

Report of the Life Skill Training Conducted for Adolescent Children of UN Staff Members in Ethiopia

August 26-30, 2013, UN Conference Center



A life-skills training, organized by UN Cares was conducted for adolescent children of Ethiopia-based UN staff members on August 26-30, 2013 at the UN Conference Center. The age of enrolled children ranged from 10 to 18 years, and the close to 185 children were divided into three groups based on their age to allow tailoring of age-appropriate messages and approaches. Children aged 10-12 years were in one group, early teens aged 13-15 years were in another group, and those aged 16-18 were in a third group. A total of 185 children attended the training.



The training was conducted for five consecutive days from 8:30 to 5:00pm, using the UNICEF Life-Skill Training Manual.

Self awareness, body language, communication (with peers, with parents), reproductive health, saying “no”, how to keep oneself and others safe from HIV, etc. were some of the topics covered during the five-day training. Specific subjects such as knowing and understanding our body parts (for the younger audience); making the right choices; healthy relationships



with the opposite sex for the middle group; love versus attraction; and reproductive health – abstinence, condom use, protecting oneself from HIV in the older age group were openly discussed using illustrations and teaching aids.

The training was opened by the Director of ILO Country Office for Ethiopia and Somalia, Mr. George Okutho, who graciously covered the cost of coffee break for the participants.

In the course of the week, the training was also graced by Dr Pierre M'pele-Kilebou, WHO Representative to Ethiopia, who went to each classroom to stop and chat with the children, ask them important, reflective questions on health and on protecting themselves and their family. The children gave interesting answers, and generally immensely enjoyed Dr M'pele's visit; especially in the youngest age group, Dr M'pele was warmly received with a standing-up greeting as is the Ethiopian custom, cheerful greeting calls from every corner, and conversations in French from French-speaking children. Inspired by their discussion with Dr M'pele, and when they heard that he was a doctor, many said they wanted to be doctors too. One boy said he wanted to be a doctor so that he could help kids.



On the last day of the training, an official certification ceremony was held in the presence of the UN Resident Coordinator (RC), Dr Eugene Owusu, who spoke to the children and awarded certificates to representatives from each group. The children also had an opportunity to have group pictures with the RC. As he spoke at the certificate awarding ceremony, Dr Owusu congratulated the children and reminded them that they ***“represent the future of Ethiopia”***. He emphasized that this initiative needs to be supported and continued so that the number of children attending could be doubled in 2014, and expressed his hope that the children and youth who attended the training would put into practice what they had learned, as well as share their learning. The RC also noted that the



work isn't over and parents need to help their children make informed decisions about their health and lives, and encouraged parents to talk about the training with their children, as well as the plans and life goals they have set during the week. At the ceremony, all trainers were complemented and applauded, and the event ceremony ended with the distribution of awards and certificates. Two representatives from each age group received the certificates on their classmates' behalf.

The children gave frank and useful feedback to the training in informal interviews they had with WHO Communication Officers, Loza Mesfin and Viivi Erkkila. Their comments ranged from, ***"This is great, please do it for non-UN children, too,"*** to, ***"It was interesting but the sessions were too long and too formal; not fun enough."*** Most said that they liked best the group work and presentations by their peers and expressed their wish that the training were a bit longer to allow everyone to share their views. Others said that the best thing was the opportunity to speak and share experiences with other children. There were a group of girls who said that the best part of the training was learning about body language and relationships, and others that said that the sex education was "scary", and that they were a bit uncomfortable when they were asked to draw their private parts.

Below are snapshots of the various quotes obtained during these interviews:



Group of 10-12 year olds

“Liked the training.”

“Learned about **body language, emotions**, reproductive health, **love and attraction**.”

“Some teachers were great! Some teachers were boring and too strict.”

“The sex education was scary.”

“I wish there had been more variety and different things to do, including exercises and activities.”



Boys and girls aged 13–15 years

“Nice!”

“Learned about body language and relationships.”

“Learned about **addiction (drugs)**.”

“The training **should have been longer**; now there isn’t enough time for everyone to share their opinions.”

“The **trainings** shouldn’t be just for UN staff kids, but **for all children** in Ethiopia.”

“Best thing was **the opportunity to speak and share experiences with other children**.”

“The training should be **more fun**. Now, it was too classroom-based and some of the teachers



were too strict.”

“More games and activities, more time.”

“The group was too big.”

“It wasn’t a problem that boys and girls were in the same group.”

Boys and girls aged 16–18 years

“Learned about **making the right choices.**”

“Reproductive health and HIV/AIDS.”

“Learned how to use condoms.”



