



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

KNOW YOUR BODY – KNOW YOUR RIGHTS!

New Delhi, Delhi, September 17, 2010 — The YP Foundation, a youth-run and led organization in new Delhi, in collaboration with UNESCO, is launching The ***Know Your Body, Know Your Rights*** Campaign, a national online campaign that enables *young people to articulate and address their need for and ability to access Comprehensive Sexuality Education in India*. The aim of the campaign is to address the lack of young people's response to and garner feedback from young people across India, on the latest draft of the Adolescence Education Programme (AEP)¹, released by NCERT, UNFPA and UNESCO in 2010.

A rights-based approach to Sexuality Education seeks to equip young people with age appropriate information that is relevant to their lived realities and gives them the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values they need to acquire essential life skills and develop positive attitudes. It views 'sexuality' holistically and within the context of emotional and social development and young people's right to access accurate information². Additionally, sexuality education creates a space for a young person to clarify their own values about these issues and make choices that reflect these values, rather than being influenced by peers or other external factors. Young people need these skills in order to navigate the constantly shifting boundaries between cultural acceptability and sexual taboos.

The Adolescence Education Programme is an encouraging step towards recognizing the need for sexuality education amongst young people in India. However, with the present ban on the AEP in eight states in India, at last count, there is a critical gap, giving rise to the need to address the *form* of sexuality education being imparted to young people from these states. Education, being a state subject allows governments to implement a programme that is not entirely reflective of the needs and experiences of young people. *The absence of reflective sexuality education implies that a significant number of Indian youth reach young adulthood, a time when they are expected to largely make their own decisions regarding their sexuality, without the complete set of the tools or information to do so in an effectual manner.*

Why is Comprehensive Sexuality Education important?

Highlights

- There are 315 million people living in India between the ages of 10 and 24, their access to information and services regarding their sexuality, gender, health and rights are insufficient.
- Of the 2.5 million people currently living with HIV/AIDS, over 50 percent of all new HIV infections take place among young adults between 15-24 years, and 40% of all cases of sexually transmitted infections occur in the same age group.
- Among young women between the ages 20-24, 13% have been found to have sexual intercourse before the age of 15 and 43% before the age of 18. By the age of 18, 47% of 20-24 year old women will be married and 22% will have given birth to a child³.
- A recently conducted National Survey (2006-2007), by the Population Council and International Institute for Population Sciences on 'Youth in India' discovered that of a total sample population of over 50,000 young people, only 15% of had received any kind of sexuality education.⁴
- Of the information that is available to young people, the inconsistency in messages as well as the lack of quality control mechanisms leaves young people with extremely limited avenues where they can clarify doubts or discuss related issues.

¹ The Adolescent Education Programme was one of the key policy initiatives of NACP II. Ministry of HRD and NACO collaborated to develop this school-based programme that is implemented across 144,409 secondary and senior secondary schools with the objective of reaching out to about 33 million students within two years. AEP is implemented by the Department of Education in collaboration with the State AIDS Prevention and Control Societies.

² **INPUTS: IPPF FRAMEWORK FOR CSE, JAN 2010**

³ National Family Health Survey 2005-06, International Institute for Population Sciences and Macro International

⁴ Youth in India, Situation and Needs: 2006-2007, International Institute for Population Sciences and Population Council

- Key documents such as the UNAIDS Outcome framework and The UNESCO Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education identify sexuality education as one of the critical methods of empowering young people to enable them to tackle challenges of HIV and health for young people. 'Comprehensive Sexuality Education' is provided keeping in mind the following principles:
- Promoting the provision of comprehensive sexuality education will forward the achievement of the MDGs. Equipping young people with knowledge and life-skills related to sexual and reproductive health can greatly contribute towards achieving MDG 3 (achieving gender equality and empowering women), MDG 5 (reducing maternal mortality) and MDG 6 (combating HIV and AIDS)⁴.

Who are the stakeholders?

The campaign is being coordinated by The YP Foundation in collaboration with UNESCO, and will run online in Hindi and English across two months, from October to December, 2010, encouraging young people as well as stakeholders from across the country to submit their opinions and thoughts on the need for sexuality education; as well as their experiences, recommendations and feedback on the Adolescence Education Programme. These stakeholders include civil society, the educational and medical community, parents, teachers, donors, civil society organizations, practitioners and peer educators involved with implementing sexuality education for young people. **As a culmination to the campaign, TYPF and UNESCO will collate the responses, comments and opinions into a public report that will be circulated and shared with key stakeholders** including young people, school teachers and educators, curriculum setters and policy makers including the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT), Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), and Educationists, UN agencies addressing the AEP and implementing sexuality education in India.

Quotations:

Dr. Shankar Chowdhury, National Professional Officer, HIV/AIDS Preventive Education, UNESCO

"Effective sexuality education provides young people with age-appropriate, culturally relevant and scientifically accurate information. It also provides young people with structured opportunities to explore attitudes and values and to practice the skills they will need to be able to make informed decisions about their sexual lives. The implementation of sexuality education will bridge a crucial information gap in young people's lives that will culminate in holistic personality development."

Dr. K.G. Santhya, Senior Programme Officer, Population Council India

"Many say *our adolescents don't have sex*. The truth is that many youth in India do engage in pre-marital sex, and where it happens, it is mostly unsafe and sometimes unwanted. It is our responsibility to ensure that when pre-marital sex takes place, it is informed, safe and wanted. Definitely, we need to impart sexuality education – in the school, outside the school, for youth from an early age. It matters because youth exposed to such education are more likely than others to delay initiation and adopt safe practices. Our youth also clamour for such education; in a recent sub-national study of young people, we found that 80% of young people in the country are in favour of sexuality education."

Ms. Ishita Chaudhry, CEO, The YP Foundation

"There is something fundamentally incorrect, with health and policy systems, with governments that put the idea of shame, silence and taboo into a young child's mind by virtue of the lack of education they give him or

⁴ The linkages between the MDGs and Comprehensive Sexuality Education for Young People, The Youth Coalition Factsheet, 2010

her on basic issues regarding their body, rights, sexuality and health. Young people need to be trusted. We do not lack the ability to comprehend information given to us and can be trusted to exercise informed decision making, on the premise that unbiased information is given to us."

Jaya Sharma and Rituparna, Nirantar

"We must not forget that sexuality education is about EDUCATION, and it cannot be about moralistic, judgmental messages being forced upon young people. The purpose of education is to help young people think for themselves, not to preach. The data shows that a majority of young people are sexually active and often do not have the information or the ability to make decisions that are in their interest. Sexuality education should be located firmly in these lived realities of young people. "

About The YP Foundation

The YP Foundation is a youth run and led organization that supports and enables young people to create programmes and influence policies in the areas of gender, sexuality, health, education, the arts & governance. The organization promotes, protects and advances young people's human rights by building leadership, and strengthening youth led initiatives and movements. Founded in 2002, the organization has worked directly with 5,000 young people to set up over 200 projects in India, reaching out to 300,000 young people.

Know Your Body, Know Your Rights' (KYBBYR) is a multi year peer education, capacity building and advocacy programme run by The YP Foundation addressing young people's sexuality, gender, health and rights for the last 8 years at local, state and national levels. The programme trains young people to become Peer Educators and conducts a range of open forum programmes on issues of sexuality, gender, health and rights, and HIV & AIDS. TYPF has been running its peer education programme since its inception in 2002 and has gradually grown to work with youth organizations in over 10 states in India where the organization has focussed on building their technical capacity to execute youth led work. TYPF has hosted three National Capacity Building workshops since 2008, The Project 19 Festival (in collaboration with the Center for Human Progress), Vikalp – Searching for Alternatives (with UNESCO and UNFPA) and the Know Your Body, Know Your Rights National Training in 2010, with IPPF and support from the MacArthur Foundation. The national training forums from 2008 till date have brought together 360 young people working with issues of gender, disability, sexuality, health and education from 10 states across India.

Established in 2003, the programme grew to work with HIV/AIDS awareness and information dissemination in 2006, to addressing a framework for young people's Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights, especially the need for Comprehensive Sexuality Education from 2008.

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