Comprehensive Sexuality Education: Taking stock, looking ahead

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Scientist, Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health

Training Course in Sexual and Reproductive Health Research 2017
1. Sexuality education is not just about teaching about sex, reproduction & avoiding sexual & reproductive health problems.
Sexuality education is an age-appropriate, culturally relevant approach to teaching about sex & relationships…

It aims to:
✓ improve knowledge & understanding
✓ promote self awareness & equitable social norms
✓ build social skills to make and follow through on choices
2. Sexuality education does not harm children & adolescents; it can do them a lot of good.
Sexuality education: Evidence from research & lessons from implementation experience

Evidence from research:
- Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) does not foster early or increased sexual activity.
- Well designed & well conducted sexuality education can:
  - bring about positive changes in sexual behaviour (demonstrated in more studies),
  - reduce negative health outcomes (demonstrated in less studies)

Lessons from implementation experience:
- Only a small number of countries have scaled up CSE.
- Even in these places, vulnerable adolescents have not been reached.
- Teachers – in many places - find it very difficult to conduct CSE.

Some additional relevant evidence

Evidence from research:

- CSE programmes that include & effectively address gender equality & power relations are more likely to reduce unwanted pregnancy & Sexually Transmitted Infections.

Adolescent Pregnancy, Birth, and Abortion Rates Across Countries: Levels and Recent Trends

Gilda Sedgh, Sc.D.,* Lawrence B. Finer, Ph.D., Akinrinola Bankole, Ph.D., Michelle A. Eilers, and Susheela Singh, Ph.D.
Guttmacher Institute, New York, New York

Table 1
Adolescent birth, abortion, and pregnancy rates and percentage of pregnancies ending in abortion among females 15–19 years old, 2011 or most recent prior year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of pregnancies</th>
<th>Rate per 1,000 females 15–19 years old</th>
<th>Pregnancies</th>
<th>Abortions</th>
<th>Births</th>
<th>Pregnancies that end in abortion (%)</th>
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3. Children & adolescents need & have a right to sexuality education.
HIV/AIDS

Knowledge of HIV and HIV prevention remains low among young people

Proportion of women and men aged 15–24 in sub-Saharan Africa with comprehensive correct knowledge of HIV transmission and reporting condom use at last higher-risk sex,* around 2000 and 2014 (percentage)


* Higher-risk sex refers to sex with a non-marital, non-cohabiting partner.


Menstruation

Knowledge & perception of menstruation

Overall a quarter of the girls knew that the uterus was the source of bleeding and about half considered menstruation normal.

BMJ Open Menstrual hygiene management among adolescent girls in India: a systematic review and meta-analysis

Anna Maria van Eijk,1 M Sivakami,2 Mamita Bora Thakkar,3 Ashley Bauman,1 Kayla F Laserson,4 Susanne Coates,5 Penelope A Phillips-Howard1
4. We are failing them at home, at school & in our communities.
Sexuality education – A huge policy-implementation gap

“Most adolescents & youth do not yet have access to comprehensive sexuality education (CSE), despite repeated intergovernmental agreements to provide it, support from the UN system, & considerable project-level experience in a wide range of countries and research showing its effectiveness.”

Sexuality education – Weak implementation

- **Weak content:**
  Inadequate information about contraception
  Key aspects of sex, reproduction & sexual health were missing

- **Weak delivery:**
  Some teachers lacked the needed skills
  Most did not want to deal with sensitive matters

Sources:
Barriers to implementation & effectiveness

5. A small number of countries are pushing beyond 'boutique' projects to implement large scale & sustained sexuality education programmes in schools.
Why have so few countries moved from sound policies and strategies to large scale and sustained programmes on ASRH?

“In spite of the commitments made by States Parties contained in plans, policies, programmes and declarations...negative social, cultural, economic and legal factors continue to threaten the lives and health of a large number of women and girls... The effective realization of these commitments is, however, dependent on...:

- Political will
- Enhanced capacity
- Sustainable resourcing
- Effective monitoring and evaluation


What enabled **positive deviant** countries to put in place large scale and sustained programmes?

- **Inadequate commitment**
  - Strong political leadership and technical consensus

- **Discomfort and weak capacity**
  - Partnerships with credible and capable change agents (from inside and outside)

- **Cash shortages**
  - Secure funding

- **No real accountability**
  - Strong management and effective use of information
"The updated Global Strategy includes adolescents because they are central to everything we want to achieve, and to the overall success of the 2030 Agenda. By helping adolescents to realize their rights to health, well-being, education and full and equal participation in society, we are equipping them to attain their full potential as adults."

- Ban Ki-Moon, Secretary General, United Nations