

Revised edition

International technical guidance on sexuality education

An evidence-informed approach



What is the *International technical guidance on sexuality education*?

The *International technical guidance on sexuality education* is a technical tool that presents the evidence base and rationale for delivering comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) to young people in order to achieve the global Sustainable Development Goals. The Guidance identifies the characteristics of effective comprehensive sexuality education programmes; recommends essential topics and learning objectives that should be covered in CSE curricula for all learners; and, outlines approaches for planning, delivering and monitoring CSE programmes.

Its purpose is to support curriculum developers and programme managers to create and adapt CSE curricula that is appropriate to their context, along with effective implementation and monitoring measures. It is also a resource for advocacy in favour of young people's health and well-being. The Guidance was developed through a consultative process aimed at ensuring quality, acceptability and ownership, with inputs from practitioners and experts, including young people, from different regions around the world.

The Guidance is voluntary and non-mandatory, based on current evidence and international best practice, and recognizes the diversity of national contexts in which sexuality education is taking place.

Who is the Guidance for?

The Guidance is for practitioners involved in the design, delivery and evaluation of sexuality education programmes both in and out of school, including:

- government education, health and other ministries;
- non-governmental organizations;
- youth workers and young people;
- other stakeholders working on quality education, sexual and reproductive health, adolescent health and gender equality.

What's new in the Guidance?

This revised edition builds on the original document published in 2009. It has been reviewed and updated to apply the latest evidence and lessons learned from implementing sexuality education programmes across diverse education settings. The key concepts, topics and learning objectives of the Guidance have been enhanced and expanded to reflect a deeper understanding of the relevance of CSE to young people's healthy development and overall well-being.

The revised Guidance presents sexuality with a positive approach, recognizing that CSE goes beyond educating about reproduction, risks and disease. It reaffirms the position of sexuality education within a framework of human rights and gender equality, and reflects the contribution of sexuality education to the realization of multiple Sustainable Development Goals, notably Goal 3 on good health and well-being for all, Goal 4 on quality education for all, and Goal 5 to achieve gender equality.

What is Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE)?

Comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) is a curriculum-based process of teaching and learning about the cognitive, emotional, physical and social aspects of sexuality. It aims to equip children and young people with knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that will empower them to: realize their health, well-being and dignity; develop respectful social and sexual relationships; consider how their choices affect their own well-being and that of others; and, understand and ensure the protection of their rights throughout their lives.

Why do young people want and need CSE?

Too many young people receive confusing and conflicting information about relationships and sex as they make the transition from childhood to adulthood. This has led to an increasing demand from young people for reliable information which prepares them for a safe, productive and fulfilling life.

CSE responds to this demand, empowering young people to make informed decisions about relationships and sexuality and helping them navigate a world where gender-based violence, gender inequality, early and unintended pregnancies, HIV and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs) still pose serious risks to their health and well-being.

In some parts of the world,
two out of three girls reported
having **no idea** of what was
happening to them when they
began menstruating

Globally, only **34 per cent**
of **young people** can
demonstrate accurate
knowledge about HIV
prevention and transmission

Pregnancy and childbirth complications are the second
cause of **death** among
15 to 19-year-olds



What does the evidence say about CSE?

There is significant evidence on the impact of sexuality education on sexual behaviour and health. The evidence emphasizes that:

- sexuality education has positive effects, including increasing young people's knowledge and improving their attitudes related to sexual and reproductive health and behaviors;
- sexuality education – in or out of schools – does not increase sexual activity, sexual risk-taking behaviour or STI/HIV infection rates;
- programmes that promote abstinence-only have been found to be ineffective in delaying sexual initiation, reducing the frequency of sex or reducing the number of sexual partners, whereas those programmes that combine delaying sexual activity with condom or contraceptive use are effective;
- gender-focused programmes are substantially more effective than gender-blind programmes at achieving health outcomes such as reducing rates of unintended pregnancy or STIs;
- sexuality education has the most impact when school-based programmes are complemented by youth-friendly health services and integrate the involvement of parents and teachers.

How does the revised Guidance support CSE?

The revised Guidance will enable users to:

- gain a clear understanding of CSE, the need for CSE and the desired positive outcomes of CSE;
- clarify misunderstanding and address misconceptions as to the purpose and nature of CSE;
- share evidence and research-based recommendations to guide policy-makers, educators and curriculum developers in designing good quality CSE programmes;
- develop relevant, evidence-informed, age- and developmentally-appropriate CSE curricula, teaching and learning materials and programmes that are culturally responsive;
- build support for CSE at community and school levels;
- increase awareness, through CSE, about relevant sexual and reproductive health issues that impact children and young people.

National policies and curricula may use different terms to refer to CSE. These include: prevention education, relationship and sexuality education, family-life education, HIV education, life-skills education, healthy life styles and basic life safety. Regardless of the term used, 'comprehensive' refers to the development of learners' knowledge, skills and attitudes for positive sexuality and good sexual and reproductive health.

What's in the revised Guidance?

The revised Guidance provides a comprehensive set of key concepts, topics and illustrative learning objectives to guide the development of locally-adapted curricula. Learning objectives are age-appropriate and logically sequenced to become increasingly complex with age and developmental ability across four age groups, (5-8 years; 9-12 years; 12-15 years and 15-18+ years). There are eight key concepts which are equally important, mutually reinforcing and meant to be taught alongside each other.

<p>Key concept 1: Relationships</p>	<p>Key concept 2: Values, Rights, Culture and Sexuality</p>	<p>Key concept 3: Understanding Gender</p>
<p>Topics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1.1 Families 1.2 Friendship, Love and Romantic Relationships 1.3 Tolerance, Inclusion and Respect 1.4 Long-term Commitments, and Parenting 	<p>Topics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2.1 Values and Sexuality 2.2 Human Rights and Sexuality 2.3 Culture, Society and Sexuality 	<p>Topics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3.1 The Social Construction of Gender and Gender Norms 3.2 Gender Equality, Stereotypes and Bias 3.3 Gender-based Violence
<p>Key concept 4: Violence and Staying Safe</p>	<p>Key concept 5: Skills for Health and Well-being</p>	<p>Key concept 6: The Human Body and Development</p>
<p>Topics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4.1 Violence 4.2 Consent, Privacy and Bodily Integrity 4.3 Safe use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT's) 	<p>Topics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5.1 Norms and Peer Influence on Sexual Behaviour 5.2 Decision-making 5.3 Communication, Refusal and Negotiation Skills 5.4 Media Literacy and Sexuality 5.5 Finding Help and Support 	<p>Topics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6.1 Sexual and Reproductive Anatomy and Physiology 6.2 Reproduction 6.3 Puberty 6.4 Body Image
<p>Key concept 7: Sexuality and Sexual Behaviour</p>	<p>Key concept 8: Sexual and Reproductive Health</p>	
<p>Topics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 7.1 Sex, Sexuality and the Sexual Life Cycle 7.2 Sexual Behaviour and Sexual Response 	<p>Topics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 8.1 Pregnancy and Pregnancy Prevention 8.2 HIV and AIDS Stigma, Care, Treatment and Support 8.3 Understanding, Recognizing and Reducing the Risk of STIs, including HIV 	

“Countries are increasingly acknowledging the importance of equipping young people with the knowledge and skills to make responsible choices for their health and well-being. Based on the latest scientific evidence, this International technical guidance provides national authorities with key concepts and learning objectives to deliver comprehensive sexuality education curricula and programmes that are rights-based, relevant to all learners and promote an inclusive, gender equal society.”

**Audrey Azoulay,
Director-General of UNESCO**

More information

This is an overview of the UN *International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education – Revised edition*.

The full document is available online at:



<http://en.unesco.org/themes/education-health-and-well-being>

<http://hivhealthclearinghouse.unesco.org/>



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