Revised edition

International technical guidance on sexuality education
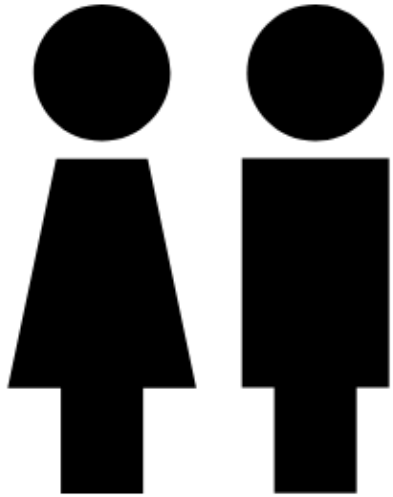
An evidence-informed approach

The Guidance at a glance

What is Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE?)

A curriculum-based process of teaching and learning about the cognitive, emotional, physical and social aspects of sexuality.

It aims to equips children and young people 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 wellbeing and that of others; and,
understand and ensure the protection of their rights throughout their lives.

What is Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE?)

CSE is education delivered in formal and non-formal settings that is:

Scientifically accurate

Based on a human rights approach

Incremental

Based on gender equality

Age and developmentally appropriate

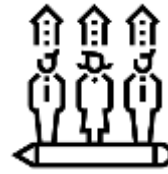Culturally relevant and context appropriate

Curriculum based

Transformative

Comprehensive

Able to develop life skills needed to support healthy choices

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What is CSE? | Why do young people need & want CSE? | What does the evidence say about CSE? | Why have technical Guidance on CSE? | What is the ITGSE? | Who is the Guidance for? | What's new in the Guidance? | What's in the revised Guidance? | Why use the Guidance?

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Why do young people need and want CSE?

- 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.

- Pregnancy and childbirth complications are the second cause of death among 15 to 19 year olds with approximately 70,000 adolescents affected annually.

- Child, early and forced marriage is a risk factor – approximately 90 per cent of births to teenage mothers in developing countries occurs within marriage.

- Every year, an estimated 246 million children are subject to some form of gender-based violence (GBV), including mistreatment, bullying, psychological abuse and sexual harassment, in or on the way to school.

- Around 120 million girls worldwide (slightly more than 1 in 10) have experienced forced intercourse or other forced sexual acts or any other form of intimate partner violence at some point in their lives.

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

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Why do young people need and want CSE?

Key sexual and reproductive health (SRH) issues that affect young people that can be addressed through CSE

- Puberty

- Pregnancy

- Access to modern contraception

- Abortion (safe and unsafe)

- Violence, including gender-based violence

- HIV and AIDS

- Sexually transmitted infections (STIs)

Other key SRH issues that affect young people that can be addressed through CSE

- The influence of ICT on sexual behaviour

- Poor mental/emotional health

- Alcohol, tobacco and drugs

Subgroups of children and young people have specific **SRH needs** and other issues that can be addressed through CSE

- Young people living with HIV (YPLHIV)

- Young people living in poverty

- Young people with disabilities

- LGBTI young people

- Young people affected by humanitarian crisis

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Why do young people need and want CSE?

…because CSE:

Prepares them for a safe, productive, fulfilling life in 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.

Presents sexuality with a positive approach, emphasizing values such as respect, acceptance, tolerance, non-discrimination, equality, empathy, responsibility and reciprocity.

Provides age-appropriate and phased education about human rights, gender equality, relationships, reproduction, sexual behaviors risks and prevention of ill health.

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What does the evidence say about CSE?

- ✓ **Comprehensive sexuality education has positive effects**, including young people's knowledge and improving their attitudes related to sexual and reproductive health and behaviour.

- ✓ **Sexuality education does not increase** sexual activity, sexual risk-taking behaviour or STI/HIV infection rates

- ✓ **Abstinence-only programmes are not effective** in delaying sexual initiation, reducing frequency of sex, or reducing number of sexual partners

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The Guidance at a glance

Education 2030

What does the evidence say about CSE?

- ✓ **Gender-focused programmes** are substantially more effective than 'gender-blind' programmes in achieving health outcomes, reducing unintended pregnancy or STIs.

- ✓ **Programmes that are comprehensive and delivered fully as intended are more likely** to have the desired positive impact on young people's health outcomes

- ✓ **Sexuality education is most impactful** when school-based programmes are complemented with non-discriminatory, youth-friendly services and parental engagement

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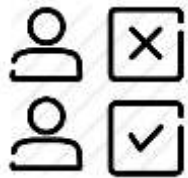
The Guidance at a glance

Education 2030

Why have technical guidance on CSE?

Enable national authorities to design comprehensive and relevant curricula and programmes.

Support all stakeholders with recommendations on how to equip young people with knowledge and skills to make responsible choices for their lives

Address misconceptions and concerns around CSE using empirical evidence and a human rights-based approach.

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Common concerns or misconceptions

Concerns	Response

✗ CSE leads to early sexual initiation

✓ CSE does not lead to early initiation or more sex, it leads to delayed initiation and more responsible sexual behaviour

✗ CSE deprives children of their 'innocence'

✓ Evidence shows that children benefit from scientifically accurate, non-judgmental and age- and developmentally-appropriate information through formal schooling.

✗ CSE goes against our culture or religion

✓ CSE programmes should build support among the custodians of culture in order to adapt content to the local cultural context, while also addressing negative social norms and harmful practices that are not in line with human rights

✗ Parents will object to sexuality education being taught in schools

✓ CSE programmes are meant to work in partnership with and engage parents

Common concerns or misconceptions

Concerns	Response
✗ Teaching CSE is too difficult for teachers	✓ Most teachers have the skills or can be trained in CSE as included in national curricula
✗ CSE is already covered in other subjects (biology, life-skills or civics education)	✓ Effective CSE covers a comprehensive set of topics, attitudinal and skills-based learning outcomes which may not necessarily be included in other subjects
✗ Young people already know everything about sex and sexuality through the Internet and social media	✓ Online media doesn't necessarily provide age-appropriate, evidence-based facts. CSE offers them a healthy space for discussion.
✗ CSE is a means of recruiting young people towards alternative lifestyles	✓ The main principle of CSE is that everyone, regardless of lifestyle, has the right to accurate information and services related to their health and well-being

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What is the International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education?
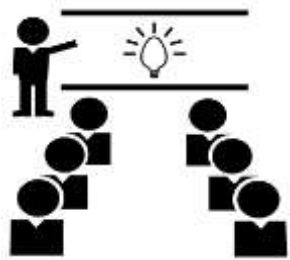
Identifies the characteristics of effective CSE programmes
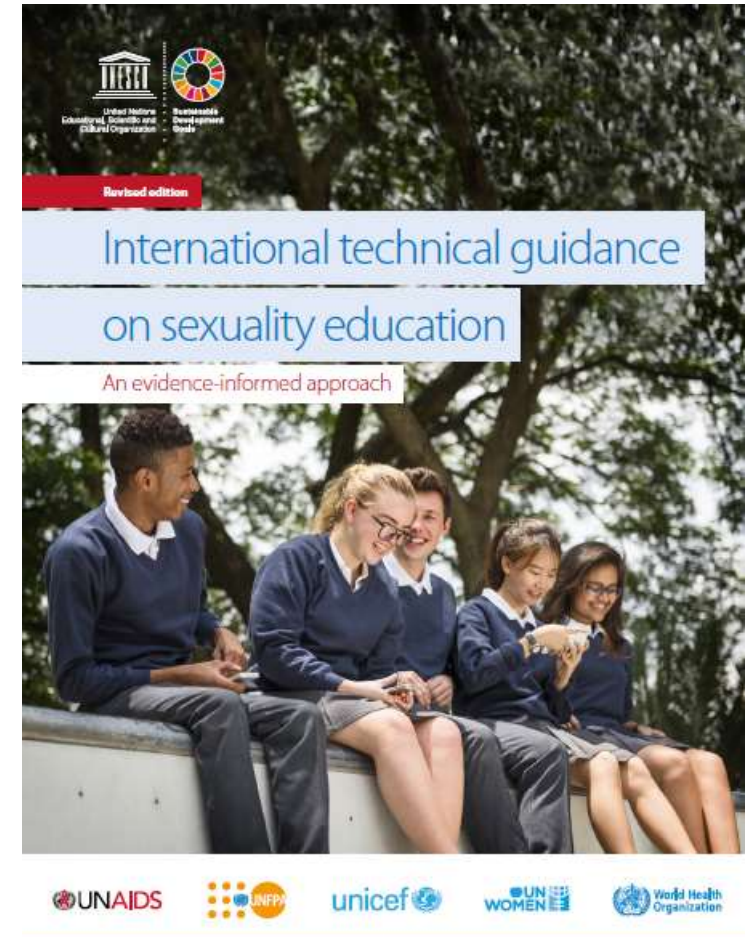
Recommends essential topics and learning objectives that should be covered in CSE curricula for learners aged 5 to 18+ years

Outlines approaches for planning, delivering and monitoring CSE programmes

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.

It was developed by UNESCO with UNAIDS, UNFPA, UNICEF, UN Women and WHO as a revised edition, based firmly on the original document published in 2009.

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Who is the Guidance for?

Health and other relevant authorities

Governments and ministries (education, health, gender equality among others)

Non-governmental organizations

Youth workers and young people can also use the document as an advocacy tool

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What's new in the Guidance?

The latest evidence and lessons learned from implementing CSE programmes across diverse education settings.

Key concepts, topics and learning objectives that have been enhanced and expanded
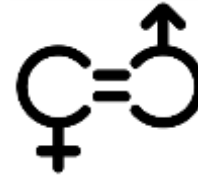
A deeper understanding of the relevance of CSE to young people's healthy development and overall well-being

Presents sexuality with a positive approach

Recognizes that CSE goes beyond educating about reproduction, risks and disease

Reaffirms the position of CSE within a framework of human rights and gender equality

Reflects the contribution of CSE to the realization of multiple Sustainable Development Goals, including

4 QUALITY EDUCATION
3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING
5 GENDER EQUALITY
10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES
16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS

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What's in the revised Guidance?

✓ A comprehensive set of key concepts, topics and illustrative learning objectives to **guide the development of locally-adapted curricula**

✓ Learning objectives that 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)

✓ 8 key concepts taught simultaneously and focused on 3 domains of learning: **knowledge**, **attitudes** and **skills**

5.2 Overview of key concepts, topics and learning objectives

Key Concept 1: Relationships

Topics:
- 1.1 Families
- 1.2 Friendship, Love and Romantic Relationships
- 1.3 Tolerance, Inclusion and Respect
- 1.4 Long-term Commitments and Parenting

Key Concept 2: Values, Rights, Culture and Sexuality

Topics:
- 2.1 Values and Sexuality
- 2.2 Human Rights and Sexuality
- 2.3 Culture, Society and Sexuality

Key Concept 3: Understanding Gender

Topics:
- 3.1 The Social Construction of Gender and Gender Norms
- 3.2 Gender Equality, Stereotypes and Bias
- 3.3 Gender-based Violence

Key Concept 4: Violence and Staying Safe

Topics:
- 4.1 Violence
- 4.2 Consent, Privacy and Bodily Integrity
- 4.3 Safe use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs)

Key Concept 5: Skills for Health and Well-being

Topics:
- 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

Key Concept 6: The Human Body and Development

Topics:
- 6.1 Sexual and Reproductive Anatomy and Physiology
- 6.2 Reproduction
- 6.3 Puberty
- 6.4 Body Image

Key Concept 7: Sexuality and Sexual Behaviour

Topics:
- 7.1 Sex, Sexuality and the Sexual Life Cycle
- 7.2 Sexual Behaviour and Sexual Response

Key Concept 8: Sexual and Reproductive Health

Topics:
- 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

What's in the revised Guidance?

Example of a key concept, topics and learning objectives

Key Concept 5:

Skills for Health and Well-being

Topics:

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

5.2 Decision-making

Learning objectives (5-8 years)

Key idea: Everyone deserves to make their own decisions and all decisions have consequences

Learners will be able to:

▶ describe a decision that they made and are proud of (knowledge);
▶ identify examples of decisions that they or others have made that had either good or bad consequences (knowledge);
▶ acknowledge that sometimes children and young people may need help from parents/guardians or trusted adults to make certain decisions (attitudinal);
▶ demonstrate understanding of circumstances that can help them make a good decision (skill);
▶ identify a parent/guardian or trusted adult who can help them make good decisions (skill).

Learning objectives (12-15 years)

Key idea: The process of making decisions about sexual behaviour includes consideration of all positive and negative potential consequences

Learners will be able to:

▶ evaluate the positive and negative consequences of different decisions related to sexual behaviour (knowledge);
▶ explain how decisions about sexual behaviour can affect people's health, future and life plan (knowledge);
▶ apply the decision-making process to address sexual and/or reproductive health concerns (skill).

Learning objectives (9-12 years)

Key idea: Decision-making is a skill that can be learned and practised

Learners will be able to:

▶ describe the main steps in decision-making (knowledge);
▶ acknowledge that decision-making is a skill that can be learned (attitudinal);
▶ apply the decision-making process to address problems (skill);
▶ name a parent/guardian or trusted adult who can be a source of help for decision-making (skill).

Learning objectives (15-18+ years)

Key idea: Sexual decision-making has consequences on oneself and others, including social and health consequences

Learners will be able to:

▶ analyze potential social and health consequences of decisions related to sexual behaviour on the individual, family, and society (knowledge);
▶ recognize that sexual decision-making affects oneself, the family and society (attitudinal);
▶ express empathy for others who are affected by their sexual decision-making (skill);
▶ make responsible decisions about sexual behaviour (skill).

What's in the revised Guidance?

Building support and planning for the implementation of CSE programmes

Building support through:

- ✓ Use evidence that demonstrates young people's existing needs within the national/local context

- ✓ Use existing international, regional and local frameworks and international agreements that support CSE

- ✓ Share arguments on the importance of the social and emotional well-being of children and young people

CSE programme implementation through:

National level

Community level

School level

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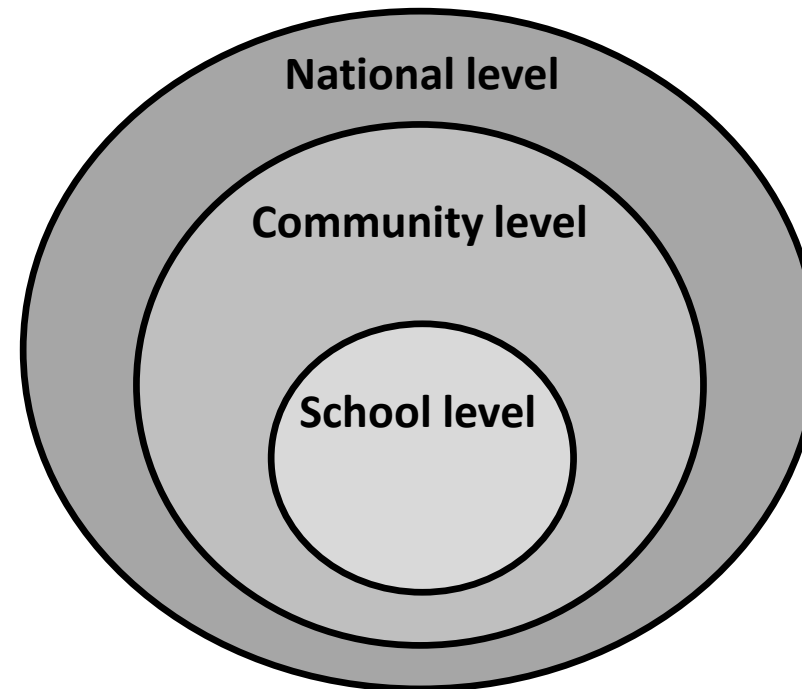
What's in the revised Guidance?

Delivering effective CSE programmes

1. Developing effective curriculum (preparatory phase and content development)

2. Designing and implementing CSE programmes (stand-alone or integrate)

3. Monitoring and evaluation of CSE programmes

4. Scaling-up CSE programmes

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*The
Guidance
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Education
2030

The ITGSE revision process

This revised edition

- is based on a new review of evidence, together with a review of curricula and curricula frameworks, both commissioned by UNESCO in 2016;

- was developed with input from a CSE Advisory group comprised of technical experts from across the globe, working in the fields of education, health, youth development, human rights and gender equality;

- involved broad consultation, including: through an online survey of user perspectives on the original Guidance; targeted focus group discussions at country level; and, a global stakeholder consultation meeting in 2016.

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Why use the Guidance?

The 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.
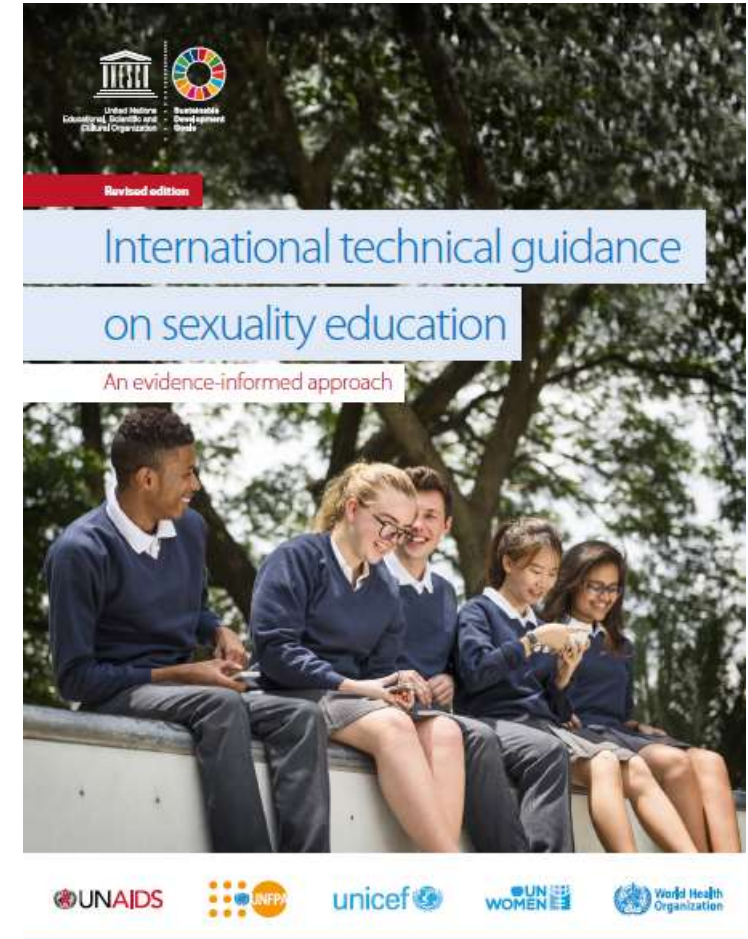
Thank you

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Questions?

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