



**THE RAIN WORKERS**



# KNOWLEDGE AS A CHANCE!

**TRAININGS MANUAL ON  
FAMILY PLANNING AND SEXUAL AND  
REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH RIGHTS**

THE RAIN WORKERS,  
Network for Sexual and  
Reproductive Health  
[www.therainworkers.org](http://www.therainworkers.org)



**THE RAIN WORKERS RESPECT ALL CULTURES AND RELIGIONS. THIS MANUAL IS NOT INTENDED TO CONTRADICT YOUR BELIEFS. INSTEAD, IT IS ABOUT PROMOTING FACT-BASED AND MEDICALLY PROVEN KNOWLEDGE FOR OVERALL HEALTH, INCLUDING PHYSICAL, MENTAL, AND EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING. THIS IS CRUCIAL FOR INDIVIDUALS OF ALL AGES, SEX, AND GENDER.**



## THE RAIN WORKERS



### **“WHAT RAIN IS FOR NATURE, KNOWLEDGE IS FOR YOU!”**

Maria Hengstberger

During her time in Ethiopia, our founder Maria Hengstberger, an Austrian gynecologist, witnessed a heartbreaking situation: Women were overwhelmed by the burden of too many children they couldn't adequately care for. Others faced childbirth complications, died from unsafe abortions or from the consequences of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). Determined to make a difference, Maria established an organisation called Aktion Regen in 1989. She developed the unique training programme “Knowledge as a chance”.

Since then, our focus has been on training staff members and volunteers of organisations and institutions as RAIN WORKERS. They serve as multipliers of knowledge about family planning, sexual and reproductive health rights, in a holistic and sustainable manner, and “let knowledge rain”.

In 2024, we renamed the organisation to THE RAIN WORKERS to underscore the crucial role of these RAIN WORKERS.

With almost 1,000 RAIN WORKERS in African countries, we engage with communities, schools, and health centers, utilising our innovative BIG 5 TEACHING TOOLS and other training materials to spread knowledge. Our aim is to improve health, empower women, strengthen families, promote gender equality, and combat poverty.

As THE RAIN WORKERS, our mission is to advance gender equality by involving everyone in family planning and sexual and reproductive health rights. We believe in empowering everyone to make informed decisions about their bodies through clear, easy-to-understand and practical information.

**Taking charge of your own body is the first step towards a self-determined life!**

Editorial team

*Vienna, October 2024*

**# Let women rise!  
# We empower WoMen!  
# Together We End FGM!**



# THE RAIN WORKERS

## OUR APPROACH

We have learned that the best way to bring positive change is by taking a comprehensive approach, considering medical, social, educational, demographic, and economic aspects of sexual and reproductive health. This is called a holistic approach.

THE RAIN WORKERS approach focuses on:

- ◆ **Global framework:** We use the Sustainable Development Goals and Human Rights as our roadmap to create positive changes in the world, making our approach stronger and easier to continue to support.
- ◆ **Equality for all:** We involve everyone in our programmes to create positive behavioural changes.
- ◆ **Strong women, strong families, strong societies:** We focus on empowering women because sustainable families and societies start with strong women's rights.
- ◆ **Giving Reason:** We explain WHY something is important before HOW to do it, helping people understand the purpose and making it more meaningful.

## OUR TRAINING PROGRAMME

We offer a standardised training programme to become a RAIN WORKER:

- 1 BEGINNER TRAINING:** Learn the basics of sexual and reproductive health rights, how to use our teaching materials, and how to practice building strong arguments to share this knowledge effectively.
- 2 PROBATION PERIOD:** Reflect on your learning and deepen your knowledge with other trainees during this period.
- 3 ADVANCED TRAINING:** Apply your knowledge in various outreach situations. This training also prepares you for the final exam to become a certified RAIN WORKER.



## QUALITIES OF RAIN WORKERS

- ◆ **WELL INFORMED:** RAIN WORKERS possess profound knowledge of sexual and reproductive health and family planning. They are committed to empowering their communities.
- ◆ **NON-JUDGMENTAL:** RAIN WORKERS explain complex topics in a simple, clear, and respectful way, creating a safe and supportive atmosphere.
- ◆ **OPEN-MINDED:** RAIN WORKERS respect different beliefs while always advocating for human rights and fact-based knowledge.
- ◆ **CREATIVE:** RAIN WORKERS use diverse approaches to help people unlearn misconceptions and relearn facts.
- ◆ **CRITICAL:** RAIN WORKERS question taboos and stereotypes to advocate for responsible behaviour, setting aside their own cultural and religious biases to act in the name of human rights.
- ◆ **COMMUNICATIVE:** RAIN WORKERS are self-confident in challenging debates and know how to use the right language for different target groups.



## ACTIVITY FIELDS OF RAIN WORKERS

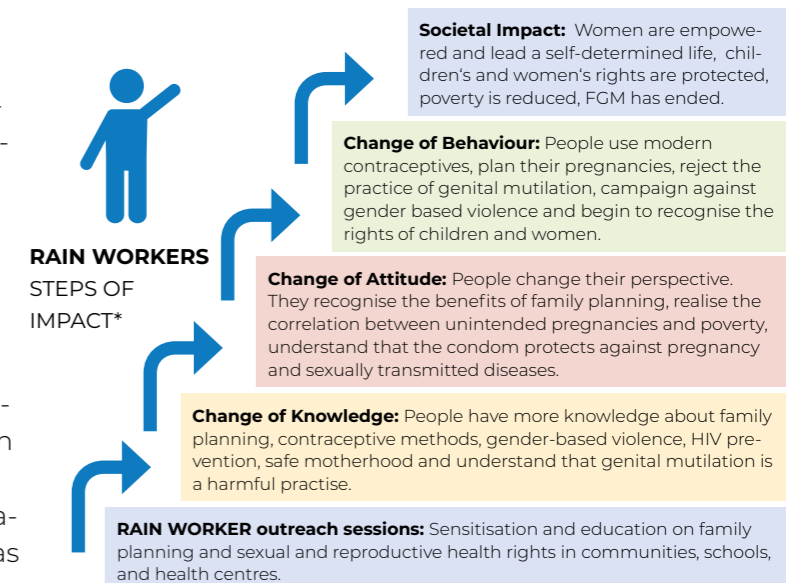
Information about sexual and reproductive health must not only be given in medical facilities but also reach people in their living environment. RAIN WORKERS need to use creative ways to reach people where they are:

- ◆ **Educational and youth centers:** Teaching young people and sensitising their parents and teachers.
- ◆ **Communities:** Bringing knowledge directly to neighbourhoods and villages, targeting specific groups such as motorcyclists, clans of elders, women's groups, churches, self-help groups, teenage mothers, circumcisers, couples during home visits, and many more.
- ◆ **Radio talks, TV broadcasts and public events:** Broadcasting informative and engaging programmes to reach a wide audience conveniently in local languages.

## OUR IMPACT – MAKING A LASTING DIFFERENCE

Changing misconceptions and breaking taboos takes time. We use a step-by-step approach to create positive change for individuals and society. We know that true progress happens gradually:

- ◆ **SHORT-TERM:** RAIN WORKERS increase people's knowledge about family planning and sexual and reproductive health rights.
- ◆ **MEDIUM-TERM:** RAIN WORKERS help people develop positive attitudes and beliefs on specific topics.
- ◆ **LONG-TERM:** This leads to changes in behaviour and has a positive impact on society as a whole.



\*According to Phineas Wirkungstreppe



# HOW TO USE THIS MANUAL

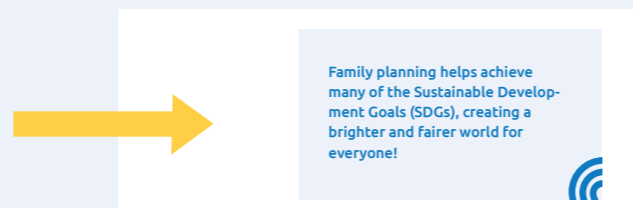
This manual is designed for ALL RAIN WORKERS and RAIN WORKER trainers, whether in training sessions or outreach activities. It provides a comprehensive collection of detailed, fact-based knowledge, presented with images, graphics and methodological guidelines.

## THE STRUCTURE OF THE MANUAL FOLLOWS A UNIFORM FORMAT:

### RAIN WORKER KEY MESSAGES

Each chapter contains key messages and the most important take-aways. You find them in boxes.

Key messages always look like this example:



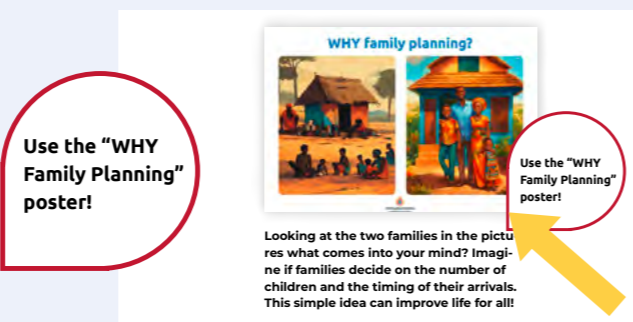
### RAIN WORKER TEACHING TOOLS

Our so called **BIG 5 TEACHING TOOLS** are essential components that facilitate the methodical processing and presentation of knowledge. Presenting knowledge in a hands-on way is a profound method of learning. The reference to a teaching tool always looks like this example:



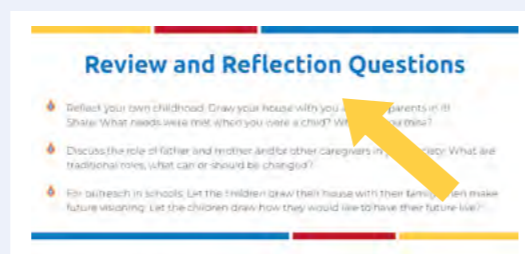
### RAIN WORKER POSTERS

Many chapters contain a reference poster. These posters are part of the material set RAIN WORKERS work with. The reference to the poster always looks like this example:



### REVIEW AND REFLECTION QUESTIONS

At the end of each chapter there are review and reflection questions. They serve to **repeat and reflect** on what has learnt and provide suggestions for passing on the knowledge to the audience in a lively and target group-specific way.



### PRACTICAL IMPLEMENTATION

The last chapter of the manual provides you with **guidelines for field outreach** and give you some practical examples. The examples do not claim to be exhaustive, but are intended to provide ideas for the first outreaches. They are practiced specifically in the Advanced Training.

**NOW, JUMP INTO THE FIELD!**



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# FUNDAMENTALS



## Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are 17 ambitious goals adopted by all UN member states in 2015 to tackle global challenges. The first goal is to eradicate poverty.

### SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT STARTS WITH FAMILY PLANNING

Family planning empowers people, particularly women, to decide freely and responsibly about the number, timing, and spacing of their children.

- ◆ **No Poverty (Goal 1):** The size of a family should be in line with the family's economic and social resources. This will lead to a stable, secure and sustainable life and reduce poverty.
- ◆ **Zero Hunger (Goal 2):** Planned number of children means less strain on food resources.
- ◆ **Improved Health (Goal 3):** Knowledge about the body and family planning methods improve the health and well-being of all family members, especially mothers and children. This enables prevention, protection, and the use of therapies.
- ◆ **Quality Education (Goal 4):** Fact-based health education and knowledge about family planning provide the basis for families to invest more in quality education of their children. This allows them to survive in the competitive job market.

- ◆ **Gender Equality (Goal 5):** When women have more opportunities for education and employment, they have the potential to earn more. This helps break the cycle of poverty in families and promotes economic stability.

Family planning helps achieve many of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), creating a brighter and fairer world for everyone!

- ◆ **Reduced Inequalities (Goal 10):** Family planning helps close the gap between so called "developed" and "less developed" countries by giving everyone a chance to improve their lives.
- ◆ **Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions (Goal 16):** Family planning promotes peace and stability. It reduces conflicts over resources, empowers women to participate in civic life, and overcomes harmful practices and gender-based violence. Equity in families fosters peaceful co-existence.



Use the SDG poster for explaining the benefits of family planning!





# Gender Equality

Imagine a world where women and girls have the same opportunities and rights as men. This is the goal of **Sustainable Development Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.**

Although women represent half of the world's population, they don't have the same rights and chances as men. This is because most societies are patriarchal.

**Patriarchy** is a system where men hold most of the power. They make most of the decisions about politics, economy, finance, society, religion, and in private life.

## WHAT IS GENDER?

The term "gender" is different from the term "sex".

**Sex** refers to the different **biological and physiological characteristics** of males and females, such as reproductive organs, hormones, etc.

**Gender** refers to **societal and cultural roles and expectations** associated with being male, female, or any other gender identity. This involves how people are supposed to act, the roles they have in society, and how they



interact with each other. It is not the same everywhere, and it changes over time. Today, roles are changing, and we all have more options.

## EXAMPLES FOR GENDER CHARACTERISTICS:

- ◆ **Payment:** Worldwide women earn significantly less money than men for similar work (called gender pay gap).
- ◆ **Housework and care work:** In many societies, housework and childcare are seen as women's responsibility, while men are expected to work outside the home.
- ◆ **Education:** All children, no matter if boy or girl, deserve the right to attend school.
- ◆ **Gender roles change over time!** For example, since 2018 women in Saudi Arabia are allowed to drive cars. Before they were not.

## SEX CHARACTERISTICS:

- ◆ Women have ovaries with egg cells, a uterus and menstruate.
- ◆ Men have testicles with sperm.

**Be aware: It is a biological fact that 2-4% of the human population has intersexual variations. By not recognizing sexual diversity, their marginalization and the brutality of their persecution is exacerbated!**

(UNFPA report 2024)

## WHAT IS GENDER EQUALITY?

Gender equality means that girls and women have the same rights and opportunities as boys and men. This includes:

- ◆ Being treated fairly and with respect.
- ◆ Having control over their bodies and health choices.
- ◆ Having a safe life, free from violence and harmful practices.
- ◆ Having equal access to education, employment, and entrepreneurship.
- ◆ Having a say in decision-making that affects themselves in the family.
- ◆ Having equal chances of participation in communities, in society and in politics.
- ◆ Having the right to personal growth and fulfilment.

**When women have equal rights as man, they are empowered. Empowered women contribute to sustainable families and strengthen the society!**

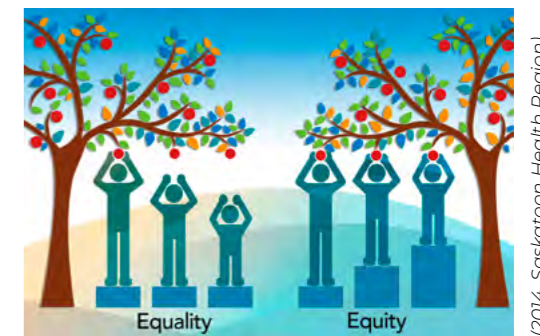


**Use the "Empowerment Cycle" poster to explain the positive impact of empowering women!**

## Review and Reflection Questions

◆ **SELF-REFLECTION:** How were you expected to behave as a girl child, as a boy child, and later as an adult? How do you feel when your behavior does not meet the role expectations?

◆ Equality is not always justice or fairness (equity). What does this mean? Interpret the picture.



◆ Talk about what gender inequalities exist in your community, in your society?

◆ What would change in your society if men and women had equal rights and opportunities? Think of family life, work life and public life.

(2014, Saskatoon Health Region)

# Population Development and Fertility Rate

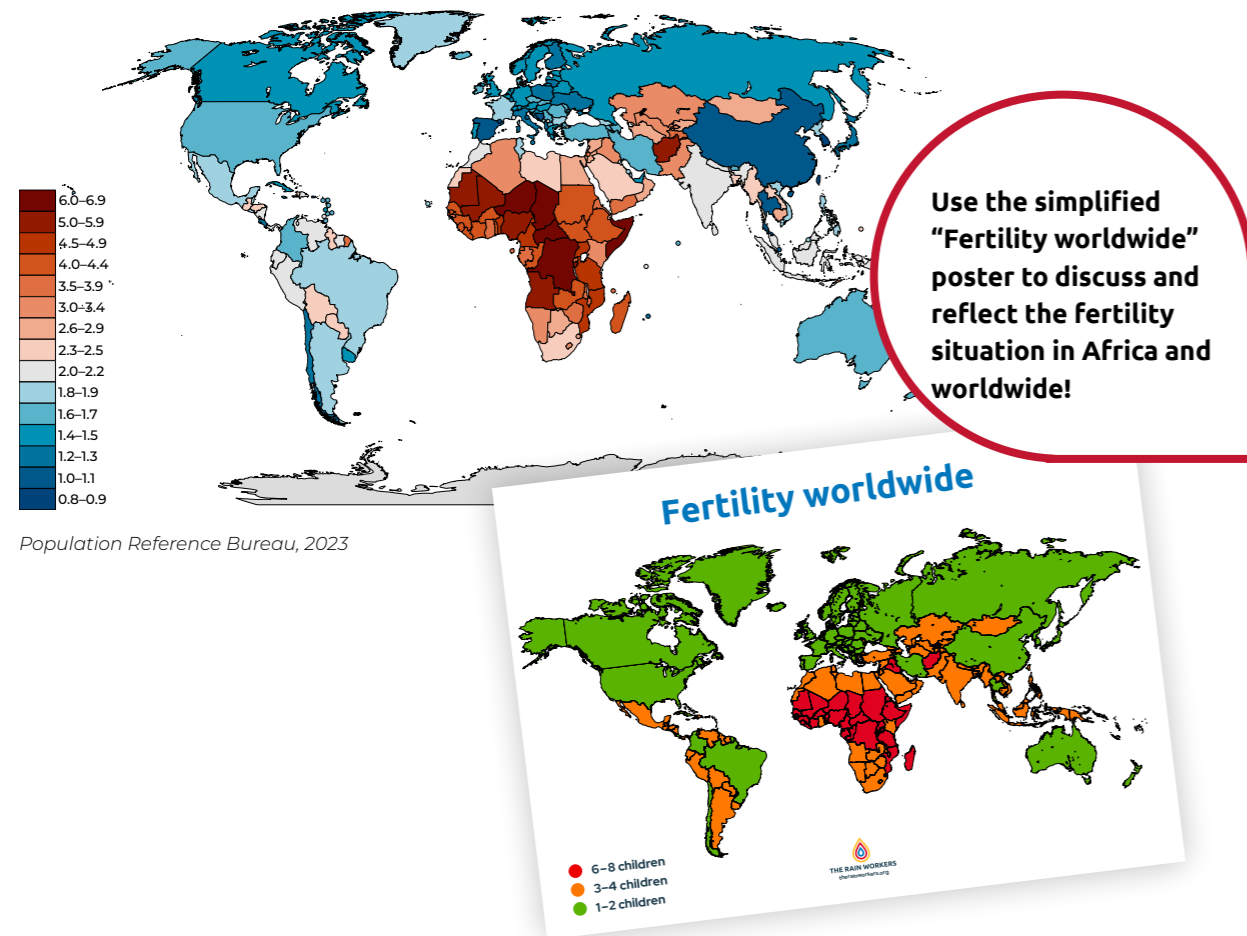
**Population development** refers to the number of people (inhabitants) in a country. It can grow, shrink, or remain stable. It is influenced by birth rate, mortality rate, and migration.

**Fertility** is the ability to conceive a child. The **fertility rate** refers to the average number of children born to women of childbearing age (usually defined as 15-49 years) in a particular population during their reproductive years. It is often expressed as the number of children per woman.

In many countries, especially in Europe, America and Asia, a decline in birth rates can be observed. This decline is partly a result of delayed parenthood for education and careers, and easier access to family planning services.

Since February 2022, the world's population has surpassed 8 billion people. It is essential to recognise that everyone has the right to reproductive health and informed decision.

(UNFPA 2022)



## THE SITUATION IN AFRICA

### High demographic diversity

- According to current figures the African continent has the world's fastest growing population.
- In 1950, Africa's population was only one-fifth of its current size.
- The UN expects the current population of 1.4 billion to double by 2050.
- Mortality rates have fallen significantly in all African countries, but fertility rates in many countries are still high.
- The 54 African countries are at different stages of demographic development: In emerging economies like Tunisia and South Africa, women typically have around two children, while in many West and Central African countries, fertility rates exceed five children per woman.

### Young age structure

- Africa has the world's youngest population.
- In 2022, the median age in Africa was about 19 years.
- This young population is already in or soon reaches reproductive age.
- Young people have great potential if they have access to quality education, job opportunities, and a well-developed health system.



### High number of unintended pregnancies and abortions

Between 2015 and 2019 half of pregnancies worldwide were unintended. Over 60% of unintended pregnancies end in abortion (UNFPA 2022). Sub-Saharan Africa has the highest number of unintended pregnancies. Lack of knowledge and insufficient access to family planning services, Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and restrictions on abortion contribute to the prevalence of unintended pregnancies and abortions.

## Review and Reflection Questions

- What contributes to rapid population growth in economically poor countries?
- The value of a woman is often associated with her ability to have children. Does this apply to your society? Is this also true for men?
- Having many children is often seen as a status symbol. Is there a misconception behind this belief? What impact does it have on a family?