

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

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## **Barriers to expanding or improving sexuality education in Southern Sudan**

1. Cultural norms do not allow discussions on sex and sexuality especially among the adolescents. Majority of the cultures in Southern Sudan consider sex a private affair that should not be discussed in public. In the case of adolescents, discussions on sex are believed to encourage and or lead them into promiscuity.
2. Bride price practices that dominate most of the nomadic communities hinder sexuality education. The earlier a girl can get married the better. If she is still a virgin then that means more cows will have to be paid. Discussions about sex are considered the mother's duty and once a girl is married off in her early teenage years then it is presumed that she will learn from her marriage or peers.
3. Religion- Islam and Christianity do not encourage discussion on sex and choice on whether to have children or not. Family planning is not even included in the reproductive health policy.
4. Effects of the war – people are more concerned about their survival and basic needs. Education levels are very low; and there are very few initiatives to cater for adolescents and young people.
5. With the HIV/AIDS pandemic life skills education has been included in the school curriculum. It includes certain aspects of sex education however uptake of HIV services is still very low and it is not considered a problem among the adolescents.
6. Reservations about condom usage – Majority of the population have reservations about condom use and it is not even allowed to educate and or distribute condoms in schools. This is related to point 1 above where it is believed that such discussion will encourage promiscuity.
7. Assumed abstinence – due to strong culture of bride price it is assumed that all young girls will remain chaste until marriage and when they get married will have children until they cannot have any more. Natural methods of family planning are used. Therefore no need for sexuality education.

## **Overcoming barriers to sexuality education**

Advocacy and development of clear government policies on sexuality education would be key. With the ongoing programmes on HIV/AIDS, inclusion of sexuality education into current

school programmes would ensure that there is government buy in and make it easier to breakthrough community barriers. Focus on youth and how to get them involved, presence of UN agencies and funding available for youth activities, with regional and international focus on year for the youth. Southern Sudan is ripe for interventions that focus on youth and adolescents and there is funding and technical expertise from international organisations to drive this.

Focus on health education and inclusion of materials on sexuality education, coupled with in service teacher training. Government policies will be key in tackling traditional cultural beliefs and values that may hinder teachers from being willing to approach sexuality education with confidence. Life skills education is now being included in the curriculum from the Ministry of education and Sports in Southern Sudan and this would be a good entry point for sexuality education in Southern Sudan. However strong support will need to come from the Government and a Behaviour change communication strategy may also be useful. UNICEF is also supporting Southern Sudan Ministry of Education Science and Technology develop a detailed teaching curriculum for health education, while appropriately positioning the topic and providing relevant teaching materials.

## 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.](#)