

UNFPA Operational Guidance for Comprehensive Sexuality Education:

A Focus on Human Rights and Gender



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UNFPA Operational Guidance for Comprehensive Sexuality Education

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Chapter 1. Introduction



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1.1 Purpose of the Operational Guidance

The right of access to comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) is grounded in fundamental human rights and is a means to empower young people to protect their health, well-being and dignity. This Operational Guidance sets out UNFPA's framework for CSE, which is one of five prongs to UNFPA's Adolescent and Youth Strategy. It is also linked with the other four prongs, which are focused on: evidenced-based advocacy for development, investment and implementation; building capacity for sexual and reproductive health service delivery, including HIV prevention, treatment and care; bold initiatives to reach the most vulnerable; and youth leadership and participation.

This document guides UNFPA's support to governments and other partners as CSE programmes, both in and out of school, are designed, implemented and evaluated. Building on current standards, it outlines steps to identify priorities, implement actions and evaluate outcomes – providing tools for programme managers and technical advisers.

The Operational Guidance is founded on scientific evidence, international human rights conventions and best technical

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standards so that a common definition of CSE and associated best practices are promoted by the organization in discussions with counterparts.

It highlights the fundamental principles of CSE and elaborates on the essential components. In addition, the Operational Guidance presents and defines four key intervention areas to strengthen the implementation of UNFPA-supported national sexuality education programmes and identifies pathways for building greater capacity within the organization.

The implementation of this Operational Guidance across UNFPA, and in cooperation with our partners, is designed to help achieve the vision of comprehensive rights-based, transformative sexuality education for young people throughout the world.

1.2 CSE Definition and Guiding Principles

In alignment with the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) Programme of Action, the Commission on Population and Development (CPD)–CPD 2009, Resolution 2009/1, para 7; CPD 2012, Resolution 2012/1, para 26 and UNESCO’s *International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education (ITGSE)*, among other international agreements, UNFPA defines “comprehensive sexuality education” as a right-based and gender-focused approach to sexuality education, whether in school or out of school. CSE is curriculum-based education that aims to equip children and young people with the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that will enable them to develop a positive view of their sexuality, in the context of their emotional and social development. By embracing a holistic vision of sexuality and sexual behaviour, which goes beyond a focus on prevention of pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections (STIs), CSE enables children and young people to:

- **Acquire accurate information** about human sexuality, sexual and reproductive health, and human rights, including about: sexual anatomy and physiology; reproduction, contraception, pregnancy and childbirth; sexually transmitted infections and HIV/AIDS; family life and interpersonal relationships; culture and sexuality; human rights empowerment, non-discrimination, equality and gender roles; sexual behaviour and sexual diversity; and sexual abuse, gender-based violence and harmful practices.
- **Explore and nurture positive values and attitudes** towards their sexual and reproductive

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