

**Appendix 15**  
**Sexuality Education For Young People**

(This has since been published by Nirantar as “*Yuvvavon ke Liye Younik Shiksha*” as the first volume in its “Nirantar Shiksha Shrinkhala”  
Copies can be obtained from Nirantar, B 64, II Floor Sarvodaya Enclave, New Delhi, 110017)

This document seeks to address the urgent issue of sexuality education for young people. It shares the perspectives and recommendations of representatives of a range of players who are invested in the issue of sexuality education for young people. The publication has been planned and co-ordinated by Nirantar and is based on contributions by

Akhil Katyal (Nigah a queer media collective),

Anu Gupta (Eklavya, Institute of Educational Research and Innovative Action)

Anuja Gupta (RAHI Foundation, a support centre for women survivors of incest/child sexual abuse)

Arpita Das (Tarshi, resource centre for sexual rights)

Arti Malik (Lawyers collective, hiv aids unit)

Chaitanya lakkimsetti (independent researcher on issues of sexuality and gender),

CHEटना (a gender and health resource group)

Deepti Mehrotra (lecturer, Delhi University)

Jashodhara Das Gupta (Youth for Change, a forum for advocacy on sexual rights and health rights, Sahyog)

Nandini Manjrekar (Tata Institute of Social Sciences),

Paromita Chakravarty (Women’s Studies Department, Jadavpur University),

Prateek Suman ( ),

Rajarshi Chakravarty (Swikriti, a support group for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people, West Bengal),

Renu Adhlakha (Centre for Women's Development Studies, a feminist research organization),

YUVA ( ),

Vidya Reddy (Tulir, an NGO working on issues of child sexual abuse),

The publication also draws upon presentations and discussions held during the National Consultation on Sexuality Education for Young People organized by Nirantar in December 2008. The participants at the Consultation were

Akhil Katyal, Nigah Media Collective, New Delhi  
Alka, Sahaj Shishu Milap, Gujarat  
Anu Gupta, Ek lavya, Madhya Pradesh  
Anuja Gupta, RAHI Foundation, New Delhi  
Arpita Das, Tarshi, New Delhi  
Arti Malik, Lawyers Collective, New Delhi  
Aryakrishnan Ramakrishnan, Casim  
Chaitnya  
Chandni Malik, Population Foundation,  
Debjani Ghosh, Youth Alliance  
Deepti P. Mehrotra, Delhi University  
Dinesh, Sahaj Shishu Milap  
Divya Jain, Bodh Shiksha Samiti, Jaipur,  
Gunjan Sharma, TARSHI  
Irfan Ahmed  
Jashodhara Dasgupta, Sahayog  
Jaya Srivastava  
Nandini Manjrekar  
Nivedita Menon  
Paromita Chakravarty, Jadavpur University, West Bengal  
Poushali Majumdar, CINI  
Rajarshi Chakravarty, Dum Dum Swikriti Society, Kolkata  
Ritu Vyas, Dewas  
Sunita Kujur, CREA  
Tapas Kr. Dey, West Bengal,  
Treesa Joseph, YUVA, Mumbai  
Uma Chakravarty  
Vidya Reddy, Tulir, Chennai  
Vijay Kumar

## SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

Should sexuality be a part of education for young people? What are the views of those who oppose the inclusion of sexuality in the curriculum? What are the arguments put forward by those who believe that sexuality must form a part of the curriculum? If sexuality were to be integrated in the curriculum what should its nature be? What else would need to change in the education system in order for sexuality to be addressed?

Of all these questions only one that has been adequately addressed in the public realm thus far. We have only heard the voices of those who oppose sex education, particularly in the context of the ban on school-based sex education enforced in 12 states in India in 2007. This document seeks to address the remaining urgent issues related to sexuality education. It shares the perspectives and recommendations of representatives of a range of players who are invested in the issue of sexuality education for young people. We are members of NGOs that work with young people, youth forums, NGOs who work on issues of child sexual abuse, women's groups, women's studies departments, educationists, academics, researchers, ngos and activist groups working for sexual rights including the rights of those marginalized on the basis of sexual orientation, gender transgression and disability.

We believe that sexuality education is a right that young people cannot be denied. Sexuality is a part of all our lives. If education is about critically understanding our lived realities then sexuality necessarily has to be a part of education. Sexuality encompasses biological, psychological and social dimensions. The term 'sex education' therefore needs to be dropped — not in order to call it something that doesn't mention the letters 's'- 'e'- 'x' (i.e. not to shy away from talking about sex) but to reflect the range of issues that education for young people should ideally encompass. It is also necessary, while outlining the contours of how we perceive sexuality education, to address the question of whom this sexuality education should be for. There is the question of age. The question we feel should be not 'how old a child needs to be' but as is the case with other areas of learning, how to ensure that the content and pedagogy is appropriate for the spectrum of ages from childhood through to adolescence. Whatever be our reluctance and anxieties, the reality of child sexual abuse, if nothing else, should warn us against waiting for an age that we consider to be 'old enough'. The question of which young people we are talking about also needs to recognize that it is not only school going children that have a right to sexuality education. Creative strategies need to be formulated in order to reach out to those young people who have not had the opportunity to go to school or have had to discontinue their school education. Therefore in this document when we speak of education, we are not limiting it to school education. Similarly when we speak of educators we include in the term teachers as well as others who will perform the role of transacting sexuality education with out of school children. The question of 'who' would remain incomplete if we were not to include in its ambit educators. We know that adults are also socialized in ways that demand significant unlearning and learning in order to be prepared to engage with young people on issues of sexuality. Feelings of shame, inadequate or wrong information, the fear of

jeopardizing the ‘student teacher’ or ‘adult child’ relationship, biases and the lack of tools and frameworks with which to understand issues of sexuality – are all aspects that require serious attention if educators are to effectively transact sexuality education.

The context in which the need for sexuality education is being articulated is one in which sexuality tends to be associated with shame, even more acutely so in more educated, urban locations. Sexuality education would need to help young people feel more comfortable with their bodies, to convey for example, the message that their private parts are as natural as any other body part, and nothing to be ashamed of. There is a need to help young people to feel positive and empowered about their bodies and about themselves. It is only when shame and fear are addressed that they can begin to recognize clearly violations against their will, to begin to feel confident to saying no to sexual activity that they do not want, including sexual abuse. Countering shame becomes all the more important in a context in which shame is used to intimidate and control girls and young women, as a tool to get them to follow social norms that are considered to be appropriate for them – i.e. rules that are meant to keep them in a subordinate position in society.

The context is also one in which young people are sexually active. Given that the population is largely rural, and that early marriage is the norm in most of rural India, we don’t need to look far for evidence. There are numerous studies that show that even outside of early marriage, young people do engage in sexual activity, whether consensual or non consensual. This is a reality that needs to be kept in mind when it is said that including issues of sex and sexuality in the curriculum will ‘lead to’ sexual activity. There is moreover sufficient evidence internationally to show that the introduction of sex education in schools does not increase sexual activity, in fact there is evidence to the contrary. By introducing sexual education the hope is that coercive sexual activity will be addressed as will issues of safety, protection from disease and unwanted pregnancy (in the context of heterosexual sexual activity).

Sexuality education would also mean creating safe spaces to ask questions and raise concerns. The context in which to locate young people’s need for information is one in which parents feel uncomfortable or consider it inappropriate to talk to young people about sexuality. It is friends and popular culture, and in more urban contexts, pornography, which are sources of information. These sources might not be able to provide accurate information. They are not designed to convey ideas about gender and sexual behaviour that are rooted in justice and equity. If we grant that young people also have a right to information, including accurate information about sexuality, from a rights based perspective, then education must ensure a fulfillment of that right.

The efforts that have been made thus far to create such learning opportunities for young people have been riddled with problems. While the debate, in particular around the ban on sex education in several states in the country, has focused on how the material and in particular the visuals are ‘too explicit’, there are in fact several critiques that have not yet been made. The most worrying aspect of the existing material, including the banned material, is that the approach is one which is dominated by the narrowly defined agenda

of HIV AIDs prevention. The content and the approach then get determined by this instrumentalist agenda.

Adolescence education or life skills education as it is sometimes still referred to, is also extremely worrying because of the ways in which it seeks to define who a good child/adolescent is. The good child is clearly one who is disciplined, who learns to accept what in life cannot be changed, who exercises control in all aspects of life, ranging from not reading interesting books before going to sleep, to controlling sexual desire. That the material is meant to address life skills allows the it ofcourse to determine what life skills are to be developed and to what end. Rather than equipping young people with the ability to analyze, to recognize their own rights and respect the rights of others, the material seek to moralize about what is right and what is wrong. Such material also creates a range of ideas of what is normal and natural. The body is almost always the able body, sexual desires are not just assumed but asserted as being for 'the opposite sex', and boys are necessarily assumed to think of themselves as being male and girls are assumed to think of themselves as females. In terms of how gender as a whole tends to be addressed is one in which while the material speaks of women achievers or the need for mutual respect, young people are not helped to understand the nature of gender inequity and the reasons underlying it.

Despite the immense problems with the existing materials, clearly banning is no solution. It is dangerous to be trapped in either calling for a ban or condoning the material. What is needed is clear articulation of the vision and perspective of sexuality education. There is an urgent need to develop an approach which has its centre the needs and interests of young people. Sexuality education needs to be matter of fact, non moralistic and non judgemental. The vision has to be one of justice and equity which entails addressing dimensions of gender, disability and sexual orientation.

Through this document we analyse some of the limitations of existing approach, and propose recommendations for how sexuality education can become more responsive to the needs and lived realities of young people in India.

Perhaps the task is not as daunting as it seems. At least with respect to gender, we have reached a place wherein the education system has accepted the significance of gender and certain efforts have been made and the process of critiquing and constructively engaging with those critiques is also underway. Recognizing and establishing the inter connectedness of gender and sexuality would perhaps be an important starting point.

## Section 2 Context

### **From population to adolescence education: A brief genealogical tour**

Youth sexuality as an issue to be addressed as part of the school curriculum is a relatively new theme in policy discourse in India. The form that it has now taken, that of adolescence education, has historically emerged out of population policy discourses in India. The launching of the family planning programme in 1952, the first of its kind in the world, and the development of a population discourse in the post-war years - primarily in the US - saw a wide range of private and public institutions deliberating on the need to intervene in what was seen as economically unviable population growth in the countries of the Third World. By the mid 1960s, under pressure from these agencies and as a result of internal economic crisis, the Indian government decided to intensify population control measures. In 1969, a national seminar on Population Education was jointly organised by the Ministry of Education and Culture and the newly established Ministry of Health and Family Planning. The seminar evolved a national consensus in favour of introducing population education in the country's education system. In 1970 the Indian government decided to introduce a population education programme in order to increase awareness about India's population 'problem'. The explicit aims of population education underlined its need as a means to control rapid population growth and transmitting the message of the small family norm.

Population Education was thus positioned as the ideological arm of the national family planning programme. The National Population Policy of 1975 explicitly recommended the introduction of population 'values' into the educational system. These were meant to inculcate in the student the national value of the small family norm and link it up directly to national developmental goals which were jeopardised by high population growth. In April 1980, the National Population Education Project was launched. Other national policies of this period echoed this stand, even the National Policy on Education 1986, a much celebrated document that for the first time in independent India spoke of the explicit interventions needed to promote women's education. These policies included population stabilisation and the promotion of the small family norm as one of the core objectives of school education. Post-1986 textbooks focused on family size and family welfare, delayed marriage and responsible parenthood. The ubiquitous message of the small family norm, the overarching ideology of population being the root cause of India's underdevelopment, and alleged role of the illiterate, largely rural, poor in contributing to the nation's underdevelopment through sexual profligacy are messages that all of us are familiar from our school textbooks. Through images of dereliction, despair and self-inflicted economic immiseration of large families, population education in schools self-consciously promoted a developmental orthodoxy that privileged 'over-population' as a root cause of social and economic backwardness, transforming popular attitudes and perceptions towards the small family norm. By the mid 90s, the gendered and classed ideologies of population and development had come to be embedded as a hegemonic ideology in textbooks across the country, and all major educational establishments were involved in the integration of population education in the curricula, in service and pre-service teacher training.

The ICPD in 1994 marks a shift in discourse from population and the demographically charged ideology of school population education to the explicit targeting of the adolescent age group. The larger paradigm shift in health and development policy saw

within education the shift from a focus on population and development to Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health (ARSH). At a seminar in 1993 at the NCERT, the nomenclature of the programme was decided—‘adolescence education’, which was seen as more comprehensive than life skills or sex or sexuality education. The three components of the programme were outlined as 1) growing up, 2) HIV/AIDs, and 3) drug abuse. Responding to the ‘youth bulge’, the fact that more than a fifth of India’s population is between 10 and 19, and around half is under 25 (Census 2001) and that a large number of HIV infections are occurring in the youth population, adolescence education closely resonates with HIV/AIDs education. (The shift in funding of this programme mirrored this position.). In the fourth phase of the project (1997-2002), it was rechristened as the National Population Education Programme, with an explicit focus on adolescent sexual and reproductive health (ARSH). Several national Policies focused on adolescents in this period, eg. the National Population Policy of 2000 that explicitly referred to adolescents as an ‘under-served’ group, deserving of special services that provide access to information, counselling and reproductive health, and the National Youth Policy 2003, which addressed the need to include information on reproductive health, HIV/AIDs and population issues in the educational curriculum. In 2006 the AEP (NACO-UNICEF-NCERT) was to be launched in all schools of the country (before it ran into some heavy weather...)

Adolescence as an area of research and intervention in India is relatively new. The long-standing academic wisdom that, unlike in the West, adolescence as a distinct stage of life was not as pronounced in the Indian set-up, was displaced under what has been identified in official documents promoting adolescence education as clear markers of social change: 1) the decrease in age of puberty, 2) increasing educational levels, and 3) delayed age at marriage. Studies which indicate increased incidence of pre-marital sexual relationships are also cited. While recognising that these relationships are occurring in contemporary society, within the context of AIDs these relationships tend to be viewed as ‘irresponsible’ behaviour, buttressing the case for interventions to equip adolescents to deal with peer pressure that push them into sexual activity and substance abuse. ‘Positive’ and ‘Responsible’ social and sexual behaviour are what adolescents are expected to learn from the adolescence education programme; this also involves learning values that are disappearing in the new context of urbanisation and changing lifestyles.

These programmes are funded and promoted by multilateral agencies working on reproductive health and HIV/AIDs that have been closely associated with international population and fertility control programmes worldwide. The position paper on ‘Health and Physical Education’ of the National Curriculum Framework (2005) refers to the positive potential of adolescence education initiatives by the state. However, in a cautionary note, the paper strongly recommended that curricular areas should guide ‘the appropriateness of the design, materials and pedagogy that are prescribed by health programmes as interventions in the school curriculum. This is critical because several of these programmes are tied to external funding and decisions are made at the central and state levels.’(p.17).

If population education promoted the image of the illiterate and poor as causes of India's underdevelopment, adolescence education tends to view the nation's adolescents as disruptors of its developmental, demographic and moral (and that is indeed another story) values.

The latest contribution to adolescence education has been the material created by NACO (National Aids Control Organization) and Unicef, is the material that triggered the controversy which resulted in 12 state governments – Maharashtra, Goa, Gujarat, Karnataka, Chattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Kerala and Rajasthan – banning sex education. The critique of the material that has most often been cited is that the materials were too sexually explicit, especially the visuals. The controversy reached the parliament which decided to refer the matter to the parliamentary petitions committee. The committee was to look into the matter of the introduction of sex education in CBSE schools. The committee invited submissions from civil society. Several of the groups involved in the creation of this publication, have sent submissions either on behalf of their own organizations or jointly with other groups. One submission was sent on behalf of women's groups and women's studies departments, one on behalf of educationists and academics and another one from child rights and youth groups. The committee has also visited different states of the country and is meant to have interacted with teachers and students. The committee is yet to make public its recommendations. In the meanwhile Naco and Unicef had constituted a review committee, the outcome of which is not yet public.

While these developments were underway there have been virtually no forums for civil society groups to perceived sexuality education as a right, to come together to dialogue and to articulate their position and recommendations. It was to create such an opportunity that a National Consultation on Sexuality Education for Young People was organized in December 2007. Over 40 participants from across the country participated in the Consultation.

The Consultation was organized by Nirantar, a Centre for Gender and Education based in New Delhi. Nirantar is an NGO that has been working on issues of gender of education since 1993. The vision has been that of women's empowerment through education and literacy. We have worked as a resource group through training and capacity building, the creation of teaching learning materials, research and advocacy. We are also engaged in direct community based interventions. Nirantar has now included sexuality education as an area of work, with a focus on building perspectives of community based workers of NGOs on issues of sexuality. Nirantar has also initiated a study of textbooks through the lens of gender and the nation in partnership with women's studies departments and others in four states of the country. This study includes looks at moral science, life skills, adolescent education and sexuality education material in four states as well as at the national level. Nirantar is also developing a curriculum for a residential educational centre for adolescents and women in Lalitpur district, Uttar Pradesh. It was Nirantar's engagement with issues of education and sexuality and the realization of the urgent need for a forum for reflection and dialogue on the issue of sexuality education for young people that led us to organize the national consultation and to bring out a document such as this.

### SECTION 3: THE CASE FOR SEXUALITY EDUCATION

Before articulating our views on the need for sexuality education, we would like to share why we are using the term sexuality education and not sex education.

From sex education to sexuality education

#### ***Sex and sex education***

The term *sex* is often used to mean ‘sexual activity’. Following from this, *sex education* is often understood to mean education about human reproductive/sexual anatomy and sexual acts. The emphasis is on biological, rather than social aspects.

#### ***Sexuality and sexuality education***

Sexuality and sexuality education are more complex concepts. The World Health Organisation defines *sexuality* thus:

*Sexuality is a central aspect of being human throughout life and encompasses sex, gender identities and roles, sexual orientation, eroticism, pleasure, intimacy and reproduction. Sexuality is experienced and expressed in thoughts, fantasies, desires, beliefs, attitudes, values, behaviours, practices, roles and relationships. While sexuality can include all of these dimensions, not all of them are always experienced or expressed. Sexuality is influenced by the interaction of biological, psychological, social, economic, political, cultural, ethical, legal, historical and religious and spiritual factors<sup>1</sup>.*

Following from this, *sexuality education* is a process of acquiring information, building a critical understanding and forming attitudes about the body as well as the mind, about the biological as well as the social aspects of sexuality, about the self as well as relationships.

Education encompasses transacting information, teaching and learning specific skills, and also something less tangible but more profound: attitudes, the realization of self-potential and critical understanding about lived experiences. Sexuality education needs to be included in the school curriculum primarily because sexuality is an important dimension of life, a dimension that starts manifesting itself in ways that are both positive and negative during adolescence. Young people receive conflicting messages about what they should aspire for and how they should behave, sexually and otherwise. While growing up, they have many questions, doubts and misconceptions about sexuality – but these are never answered since there are few sources of accurate information about sexuality. This leaves them unsure of their own bodies and emotions. It also leaves them vulnerable to sexual abuse and exploitation. It is the denial of information, which leads to fear, anxiety, mishaps, abuse, feelings of shame etc.

There is overwhelming evidence which demonstrates that young people are already sexually active in India. The National Family Health Surveys II and III reveal that young

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<sup>1</sup> WHO Draft Working Definition 2002

people, who form 30% of the population, are sexually active at 12 and 13 years. 57% of girls are married before they are 18 and 52% have their first pregnancy between 15 and 19 years. Over 50 % of all new HIV infections in India take place among young adults between 15-24 years old.<sup>2</sup>

In a context in which young people are not just sexually active, but face sexual abuse, contract HIV and become mothers during their teens, how can withholding information about sexuality from them be justified?

Moreover, adults are themselves often uncomfortable talking about sex, sexuality and relationships, having been raised in a similar culture of silence. As a result young people's confusions and questions are continually suppressed. We are therefore talking about sexuality education both for young people and for the adults who are meant to be playing the role of educators. At present there are many voices of adults that are articulating anxieties related to sexuality education. There are also however voices of young people that seem to convey quite clearly that they want sexuality education.

## **YOUNG PEOPLE SPEAK OUT AGAINST SEX-ED BAN**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

HYDERABAD 31 OCTOBER 2007

As young people attending the 4<sup>th</sup> Asia Pacific Conference on Reproductive and Sexual Health and Rights, we strongly protest the ban against sex education recently imposed by 12 Indian State Governments.

The ban opposes the training tools used under Adolescent Education Programme developed by the Union Ministry of Education along with NACO and UNICEF.

This ban violates our right to information, right to education, right to health under the Indian Constitution and breaches India's international commitments under UN treaties and declarations.

Young people need comprehensive sexuality education so that they are empowered to make informed decisions relating to their bodies without fear, shame or guilt. Given the right information and skills, young people can negotiate high-risk situations more effectively and reduce their vulnerability to violence, HIV and substance abuse.

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<sup>2</sup> UNICEF India website: [http://www.unicef.org/india/media\\_2705.htm#viewedon](http://www.unicef.org/india/media_2705.htm#viewedon) October 9, 2007.

Arguments based on culture or morality, such as those made by the Chief Minister of the State of Madhya Pradesh, are invalid and do not justify denying young people the information and skills they need and are entitled to.

Comprehensive sexuality education does not ‘corrupt young minds’ but that the lack of information leads young people to access false, incomplete and harmful information.

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Sexuality education is very important for young people. It strengthens relationships amongst us. It will also help remove violence by society against love between young people.

Venkat... kamla nagar, dharavi, Mumbai

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When girls can get married at a young age, have sex within marriage and produce children, why are they denied the right information on the subject? There should be scope for negotiation to bridge the gap between the generations over this matter,” Ipshita Chowdhury , Youth Parliament, an organisation of 800 young people working with school children of Delhi.

Youth demand sex education in schools, hindu, 1.11.2007

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**Sexuality education for young people is needed to enable them to:**

- **Understand the changes that they are undergoing, address their fears and anxieties regarding these changes**
- **Be aware of their rights and how these can be protected**
- **Take decisions and negotiate with others, based on both a recognition of their own interests and the rights of others**
- **Recognize sexual abuse, violence and discrimination and break the silence related to these violations**
- **Be healthy and to protect themselves from diseases**
- **Counter the sense of shame about their bodies and sexuality so that they feel confident and positive about themselves and so that they experience a greater sense of well being,**

### **The Right to Information**

The context today, as we know is one in which schools most often fail to provide even more limited biological information related to sex and sexuality. Many of us remember the embarrassed teacher not teaching the section on human reproduction in the biology

text book. That continues to be the experience of most school going students even today, except perhaps in some of the more elite schools in the metros. Young people who do not go to schools do not even have the few pages of the biology text books to look at. Parents too are uncomfortable to talk about sex and sexuality with their children. Although there is much less anxiety in rural areas, here too it is not as though parents talk to their children about issues of sex and sexuality. The only sources available then are friends, sexually explicit films, popular magazine or books, pornography and in more urban areas the internet, which young people from more middle and upper class backgrounds can access.

Even within this boys have greater access to information networks as compared to girls. There tends to be more sexually explicit exchanging of 'information' between friends, siblings, internet, films, pornography etc. which act as informal sources of sexual knowledge. However such information is often incorrect and has gender biases. But girls often have very limited access to even these sources of information about sexuality.

The last NFHS survey showed that in spite of heavy campaigning, 60% women in India had never heard of HIV/AIDS.

The Working Group Report on Empowerment of Women, Ministry of Women and Child Development, constituted as part of the 11<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan process, notes that "issues of sexuality need to be addressed to provide children with information, enable them to make informed choices, make them aware of the diversity of expressions of sexuality and gender and to equip them to deal with violations (pg 108)."

### **Challenging assumptions and stereotypes related to gender and sexuality**

Sexuality education is necessary in order to critically understand notions about sexuality and gender, particularly those which are used to curtail the rights of young people. This will help to dispel adolescent anxieties. It will also help foster a greater acceptance of different expressions of gender and sexualities and to counter discrimination against those who are seen to be breaking conventional social norms.

Sexuality education can help challenge the notions that

- boys are "naturally" aggressive and will insist on sexual satisfaction and that girls are passive, shy and unable to express or withhold consent firmly.
- a 'good' woman is one who places others' needs and desires over her own, and one who submits herself to norms (that perpetuate subordination).
- those who are disabled are either asexual or hyper sexual.
- there is only one kind of attraction – that between boys and girls, or men and women
- if you are born a boy, you will look and behave like a boy, or that if you are born as a girl then you will look and behave as a girl.

Rights related to gender and sexuality have begun to be recognized by laws and international conventions such as the Prevention Against Domestic Violence Bill, 2006

and CEDAW<sup>3</sup>. However in spite of legislations, social taboos and norms prove difficult to combat. Sexuality education can play an important role in this process.

Sex and sexuality, like gender, is not natural but determined by a wide range of social, economic and cultural factors. There are innumerable dos and don'ts related to sex and sexuality – with whom, how, why and when sexual behaviour is acceptable and when it is not. These rules are related to the need to maintain existing structures in society in place, however unequal and unjust they may be. Awareness about the punishments we will face if we behave in certain ways and the privileges we will enjoy, all go towards creating the existing 'knowledge' that we have about sex and sexuality. This is what is being referred to as 'naturally' acquired knowledge. If we want young people to acquire knowledge which is centred on their needs and interests (which may not be the same as what is needed to maintain existing social structures) and which is justice and equity based, there is clearly a need for sexuality education.

### **Right to bodily integrity**

An important aspect of empowerment is the right to bodily integrity – the right to take decisions about one's body. Sexuality education should build an understanding about that every person has the right to say no to unwanted touch. Bodily integrity also needs to be understood in more positive terms of agency and well being. There are ofcourse close linkages between these positive and the negative aspects of sexuality. Child sexual abuse, sexual harassment and even sexualized ragging at school can be identified only when young adolescents realize that they have a right to bodily integrity and that nobody has the right to violate them against their will. In the context of young women issues of bodily integrity become particularly important in the context of early marriage. Early/unwanted pregnancy and the need to understand that submitting one self to the will of the husband is not what a the wife 'needs' to do is essential. Contraception and the notion of mutual responsibility need to be established.

- In Uttar Pradesh, only 8.7 percent of married women ages 15-49 reported use of condoms.
- Two-thirds of married women (all ages) in U.P. don't know that consistent use of condoms can reduce the risk of contracting HIV. Only 74% of men and 40% of women have ever heard of AIDS.
- In rural Uttar Pradesh, the majority of married women described early sexual encounters with their husbands as coercive.<sup>4</sup>

### **Understanding and dealing with violence**

Sexuality education can also help understand violence. Boy's and men's sexuality is not "naturally" aggressive or "hormonally" violent. This violence is a product of the way they were conditioned to exert power over women; if it were a 'natural' phenomenon then *all* boys and men would be physically and sexually abusive. Sexuality education

<sup>3</sup> Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women.

<sup>4</sup> George, A. and S. Jaswal. 1995; "Understanding sexuality: Ethnographic study of poor women in Bombay," Women and AIDS Program Research Report Series No. 12. Washington, D.C.: International Centre for Research on Women.

programs can create an opportunity to engage with boys and girls about sexual violence through discussions around gender, sexuality, power and relationships, and change their perspectives and behaviour through it.

Sexuality education classes can also provide a safe environment for learners to discuss and resolve confusions, guilt and anxieties related to personal experiences of violence, particularly from those in positions of power. Often children have no language, no words with which to disclose the abuse they have faced because anything related to the sexual has been shrouded in silence. Sexuality education can reassure the young of their rights to safety and dignity by giving them the words to name violence.

Sexuality Education can play a crucial role in the reduction of the high incidence of child sexual abuse in our society. Sexuality education will have a two-fold effect – it will lead to the child recognizing “child sexual abuse” by an adult at the time of occurrence and it will contribute to the confidence of the child in telling his/her caregivers about the occurrence.

According to a national level study in 2007 on child abuse by the Ministry of Women and Child Development in India, out of a total of 12,447 children, across 13 states, 53.22% reported having faced one or more forms of sexual abuse that included severe and other forms. Among them 52.94% were boys and 47.06% girls. around 70% of abused children have never reported the matter to anyone”.

Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India. Study on Child Abuse 2007 <http://www.wcd.nic.in/childabuse.pdf> Chennai.  
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53 % of surveyed women aged 20-24 were married by age 18. In U.P., the median age at first birth for women age 25-49 is 19.4, and 14.3 % of surveyed women aged 15-19 were already mothers or pregnant at the time of the NFHS -3 survey.

- Complications of pregnancy such as anemia, low birth weight, spontaneous abortions and eclampsia are significantly higher among adolescent mothers, as is the risk of dying from pregnancy

### **Sexuality Education as a Right**

The right to sexuality education should be considered an inherent part of the rights to life, health, expression, education and information that have been recognized as fundamental rights under the Constitution of India. The fundamental right to life enshrined in the constitution has been interpreted to include right to health that entails complete physical, mental and social development.

The right to receive information on sexual and reproductive health has been well recognized in various international human rights instruments. The *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* (ICESCR) and the *Convention on the Rights of*

*the Child* (CRC) specifically recognize the right to health and survival and development to include appropriate sexual and reproductive health information and services. India, being a signatory to these conventions is therefore under an obligation to ensure that children and young persons are not denied vital information and education on their sexual and reproductive health.

Recent news reports suggest the incidence of child sexual abuse in schools by figures in authorities like school principals and teachers is fairly high.

### **Countering Myths and fears about Sexuality Education**

**We respond below to some of the arguments put forward by proponents of the ban on Sex Education**

*Young people are being provided with information that is “too explicit at too young an age”.*

The scope of sexuality education is much wider than information about sexual activities. Moreover an age appropriate curricula will mean that the content, style and images used would be informed by the specific needs and contexts of different age groups.

### **Child Sexual Abuse and Sexuality Education**

How can a teenage girl muster courage to tell her parents that her cousin puts his hand in her panties every time he visits them, when throughout her life she has been conditioned to believe that 'good girls don't speak about such dirty things'? How will a seven-year-old boy be able to tell his mother that the school bus driver asks him to touch his private parts when in his mind 'private parts' resonates with 'shame'? Often in our work at Tulir - Centre for the Prevention and Healing of Child Sexual Abuse we have come across parents and teachers who want their children and students to be protected against sexual abuse, but they do not want to talk about matters as simple as naming the private parts. This silence lends strength to abusers who use it to their benefit, feeling comfortable in the knowledge that children won't talk about it and if they do, chances are they will be muted by adults. Tackling child sexual abuse proactively also means lifting the veil of silence from sexuality.

By Alankaar Sharma and Vidya Reddy, Tulir, Chennai.

There is no evidence to demonstrate that the introduction of sex education leads to increased sexual activity among young people. Several studies provide evidence to the

contrary (see footnotes). For example, a study commissioned by the WHO and Global Programme on AIDS<sup>5</sup> reviewed 47 studies that evaluate sexuality education interventions implemented in various countries and found that in 17 studies it was reported that education delayed the onset of sexual activity, reduced the number of sexual partners or reduced unplanned pregnancy and STI while 25 studies reported that education neither increased nor decreased these indicators.<sup>6</sup>

There is overwhelming evidence which demonstrates that young people are already sexually active in India.

- The National Family Health Surveys II and III reveal that young people, who form 30% of the population, are sexually active at 12 and 13 years.
- Among adolescents in the typical north Indian population, 17% of school children and 33% young workers of 3,300 young persons aged 15 – 24 reported having premarital sex.<sup>7</sup>
- 57% of girls are married before they are 18 and 52% have their first pregnancy between 15 and 19 years.
- More than 53% children in India are subjected to sexual abuse<sup>8</sup> and that over a third of all rape victims are below 16 years.<sup>9</sup>

***Teachers are unwilling and unprepared to teach sex education.***

There is an obvious need for teachers to be equipped in terms of information and perspectives related to sexuality; ease and comfort in dealing with issues of sexuality; ability to communicate with young people about these issues. However, **the lack of training inputs cannot be a justification for the exclusion of sexuality from the curriculum.** Instead, capacity building and training inputs need to be built in.

***Parents are opposed to sex education.***

The danger of parental opposition to the introduction of sexuality education is one that needs to be recognized and addressed in a strategic manner. However, parental approval cannot be the yardstick for meeting the educational needs of young people. **No other aspect of the school curriculum requires such parental approval;** sexuality alone cannot form an exception. Parents need to recognize the importance of schools as a space in which young people can learn about issues of sexuality, in a context in which it is often not easy for them as parents to talk to their children about these issues. There is the

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<sup>5</sup> 'Sexuality Education and Young People's Sexual Behaviour: a review of studies, 1997

<sup>6</sup> WHO Technical Report Series No.938 Preventing HIV/AIDS in Young People: A Systematic Review of the Evidence from Developing Countries, 2006, shows that school curriculum based HIV prevention education results in delayed age at entering a sexual relationship, reduced number of sexual partners, increased use of safer sex and contraception and other such positive behaviours.

<sup>7</sup> Study reported in *BMJ* 2001;322:575 ( 10 March )

<sup>8</sup> Press Release, "Ministry of Women and Child Development releases a Study on Child Abuse", April, 9 2007, <http://pib.nic.in/release/release.asp?relid=26737>

<sup>9</sup> Dasgupta J and Das A eds. "The emerging agenda: Adolescents" Understanding reproductive health: A resource pack. Booklet eight. Kriti resource centre, Lucknow, India

larger issue of **the transformatory role of education which is to introduce new ideas and to change society, not merely to reflect existing biases or ways of thinking**, which is sometimes regressive. It is useful here to consider the example of dowry. Many parents may not think it is wrong to give or take dowry. However, the school curriculum would have to create a learning situation where the widely practiced custom of dowry is questioned. It is now in fact common for educational curriculum to introduce new ideas of gender equality.

***It is against Indian culture and promotes corrupting Western values***

The ban against sexuality education invokes a vague notion of Indian culture that holds no weight. For one, there is no unified sense of Indian culture that exists. It is not only about tribal cultures which are meant to have less restrictive sexual practices. Even when we contrast the urban and rural contexts, we find a difference. In rural areas sexuality is much less of a strictly private matter. An indicator of this is the humour related to sex and sexuality that children are allowed to witness, be it in ‘bawdy’ marriage songs or jokes and banter amongst adults. There are similar differences related to class, caste and most importantly of education. Anxieties related to sex and sexuality are highest among the more educated. Modernity, the notion of what it means to be civilized, seem to militate against an engagement with issues sexuality. Secondly, there are discriminatory and abusive practices within Indian culture. It becomes difficult to justify the ‘purity’ or moral superiority of the Indian family when violence, abuse and discrimination are condoned and sanctioned in the name of tradition or religion. Thirdly, even as we recognize that the current focus on Hiv/aids within adolescence education in India is related to a global push to work on this area, we need to see that in an era of globalization, this is happening in most spheres. It is difficult to justify a purist, nationalist position vis a vis only sex education. There are those who are against sex education but are clearly not against inviting foreign investments in India, or soliciting funds from Western sources for a range of social, political and cultural events and institutions.

***Sex is natural and knowledge about it is acquired naturally so there is no need for sexuality education***

We have argued how sex and sexuality, like gender, is not natural but determined by a wide range of social, economic and cultural factors. ‘Naturally’ acquired knowledge means messages about sex and sexuality which are in keeping with the existing social order. Moreover because of the sense of shame and secrecy accorded to sexuality, even adults have all kinds of questions, fears, myths that they often have no way of addressing.

The TARSHI telephone helpline provides information, counselling and referrals on a range of sexuality, sexual and reproductive health and rights issues. ‘Talking about Sexuality’, a report of preliminary findings from the TARSHI helpline. The Helpline has recorded over 57,000 calls between February 14, 1996 and October 10, 2007

The data shows that there is an urgent need for information about sex and sexuality. Common myths and misconceptions related to sexuality that are encountered on the Helpline:

Nocturnal emissions are a sign of weakness/illness that need to be cured.

Condoms reduce pleasure.

Condoms are only for those who want to avoid pregnancies.

Masturbation is harmful – it causes weakness, pimples, and dark circles under the eyes, infertility and sexual problems.

Women do not masturbate.

Sex with a virgin cures STDs and AIDS.

The intact hymen is a sign of virginity/ a woman who does not bleed on the ‘wedding night’ is not a virgin.

It is a woman’s duty to have sex with her husband whenever he wants her to.

Oral sex can lead to pregnancy (if semen is ingested).

Anal sex cannot lead to conception. Anal sex is safe sex.

Premature ejaculation can be ‘cured’ by medicines.

Only peno-vaginal intercourse is ‘real’ sex.

Sex between two men is not sex but ‘masti’ (play).

Oral/anal sex is considered wrong/bad, or at best forbidden, yet it is practised, leading to guilt and shame.

42.6% of calls received on the helpline were from people between the ages of 15 and 24 years.

*An 18 year old English speaking man wanted to thank the counsellor for biology information on the female and male genitals and also the reproductive system and its functions. He is a student of Class XII Science from a prominent school in Delhi.*

There is clearly a need for sexuality education in a world where: children are abused by people they know and trust; girls are forced into marriage and sex without their consent and then expected to bear children when they are physically not ready for it; boys are made fearful of their bodies and desires during adolescence; pornography becomes the only source of information on sexuality; the disabled, transgendered and queer face violence, discrimination and fear for their different desires and needs.

#### **SECTION 4: CURRENT CHALLENGES**

“Sexuality is addressed in a problematic manner in educational materials,” notes the Working Group Report on Empowerment of Women, Ministry of Women and Child Development. “It is either related to population or reproductive health or seen as a

problem associated with promiscuity and shame.” (pg 111). While there are a number of organizations producing sexuality education materials and conducting programs not all of them are informed by a holistic, rights based perspective on sexuality. As a result the content of such programs either reinforces values, stereotypes and negative assumptions that do little to really inform or support youth.

For the purpose of indepth analysis of the current approach and materials the following material was reviewed:

- Adolescence Education in Schools  
Package of basic materials, NCERT,1999
- Yuva School Adolescence Education Programme – Handbooks for teachers, Volumes 1 and 2, Department of Education, Delhi, Delhi State Aids Control Society,2005
- The blue book (15+) and The red book (10-14)Tarshi,1999
- Adolescence Education Programme---Teachers workbook, Facilitators Handbook for Training Peer Educators, Facilitators Handbook for Refresher Teacher Training, Flip Chart, Unicef-NACO

**Also from mp** The materials developed by Government agencies include the following:

1. Kishoravastha Shiksha, SCERT, 2000.
2. Jeevan Ke Liye Shiksha , MPSAC, 2003
3. Kishoravastha Shiksha mein Kaushal Vikas Samabandhi Prashikshan Rajya Shiksha Kendra, 2005-06

The materials developed by the NGOs include the following:

1. Beti Kare Sawal, Eklavya, 1997.
2. Samajik Lingbhed or Hum Sahyogini Trust, 2003
3. Kishori Swasthya Karyakram – Ek prayog, (an unpublished report) Eklavya, 2002
4. Kishoron Ke Mukh Se, (an unpublished report) Eklavya, 2002
5. Bhavishya Ka Chunav CEDPA India, 2003
6. ‘Ladki Sayani Ho Gai’ (Slide show),Marathi Vigyan Parishad, Mumbai (used in M.P.)
7. ‘Paro Ki Kahani’ (Flip Charts), Care India

Jaya please choose the relevant stuff.

**And west Bengal**

**Paromita and anu please add to the analysis and examples.**

Key concerns related to materials reviewed

1. INSTRUMENTALIST NATURE OF THE MATERIALS

Needs and interests of young people not central to the approach

2.OVERWHELMING FOCUS ON HIV AIDS

Content as well as approach dominated by the agenda of HIV AIDs prevention

### 3. FOCUS ON REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH NOT SEXUAL HEALTH OR SEXUAL RIGHTS

Issues of sexuality from a rights perspective do not find space in the material

### 4. DISCIPLINE/CONTROL

Wide ranging rules about daily life and sexuality

Fear inducing approach

### 5. INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY NOT SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY

In placing the responsibility on the individual students are not enabled to understand in what way social institutions are accountable

### 6. NO SPACE FOR POSITIVE ASPECTS OF SEXUALITY

Even when desire is acknowledged it is sought to be controlled.

Many 'strategies' suggested to deal with 'temptation'

### 7. NO RECOGNITION OF DIVERSITY

Normalizing and essentializing representation of realities.

No recognition of diversity in terms of

The body

Gender diversity

Intimate relationships

Sexual desires

### 8. INADEQUATE ENGAGEMENT WITH GENDER

Superficial engagement with gender, insufficient focus on gender based discrimination, no social analysis

4. What follows are the findings of the review of the materials. We have tried to use illustrative examples as much as possible, in order to convey in a more direct manner, the trends that have emerged from the review. These are examples that reflect commonalities in the materials. The review revealed that there were certain ways in which the earlier material is different from the newer material review. Through examples we have also tried to highlight this specificity. The older material refers to the NCERT Adolescence Education in schools, 1999 and the newer material refers to YUVA Adolescence Education Programme, 2005 lifeskills west Bengal full title and year, need to categorize and add mp material

The material developed by the government consists of Teacher Guides to be used with school going adolescents which has been developed by the SCERT and MPSAC (Madhya Pradesh State AIDS Control Society between the period 2000-2006. The NGO material is of various kinds – teacher guides, booklets for adolescents, and teaching-learning materials. These materials have been developed between the period 1997 and 2003

Although only a handful of such examples can be used here, there are several other examples for each of the findings that can be drawn upon. We have commented on the red and blue books published by Tarshi separately since in many ways they represent a different approach to sexuality education than the rest of the material reviewed. There is also a separate box highlighting the specificities of the Unicef and Naco material which has been banned in several states. Before sharing the key findings of the review, it needs to be stated that the majority of the material is aimed at teachers and is not for direct use by young people themselves.

## 1. INSTRUMENTALIST NATURE OF THE MATERIALS

The material is informed by objectives such as prevention of Hiv/aids and population control. The needs and interests of young people are not central to the content or approach of the materials. The instrumentalist nature of the objectives has been stated clearly by the bodies that have published the material.

“The demand (for adolescence education) has gained momentum in view of the growing problems relating to the sexual behaviour of adolescents and the arrival of aids pandemic has added the element of urgency to this need.”

NCERT I, 3

In the more recent material, as represented by Yuva, the objective of creating a well disciplined young person who will work for certain pre determined societal goals (safe goals, which do not raise fundamental issues of justice and equity in society) is clearly articulated.

“The developing adolescent can be engaged actively in learning experiences that will enable him/her for example to practice basic hygiene and sanitation practices, listen and communicate effectively in relationships, practice abstinence and safe sex or advocate for a tobacco free school or community.”

Yuva, I, xviii

## 2.FOCUS ON HIV AIDS

The instrumentalist logic becomes even more clear in specific statements that relate to HIV/AIDSs.

“If the adolescents are not looked after properly... mortality will increase....the loss, in social and in monetary terms, to the nation is colossal. The devastating impacts of HIV on individual, family and national development are well known. Thus reaching out to the adolescents provides an opportunity to reduce the incidence of HIV and the total burden of disease in the country.” (p. xviii, Yuva Vol 1).

The focus on HIV/AIDS is reflected in the extent to which concerns related to the disease dominate the content. The other manner in which this focus plays itself out is in the moralistic and fear based approach of the material (detailed later). These approaches are being deployed in order to bring about behavior change in the young people. In the newer material this has also meant a more detailed (what is often referred in a somewhat loaded manner as ‘explicit’ ) sharing of information about the anatomy and about condom use. The push towards talking about sex in a more direct manner combines with unresolved anxieties to create stark contradictions in the material. On the same page we find exhortations that young people should practice abstinence and we also find information about condom use.

One of the reasons for these contradictions lies in the fact that the push for the HIV/Aids agenda has come from the West. In the context of globalization, any phenomenon is a

mix of the global and the local. This is not unique to Hiv aids, and neither is a global push in any context, in and of itself problematic. Also such a push could have created an opportunity to open up discussions on sexuality, including within the education sector. Instead our response has been knee jerk. We have not worked through how we should address Hiv aids and related issues of sexuality. This shows through clearly in the material reviewed, much of which seems to have been the product of 'cutting and pasting' from various documents.

Even with the limited agenda of Hiv aids prevention the material is lacking in several respects. Behaviour change is a complex and highly challenging objective. Moralistic messages that are unlinked to people's lived realities will certainly not be effectively. Urging young people to practice abstinence, other than being problematic in and of itself, is also not a particularly appropriate strategy given that in India the spread of Hiv aids is mostly within marriage. The material is also blind to the specific vulnerabilities and human rights violations faced by individuals and communities based on gender and sexuality related marginalization. This includes women, sex workers and MSM, men who have sex with men. Even in terms of information, the material is reluctant to touch the issue of condoms. Information on how to use condoms has been provided only in the banned material.

### 3. FOCUS ON ISSUES OF REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH NOT SEXUAL HEALTH OR SEXUAL RIGHTS

The material has given much more importance to concerns related to reproduction rather than sexuality, in keeping with the objectives of disease prevention and population control. One cannot even say that the focus of the material is on reproductive health because that is an arena which is much broader than the issues that the material address. Sexuality is addressed only in order to urge young people to control their sexual desires. In the more recent material, the other context in which sexuality is addressed is in terms of allaying some of the fears experienced by young boys as they relate to masturbation and wet dreams.

#### Focus on STDs and AIDS

The discussion on disease is limited to sexually transmitted diseases and HIV-AIDS. Most students have little information about STDs. The brief presentation in the guides only evokes fear. However students are advised not to indulge in homosexual relationships in order to protect themselves from STDs. Girls generally have many questions about menstrual problems, vaginal infections, and urinary complaints. These find no space here.

Material brought out by NGOs tends to have a greater focus on reproductive health, as compared to government sponsored material which tends to focus much more on Hiv aids. However even the NGO material does not address sexual health or sexual rights, although in terms of the language used the material tends to be as sexual/reproductive/health/rights, or some combination of these words.

#### 4.DISCIPLINE AND CONTROL

The desire to control the behaviour of young people and to discipline them is a running theme in the more recent adolescent education material. This manifests itself in numerous ways. The material seeks to induce fear in young people. Adolescence itself is presented as a traumatic phase of one's life.

“Poor information and skills, lack of a safe and supportive environment, being sexually active, substance abuse, violence and injury, early and unintended pregnancy and infection with HIV and other sexually transmitted infections threaten the health and lives of adolescents” (Yuva, 1, xvii)

There is an extremely long list of dos and donts that young people are meant to follow. Below is an example of the don'ts that students are meant to observe before going to sleep.

“Avoid beverages with caffeine such as coffee, soda after 4 p.m.  
Avoid interesting reading and computer games before going to bed.”  
Yuva, I, 8

Abstinence is an oft repeated theme in the material.

“There is a need to reinforce those social and cultural values that militate against pre marital and extra marital sexual relations and promote responsible sexual behavior and respect for the opposite sex.”

Ncert,I ,8

It is interesting to note that the arguments used to promote measures such as abstinence relate not only to preventing disease or avoiding pregnancy, but also to respect for opposite sex (which in fact refers to girls).

“By considering each other as “sex symbol” adolescents cannot establish a lasting relationship between themselves. They have to appreciate that every individual has equal self-worth and human dignity”

Ncert, II, 35

“Sex drive has to be controlled, if it is to become a positive factor in defining interpersonal relationship with the opposite sex.”

Ncert,II, 35

Why discipline and control are required is best captured by the following quotations.

“Sex drive is the basic instinct upon which depends the preservation and perpetuation of the human race. It is not a means to gain sensual pleasure but a positive force in the development of the personality of individuals. It is the anchor to the partnership between man and woman who share interests and ideas, mutual acceptance of responsibilities, self realization and love. That is why society maintains close watch on the interactions between man and woman. Both are expected to conform to the societal codes or rules for the common good of society, for a happy family life and for individual's own development.”

Warnings about consequences of sexual activity move beyond pregnancy and disease to the loss of social 'protection' (parental approval, the institution of marriage etc.)

“Adolescents need to be convinced that certain social norms have innate protective qualities. Staying faithful to one partner, social acceptance for sex within marriage is some of these.” YUVA, Vol, II, p. 77

It is clear that the material seeks to promote social norms that are meant to perpetuate the existing social order, based as it is on a range of inequities, including gender injustice. It is asserted however that the individual good is the same as the good of the family which in turn is the same as the good of society. The young person (girl perhaps) is also to learn that if they behave themselves and follow the rules, they will be rewarded with protection.

There are several unstated, highly questionable assumptions in the above assertions.

- ◆ Sexual activity will always be unprotected and therefore lead to disease and/or disease
- ◆ Sexual activity means only peno-vaginal penetration between men and women which is why the prospect of pregnancy always looms large
- ◆ Sexual advances by a boy towards a girl are always unwanted and not reciprocated. Girls are thereby passive recipients and boys the aggressors.
- ◆ Monogamous marriage is the only legitimate space for sex

Seeking to impose a host of rules is part of a fear inducing approach. It is interesting to note that the only time that the material seeks to allay fears is in the context of boys' sexuality. The newer material in particular takes pains to reassure boys that masturbation and wet dreams are not unnatural. While this is positive, the material falls short of addressing the social context which either invisibilizes or seeks to control girls' sexuality. Another gender differential can be seen in the engagement with the issue of child sexual abuse which most often assumes that only girls are subjected to CSA. This, despite the findings of the Ministry of Women and Child survey on CSA, which show that 52.94% of the 12,447 survivors of CSA surveyed were boys.

## 5. INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY NOT SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY

Particularly in the newer material, the burden of existing realities is placed squarely on the individual herself.

Take the instance of violence. Girls are urged to deal with the violence by being brave and through self defence. “YUVA acknowledges that Delhi could be a more safer place for girls and women, and that it is upto them to protect themselves, so that they can say a firm no while required” (p. xiii, Yuva, Vol I)

Madhya Pradesh text books go as far as to tell girls

not to go anywhere alone

not to wear provocative clothes

not to dry underwear outside

to stay away from drivers and maids

anu, can you please send exact quotes

- <sup>^</sup>fdlh futuZ LFkku ij vdsyh u tk,<sub>j</sub>A vkids lkFk dksbZ ifjfr vo'; pkfg,A ?kjokyksa dks lnk lwfpr djds tk,A\*\*
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- vkids vkUrfjd oL= ¼czk vkSj isUVh;½ dHkh [kqys esa u lq[kk,<sub>j</sub>A

pg.72.Kishoravastha Shiksha, SCERT, 2000.

<sup>^^</sup>?kj ds M<sup>a</sup>k;ojksa o ukSdjks ls Hkh vf?kd ckrphr u djsaA\*\*

pg. 83 Kishoravastha Shiksha mein Kaushal Vikas Samabandhi Prashikshan Rajya Shiksha Kendra, 2005-06

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Not only are girls held responsible for the violence, there is an absence of any practical information on what to do in a situation in which violence occurs.

It is not only in the context of violence that responsibility is placed on the individual. It is part of a discourse whereby there is a failure to establish the importance of accountability of systems that are meant to ensure access to rights. Responsibility is once again placed on the individual, who is urged to change what s/he can and leave aside that which is supposedly beyond her/his control.

In an exercise about why students might or might not be motivated at school, 24 out of 39 reasons were linked to students themselves. None linked to school infrastructure, quality of text books etc. "There are many factors which increase and decrease students' motivation to study. Some are under one's control and some are not. It is effective to change those factors... which are under students' control. (YUVA, I, p.3). Students have even been asked to "cope, adapt accept challenges." (YUVA, I, p.45)

One of the reasons perhaps why there is so much emphasis on discipline and on individual responsibility is the need to prepare young people for the newly emerging global market economy. Although it might appear to be so, this does not constitute an 'over reading' of the material. The yuva manual devotes an entire chapter on signing contracts...

The name of the chapter is "Let us have a contract", p. 115, Vol I, YUVA

A hall mark of the newer material is that it seeks to be interactive. There are many games and activities. However the review showed that these interactive tools were infact prescriptive in nature. The first problem lies in the objectives underlying these exercises. These objectives often relate to the achievement of instrumentalist ends

(behaviour change for disease and population control). When the objective is instrumentalist the tool can allow only limited space for learners views and experience. The second and related objective (less visible) is ensuring greater conformity to existing social norms. Once again with this agenda leaves limited room for students. Thirdly the exercises are accompanied by detailed ‘expected responses’. While this is a commonly used tool to aid teachers and facilitators, in this context they become particularly problematic. The students are told to speak freely but are very soon subjected to detailed ‘expected responses’ which also become a vehicle for the strengthening of existing social norms.

Paromita, Can we other examples from west Bengal

## 6.NO POSITIVE ASPECTS OF SEXUALITY

We saw above how there are innumerable rules that seek to determine sexual behavior. There is however no positive articulation of sexuality. There is in most materials an acknowledgment that young people have sexual desires. However these are recognized only in order that they can be controlled.

The materials suggest many ‘strategies’ to use to deal with ‘temptation’.

“They may experience physical responses such as rapid heartbeat and warmth in the sex organs. It is normal to experience these feelings and to have the desire to have a friend of the other gender. Again, the issue is “What decisions will we make about these feelings. Tell them that cultural and social sensitivity is important. Is

“Tell the class that adolescents need to learn to regulate their sexual feeling in a friendship. Both girls and boys can decide when to act on their sexual feelings and when not to.” Discuss how to handle sexual or romantic feelings without engaging in sex. Discuss alternative expressions for sexual energies for sexual energies, e.g. sports, clubs, etc.

Giving flower-west bengal

Clearly only the ability to say no is being strengthened

Other than suggesting concrete strategies to control desire, the material also builds arguments against the expression of sexual desire. A strong link is made between desire and violence. Adolescent sexuality is portrayed as one which can go out of control and spill over into abusive behavior. Other than being an argument which is offensive towards young people, it also goes against what feminists and the women’s movement have long established – that sexual violence is about abuse of power and not desire.

Adolescents are not only abused, ‘they themselves, given the opportunity, instead of seeking proper methods to curb sexual desire , often commit abuse. Because they do not have proper sexual knowledge they end up abusing others. Ref 165

Even when such a direct link is not made, there is an elision, a seamless flowing from a point about sexual gratification to rape in the same sentence.

“Deviant behaviour... When they seek sexual gratification at a purely physical level, when the inhuman acts of rape and sexual violence are reported and when young females become victims of eve teasing”

Ncert,II,33

#### 7.FAILURE TO RECOGNIZE DIVERSITY

In failing to recognize the diversity that exists in the way people are, the material also reinforces ideas about ‘how things are’ and what is ‘normal’. The discourse is one which is essentializing. The non recognition of diversity goes hand in hand with pre selecting certain realities, and this selection also reflects clear biases in favour of the powerful sections of society.

There is no recognition of diversity in terms of

Urban rural

The normal body

Gender diversity

Intimate relationships

Sexual desires

#### URBAN-RURAL

The newer material in particular assumes that the reader is urban and well off. This is clear in the nature of examples given.

“The unhealthy sleeping patterns that many students follow are: Watching TV/playing video games for long hours”, chatting with friends from hours at night on telephone/internet, the materials have taken an upper class, urban stand.”

**Yuva, Vol I, p. 7.**

paromita can you please add

#### THE ‘NORMAL’ BODY

There are repeated references to ‘normal’ changes that the adolescent can expect will take place in the body. While the intention might be to reassure the adolescent at a time when bodily and other changes might create some anxiety, there is a need to be careful because one is, in the process, creating ideas about what is ‘normal’. If the changes do not conform to this idea of what is ‘normal’, then those changes/characteristics get categorized as ‘abnormal’ with the anxieties, stigma and discrimination that accompanies ‘abnormality’.

It is also critical to remember that the diversity that exists in life cannot be captured by these categories, which are often water tight binaries.

Take the example of 'normal' changes that are meant to take place for boys and girls. There are two kinds of problems here. One is that there are many who are born male and identify as male, but have physical characteristics that are not considered 'normal' for boys such as the growth of breasts. Similarly for girls. There are also inter sexed young people who have both sexual organs, or one which is less developed than 'normal', who are entirely absent from the two biological categories of 'boy' and 'girl'.

The other idea about the normal body is that it is an able body. Some of the newer material does acknowledge the existence of people with disabilities, but not in the context of sexuality. Even in the manner that disability itself is represented is problematic. Those with disabilities are expected to perform with excellence as though to 'compensate' for their disability.

"Anita is a seventeen year old girl who uses crutches and belongs to a middle class family.... she is very popular and is ever smiling. In her spare time she teaches a no. of neighborhood children. In the weekends, she can be seen going with her friends, walking slowly a calmly on her crutches to the nearby government centre to teach computers to children. ...Se does not get bothered about the crutches and is quite popular with adults and children alike" (p. 119, Yuva Vol 1).

#### GENDER DIVERSITY

The diversity of gender is such that merely 'boy'/'girl' or 'man/woman' do not adequately capture people's realities. The material works only within this binary framework. We know that there are those who are born female but who don't identify as girls/women, those who are born as male but don't identify as boys/men. There are also those who might identify as hijra. Or others who might not want to identify themselves with any gender. There is no space for these realities in the material.

Don't know where to place this. Please use where relevant

In Kishoravastha Shiksha whilst describing the female reproductive system and the hymen 'virginity' has been mystified even further. An irrelevant question raised is "What is the meant by a 'kunwari' girl?" The answer to this question is an elaborate description of hymen rupture during intercourse. There is only one sentence which mentions that hymen rupture can take place also during masturbation, surgery or through an injury. A similar topic has been suggested for a debate, 'Should a girl be a virgin before marriage?' However in Jeevan Ke liye shiksha and Kishoravastha Shiksha mein Kaushal Vikas Samabandhi Prashikshan the opposite approach has been used and an attempt has been made to demystify virginity.

#### INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS

The assumptions made and asserted in the material about intimate relationships is that

- everyone has to get married.

The one exception to this was a section of the NCERT material.

**Ncert quote which says that marriage is not the only goal of life**

- marriage is for life.

Divorce is either not mentioned at all or when it is, divorce is likened to the worst kind of eventuality possible.

Paromita can you please add the example about divorce being like suicide

-monogamy is assumed and asserted

## SEXUAL DESIRE

As mentioned above there is an assumption made in the material that sexual activity is reduced to sexual reproduction. In terms of desire too the material portrays a world in which there is only one kind of desire – that between men and women. It is also assumed that ‘who one desires’ remains unchanged through out life. If a woman is attracted to men, she will always only be attracted to men. This constitutes a failure to capture realities as they exist.

The term homosexuality is one that is not entirely ignored. There were one or two references made in almost all the materials reviewed. However what was more striking was the need to repeatedly say ‘attraction to opposite sex’, rather than just ‘attraction’ in different ways.

“Infatuation/Crush: when a young person likes or idolizes a person of opposite sex of different status-money, power, education, age.

Romance: is when one likes a person of opposite sex...” (p. 150. Yuva Vol. 1)

“the mutual attraction between boys and girls is, therefore, a completely normal and universal behaviour.”, “sudden development of their interest in members of the opposite sex”

Ncert, I, 5.

Except for the life style material of West Bengal, the other materials do not each make a mention of the existence of sex workers, not even in terms of HIV/AIDs.
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Please fit in appropriate place if you want to include it.

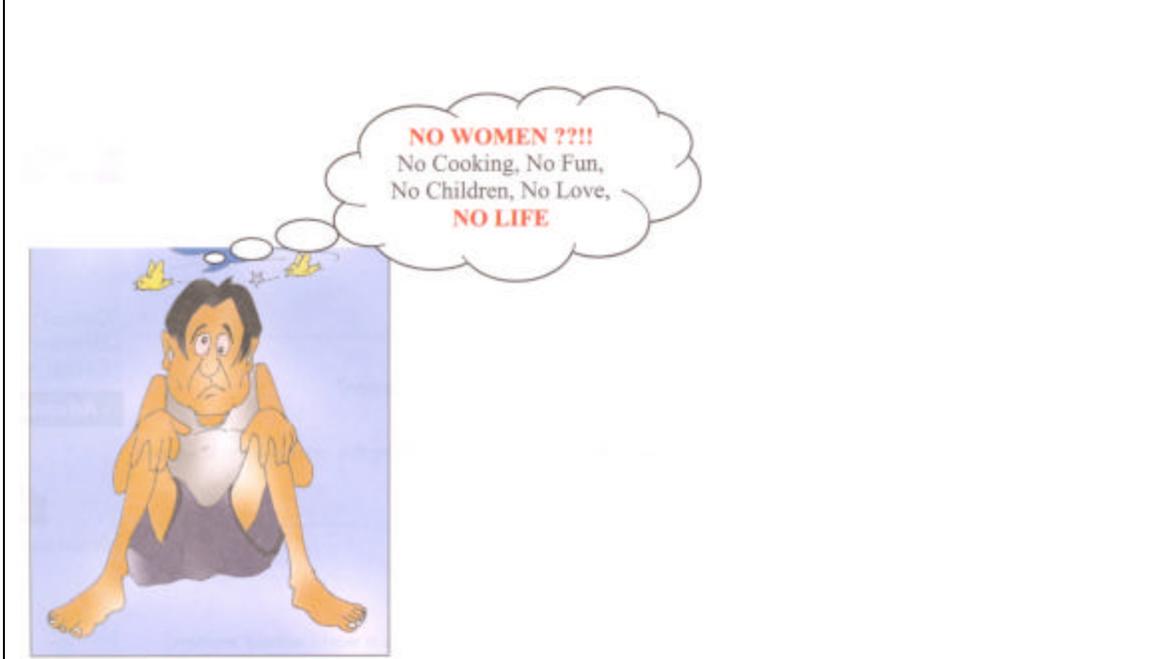
- There is minimal discussion on contraception for safe sex and teachers are advised to limit any discussion on the condom. Where contraceptive pills are mentioned it is again to evoke fear as their limitations are elaborated upon rather than their uses.
- Fortunately masturbation and wet dreams have been described as being normal and adolescent have been advised not to feel guilty about them. However the discussion on masturbation seems gender biased. Though masturbation is considered as a normal method for sexual gratification for both boys and girls, a detailed description about the technique is given only for boys and there is no such description for girls. Thus indirectly reinforcing the myth that girls do not possess any sexuality and even if they do they must ignore it.

## 8. INADEQUATE ENGAGEMENT WITH GENDER

We have already seen how the material constructs ideas about gender through sexuality – for example of girls as passive recipients of unwanted attention from boys. We have also seen how the reality of the varied expressions of gender, other than the two categories of boy and girl are ignored by the material. In addition to this we find that although the

material seemingly has an extensive engagement with gender issues, on the whole this tends to be superficial, tokenistic and often highly distorted. There is insufficient engagement with gender based discrimination – there is virtually no mapping of the nature and range of discriminations. For example, given the importance placed on reproductive health it was surprising that the cultural, discriminatory practices related to menstruation are not even mentioned in most material. There is also no analysis as to why gender based discrimination exists. On the contrary we have examples of girls actually being held responsible for the violence they experience. In some instances the material is outright offensive in terms of gender relations.

a picture in p. 156, Vol 1 Yuva, which has a line below it: No women/// No cooking, no fun, no children, no love, and no life.



at the same type same book says that women invite rape and abuse by how they dress, yet it speaks of gender stereotyping as a problem

Anu can you please add

### **The red book and the blue book, tarshi**

From all the material reviewed the red and blue books brought out by tarshi were qualitatively different. We have therefore commented on these books separately.

The approach is positive and non instrumentalist

“We feel its important that you have information that will help you to be a happier, healthier, and more in-charge-of- your-life sort of person”

Tarshi red book 2

“Excited, warm, tingly, thrilled, pleasurable, gentle, loved, wanted, special, happy, --- these are some things that people feel when they have sex.”(p. 12. Red Book).

It is matter of fact and reassuring

“sex is a normal and enjoyable activity that most adult human beings engage in.”(Red Book, p. 13).

“Do I have to have sex when I grow up? Isn't it Dirty and wicked? You don't have to do anything you don't want to do. Sex is something that is enjoyed only if it is done out of free choice. Right now it might seem quite strange to you but later you might change your mind. That's ok. Sex is a way of expressing ourselves and our feelings. It is not dirty or wicked.” (p. 17, Red Book)

The material does not however seek to build young people's understanding of why the situation with respect to sexuality and gender is what it is. It does however raise certain gender issues in a manner that people can easily relate to

- **“does your partner- make decisions for you all the time?,**
  - **control what you wear and do?**
  - **Tell you who not to talk to or meet?**
  - **Make you feel inferior?**
  - **Insult you?**
  - **Make you think you are stupid or going crazy?**
  - **Treat you like an object?**
  - **Expect you to confirm to stereotypes?**
  - **Ask you for explanations but not offer any?**
  - **Threaten to or get violent with you?**
  - **Emotionally blackmail you with sulks and threats?**
- If any or a combination of these things is happening fairly regularly, you need to sort out your relationship fast. The longer it goes, the worse it gets.**
- (Blue Book, Tarshi, p. 16)**

### **Specific elements related to the banned material<sup>10</sup>**

The review of the controversial unicef/naco material revealed the material to be very similar to the other newer material. The key differences were that the

- visuals are more explicit
- more information related to sex - including how to use a condom and using terms like anal sex and orgasm which are absent in other material
- even more emphasis on hiv/aids

### **OVERALL CONCERNS RELATED TO THE MATERIALS REVIEWED**

- **A fear-based approach to talking about sex and sexuality is counter-productive.** Any material or pedagogy that seeks to generate fear in the learner violates the fundamental principle of education: respect the learner. Fear prevents a learner from engaging in the learning process. Even if the objective is limited to behaviour change, a fear based approach will not enable such change to happen.

- **Young people's right to information is violated in several ways:**

#### ***Gaps in information***

Self or externally induced censorship means that there are gaps in information. For example there may be no information on how to use a condom (despite a lot of emphasis HIV/AIDs). These gaps might also exist because certain pieces of information are not considered important, for example when addressing issues of violence, information about laws or redressal mechanisms is perhaps not considered important.

#### ***Misinformation***

Because of the information is governed by existing social norms, the messages being communicated to young people provide distorted information. For example focusing on abstinence, the idea that marriage can provide as a protection against HIV/AIDS infection, when in fact when the reality is that most hiv transmission takes place within marriage.

#### ***Distorted representation of realities***

When sections of people and experiences are excluded from the text, that too is a violation of right to information because the (incomplete) representation of realities is a distorted one. Making little or no reference to the reality that there is same sex desire (not only opposite sex), that there are more than two categories of male and female, invisibilizing people with disabilities or sex workers, constitutes such a distortion of reality.

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<sup>10</sup> Teachers' Workbook, Facilitators' Handbook For Training Peer Educators, Facilitators Handbook For Refresher Teacher Training, A Flip Chart

- **Not lessening/enhancing vulnerabilities**

The failure to even adequately address the above aspects of reality fails to reduce the vulnerability of young people who are marginalized because of their sexuality or gender. In fact by strengthening notions of what it means to be 'normal' the material can contribute to enhancing vulnerabilities of young people. For example, when the material fails to address

- the shame and fear associated with sexuality

- reinforces the power inequality between the young and the old (because of its strong desire to control the lives of adolescents through discipline and innumerable rules)

it runs counter to the objective of enabling children to recognize and to be able to talk about child sexual abuse.

**Failure to promote justice**

Education is meant to promote justice by enabling access to information and social analysis. In the materials reviewed however we find

- insufficient information and analysis related to discrimination based on gender, sexuality and related realities of caste, class, religion, ability etc. There is virtually no information related to sexual violence or sexual harassment.

- little or distorted analysis of social realities means a failure to enable young people to understand those realities, which is essential if education is to play a role in enabling them to become aware of their rights.

- by focusing on individual responsibility and in failing to build an understanding of power dynamics within the family, the rationale for the education system (serving the learning needs of young people) and of State accountability, the material is unable to help young people to exercise their rights vis a vis social institutions like the family, school and the State.

**Strengthening the Status Quo**

The status quo (with all its inequities) is strengthened in various ways. In addition to the factors mentioned above this happens through

- the efforts to enforce discipline/control

- strengthening of existing norms and ideas of the normal

Surviving school as a transgender person

I was born in 1974 in Dum Dum, a suburb of Kolkata. My family was the usual Bengali middle class with father a government servant and my mother, a housewife. There were my grandparents as well who stayed with us.

My early childhood is a bundle of blurred memories; that of my mother doing household chores, my father going out everyday, my house, within which my entire world was centered.

I got quite a jolt when my parents sent me to a place called school. I was only four years. From that very age, I fancied dressing up like women. I often put on my mother's

clothes, wore bangles and lipstick. At first, my mother probably overlooked it as child's play. However, I started getting scolded when she realized that it was becoming an obsession.

My growing up was not with football or cricket but with dolls and gossip. In fact, I found the games that boys normally play were rather boring and physically challenging as well. Somehow, it was not worth it.

Sometimes, my mother forced me to go out and play with the kids. Although I did go out, I used to stand at the side of the field and lament at the ladies gossip that I was missing.

There was a significant aspect to my playing with dolls. I was always the mother of my dolls, gladly giving the role of the father to my younger sister or for that matter anyone who wished to take it.

Gradually, my classmates noticed that I was somehow different from the lot. They discovered that I was apparently timid and vulnerable. This gave them the courage to bully and ridicule me. The first feeling of insecurity was thus setting in.

Although I was often bullied in class, I had this desire to play with kids of my age. And so, when they chose to play hide and seek, I was the happiest person in the world. However, this did not mean that I was alienated. I was a darling with the girls of my locality, especially the older ones who thought me to be a chubby little creature, who gave no trouble and was always willing to do those errands that other boys of my age would spurn.

Thus I was managing and balancing my life. Things took a turn at puberty. I suddenly realized that I was becoming a 'bad boy'. Moreover, I discovered that I had around me a bunch of even worse boys. They were always discussing girls! How horrible!

There were other challenges too. My body was not what it used to be. My voice was no longer sweet. I began to feel rather ashamed of myself and the developments in my body.

I remember getting rather attracted seeing the picture of Tarzan. I rather was surprised at my classmates' obsession for Steffi Graff. How unattractive she was! Needless to say, I always avoided the hot discussions that they had everyday about females and female celebrities.

So, I was getting isolated. Was I the only person in the world with this strange attraction towards the same sex?

While I was pondering thus, my classmates discovered a new time pass. It was me. They started calling me *Boudi* (sister in law, in Bengali). Gradually, I became a new attraction in the whole school, a *Boudi!* This once gave a classmate the courage to physically harass me. When I threatened to tell this to my parents and the classmates, he stopped, only to accuse me of indecency. People around believed him, possibly because I was effeminate.

Thus my known world was gradually getting unknown. I did not have anyone with whom I could share my feelings. I did not have anyone who would lend a shoulder to me. I did not have any friend.

I had often tried to 'purify' myself. But every time I took a resolution, forces within washed it away in no time. I was losing control of my own self. I was getting possessed by an evil power. I wanted to be 'good'. However, that was not to be.

I once thought that leaving school would solve all my problems. After all, I will not have to deal with these bad boys day in and out. All these had an impact on me. I developed obsessive compulsive disorders.

My first visit to a counselor only aggravated my problems. When I told him about my sexual orientation, he said that my case was typical to what some 'old Marwaris suffer from' and that I should try to think about girls and only girls.

I was rather choosy about which college to join after I had left school. I wanted a 'safe place' where no one would call me *Boudi* or give me alienating looks or leave me out of a party. However, my life did not become any better. I often bunked my classes, not to 'freak out' but to stay at home. At home I concentrated on my studies and ended up with the highest mark in the entire humanities stream in college.

Thus I took admission to Presidency College, the best college in the city. It was here for the first time that I interacted with girls of my own age. While I felt more comfortable with girls, word started spreading around that I was having an affair with one of them. On the other hand, I was developing a liking another boy in the class. How strange and confusing!

My confusion started having an effect on my studies. The more I tried to get out of the 'problem' the more did the problem get on top of me. It finally reached its climax when I was unable to sit for my Part II exams. I contemplated committing suicide.

It was at this time that news about Counsel Club (a support group for sexual minorities, the first of its kind in Kolkata) came out in Ananda Bazar Patrika (a leading Bengali daily in Kolkata). It gave me the first signal that I was not alone.

I nervously went to a bookstall to get hold of a copy of Prabartak (the house journal of Counsel Club). The house journal had the address of Counsel Club. I wrote a letter to the Club that I wished to become a member.

It was a long wait for the reply. I finally got the invitation to be with people whom I could identify myself with. My life began taking a different turn. But then, that it is another story.

The focus of this section has been on current challenges as manifested in the materials being currently used. In addition to the problems related to the nature of the material, there is also the issue of adolescent education programmes being viewed as an add on the 'main' curriculum. Even with respect to the proposed Unicef-Naco material, a mere 16 hours of teaching time per year was proposed. If the education system is convinced that it needs to address issues of sexuality then it has to become a part of the curriculum. A related concern is with respect to teachers training. As adults who have socialized to think about issues of sexuality in particular ways teachers require intensive inputs to both understand and experience a sense of ease about engaging with students about issues of sexuality. There is also the challenge of 'out of school' children that needs to be seriously engaged with when visualizing and designing a strategy for sexuality education for youth people, a majority of whom are out of school.

On the need for teacher training...

From my experience as a teacher educator, particularly teaching a paper entitled 'Gender and Schooling' as part of the B Ed course in Delhi University, I can say that it is extremely important to provide space, in both school and college curricula, for

- (a) Gender issues
- (b) Sexuality issues

Teachers themselves need to learn before they can teach. They have to learn about gender and sexuality issues, to meet their own interest and lack of knowledge. Otherwise they carry the burden of their own problems, as well as prejudices and ignorance/ misinformation with them. They need to learn how to meet the students' need for information, handle students' problems on issues like gender discrimination and sexual harassment, and deal with the widespread negative stereotyping and stigmatization of sexual desire itself.

I find so many blocks with regard to sexuality, sexual desire and sexual choice, that simply normalizing that, defining it as a totally acceptable human urge, is a sufficient agenda to begin with. For most of my students, any manifestation of female desire has been de-legitimised. Families 'trust' them, meaning they will not 'stray'. Neighbours comment on sexual availability ("Girls who go to college are all loose. Look in their bags, you will find be Mala-D"). Students cope with rampant sexual harassment on their way to and from college. They face pressures regarding their appearance, clothes, marriage prospects, and actual negotiations for marriage. Yet they are infantilized, with no proper information provided on sexuality issues.

When my students go as interns to government schools (during the 4<sup>th</sup> year of the 4-year B Ed course), they come across sexuality and gender issues in the school classroom. They see small girls being harassed by male teachers, while sexist remarks are commonly made even by female teachers. Small boys learn how to abuse girls, verbally and physically, from older boys and from male teachers (and often from their own elder brothers and fathers). Teacher-interns themselves face gender discrimination and sexual harassment in the schools, especially if the school Head is not supportive of girls and women.

Our own class in college becomes like a safe haven – a safe space in which to talk, vent steam, articulate experiences, formulate issues, and devise strategies. Strategies we have come up with include the following:

- *pedagogy* as a consciousness-raising tool: we share the personal and see its political nature, as part of socialization processes and gendered social structures
- *devise teaching practices* that articulate gender concerns, in every subject, at every stage, right from early primary school level
- *teach sexuality – in terms of biology* – give clear explanation of desire and sexuality in relation to our bodies, emotions and minds

- *elicit doubts, answer questions* – sessions in which students write down their questions anonymously, and I answer, we discuss together. These sessions have a lot of questions regarding desire, pain, sexual intercourse, homosexuality.... Some unexpected questions like ‘Is sexual intercourse painful for men too?’ and ‘If I am raped on my wedding night, can I go to court against my husband?’

- Dr. Deepti Priya Mehrotra

## SECTION 5: SUGGESTIONS FOR CHANGE

Having articulated the reasons why we consider sexuality education to be an essential component of education for young people, and having reviewed the material currently in use and the approach it represents, we submit our recommendations related to the approach and implementation of sexuality education.

### KEY RECOMMENDATIONS RELATED TO APPROACH

**1. The guiding principle of age appropriate information is a must** to ensure that the content and style meets the needs and interests of a particular age group. This is important also because sexuality is a lifelong experience and does not begin only at puberty.

**2. Sexuality education must not be driven, in an instrumentalist manner by the agenda of disease prevention.** Information about diseases, including Hiv aids is important, but can only be one element of the curriculum. At the core of the curriculum must be the learning needs of young people. The approach has to be one of respecting the learners. They cannot be treated like targets for messages that seek to control them. A child rights perspective would mean honouring their right to information.

**3. The approach to Sexuality Education must affirm a positive sense of self and also a positive approach to sexuality.** Sexuality, like other aspects of our lives, has dimensions that are both negative and positive. We cannot only focus on the negative, because this will be denying an entire dimension of sexuality. Also only a positive approach that can help negotiate violations. Sexuality should not be projected only as a dangerous and anxiety producing aspect of our lives but should also be recognized as a source of happiness and well being. This is particularly true for women’s sexualities which have long been discussed only in the context of violence and repression. Girls need to feel comfortable and happy about their bodies and its processes and sexuality education presents an opportunity to impart that confidence.

**4. Sexuality education should be rooted in existing lived realities and reflect the diversities that exist.** Sexuality education needs to recognize and reflect the diversity in

young people's lives in terms of urban-rural, class, disabilities, gender and sexual orientation. Any curriculum that assumes that all young people are urban, elite, able bodied, masculine if they are born boys or feminine if they are born girls or that all young people are only ever attracted to members of the opposite sex, would be distorting reality as it exists, and the representation of social realities would be a fundamentally flawed one. Secondly if the curriculum were to make such assumptions it would be marginalizing those who fall outside of the assumed categories. This would be violating their right to be represented in the curriculum as well as their learning needs.

**5. The framework has to be one of social analysis, based on principles of equity and justice.** The curriculum needs build an understanding about sexuality, in the manner that gender has ideally meant to have been engaged with – i.e. with an understanding of structures and processes of socialization which lead to discrimination and injustice. The effort, as again in the case of gender, should also be to understanding that while there are forces of domination and control, change is possible. This social analysis is essential because it is only then for example that learners can understand, and learn to negotiate with values and attitudes that stigmatize diseases that can be transmitted sexually, tell a woman that she is wrong if she seeks to control the number of children she wears by asking her husband to wear a condom, that make a boy who is feminine subject to constant ridicule, that tell a girl who is sexually harassed that 'she must have asked for it'.

It is not enough to merely parcel out slogans like 'just say no', but to go further and explain why violence occurs. How can a child say 'no' or grow into an adult who can say 'no' when he or she has always been expected to adhere to what the adult/husband/father/society says is right. In addition to understanding sexuality in relation to social structures and processes related to gender, caste, religion, dis/ability, the curriculum also needs to address the power dynamics between adults and children. If education is to enable young people to understand the values of democracy, equity and justice then there has to be an indepth understanding of the workings of gender as well as sexuality.

**6. Issues of marginalization are of importance to everyone and not only those who might be at that time directly affected by it.** There are two reasons for this. One is that everyone at some point in their lives might be directly affected. In the context of disability, disability rights activists refer to those who are not disabled as TABS, Temporarily Abled Bodies. This recognizes that disability could become a part of any ones life at any point. In terms of issues of same sex desire and gender transgression, queer activists view that the way in which we experience our gender and sexuality desires is neither natural nor fixed. For example, with respect to sexuality, who we are attracted to is also impacted by processes of socialization. This also means that today someone might be attracted only to the opposite sex but later might be attracted only to those of her/his own sex, or both. Therefore as is the case with dis/ability, there are no rigid categories of homosexuality, bisexuality or heterosexuality.

Queer is a term that is used to describe a perspective that recognizes sexuality and gender diversity and which understands and critiques existing social norms related to
--

sexuality as being related to structures and ideologies of power. The term queer is similar to the term feminist in that it describes a perspective, a way of understanding realities through a particular lens, necessarily including an analysis of power relations. The term queer can also be used for people who are same sex desiring or transgender.

The second reason why there is a need to engage with disability or queer perspectives, and not only with the special circumstances of those directly affected, is because these perspectives deepen our understanding of social structures. In particular they help us to deepen the understanding that every aspect of our lives is socially constructed, that there is nothing 'natural' and 'normal' and that ideas of what is natural and normal are in fact ways of maintaining existing power inequalities in society. Simply put, that there is no 'natural' body and no 'normal' desire, helps us understand that in fact nothing is natural or normal.

In addition to these perspectives and informing the overall approach of the curriculum, the curriculum also needs to incorporate the concerns of those who are directly affected. For example disabled people being consider a asexual or the ridicule and violence faced by young people because of they are transgender or because they are attracted to someone of their own sex.

The desired flow is from an understanding of the continuum (that any person at any point in their lives can be directly impacted) to concerns related to those affected. This particular flow is important so that learners don't assume that these are issues of importance only for those currently impacted and see the larger significance of these issues. This flow is a principle similar to other pedagogic principles such as moving from the immediate to the abstract.

**Perhaps the entire point 6 above can be deleted. Please suggest**

In terms of language (as it reflects the perspective), the terms 'natural' and 'normal' should be avoided. There will be places where the text will need to use the words 'he' or 'she' in order to highlight the specificities of the experiences of boys and girls. However in the rest of the text, the use of gender neutral language is recommended. There should also be no qualifying of 'attraction' with terms like 'heterosexual' or 'for the opposite sex' etc.

**7. A non-judgmental, participatory pedagogy must be used to transact sexuality education.** Sexuality education can be an opportunity for learners to engage in debate and dialogue rather than be herded through exercises in conformity. It can become a space for independent thought, critical thinking, sensitivity and empathy. A non judgemental approach is necessary to move away from the moralistic manner in which sexuality is currently looked at. This is necessary in terms of moving to a social analysis framework. A non judgemental approach is also necessary in order that the students feel comfortable in asking questions.

**Sexuality education requires an enabling policy environment. The following law reform processes are essential –**

**Repeal of Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code that criminalizes consensual sexual activity between adults and is used to persecute same sex desiring people**

**A law on child sexual abuse**

**Criminalization of marital rape**

## **KEY RECOMMENDATIONS RELATED TO IMPLEMENTATION**

**The government should constitute a high-level committee to design the framework for the introduction of sexuality education in the core school curriculum.** Since sexuality education is a new aspect of the curriculum, there needs to be a high degree of preparedness within the educational system in the country. The National Council of Educational Research and Training is best placed to host such a committee, given its stature as the premier educational institution in the country, its autonomous status and its practice of partnering with individuals and civil society organizations. The mandate of the committee should be to:

- Outline the approach and perspective on sexuality education
- Broadly identify areas of sexuality education appropriate for different age groups of learners
- Design the process of teacher preparedness.
- Create guidelines related to the pedagogy that should be used for sexuality education

A national consensus on the approach and content of sexuality education should be evolved by the NCERT and then adopted by the respective SCERTs with local modifications.

The committee needs to formulate a short term strategy for sexuality education while simultaneously working on a long term strategy. The short term strategy must also address the ban of materials on sex education across the country, which is in no way a solution to the existing challenges related to sexuality education.

**The process of developing the curriculum framework needs to be one that involves individuals and organizations that have the relevant experience in working on issues of gender, sexuality and adolescence.**

Given the need for the approach of sexuality education to be youth centred, equity and justice based, it is essential that the process of curriculum development draw upon those with the required perspective and expertise. It is also necessary to define expertise. All too often expertise in this area is seen to rest with professionals such as psychologists, doctors, consultants who have been working in the area of Hiv/aids or educationists who

have no particular focus in areas of gender or sexuality. It is important that expertise be assessed on the basis of the perspective and experience of those being involved in the process. A perspective of gender justice and sexual rights would be essential for those involved in designing a sexuality education curriculum framework. It is also necessary to involve experts who have worked on issues related to marginalized sexualities – i.e. on issues related to same sex desire, disability and gender transgression. It is also essential to involve representatives of women's groups and women's studies centres that have a feminist perspective. Their experiences of research and activism will provide important insights and perspectives on sexuality education. This is important given the close linkages between gender and sexuality. It is also important because women's groups have in depth understanding and experience in the realm of attitudinal change. Their involvement would be critical therefore not only in terms of content but also in terms of pedagogy, both with learners and educators during their training.

Young people themselves should also be involved in the process of developing the curriculum framework. There are today several youth groups that are engaging with issues of gender and sexuality. As is the case with the selection of other experts, it is necessary to have a selection criterion for the youth representatives. Youth, as most adults, have also been socialized in ways that that their existing perspective might not be equity and rights based. It is therefore necessary to select those youth groups/individuals whose perspective is in keeping with the desired approach of the curriculum. Young people who are marginalized in terms of sexuality such as those with disability, same sex desire and gender transgression should also be involved in the development of sexuality education materials.

**There should be material which is aimed at young people themselves** in addition to material for teachers and other educators. This is important for the same reasons that apply for any other subject area that is transacted as part of the education curriculum. Young people must have material that speaks to them directly. All learning needs to have dimensions of autonomous as well as facilitated learning. Texts that the learners can use directly as well are therefore essential.

**Sexuality education needs to be built into the curriculum, be it the school curriculum or other learning spaces aimed at out of school children.**

The approach cannot be one of an add on. If educationists believe that that sexuality education is a right that young people must have access to, then there cannot be any tokenism. It is only when sexuality education is made part of the curriculum, that it will receive the attention and resources that it requires as a area of learning, in terms of envisioning, implementation and monitoring.

**Intensive teacher training and capacity building of other educators**

Sexuality like gender is an area that demands considerable unlearning and learning processes for adults as well. Capacity building is needed for those who are part of the school system as well as other systems working with young people, such as the health

department. As a result of existing processes of socialization there are barriers to engaging with young people on issues of sexuality. Educators need to

- be equipped with information
- feel comfortable in imparting sexuality information
- learn and non judgmental
- understand and build a commitment to equity and justice in the realm of sexuality

Within the school system

- all teachers and principals need basic orientation
- teachers who will be transacting sexuality education need intensive inputs. These inputs need to be based on the recognition that sexuality education is a particular area of learning that requires specialization as do other subject areas.
- sexuality education needs to become an integral part of teachers training. This will involve a thorough review of the existing B.Ed and D.Ed curricula and providing the necessary inputs and resources to equip teacher training institutions to prepare teachers for sexuality education programs.
  - There is also a need for the educational system, in particular for the initial phase, to draw upon expertise that exists outside of the existing system in order to meet the learning needs of students and simultaneously build capacities within.

The involvement of women's groups will be essential for training of educators.

**With respect to young people with disabilities, there is a need to design special measures keeping in mind the specific needs and requirements related to disabilities.** There is a need to recognize that there are different kinds of disabilities and that different technologies can be used such as the use of braille, audio-visual aids, sign language etc.