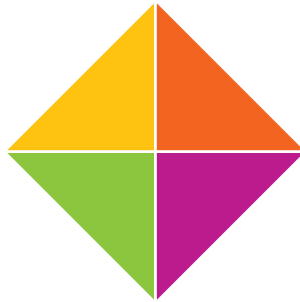


Post-2015 Negotiation Briefs #1: Comprehensive Sexuality Education



Introduction

Sexuality Education is the process of acquiring information and forming attitudes, beliefs and values regarding interpersonal relationships, affection, intimacy, body image and gender roles.¹ Having a 'comprehensive' sexuality education is important because it empowers and equips young people with knowledge, skills and tools to determine and enjoy their sexuality, physically and emotionally.²

Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) should ideally be implemented in schools but it can also be implemented in informal settings for out-of-school children and youth. Several studies have demonstrated that CSE is helpful for:

- × Decreasing the number of unwanted teenage pregnancies
- × Contributing to prevent HIV and other sexually transmitted infections
- × Delaying age of sexual debut³
- × Improving attitudes of respect towards women and girls and towards people of diverse sexual orientations and genders
- × Decreasing dating violence and sexual violence.

For these reasons, including CSE in the development agenda is very important for the goals related to health as well as those related to education, gender equality and peaceful societies.

One of the main goals of the post-2015 framework is to “*finish the unfinished business of the MDGs*”. Comprehensive Sexuality Education has not seen enough progress since 2000. Despite, the third indicator of Target 6-A of the MDGs (Have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS) being “*Proportion of population aged 15-24 years with comprehensive correct knowledge of HIV/AIDS*”, in 2011, only 32% of youth in sub-Saharan Africa had correct knowledge. Thus in the region most affected by HIV, less than 1 in 3 young people have the knowledge they need.⁴ It is evident that access to information about HIV and other issues related to sexual and reproductive health and rights must be scaled up and implemented with a scientific and non-discriminatory approach.

Comprehensive Sexuality Education in UN and Regional Agreements

The term ‘comprehensive sexuality education’ has not been mentioned in legally binding conventions or declarations, but several UN entities such as UNESCO, UNFPA and UNAIDS refer to it in official documents. Also, several publications developed by the UN and other international NGOs have mentioned in some form the importance of providing children and young people with information and skills for a healthy life, including CSE.

Article 24 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child mentions in paragraph F:

“State parties (...) shall take appropriate measures: To develop preventive health care, guidance for parents, and family planning education and services”.

The article 29, paragraph D says, regarding to education:

“State parties agree that the education of the child shall be directed to (...): The preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes and friendship among all peoples”.⁵

A more recent document, the Resolution 2012/1 of the UN-ECOSOC’s Commission on Population and Development titled “Adolescents and youth” says in paragraph 26:

“Calls upon Governments, with the full involvement of young people and with the support from the international community, to give full attention to meeting the reproductive health-service information and education needs of young people, with full respect for their privacy

and confidentiality, free of discrimination, and to provide them with evidence-based comprehensive education on human sexuality, sexual and reproductive health, human rights and gender equality, to enable them to deal in a positive and responsible way with their sexuality”.⁶

The Montevideo Consensus, created in the context of the UN-ECLAC meeting in 2013⁷ does mention CSE in paragraph B-11:

“Ensure the effective implementation from early childhood of comprehensive sexuality education programs, recognizing the emotional dimension of human relationships with respect for the evolving capacity of boys and girls and the informed decisions of adolescents and young people regarding their sexuality, from a participatory, intercultural, gender-sensitive and human rights perspective”.

The Eastern and Southern African (ESA) Ministerial Commitment created in 2013, in the context of a meeting organized by UNAIDS and UNESCO mentions in paragraph 2.2.1:

“Investment in quality education that includes comprehensive, life-skills based sexuality education fulfills the right to education whilst also contributing to well-being and future quality of life”.

Those are just examples of the multiple documents that call out for making sure that information and capacity building related to sexual and reproductive health and rights reaches all children and young people.

Comprehensive Sexuality Education in Post-2015 Negotiations

Diverse movements and Major Groups that have been part of the post-2015 process have been actively advocating for the inclusion of CSE in all the documents that have been developed within the UN and also in alternative spaces. For example, the Major Group on Children and Youth, the official youth constituency for after post-2015 with the participation of thousands of activists and organizations around the world, has mentioned that is crucial to “increase the amount of young people with access to integrated sexual and reproductive health information and services”.⁸

CSE was highlighted as a priority in the WorldWeWant consultations, a global process that generated the priorities of the world’s people for the future. It was

noted that *“The integration in the curriculum of comprehensive sexual and reproductive health education is part of quality education”*.⁹

The Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 proposed by the OWG about inclusive and equitable quality education says in Target 4.7

*“By 2030, ensure all learners acquire knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including among others through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence. Global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity (...)”*¹⁰

CSE is important not only for achieving good health outcomes but also in supporting human rights and gender equality, which are issues mentioned in Target 4.7 proposed by the OWG. Ideally, CSE should be mentioned explicitly so all countries can see they have the obligation to create strategies such as developing a national curriculum for schools, training teachers and peer educators, and implementing CSE with children and youth in-and-out of school.

Youth Positions on Comprehensive Sexuality Education

Phase 1 of ACT!2015, a global mobilization initiative led by The PACT,¹¹ consisted of 199 community dialogues globally. An analysis of the reports of the consultations highlighted CSE as a top priority for young people:

“Transform social norms about gender and sexuality for young people’s access to youth friendly SRH information and comprehensive sexuality education”.

The Bali Declaration, developed in the context of the ICPD Global Youth Forum, says in paragraph 3.10:

“Governments should ensure that every young person, including LGBTQI young people, have equal access to the full range of evidence- and rights-based, youth-friendly sexual and reproductive health services and comprehensive sexuality education, that is respectful of young people’s right to informed consent”.

The document *Investing in Youth and Adolescents is Central to Sustainable Development* that summarizes another set of priorities for youth organizations is also clear about CSE being one of the thirteen points: Comprehensive sexuality

education and Non-formal education must be part of the post-2015 agenda in the context of health but also, in the context of the education goals.¹²

According to youth organizations working on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR), CSE must be free of prejudices, based in scientific evidence and must address, in a holistic way all issues of sexuality beyond the biological aspects. These include family expectations, relationships, peer pressure and violence among other topics.¹³

Alternative language to CSE has been used in different documents including 'sexual and reproductive health education', 'sex education' or 'reproductive health information'. Nevertheless, those terms do not refer to the comprehensive approach that this type of education should include and tends to narrow the concept to talk about reproduction instead of sexuality in a broader concept that includes rights, pleasure and diversity. Therefore it is essential that governments commit fully to 'Comprehensive Sexuality Education' and not a derivative form of the concept.

Resources

- × *Eastern and Southern Africa Ministerial Commitment: Young people today*, UNAIDS/UNESCO. www.unesco.org/new/en/hiv-and-aids/our-priorities-in-hiv/sexuality-education/east-and-southern-africa-commitment
- × *International Technical Guidelines on Sexuality Education*, UNESCO/UNAIDS. www.unesco.org/new/en/hiv-and-aids/our-priorities-in-hiv/sexuality-education/international-technical-guidance-on-sexuality-education
- × *It's All ONE Curriculum: A Unified Approach*, IWHC/IPPF/Pop Council. iwhc.org/resource/all-one-curriculum-sexuality-education
- × *Monitoring and Evaluation Guidance for School Health Programs*, UNESCO/Save the Children/EDC. hivhealthclearinghouse.unesco.org/sites/default/files/resources/FRESH_M%26E_CORE_INDICATORS.pdf
- × Summary of the Education Global Thematic Consultation - *The World We Want*, 2015. www.worldwewant2015.org/node/365352

Acknowledgements

This briefing was authored by Ricardo Baruch. Thanks to The PACT and UNAIDS colleagues for feedback and editing support.

Footnotes

1. Sexuality education Q & A. SIECUS, 2011.
2. Framework for sexuality education. IPPF, 2006.
3. International Guidelines on Sexuality Education. UNESCO, 2009.
4. The Millennium Development Goals Report. UNDP, 2013.
5. Convention on the rights of the child. UN, 1989
6. Resolution 2012/1, "Adolescents and youth", Commission on Population and Development, 2012.
7. Montevideo consensus on population and development. ECLAC, 2013.
8. Thematic Proposals for the Post-2015 framework. Major Group on Children and Youth, 2013.
9. Envisioning education in the Post-2015 development agenda. The World We Want, UNICEF/UNESCO. 2013.
10. Proposal of the Open Working Group for Sustainable Development Goals, 2014.
11. The PACT is a coalition of 26 youth-led and youth-serving organizations with a vision to create solidarity to work strategically and collaboratively in the HIV response towards ensuring the health, well-being and human rights of all young people.
12. PMNCH/IFMSA/YPEER. Investing in youth and adolescents is central for sustainable development. PMNCH/IFMSA/YPEER, 2014.
13. Youth Coalition for Sexual and Reproductive Rights. The linkages between MDGs and CSE for young people. Youth Coalition for Sexual and Reproductive Rights, 2010.

