



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



Political Leaders:

KNOW MORE about CSE and Youth Friendly Services!

A better, healthier future for young people!

Comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) is culturally and age appropriate information that teaches young people about sexuality and sexual and reproductive health issues. Support it.

Evidence shows that CSE increases children's knowledge about HIV, helps them delay sexual activity, reduces the number of sexual partners they have and increases their knowledge and use of contraceptives when they need to prevent sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and HIV, as well as early pregnancy.

Support CSE – Support our future leaders!

Why CSE and Youth Friendly Services Go Together

Sexuality education needs to be supported with accessible, affordable and effective health information and services. Young people and their communities remain at risk without the products that support them, including: condoms, modern contraceptives, treatment of HIV and sexually transmitted infections, pregnancy advice and care and other services. This is why combining CSE in schools and youth friendly services in communities is the key to long-term health improvements in eastern and southern Africa.

What are Youth Friendly Services (YFS)?

Youth friendly services are based on a comprehensive understanding of what young people in any given society or community want and need. They cater for young people's sexual health, rights and diversity.

YFS include:

- Sexual and reproductive health counselling.
- Relationship and sexuality counselling.
- Sexual abuse counselling
- Counselling on contraception and contraceptive provision, including emergency contraception.
- Prevention of sexually transmitted infection (including HIV), testing and counselling services.
- Services for termination of pregnancy (where legal and when permissible).
- Prenatal and post-partum services.

Sexual and reproductive health (SRH) is supported by knowledge, skills and the ability to make responsible, positive, informed and safe sexual choices – including choosing not to have sex.

“There is no trust more sacred than the one the world holds with children. There is no duty more important than ensuring that their rights are respected, that their welfare is protected, that their lives are free from fear and want and that they grow up in peace.”

– Kofi A. Annan, Former UN Secretary-General

Why Should Political Leaders get Involved and Support CSE?

Across the region, 52 young people become infected with HIV; of these new HIV infections, 60% are in young women. There are 158 million adolescents and young people in eastern and southern Africa, and 40% of them lack the basic knowledge and the means to prevent HIV, sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and the dangers of early pregnancy.

Your government has ratified the rights of young people and children to information in schools that protects their health, and to YFS in communities; yet research by UNICEF, UNFPA and UNESCO has shown that there are significant gaps in what is currently being taught. These include: information on sex and sexual health; information on condoms and contraceptives; provision of mixed-messages about gender and human rights; and references to sexuality that are negative and based on fear.

“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.”

- Nelson Mandela

What is my role as a political leader?

“An army of sheep led by a lion can defeat an army of lions led by a sheep.”

- Ghanaian Proverb

Support the implementation of policies and guidelines: Read and know what national policy documents say. Create local action plans to implement them. Lobby for the support and resources you need.

Support young people's access to information, treatment and care: CSE in schools and YFS in communities are not just for sexually active young people. It is this stigma that puts young people who need information at risk. Accurate information directly from health service providers can have a very positive impact on promoting young people's healthy behaviour.

Leaders protect all: It is your role to ensure that all the rights of children and young people are upheld so that they can make informed, responsible decisions. As a political leader, you can lead the way and influence others to support CSE for children and young people. Ensure that national guidelines and recommendations on CSE in schools and communities are implemented. The African Youth Charter (AYC) of 2006 is guided by the African Union's vision of promoting and emphasising the importance of young people for the development of Africa.

What Can I Do to Help as a Political Leader?

- **Support policy review.** Are national policy documents supporting CSE and YFS for young people, in- and out- of school? Are communities being consulted? Are resources being allocated? Are implementation plans in place and being monitored?
- **Share and discuss** international, regional and national guidelines and recommendations that support CSE and SRH for children and young people; ensure that guidelines are being fully implemented. Make a case for change!
- **Break the silence:** Speak out against harmful cultural practices, including: unsafe initiation rites, intergenerational sexual relationships between children and adults, child marriage, forced marriage, early pregnancy, virginity testing, wife inheritance, and stigma towards people living with HIV, disability and other differences
- **Lobby for service provision.** Support YFS in the community and work with other leaders to ensure an environment that allows young people to access them without judgement.
- **Support schools and groups providing CSE and YFS** – highlight them as champions.

***Informed Children and Young People:
Informed Choices –
You Can Lead The Way.***



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