

[Module 2: Evidence based approaches to sexuality education for adolescents - Adolescent health and development with a particular focus on sexual and reproductive health - Assignment](#)

[Palwasha Anwari](#)

[Epidemiology Department, Tulane School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine, USA](#)

Barriers toward introduction and expansion of education on sexuality in the context of Afghanistan

1. Socially and culturally conservative and closed society.
2. Education on sexuality and reproduction health is regarded as a taboo and sin.
3. Lack of defined values for gender, relationships, sexuality and reproduction in family and society levels.
4. Misconception on education on sexuality.
5. Lack of knowledge and awareness on the importance of this topic at all levels (parents, community leaders, religious leaders, school teachers, ministries and even central government).
6. Lack of pragmatic policies and strategies at the national and subnational level to address the need of education on sexuality and reproduction.
7. Lack of access to formal education (schools) of all children and young population.
8. Lack of strong and friendly family relationship.

Suggestions on overcoming these barriers

Education on sexuality and reproduction health is a very sensitive issue in the sitting of my country, Afghanistan, because it is socially and culturally conservative with high rate of illiteracy. There aren't any specific policies and strategies on the issue; therefore, there hasn't been taken simple single step to address the need of education and awareness on sexuality and reproduction health for adolescents. In addition, there is a misconception about education on sexuality. It is thought that education on sexuality encourages youths to have sex. To introduce and expand education on sexuality, it is necessary that a working group should be assigned. This working group must consist of representatives of government authorities to have strong support of government, representatives of ministries of education, health, religious affairs, women and youth affairs, representatives of religious and community leaders, and representatives of international organization especially UNFPA with its 30 years experiences in adolescent's health and reproduction education and services. Moreover, to develop comprehensive policies and strategies it is important that we must use the experience and lessons learned of other countries and adopt their approaches with our context and sitting. Furthermore, youth should also have taken active role in developing the strategies, because they better know their needs and problems.

Based on a report posted on official website of ministry of education (January 2010), approximately 42% or five million of the estimated 12 million school-aged children and youth do not have access to education, no female students enrolled in grades 10-12 in 200 of 412 urban

and rural districts, and 453 schools are still closed or have been damaged in the past two years, resulting in 300,000 students deprived of schooling; and, some 11 million adults remain illiterate. With this data one can say almost half of children and youth don't have access to formal education. Therefore, another media along with formal education should be sought in order to transferring education and knowledge on sexuality and reproduction to all children and youths across the country. These channels can be parents, religious and community leaders, and mass media and peer education.

Since there are stigmas and discriminations toward this topic and youth cannot express their problems and needs freely, it is necessary to increase common awareness and strengthen close and friendly family connections. Due to sensitivity of its nature, education on sexuality, it is vital that each step should be taken gradually and with great caution, and, in addition, the given information should be accurate, valid and in line with existence society norms and values.

Assignment documents

1. [IPPF. From evidence to action: Advocating for comprehensive sexuality education. London: IPPF; 2009.](#)
2. [UNESCO. International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education. Volume I. The rationale for sexuality education. Paris: UNESCO; 2009.](#)
3. [UNESCO. International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education. Volume II. Topics and learning objectives. Paris: UNESCO; 2009.](#)
4. [UNESCO. Levers of Success. Case studies of national sexuality education programmes. Paris: UNESCO; 2010.](#)