While the WFS project itself might be contextualized in Egypt, the resources and curriculums would extend to wider contexts in the whole MENA region that could be easily transferred and applied in other regions accounting for the shared challenges and backgrounds.

BENEFITS FOR A WFS PARTNER

1-Flexibility

One of the advantages of WFS is the flexibility in the partnerships, as it's not mandatory to fund or support all the previous components of the project. An interested partner can support a specific component or activity that can be tailored based on the needs and the project's orientation.

2-Visibility

Added to having a major role in providing women friendly SRH services and putting an end to GBV, a WFS partner will benefit from a wide pool of local and international connections of active actors and stakeholders in the SRH sector. Also, awareness about women health, SRH and family planning, takes an essential part from WFS strategy through various online and offline channels, which provides to a partner logo the visibility on any funded equipment or infrastructure renovations as well as co produced content (posts, articles, campaigns..) on:

- WFS Facebook Page
- WFS Instagram Page
- WFS website
- Shamseya Facebook Page
- Shamseya LinkedIn Page
- Communication tools (flyers, posters, Newsletters..)

Being a partner for WFS means that you will be on the invitation list for any event organised by the project which gives you both the opportunity of exposure and acknowledgement for your entity's efforts towards a better future for women's health in Egypt.

Finally, with all its created tools and successful partnerships with relevant Sexual and Reproductive health experts, NGOs and influencers, the WFS project successfully finds an exceptional place aiming to provide women friendly services in the facilities we work with, not only by implementing the reformations needed, but also by producing knowledge that will benefit healthcare providers, researchers and policy makers.



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