

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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Some Barriers to Improving Sexuality Education in Liberia

1. **Cultural Norms/Concepts.**
The culture of believing that adolescents are children/immature and therefore not to be a part of sexual matters neither its discussion. Sexual matters should be left strictly with adults. The fear that sexuality education could mislead their children into early engagement into sexual activities.
2. **National Policies on Sexuality Education that are not reinforced.**
Liberia, a country whose health system is still on the path of reformation after a long period of civil crisis, is faced with a huge challenge of provision of acute urgent or immediate health needs/services for its citizens. Priorities may be placed on more urgent needs than others. Although government had began instituting sexual education programs especially in public schools but in my opinion, these programs do not have enough strength yet to address the huge burden of adolescents sexual health. With time, these programs will definitely take positive directions.
3. **Socio-economic Problems.**
With better organization of sexuality education in the private schools, better results are clearly evident. However, bulk of Liberian parents fall in the low socio-economic bracket and cannot afford the high cost of sending their children to private institutions.
4. **Programs, such as the National Family Planning Program that should serve as legitimate entry point for sexuality education do not provide such corridor.**
5. **Rural versus Urban Institutions.**
Sexuality education may tend to be weaker in rural institutions than in the urban ones. Several reasons may contribute to such weakness. Firstly, traditional norms are held more tightly in rural communities as compared to the urban areas. The very instructors who are to be trusted with the responsibilities of providing sexuality education for adolescents, may to some extent be held down by these very norms.
6. **No formal training of sexuality education for service providers (teachers, health workers, peer educators, etc.)**

Suggestions for Overcoming these Barriers

We are all aware that traditional norms are hard held concepts that are very difficult to break through, but with the changing time it is highly possible to convince society in modifying some of these concepts. It requires persistent engagement of the community backed by evidence-based

approach, so that people are readily able to see the beneficial effect of sexuality education, (such as unwanted pregnancy, HIV prevention, etc). Community awareness and education could be a focus of such program.

If sexuality education must succeed in Liberia, government must adapt stronger and clearly defined policies and clear means for implementing these policies. Sexuality education must be made a part of the national curriculum to enable all school-going adolescent and young people have access to sexuality education irrespective of their socio-economic status.

This provides them with the opportunity of equal access to the same quality of education regardless of which school they enroll in, be it private or public, and urban or rural. Instructors on the other hand must also be given the requisite training to fully prepare them for this task. Training of service providers such as, teachers, health workers, community volunteers, peer educators must be emphasized and well conducted to prepare them for the task. Services provided by related programs like the Family Planning, must be more sensitivity to the health needs of young people. Equal attention should also be placed on less fortunate groups such as young people who do not have the opportunity to attend school. Community-based sexuality education will provide a good opportunity for such less fortunate group. Lastly, a good monitoring and evaluation of a well-structured sexuality education program will set the stage for improvement.

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.](#)