



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



Traditional 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.

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 YFS in communities is the key to long-term health improvements in eastern and southern Africa.

What are Youth Friendly Sexual and Reproductive Health Services (YFS)?

Youth friendly services sexual and reproductive health services (YFS) provide health services 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 services 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 is the knowledge, skills and ability to make responsible, positive, informed and safe sexual choices – including choosing NOT to have sex.

Why should traditional leaders get involved and support CSE?

Some people feel that talking to children about sexuality education at school or from sources outside the family or community network is against tradition and culture. For many it is taboo to discuss issues around sexuality, relationships and SRH with children and young people.

“If you close your eyes to facts, you will learn through accidents.”

—African proverb

Today, children will get this information from many other sources that are not always helpful (television, radio, mobile phones, newspapers etc.). Even the family is changing and traditional sources of information are not always there for all children. With HIV infection highest amongst 15 to 24 year-olds, the absence of reliable information sources is having a very negative impact.

“Wisdom is like a baobab tree; no one individual can embrace it.”

—*Akan proverb*

Not engaging children and young people in discussions on sexual and reproductive health leaves them at risk of HIV and STI infection as well as unplanned and early pregnancy, sexual violence and abuse. Traditional leaders can help break the taboo.

What is my role as a traditional leader?

“Knowledge without wisdom is like water in the sand”

—*Guinean proverb*

Speak up: As a traditional leader, you can lead the way and influence others to talk to young people on these important health issues. People look to you for guidance and leadership regarding how CSE and YFS in schools and communities fits with cultural and traditional practices and norms.

Know the issues: One in three people in eastern and southern Africa is aged 10-24 years and less than 40% of them have adequate information about HIV. Fifty-two young people get infected with HIV every hour.

Support young people’s access to health information, treatment and care: Youth friendly services are not just for those young people who are sexually active; they can provide advice on abstaining, having healthy relationships and intimacy without sex. Accurate information directly from health service providers can have a very positive impact on 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 and live healthy, productive and fulfilled lives. Young people are our future; help them!

“Children are the reward of life.”

—*African proverb*

What I can do to help, as a traditional leader?

- **Highlight that CSE and YFS promote abstinence as the primary and most effective safer sex strategy.** However, without information on other options, efforts to promote healthy, responsible behaviours in children and young people are less effective.
- **Support CSE clubs and YFS in your community.** Work with schools and service providers to create an environment free of stigma and discrimination when young people choose to be safe.
- **Cultural Dialogues:** Participate in cultural dialogues and promote positive practices that protect the rights of children and young people.
- **Break the silence:** Speak out against harmful cultural practices in your area. These might include unsafe initiation rites, intergenerational relationships between children and adults, child marriage, forced marriage, early pregnancy, wife inheritance and stigma towards people living with HIV, with disabilities and other differences.

Informed Children and Young People: Informed Choices — You Can Lead The Way!



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