



**The UNFPA in
your hands:
an e-learning
strategy to connect
with people
anywhere, anytime**

Systematization
of experience

December 2021
Caracas - Venezuela

This systematization document was developed based on the reconstruction of the experience of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) team in Venezuela, as a result of the implementation of alternative and innovative training activities in the context of the humanitarian context and the COVID-19 pandemic.

This systematization was carried out by the Coordination of Training and Systematization, under the responsibility of Gladys Quintero. The preparation of the document and its layout was carried out by Claudia Cova.

This publication has been made possible by the contribution of the Latin America and Caribbean Regional Office (LACRO) and, in particular, by the management of the Regional Learning Focal Point team, under the leadership of María Fajardo.

The UNFPA is especially grateful to the local coordinators, teams and facilitators of Sexual and Reproductive Health, Gender-Based Violence and Comprehensive Sexuality Education, who made possible the collective construction and implementation of this methodology.

How to cite this document:

UNFPA (2021). *The UNFPA in your hands: an e-learning strategy to connect with people anywhere, anytime. Systematization of experience.* Coordination of Training and Systematization, United Nations Population Fund - Caracas, Venezuela.

The Venezuela country office contributes to innovation and knowledge management, which in the UNFPA refers to planning, organizing, motivating and deploying people, processes and technologies to create, capture, access, share, select and apply knowledge to achieve organizational developments and results.

From this perspective, the systematization of the initiative of using virtual technologies for team training is a different and innovative proposal in terms of identifying alternative uses of different communication tools that are available and easily accessible. The systematization of this experience is important because it allows this type of proposal to be put at the service of the UNFPA community, as demonstrated by the Venezuela country office team's participation in the UNFPA Innovation Fair and Awards 2021, which was very well received.

María Jimena Fajardo

Associate Monitoring and Evaluation Officer

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United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)

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Preamble

One of the changes introduced by the new UNFPA Strategic Plan (2022-2025) is the shift from knowledge dependency to knowledge generation and communication. For the UNFPA in Venezuela it is fundamental to create and manage knowledge, and share it above all. The systematization of good practices and lessons learned and their dissemination have been key factors in strengthening our work and motivating others. Moreover, innovation has been a fundamental action to ensure that this exchange of knowledge occurs in a systematic, communicable and inclusive way, especially in exceptional circumstances such as the one we are currently experiencing.

Therefore, we would like to share with you this systematization document of our initiative, **UNFPA in your hands: an e-learning strategy to connect with people anywhere, anytime.**

Below, we present the elements involved in implementing a WhatsApp Learning methodology. This is the experience resulting from the execution of remote training actions aimed at saving lives in the humanitarian and pandemic context in Venezuela.

In the midst of such circumstances, we decided to adapt the audiovisual content of our presentations to the WhatsApp platform. We adjusted the learning methodologies and developed scripts for the management of this space. We contacted the beneficiaries and made sure that, despite the circumstances, they had the UNFPA in their hands, closer than ever, and could access life-saving information.

This initiative, which participated in the UNFPA 2021 Innovation Fair and Awards, where the jury gave it special recognition, was made available to the UNFPA teams. It is a proven method, a feasible and replicable practice, especially when working in humanitarian contexts, pandemics, natural events or armed conflict; when we need to overcome the barriers imposed by reality, reduce gaps and manage risks, to access affected communities. This alternative emerges as a possibility, to reach vulnerable people at any time, in any place and in any direction.

This experience is the product of the alliance of a creative and innovative team with professionals of the highest technical level and a management team willing to take calculated risks in situations of vulnerability and uncertainty. The commitment to humanitarian response has made it a reality: we have achieved the highest paradigm of efficiency, as we have reached thousands of people and far exceeded initial estimates, all at a lower cost and in a shorter timeframe.

Today we are honored to share the experience, so that it can be replicated, hoping that it may be found helpful.

Jorge González

UNFPA representative in Venezuela

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Introduction

This experience is about leaving no one behind and reaching the most vulnerable people, anytime, anywhere, and in any direction. This is about exchanging knowledge from the UNFPA to the people and from the people to the UNFPA.

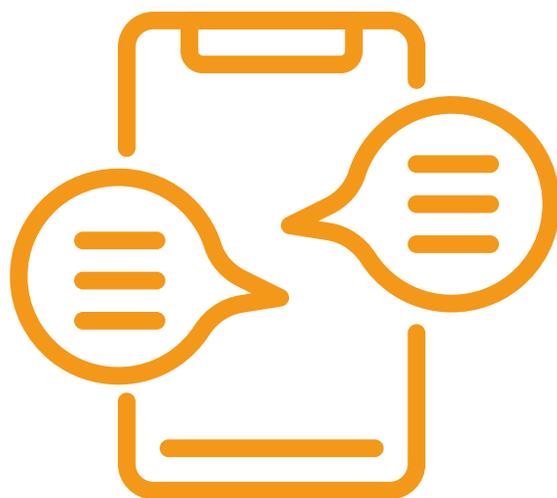
In 2020, with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and the imposition of containment measures in Venezuela, UNFPA-Venezuela had to stop all planned training activities.

At the same time, in the border populations, where the UNFPA deploys humanitarian actions, the social and economic conditions of the population were severely impacted, exacerbating many of the situations that the organization had been addressing in the areas of sexual and reproductive health, as well as gender-based violence.

In order to continue providing support to these populations and to continue building the capacity of people and organizations in the border territories, the UNFPA-Venezuela team transformed its training methodology to adapt it to a distance learning format using mobile technologies.

After assessing different methodologies for this new training scheme, the WhatsApp Learning methodology was adopted. The use of this tool made it possible, in a short period of time, to resume the UNFPA-Venezuela training offer at the borders and in rural and remote areas, with good results.

This document presents the key aspects of the implementation of this methodology between 2020 and 2021 by the UNFPA Venezuela and explains its step-by-step development. It also details methodological, technical and operational elements, as well as challenges and lessons learned, as a guide for other organizations wishing to implement distance training strategies in humanitarian contexts of vulnerability and uncertainty.



**WHATSAPP LEARNING
METHODOLOGY DEVELOPED
BY UNFPA-VENEZUELA**

01



WHAT WAS OUR EXPERIENCE?



The confinement measures severely limited and, at times, completely restricted the possibilities for face-to-face meetings.

This, for training processes that are based on a logic of joint knowledge construction, participation and exchange as a pedagogical strategy, had a very marked impact.”

Assistant to the National Coordination of Gender-based Violence. UNFPA-Venezuela.

The humanitarian context within the framework of the COVID-19 pandemic

In 2020, humanity was surprised by the first pandemic of the 21st century. Abruptly, and without much preparation, many countries were forced to adopt confinement measures, Venezuela among them. Activities involving face-to-face meetings and interactions had to be halted and face-to-face education and training processes were suspended.

This situation directly affected the agenda of UNFPA’s humanitarian activities in Venezuela. All projects under implementation at that time had a capacity-building component and training processes were essential for their implementation.

In this context, the living conditions of people at the border became rapidly precarious due to the social and economic consequences of the pandemic. Border communities began to have more needs, but it was challenging for the UNFPA team to reach them. Face-to-face training was not feasible and the achievement of objectives and results, as well as the long-awaited support, were threatened.

Given these circumstances and in order not to completely stop working with the population in these localities and to be able to attend to their growing needs, the UNFPA-Venezuela decided to transform its training proposal and adapt it to the new conditions. This is how the challenge of bringing the ongoing training processes to virtual environments is taken on, with the urgency of providing agile and rapid responses in the humanitarian context to populations severely affected by the economic and social consequences of the pandemic.

At that time, it was clear that, if good results were to be achieved, it was imperative to circumvent the traditional barriers associated with this type of training. Some of these barriers included the use of new and complex applications, the availability of a robust internet connection and the technical training of users. For this new training proposal, the UNFPA-Venezuela team needed to use an easily accessible remote platform that people were already familiar with.

It was clear that, if good results were to be achieved, it was imperative to circumvent the traditional barriers associated with this type of training.

Difficulties identified in implementing the distance learning proposal:

- Severe restrictions on internet access by the target population of the projects under implementation, mainly located in border and rural areas.
- Uncertainty about the existence of adequate technological resources for the development of training activities in virtual format.
- Need for a facilitation team with competences to manage distance learning processes.



Particularly, I feel extremely grateful, (...) this workshop came at the right time, because we are dealing with a high morbidity of gender-based violence in CAINNAM (Comprehensive Care Center for girls, boys, adolescents and women) of the San Antonio terminal, especially with refugee women. I take with me gratitude and learning. Thank you very much."

Participant in the workshop *Legal and Practical Tools for the Effectiveness of the Organic Law on the Right of Women to a Life Free of Violence.*

After carefully assessing the existing conditions, it was decided that the best option for the continuity of the UNFPA training processes, in the distance learning modality, was the use of the WhatsApp Learning methodology. The use of a popular and easy-to-use tool such as WhatsApp made it possible to reactivate the training component of the different projects in the short term and to continue to meet the needs of the communities.

This training modality has proven to be effective in building the capacities of the participants, without sacrificing the participatory approach of the training.

This training modality has been implemented by UNFPA-Venezuela on an uninterrupted basis until the end of 2021 and is expected to continue in the following year. It has proven to be effective in building the capacities of the participants, without sacrificing the participatory approach of the training or the close accompaniment of the learning groups.

The activities carried out and their results

The WhatsApp Learning methodology allowed the UNFPA in Venezuela to continue training its partners in the border communities during 2020 and 2021: implementing partners, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), health personnel and teachers. We have also worked directly with adolescent groups and community awareness-raising activities.

The training strategy through the WhatsApp platform began to be implemented in May 2020, in the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic in Venezuela. From that date until November 2021, around 4,000 people were trained in the following areas:

Sexual and reproductive health:

- Contraception counselling.
- Update on contraception.
- Emergency obstetric care.
- Sexually transmitted infections (STIs).
- HIV and pregnancy.
- Minimum Initial Service Package (MISP).
- Medical strengthening and COVID-19 prevention: correct use of personal protective equipment.

Gender-based violence:

- Gender-based violence and safe referrals.
- Clinical management of sexual violence.
- Organic Law on the Right of Women to a Life Free of Violence.
- Positive masculinities.
- The route of access to justice for the right to a life free of violence.

In the area of comprehensive sexuality education, teachers and peer promoters were trained. The WhatsApp methodology was also used for the development of various forums and awareness-raising activities in the territories.

The UNFPA in Venezuela has found this new and innovative way of conducting training workshops to be very effective in reaching people in remote areas and plans to continue to use it in the future in the context of humanitarian emergencies, even after the resolution of the pandemic.



The most reported type of violence in my institution is psychological and physical, and I consider that the hardest route is the personal one, which involves facing your fears and filing a report. That is why these workshops are so important, because having trained and sensitized officials will not cause the victim to experience another type of violence.”

Participant of the workshop *Understanding Gender-based Violence and Safe Referrals of Incidents of Violence.*



WHAT IS THE WHATSAPP LEARNING METHODOLOGY?



In my opinion, it was a workshop really rich in information and learning, as we must be prepared to attend to the victims of violence.

As a community ombudsperson, I feel empowered and 100 per cent prepared to serve these victims."

Participant of the workshop *Understanding Gender-based Violence and Safe Referrals of Incidents of Violence.*

WhatsApp Learning is a training modality that uses the WhatsApp messaging application as the main tool to facilitate learning, through its group functionality.

WhatsApp is the world's most popular mobile communication tool. It allows messages to be sent and calls to be made through an internet connection, either from mobile devices (its most widespread use) or from the computer, in its web and desktop versions. It is a free application and is available for devices with the most popular operating systems: Android, IOS, and Windows Phone.

By 2021, this app is estimated to have around two billion active accounts globally and is an everyday tool for a large number of people around the world. WhatsApp is an excellent medium for the exchange of information. It works not only for sending text messages and making calls, but also for sharing audio, photos, videos, documents, animations, etc.

Among the types of content that can be shared with WhatsApp are links. This facility allows linking and redirecting resources from other applications, websites and platforms such as Google (with all its tools), Dropbox, Mega, Facebook, etc., making it possible to access an infinite number of media and content from one place.

WhatsApp facilitates the creation of groups of up to 256 members, which facilitates the creation of communities of interest, including learning communities. There are various configuration and administration options for groups, which is very useful for moderating content and participation.

Another very advantageous feature of this messaging application is that content shared through it remains indefinitely stored on mobile phones and can be backed up, transferred and retrieved. In this way, information can be exchanged both immediately or synchronously and in a delayed or asynchronous manner.

For all these reasons, WhatsApp, which was originally created for communication and recreational purposes, has progressively started to be used for other commercial and educational purposes as well.

In the case of education, messaging applications, such as WhatsApp, are considered central to mobile learning strategies that support the use of mobile devices as a powerful resource for learning.

Mobile Learning is a strategy endorsed by organizations, such as UNESCO, which recognize its use as an excellent alternative for democratizing the use of Information and Communication Technologies for learning, as well as for extending distance learning opportunities. The main reason is the low cost of mobile devices compared to traditional computing equipment. The ability to work with these devices from anywhere, i.e., their portable and ubiquitous nature, is also seen as an advantage.

In terms of connectivity, the use of mobile devices for educational processes is also beneficial: they can easily be used with WiFi networks and can also work using mobile data (in cases where WiFi networks are not available or do not work properly).



“On the other hand, I confess that I have not been able to do the practical work. I am in a work meeting, but following the workshop with eagerness and pleasure. Please, where can I send tomorrow or the rest of the week? Thank you!”

Participant of the workshop *Understanding Gender-based Violence and Safe Referrals of Incidents of Violence.*

In the case of education, messaging applications, such as WhatsApp, are considered central to mobile learning strategies that support the use of mobile devices as a powerful resource for learning.

WhatsApp is an ideal alternative to implement training processes quickly among people who do not have greater technological resources or skills for its use.

WhatsApp provides additional advantages. Because of the widespread use of this tool, people are generally not required to download new applications to their devices, nor are they required to learn how to use new or complex apps. Thanks to these advantages, WhatsApp is an ideal alternative to implement training processes quickly among people who do not have greater technological resources or skills for its use.

Main advantages and benefits identified in using WhatsApp for learning activities

- 
- The widespread use of WhatsApp as a means of communication makes it an easy-to-use tool that people are familiar with.
 - Its use does not require the installation of a new application or additional training.
 - It does not require high bandwidth to operate or large data downloads. This makes it possible to overcome, to a large extent, connectivity bottlenecks.
 - At very low cost, this tool works in remote locations, facilitating synchronous and asynchronous communication modalities. This is very convenient when face-to-face interaction is not possible.
 - It facilitates direct communications, both in groups and individually.
 - It promotes learning processes that are people-centered, participatory, collaborative and collectively constructed.
 - Participants can process all shared content at their own learning pace.
 - Promotes written expression and reading.
 - It can be used with groups of people with disabilities or with written communication restrictions, through voice recording.
 - It facilitates working with different learning groups, simultaneously or not, and the easy replication of training content once it has been designed.



WHAT IS THE TRAINING AND FACILITATION APPROACH USED?

Participatory and experiential learning

Facilitation is the process of leading and accompanying groups of people in achieving learning objectives through participation. Promoting participatory learning is the key factor in this process.

Participatory learning is person-centered and holds that every human being has something unique and valuable to contribute. It also considers practice, doing and reflection (individual and collective) to be fundamental to the learning process.



In these times of crisis that the country is going through, these workshops are of vital importance because they allow us to design new strategies on how to respond and provide help to victims of both sexual and domestic violence”.

Participant in the *Sexual Violence* workshop.



Characteristics of a participatory training space:

- It is focused on the people involved.
- It values the skills, experiences and knowledge of the group in training.
- It promotes participation and individual and collective reflection on the contents worked on.
- The protagonists of the process are the participants, not the person responsible for facilitation.
- It fosters a climate of respect and trust that encourages participation.

The three moments of the facilitation process: start-up, process and closure

For any facilitation process to develop fully and happily, three phases or moments need to be completed: initiation, process and closure.

For any facilitation process to develop fully and happily, three phases or moments need to be completed: initiation, process and closure. Each of these moments calls for specific actions that must be carefully designed.

Start-up

In this first moment, the basis of the training process is defined and laid down together with the participants. It is a time to get to know each other and to create the necessary emotional connection between the facilitator and the group to advance the learning process. The actions carried out in the start-up phase are as follows:

- Introduction of the organizations involved, the facilitators and the participants.
- Presentation of the objectives of the training, the methodology and the work agenda.
- Clarification of expectations.
- Establishment of agreements and operating rules.

Process

This is the moment when the contents or topics of the workshop are worked on. When facilitating learning processes, it is necessary that activities around these topics always engage people and allow them to learn through reflection and practice.

In concrete terms, this phase involves the presentation of the training content by the facilitators, as well as the implementation of activities that invite people to express themselves, think and apply knowledge.

Closure

The moment of closure is considered to be as important as the moment of start-up. Failure to adequately close a facilitation process can leave groups with a feeling of incompleteness and uncertainty about the achievement of the originally formulated learning objectives. In this phase, actions are carried out such as:

- Emphasize the key aspects worked on and the achievements made.
- Invite participants to share their assessment of the process and their learning.
- Apply instruments for the evaluation of knowledge and of the lived process.
- Generate agreements for continuity, if this is envisaged.

Creating learning communities

A learning community is a group of people learning together, with the same tools and in the same environment (face-to-face or virtual). In these communities, all those involved have an impact on each other's learning, as they participate in a dialogical way, and on equal terms, to achieve common learning objectives.

In the UNFPA-Venezuela distance working methodology, building learning communities in all the training groups is fundamental. It is not about creating spaces for people just to read and share communications, links and files. The goal is to create working groups in which each participant actively takes ownership of their learning process and participates, builds and collaborates with their peers. This is achieved by:

Within the UNFPA-Venezuela distance work methodology, it is essential to build learning communities in all training groups.



Good morning. I'm grateful for this workshop, for the information provided, and most importantly for the links we are left with for the realization of our work together, a multidisciplinary team, for my concept, with each of my colleagues present. Excellent interventions and sharing of knowledge."

Participant in the workshop *Enhancing Protection, Redress and Access to Justice for Survivors of Sexual Violence.*

- The definition of shared objectives.
- Encouraging people to participate on an ongoing basis.
- The invitation to reflect on the contents worked on.
- Encouraging the exchange of knowledge among participants and the generation of agreements.
- Individual and group verification of the learning achieved.

The learning communities within the WhatsApp Learning methodology developed by the UNFPA are made up of **groups of between 20 and 25 members**. This number facilitates the participation of all members and makes the coordination and administration of the groups manageable.





WHAT IS NEEDED FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THIS METHODOLOGY?

The team: roles and responsibilities

Each workshop facilitated by UNFPA-Venezuela is the result of the coordinated effort of a group of people with different levels of competencies and responsibilities. The team in charge of advancing this methodology in the organization includes the following instances:

“

Isaloren, Antonio, Guillermina, Camilo and all the team responsible for the workshop: Congratulations and thank you for the effort to conduct the workshop in a format that meets the challenges posed by the pandemic.”

Participant in the workshop *Gender and New Masculinities*.

Training coordination

It is responsible for managing the methodological aspects of training and the capacities needed for its implementation. It accompanies facilitators throughout the training process, from design to evaluation and beyond:

- It defines, adapts and updates aspects related to the training methodology.
- It trains facilitators in the use of the methodology.
- It accompanies the instructional and methodological design of the workshops.
- It monitors the workshops and the learning communities to ensure that the methodology is being used appropriately.

Component co-ordinations

These are the bodies responsible for defining the strategic and programmatic guidelines in the areas of sexual and reproductive health training, gender-based violence and comprehensive sexuality education:

- They specify the topics of the workshops.
- They define, together with the facilitators, the contents and focus of each workshop.
- They validate training designs.
- They follow up on the workshops.
- They draw up the certificates.

Territorial co-ordinations

They are responsible for managing all aspects of workshop implementation in the field and coordinating the learning communities:

- They identify training needs in the field.
- They invite participants.
- Create and configure WhatsApp groups.
- They incorporate all the people involved in the workshop into the group.
- They coordinate the learning communities.
- They support the work of the facilitators during the implementation of the workshop.
- They monitor the performance of the participants.

The territorial coordinations are in charge of managing all the aspects related to the execution of the workshop in the field and of coordinating the learning communities.

Facilitators

They are responsible for conducting the learning sessions:

- They prepare the design of the workshops, with the support of the training co-ordination.
- They implement the training activities in the learning communities.
- They monitor the performance of the participants during the execution of the sessions.

Conducting learning communities on WhatsApp during facilitation is a demanding task that can easily overtax the facilitator. For this reason, it is recommended that there is more than one person in charge of this work within the groups: it can be two people in the facilitation role or one person in the facilitation role and one person from one of the coordination component or territorial coordination to provide support.

Technological requirements

For facilitation

The facilitator should ideally have access to:

- A mobile device with the WhatsApp application installed.
- A computer.
- Permanent and good quality internet connection.



Working in pairs allows for a fundamental complementarity, not only in aspects related to content, but also in the dynamics of the pedagogical process itself, especially in the moments of exchange, where we must respond to each and every one of the comments, solve doubts, and clarify aspects. All this must be done very quickly, but at the same time, very carefully, so as not to hurt sensitivities, create discomfort or confusion.”

Assistant to the National Coordination of Gender-Based Violence. UNFPA-Venezuela.

Always connected



It is essential that the connection with the learning community is not lost during facilitation. Therefore, the facilitator must have up-to-date equipment with sufficient capacity to run all the required applications, as well as a variety of internet sources (data signal, portable devices, etc.).

For participation

Participants must have:

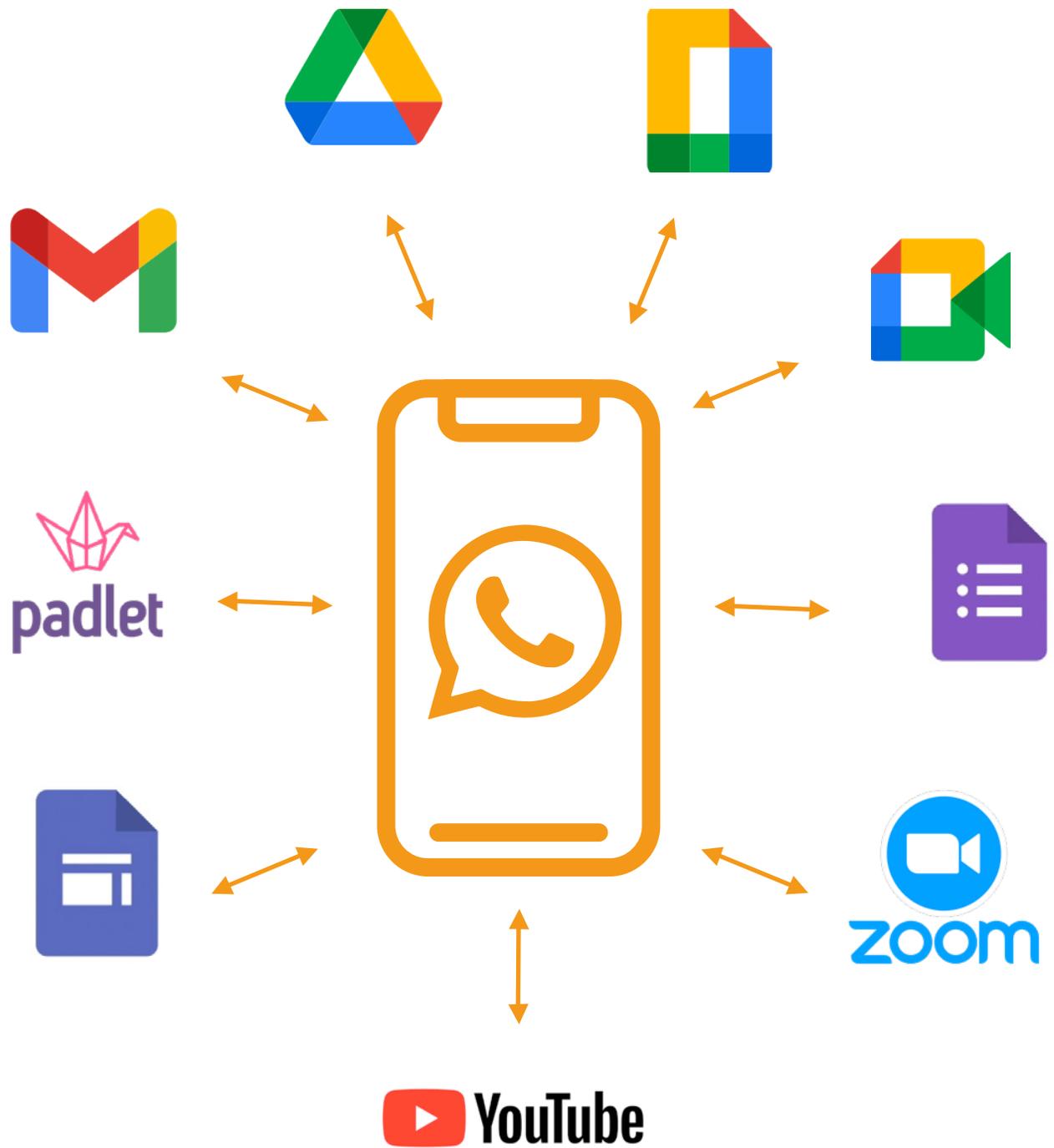
- A mobile device with the WhatsApp application installed.
- Internet connection via WiFi network or data signal.

Organization of technological tools: the multi-platform system

Although WhatsApp is the main platform for the meeting and interaction of the learning community, it is extremely enriching to include other applications to facilitate participation.

Although WhatsApp is the main platform for the meeting and interaction of the learning community, it is extremely enriching to include other applications to facilitate participation and exchange among participants, as well as to provide resources to enable collaborative assignments and activities. The tools used by UNFPA-Venezuela in this process are mainly:

- **WhatsApp**, for the creation of learning communities through the group functionality.
- **E-mail**, for the exchange of communications and the sending of tasks.
- **Google Drive**, for the creation and storage of documents, presentations, formats and various files related to the workshops.
- **Google Forms**, for the creation of the initial and final knowledge assessment tests, as well as the determination of knowledge gaps (pre-test and post-test).
- **Google Sites**, for the development of websites with general information about training processes, bibliography, support material, etc.
- **Google Meet and Zoom**, for video conferencing.
- **Padlet**, for the creation of collaborative murals.
- **YouTube**, for video sharing.





HOW CAN THE USE OF WHATSAPP LEARNING METHODOLOGY HELP US?



At 10 a.m. we will formally start our session today! We know that in some places there are difficulties with internet and electricity services. That's why we really appreciate it if you can join us in the sessions via WhatsApp. See you in a bit."

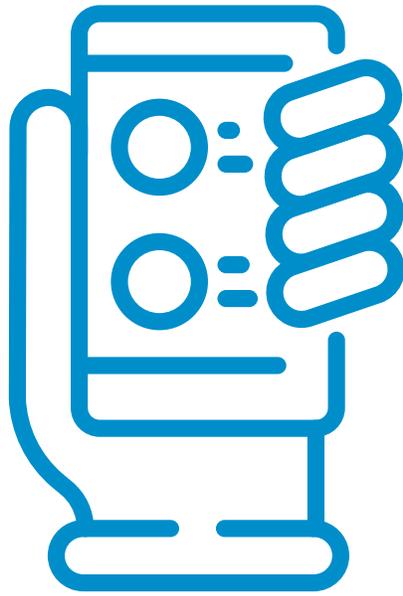
Facilitator of the workshop *Understanding Gender-based Violence and Safe Referrals of Incidents of Violence.*

A training alternative for humanitarian contexts and hard-to-reach areas

Distance training through mobile devices, such as WhatsApp Learning, is an excellent strategy to be used in contexts and scenarios where conditions for face-to-face training do not exist and where the population has difficulties in accessing expensive technologies, such as computer equipment, and robust and stable sources of internet connection. Some of these scenarios are:

- Emergencies and humanitarian crises.
- Populations in remote or hard-to-reach areas.
- Situations of armed conflict or social violence.

Because of the ease of sharing content in different formats (audiovisual, audio, text, among others), the WhatsApp Learning methodology works very well for working with people with hearing or visual disabilities, as well as with people with reading and writing limitations.



TRAINING DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION

02

TRAINING PROCESS STAGES AND MAIN ACTIONS



Phase 1 Instructional design

Plan training sessions using a detailed, step-by-step approach. Focus and work on:

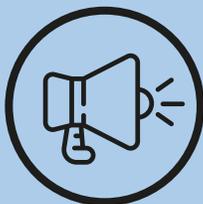
- Creating the general definitions: workshop objectives, contents and scope.
- Producing the contents and resources for each session by answering the key questions.
- Designing the sessions:
 - Session script or motto.
 - Support material (slides and audios).



Phase 2 Capacity building of the facilitation team

Strengthen the team's technological capacities. Focus and work on:

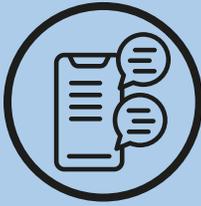
- Training the team of facilitators.
- Providing methodological and affective coaching throughout the training process.



Phase 3 Invitation and admission

Create the learning community on WhatsApp. Focus and work on:

- Sending the invitation to the workshop.
- Creating and naming the WhatsApp group.
- Adding the persons playing administration roles to the group, such as facilitators and coordinators, among others.
- Adding the participants to the group.
- Starting up the workshop.
- Asking participants to complete the pre-test evaluation.



Phase 4 Development of the learning sessions

Facilitate training content using participatory and experiential strategies. Do the following:

- Welcome participants to the session and introduce yourself.
- Communicate the community's rules.
- Present the objectives and contents of the session.
- Invite participants to introduce themselves.
- Facilitate session contents and participatory activities.
- Close the session and announce future activities.



Phase 5 Closing, follow-up and evaluation of the workshop

Close the workshop properly and assess the results achieved. Do the following:

- Announce the end of the workshop.
- Refresh the main contents worked on.
- Acknowledge the group's participation.
- Invite participants to make any questions or comments about the workshop.
- Ask participants to complete the post-test evaluation.
- Verify the certification criteria for each participant.
- Prepare and send certificates.
- Produce the workshop report.



FASE 1: INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN



The methodology seems simple, but it requires some fine-tuning for the facilitator to connect with an audience that she/he does not see, that she/he does not feel, and the same applies to the participants. This is not easy! This requires much more than technical knowledge; it requires pedagogical resources.”

**Facilitator of the
HIV and Pregnancy
workshop.**

Virtual learning environments

A virtual learning environment is an educational space created with information and communication technologies. These spaces do not exist physically, so it is not possible to establish face-to-face relationships.

These environments have become very popular over time because they enable the development of distance training activities. Although remote connectivity is their main strength, they are also a major barrier to participatory training. The absence of face-to-face contact is a challenge for participatory learning processes in different aspects:

- If the contents are not well structured, this can seriously affect the understanding of the workshop topics, both through dispersion and information overload.
- Facial and non-verbal expressions, vital in the communicative process, are often unreadable from a distance, making it more difficult to connect emotionally with groups.
- Interaction and knowledge sharing can be affected by low participation, as in the virtual format it is easier to isolate oneself from the processes and neglect the content than in face-to-face sessions.
- The nature and pace of interaction in virtual environments can be unmotivating for some people and too demanding for others, which unbalances the use of resources and content.

If we want to work from a participatory approach in virtual learning environments, it is necessary to develop actions to overcome these difficulties.

Instructional design in the *WhatsApp Learning methodology*

A complete and detailed instructional design is fundamental to guarantee the success of any training activity and, in the case of courses developed with the WhatsApp Learning methodology, it is simply indispensable. It is therefore necessary to take the time to think about, design and prepare all training content. This involves both the definition of the activities and the preparation of the dynamics, the support materials and the explanations in text and audio format.

In order to structure and streamline the instructional design work of the facilitators, the UNFPA-Venezuela team created a series of formats. These formats, ordered from general to specific, show the general definitions to be developed (objectives, profiles, benefits, etc.) and the support material to be generated for each session.

These environments have become very popular over time because they enable the development of distance training activities.



When we are in a face-to-face workshop, keeping people in the process, focused on the activities, can be complex. This is even more difficult in the case of virtuality. Generally, people find themselves doing other activities in parallel, attending to household dynamics, or with as many distractions as possible. This necessarily involves developing a set of strategies to engage people emotionally and rationally with the learning process they are experiencing.”

Assistant to the National Coordination of Gender-Based Violence. UNFPA-Venezuela.

The step-by-step process is outlined below:

Step 1. General definitions

The objectives, contents and scope of the workshop are developed in the following format:

Instructional design format

Workshop Name	
Presentation	
Objectives	
Participants' Profile	
Benefits	
Content	
Methodology	
Evaluation	
Facilitator	

Once completed, the format will look like the example below:

Workshop Name	Comprehensive Sexuality Education
Presentation	Comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) is a curriculum-based process for teaching and learning about the cognitive, emotional, physical and social aspects of sexuality. The aim is to prepare adolescents and young people with knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that empower them to exercise their sexuality responsibly, to prioritize their own and other people's health, well-being and dignity in their choices, and to enable them to recognize their sexual and reproductive rights (SRR) in order to exercise them autonomously.
Objectives	Objective Offer information on comprehensive sexuality education to teachers and peer promoters in the community, in Independencia municipality, Anzoátegui state.
Participants' Profile	Adolescents, young people and teachers in the area of influence of the Soledad Project, in Independencia municipality, Anzoátegui state.
Benefits	At the end of the workshop, participants will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be provided with tools for the recognition of adolescents as subjects of law, which will enable them to participate in decision-making and improve their skills for the enforceability of their rights, with greater assertiveness and empathy. • Facilitate processes of recognition of emotions and situations, in order to prevent life-threatening behavior, especially during puberty and adolescence. • Recognize the risks of unprotected sex and how an unplanned or early pregnancy can have an impact on adolescents' life plans.
Content	The training program includes 3 modules, each comprising two thematic blocks distributed in 4 sessions. Introduction to the Program (1 session) MODULE 1: ABC OF SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS (4 sessions) I. What we talk about when we say human rights <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Session 1: What do I need to know about my human rights? • Session 2: The sexual and reproductive rights of the adolescent population. II. The right to have rights <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Session 3: Sexual and reproductive rights in everyday life. • Session 4: Organizing to defend our sexual and reproductive rights. MODULE 2: SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH (4 sessions) I. Sexual and reproductive health <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Session 1: Basic concepts of sexuality. • Session 2: Sexual health (SH) and reproductive health (RH) risks. II. Violence and protective factors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Session 3: Violence against women, girls and adolescents. • Session 4: Protective factors to prevent SH and RH risks in adolescents. Closure of the program (1 session)
Methodology	Each module comprises 4 working sessions of two hours each, implemented through the WhatsApp Learning methodology. In the WhatsApp learning community, the thematic content will be presented, accompanied by generative questions, practical exercises and experiential dynamics of participation, reflection and collective construction. The program has a website, where participants will have access to support materials, main and complementary bibliography, and other resources.

Assessment:	<p>In order to obtain the certificate, participants must complete and submit the following assigned practical activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completion of the initial assessment instrument (pre-test). • Reading of support material. • Active participation in the WhatsApp learning community, in each of the modules. It is estimated that there will be a minimum of two interventions per session. The relevance and contributions given through the interventions will be taken into account. • Resolution of exercises, which must be sent by email before the second session (compulsory and subject to assessment). • Completion of the final assessment instrument (post-test).
Facilitator	Rosa Martínez

Step 2. Definition of contents and resources for each session

In order to shape the learning sessions, once the general aspects defined above are clear, it is useful to reflect on and answer the following questions:

- What topics or contents am I going to work on?
- How will the topics or contents I am going to work on be presented?
- What do I have to design or develop for the virtual classroom?
- What activities should the participant carry out?
- How will it be verified that learning has been achieved or the requirements of the session have been met?

For this purpose, it is proposed to use the format presented below:

Session Name	Topics to be addressed in the session	Presentation of contents or topics	Learning resources	Participant assignments	Assessment and closure of the session
	<i>What topics or contents am I going to work on?</i>	<i>How will the topics or contents I am going to work on be presented?</i>	<i>What do I have to design or develop for the virtual classroom?</i>	<i>What activities should the participant carry out?</i>	<i>How will I verify that learning has been achieved or that the requirements of the session have been met?</i>

Once completed, the format will look as follows:

Session Name	Topics to be addressed in the session <i>What topics or contents am I going to work on?</i>	Presentation of contents or topics <i>How will the topics or contents I am going to work on be presented?</i>	Learning resources <i>What do I have to design or develop for the virtual classroom?</i>	Participant assignments <i>What activities should the participant carry out?</i>	Assessment and closure of the session <i>How will I verify that learning has been achieved or that the requirements of the session have been met?</i>
Session 1: What do I need to know about my human rights?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Background. 2. What are human rights? 3. Characteristics of human rights. 4. Which human rights? 5. Family, community and State. 6. Co-responsibility in HR. 7. Women's and girls' rights. 8. What is gender? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Stereotypes. b. Agents of socialization. 9. Some practical examples of compliance. 	<p>Images with content.</p> <p>Explanatory audio.</p>	<p>PowerPoint slides.</p> <p>Audio recording.</p> <p>Preparation of generative questions</p> <p>Practical assignment.</p> <p>Compile suggested bibliography.</p>	<p>Review of audios and presentation of images with content.</p> <p>Participate in the chat forum.</p> <p>Assignment: conduct interview.</p> <p>Bibliography reading.</p>	<p>Digital questionnaire to validate knowledge of the contents.</p> <p>Participation in chat forums.</p> <p>Practical assignment.</p>

Considering that this is distance learning it is necessary to document and think creatively in order to generate relevant and motivating activities.

At this point, it is essential to stop and think about and develop the content of the Participants' Assignments column. It is these assignments that will ensure the active participation of people and also the experiential nature of the training. Considering that this is distance learning and the more traditional face-to-face dynamics cannot be carried out, it is necessary to document and think creatively in order to generate relevant and motivating activities.



Techniques and strategies to promote participation in virtual learning environments:

We can implement multiple strategies to facilitate virtual participatory processes, and there are many digital resources that we can use to do so. Some of these are listed below:

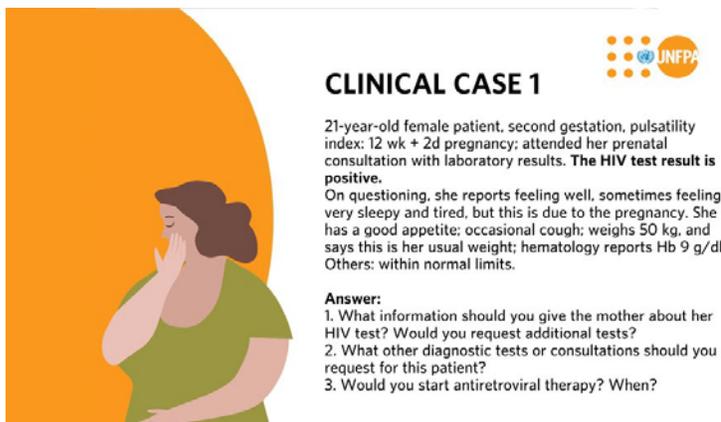
- Asking generative questions.
- Discussion of documents.
- Analysis of images and photographs.
- Graphics analysis.
- Discussion forums.
- Creation of concept maps.
- Completion of online questionnaires.
- Video analysis.
- Analysis of case studies.
- Development of infographics and mind maps.
- Development of virtual portfolios.
- Creation of interactive presentations.
- Recording podcasts.
- Collaborative document production.
- Use of virtual whiteboards.
- Assignment of practical activities in the community or organization.

Examples of participatory activities developed in UNFPA-Venezuela workshops:



It is necessary to have a series of resources and tools to make the group more dynamic. Short texts, stories, poems, videos, songs, generative questions. Motivational or appreciative phrases to challenge the group are essential. You have to create a feeling that the group is on the move.”

Assistant to the National Coordination of Gender-Based Violence. UNFPA-Venezuela.



Step 3. Session design

Once we are clear about what we want to achieve with the training and what we need to do to achieve it, we then proceed to design each of the sessions in detail. It is essential at this point to specify as much as possible the content that will be shared in the learning community, in order to establish the script or slogan for the session. The session script is the key to a structured and orderly learning process.

The session script is the key to a structured and orderly learning process.

The script should indicate all the content that will be shared on the WhatsApp platform, following exactly the same order

The script should indicate the appearance of content slides and audios should be specified, as well as explanatory texts and activities for participation.

in which it will be presented. The appearance of content slides and audios should be specified, as well as explanatory texts and activities for participation. The only thing that will not be written in the script will be the responses to the participants' interventions, which will, of course, be elaborated at the time they take place.

In this step, the following format will be completed:

Format for the design of learning sessions

Session (number)	
Objective of the session	
Content	
Description	
Session script	
Remarks and comments	



The organization of content in the script

To ensure understanding of the contents, they need to be presented in strict order. This order must respect the sequential organization that WhatsApp has when uploading and sharing information. An example of the organization of the contents in the script is the following:

1. Slide
2. Audio
1. Slide
2. Audio
3. Slide
4. Explanatory text with some activity

The following is an example of the completed session design format:

Sesión 1	What do I need to know about my human rights?
Objective of the session	Educate adolescents on the importance of knowing and exercising human rights and their relationship to sexual and reproductive rights.
Content	<p>We will work on the following contents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Background. • What are human rights? • Characteristics of human rights. • Which human rights? • Family, community and State. Co-responsibility for human rights. • Women's and girls' rights. • What is gender? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Stereotypes. - Agents of socialization. • Some practical examples of compliance.
Description	<p>During this session, participants should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read and analyze the slides in the presentation. • Have at least 1 participation in the learning community. • Watch the video. • Do the recommended readings. <p>During this session, facilitators should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide the relevant slides, audios and videos in good time. • Participate in forum chat sessions to encourage and guide discussion and clarify doubts.
Session script	<p>Text. Welcome, dear participants, to the session What do I need to know about my human rights?</p> <p>Text. My name is Rosa Martínez and I will be your facilitator during this session. I am also accompanied by Laura Muñoz, the workshop coordinator.</p> <p>Slide 1. Facilitator's Presentation.</p> <p>Slide 2. Objectives of the session.</p> <p>Slide 3. Contents of the session.</p> <p>Slide 4. Session methodology.</p> <p>Slide 5. PSEA Standards (United Nations anti-harassment standards).</p> <p>Text. I open the floor for you to introduce yourselves. Please indicate your first and last name.</p> <p>Text. Thank you all for your participation.</p> <p>Text. I share with you the agreements of our learning community.</p> <p>Slide 6. Learning community standards.</p>

<p>Session script (Continuation)</p>	<p>Text. We now begin with the contents of this session.</p> <p>Text. Which human rights do you know? We look forward to your participation. Go for it!</p> <p>Text. All your interventions were excellent. We continue.</p> <p>Slide 7. Background.</p> <p>Audio 1. Background.</p> <p>Slide 8. Human rights.</p> <p>Audio 2. Human rights.</p> <p>Slide 9. Types of human rights.</p> <p>Audio 3. Types of human rights.</p> <p>Text. Now, I invite you to watch the following video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xGnXoLZsc1g</p> <p>Text. What did you think of the video? I am opening the chat so that you can express your opinions. (Answer the questions and explain from the participants)</p> <p>Text. Very good! Excellent reflections.</p> <p>Text. We continue with the contents.</p> <p>Slide 10. To be subjects of law.</p> <p>Audio 4. To be subjects of law.</p> <p>Slide 11. Role of the State in human rights.</p> <p>Audio 5. Role of the State in human rights.</p> <p>Text. We have finished with the contents of this session. Thank you very much for your attention and active participation.</p> <p>Text. We look forward to your comments and questions about the content. The chat will remain open until 9.00 p.m.</p> <p>Text. Next week, we will be working on module 2. We look forward to seeing you! Have a nice evening.</p>
<p>Remarks and comments</p>	



Recommendations:

- Once produced, organize the files indicated in the script (slides, images, audios, etc.) sequentially on the computer or phone in order to locate and share them more easily.
- Make use of the various online tools available to carry out the activities and link them to the WhatsApp space.
- Vary the dynamics of the tasks: use different strategies in the same session.
- Consider carrying out tasks from one session to the next, to give participants more time to complete them.
- Set up a mailing address for sending more complex tasks.

The moments of start-up, process and closure in workshop design

Both for the overall design of the workshop and for the design of the individual sessions, it is necessary to keep in mind the three moments of facilitation outlined above.

Start-up

When the focus is on the learning session, content is included at the start-up to help introduce the session. For example:

- Welcome to the session.
- Facilitators' Presentation.
- Purpose of the session.
- Content to be worked on in the session.
- Session methodology.
- Work rules.
- Presentation of the participants.

When the focus is on the general workshop, the initial contents of the whole training are presented in the start-up session. For example:

- Welcome to the workshop.
- Presentation of the organization(s) responsible for the workshop.
- Coordinator's Presentation.
- Goals and objectives of the workshop.

Both for the overall design of the workshop and for the design of the individual sessions, it is necessary to keep in mind the three moments of facilitation.

- General content of the workshop and timetable.
- Workshop methodology.
- Assessment strategies and certification.

When the focus is on the learning session, the moment of process includes exclusively the content to be worked on.

Process

When the focus is on the learning session, the moment of process includes exclusively the content to be worked on. For example:

- Slides.
- Audios.
- Explanatory texts.
- Dynamics and assignments.

When the focus is on the overall workshop, the process phase includes the content of all sessions.

Closure

When the focus is on the learning session, processes that help to close that particular session are worked on at the moment of closure. For example:

- Announcement of the end of the session.
- Opening of space for final comments and clarifications on the content worked on.
- Announcement of the content of the next session.

When the focus is on the general workshop, the closing session is used to work on activities that help to bring the whole training process to a close. For example:

- Evaluation of the workshop by the participants.
- Farewell and evaluation of the workshop by the coordinator.
- Conducting the post-test evaluation.

Content and support material

Explanatory texts

In order to facilitate the reading and understanding of the content of explanatory texts, it is recommended that they be short and to the point. Each text should contain a key idea. If the explanation requires more ideas to be included, then the texts should be divided into several messages.

Examples of explanatory texts:

Welcome to the workshop:

Dear colleagues. It's a great pleasure to greet you. We warmly welcome you to this workshop: **Legal and Practical Tools for the Effectiveness of the Organic Law on the Right of Women to a Life Free of Violence.**

We have made some changes and the **initial session** will take place **tomorrow, 11 August, at 10:00 a.m.** on the Zoom platform. I will leave you in a future message the details for the connection.

Explanation of the working methodology:

First, we share with you some **slides and audios** that you should review and listen to.

You will have a few minutes to read the slides and listen to the audios.

Presentation slides

In contrast to the presentation slides produced for face-to-face workshops, which should be very schematic and without explanations, the slides produced within the framework of the WhatsApp Learning methodology should include explanatory text. This text will make it easier for participants to refer to them again and again, asynchronously, as supporting material.

Each slide should have a headline and also the explanatory contents in a summarized form. It is also important to incorporate graphic resources, such as photographs, illustrations, tables, graphs, flow charts, etc. that help to complement or better explain what has been presented.

The following are some examples of the slides that have been produced:

In order to facilitate the reading and understanding of the content of explanatory texts, it is recommended that they be short and to the point.



Very good slides, really. The workshop was excellent. I am grateful for the invitation. I look forward to doing other workshops with you. Congratulations to the facilitators and to all of us who participated in the workshop."

Participant in the workshop *Legal and Practical Tools for the Effectiveness of the Organic Law on the Right of Women to a Life Free of Violence.*



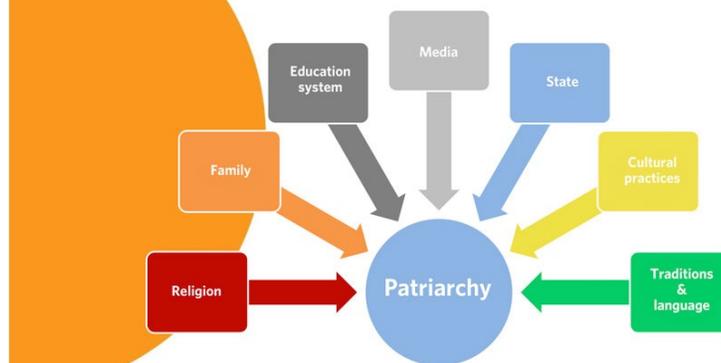
Human rights

These are the attributes men, women, boys, girls, adolescents, young people, adults and the elderly have, just because they are people, regardless of their age, sex, sexual orientation, ethnicity, origin, beliefs, social class or thought.

In short, all people have rights simply



Agents of gender socialization



Recommendations:



- Produce the slides in the preferred presentation application and then convert them into individual images (via screenshots or any other method) to ensure their sequence.
- The slides should be light files, with little weight, to facilitate their download in different connectivity scenarios (data connection, low bandwidth internet, among others).

Audios

The use of audio is a very important aspect of this methodology, as it allows the content of the slides to be expanded and deepened. For each slide there should be an audio explanation. In this audio, the facilitator will read the content of the slide and complement it with comments, explanations, reflections, etc.

For each slide there should be an audio explanation.

Recommendations:

- Prepare the explanation of each slide before making the recording.
- Make the presentation in a tone of voice that is appropriate, pleasant and easy to listen to.
- Choose a place with little ambient noise to avoid disruptions.
- Record short audios, between one (1) minute and one and a half minutes (1.5 min). Short audios will make people more motivated to listen and easier to listen to. They will also generate files that are lighter and easier to share in environments with difficult internet access.
- Record several versions in order to be able to choose the one where the sound is completely clear, the length is recommended and the explanatory content is adequate.



I am fascinated by the material. Quite clear and accurate information. (...) The time to enjoy it is so short that you have to listen to it again to enjoy it better. Thank you, thank you."

Participant in the workshop *Gender and New Masculinities*.



Main actions of the **Instructional design phase**

- 1** Creating the general definitions: workshop objectives, contents and scope.
- 2** Producing the contents and resources for each session by answering the key questions.
- 3** Designing the sessions
 - Session script or motto.
 - Support material (slides and audios).



PHASE 2: CAPACITY BUILDING OF THE FACILITATION TEAM

Virtual facilitation

The person responsible for conducting a participatory training process is called a facilitator. This person is responsible for accompanying the group of participants in achieving their learning objectives, by creating the material, emotional and participatory conditions for this to be possible.

In face-to-face training spaces, the facilitator uses his or her physical presence and gestures to connect with the groups and also has the possibility to directly observe what is happening with each individual and act accordingly. However, in distance learning processes, these actions are not possible. Therefore, it is necessary for the facilitator to develop additional competences in order to connect with the group.

“

I believe that this accompaniment has been fundamental, because it is a different way of teaching, which seems simple, but requires a whole process of adaptation, of re-engineering, so that the objectives of the training can be achieved and our participants are trained and motivated to apply this knowledge in favor of better care for our patients.”

**Facilitator of the
HIV and Pregnancy
workshop.**

From a human and relational point of view, the person who facilitates in virtual training environments must have the ability to bond emotionally and rapport with groups, as well as to guide meaningful, participatory and collaborative learning experiences, even when at a distance. With his or her words and actions, this person must be able to cope with the fact that he or she cannot relate to groups face to face.

From a technical point of view, this person must have the ability to function appropriately on the training platform being used. They must also have the skills and abilities to generate and share digital products to support training and to work with related applications (messaging, mail, video, forums, video calls, etc.).

Capacity building of the facilitation team

As mentioned in the previous section, developing competences in the team facilitating learning in virtual environments is a key to success. Consultants, teachers and facilitators involved in training processes have expertise in their respective areas, but the reality is that they do not always have the competencies for facilitation in these settings. In this sense, before a person takes over the running of a workshop, a fundamental task is to ensure that his or her profile matches that of a virtual facilitator.

Developing competences in the team facilitating learning in virtual environments is a key to success.

In the more human and relational aspects, within what we could consider as soft skills, it is necessary to develop capacities for:

- Mediating participatory distance learning processes.
- Moderating the interaction between participants.
- Generating initial rapport and foster empathy.
- Responding to comments and questions, as well as respond quickly.
- Being responsive and approachable.
- Writing messages with the participant's name and in a warm and respectful tone.
- Moderating your tone of voice in your audios to make them pleasant and expressive.

It is also important to work on technology skills with those who are unfamiliar. These competences include the appropriate use of WhatsApp, the management of complementary platforms

and tools, and the production of supporting material. Capacities must be built to:

- Create and manage WhatsApp groups.
- Share content on WhatsApp: texts, images, audios, documents and links.
- Create digital images.
- Record audios.
- Manage links.
- Create PDF files.
- Use complementary applications: e-mail, information storage, video calls, forms, among others.

It is also important to work on technology skills with those who are unfamiliar.

The accompaniment and coaching process

The training process for facilitators of the UNFPA-Venezuela is conceived as permanent and continuous. It is carried out through a community of facilitators called Entorno virtual. This space provides training and general and specific tools for virtual facilitation.

In addition, accompaniment actions are deployed in two dimensions:

Methodological accompaniment

We work with the people in charge of facilitation, the design of the workshops, the definition of participatory facilitation strategies, the production of content for the virtual work, etc. We also accompany the process of preparing and organizing the contents and audios and carry out preparatory practices prior to and during the development of the workshops.

Affective accompaniment

We work closely with the emotional situation associated with this training modality, in order to overcome fears related to virtual facilitation and the use of WhatsApp for educational purposes.



The creation of the community of facilitators around the UNFPA Virtual Environment allowed the formation of a team that is prepared, motivated and sensitized to continue to achieve the objectives of continuing medical education in any corner of our geography. For me, it has been a wonderful experience. Being part of this team has allowed me to grow as a medical professional and as a teacher. What I have learned here I have been able to replicate in other settings; distances and travel difficulties are no longer a constraint.”

Facilitator of the HIV and Pregnancy workshop.



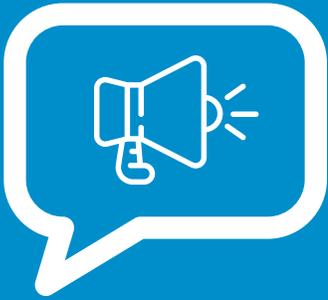
Recommendations:

- Maintain permanent communication channels with facilitators to provide timely technical and emotional support.
- Invite those responsible for facilitation to learn about the working dynamics of workshops already implemented and in progress.
- Exchange experiences with facilitators.



Main actions of the **capacity building of the facilitation team phase**

- 1** Training the team of facilitators.
- 2** Providing methodological and affective coaching throughout the training process.



PHASE 3: INVITATION AND ADMISSION

Invitation process

The process of convening and creating the learning community depends on the organizational structure for contacting and inviting participants. These invitations can be open or closed.



Between the promoter team and the facilitator, women from the community over 20 years of age were invited to cover the goal in this age group.

**Territorial coordinator
UNFPA-Venezuela.**

In open invitations, anyone can enter the training space and join, without needing a direct invitation. In these cases, the link to the WhatsApp group is shared and all interested persons will join autonomously.

In closed invitations, the invitation is made within targeted interest groups and the name and contact details of all persons who will attend are known in advance. These people are added to the WhatsApp group by those who create and manage these groups.

Advantages and disadvantages of open and closed invitations

Type of invitation	Advantages.	Disadvantages
Open invitation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is possible to extend the radius of coverage of the workshop and reach out to organizations and individuals with whom you do not have direct contact. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is uncertain how many people will be interested. It is not possible to control the profile of the people registered or participating, so it is possible that people with other interests (sales, proselytizing, etc.) may join, which affects the dynamics of the work. In the absence of a direct participation agreement, people may feel less committed to the training process.
Closed invitation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Control over the people who will participate in the training is maintained, ensuring a commonality of interests around the workshop topics. It is possible to focus on the target population of the projects. Investment in the activity and impacts can be more accurately managed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The invitation will be limited to the scope that the responsible organization has in the territories.

In the case of the UNFPA-Venezuela, invitations are closed and are the responsibility of the territorial coordinating offices. The people responsible for these coordination bodies identify the training needs within the partner organizations, public institutions and communities and make direct invitations.

Once the invitation has been issued, the information of the applicants is registered (at least name and telephone number associated with a WhatsApp account). This information is subsequently used in the learning community.

In the case of the UNFPA-Venezuela, invitations are closed and are the responsibility of the territorial coordinating offices.

Initial profile assessment or pre-test

At the beginning of each workshop, participants are invited to fill in their initial profile using the pre-test form. This form contains basically two blocks of questions: one block with identification and contact questions (name, identity card, e-mail, telephone, gender, age, profession, etc.), and another block with questions about the contents of the workshop (knowledge questions).

The Google Forms tool is used for this evaluation. This tool allows the generation of forms in a very quick and agile way, facilitates the sending of forms through links and also generates a database for the subsequent processing and analysis of the information collected.

The initial assessment form also provides the facilitator with information regarding the topics on which the group is most and least proficient.

In addition to assisting in the collection of information about the participants and their pre-workshop knowledge, the initial assessment form also provides the facilitator (and the entire coordinating team) with information regarding the topics on which the group is most and least proficient. In this way, the emphasis to be placed on training can be defined in advance.

Shaping the learning community on WhatsApp

Creation and identification of the group

The learning community on WhatsApp, through the functionality of groups, is created by the local coordination in the territories, once the decision is made to hold a workshop and the process of inviting participants is initiated. It is also your responsibility to assign a name and a picture to the group for identification. The name of the workshop and the number of the group are placed in the name. **For example: G1 The access to justice route.**

Including people in the community

Once the WhatsApp group is created, access is given to the people who will facilitate and they are also assigned the role of administrators. Other roles that are incorporated with management privileges in the group are the training co-ordination and the component co-ordinations. This makes it

easier to monitor and support the training process from various levels.

The persons responsible for the administration of the group manage the entry and exit of participants, changes in the group settings, the sending of content, among other aspects. As information is collected from participants, they are added to the WhatsApp group.

The persons responsible for the administration of the group manage the entry and exit of participants, changes in the group settings, the sending of content, among other aspects.

Preparatory activities: the start of the workshop

Once the learning community has been formed in the WhatsApp group, the person in charge of its coordination makes the formal presentation of the workshop to the participants. The actions being carried out at the moment are:

- Welcome and presentation of the UNFPA, by the local coordination.
- Presentation of the workshop and its objectives.
- Invitation to take the initial assessment or pre-test.

Examples of messages for the preparatory phase:

Good morning to you all. I am Ana Méndez, Coordinator of Gender-based Violence in Miranda state.

On behalf of the **United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)**, we welcome you to this working group which will be the learning space for the workshop **Gender and New Masculinities: Towards Nonviolent Practices in Men**.

Today, you will only receive information about the schedule of activities, **which start on Tuesday 10/11 with a videoconference on the Google Meet platform at 10 a.m. and 3 interactive classes on Wednesday 11, Thursday 12 and Friday 13 from 03:00 p.m. to 05:00 p.m.** with facilitators Daniel Ponte and Guillermo Andrade.

The workshop **passing requirements** are:

- Your participation in the 4 working sessions (1 videoconference via Google Meet and 3 two-hour classes via WhatsApp group).
- Pre-test completion before starting the course.
- Post-test completion at the end of the course.
- Fulfil each day's assignments as indicated by the facilitators.

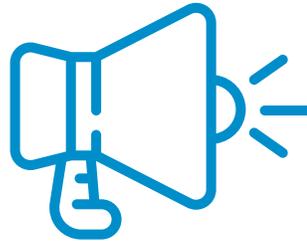
Thank you all for having accepted the invitation and for being part of this formative process.

I will be available via my personal chat for any questions or doubts. Happy day.



Recommendations:

- In order to maintain the closed character of the learning community, only the coordinating bodies should take on the task of adding new people to the group. A link should not be shared for new additions.
- Putting full information (name and phone number) when adding participants and participants will facilitate the identification of persons during the training process and coordination tasks.



Main actions of the invitation and admission phase

- 1 Sending the invitation to the workshop.
- 2 Creating and naming the WhatsApp group.
- 3 Adding the persons playing administration roles to the group, such as facilitators and coordinators, among others.
- 4 Adding the participants to the group.
- 5 Starting up the workshop.
- 6 Asking participants to complete the pre-test evaluation.



PHASE 4: DEVELOPMENT OF THE LEARNING SESSIONS



Good afternoon (...) I am very grateful for the workshop, because through chats, images and audios they help us to strengthen everyone's knowledge, in order to look for methods and measures to be able to give support or answers to victims of sexual violence."

Participant of the *Sexual Violence* workshop.

The start of the learning session

As noted in the design section, every learning session should have an opening moment to welcome the participants, explain the purpose and content of the workshop, and for participants to introduce themselves. It is a crucial moment to set the emotional climate of the space and create a connection between the facilitators and the learning group.

Example of activities and content for the beginning of the session:

<p>Welcome to the session</p>	<p>Shared content:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slide with the name of the workshop. • Welcome text. <p>Example:</p>  <p>Good afternoon. It is a pleasure having you here today. You are warmly welcome to the first session of Module I of the Antenatal Care Workshop.</p>
<p>Introduction of facilitators</p>	<p>Shared content:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitator's information slide. • Introductory text. <p>Example:</p>  <p>My name is María Delgado Pérez and I will be accompanying you during this learning session.</p>
<p>PSEA (anti-harassment) rules</p>	<p>Shared content:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slides with the content of the standards. • Explanatory text. <p>Example:</p>  <p>CODE OF CONDUCT: to prevent harassment, including sexual harassment, AT UNFPA EVENTS: https://unfpa.pa/codeofconduct</p>

**PSEA (anti-harassment) rules
(Continuation)**

Sexual exploitation and abuse
KNOW THE RULES. THERE IS NO EXCUSE!

ANY PERSON ACTING UNDER THE UNITED NATIONS EMBLEM MUST ABIDE BY THE FOLLOWING PROHIBITIONS:

- 1) Any sexual activity with children and adolescents, regardless of the local majority of age or age of consent. Claiming ignorance of a child's age is not a defense.
- 2) The use of children, adolescents or adults to find people to have sex with.
- 3) Exchange of money, employment, goods or services for sex or sexual favors. This includes any exchange of assistance.
- 4) Any sexual activity with sex workers, whether or not it is legal in the country.
- 5) Sexual relations between humanitarian personnel and beneficiaries.

Sexual exploitation and abuse
If you witness or suspect an act of exploitation, HARASSMENT or sexual abuse:

- Report it immediately at: psea-venezuela@unfpa.org
- Report when you suspect that sexual exploitation, harassment or abuse has occurred. It is not necessary to have evidence.
- Always maintain the strictest **CONFIDENTIALITY** so as not to expose the survivor.

ZERO TOLERANCE
TO SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE

This is a space **FREE** of all forms of harassment, including sexual harassment. If you feel any discomfort, let the group administrators know.

Learning community agreements

- Shared content:**
- Slides with the agreements.
 - Explanatory text.

Example:

It is important that we adhere to the learning agreements throughout our participation in this group.

<p>Dynamics of participation</p>	<p>Shared content:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slides showing the learning dynamics. • Explanatory text. <p>Example:</p>  <p>The chat will close for participation during the facilitators' explanations and open for you to make your interventions. Interventions should be made in text format only.</p>
<p>Presentation of the contents of the session</p>	<p>Shared content:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A slide with the contents of the session. • Explanatory text.
	<p>Example:</p>  <p>The aim of this module is to help prevent complications in pregnancy. We will be working on the following contents.</p>
<p>Methodology Presentation</p>	<p>Shared content:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explanatory text of the methodology. <p>Example:</p> <p>First, we will share with you some slides and audios that you should review and listen to, for which we will give you a reasonable amount of time.</p> <p>Afterwards, we will open the floor for the presentation of each and every one of you, as well as your comments and contributions to the topic, in order to initiate the exchange and collective construction.</p>

Introduction of participants	Shared content:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Text with invitation to participants to introduce themselves.
	Example: In order to become familiar with each other, we would like you to please introduce yourselves by writing your first and last name and the organization you belong to . We open the chat so that you can share your presentation. Let's get started!



Moderating participation

In order to maintain the content structure defined in the workshop script and to avoid interruptions that can disperse the presentation of the content and confuse people, it is necessary to moderate the participation in the WhatsApp group.

At the time the contents of the session are published, only people with an administration role will be able to share information. To do this, the group settings must be configured so that only those who administer the group can send messages.

When it is time for group participation, the development of a dynamic or exercise, the settings are changed so that participants can send messages. Whenever the settings are changed, the group should be notified.

In addition, it is recommended that participants' interventions be in text format only, in order to speed up the review and response of the messages by those conducting the learning session.

The development of the learning session

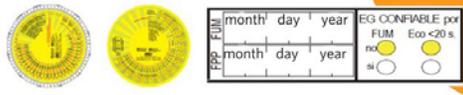
We work under a participatory and experiential approach, so in addition to sharing training content, activities will be developed to activate learning through practice and reflection.

In the process phase, the topics of the session unfold. We work under a participatory and experiential approach, so in addition to sharing training content, activities will be developed to activate learning through practice and reflection. Key in this phase are the generative questions, the collective construction and the elaboration of assignments defined in the design phase.

Example of activities and contents of the development of the session:

<p>Start of the presentation of the contents</p>	<p>Shared content:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explanatory text. <p>Example:</p> <p>Thank you very much for your participation!</p> <p>--</p> <p>Next, we will close the chat to share the contents of the session.</p> <p>--</p> <p>Please pay attention to the content slides and audios.</p>
<p>Presentation of contents</p>	<p>Shared content:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slides with content. • Explanatory audio. <p>Example:</p> <div data-bbox="576 646 1161 1029">  <p>Prenatal care</p> <p>Definition:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A set of systematic and periodic actions and procedures aimed at the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of factors that may cause maternal and perinatal morbidity and mortality. • Physical and psychological preparation of the mother for childbirth and care of the newborn. </div> <p>[Audio]</p> <div data-bbox="576 1087 1161 1470">  <p>Prenatal care</p> <p>Characteristics of good prenatal care</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Precocious. • Regular. • Complete. • Wide coverage. </div> <p>[Audio]</p>

<p>Presentation of contents (Continuation)</p>	  <p>Classification of pregnancy according to risk</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Low risk ▪ High risk <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Type I - Level 1. -Type II - Level 2. -Type III - Level 3. <p>[Audio]</p>
<p>Participatory activity</p>	<p>Shared content:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Slide introducing the participatory activity. ▪ Generative question. <p>Example:</p>  <p>What are the factors that pose a high level of risk in pregnancy?</p> <p>We are reopening the chat so that you can make your interventions.</p> <p>--</p> <p>Thank you very much for your participation and for your excellent contributions!</p> <p>--</p> <p>We close the chat to continue with the contents. Please pay attention to the slides and audios.</p>
<p>Presentation of the contents</p>	<p>Shared content:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Slides with content. ▪ Explanatory audio.

<p>Presentation of the contents (Continuation)</p>	<p>Example:</p>  <p>Gestational age Determine gestational age and likely date of delivery</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Date of last menstrual period. • Gestogram. • Ultrasound of the first quarter. • Naegle Rule.  <p>[Audio] [Audio]</p>
<p>Participatory activity</p>	<p>Shared content:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slide introducing the participatory activity. • Information slide on the activity. <p>Example:</p>  <p>Gestational age calculation exercises</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Pregnant woman with last menstrual period on 02/12/2021. Calculate gestational age and expected date of delivery. •Pregnant woman with last menstrual period on 03/30/2021. Calculate gestational age and expected date of delivery. •Pregnant woman with last menstrual period on 05/07/2021. Calculate gestational age and expected date of delivery. •Pregnant woman with last menstrual period on 06/27/2021. Calculate gestational age and expected date of delivery.  <p>For the next session, please solve the following exercises to calculate the gestational age and probable date of delivery. Please bring your results to share and discuss in the group.</p>

Completion of the learning session

The culmination of each learning session should be clearly indicated through the chat.

The culmination of each learning session should be clearly indicated through the chat. This is a good time to thank you for your participation and to leave an open space for comments and clarification of doubts.

Example of activities and contents of the finalization of the session:

Completion of the learning session	<p>Shared content:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Slide with closing content.• Explanatory text. <p>Example:</p>  <p>So much for the contents of today's session.</p> <p>Thank you very much for your attention and active participation.</p> <p>---</p> <p>We have opened the chat so you can share comments and ask questions. We will keep it open until 9:00 p.m. to give people who could not connect during the session a chance to participate as well.</p> <p>---</p> <p>The next session will be tomorrow at 4:00 p.m. We will continue working with the contents of Module I. We look forward to seeing you!</p>
---	--



Recommendations:

- Send messages before the start of each learning session (hours and minutes before), to remind you to do the activity. They can be sent by the persons coordinating the workshop as well as by the facilitators.
- Facilitate from the version of WhatsApp with which you are most comfortable and familiar: mobile, web or desktop.
- During facilitation, organize and have at hand all resources to be used: equipment, files, supporting documents, etc.
- Follow in strict order the publication of the contents, according to the guideline written in the script, in order to facilitate its comprehension.
- Write messages in an affectionate and friendly tone. The use of WhatsApp text formatting options (bold, italics, etc.) is recommended, as well as the use of emoticons to make texts easier to understand and more expressive.
- Call people by name at the time of participation and welcome each person to the workshop (synchronously or asynchronously).
- Ask participants to identify themselves when making interventions, so that you can respond to them using their name.
- Close and open the WhatsApp group to moderate the participants' interventions.
- Provide sufficient time for people to introduce themselves, clarify doubts and make comments (synchronously or asynchronously).
- Respond to all the group's interventions.
- Support the person accompanying the process (in the role of co-facilitation or coordination), in order to be able to carry out all the tasks adequately.



Main actions of the development of the learning sessions phase

- 1** Welcome participants to the session and introduce yourself.
- 2** Communicate the community's rules.
- 3** Present the objectives and contents of the session.
- 4** Invite participants to introduce themselves.
- 5** Facilitate session contents and participatory activities.
- 6** Close the session and announce future activities.



PHASE 5: CLOSING, FOLLOW-UP AND EVALUATION OF THE WORKSHOP

Closing of the workshop

The workshop ends when all learning sessions have been facilitated. It is important that at this point the participants perform a cognitive and emotional Gestalt.

The closing of the workshop, as well as the opening, is the responsibility of the territorial coordinations. During this time, it is important to take the following actions:

- **Closing of content**, with emphasis on the main ideas developed during the workshop. The essential contents worked on must be taken up and reinforced.
- **Indication of next steps**, to inform in a clear and direct way what actions will be taken after the closing of the training space. For example: the implementation of the post-test and the awarding of certificates.
- **Dismissal of the group**, to allow the group to express their opinions and evaluations of the experience and to share their final comments.
- **Affective closure**, to value the group and the achievements reached (objectives and learning).



I really enjoyed the workshop and I would like to keep in touch with you to exchange views, because the topic is very broad. We have GBV all the time, we just don't see it because we don't have the knowledge to identify it."

Participant of the workshop *Understanding Gender-based Violence and Safe Referrals of Incidents of Violence.*

Examples of messages for the closing of the workshop:

Dear participants, **we at the UNFPA are pleased with the completion of this workshop on antenatal care.** We are very enthusiastic about the participation throughout the days and thank the facilitators for their dedication, commitment and the energy with which they approached all the topics.

We have worked on the fundamental aspects to ensure that the pregnancy, birth and puerperium of the women we serve is a positive experience, **indicating the diagnostic elements to keep in mind and the recommendations to avoid complications.**

We thank you for your participation in the activities and your support. It is an honor for us to have had your presence during this workshop.

To complete the training process, they must complete the post-test form. Here is the link: <https://forms.gle/XXX XXX>

Please confirm via this channel when you have completed the assessment.

We are opening the chat so that you can ask your questions and share your opinions about this training activity. The chat will remain open for everyone to express themselves.

Follow-up

Consistency in the participation of the people enrolled in the workshops and the verification of learning are key to guaranteeing the fulfilment of the objectives within the distance learning experiences. Clear monitoring strategies and evaluation criteria are essential in this regard.

Follow-up actions are a joint responsibility of the coordinating team and the persons responsible for facilitation. Some of the follow-up work includes:

- Verify the presence and participation of people in the training sessions.
- Reminders of activities in the learning community.
- Check that the initial and final evaluations (pre-test and post-test) have been completed by the participant group.

As part of the workshop follow-up, it is also important to monitor that the activities in the learning communities are carried out according to the methodological guidelines and at the scheduled times, and that the facilitators perform appropriately in guiding the groups.

In the application of the WhatsApp Learning methodology, having clear monitoring strategies and evaluation criteria are essential.

Evaluation and awarding of certificates

Post-test evaluation

The post-test evaluation is applied to the participants at the end of the training process, with the aim of finding out what they have learnt. It is a test of knowledge about the contents of the workshop. Like the initial test, this evaluation is developed using the Google Forms tool, to facilitate its submission to all participants. The processing of the responses stored in the database allows the coordinating team to get an overview of the workshop results and the group's learning.

The post-test evaluation includes a final section with questions about the workshop, to find out the participants' assessment of the training process.

Certification

The trainings carried out by UNFPA-Venezuela include the awarding of certificates of participation and attendance.

The trainings carried out by UNFPA-Venezuela include the awarding of certificates of participation and attendance, after assessing the fulfilment of a series of criteria previously defined and shared with all participants. These criteria are: having completed the pre-test and post-test assessments, having participated in the learning sessions and having completed the assigned tasks. In some workshops it is required to have achieved an approval percentage equal to or greater than 80% in the post-test evaluation to obtain certification.

The following format was created to manage the delivery of these certificates:

Criteria for the certification of virtual workshops format

Workshop Name:							
State:				Workshop Date:			
Local Coordination:				Facilitator:			
Participant data			Certification of virtual workshops criteria				
No	Participant's Name	Identity Card	Pre-test completion	Participation in WhatsApp sessions	Completion of the activities planned in the workshop	Post-test completion	Certificate
1							
2							
3							
4							
5							
6							
7							
8							
9							
10							

This form is completed by the territorial co-ordination offices. Once filled in, it is sent to the persons responsible for the co-ordination of the components for the elaboration of the certificates.

Workshop report

The last step in the development of the workshops is the preparation of reports by the facilitators. These reports document the learning process and allow to know, from the facilitators' point of view, what happened in the working sessions, as well as to identify strengths and weaknesses in the processes.

The report is prepared using the following format:

Training Report (Virtual)

IDENTIFICATION OF THE ACTIVITY

- Type of activity:
- Name:
- Objective:
- Date:
- State:
- Municipality:
- Venue of the activity:
- Facilitator:
- Name of the Local Coordinator/Person in charge:
- Participants:

CONTENT OF THE REPORT

- Introduction:
- Development of the activity:
- Results of the training process:
- Learning assessment results (pre-test and post-test results):
- Observations, recommendations and lessons learned:
- Recommendations, agreements and next steps:

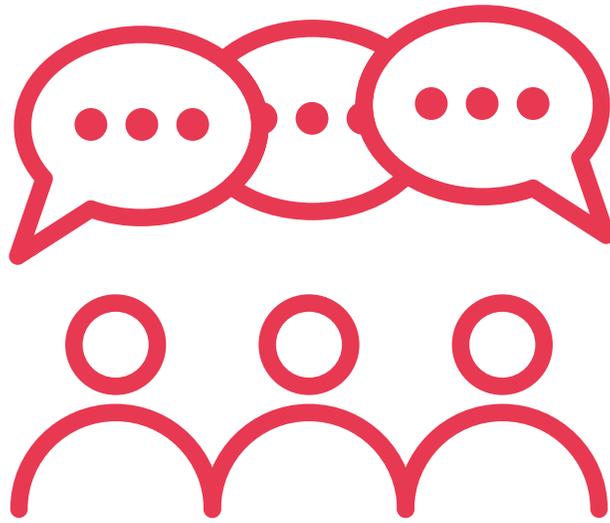
SCHEDULES

- a. Attendance list (pre-test and post-test database list).
- b. Instructional design.
- c. Presentation slides.
- d. Photographic record (in virtual courses, include screenshots of participants in the WhatsApp group, significant screenshots of the presentation and/or participation).



Main actions of the **closing, follow-up and evaluation** of the workshop phase

- 1** Announce the end of the workshop.
- 2** Refresh the main contents worked on.
- 3** Acknowledge the group's participation.
- 4** Invite participants to make any questions or comments about the workshop.
- 5** Ask participants to complete the post-test evaluation.
- 6** Verify the certification criteria for each participant.
- 7** Prepare and send certificates.
- 8** Produce the workshop report.



**FINAL REFLECTIONS,
LESSONS LEARNED AND
CHALLENGES**

03

The challenges and lessons learned identified by the UNFPA-Venezuela team in the implementation and development of this methodology are manifold:

In humanitarian emergency situations Mobile Learning training strategies, such as the WhatsApp methodology, are a viable and effective option for connecting with populations and building capacity.

1. Humanitarian emergencies, pandemics, natural disasters or even situations of armed conflict require keeping the focus on the goal of saving lives and adapting quickly to volatile and highly uncertain dynamics. In these contexts, Mobile Learning training strategies, such as the WhatsApp methodology, are a viable and effective option for connecting with populations and building capacity.
2. It is possible to adapt educational content and participatory and experiential dynamics to the format of WhatsApp and other communication applications, such as Telegram. Flexibility in implementing these methodologies in different environments can generate impactful results, including motivating creativity and synergies.
3. Working in virtual learning environments involves new approaches and instructional design strategies, as well as the close accompaniment of specialist teams, for the development of skills.
4. Moving from face-to-face training to the development of distance learning programs in a short period requires a committed team that directly coordinates actions in the territory, in synergy with the teams responsible for the design and implementation of the training processes.
5. In many cases, additional efforts are needed to access mobile equipment and overcome connectivity difficulties. Considering mobile device sharing and funding for internet connectivity allowed the UNFPA to increase outreach and participation in the workshops to reach people in rural and hard-to-reach areas.
6. The universe of platforms and applications used needs to be expanded to facilitate the implementation of participatory activities. It is important to ensure that these platforms and applications are easy to use and access.

A committed, creative team that directly coordinates the actions in the territory, in synergy with the teams responsible for the design and implementation of the training processes, has allowed the development of this initiative. This is an

inspiring experience. It is about leaving no one behind, about reaching the most vulnerable people, anytime, anywhere and in any direction: from the UNFPA to the people and from the people to the UNFPA. We made sure that everyone had the opportunity in their hands to access life-saving information. We ensured that, despite the circumstances, they had the UNFPA in their hands, closer than ever.

We hope that this feasible and proven practice will be useful to other UNFPA offices. Knowledge generation and communication is a practice that strengthens the management of all our teams, the UNFPA as an agency and the actions we execute.

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