

TRANSLATING COMPREHENSIVE SEXUALITY EDUCATION COMMITMENTS INTO ACTION

Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) is essential to realising the sexual and reproductive health and rights of children, adolescents and young people. It is a critical for empowering adolescents with the knowledge and skills they need to promote gender equality in their worlds and to take control of and make informed choices about their bodies and lives.

In recent years, there has been considerable momentum on improving access to and implementation of CSE, both within schools and in out-of-school settings and across both development and humanitarian settings. This includes governments making new commitments to CSE as part of intergovernmental and international processes: many governments made commitments to CSE at **ICPD25 in 2019**; CSE is a key action in the **Global Acceleration Plan of the Beijing+25 SRHR Action Coalition**; CSE is also a central commitment at the G7 in the **Girls' Education Declaration**.

Yet many governments and advocates find themselves still working to bridge the gap between commitment and implementation. The aim of this document is to provide a range of strategies that governments can use to translate their commitments on CSE into tangible action – ensuring the successful implementation of and support for CSE in their national context with a view to ensuring that all children, adolescents and young people have access to CSE wherever they live, without discrimination.



POLICIES AND BUDGETS



Bring your national colleagues and allies on board as soon as possible.

Reach out to national colleagues in different Ministries, sectors, and government bodies to promote the national commitment to CSE, using sector-specific and contextualized entry points.

- Consider the **right entry point** when discussing CSE with different stakeholders: CSE as a means to challenge harmful gender norms; reduce GBV; reduce unintended adolescent pregnancy and protect against STIs including HIV; prevent child, early, and forced marriages and unions; ensure girls stay in education; ensure the rights to health, and bodily autonomy; and **as essential for realising gender equality**.
- Can you use available **evidence and local data** to promote how CSE helps meet national and global goals?
- Are **local youth advocates, civil society, and experts** aware of and supported to promote the value of meeting CSE commitments in their encounters with national decision-makers?



Include CSE within national policies, strategies, and budgets at every opportunity and at different levels.

CSE should be considered as part of education and health sector national and subnational plans, with associated budget lines and accountabilities. Think outside the box when looking for opportunities to reinforce CSE's centrality to your development goals:

- Is CSE a mandatory, optional, or examinable subject within the **national curriculum**?
- Is CSE provision included in policies, programmes, and funding for children and adolescents who are **not currently in school**?
- Is CSE mentioned in your **national plans** for gender equality, to prevent gender-based violence and adolescent pregnancy, to improve education quality and teacher training, and to promote youth development?
- Are your **health-sector plans** linked to CSE as part of a comprehensive SRH strategy?
- Is CSE included in **national emergency preparedness, humanitarian needs assessments, and disaster risk reduction planning**?




Plan and budget for the long-term.

Once you've secured commitments to CSE in national plans, policies, and strategies, make sure there is sufficient funding to get it implemented. Consider progressive, multi-step investment strategies that recognize the long-term potential of a CSE approach:

- Do you need to **develop and contextualize** a national standard or curriculum?
- Are there **sufficient resources being allotted to integrate CSE** into gender responsive education system strengthening and teacher training and supervision?

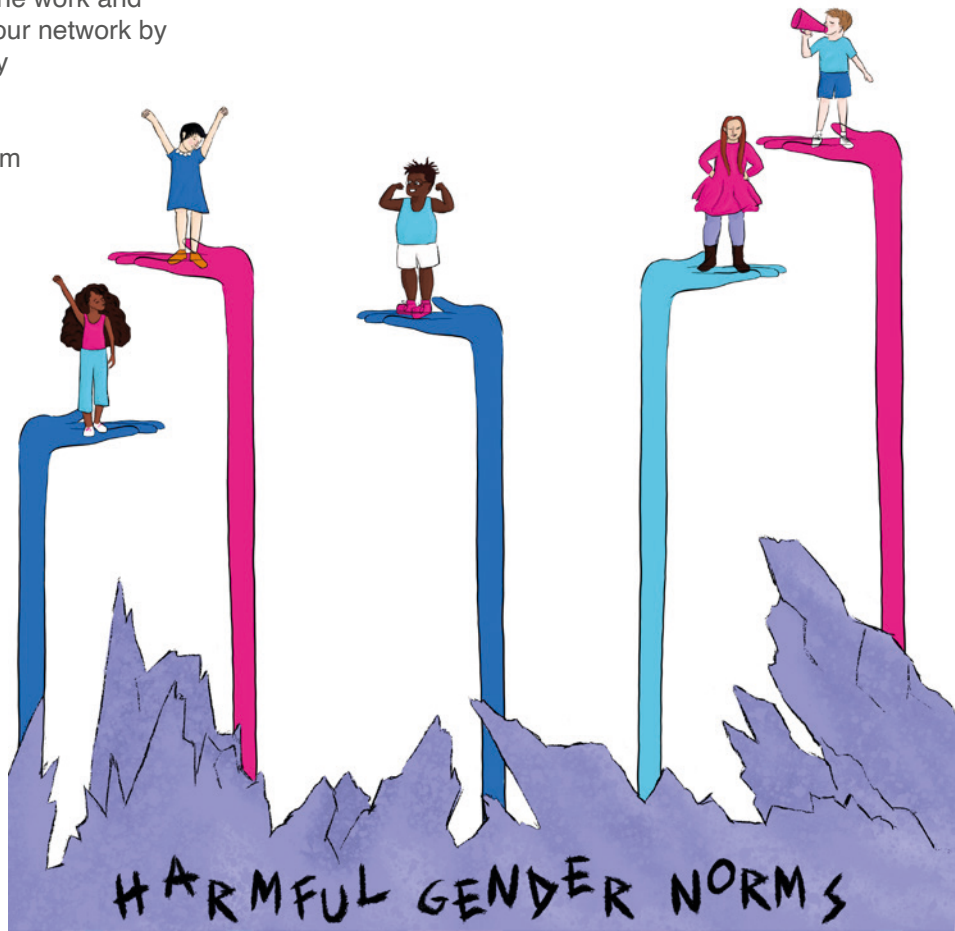
- Are there resources being devoted to **whole-community and out-of-school CSE**, and to youth and community partners?
- Are investments in CSE keeping pace with investments in **youth-friendly health services and youth-led development programmes**?
- Is continuation of CSE included in **budgets** for humanitarian interventions and responses?

 **Know who is accountable for CSE implementation at every level.**

Establishing and maintaining a national CSE programme requires sharing the work and the responsibilities. Expand your network by diversifying your accountability strategies:

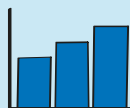
- Is there an internal task team or working group to ensure **collaboration across sectors and in all settings**, including humanitarian response and programming for out-of-school adolescents?
- Is there **school-level accountability** or reporting lines in school administration and teacher supervision?

- Where can community scorecards, youth-led curriculum reviews, participatory evaluation, and other collaborative mechanisms for **quality reporting be integrated into accountability structures**?
- How do national data and reporting systems track **CSE funding, implementation, and quality**?
- Are you using **national, regional and global monitoring and accountability** indicators and mechanisms to help track progress on implementing your commitments?



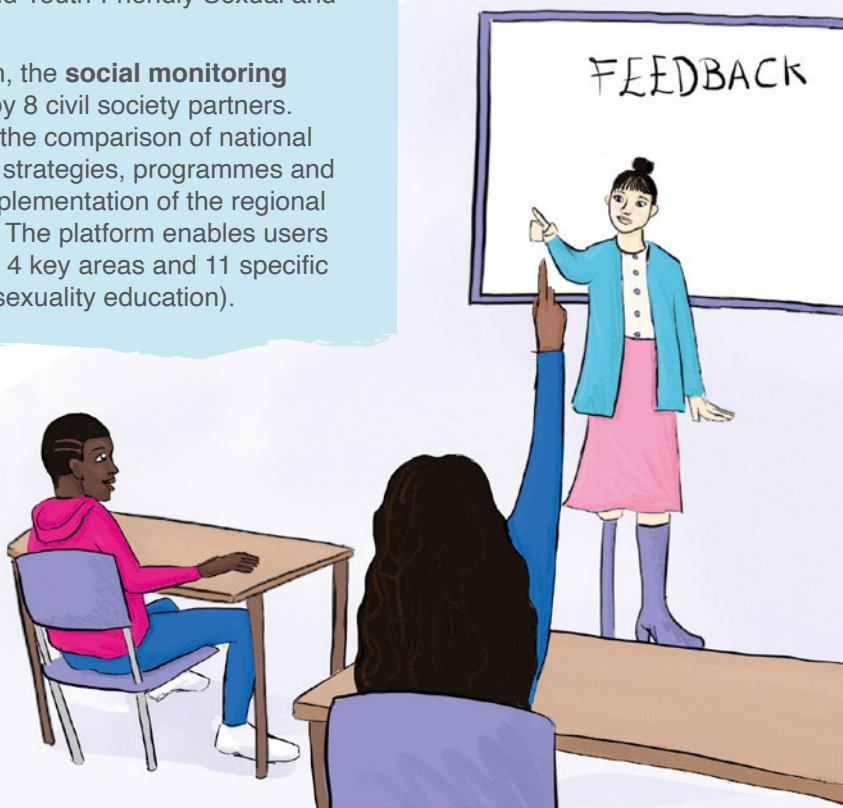
CSE Reporting and Accountability

There are multiple opportunities to align your national CSE work with your global and regional commitments and reporting. You may want to include your work on CSE in your reporting for the **High Level Political Forum** for Agenda 2030/the SDG commitments; the **High Level Commission on the Nairobi Summit** for ICPD25 commitments; the accountability framework that will be established to monitor Beijing+25/Generation Equality commitments; your **annual CEDAW and CRC reporting**; and to the **Universal Periodic Review**. You can also look to expansive ideas of accountability and monitoring to track your progress by integrating support for **community-led accountability** through score cards and participatory curriculum review, and ensuring that CSE is integrated in school and education system strengthening and part of teacher training and supervision requirements.



The **UNESCO Sexuality Education Review and Assessment Tool (SERAT)** is an excel-based tool, designed to help countries collect data and analyse the strengths and gaps in their [HIV prevention and] sexuality education programmes at primary and secondary school levels. SERAT is aligned to the International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education principles and has been used to track progress in East and Southern Africa on the Ministerial Commitment on CSE and Youth-Friendly Sexual and Reproductive Health Services.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, the **social monitoring initiative *Mira que te Miro*** is run by 8 civil society partners. It monitors, analyses, and enables the comparison of national and regional legislation, policy and strategies, programmes and statistical information relating to implementation of the regional Montevideo Consensus document. The platform enables users to search and compare progress in 4 key areas and 11 specific themes (including comprehensive sexuality education).

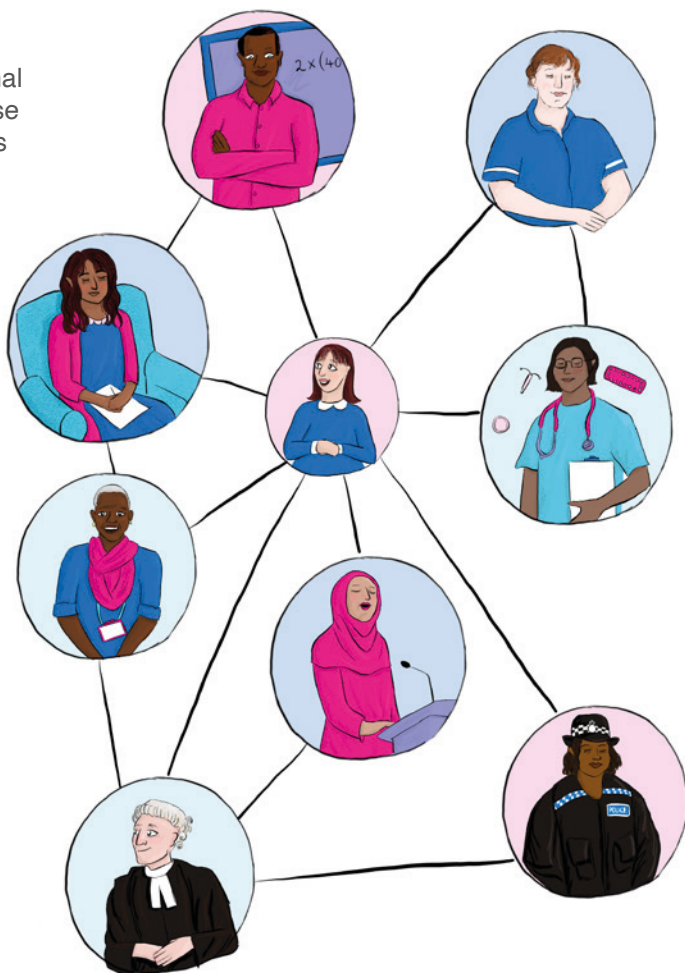


COLLABORATION AND COORDINATION

➔ Find entry points to bring multiple sectors to the table.

CSE is a crucial strategy to advance multiple national goals. Deliberately reach across sectors to engage colleagues from health, education, and others to share workplans, budgets, responsibilities, and accountabilities using common interests:

- Are **health sector colleagues engaged to link CSE to service delivery** to reduce the transmission of HIV and other STIs, to prevent unintended adolescent pregnancy and expand access to contraception, to promote mental health and well-being, and to respond to sexual and gender-based violence?
- Are you working with **education sector colleagues** to integrate CSE into education system strengthening, teacher training, national curriculum development, and efforts to increase girls' access to education and to make schools safer and reduce bullying, discrimination, and school-related gender-based violence?
- Are you working with both **education and child protection and justice sector colleagues** to ensure that CSE programmes are integrating both a focus on challenging **harmful social norms and referral and protection strategies** for identifying children and adolescents at high risk for violence, child, early, and forced marriages and unions, and other harmful practices?
- Are your **innovation and technology investments** actively working to expand the reach of CSE to all adolescents through digital and media platforms and to reduce the gendered digital divide?
- Are your **colleagues working to advance gender and social equality** able to use investments in in- and out-of-school inclusive CSE to promote positive social and gender norms and reduce gender-based violence?
- During emergencies, is CSE addressed in the **humanitarian coordination system** and are health, education and protection sectors collaborating to ensure life-saving information and continuation of CSE is available for all children, adolescents and young people?



Bring in community allies and partners as experts and champions.

Take advantage of existing national, sub-national, and local implementation and advocacy expertise by expanding access to mechanisms for community engagement. Map and diversify existing working groups and technical committees and where needed conduct additional outreach:

- Are you supporting **national mechanisms to connect to community partners**, particularly those operating in distant, marginalized, or under-represented communities?
- Do you have targeted strategies to reach adolescents and young people, parents, teachers, and traditional and faith leaders and **ensure they are engaged in the design and implementation of CSE strategies?**
- Do your community engagement mechanisms **mirror the diversity of the country** and hold space for marginalized and under-represented groups?
- Are you supporting community partners with information and resources to advocate for CSE within their contexts and **counter resistance, backlash and misinformation in all settings**, including online?

- Are you sufficiently **investing in youth-led organizations and youth advocates** to drive change and promote CSE in their communities?

Give young people the opportunity to lead.

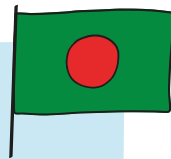
Young people can be your fiercest and strongest allies for implementing CSE at national and community levels. Find opportunities to bring young people into the design, delivery, and monitoring of your CSE work

- Are you **supporting civil society or youth networks** of current or former CSE peer educators/advocates who can be your community champions?
- Is there **funding and resources** to ensure youth networks and youth-led organizations are supported to fully engage with all relevant design, implementation, and accountability mechanisms?
- Are young people leading the assessment of CSE curriculums and programmes for **quality and coherence** to national standards?
- Are you ensuring that **engagement mechanisms are fully accessible** for young people from marginalized and under-represented communities?

Bangladesh

International Center for Research on Women and Plan International with the support of UNFPA, have been working with the government in Bangladesh as part of the Generation Breakthrough programme to support the development of curriculum called **GEMS (Gender Equity Movement in Schools)**, including core components on CSE and focused on 10-14 year olds. Following a successful pilot, this government accredited curriculum is now being scaled up and implemented by Plan Bangladesh in 1039 schools and madrasas.

Further work is also underway with the Government & Directorate of Secondary & Higher education to develop similar curriculum for older adolescents (aged 14-16) with added CSE sessions based on UNESCO standards.



➔ Find a safe space for learning and mentorship.

All over the world, governments are learning every day what works and where the challenges are in implementing their commitments to CSE. You can look to other governments in your region, allies across regions, and trailblazers for their advice and support:

- Are there regional and global meetings and events where you can **meet with your peers to share learning**?
- Can you capitalize on **regional commitments and reporting mechanisms** to promote increased commitment in your country?
- Are there opportunities to use case studies and data from other countries to **problem-solve** in your own context?



Zimbabwe

Plan Zimbabwe has been supporting government teachers to deliver CSE to young people in school and working within a consortium of partners to deliver CSE to young people out of school aged 10-24 years.

For young people in primary and secondary school, Plan has been working in partnership with the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education to expand the life-skills education curriculum in line with the [‘UN International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education’](#) and Plan’s [‘Putting the C in CSE: Standards for Content, Delivery and Environment of Comprehensive Sexuality Education’](#). As part of their support role, they provide in-service training to teachers, who in turn share their learning with primary and secondary school students as they deliver the life-skills curriculum. They also provide monitoring tools to teachers in measuring reach and effectiveness of delivered content.

For young people out of school, Plan also deliver CSE sessions that focus on social norm change complementary to the in-school curriculum. These are delivered through peers and mentors in separate groups for boys and girls, as well as mixed groups. With the advent of COVID-19, Plan has adopted a hybrid approach, which includes in-person delivery in small groups, digital delivery via WhatsApp and bulk SMSing and providing linkages to services through mobile outreach.

CONTENT AND REACH

Apply a comprehensive standard.

Regardless of whether your commitment to CSE is brand-new or several decades old, there are likely multiple programmes and partners in your country implementing their own curricula and approaches to deliver CSE or elements of a CSE approach. Work with stakeholders, old and new, to align to a comprehensive, evidence-based standard for national implementation that guarantees the quality and accessibility of information for all children and adolescents:

- Is your national curriculum aligned to definitions, principles, and learning objectives included in the [International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education?](#)
- Have you engaged government, civil society and community-based organizations, including faith or traditional leaders, young people, and experts to **focus your standards and materials on national priorities, history, language, and culture?**
- Is the **same standard** applied to all CSE programmes regardless of whether they are delivered in-person, online, in- or out-of-school, in all settings?
- Are your standards and curricula targeted to **age-specific** learning objectives and **age-disaggregated** for delivery at all ages?
- Has your **curriculum been tested** to make sure it addresses the needs of young people and revised based on **evaluation and feedback from young people and education experts?**

What does comprehensive mean?



CSE provides clear, comprehensive, accurate, non-judgemental information and includes substantive discussions on sex, sexuality, relationships and consent, contraceptive choices and abortion care.

[Plan International's CSE Standards](#), adapted from the International Technical Guidance, include concepts and suggestions for putting standards into practice on the content, delivery, and enabling environment for CSE implementation, with a focus on gender, social norms, and safety for all learners. Standard 2: Comprehensive Information includes the following concepts:

Comprehensive: CSE is a curriculum-based process of teaching, covering all key topics in a logical sequence about the cognitive, emotional, social, interactive and physical aspects of sexuality.

Accurate: the content of CSE reflects the most current scientific evidence, based on research results in the field.

Non-judgemental: CSE is not value-free. However, educators and learners need to understand the difference between facts and values. Educators should not teach based on one's personal standards or opinions.



Create and stick to positive messaging building on shared values and a clear vision for CSE.

Evidence from countries and regions around the globe has shown that when properly informed on the content and learning objectives of CSE, parents, teachers, and communities are nearly universally interested in its implementation. Use data and proactive communications strategies to garner and protect community support:

- Are you regularly **sharing data and evidence with stakeholders** and partners to use in their community engagement campaigns?
- Have you established a relationship with **traditional and new media**, including social media, that allows you to quickly and continuously promote accurate information and positive messages about the value of CSE in communities?
- Do you have coordinated messages and strategies for public information campaigns that are built with stakeholders **based on evidence and shared values**?
- Are you providing youth networks, community organizations, traditional and faith leaders, and other influential personalities with **data, evidence, information and resources** to promote CSE?



Leave no one behind.

All children, adolescents, and young people have the right to access the information, education, and services they need to protect their health and well-being. Ensure a human-rights based and inter-sectional approach by working with partners across sectors and through civil society and private sector to ensure that your national curricula and learning standards for CSE are inclusive, non-discriminatory, and delivered equally across all delivery modalities to reduce inequalities in access:

- Are there national data, community mapping, or stakeholder engagement processes you can use to **identify key marginalized and underserved communities and groups of children and adolescents**?
- Have you **worked with representatives from multiple marginalized and under-represented communities** to review national standards and content and delivery modalities to make sure they are appropriate and **fully address their needs**?
- Can you **partner with the private sector, media and technology** to innovate delivery of CSE outside of schools?
- Have you ensured that **CSE is integrated into your country's COVID-19 response and national emergency preparedness systems**?
- Have you ensured that children, adolescents and young people who are LGBTQI+, indigenous, and/or living with disabilities have access to CSE **without discrimination or stigma**?

FURTHER READING AND RESOURCES

There are many resources available to national implementers, decision-makers, and advocates to advance CSE in their work and national contexts, including technical support and advice from colleagues at Plan International. For further support on the path from commitment to implementation, you can reach out via SRHR@plan-international.org or explore these resources:

Global Standards:

- [International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education](#). UNESCO, UNAIDS, UNFPA, UNICEF, UN Women and WHO, 2018.
- [International Technical and Programmatic Guidance on Out-of-School Comprehensive Sexuality Education](#). UNFPA, UNESCO, WHO, UNICEF, and UNAIDS, 2020.
- [Putting the C in CSE: Standards for Content, Delivery, and Environment of Comprehensive Sexuality Education](#). Plan International, 2020.

Implementation and Accountability:

- [UNFPA Operational Guidance for Comprehensive Sexuality Education](#). UNFPA, 2014.
- [Sexuality Education Review and Assessment Tool \(SERAT\)](#). UNESCO, 2020.
- [Inside and Out: A Comprehensive Sexuality Education Assessment Tool](#). IPPF and UNESCO, 2015.

Advocacy:

- [Together on the Path to Change: A Young Advocate's Guide to Advancing CSE](#). Women Deliver, 2020.
- [We Demand More! A Sexuality Education Advocacy Handbook for Young People](#). The PACT, UNESCO, and IPPF, 2017.
- [Advocating for Change for Adolescents! A Practice Toolkit for Young People to Advocate for Improved Adolescent Health and Wellbeing](#). PMNCH and Women Deliver, 2018.
- [The full story: Advocating for comprehensive sexuality education that includes abortion](#). IPAS 2020



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