CycleBeads® Training Course via IVR

Implementation Guide

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Acknowledgments

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ACRONYMS

AFR	Action Familiale Rwandaise
CHW	Community Health Worker
FA	Fertility Awareness
FACT	Fertility Awareness for Community Transformation
FAF	Faith Alive Foundation
FAM	Fertility Awareness Methods
FBO	Faith-Based Organization
FP	Family Planning
HDI	Health Development Initiative
HTSP	Healthy Timing & Spacing of Pregnancy
IEC	Information, Education & Communication
IRH	Georgetown University's Institute for Reproductive Health
IVR	Interactive Voice Response
KIT	Knowledge Improvement Tool
MFP	Masculinities, Faith & Peace
NFP	Natural Family Planning
SDM	Standard Days Method
SMS	Short Message Service
SRHR	Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights
TEAM-CIHDA	The ECWA AIDS Ministry Community Integrated Health Development Advancement
TOT	Training of Trainers
UPMB	Uganda Protestant Medical Bureau
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

INTRODUCTION

Health systems depend on the availability, competency, and motivation of the health workforce. Integrating Fertility Awareness Methods (FAM) into family planning (FP) training curricula has been one of Georgetown University's Institute for Reproductive Health (IRH) key strategies for strengthening FP by including the Standard Days Method® in service delivery. IRH has a wide range of experience providing training to facility-based and community-based health workers, both face-to-face and virtually and it added to its portfolio, a new training relying on Interactive Voice Response (IVR).

This Guide describes the process followed during the implementation a training course in the Standard Days Method® (SDM), delivered via IVR. It is based on Viamo and the Institute of Reproductive Health's (IRH) experience designing and deploying the course in public, private and NGO sectors, in collaboration with partners in Rwanda and Nigeria. This guide can be adapted to different contexts for conducting training that prepares community-level providers to:

- Offer Standard Days Method® (SDM) in the context of FP services

- Use CycleBeads® and the package insert as a tool to teach clients how to use SDM

This implementation guide includes the **course curriculum**, which provides the course content that can be adapted using IVR technology. This implementation guide addresses:

1. Course setup to upload
2. Orientation to learners to prepare them for taking the course over the phone
3. Course deployment and support to learners by program managers

WHAT IS IVR?

Interactive Voice Response is a low-cost, automated phone system technology, adaptable to deliver training content to learners who listen to pre-recorded material and answer related questions using their mobile phone. IVR allows learners, regardless of literacy level, to access training material. Delivering training through IVR allows programs to train low-literacy community-level providers in their own language at scale, maximizing training engagement and reach.

STEPS IN COURSE IMPLEMENTATION

1. Course Content

As SDM can be offered by different types of providers, integrating the method into training curricula requires adaptation to the learners' context, schedules and language. The increasing availability of mobile phones in remote communities offers the opportunity to deliver remote training via mobile phone. This option helps address the limitations of in-person training, including increased costs of bringing trainees together and travel limitations. Characteristics of the IVR course include:

- The content is organized into seven lessons, each lasting 5-7 minutes. The specific content of the SDM course, including the English scripts used for the 7 lessons, can be found in the course curriculum.

- It is designed to last one month, with learners receiving two lessons per week, via phone, on a set schedule.

- Each lesson is composed of an introduction, a topic narrative, a conclusion, and a multiple-choice quiz.

- Learners also receive pre-and post-lesson SMS messages, alerting them of upcoming calls and offering a lesson summary.

- Learners are able to take the course in their local language and choose the times when they receive the phone call.

Content should be translated by implementing organization, to suit their local context. Viamo would record the translated script and integrate into their IVR system. Viamo and the implementing organization may decide to run a pretest before uploading the course in the system.

Course Objectives

The goal of the course was to equip community-level providers to:

- Offer CycleBeads within the context of informed choice.

- Check to see if CycleBeads will work for a woman and her partner.

- Teach clients and their partners how to use CycleBeads.

- Talk to the client or the couple about ways to manage the fertile days when she can get pregnant.

- Refer client to a more experienced healthcare provider or clinic when needed.

COURSE OUTLINE

Week	Curriculum Area	Content Focus/Learning Outcomes
Week 1:	**00. Introduction**	• Understand the purpose of the mobile curriculum • How to navigate the content • Review the course outline
	Baseline survey	• Assess current knowledge level of trainees
	1. Family Planning and CycleBeads	• What is CycleBeads • What do the colors of the beads mean? • How CycleBeads are used
Week 2:	**2. How CycleBeads work**	• How CycleBeads work • How it used daily by the woman
	3. Who can and cannot use CycleBeads	• Who can use CycleBeads • Who cannot use CycleBeads • When to start using the method
Week 3:	**4. Tracking cycle length and using the calendar**	• When the user will go see the provider • How the male partner can help use the method correctly to prevent pregnancy
	5. When to return and using method with partner	• When the user will go see the provider • How the male partner can help use the method correctly to prevent pregnancy
Week 4:	**6. Simulation of counseling with a client**	• How to screen clients • Explaining method use • How to support correct use
	7. Highlight key issues and FAQs – big takeaways	• Screening clients • Explaining how CycleBeads work • Supporting correct method use
	Endline survey	• Assesses current knowledge level of trainees after the training

2. Learner's Orientation

Programs implementing this course advertise the course to potential participants who then enroll based on their interest. Enrolled participants provide their contact information and are invited to an orientation session. At this orientation, learners explain the IVR remote training approach, how this specific course is about and how to follow the lessons over the phone. Learners learn about the length of each lesson, how often the calls come in and what to do during the call. A live demo of a call is provided as a practical example to become familiar with. A brief leaflet with instructions as reminders is provided. Learners ask questions related to the remote training, and the facilitator can rely on a list of answers to questions that learners have asked more frequently.

Orientation Materials

The implementation of the IVR course depends on orienting course learners and providing them with the training package (See Annex 1) which includes:

1. Instructions on how to complete the course
2. One set of CycleBeads
3. SDM Provider Job Aid

During the orientation, program managers should gather the following contact information.

- Name
- Age
- Phone number
- School level achieved
- Location

Frequently Asked Questions by Learners

Question: If we choose the wrong response on the lesson quiz, how can we correct it?

Answer: It is not possible to correct. You will receive information before the training on how to answer correctly, and can follow those instructions.

Question: If I miss any lesson, how will I keep up?

Answer: You will call back the training telephone number given to you at the orientation. Once you call back, you will receive all missed lessons.

Question: Which phones can we use to complete the course?

Answer: You can use any type of phone, including smartphones, flip phones, home phones, and landlines, to complete the course

Frequently Asked Questions by Learners

Question: What will we do if it is raining [and we don't have service]?

Answer: You will stop and restart once you have cell service. Call the training phone number given to you at orientation and you will receive the uncompleted lessons.

Question: If someone calls me during the orientation, can I respond?

Answer: You should stay on the training call until the lesson is over.

Question: Instead of following the training during one month, is it possible to have all 7 lessons in one day?

Answer: It will be difficult to follow all of the lessons in one day. The most effective way is to have 2 lessons per week.

Question: Can we record the lessons?

Answer: You do not need to record the lessons. You will get a summary of the lessons via SMS, and can call back the training number to repeat the lessons as many times as you'd like.

**Question:** When can we begin offering CycleBeads?

Answer: You can begin offering CycleBeads when you finish all 7 lessons in the course and receive approval from your supervisor.

3. Course Monitoring

IIVR training provides the opportunity to rapidly collect and analyze data from the course that program implementers can use to monitor course uptake and support the learners. Viamo's platform collects the data automatically and routinely, and then shares it with the implementing organization on dashboards that are updated weekly. Data collected includes the number of learners who started each lesson, who completed which lessons and took the quizzes, in addition to quiz results. All of this information can be disaggregated based on the learner demographics provided, e.g. age, location, school level. The dashboards allow program managers to monitor lesson interactions, and locate the individual learners who failed to start and/or complete each lesson. Data analytics on the quiz results can give evaluators a proxy for knowledge gained.

Program managers may find it useful to assign a point person, who can respond to logistical issues that emerge relating to the remote training, who can serve as contact for the learners, and who can better follow up with individual learners who are having trouble with completing each lesson.

Communications during this course implementation was handled via phone with the learners and for managing and troubleshooting among program personnel and Viamo, a WhatsApp group was setup for agile interactions and support.
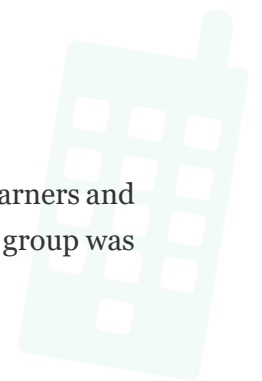
4. Troubleshooting

As the course is rolled out, there are various technical and logistical issues that may emerge. Potential solutions to common issues include:

- **Failed calls**
  Learners may not receive the call at the designated time, due to weather, service disruptions, or being in areas with poor network coverage. Learners should have the training phone number on hand, so that they can call back and listen to any incomplete lessons. In addition, push messages can be sent to the numbers who did not complete the lessons.

  An example SMS message could be:

  > *Hello! This is a message from [implementing organization], make sure you save this number [phone number] as **"Training"**. If you missed the previous lessons you will be required to complete them. A lesson will last for 5-6 minutes. If you miss a call, please flashback the saved number."*

- **Confusion about caller ID**
  The messages sent pre- and post-lesson, through SMS, are sent by a different phone number than the training phone number. The learners should note this in the orientation, and save both numbers in their phone.

- **Low completion rate**
  As learners' data is collected automatically, program managers can easily identify the learners who have not completed any lessons and follow up with them directly. Learners are required to complete previous lessons before moving onto the next ones.

5. Service Provision

Learners can start providing CycleBeads services after they have completed all 7 lessons, and receive approval from their supervisors. Learners who are ready to offer the method receive a service delivery package containing 2-3 sets of CycleBeads, a copy of the SDM provider job aid and a sheet for recording new SDM clients for method uptake reporting.

LESSONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Remote training via IVR is a cost-effective approach to engaging and training learners new to offering SDM services. It requires fewer resources than typical in-person training workshops, and is convenient for learners with lower literacy, particularly in contexts where Covid-19 complicates the delivery of in-person training.

While IVR-based learning solves some challenges presented by in-person training—such as logistical hurdles, travel stipends and detailed planning and coordination—it is a technology that still needs to be supported by people, and the supervisors' and program managers' roles may shift as a result. When using IVR technology, staff need to monitor data, troubleshoot with participants, schedule in-person supervision visits, and plan for the training orientations.

Of great importance are the following lessons learned identified from interviews with the program managers who implemented the course, and the course and the learners who completed i:

- Verify mobile phone numbers for the learners before the training starts.
- If possible, screen out participants who are not comfortable using their mobile phones, or better equip them to be able to follow the IVR prompts.
- Ensure that training sessions are not sent out on holidays.
- Explicitly recommend that learners put the training call on "speaker" so that they can interact with CycleBeads and the provider job aid, and/or take notes.
- Reinforce that learners can call back and re-listen to training modules at any time, and that they may also call the supervisor assigned to ask follow-up question.

This implementation guide is based off IRH's experiences delivering remote training in Rwanda and Nigeria, and can be adapted for programs contexts and needs. Through this guide, programs will understand the resources needed to implement a remote training course, and will receive necessary materials including course instructions, course materials, course curriculum, and troubleshooting advice. Using this guide will prepare programs to deliver a successful remote training course, preparing providers to offer SDM services to eligible clients.

ANNEX 1:
SDM IVR COURSE - LEARNER MATERIALS

Instructions for Learners

USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

Passages

Instructions for learners:

- The training is over the phone.
- You will get a call from the phone number **[enter training phone number]**. Save this number in your phone.
- Answer the call when it comes. It does not cost any airtime.
- The call will last around 5 minutes. During this time stay in an area with good network coverage.
- Always make sure your phone is charged to duration of the call.
- Listen carefully to what the voice on the phone says. This is a recording – nobody is talking directly to you. And if you talk, nobody will hear you if you talk.
- You can put the call on "hands free" if you need to use the material to read or CycleBeads.
- The voice on the phone will ask a question, and you will choose an answer. Listen to the instructions. For example, "Press the number **1** if you are a man."
- Press on your phone the number for the answer you want.
- If you miss the phone call, you can call back to receive the lesson. This call is free.

CycleBeads

SDM with CycleBeads Provider Job Aid

Standard Days Method®
with CycleBeads®
Provider Job Aid

1. Ask these questions to determine that CycleBeads can work for the client:
   - Do your periods come about a month apart? Do your periods come when you expect them?
   - Can you and your partner use a condom or abstain from sexual intercourse for 12 days in a row?

   If she answers **YES** to the above questions, she can use CycleBeads.

   If she answers **NO**, offer her another method.

2. Determine when she can start using CycleBeads:
   - If the woman knows the first day of her last period, she can start using CycleBeads today.
   - If the woman does not remember that date, she can start using CycleBeads the first day of her next period.
   - If the woman has recently used a hormonal method, delivered a baby or is breastfeeding, she must wait until her periods are regular again.

   See instructions on the back for when to start CycleBeads.

3. Give CycleBeads to the client and show her how she will use them. Discuss the calendar and instructions for use. See instructions on the back.

4. Talk about how the couple will prevent pregnancy during the days when the ring is on a white bead.
   - Discuss potential use of condoms and abstinence.
   - Discuss other forms of sexual activity that have no pregnancy risk.

5. Remind her to check that her period comes between the dark brown bead and the last brown bead.

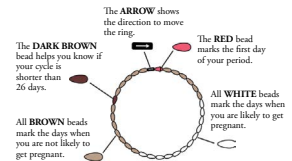6. Inform her that CycleBeads do not protect agains STIs or HIV.

Remind clients to use their family planning method continuously. For the health of mother and baby, tell clients to wait at least 2 years before trying to become pregnant again.
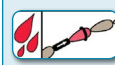
What is CycleBeads?

CycleBeads represent the menstrual cycle. Each bead is a day of the cycle.

CycleBeads are based on the Standard Days Method (SDM), a natural family planning method more than 95% effective when used correctly.

The woman moves the ring one bead each day to know what days she can become pregnant. On these days, she will use a condom or avoid sex to prevent a pregnancy.

The **ARROW** shows the direction to move the ring.

The **DARK BROWN** bead helps you know if your cycle is shorter than 26 days.

The **RED** bead marks the first day of your period.

All **WHITE** beads mark the days when you are likely to get pregnant.

All **BROWN** beads mark the days when you are not likely to get pregnant.

How to Use CycleBeads

On the first day of your period, move the ring to the RED bead. Also mark that day on your calendar.

Every morning move the ring to the next bead. Always move the ring in the direction of the arrow. Move the ring even on days when you have your period.

When the ring is on any WHITE bead, use a condom or avoid sex to prevent pregnancy. These are days when you can get pregnant if you have unprotected sex.
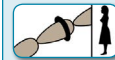
When the ring is on a BROWN bead you can have sexual intercourse. These are days when pregnancy is very unlikely.

The day your next period starts, move the ring to the RED bead again. Skip over any remaining beads. Your period signals that a new cycle has started.
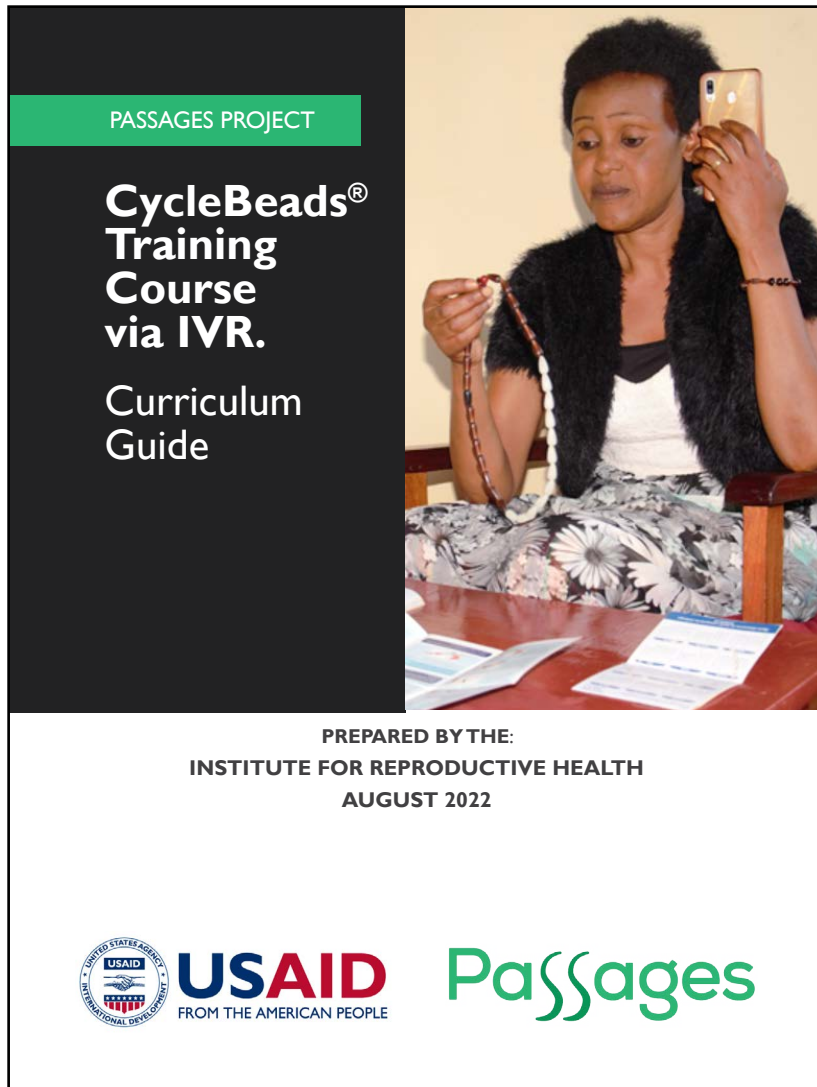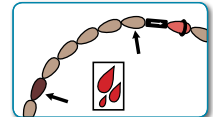
Be sure your cycles are in range:

- To use CycleBeads, your period must come between the dark brown bead and the last brown bead.
- If you start your period before you put the ring on the DARK BROWN bead, it means it has come too soon to use the method.
- If you have not started your period by the day after you put the ring on the last BROWN bead, it means your period is too late to use this method.
- Contact your provider if you have more than one cycle out of range in a year.

When to start CycleBeads

Circumstances	When to start
User knows the first day of her last period.	Start CycleBeads today. Move the ring to the correct bead.
User does not remember the first day of her last period.	Start CycleBeads on the first day of her next period.
Postpartum or breastfeeding.	Wait until after 4 periods. Start after her last two periods have been about a month apart (26 to 32 days).
3-month injection user.	Wait until 90-day protection ends, and last three periods have been about a month apart (26 to 32 days).
Hormonal method user (the pill, patch, ring or 1-month injection, implant)	Start CycleBeads if her last three periods* have been about a month apart (about 26 to 32 days). *After discontinuing hormonal method.
Had a miscarriage or abortion in the past month OR used emergency contraception.	Start CycleBeads on the first day of her next period (if her periods were about a month apart before she got pregnant or used EC).

Curriculum Guide

Click here for the Curriculum Guide.

ANNEX 3: KEY CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Key Challenges

- Inconvenient timing: for a select number of learners, the time of the call was not convenient due to transit, network coverage, or because it was late at night. Further, the timing of the calls was not always consistent, with some calls coming at 4:00 pm and some coming at 8:00 pm. Most were able to call back at times that were convenient for them.

- Duration of calls: many learners from AFR many found that the lessons were too short to give them an adequate overview of SDM. Some suggestions included: further explanation on the method; repetition of key messages; slowing down the narration voice.

- Technical issues: Some learners reported technical and/or network issues with the IVR course, e.g. failed calls; network issues limiting their ability to receive/answer calls. Some reported not receiving the reminder SMS messages or that when they called back to catch up on lessons, the operator would repeat lessons they'd already taken.

- Lack of familiarity with technology: A small number of the learners had less experience with mobile phones, and had trouble completing the course. In addition, some learners reported they were not aware that they could call back to receive lessons they had missed or to repeat the lesson if necessary.

- Course speed: Some learners found the calls too fast and would have appreciated more time to take notes and reflect on the content. This issue can be addressed if the learners call back and retake the lesson, so this option needs to be further emphasized. For many learners, there were key points that needed to be repeated (for example: how recent users of a hormonal method can use SDM; what the fertile days are; how to counsel clients in the use of SDM).

- Inability to ask questions: One of the key disadvantages to modality of remote training, as opposed to in-person training or synchronous remote training, is the inability for learners to immediately ask questions and receive feedback. In this case, the learners have the option of writing their questions and contacting the trained point of contact/supervisor to get them addressed. This feature should also be emphasized.

ANNEX 3: KEY CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations

Challenge	Solution/Recommendation
Inability to ask questions/get feedback	• Learners can reach out to their contact point or supervisor to ask clarifying questions about the method. This should be emphasized repeatedly, during the orientation. This may require including an exercise during the learners' orientation to discuss and offer options for taking notes of questions and comments to then run by the supervisor.
The lesson duration was not long enough to take notes	• Learners can call back the training number and repeat the lesson as many times as they want. • In future courses, programs could consider slowing down the narration or further repeating key messages during the lessons. However, this would require retesting as it is bound to have implications because extending a session beyond 5-7 min can impact the learners' attention span, not to mention it can affect course "marketing" and uptake by making it less attractive.
Challenge with mobile technology	• The orientation session can include practice on how to navigate a lesson, including how to call back, how to put the phone on speaker to use CycleBeads and/or take notes, and how to respond to the quiz questions.
Some scheduled calls fell on public holidays	• The programming of calls could take into consideration public holidays occurring within the implementation period and reschedule lessons during holidays or important events to avoid learners missing the call.