



TRAINING PROGRAMME ON HARM REDUCTION

Background/Introduction

Since 2004, the IFRC and Italian Red Cross in collaboration with Villa Maraini Foundation are offering training courses on harm reduction to Red Cross/Red Crescent National Societies and other public and private organizations.

Villa Maraini Foundation (VM) is active in the field of substance abuse since 1976. During the years, VM has radically increased its activities and services, becoming a leading centre on substance abuse treatment and prevention both nationally and internationally, and serving as a reference centre within the Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement and externally. Each year, VM provides a wide range of programmes and services to more than 3.000 drug users, people living with HIV/AIDS and other marginalized people. These services include residential and semi-residential therapeutic communities, opioid substitution treatment (OST), outreach street units for needle and syringe programmes (NSPs) among PWIDs, testing for HIV and HCV, a drop-in centre and a night shelter, an emergency unit for overdose intervention and other emergencies related to drug use, a prison project for drug offenders.

In 2012 the IFRC, Italian Red Cross and Villa Maraini Foundation, in response to high levels of drug use and related problems globally, have established a tripartite international Partnership on Substance Abuse. Aim of this Partnership is to join efforts and expertise to better support RC/RC NSs to expand comprehensive approaches to drug abuse, with a focus on harm reduction and the fight against stigma and social exclusion of PWUDs.

Key objectives of the Partnership are:

- a) provision of training courses on a comprehensive harm reduction approach to drug users;
- b) technical support in the development of harm reduction activities and programmes;
- c) serving as a hub of research and resource centre on harm reduction;
- d) partnership with other organizations dealing with harm reduction and human rights of PWUDs.

From 2004 to 2017, 32 training courses have been conducted for delegates of 51 RC/RC NSs and 11 IFRC Regional Offices from all over the world.

Training methodology

The training lasts five full days and includes a mix of theory and practice, with the active involvement of participants through group works, role plays, brainstorming.

In addition, being the training conducted in the premises of Villa Maraini Foundation, participants have the possibility to visit and get involved in the daily work and activities of VM's services, such as the drop-in centre, the street units, the emergency unit, the therapeutic community.

The training is conducted in English. If required, it is possible to organize simultaneous translation in other languages, to enable the participation of no-English speakers.

Training content

The training covers a wide range of topics, in order to present a comprehensive approach toward drug abuse, based on public health and human rights principles.

The sessions include:

- Drug addiction: meaning and characteristics
- Overview of drugs and their effects
- Harm reduction strategy
- Drug use and social vulnerabilities (HIV/AIDS, TB, HCV, etc.)
- Attitude toward drug users: a comparison between the "traditional method" and the "harm reduction" approach
- Effective integrated service delivery for PWUDs: the model of Villa Maraini
- Outreach work: street units, NSPs, use of naloxone in overdose intervention
- Opioid substitution treatment
- The work with family
- Advocacy for humanitarian drug policy

Trainers profile

The team of trainers is composed of high qualified and experienced professionals, including medical doctors, psychologists and social workers of Villa Maraini Foundation, plus an expert from the IFRC Health Department.

Training costs

Normally, travel and accommodation costs of participants are covered by the IFRC Health Department.