

TACKLING THE TABOO:

Sexuality and gender-transformative programmes to end child, early and forced marriage and unions

Summary Report



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INTRODUCTION

Control and regulation of sexuality – in particular adolescent girls' sexuality – is a critical and often unaddressed manifestation of gender inequality that exists in different cultural contexts and communities around the world. Virtually all societies place some level of legal, religious, political, social or economic restrictions on:

- how sensuality, intimacy and pleasure are experienced
- how people engage in sexual and other intimate relationships
- how people express their sexuality and sexual orientation
- how they ensure their own sexual and reproductive health
- the exercise of sexual agency and bodily autonomy more generally.

For adolescent girls, these restrictions are exacerbated by age and gender, which are key dimensions of inequality. Adolescent girls usually lack power and agency over their own lives and are often highly constrained in their ability to make decisions for themselves.

Rooted in patriarchy, control of adolescent girls' sexuality is a driver of one of the world's most prevalent harmful practices: child, early and forced marriage and unions (CEFMU).^{1,2} CEFMU is a stark example of how women's and girls' life choices – down to the most intimate of if, whom and when to marry – are taken from them and controlled by others. There is a growing awareness among practitioners, researchers, activists and policymakers that addressing patriarchy and the control of sexuality are key to understanding and effectively combatting CEFMU.³ However, too few programmes that aim to reduce CEFMU take on the issue of sexuality as central to their work.⁴ Unless control of sexuality and harmful gender norms that subordinate the position of women and girls in society are addressed head on, CEFMU will persist.

In response to this, the CEFMU and Sexuality Programs Working Group was formed. The group commissioned an analysis to **identify gender-transformative approaches (GTAs) that work at the intersection of CEFMU and sexuality** that could potentially be adapted for other contexts, and understand the key determinants of success for these programmes.

Gender-transformative approaches (GTAs)

encourage critical awareness of gender roles and norms; promote equitable positions of girls and women in society; challenge the distribution of resources and allocation of duties between men and women; and/or address the power relationships between girls and women and others in the community, such as service providers or traditional leaders. The ultimate aim of GTAs is to achieve gender equality, empower women, girls and gender non-conforming young people, promote health and eliminate violence.

This report⁵ identifies promising gender-transformative work taking place in politically and culturally conservative contexts, including programmes led by grassroots organisations. The findings are meant to be used: 1) as a learning tool for programme implementers, 2) to present gaps and opportunities for future research, and 3) as a tool for advocates to open dialogue with leaders and policymakers about how programming designed to address CEFMU can advance girls' and women's greater sexual agency and bodily autonomy.

We would like to thank all the organisations that shared their time, expertise and information with us. Without their generosity and important work, this report would not have been possible.

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In solidarity and partnership, the CEFMU and Sexuality Programs Working Group:

American Jewish World Service (AJWS), CARE, CREA, Global Fund for Women, Girls Not Brides, GreeneWorks, International Center for Research on Women (ICRW), International Women's Health Coalition (IWHC), Nirantar Trust, Plan International, Population Council and Promundo-US.



Photo: Flemming Gernyx / Plan International

¹According to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR): Child marriage, or early marriage, is any marriage where at least one of the parties is under 18 years of age. Forced marriages are marriages in which one and/or both parties have not personally expressed their full and free consent to the union. A child marriage is considered to be a form of forced marriage, given that one and/or both parties have not expressed full, free and informed consent. Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, *Child, early and forced marriage, including in humanitarian settings*, <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Women/WRGS/Pages/ChildMarriage.aspx> (accessed April 2019). While this term has become accepted in United Nations documents to describe this varied practice, the word 'unions' is added to reflect the informal marriages or free unions that are so common in the Latin America and Caribbean region, and equivalent to marriage (adapted from Plan International).

²Approximately 650 million girls and women alive today were married before their 18th birthday (UNICEF, 2018). This statistic does not capture the full extent of the problem, as patriarchy may push women to marry long after they turn 18.

³M.E. Greene, S. Perison, J. Hart and M. Mullinax. *The centrality of sexuality for understanding child, early and forced marriage*, Washington, DC, GreeneWorks and American Jewish World Service, 2018, https://ajws.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/centrality_of_sex_final.pdf.

⁴Ibid

⁵This is a summary of a full report by the same title. The full report contains concrete examples from the range of organisations reviewed.

METHODOLOGY

The working group hired a research team, which conducted extensive information gathering and a detailed analysis to identify and understand promising and adaptable GTAs for addressing sexuality in CEFMU programmes. An initial sample of 194 programmes was narrowed to 23 organisations with programmes that fit the criteria developed in consultation with the working group.

The programmes of 23 organisations were analysed in detail using variables of interest, including a general characterisation of the participant groups, programme objectives and implementation information (curricula, community involvement, length of the programme and frequency of sessions, and programme cost), articulation of a gender-transformative perspective in programme principles, girls' engagement processes, the use of an ecological model, work around sexual and reproductive health and rights, and strategies and innovative entry points. Finally, while the research team put considerable effort into identifying programmes from Latin America and the Caribbean, only a few of the organisations originally long-listed responded to our queries. This is unfortunate as the rates of early marriage, and especially informal unions, are high in the region. Additionally, the report does not focus specifically on humanitarian settings.

First-cut parameters

- Highlights/targets girls (may also target others, including transgender and gender non-conforming children and youths, but at least some of the programming is specifically designed for girls and young women only).⁶
- Focussed on promoting autonomous decision-making.
- Gender-transformative,⁷ with an intersectional approach.
- Anchored in the rights of girls and young women.
- Grounded in the complexity of girls' lives, i.e. focussed on the unique characteristics of the girls with whom they are working and based on an understanding of their particular needs and characteristics.
- Highlights voices of girls. For example, engaging girls (and other programme participants, which may include transgender and gender non-conforming children and youths) in programme evaluation or review, and ideally in programme development. Creates spaces for girls to express themselves safely.
- Sensitive to particularities of the community in which it is located and engages community stakeholders, including with men and boys as partners for gender equality and challenging harmful masculinities.
- Considers linkages across social ecology (i.e. family, community and society-level barriers), including structural and legal barriers, harmful gender norms and cultural expectations, either as interlinked programming or through referrals.
- Addresses sexual and reproductive health.

Second-cut parameter

The programme works explicitly on CEFMU



Photo: Parav / Plan International

⁶Population Council, 'Girl-Centered Program Design: a toolkit to develop, strengthen and expand adolescent girls' programs.' 2010. The toolkit notes that many communities lack programming that is designed for girls. Rather, girls are expected to participate in general youth programming, but such programming often does not meet their needs or focus on their gender-specific experiences. The toolkit further comments that "Girls tend to receive the maximum benefit when the programs they participate in are girl-only because they feel free to open up, express themselves, ask any questions and take on leadership roles that they might not otherwise."

⁷We drew upon the *Girls Not Brides* definition of 'gender-transformative'.

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KEY FINDINGS: TACKLING THE TABOO THROUGH GENDER-TRANSFORMATIVE APPROACHES

The findings reflect elements of promising gender-transformative approaches employed by organisations in the review to address the control of girls' sexuality in the context of CEFMU.

A cross-cutting theme that emerged was **backlash** – and the various ways organisations using a gender-transformative approach to address adolescent sexuality and CEFMU grapple with, overcome and learn from backlash in their work. This includes using strategic entry points for recruitment, dialoguing with parents and community leaders, and engaging men and boys as allies in the journey towards gender equality. While even well-articulated programmes that involved parents and communities experienced some form of backlash, it can be argued that this iterative and complex journey is already 'transformative', as it shakes the foundations upon which unequal gender norms are established.

Findings: Key elements of GTAs for CEFMU

- Sexuality curricula: gender-sensitive, context-specific, flexible and relatable
- Centring girls as agents of change
- Working with men and boys to advance gender equality
- Careful selection, training, and ongoing support of programme facilitators
- Addressing intersectionality: understanding the complexities; reaching the most vulnerable
- Grounding programmes in local contexts
- Collaborating with families, communities and local stakeholders
- Innovative strategies for recruitment and retention
- Monitoring, evaluation and learning – mixed methods
- Ensuring sustainability for social change



Photo: Josh Estey / CARE

Promising approaches: Elements of programme design and implementation

- **Sexuality curricula: Gender-sensitive, context-specific, flexible and relatable**

A fundamental aim of gender-transformative approaches is to challenge the social norms around gender and sexuality. Curricula focussed on social transformation emphasise political and social change, and use information and teaching as vehicles for it, often within the context of a broader programme. Addressing the control of adolescent sexuality from a rights framework that includes issues such as consent, choice and pleasure is very challenging in many contexts. Many organisations and programmes in this review support participants to feel more comfortable speaking about sexuality, work to dispel notions of 'normal-abnormal' and move away from feelings of guilt or judgement. Maturity, responsibility, consent, mutuality and respect were touched upon by all programmes, though to different degrees and through a wide range of methods and strategies. Most programmes operated from a rights-based, feminist perspective and discussed the difference between sex and gender. Some programmes addressed sexual orientation and gender identity, pleasure and desire, though these issues were not covered by all programmes and are likely an area that needs to be strengthened in the field.

- **Girls as agents of change: Centring their participation, leadership and perspectives**

Young people need to be recognised as crucial partners in sexual and reproductive health interventions, and not treated merely as recipients or beneficiaries. Indeed, girls' ability to speak up for their own rights played a major part in the achievement of some of the organisations' results; once they asserted their own rights, it was generally easier for others, such as their parents, to support their decisions. However, as The YP Foundation pointed out, "young people don't just run on motivation and fresh air"; strong support networks are needed, as well as strategies that include connecting participants and graduates with further learning and development opportunities.

Beyond training young people and strengthening their individual leadership skills, many organisations noted that collectivising girls to take joint action has empowered them to voice their opinions and concerns at the community level and enabled them to jointly work out solutions to their problems. Once girls form a critical mass and are seen in public behaving according to new social norms, these new

platforms can sustain other activities and efforts that benefit other girls and women in their communities.

- **Working with men and boys to advance gender equality**

Challenging inequitable gender norms that privilege men and boys is at the core of successful gender-transformative programming. Besides working with girls and women, most approaches in this review not only involved, educated and empowered men and boys, but also challenged them to understand and reject their privilege, and to hold other men and boys accountable for their actions towards girls and women. To achieve this, programmes tapped into young men's interests, whether through interventions of interest to them (e.g. sports) or content and messaging around key issues facing them (e.g. employment).

- **Careful selection, training and ongoing support of programme facilitators based on clear and fully agreed principles**

The attitudes and aptitudes of teachers, mentors or facilitators around content areas such as sex and gender are key to the successful implementation of the programmes. The selection process should include assessment of a candidate's ability and willingness to teach the curriculum. For example, they must be fully accepting of different aspects of sexuality and should address any prejudices or discomfort they may have beforehand (e.g. with regard to homosexuality or sex before marriage). Before a programme starts, some organisations conduct "values clarification" exercises to ensure whoever is delivering the curriculum fully embraces feminist principles of equal and inalienable rights. While "staff transformation" is embedded in the theory of change of a few organisations and programmes in this review, overall gender-transformative training and ongoing support

of teachers, mentors and facilitators remains a weak component of many organisations.

- **Addressing intersectionality: Understanding the complexities, reaching the most vulnerable**
CEFMU affects girls across of different socio-economic strata, but it is often more prevalent amongst girls facing multiple deprivations, including the poorest girls, those out of school and those facing displacement.^{8,9,10} Programmes that incorporate GTAs address these intersectionalities in their CEFMU work to more deeply engage with the problem and transform social and gender norms in order to promote sustainable change. Most of the organisations in this review did not explicitly say they employed



Photo: Russell Watkins / DfID

A fundamental aim of gender-transformative approaches is to challenge the social norms around gender and sexuality.

⁸A. Erulkar, 'Early marriage, marital relations and intimate partner violence in Ethiopia,' *International Perspectives on Sexual and Reproductive Health*, 2013, 39, 1, 6–13, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/23584463>.

⁹Women's Refugee Commission, *A Girl No More: The Changing Norms of Child Marriage in Conflict*, NY, Women's Refugee Commission, 2016, <https://www.womensrefugeecommission.org/girls/resources/1311-girl-no-more>.

¹⁰N. Otoo-Oyortey, & S. Pobi, 'Early Marriage and Poverty: Exploring Links and Key Policy Issues,' *Gender and Development*, 2003, 11(2), 42–51.

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intersectional approaches, but they did mention cross-cutting topics in curricula, recruitment processes and methodologies to reach the most marginalised communities. For instance, programmes took into account demographic aspects when selecting participants, including school enrollment, poverty and displacement status. Sexuality programming for adolescent girls and boys with disabilities was identified as an important gap.

- **Grounding programmes in local contexts**

One of the main characteristics of gender-transformative work is the awareness of diversity and understanding what it means to be male or female, of a certain age, sexual orientation, ethnicity and class, among other factors, in a given social and cultural context. Many organisations in this review undertook formative research ahead of programme design and implementation to understand the specific local drivers of CEFMU (including gender norms) and the ways in which sexuality is understood in a community. In addition, in-depth contextual analysis helped to gain community trust and develop tailored strategies. Hiring staff who know the values and practices of their community was also instrumental in building trust, gaining community buy-in and driving change. This is especially important when addressing issues around sexuality, to minimise backlash against the language and approaches used during programme implementation.

- **Collaborating with families, communities and local stakeholders**

This review highlights the importance of taking an ecological approach to addressing the drivers of CEFMU, including an explicit focus on necessary structural changes. Established networks and trust within communities were widely cited as indispensable assets in the implementation of activities that address sensitive issues. When working with adolescent girls, who seldom have a voice in the public sphere, it is critical to create an enabling community environment through community mobilisation and involvement. Parents and adult community members are gatekeepers to changing the social institutions that support CEFMU and hamper girls' bodily integrity and sexual agency. Securing their support from the outset in many cases helped reduce resistance. Similarly, working directly with religious leaders, local leaders and opinion leaders from the community – where possible – was found to be particularly important.

- **Innovative strategies for recruitment and retention**

Organisations working in highly conservative and religious settings tended to use different entry points to overcome the various barriers to girls' ability to fully participate in their programmes, including introducing the topic of sexuality through more general or indirect lenses. This review found storytelling, sports, art and skill-building activities to be the main strategies used by the organisations reviewed to increase participation and community recognition. Additionally, dynamic platforms such as radio and multi-day events with activities such as competitions or debates offered tools to engage young people directly with their communities and motivated their attendance. Finally, the organisations also included strategies for their adolescent girls to build skills, overcome financial barriers and gain access to resources, including by building business and financial skills (e.g. book keeping) and facilitating access to savings schemes and credit.

- **Monitoring, evaluation and learning**

A core set of monitoring, evaluation and learning capacities were deemed essential to the sustained development, monitoring and implementation of integrated programming over the long term. These include monitoring and evaluation (M&E) expertise, including participatory approaches. Learning-focussed M&E provides a basis for course-correction of ongoing programmes. Smaller, grassroots organisations are often unable to take on quasi-experimental evaluations, but instead have developed innovative approaches to capture change. The need for greater support and capacity building for smaller organisations to conduct M&E was reported. Further development of and support in applying measures that capture norm-change beyond the age of marriage, including empowerment and agency over time, were also reported as necessary to track progress related to the root causes of CEFMU.

- **Ensuring sustainability for lasting social change**

Patriarchal gender norms and conceptions of sexuality are deeply rooted and normalised, making the process of ensuring sustainable change around sexuality complex. Achieving sustainability requires multi-pronged approaches and strategies that involve deep work with communities, governments and

other stakeholders. Successful examples of sustainability in this review included working with health and education ministries to institutionalise elements of programming and curricula, and working with local political institutions to provide continued support for local programmes.



Photo: Priscilla Mora Flores / Girls Not Brides

One of the main characteristics of gender-transformative work is the awareness of diversity and understanding what it means to be male or female, of a certain age, sexual orientation, ethnicity and class, among other factors, in a given social and cultural context.

RECOMMENDATIONS

A comprehensive conceptual framework and common measures of success are needed

The lack of a common conceptual framework on the link between sexuality and CEFMU and agreed-upon measures of success may have negative implications for coherent and effective programming as well as donors' willingness to fund sexuality work. Further research and understanding of the interdependence and linkages between sexuality, rights, autonomy, poverty, class and caste in the context of CEFMU are needed. It is important to prioritise indicators based on access to services and autonomous decision-making in addition to age of marriage, because age-focussed measures do not account for the root causes of CEFMU.

Discussion, research and guidance needed on criminalisation of adolescent sexuality

This conceptual framework should include the role of legal frameworks in governing sexuality for all people, with particular attention to age and gender controls. In recent years, a number of governments have increased the legal age of marriage to 18 years, and, in some cases, have also raised the age of consent to 18. Conflating the age of marriage and age of consent risks curbing adolescents' agency and can stigmatise or criminalise individuals who have sex before marriage. A lack of clarity around such laws can make health providers more reluctant to provide services to adolescent girls. Greater examination and evaluation around the impacts of laws on adolescents is needed.¹¹

Recommendations for programme implementers

Design, implement, monitor and evaluate gender-transformative programming that addresses the root causes of CEFMU, including patriarchal control of adolescent girls' sexuality.

The analysis found that relatively few programmes address sexuality in their programming from a rights-based, gender-transformative approach. This is a missed opportunity to tackle the fundamental drivers of this harmful practice in a way that has the potential to create lasting change. More programmes should address sexual and reproductive health and rights, including sexual orientation and gender identity, take a thorough and nuanced approach to understanding consent, as well as adolescent girls' choice, desire and pleasure. This should be part of a comprehensive, multi-sectoral approach to addressing CEFMU that includes enhancing girls' access to resources, skills, health care and education.



Photo: CARE Bangladesh

Ensure CEFMU programming places girls at the centre, building their skills, perspective and agency to open up alternative life options beyond child, early and forced marriage and unions. Programmes should invest in building girls' practical skills as well as their political consciousness. They should support them to recognise, analyse and deconstruct the social norms that place women and girls at a disadvantage in all societies, and to envision possibilities for themselves other than CEFMU. Girl collectives can help girls find and use their collective power to advocate for issues important to them. Interventions that support girls' agency and put them in control of their own life should be seen as a fundamental component of any CEFMU programme.

Work with men and boys to check and challenge their own privilege and power and to become active supporters of gender equality. Empowering women and girls to envision change in

their own lives does not make it their responsibility to challenge patriarchy and dismantle harmful social norms on their own. Programming should creatively engage men and boys with methodologies that support them to recognise, question and reject their unequal share of power in society and control over women and girls, and to hold other men and boys accountable.

Build strong relationships and strategic partnerships with stakeholders – family, community and institutions – to address norm change at all levels. Sexuality is a relational phenomenon based on power structures; overcoming its control and regulation cannot be addressed without involving individuals, families, communities and institutions. Structural approaches that work at the different levels of the ecological model to decrease gender inequality and increased sexual autonomy are essential.

¹¹This is summarised in the following brief: <https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Age-of-Marriage-brief.pdf>

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Ground programmes in local contexts.

Organisations seeking to transform social norms need to take the time and make the investment in understanding local contexts, securing community buy-in in a way that does not compromise the centrality of women and girls and tailoring programmes to be meaningful in a given location. This includes hiring and training local staff and supporting them to uphold feminist values.

Take an intersectional approach. It is imperative to understand sexuality in the context of power, in particular along the various axes and dimensions of power and inequality – such as gender, age, race, caste, class. It is also important to recognise how CEFMU often affects the most marginalised women and girls. Programmes should be inclusive in both their analysis and recruitment, with particular attention to groups that are often overlooked in sexuality programming, especially girls and boys with disabilities, those out of school, and married girls and young mothers.

Recommendations for researchers

Share existing short- and long-term metrics for assessing social norm change and impacts of CEFMU programming. Furthermore, develop new ones to fill gaps, including for demonstrating causality in programme interventions and shifts in attitudes and beliefs related to sexuality, gender equality and CEFMU.¹² Measurements of success should go beyond tracking age of marriage to measure changes in attitudes and perceptions, girls' agency, outlook and other indicators of social transformation and empowerment.

More capacity is needed to strengthen M&E processes and methodologies that link specific components of high-quality sexuality programming with outcomes and strengthen the evidence base, including support and capacity building for smaller organisation's ability to evaluate their work.

Funders should support long-term, flexible approaches to gender-transformative programming that addresses sexuality.



¹²Select sources for measuring norm change: Gender Equitable Men (GEM) scale developed by Population Council and Promundo, Making women count, 2013, <https://promundoglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/Measuring-Gender-Attitude-Using-Gender-Equitable-Men-Scale.pdf>; Plan International developed an Index of Acceptability, User guide Index of Acceptability, https://www.alignplatform.org/sites/default/files/2018-06/ARO-User_Guide_Index_of_Acceptability_ACMI-Final-IO-Eng-nov15%20reduced.pdf; The Attitudes, Practice, and Social Norms Survey by Voices for Change, Quantitative and Qualitative Results from Voices for Change Baseline Study, 2015, <http://www.v4c-nigeria.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Attitudes-Practices-and-Social-Norms-Survey-Report-FINAL-September-2015.pdf>

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Photo: Vincent Tremeau / Plan International

Recommendations for funders

Develop guidelines/criteria that encourage grantees to take gender-transformative approaches to sexuality and CEFMU. Funders should prioritise support for approaches that recognise and address the underlying drivers – patriarchy and gender inequality, and control of girls' and women's sexuality – in their work with adolescent girls and on CEFMU.

Support long-term, flexible approaches to gender-transformative programming addressing sexuality. It is important for funders to recognise the long-term, and sometimes non-linear, nature of social norm change, and be prepared to provide multi-year, flexible support to programme implementers.

Direct funding towards programming all levels. Foundations and other donors should prioritise funding to multi-level and multi-sectoral programmes (with collectives, communities and service provision at the local and regional levels) that address the relational aspect of sexuality.

Recommendations for advocates and young activists

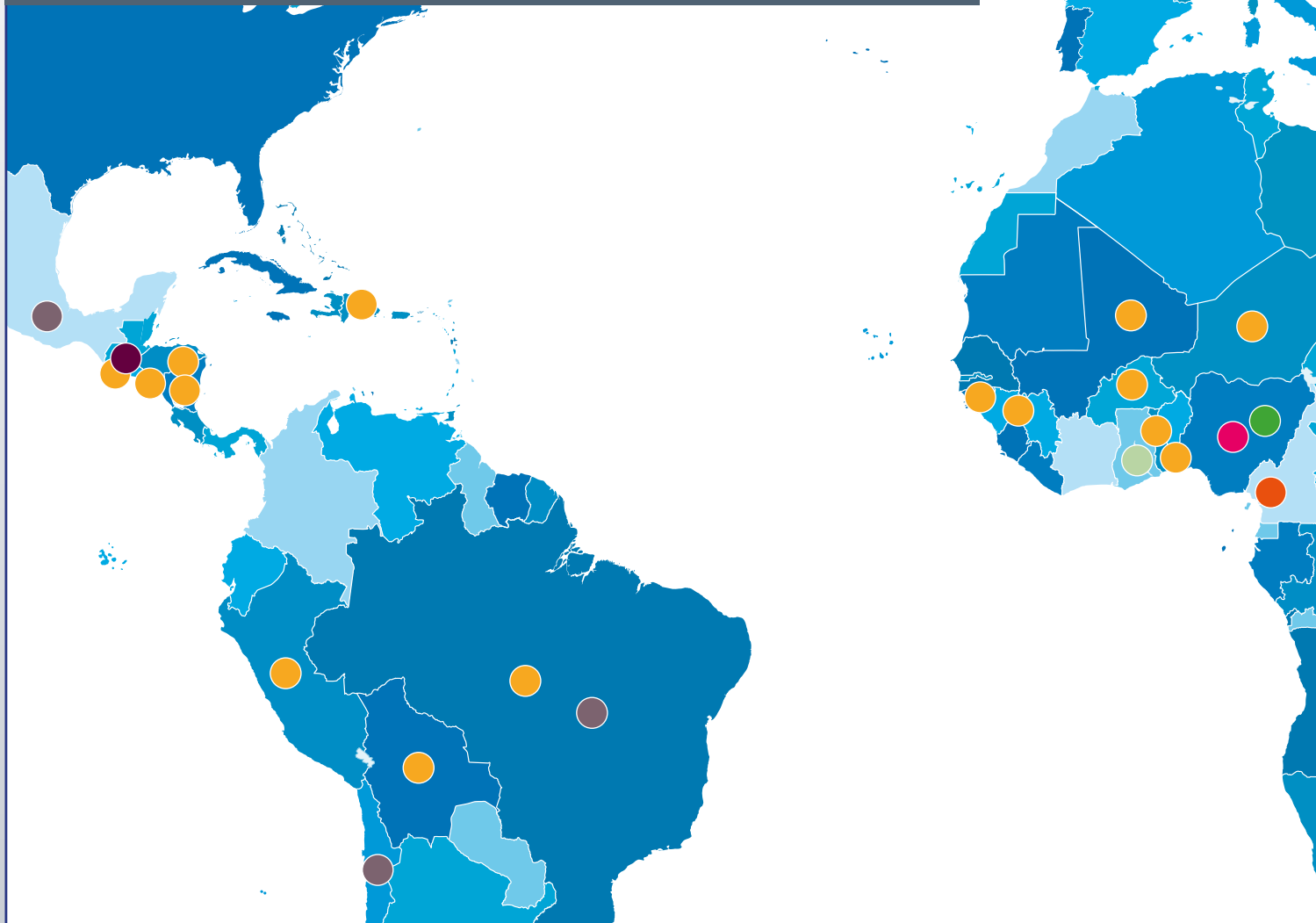
Highlight issues of CEFMU and sexuality within a broader framework of development and human rights agendas. For policymakers, it is important to connect CEFMU work to larger development goals, including education, HIV and reproductive health, and to open space for negotiations and collaborations across sectors.

Empower girls to advocate for themselves. The voices of young activists are key assets for designing new programmes and public policies to end CEFMU. Encouraging girls in particular, and strengthening their capacity to bring their messages to the public not only empowers them, but also is a powerful tool for impacting decision-makers.

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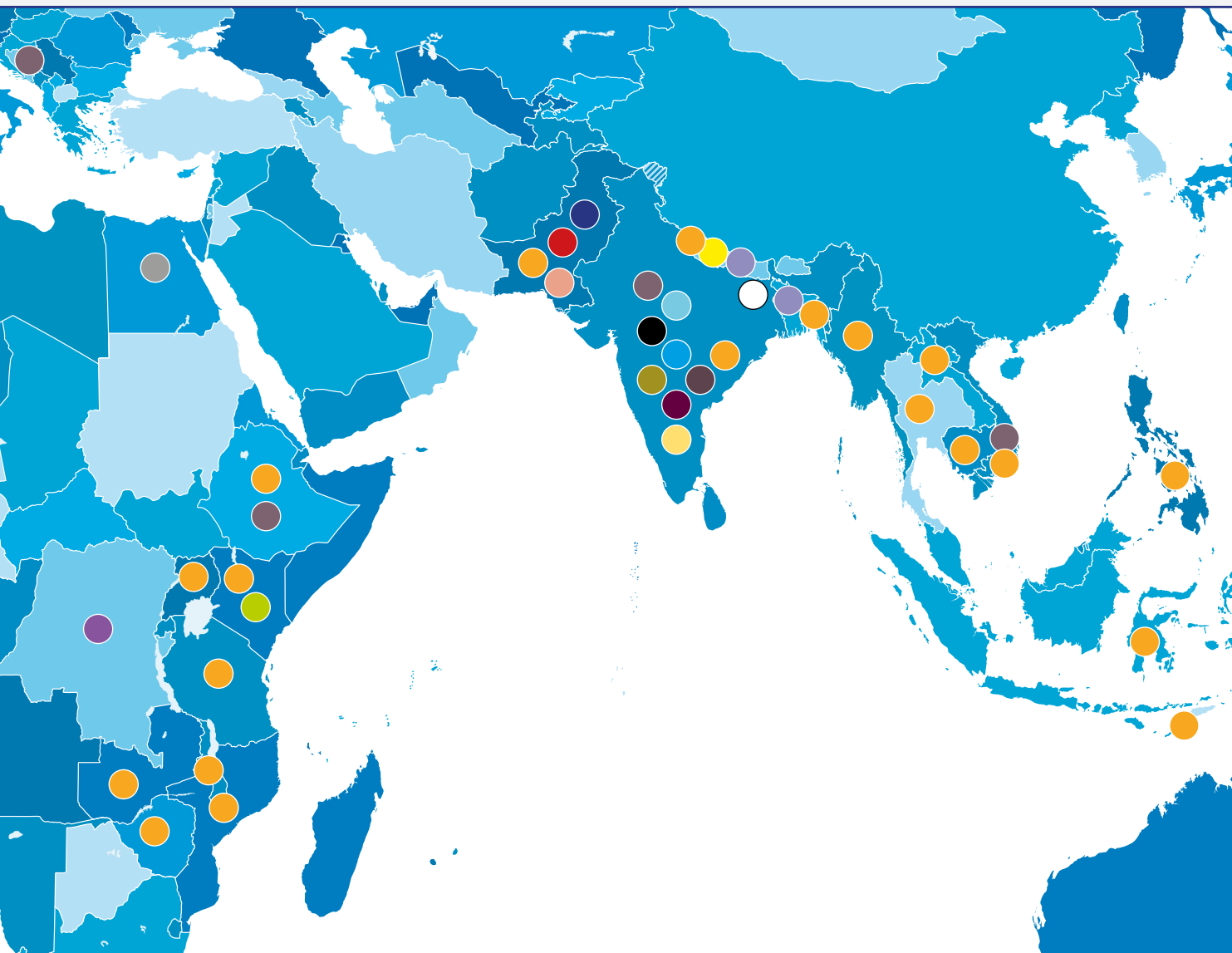
GEOGRAPHIC LOCATIONS OF ORGANISATIONS AND PROGRAMMES ANALYSED IN THIS REPORT



Organisation(s) and programme name(s)	Country
● Aahung	Pakistan
● Association pour la Promotion de l'Autonomie et des Droits de la Jeune Fille/Femme (APAD)	Cameroon
● Aura Freedom International	Nepal
● Aawaaz-e-Niswaan	India
● CARE – Tipping Point and TESFA programmes	Nepal, Bangladesh and Ethiopia
● Caritas, CEDPA and Population Council – Ishraq Program	Egypt
● ICRW, CORO and TISS – GEMS programme	India
○ CREA – It's My Body programme	India
● ICRW – Development Initiative on Supporting Healthy Adolescence (DISHA)	India
● Girls' Power Initiative (GPI)	Nigeria
● Institute for Health Management, Pachod (IHMP) – Maharashtra Life Skills Program	India
● International Centre for Reproductive Health and Sexual Rights (INCREASE)	Nigeria

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Organisation(s) and programme name(s)	Country
● Peace Foundation	Pakistan
● Plan International – 18+ and Yes, I do programmes	Global
● Population Council – Abriendo Oportunidades programme	Guatemala
● Promundo – H I M I D programmes	Global
● Rutgers World Population Foundation (WPF) – Awareness to Action programme	Pakistan
● Sarathi Development Foundation – Saloni project	India
● Solidarité des Jeunes Filles Socioprofessionnelle (SOJFEP)	Democratic Republic of Congo
● Trust for Indigenous Culture and Health (TICAH) – Our Bodies, Our Choices programme	Kenya
● VACHA Trust	India
● Youth Harvest Foundation Ghana	Ghana
● The YP Foundation	India

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The following case studies were developed to highlight gender-transformative approaches undertaken by grassroots organisations in diverse geographic contexts.



CASE STUDY:

TRUST FOR INDIGENOUS CULTURE AND HEALTH (TICAH) – KENYA

General organisational overview

TICAH is a Kenyan-led grassroots organisation founded in 2003 to enhance the positive links among health and cultural knowledge, practice, belief, ritual and artistic expression. Since then, TICAH has focussed on **breaking the culture of silence around sexuality** and on challenging stigma and discrimination. TICAH is a national leader on advocacy to improve laws and policies on sexual health and rights nationally and internationally. It focusses on providing comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) for people of all ages, safe birth, safe abortion services and contraception, and on ending harmful traditional practices such as child, early and forced marriage and unions (CEFMU) and female genital mutilation. Keeping the indigenous wisdom at heart, their holistic and intersectional approaches range from “art with a heart”, to rituals and meditation, to supporting inspiring community leadership groups.

Participant population

TICAH works with groups of adolescents and youths in urban and peri-urban areas of Nairobi. These include: boys and girls from primary and secondary school (ages 12-15 and 15-19, respectively); out-of-school girls (ages 15-19) who are more likely to experience drug abuse, sexual abuse and other forms of violence within the community; young mothers (ages 15-19), girls and young women living with HIV; and university students (ages 19-26). TICAH's participants come from environments affected by high levels of gender-based violence, including sexual violence, and some of them are violence survivors. Therefore, the organisation places a strong emphasis on creating safe spaces and upholding confidentiality.

Key features of TICAH's work: Pro-choice, holistic and bold sexuality education and advocacy

TICAH acknowledges that young Kenyans often lack places to safely ask questions or talk about their sexual feelings in a non-judgemental setting. To overcome these limitations, TICAH works with adolescents and young people to help them discover information related to sexuality so that they can enter their sexual lives with the confidence and skills to make conscious choices. TICAH creates an environment that acknowledges diversity and

celebrates everyone's right to a satisfying intimate life. Their wide and deep remit goes beyond sexuality education, covering many aspects of a young person's identity and the communities around them, such as spirituality, traditional wisdom and art. As such, their strategies are holistic and diverse, seeking to bring local wisdom, ancient and new, to their quest for healing and justice.



We seek to learn from indigenous wisdom wherever we can. Our focus is on good relationships, healthy households and community action.

TICAH staff member



These strategies include awareness creation around concepts such as contraception and safe abortion, leadership development, advocacy around sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), changing social norms and attitudes around sexuality, life skills development and collective action.

Featured programme: Our Bodies, Our Choices

Their Our Bodies, Our Choices programme covers all of TICAH's work around sexuality and is mainly focussed on education, counselling and advocacy.

Ensuring that young people feel safe, and crafting non-judgemental and supportive – “sacred” – spaces for them to share experiences, is core to their curriculum and guides most of their sexuality work. It is composed of a manual, scenario cards and educational posters that have been carefully developed and beautifully designed, and that present all the information in English and Swahili.

TICAH's compelling materials aim to break the

What are my sexual fantasies?
What do I desire?
What do babies have to do with sex?
Mawazo yangu ya kisiri kuhusu ngono ni yapa?
Nina tamani nini katika ngono?
Kupata watoto kunahusiana vipi na ngono?



What does it take to ask for what I want?
Am I clear about my own choices?
Itanichukua nini kuuliza ninacho kitaka?
Ninazijua vizuri chaguo nilizo nazo?



barriers that exist in Kenya for talking about **sexuality, sexual orientation, desire, health and relationships**. Through the curriculum, participants engage in open conversations related to their own personal stories, the effects of patriarchy in their development, or the connections between **sex and power**, among others. Conversations to explore these different topics allow the participants to share their stories about losing their virginity, engaging in sex work or around personal sexual fantasies.

TICAH's model of “**leading from behind**” includes training adult facilitators, but having the sessions guided by the young people who are the participants. TICAH provides all participants with opportunities to conduct their own research, facilitate and give information on different topics, with the facilitator supporting these efforts and ensuring that the group has factual and accurate information. This boosts the participants' self-esteem and communication skills. In addition, serving as a peer educator

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improves their leadership skills. The organisation also provides safe spaces for the trainers to share their experiences and learn from each other on a monthly basis.

TICAH seeks partnerships with others to expand their work around sexuality. For example, they have sought collaborations with an adolescent sexuality magazine to gather questions related to sexuality from TICAH's students and publish the answers in their nation-wide editions. They also partnered with a dance group to create "I'm Sexy, Too", a series of theatre stories about the sexual lives of young women living with HIV. The organisation operates a reproductive health hotline called **Aunty Jane Hotline**. It works with a network of 133 service providers that provide stigma-free, rights-based information and counselling to married and unmarried women.

Recognising that "beauty is powerful", TICAH has also used innovative strategies to engage and support their programme participants. For instance, they use art and meditation as therapy to work with survivors of violence.

Complementary to their Our Bodies, Our Choices programme is TICAH's **Teaching Calendar**, designed to stimulate learning and discussion in the communities where they work. The TICAH Calendar is filled with Kenyan art, provocative quotes and events in history. Each month includes "healthy seeds" in the form of simple herbal recipes for common illnesses, values to discuss, history to learn from, questions to consider in groups, clubs and classrooms, and excerpts from the Kenyan Constitution and other laws.

Their advocacy work mainly focusses on inclusion of **comprehensive sexuality education in schools**. TICAH has joined different alliances and caucuses with the same goal. There are several recorded wins as the government has made some progress to include it in the national life skills curriculum. TICAH has also joined other partners in pushing for the reinstatement of the standards and guidelines on safe abortion that were withdrawn three years ago. At the time of writing, the court process was ongoing.

TICAH carries out **values clarification exercises** on different sexuality topics, including abortion, with community leaders such as chiefs and religious leaders, including imams and priests, among other community members.

Evidence of results

TICAH uses questionnaires, focus group discussions and collection of stories for their monitoring and evaluation. They also use longitudinal, case control or cross-sectional studies with control groups, stories of change and observation to evaluate their programmes.



I have lived my entire life knowing that abortion was unacceptable, especially as a religious leader. Clarifying my values in this workshop actually made me see how women needed information and services to prevent unwanted pregnancies but also to access safe abortion. I was so excited when I got trained and learnt of all these things.

Religious leader, Athi River



Elements of success at a glance

1. TICAH's culture: the spirit of "leading from behind"
2. Team work and ongoing support to the team members.
3. Creativity and use of arts as therapy and source of inspiration.
4. Building relationship with the community
5. Engaging spirituality in a sexuality-positive way

Results

TICAH reports having rolled out their curriculum to 300 primary school students, 300 secondary school students, 100 out-of-school girls, 60 young mothers and 2000 university students, to date.

Furthermore, eight schools where they have worked imparting their sexuality programme have incorporated their sessions as part of the school programme.

A number of changes in information and attitudes in the girls participating their sexuality programme have also been reported. The topic on consent (especially within relationships), for example, opened the eyes of so many girls who had largely ignored their rights. They also report increases in self-esteem, improved relations with peers, and better awareness on procedures to follow in the event of sexual abuse.

While they do not yet have concrete evaluation tools to measure the impact of the work with religious leaders, TICAH reports that the values clarification exercises have been pivotal to achieve change in attitudes, beliefs and behaviours of community and religious leaders in observable ways.

Challenges and opportunities

TICAH has not worked extensively around CEFMU to date; however, it is beginning to expand its work in this area and has initiated contacts with the Maasai community in the outskirts of Nairobi.

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All photos courtesy of TICAH

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CASE STUDY:

INTERNATIONAL CENTRE FOR SEXUAL REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS (INCREASE), NIGERIA

General organisational overview

INCREASE is a grassroots organisation that has been working in Nigeria for several decades to create a political, social and cultural environment that is conducive to expanded access to sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) information and services. The organisation advocates for the sexual health and rights of society's most disenfranchised groups, including adolescents and young people, women living under Shari'a law, sexual minorities, survivors of sexual violence, sex workers, and widowed women living with HIV/AIDS.

INCREASE operates in a complex country context – which includes Boko Haram threats and government curfews and lock downs – to increase girls' self-esteem and give them a greater voice and agency to decide their future.

INCREASE's Executive Director, Dorothy Akenova, is an acclaimed feminist and women's rights activist, who personifies the potential of change.

Participant population

INCREASE works primarily with adolescents aged 11-19 years, approximately 25 per cent of whom are boys and young men, to reflect on and change harmful norms and masculinities in boys and to prepare girls to confidently interact with them. The girls and boys included in INCREASE's work are unmarried, in and out of school, girls and boys with



disabilities and orphans, all of whom are at risk of being married young and taken out of school or leaving school due to pregnancy.

Key features of INCREASE's work: Addressing sexuality through a gender transformative lens

The culture of silence on issues of sexuality cuts across all communities in Nigeria, and patriarchal conceptions are deeply engrained in the country. The situation is aggravated by campaigns by groups that reinforce a negative and sometimes confrontational attitude among Nigerians towards information and education on SRHR, with devastating effects on Nigerians' human rights.

Against this backdrop, INCREASE employs **four main strategies**:

- **Conducting research** to generate evidence and contest the resistance to and denial of reproductive and sexual rights, including by using research to educate leaders and debunk myths.
- **Increasing access to information** and awareness through behavioural change communication.

- **Advocating** to influence policies and laws to be gender sensitive and to protect sexual and reproductive rights principles.
- **Establishing linkages with providers** to make legal services accessible and affordable to individuals and groups, especially adolescents, women living under Shari'a law and sexual minorities.

They have also worked extensively with health workers to encourage them to be youth-friendly, disability-friendly and LGBTI- (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex) friendly, and to address stigma and discrimination against people living with HIV/AIDS. In this regard, they also build a support network that assures protection for young people, LGBTI people and people with disabilities, and they often facilitate access to services to those at risk of abuse, including by covering costs.

Featured programme: Girls Leadership Programme

INCREASE delivers its trainings through the Girls Leadership Programme. They use Sara Longwe's analytical and change model to move girls from being passive recipients of services to being advocates who hold governments accountable to



In the conservative North where we work, gender identities and roles are straight jacketed in conformity with patriarchal values. This means that girls are socialised as second-class citizens.

INCREASE staff member



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commitments, including domesticating international treaties; who articulate policies, review or promote laws that protect the rights of girls and women; and who monitor budgetary allocations and disbursement.

Their programme team identifies fully with **feminist principles** of equal and inalienable rights and undergoes values clarification exercises as part of their training. INCREASE builds the capacity of their facilitators on sexual reproductive health and rights, life competency and leadership skills, gender, principles of feminism, advocacy, facilitation skills and psychosocial support and counselling. **Peer educators**, who are alumni of the Girls Leadership Programme, support the facilitators during sessions, serving as mentors to the participants. Various facilitation methods are employed such as small lectures, group work, presentations, role plays, experience sharing and use of visual and audio-visual materials. Alumni also meet periodically with programme participants to share experiences, linking participants and graduates with other learning and development opportunities, creating a support network the girls can trust and count on.

Programme sessions take place in a centre that **offers a safe space** in which girls can express themselves freely – including choosing what clothing they wear – and where interactions with other participants, including the few male peers, can occur without fear of violence or the threat of it. Besides being a safe space where INCREASE's curriculum is delivered, the centre also serves as a space to participate in **dance, drama, singing and other activities**.

INCREASE's curriculum was developed in 2011 and borrows heavily from the comprehensive sexuality education training manual published by Action Health Inc. and the All in One curriculum, the Adolescent Sexuality Training Manual of the Federal Ministry of Health of Nigeria and its clinical protocol. The core components are **human rights, sexual reproductive health, leadership skills, life competency skills, gender analysis, advocacy, and understanding sexual orientation and gender identity**. The sessions include anatomy and physiology, sexuality and pleasure, body image, contraception, pregnancy, HIV, sexually transmitted infections, the full mix of contraception, stigma and discrimination, gender analysis, gender-based violence, girls' rights, CEFMU and intersectionality. As part of their focus on leadership, activities also focus on strengthening participants' negotiation, refusal and pressure resistance skills, for example using case study scenarios that lead participants to stronger responses and attitudes.

Acknowledging the importance of working across the different levels of the ecological model, the programme also mobilises participants to **involve parents and teachers**, including through inter-



generational dialogues. INCREASE also organises an outreach programme to rural communities in order to sensitise villagers on SRHR issues through theatrical performances and question and answer sessions. The outreach visits build rapport between INCREASE and community leaders for continued partnership.

INCREASE's advocacy work is largely articulated around an open forum where officials and **religious and local leaders (and also parents and teachers) who want to participate can engage in discussions** together to strengthen their commitment. The forum is also a key tool for recruiting adult champions who understand the role of SRHR and gender equality and, as a result, can help to generate change in their communities. INCREASE also invites parents, teachers, friends, alumni, policymakers and the media to its annual graduation ceremony to generate public awareness.

INCREASE also addresses participation in decision-making at home and in public places and stimulates reporting harmful practices, including sexual abuse and CEFMU through their Hajara Usman Girls' Leadership Programme. In fact, INCREASE's response to cases of abuse is a cornerstone of their programme and a key element of success. They offer direct support or referrals to health, psychological and legal support and shelters for those participants suffering violence or needing SRHR services, and they also report the perpetrator to the police.



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Since 2011 INCREASE has mobilised 255 girls through their leadership programme.

Evidence of results

INCREASE uses a logical framework evaluation tool to monitor and evaluate the progress and impact of the training before, during and after completion. INCREASE also conducts regular evaluation and assessments with participants. They also evaluate the number of girls that delay marriage.

INCREASE involves young people in the design of intervention strategies through regular evaluation and assessments of how they are learning the issues and putting the skills learned into use in their lives.

Results

Since 2011 INCREASE has mobilised 255 girls through their leadership programme. Their evaluations show the following results:

The content of the pre-programme tests demonstrate that virtually all of the girls had high internalisation of patriarchal values. For example,

girls made either written or oral (for those with weak writing skills) statements such as these: "Boys are more brilliant than girls"; "A Woman's place is in the kitchen"; "While dating, a boy beats a girl as a proof of love"; "Woman who reports her husband for battering is not a good wife"; "There is no such thing as rape in marriage".

Upon completion of the programme, girls were conversant with the human reproductive anatomy and physiology, which met with a lot of resistance initially among the participants. They could facilitate presentations and their vocabulary had grown. Many of them were holding leadership positions in their school or in their church communities, and their school performance had improved

1. Girls reporting high self-esteem and confidence to aspire and take on leadership roles in their schools and communities increased.
2. Integrated CSE into the school curriculum.
3. Increased number of girls and women reporting cases of violence to INCREASE.
4. Increased number of girls who have chosen to delay marriage and have the skills to do so.
5. Improved sensitisation and awareness created on the adverse effect of CEFMU to rural areas of Niger State.

6. Over 500 young people had access to condoms and lubricants through their outreach programme and voluntary counselling and testing (VCT) was provided to hundreds of antenatal care attendees. INCREASE has followed up with those who tested positive to stay on HIV treatment.

Elements of success at a glance

1. A programme team that has its values clarified and identifies fully with feminist principles of equal and inalienable rights
2. A robust curriculum with well-articulated modules
3. Mobilising participants from various settings (schools and homes) with the involvement of parents and teachers
4. Providing support for transport fare and light refreshment for participants
5. A viable alumni network that serve as mentors
6. Linking participants and graduates with other learning and development opportunities
7. Acting swiftly on reported cases of abuse
8. Creating a support network that the girls can trust and count on
9. Recognising and rewarding merit and outstanding performance among the girls

Challenges and opportunities

In the past, INCREASE found that individual advocacy visits to policymakers were either hard to schedule due to the lack of commitment by officials or were trivialised when conducted. Therefore, INCREASE decided to host an open forum where officials and leaders who want to participate can engage in discussions together with parents and teachers to strengthen their commitment.

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All photos courtesy of INCREASE

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CASE STUDY:

THE YP FOUNDATION – INDIA

General organisational overview

The YP Foundation was co-created by young people in 2002, in the aftermath of the Godhra Riots that took place in Gujarat. The hope was to bring young people together from across the country to build a stronger understanding of human rights, and create opportunities to work together and discover leadership skills on social issues young people were passionate about through a safe, open and non-judgemental platform. It quickly transformed into a youth-run and youth-led organisation providing comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) to young people and advocating for systemic changes. The **connections between sexuality and child, early and forced marriage and unions (CEFMU) permeate their entire curriculum**, which is also the centrepiece of their Know Your Body, Know Your Rights (KYBKRYR) programme. A unique feature of this programme is its rights-based, stigma-free and affirmative approach towards sexuality and sexuality education. The YP Foundation works with and for young people across issues such as gender, sexuality, leadership, health and education to advance the rights of young women, girls and other young people who face marginalisation. All of their work is based on intersectional, feminist and rights-based principles.

Participant population

The YP Foundation works with youths aged 10-25 from diverse backgrounds, especially young women in schools, institutional care homes, after-school learning centres and community youth groups. Its programmes are run by peer educators (18-22 years), most of whom are college students that partake in a two-year or longer leadership programme. Their beneficiaries have diverse backgrounds in terms of what regions they come from (urban/semi-urban/rural), their sexual orientations, their gender identities, their religions, their class and their caste.

Key features of The YP Foundation's work: Youth-led model that promotes feminist, intersectional and rights-based sexuality education

In India, programmes aimed at advancing sexuality education of young people often confront considerable opposition from politicians,



parents and teachers who, despite evidence showing otherwise, believe that such positive sexuality perspectives will foster irresponsible and promiscuous sexual behaviour among young people. Furthermore, programmes and policies that focus on the sexuality of young people are generally designed and developed or discussed amongst adults, neglecting to embrace the opinions and desires of young people themselves.

Because of this, The YP Foundation's existence and mission is centered around **the power of youth leadership**, ensuring that young people are equal stakeholders in programmes and policies that target them and are able to meaningfully participate. Rather than seeing young people as leaders of tomorrow, The YP Foundation insists that youths are leaders today, and it works to spread that message beyond youth-focussed spaces.

Moreover, The YP Foundation proudly adopts a **rights-based, stigma-free and affirmative approach to sexuality**, which is deeply engrained in all of their interventions. As such, their work emphasises informed consent, choice and pleasure, issues that they discuss directly and openly with participants, educators, parents and policymakers. In particular, The YP Foundation creates platforms and tools to engage young people and other relevant stakeholders on the importance of CSE and mobilises them to include issues of sexuality in policies and programmes designed to reach young people in India.

In addition, acknowledging that the experience of 'youth' is not homogeneous and that all youth-centred programming should accommodate the diverse nature of youth identity; by design The YP Foundation is **explicitly inclusive of diverse groups**. Across programmes, they work with marginalised youths from low-resource backgrounds, and predominantly Dalit and Muslim communities. Their **intersectional and feminist approach** also considers migration, sexual orientation, gender identity, caste and other marginalised identities or statuses in their interventions.

The YP Foundation's programmes focus on

Rather than seeing young people as leaders of tomorrow, The YP Foundation insists that youths are leaders today.

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empowering young people to lead implementation and use that experience to become effective advocates with policymakers, communities, gatekeepers and other stakeholders. In this manner, the organisation creates **youth-adult partnerships** and makes a case for youth leadership at all levels and in all processes.

The YP Foundation supports young people to respond to real-life situations in a positive manner and take informed decisions for their lives. They **provide a safe space** for youths to learn to articulate their concerns and opinions, share their personal experiences, and to ask questions without getting judged or reprimanded. At the broader community level, they provide a platform for young people to voice their views and advocate for themselves in front of their family members, for example through small-scale social action projects.

Featured programme: Know Your Body, Know Your Rights (KYBK YR)

The Know Your Body, Know Your Rights (KYBK YR) programme provides CSE to



An affirmative and celebratory approach to sexuality, which emphasises informed consent, choice and pleasure, guides our work on SRHR (sexual and reproductive health and rights).

Organisational principle of
The YP Foundation



Ours isn't just an objective curriculum to teach the biological aspects of reproductive health. The curriculum is based in the real world and interweaves aspects of intersectionality, power, and patriarchy. For example, while discussing menstruation, we not only address issues of menstrual hygiene, but also create a space to discuss the shame and stigma around menstruation.

Introduction to the curriculum



young people from diverse backgrounds. The KYBK YR programme design is directly informed by outreach to adolescents and young people who face discrimination and marginalisation. Its implementation is youth-led with strong collaborations across grassroots non-governmental organisations alongside focussed engagement with local and national stakeholders from health and education sectors, including government officers, health care providers, counselors, frontline health workers and teachers.

Sex-positive messaging in KYBK YR's curriculum

- Sexuality is a healthy part of life and there is no fixed or prescribed way to experience or express our sexuality.
- Feeling attracted to another person is a common experience for many people. It is also perfectly fine to not feel attracted to anyone.
- There are no good or bad sexual acts. Different people may enjoy different sexual acts.
- Our experience of sexuality is impacted by the cultural and social norms around us.
- Sexual identities can be of many types and it is important not to judge someone based on their identity or to discriminate against a person because of their sexual or gender identity.

A **peer education model** drives KYBK YR programme implementation. The peer educators, called **Youth Leaders**, who facilitate KYBK YR's curriculum are a diverse and dynamic group of young people who are passionate about social justice, intersectional feminism and learning more about their world. The YP Foundation follows a leadership-building approach to peer education where the young leaders are engaged for a year in **rigorous feminist training** and intense capacity building.

The Youth Leaders build an in-depth understanding of gender-related concepts such as different gender and sexual identities, learn the subtleties of rights-based action and understand violence and discrimination as human rights issues.

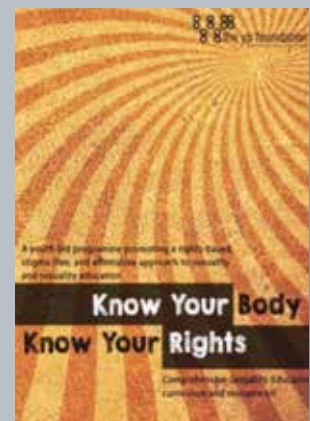
Acknowledging that one size does not fit all, The YP Foundation has opted to use a flexible curriculum that is adapted to different groups of participants. Following a bottom-up approach, **the curriculum development process starts with**

the girls and boys themselves, engaging them in the actual design and adaptation processes. The YP Foundation changes some of the language and case study content in order to ensure that the curriculum is acceptable, accessible and relatable to different audiences, such as using examples extracted from local newspapers that might be familiar to the participants. They also update their materials regularly. The peer educators use a lot of creative tools to engage the participants and strengthen their understanding on issues, including **audio visual tools, interactive games and blogs about sexuality and sexual rights**. For example, they use case studies, group work and exercises to discuss "good sex and bad sex", norms that impact sexuality, understanding sexual identities and discrimination related to different sexual orientation and gender identities, and other topics.

Tearing apart gender norms

In this exercise from the curriculum, The YP Foundation explores the concepts of patriarchy and discrimination with personal stories, like the story of Mohan, and leads participants to conclusions like this:

Mohan faced violence because he does not identify with the gender assigned to him at birth and he has broken the gender norms. Patriarchy wants men to be manly and women to be womanly. Transgression of gender norms destabilises patriarchal structures, which is why people like Mohan are discriminated against, violated, and punished.



Furthermore, the curriculum moves away from instilling fear in young people and focusses on empowering them by training them on concepts such as choice, autonomy, rights and sexual expression, including positive messaging and **in-depth discussions about pleasure and desire**. In

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doing so, they build young people's skills to develop a positive self-image and healthy attitude.

The YP Foundation also includes thoughtful analyses of power and patriarchy in their curriculum and **works specifically with young men and boys** on challenging gender-based violence through questioning patriarchal notions and norms of masculinity.

Evidence of results

The YP Foundation used a multi-method qualitative study in 2017 to evaluate the impact of its programme (2016-2017) on the peer educators, participants and partner organisations. The evaluation included a review of secondary data sources as well as interviews and focus group discussions conducted with a range of stakeholders (including peer educators, participants and staff) with different perspectives about the programme. The report also briefly explored whether the participants and partner organisations sustained changes brought about by their participation in the KYBK YR over time.

Additionally, as part of their commitment to full engagement, participants have also been involved in different accountability processes. Youth Leaders, for example, have undertaken mystery-client social audits to assess the youth-friendliness of sexual and reproductive health service delivery in 36 public, private and non-governmental health centres. The data from these audits was used in multi-stakeholder district-level and state-level consultations to facilitate constructive dialogue between youth leaders and frontline health workers, doctors and government and non-government representatives on these issues.

Results

KYBK YR demonstrates that youth-centred and youth-led programming through a multi-sectoral collaboration model has immense potential to transform the lives of adolescents and young people by empowering them to become agents of

social change.

On an annual basis the KYBK YR programme engages over 1500 youths (mostly young women ages 10-25) in schools, institutional care homes, after-school learning centres and community youth groups in urban and rural setting across three states in India. Meanwhile, the programme's public and policy advocacy components have an annual outreach of over 50,000 people online, through social media campaigns, and offline, through youth-led social action projects including street plays, youth-led audits of SRHR service delivery and multi-sectoral consultations.

The evaluation revealed that the programme achieved an increased level of leadership, self-confidence and negotiation skills amongst young women and girls who participated.

Other results included:

1. Increased in knowledge and information of young people on sexual and reproductive health, clearing up myths and misconceptions.

2. Improved attitude of male participants towards girls and women.
3. Young people became critically conscious and started to question ideas that were imposed on them by their family or society in the name of tradition, culture and religion.
4. Created a demand for CSE.
5. Created a large cohort of young people who are ready to act as social activists and take forward CSE as an agenda.
6. Young people started to challenge social norms and influence their peers do to the same.
7. A majority of the participants recognised how the stigma attached to SRHR issues adversely impacts their bodily integrity and rights

Elements of success at a glance

- Young people are the leaders and all programmes are youth-led and youth-centred.
- Rights-based, stigma-free and affirmative approach to sexuality.
- Knowledge and experience working with young people with diverse backgrounds and levels of marginalisation.
- An intersectional feminist perspective, helping to connect with diverse groups.
- Flexible CSE curriculum based on a bottom-up approach and that is accessible, acceptable, relevant and relatable.

Challenges and opportunities

The evaluation pointed at three main areas that could be strengthened, including the engagement with families and communities, engagement with partner organisations, and increased focus on the power of collectives to advance girls' goals. The organisation also acknowledges the critical gap in reaching out to and serving people living with disabilities, and would like to expand their materials and approaches to this end.

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All photos courtesy of The YP Foundation

**The YP Foundation
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Photos: front cover; Graham Crouch / Girls Not Brides; back cover; Fran Afonso / Girls Not Brides