



# Comprehensive sexuality Education

Developed and facilitated by  
**Diana Amanyire (Save the Children)**  
**James Tumusiime (UNFPA)**



Kingdom of the Netherlands

A cartoon illustration of a young girl with black hair styled in two buns, wearing a pink patterned dress and purple leggings. She is holding a large orange rectangular sign with her right arm.

## Learning objectives

- Understand the fundamentals of CSE.
- Recognize the Benefits of CSE in Health and Well-Being.
- Navigate Policy Frameworks and Global Commitments
- Address Myths, Misconceptions, and Pushbacks on CSE
- Appreciate the effective approaches to CSE delivery.
- Explore the role of young people in delivering CSE.

# Fundamentals of CSE

- **Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE)** is a **curriculum-based process** that teaches young people about the **cognitive, emotional, physical, and social aspects** of sexuality. It equips them with **knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values** to:
  - Realize their health, well-being, and dignity.
  - Develop respectful relationships and navigate social interactions.
  - Understand their rights and make informed choices.
  - Ensure protection from harm, including gender-based violence and discrimination.
- CSE is **incremental**, meaning topics are introduced **gradually**, building upon previous learning in a **spiral curriculum** that **adapts to developmental stages**.

# Fundamentals of CSE



- **What do we mean by Comprehensive?**
  - It refers to breadth and depth of the topics
  - It implies that topics cannot be included or excluded at random. It is a package.
  - Abstinence only until marriage is NOT an example of comprehensive sexuality education.
  - Sexuality is not to be presented only as risk, danger, and 'just say no' but presented in a more balanced, realistic way

# Fundamentals of CSE

## Core Components of CSE

According to UNESCO's **International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education**, CSE covers:

- **Human development** – Puberty, anatomy, reproduction.
- **Relationships** – Family, friendships, romantic partnerships.
- **Personal skills** – Communication, decision-making, self-awareness.
- **Sexual behavior** – Consent, boundaries, safe practices.
- **Sexual and reproductive health** – Contraception, HIV/STI prevention.
- **Gender equality** – Challenging harmful norms, promoting equity.
- **Rights and responsibilities** – Legal protections, bodily autonomy.
- **Violence prevention** – Addressing sexual harassment, abuse, and exploitation.

# Fundamentals of CSE

- **CSE may go by other names**, depending on the country of origin (*Ask participants to give examples from their countries*).
- CSE is **scientifically accurate, evidence-based, and rights-focused**, ensuring young people receive **age-appropriate** information that supports **healthy decision-making**.
- CSE is **delivered in formal and non-formal settings**, ensuring **accessibility for all young people**, including **vulnerable groups**.



# Benefits of CSE to health and well-being

## CSE contributes to:

- Delayed sexual initiation and reduced risk-taking behaviors.
- Improved knowledge and self-efficacy, fostering confidence in decision-making.
- Increased use of contraception and HIV prevention methods.
- Reduction in gender-based violence, reinforcing respect and consent.
- Promotion of positive attitudes, supporting healthy relationships and self-esteem.

UNESCO's research highlights that CSE does not encourage early sexual activity—instead, it **empowers young people to make informed choices.**

# CSE policies and global frameworks

## Policy frameworks

- ICPD PoA
- Mexico Ministerial Declaration: Preventing through Education (2008-2015)
- ESA commitment on CSE and SRHR- 2013
- SDG goal 3, 4, and 5
- Pan-African High-level Ed Conf: Nairobi Declaration On Ed for Africa we want
- Regional Ministerial commitments e.g., ESA Commitment-(2020-2030), SADC SRHR scorecard

## Technical frameworks

- International technical guidance on CSE
- International Technical and Programmatic Guidance on OOSCSE (2020)
- African Union continental strategy on education for health and wellbeing of young people in Africa (2023).
- CSE implementation toolkit
- Country specific frameworks and training curricula.

# Myths and misconceptions about CSE

## Activity 1: True or False

*Note to facilitator: Tell participants that this activity is about understanding the myths and facts about CSE*

### Preparation

- Placards with “True” and “False” written on them.
- Prestik/ tape.
- Myths and facts statements on CSE

Timing: 15 minutes

# Activity 1: True and False

## Instructions

1. Using Prestik/tape, stick the two placards on the wall at the front of the room with the **'True'** placard in one corner, the **"False"** placard in the opposite corner.
2. Tell participants that you are going to read out some statements on about CSE.
3. Ask participants to move to either side of the marked sections in the room according to whether they believe a statement is true or false.
4. Each time the group moves, ask for a volunteer to comment on why they moved. If you sense that someone has an interesting point of view, ask if they would like to share.
5. Read about four of the following statements on myths and facts about CSE (Refer to the content on myths and facts on slide 10).
6. Ask participants to share any additional statements on myths about puberty in their community that haven't been shared.
7. Refer to statements on myths and facts about CSE on slide 10 to recap this activity.
8. Ask participants to summarize the main things that they learned from this activity

# Debunking Myths about CSE



Misinformation often leads to **opposition**. Addressing myths is **critical** for successful implementation.

(<https://www.unfpa.org/stories/10-myths-%E2%80%93-and-truths-%E2%80%93-about-comprehensive-sexuality-education> )

Myth	Fact
Encourages young people to have sex/ early sexual activity	Research shows that CSE delays sexual activity by equipping young people with decision-making skills and risk awareness
Focuses on sexual intercourse/CSE is just about sex	CSE covers broad topics such as relationships, consent, gender equality, personal well-being, and human rights.
Follows an abstinence only until marriage approach	CSE doesn't follow an abstinence-only-until-marriage approach – it provides medically accurate, age-appropriate information on abstinence, contraception, and safer sex practices to support informed choices.
Perpetuates myths about condoms	CSE dispels myths about condoms, emphasizing their effectiveness in preventing STIs and unwanted pregnancies while promoting scientifically accurate sexual health awareness.
Disregards or imposes cultural or religious values and morals	CSE is adaptable to local cultural contexts, while upholding human rights and health standards.
Undermines parents or the authority of families	CSE complements parental guidance and reinforces family values
Promotes membership in sexual minorities (homosexuality, transgender, etc.)	CSE doesn't promote any sexual orientation, but teaches respect, inclusivity, and human rights for all individuals.
Teaching contraception encourages risky behavior	Studies confirm that CSE increases contraception use and reduces unintended pregnancies and STIs
Parents should be the sole educators of children on sexuality	While parental involvement is important, structured CSE ensures accurate, non-judgemental, scientifically correct education
Only older adolescents need CSE	CSE follows a developmentally approach, spiral curriculum, starting with age-relevant topics for younger children (e.g., personal boundaries, social skills, family values).

# Addressing pushback on CSE

The pushback for CSE can originate from ideological, political and or during implementation of CSE:

- Some cultural and religious background
- Misconception on SRHR
- Lack of evidence on its impact
- Personal belief especially among opinion leaders
- Misinformation and misinterpretation of CSE
- 'Western imported' agenda.

# Approaches to addressing pushback

- **Understand the pushback:** Who are they? What are their arguments? What are their motivations and concerns?
- **Respond Strategically:** Address misinformation, clarify the facts with evidence and address emotional appeals
- **Highlight common ground:** Find areas where the pushback and counter pushback might agree.
- **Focus on persuasion:** Present your arguments in a clear, compelling way. Emphasize the benefits of CSE and how it addresses the needs of young people.
- **Strengthen Your Movement:** Expand your movement's reach and build a strong base of supporters;

# Best practices for delivering CSE to different audiences



Effective Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) delivery requires **tailored approaches** that consider **age, cultural context, literacy levels, and vulnerabilities**. The following best practices ensure inclusive, impactful, and responsive CSE programming:

## 1. Creating an Enabling Learning Environment

- Establish ground agreements (confidentiality, respect, and inclusivity).
- Foster safe spaces for open discussions, free from stigma or judgment.
- Use active listening techniques to encourage participation.
- Sensitize key gatekeepers and influencers (e.g., parents, traditional and religious leaders, journalist) about CSE and its benefits.

# Best practices for delivering CSE to different audiences



## 2. Adapting Content to Audience Needs

- Age-appropriate learning: Ensure content aligns with developmental stages.
- Cultural sensitivity: Adapt messaging to local norms while upholding human rights.
- Inclusive approaches: Address the needs of marginalized groups, including migrants, LGBTQ+ youth, and persons with disabilities.

## 3. Using Participatory and Interactive Methods

- Peer-led education: Engage young people as facilitators to enhance relatability.
- Community Score Cards: Strengthen service accountability and responsiveness.
- Storytelling & role-playing: Encourage experiential learning and critical thinking.
- Poetry and scripts: Encourage engagement, emotional connection, and cultural relevancy.

# Best practices for delivering CSE to different audiences



## 4. Leveraging Digital and Media Tools

- Social media & radio programming: Expand accessibility for out-of-school youth.
- Gamification & mobile apps: Enhance engagement through interactive learning.
- Multimedia formats: Use videos, podcasts, and infographics for diverse audiences.

## 5. Strengthening Educator and Facilitator Capacity

- Provide specialized training for teachers and service providers.
- Equip facilitators with structured tools for programmatic assessments and referrals.
- Ensure continuous evaluation to refine delivery models.

# Best practices for delivering CSE to different audiences



## 6. Integrating Gender-Sensitive and Rights-Based Approaches

- Address power dynamics to promote equity and inclusivity.
- Reinforce bodily autonomy, consent, and protection from violence.
- Challenge harmful gender norms through transformative education.

## 7. Monitoring, Evaluation, and Continuous Improvement

- Use feedback mechanisms to refine content and delivery.
- Conduct impact assessments to measure effectiveness.
- Ensure iterative refinement for clarity and relevance.

# The role of young people in advancing CSE



## Reflection:

- What do you think are the key role to advance the implementation of CSE in their respective country and globally?

# The role of young people...

Young people can drive the advancement of CSE through:

Peer education & mentorship – Supporting knowledge-sharing.	Policy engagement – Influencing national frameworks.	Local and digital activism – Busting myths and mobilizing awareness.	Community-led programming – Strengthening grassroots movements.	Agents of change: serve as a catalyst for change through movement bldg	Linking agent: bridge the gap between information and service needs of youth
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Empowering youth ensures sustainable, youth-centered solutions that advance SRHR-HIV outcomes.

# Examples of CSE programming from the region



- UNFPA Safeguarding young people (SYP) program – implemented in Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Malawi, Namibia, South Africa, Zambia, and Zimbabwe, Angola, Mozambique, Rwanda, and Tanzania.
- CSE programme for marginalized young people in Ethiopia and malawi.
- SRHR-HIV Knows No Border program (IOM/Save the Children) – implemented in Mozambique, Zambia, Eswatini, South Africa, Malawi, Zimbabwe.
- AMAZE initiative Africa (Advocates for Youth).

# Reflection session

## Instruction:

- Ask participants to write the following on three separate post-it notes:
  - something they learned from the module.
  - any concern or discomfort they may have about CSE.
  - a reflection on what they will do to advance CSE among their peers or in their community.
  
- Ask 3 – 4 volunteers to share their reflection with the group.

# Resources and tools

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- [International technical guidance on sexuality education.](#)
- [International Technical and Programmatic Guidance on Out-of-School Comprehensive Sexuality Education \(CSE\).](#)
- [AU continental strategy on education for health and well-being of young people in Africa.](#)
- [Resources for CSE tools used by ESARO.](#)
- [CSE online course for Educators \(UNESCO\).](#)
- Amaze CSE videos [AMAZE Africa Region - amaze-za / Africa.](#)
- National framework/guidance on CSE out-of-school.
- National framework/guidelines for CSE in-school.