

## **Introduction**

According to our knowledge Sexual education is not taught as a stand-alone subject in the formal education in Sudan. However, many components of sexuality education have been integrated within an existing mainstream subject, such as biology and religious studies.

### **1. Barriers to expanding sexuality education in Sudan**

#### **1.1 Sex education phobia**

There is strong belief that ‘sex’ is one of the topics that Sudanese people will not talk about it. This phobia of sexuality education is linked to the culture of sins and prohibition as a result of parenting that embeds the concept of sex as a sin and talking about it is prohibited.

#### **1.2 Talking about sex is prohibited and not appropriate**

Sudanese people consider sexuality to be an extremely private issue and discussion of sex is considered a taboo [1], even children are not permitted to ask about sexual issues from their parents, and some trips even beat children if they ask [2]. Moreover, the discussion about sex in public, or in a gender mixed group may make some people feel uncomfortable.

#### **1.3 Sexuality education leads to permissiveness**

Many people, policy makers, and ministers strongly advocate that sexual education will promote sexually permissiveness. They argue that advocacy for the chastity and sexual abstinence before marriage is better than educating adolescents about sexual practice and how to use contraception!

#### **1.4 Misunderstanding of the meaning of ‘sexuality education’**

Sexual education has been organised around six key concepts: Relationships, Values, attitudes and skill, culture, society and human rights, human development, sexual behaviour, and sexual and reproductive health [3]. These components of sexual education are not very clear to the majority of Sudanese people, even policy makers. Most of them think that sexual education is only education about sexual practice.

#### **1.5 Low school enrolment rate**

Schools are the main place for delivering sexual education. Sudan has a low primary school net enrolment rate of 54%, and low secondary school enrolment rate of 30% [4].

## 2. Suggestions on overcoming these barriers

Some people get offended with the vocabularies derived from word 'sex' and link it with sexual practice and permissiveness. For this reason, it has been suggested to use more acceptable terms like 'Family education', or 'reproductive education', even they are not the right terms.

Talking about 'sexuality' from the religious point of view will be much accepted by Sudanese communities. Careful approach is needed to deal with sexuality education when inculcated in the curricula of all levels of education in the Sudan.

It will be more acceptable in the Sudanese context to integrate the sexual / reproductive education within existing subjects such as biology, religious studies, etc.

## 3. Conclusion

Sex education is very sensitive issue in Sudan and in other Arab countries. It is very crucial to be sensitive to cultural, religious, and political concerns. There is a great need to develop a contextualized sexual education that integrated with Islamic values and rules, and be cultural sensitive to Arabic and Muslims countries.

## 4. References

1. McLean, P., *A guide to Sudanese cultural and social norms*. March 2005, The Refugee Council on behalf of The Resettlement Inter-Agency Partnership: London.
2. Allena, T., *Witchcraft, Sexuality and HIV/AIDS among the Azande of Sudan*. *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, 2007. **1**(3): p. 359 - 396.
3. UNESCO, *International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education: An evidence-informed approach for schools, teachers and health educators*. Volume II: Topics and learning objectives. 2009, Paris: UNESCO.
4. UNICEF. *Sudan Statistics*. 2008 [cited 2010 10 Sep]; Available from: [http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/sudan\\_statistics.html](http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/sudan_statistics.html).