

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 /improving sexuality education in Northern Nigeria**

**Access to the target groups:** This is a particular barrier in Nigeria where a lot of young people are out of school. While youth in school can be easily targeted in dispensing sexuality education, those out of school present a challenge.

**Taboo:** Issues bordering on sexuality are still viewed as topics not to be discussed in public. Hence parents do not view sexuality education as appropriate for their children.

**Foreign influence:** Parents and the opinion leaders, as the repository and transmitters of community values and beliefs see the issue of sexuality education as not part of our culture and seen as interference by western non-governmental organizations to pollute the culture under the guise of modernization.

**Religious organizations** advocate abstinence for sexually capable young people and have the view that sexuality education has the potential of increasing sexual promiscuity among young people, hence their opposition to its implementation.

**New concept.** Sexuality education is a new concept in my community, although there is a national policy on it. Like all new ideas, it faces the inertia associated and is bound to be resisted.

It is not part of the school curriculum, so even young people in schools do not have the benefit of having sexuality education and teachers do not feel bound to teach what they are not paid to teach.

At present, there is no guideline that is available to school teachers on how to handle the incorporation and teaching of sexuality education in the various tiers of schools in the community.

Few teachers, policy makers and parents have good understanding of sexuality education. Political leaders are reluctant to risk a backlash by openly supporting sexuality education in a conservative society. Therefore effective policy making and implementation is lacking.

No enabling laws to entrench sexuality education in to the school curriculum, media educational programmes and youth –based programmes.

Funding of capacity development of stakeholders on sexuality education may also be an impediment to implementation in face of competing demands of the community.

## **Suggestion on how to overcome the barriers**

Provision of accurate and easily understandable information on sexuality education is needed. Such information can also help to allay the unfounded fears of parents and community leaders alike: that such programs promote sexual activity. This information should be provided in Hausa language which is widely spoken in the community. Another strategic measure is to involve Islamic religious and traditional rulers in the programme. This is to enlist their support in the implementation.

Another strategy is open campaign through the mass media like Hausa language radio services, television and vernacular newspapers. This will help remove the taboo from discussing adolescent sexuality and also can provide information, redefine social norms, and change attitudes and behaviors. It is also important to overcome resistance by drawing on the support and active involvement of teachers, parents, and other caring adults. Involvement of Parent-Teachers Associations which are found in most schools can be a good step in the process of involving the whole community.

## **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.](#)