

A Guide to Tools for Assessments in Sexual and Reproductive Health

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Fifteen years after ICPD, a large global family of development workers committed to universal access to sexual and reproductive health continue to work on improving the lives and expanding the choices of individuals and couples. Reproductive health is a human right, yet reproductive health conditions are the leading cause of death and illness in women of childbearing age worldwide. At least 200 million women who want to plan their families or space their births lack access to safe and effective contraception.

Investments in reproductive health save and improve lives, slow the spread of HIV and encourage gender equality. These benefits extend from the individual to the family and from the family to the world. Yet resources allocated for improving SRH are scarce and needs are urgent. It is vital to use our limited resources in the most effective way.

Understanding a problem and all its contributing and surrounding factors is the most important first step toward finding a solution. Over the last decade SRH workers have become increasingly aware of the need for an appropriate assessment of problems and needs before designing interventions, and for continuous monitoring during implementation. They have developed and used many tools and methodologies for the purpose; maybe too many for the busy programme manager at national or district level to be comfortably familiar with all the strengths and limitations of these tools and the resources and time needed to conduct assessments using them.

To fill this information gap, we have developed a guide to tools and successful methodologies for SRH assessments. We hope that it will be a useful aid to busy programme managers who need to plan and conduct assessments in SRH; understand better the challenges facing them; plan interventions, and monitor and evaluate their progress.