



Spotlight Initiative
To eliminate violence against women and girls

Initiated by the European Union and the United Nations:



CONCEPT NOTE

Proposed dates: May - September, 2021

Title: Strengthening Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) for out-of-school youth to reach the most left behind in the Caribbean

Background

Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) in and out-of-school is an essential part of UNFPA's Strategic Plan, which puts adolescents and youth front and center. CSE outside of the more rigid school setting provides a number of opportunities to adapt content, methodologies, timing and dosage. Compared with CSE delivered in school, out-of-school CSE affords the opportunity to create a more informal and flexible setting than may be possible in school, with the potential for smaller learning groups, longer class times, more varied and creative delivery of the curriculum, and more interaction among learners. Out-of-school CSE can also include challenging topics and promote a rights-based approach rooted in gender equality and empowerment in a way that may not always be feasible or acceptable in school settings. Learners could feel safer and freer to share questions and perspectives that they may be reluctant to voice to a teacher at their own school.

Another reason to promote CSE out of school is the number of children and adolescents who don't have access to school, experts estimate 263 million¹ don't have access to school. It has also been noted that CSE is even more effective when it links to sexual and reproductive health services, as well as to life skills including prevention of violence. Out-of-school programmes may be better able to link children and young people to sexual and reproductive health services, mentors and other forms of support.

With this in mind, the Spotlight Initiative (SI) thematic focus in the Caribbean is on the reduction in prevalence and incidence of family violence. Family violence includes physical, social, sexual, economic and psychological/emotional abuse and acts of aggression within relationships that are considered as family connections or akin to family. The definition is guided by the domestic violence legislation across the region and the Initiative will take a non-discriminatory approach in advancing a comprehensive approach for all regardless of social status, location, gender identity, disability, ethnicity or sexual orientation.

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Comprehensive Sexuality Education During a Pandemic: Interview with UNFPA's Ilya Zhukov, December 2020



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The SI recognizes that family violence is a form of gender-based violence (GBV) in which women and girls are disproportionately the victims /survivors. The initiative is intended to address the root causes of this violence, that is, patriarchal and unequal gender norms and relations between women and men. Family violence negatively affects a range of human rights including women and girls' enjoyment of sexual and reproductive rights. While the focus of Spotlight is on women and girls, the improved capacities of regional and national institutions to implement laws and policies, collect and analyse data and engage in prevention programming will benefit men and boys all of whom are affected by harmful stereotypes around masculinity.

The SI is being implemented in Belize, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago. This regional programme will benefit both Spotlight, and non-Spotlight Caribbean countries through the production of and access to regional public goods. It will add value, and contribute to the scale, sustainability, visibility, lessons learnt and replication of programming throughout the region. The Regional Component will prioritise working with regional bodies, regional advocacy with Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) networks, transferring lessons learned and engaging in South-South and triangular cooperation. It will address specific regional challenges that inhibit progress on the prevention of and response to violence against women and girls.

The SI takes on further urgency in the global COVID-19 pandemic. Women and children who live with family/domestic violence have no escape from their abusers during quarantine, may be isolated and do not have ready access to protective services and resources. In many countries, increases in incidences of domestic or family violence are being reported, including Trinidad and Tobago for which there is some data available.² There is an increasing attention to this gender dimension of the COVID crisis and the SI must support the integration of GBV prevention across the regional approaches to COVID prevention and response and ensure continued access to sexual and reproductive health services.

Justification

With a substantial number of young people out of school, the provision of CSE to out-of-school youth is essential. Additionally, it's an indispensable component to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs. The 2030 Agenda commits to leave no one behind, reach the furthest behind first, and to empower those most vulnerable, including women and children, youth, LGBTIQI+ persons, persons living with disabilities, people who are at high risk of acquiring or living with HIV&AIDS, indigenous peoples, refugees, internally displaced people and migrants. In addition, CSE programs, including out-of-school programs, have the potential to contribute substantially and specifically to SDG3 – Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages; SDG4 – Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all; SDG5 – Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls; and SDG10 – Reduce inequality within and among countries.

² Police data shows that in March 2020 there were 96 assaults by beatings compared to 42 in March 2019.



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These goals are critical to the achievement of target 3.7, which aims to ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health care services, information and education by 2030.

CSE delivered through a human rights and gender equality-based approach, in an out-of-school context in particular, is crucial to reach marginalized adolescents and youth, in particular vulnerable, disadvantaged and marginalised youth, young people living with disabilities; persons living in humanitarian crisis settings; indigenous young people; LGBTQI and non-gender conforming young people; young people living with HIV; young people who use drugs; young people who sell sex; and young people who are in detention. There is also the narrative of male marginalization in the Caribbean region which continues to pose a barrier to progressive efforts to address gender inequality and achieve the fulfillment of human rights for women and girls. Strides towards gender equality have resulted in gains for women and girls in the Caribbean, relating primarily to high education rates, and increases in employment rates, however critical gaps remain.

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. When delivered well, CSE responds to this demand, empowering young people to make informed decisions about relationships and sexuality and 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.

Equally, a lack of high-quality, age- and developmentally-appropriate sexuality and relationship education may leave children and young people vulnerable to harmful sexual behaviours and sexual exploitation. CSE plays a crucial role in addressing the health and well-being of children and young people. Applying a learner-centered approach, CSE not only provides children and young people with age-appropriate and phased education on human rights, gender equality, relationships, reproduction, sexual behaviours risks and prevention of ill health, but also provides an opportunity to present sexuality with a positive approach, emphasizing values such as respect, inclusion, non-discrimination, equality, empathy, responsibility and reciprocity.

The region has a history of conservatism, including from religious quarters, and a backlash against women's rights and gender equality. This conservative tide also manifests in reactions against comprehensive sexuality education, sexual diversity, access to sexual and reproductive health services by adolescents without parental consent, emergency contraception, abortion, or laws on Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) and gender-based violence (GBV). Conservative social media platforms for instance widely circulate messages that sexuality education encourages persons to change their sexual orientation or become more sexually active. However, examples in the region include Comprehensive Sexuality Education integration in many of the countries through the Health and Family Life Education (HFLE) curriculum which is currently rolled out in the region. It should be noted that notwithstanding the efforts of CSE through HFLE, there is need for specific interventions to support the delivery



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of CSE out of school, and programmes that seek to address the needs of specific vulnerable youth populations.

The out-of-school CSE component of the Regional SI will utilise the services of CSOs to engage young people and the expertise of a consultant team to work on adapting the international guidance on out of school CSE to the Caribbean context and the development of a Caribbean Toolkit for CSOs to implement for out of school CSE. It is important that these consultancies and engagements be transparent, inclusive and of a high quality as many of the programmes and or analysis done in the past have made gains which contributed to a backlash against women's empowerment and gender equality efforts and to an increasing fundamentalist response. Data which is presented without appropriate context or analysis such as the fact that women are approximately 70% of tertiary level graduates³ has led many policymakers and the general public to argue that women's empowerment has been achieved (often to the detriment of men and boys) and that increased focus should now be placed on men and boys who are being marginalized and made vulnerable by the gains achieved by and for women and girls. Such analysis also masks fundamental structural inequalities including a persistent gender pay gap and differentials in the need for educational qualifications for women and men to access employment and to move out of poverty. Many multidimensional factors contribute to the vulnerability and risk of young people to these negative outcomes, including early initiation of sexual activity, adolescent pregnancy and rapid repeat births, intergenerational and transactional sex, sexual violence and incest, limited access of young people to sexual and reproductive health information and services, lack of a supportive legal and policy environment to facilitate the full enjoyment of sexual and reproductive rights by adolescents.

Project Details

This out-of-school CSE intervention aims to support operationalization of the International Technical and Programmatic Guidance on out-of-school CSE and support the implementation of out-of-school national programs in the Caribbean. The initiative is part of the regional SI efforts that will ensure overall oversight of the intervention, alignment of the national components with global and regional strategy for out-of-school CSE and alignment of CSE tools and materials generated from the project. There are three main activities to support the development of programme resources for the delivery of high quality CSE for out of adolescents and youth in the Caribbean. The first activity will be done by the consultant team to be recruited and will focus on adapting international guidance on out of school CSE to the Caribbean context, the second activity will be done by the same consultant team and will focus on the development of a Caribbean Toolkit for CSOs to implement the out of school CSE, including specific groups of young people. Both of these activities will use the International Technical and Programmatic Guidance on Out-of-school Comprehensive Sexuality Education to guide the work. The third activity will engage CSOs to hold consultations with young people across the region and will work in coordination with the consultant team to aid the development of the Caribbean Toolkit for CSOs.

³ University of the West Indies, 2009-2013 Statistical Review



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Delivering out-of-school CSE plays several key roles, including:

- Providing CSE to adolescents and young people, in particular young women and girls, who are not or are no longer in school.
- Supplementing in-school sexuality education, which may or may not be comprehensive, or not be included at all in school curriculum.
- Offering greater flexibility in terms of time, content and the ability to link community-based CSE with service provision such as access to condoms and other to deliver contraception.
- Effectively supporting efforts to change ingrained attitudes about gender, violence, harmful practices, stigma and discrimination as well as related self-reported behavior.
- Allowing content tailored to the specific situations, cultures, needs, capacities and concerns of specific groups of young people such as LGBTQI and non-gender conforming young people; young people living with HIV; young people who use drugs; young people living with disabilities; young people who sell sex; and young people who are in detention.

Project objective and outcomes

The out of school component of the Regional SI aims to increase the number of adolescents and young people, in particular young women and girls, who will have the skills and opportunities to make informed choices about their sexual and reproductive health and rights. This component of the Regional SI will focus on adapting international guidance on out of school CSE to the Caribbean context and developing a Caribbean Toolkit for CSOs to implement out-of-school CSE. Additionally, CSOs will be contracted to hold a number of consultations with young people across the region. These interventions are necessary because there is a growing body of knowledge about what strategies are effective or at least promising for primary and secondary prevention of violence against women. Efforts aimed at preventing the various forms of family violence against women and girls in the Caribbean region have been fragmented with limited investment in, and analysis of, successful strategies, methodologies and coordinated approaches at a regional level.

The proposed areas of intervention will strengthen regional capacities to advocate for and deliver quality Comprehensive Sexuality Education for in and out-of-school youth in the Caribbean and will contribute to outcome 3 and output 3.1 of the SI:

Outcome 3: Gender equitable social norms, attitudes and behaviour change at community and individual levels to prevent violence against women and girls, including family violence

Output 3.1: Regional and national evidence-based programmes are developed to promote gender-equitable norms, attitudes and behaviors, including on Comprehensive Sexuality Education in line with international standards, for in and out of school settings.



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Through the SI, UNFPA will work directly with youth-affiliated CSOs and other national and regional organizations to hold consultations with young people on out-of-school CSE. This will include adapting and contextualizing to the Caribbean context the “International technical and programmatic guidance for out-of-school CSE” and development of a Caribbean Toolkit for CSOs to implement out of school CSE, through a consultative process and in collaboration with young people, including specific groups of young people and especially those most vulnerable. The adapted guidelines will be validated and launched at the regional level.

As a result of these activities, it is expected that a number of CSOs and young people across the region will adapt the international guidelines on out-of-school CSE. These out-of-school interventions will be bolstered by the implementation of other interventions that are also supported under the SI Regional programme such as; the conduct of a formative assessment of HFLE; the development of M&E guidelines and tools to assess HFLE impact; and, the development and implementation of a regional advocacy strategy for in and out of school CSE. These interventions are very cardinal to the work and efforts already done for CSE in the region.

Given the COVID-19 pandemic, and until further notice, these activities may have to be delivered through blended face-to-face and virtual approaches under the principle ‘to do no harm’. UNFPA will continue to adhere to the national guidelines from the health and education authorities to judge how young people who do not have access to online technology may be reached. This is a risk limitation as the most vulnerable and marginalized young people, especially girls as a result of the gender digital divide, may not have access to the Internet and/or electricity and may be out of reach.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that the current COVID-19 pandemic with its attendant school closures as well as online teaching modalities may have resulted in an increase in the out of school population including among young people who lack access to remote teaching in the absence of electricity and/or Internet. In addition, the impact of COVID-19 has been deleterious in that there has been an increase in the reports of GBV at community level. Such evidence also suggests that the longer hours that students spend online exposes them to sexual and other risks including pornography, sexual grooming, sexting, trafficking and cyber-bullying. It is also important to note that school closures can result in increased violence as schools are a safe place to speak up or for abuse to get noticed.

Focus on out-of-school CSE affords the opportunity to create a more informal and flexible setting than may be possible in school, with the potential for smaller learning groups, longer class times, more varied and creative delivery of the materials, and more interaction among learners. Out of school CSE also has the potential to bring together adolescents and young people with similar life experiences or living in the same context, especially those who are marginalized. These interventions are expected to provide them with CSE tailored to their specific needs, and encourage them to act as support networks for each other.

These activities were conceptualised based on a UNFPA commissioned State-of-the-Art Diagnosis on the Implementation of Health and Family Life Education (HFLE) in the



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Caribbean in 2017. Eight countries participated and there were seventy-two respondents from Education Ministries including primary and secondary schools. This assessment was executed against: UNESCO International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education; UNFPA Operational Guidance for CSE and CARICOM's HFLE Regional Curriculum Guidelines.

While the study revealed very limited information from key informants about out of school CSE programmes, the study found that Suriname was the only country from the sample without a defined delivery structure. Jamaica was the only country with an exclusive (taught as a core subject) mode of instruction and Trinidad and Tobago implementation was based on the CARICOM HFLE standard guidelines. All other countries had a defined structure for sexuality education delivery, either an infused (taught within other subject areas) or integrated (merged into other subject curriculum) mode of instruction and implementation based on selective or modified versions of the CARICOM HFLE guidelines.

Given this finding and taking into consideration the role CSE plays in promoting gender-equitable norms, attitudes and behaviours, including intimate partner violence (IPV), CSE was placed as one of the signature interventions of the Caribbean SI programme. It is aimed to increase by the end of the programme, the proportion of countries with draft, new and/or strengthened CSE programmes in line with international standards.

For the purpose of this programme, out of school CSE population will be defined as children and young people that are not attending school (face to face nor remotely) or have dropped out.

The following results are likely at the end of the implementation of the above-mentioned CSE out of school interventions:

- Adolescents and young people will have a more enabling environment to access Comprehensive Sexuality Education.
- Youth participation in policy making and programme planning processes is expected to increase.

Potential Partners:

Rolling out these activities will involve collaboration with regional institutions and civil society organisations including but not limited to:

- Caribbean Community (CARICOM)
- University of the West Indies (UWI)
- Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS)
- Pan Caribbean Partnership Against HIV and AIDS (PANCAP)
- Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC)
- Institute of Gender and Development Studies (IGDS),
- Caribbean Development Bank (CDB)
- Caribbean Association of Judicial Officers (CAJO)
- Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ)



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- Regional and national women's organisations
- Men's organisations working on gender equality
- Organisations focusing on the advancement of SRHR