

# WHY IS COMPREHENSIVE SEXUALITY EDUCATION IMPORTANT?



MY BOYFRIEND IS PRESSURING ME TO HAVE SEX, HOW DO I SAY NO?

WHAT DOES IT MEAN IF I AM A GIRL AND I FIND OTHER GIRLS ATTRACTIVE?

WHAT IS LOVE?



WHAT IS HIV AND HOW CAN I PROTECT MYSELF?

These are common questions that young people are either too afraid to ask or lack the comprehensive knowledge, supportive attitudes and life skills they need to make these decisions about their lives and bodies safely and responsibly.

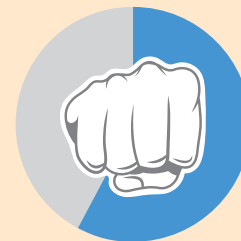
**Sexuality is a fundamental part of human life. Every young person will have to make decisions that impact on their sexual and reproductive health, and wellbeing. That is why comprehensive sexuality education is so important.**



Across the Asia and Pacific region, **less than a third of young people (10-24 years) have comprehensive knowledge of HIV.**<sup>1</sup>



**Girls 66%**



**Boys 58%**

In the Pacific, **two thirds of girls and 58% of boys** agree that physical violence is justified for at least one reason.<sup>2</sup>



**47%**



**46%**



**33%**

**Half of 15-18 year olds** have **experienced chatting with strangers on social media (47%)** and **watching pornography (46%)**. **A third (33%)** have **experienced sexting** (sending, receiving and sharing of sexually explicit photos, text messages or videos).<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Source: DHS and MICS

<sup>2</sup> Source: DHS and MICS

<sup>3</sup> Source: UNFPA, Sexuality education online youth survey. Bangkok: UNFPA Asia Pacific Regional Office, 2019. (non-representative sampling)

**Comprehensive sexuality education** is a rights-based approach to empowering young people with knowledge, attitudes and skills to protect their health, wellbeing and dignity. It goes beyond simply providing education about reproduction, risks and diseases, to address positive sexuality and relationships, and the broader socio-cultural and gender influences on sexual and reproductive health, with an emphasis on developing life skills.



## MYTH

**Comprehensive sexuality education does NOT lead to:**

- Early sexual debut
- Increased sexual activity
- Risk-taking behaviour



## FACT

**Comprehensive sexuality education can contribute to:**

- Delayed onset of first sex
- Decreased frequency of sex and number of sexual partners
- Reduced risky behaviours and increased use of condoms and contraception



Though my teachers were frank and supporting, they would avoid questions related to sexual and reproductive health saying you would know yourself in future.

Young woman,  
Nepal



People think it's too early to give children sex education. But I think it's important because it's the reality they will face in their life.

21-year-old woman,  
Indonesia



We tend to be curious. If we are not educated properly, our curiosity could be dangerous.

22-year-old man,  
Indonesia



[With sexuality education] I understand myself better, my needs, my life's direction in the future... If we have knowledge, we would want more. Protect ourselves, respect ourselves, and understand others.

24-year-old woman,  
Indonesia





## WHAT ARE THE ISSUES?

While considerable progress has been made in Asia and the Pacific, no country provides a comprehensive sexuality education curriculum that meets international standards.



- ▶ 27 out of 30 countries have at least one **national law, policy or strategy** referring to the provision of sexuality education for young people.



- ▶ Aspects of sexuality education are introduced in **the first grade of primary school education or earlier** in only half of the countries in Asia and the Pacific.



- ▶ **44% of girls and 45% of boys had not received enough information about menstruation or wet dreams** before they experienced them for the first time.



- ▶ **25 million adolescents are not enrolled in lower secondary school**, and therefore many adolescents miss out on essential knowledge and skills to support their sexual and reproductive health.



- ▶ **Topics commonly covered in primary and secondary schools include** puberty, HIV & AIDS / sexually transmitted infections (STIs), and sexual abuse/violence.



- ▶ **Topics that tend to be left out include** contraception, sexual orientation and gender identity, online media and technology, and services for sexual and reproductive health.



- ▶ Many national curricula have **limited the inclusion of participatory approaches**.



- ▶ **Many teachers lack the skills and confidence** to effectively deliver comprehensive sexuality education.



- ▶ Limited education is provided to or that addresses **vulnerable populations** of young people such as young lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) people, young people with disabilities, and young people out-of-school.



- ▶ Young people felt that **peers** (56%) and the **Internet** (55%) were more important sources of information about sexuality than **schools** (39%).



# TAKE ACTION

## Laws and policies

- Make comprehensive sexuality education mandatory in all primary and secondary schools.

## Stakeholder engagement / partnership

- Engage experts and all stakeholders including teachers, young people, and parents in comprehensive sexuality education design, planning and evaluation for both in-school and out-of-school programmes.<sup>4</sup>
- Integrate or link out-of-school comprehensive sexuality education programmes with existing programmes and services.

## Curricula

- Develop comprehensive curricula in line with the *International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education (ITGSE)*<sup>5</sup> both for in-school and out-of-school comprehensive sexuality education programmes.

## Teacher's preparedness

- Provide pre-service, regular in-service training and supportive supervision for teachers and facilitators.

## Delivery

- Introduce comprehensive sexuality education from early primary in an age-appropriate manner.
- Cover all the eight concepts<sup>6</sup> outlined in the *International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education (ITGSE)* in an age-appropriate manner.
- Use participatory teaching methods to enhance life skills that encourage critical thinking, communication and negotiation, decision-making and assertiveness.
- Strengthen comprehensive sexuality education for young people not engaged in formal education.

## Monitoring and evaluation

- Integrate the monitoring and assessment of school-based comprehensive sexuality education into Education Management Information Systems (EMIS) or other national measures of education quality.
- Consider having comprehensive sexuality education as an examinable subject, not just assessable.

<sup>4</sup> Out-of-school comprehensive sexuality education refers to comprehensive sexuality education which is not delivered at school to students as a part of the school curriculum. Refer to guidance [International Technical and Programmatic Guidance on Out-of-School Comprehensive Sexuality Education \(CSE\)](#)

<sup>5</sup> Refer to the [International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education](#).

<sup>6</sup> Concept 1: Relationships; Concept 2: Values, rights, culture and sexuality; Concept 3: Understanding gender; Concept 4: Violence and staying safe; Concept 5: Skills for health and well-being; Concept 6: The human body and development; Concept 7: Sexuality and sexual behaviour; Concept 8: Sexual and reproductive health. Refer to the [International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education](#).

For more information, see the full report United Nations Population Fund 2021. 'My Body is My Body, My Life is My Life: Sexual and reproductive health and rights of young people in Asia and the Pacific.'