

2022 Education Summit

IPPF and Countdown2030Europe Key Messages and recommendations

Background

Recognizing that education is a human right and a foundation for peace, tolerance whose fulfillment is critical to guarantee other human rights and achieve sustainable development. The UN Secretary-General announced in his report to the UN General Assembly on 'Our Common Agenda' his intention to convene a Transforming Education Summit (TES) in September 2022. The Summit is aimed at mobilizing action, ambition, solidarity and solutions with a view to transforming education between now and 2030. The main expected outcomes of the Summit are:

- National and international commitments to transform education;
- Greater public engagement around and support for transforming education; and
- A Secretary General's Summary (summit outcome document), which will capture the knowledge/commitments generated by the Summit and its preparatory process, informing Summit follow-up including through the SDG4-Education 2030 High Level Steering Committee and the proposed intergovernmental Summit of the Future in 2023.

Key messages and Recommendations

These messages are meant to inspire national governments, commitment makers, and all stakeholders that are part of the five action tracks, for them to include important elements of the right to education, girls education and comprehensive sexuality education in their commitments and discussions.

The right to education and obstacles to inclusive, equitable, safe and healthy schools

The right to education is a right recognized in the Universal Declaration for Human Rights and reaffirmed in many other Human Rights Treaties and intergovernmental agreements. As stated in Article 13 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, "*education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and the sense of its dignity, and shall strengthen the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. (...) education shall enable all persons to participate effectively in a free society, promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations and all racial, ethnic or religious groups (...).*"

Furthermore in the 2030 Agenda, Member States committed to:

- 4.1. By 2030, ensure that **all girls** and boys **complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education** leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes

4.2 By 2030, ensure that **all girls** and boys have **access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education** so that they are ready for primary education

4.3 By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university

4.4 By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship

4.5 By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations

4.6 By 2030, ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy

4.7 By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development

- **Right to Education**

The right to education has a transformative potential and is a multiplier right that supports the empowerment of all women and girls to claim their human rights, including the right to participate in the conduct of public affairs, as well as in political, economic, social and cultural life, and to fully, equally and meaningfully participate in the decision-making processes that shape society. Education is widely recognised as a powerful tool to empower women and girls within the household and society, and is considered a key pathway for women and girls' bodily autonomy, to make informed decisions about their lives, but also to have access to better jobs and decent work, housing, etc. Educated women are more likely to marry later, use contraception and access healthcare; and to understand their rights and have the self-confidence to act on them¹. Each additional year of schooling for girls improves their employment prospects, increases future earnings by about 10 per cent and reduces infant mortality by up to 10 per cent². Post-primary education has far stronger positive effects on empowerment than primary education³; girls with only primary education are twice as likely to marry before the age of 18 as those with secondary or higher education⁴. Adolescent childbearing interrupts school attendance and impairs young

¹ USAID. Op. cit.; United Nations Millennium Project Task Force on Gender Equality (2005) Taking Action: Achieving Gender Equality and Empowering Women. This contributes to their social empowerment and status: Eyben R (2011) Supporting Pathways of Women's Empowerment: A Brief Guide for International Development Organizations. Pathways Policy Paper. Brighton: Pathways of Women's Empowerment

² World Bank (2002) Opening Doors: Education and the World Bank.

³ United Nations Millennium Project Task Force on Gender Equality (2005) Taking Action: Achieving Gender Equality and Empowering Women

⁴ UNFPA (2012) Marrying Too Young: End Child Marriage. New York: UNFPA.

women's long-term social and economic mobility and, indirectly, their empowerment across the life course⁵. Furthermore, girls and young women often do not have access to the information, education and health services, including contraceptives, they want and need. Four in ten adolescent girls aged 15-19 years who want to avoid pregnancy are currently not using a modern contraceptive - a wide variation is however observed across regions⁶.

- **Non-discrimination and school (re)-enrollment**

Only half of countries worldwide protect the Right to Education without discrimination in their constitutions⁷. Besides, in all regions of the world we still see people being denied education or school (re)-enrollment based on their abilities, sexual orientation and gender identity, HIV-status or after pregnancy. Whereas, schools should be safe for all young people including young queer people and free of homophobia, transphobia, discrimination and bullying. The schools' curricula on sexuality education should address the needs of all young people, including young queer-identifying people, young people with disabilities, young people living with HIV, and other marginalized populations.

School enrollment, CSE and adolescent friendly sexual and reproductive health services are essential in preventing adolescent pregnancies. The school closures and subsequent disappearance of safe spaces during the Covid-19 as well as a lack of sexuality education and closure of health facilities meant a rise in adolescent pregnancies⁸. Unfortunately, in many countries we still see girls being denied (re)-enrollment during and after they have become pregnant⁹ which is a violation of their right to education.

- **Menstrual health and hygiene management**

Schools provide not only an environment for learning, but also for many adolescent girls' access to Menstrual Health and Hygiene supplies, knowledge, skills and social support. Particularly adolescent girls had limited access to menstrual health and hygiene management during the Covid-19 pandemic due to a lack of critical information, limited access to technology and digital platforms, school closures, suspension of community-based programming, and low levels of literacy¹⁰. Ensuring gender equality and increasing school enrollment requires investments in

⁵ Hindin M (2012) The Influence of Women's Early Childbearing on Subsequent Empowerment in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Crossnational Meta Analysis.

⁶ UNICEF, UN Women & Plan International (2020) A New Era for Girls: Taking stock of 25 years of progress.

⁷ [60 years of the UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education – What happened since the adoption?](#)

⁸ [SWP Report 2022 | United Nations Population Fund \(unfpa.org\)](#)

⁹ [1] Both, R., Castle, S., Hensen, B. (2021). 'I feel that things are out of my hands'. *How COVID-19 prevention measures have affected young people's sexual and reproductive health in Ghana, Indonesia, Kenya, Nepal, Uganda and Zimbabwe*. Rutgers: Utrecht, The Netherlands retrieved from: <https://rutgers.international/news/news-archive/rutgers-studycovid-19-measures-have-huge-impact-all-aspects-young-peoples-lives>

¹⁰ [UNICEF-Brief-Mitigating-the-impacts-of-COVID-19-on-menstrual-health-and-hygiene.pdf](#)

menstrual health and hygiene management in and out of school settings.

- **Comprehensive Sexuality Education**

As children move through childhood and then adolescence, parents and/or other caregivers teach them how to do everyday things e.g. how to cross the road safely, how to use a stove without burning themselves or how to buy something from the local grocery store and come back home with the right change. They do this because these everyday things are important parts of their lives. Sexuality and reproduction too are important parts of their lives. As children and adolescents grow and develop, they need education that prepares them for their future, matches their development and circumstances that go beyond pure biology, and therefore have access to sexuality education. CSE goes beyond biological information to include values creation around human rights and gender equality, nonviolence and non-discrimination as well as skills to build healthy relationships. CSE programs reduce¹¹ risky behaviors where about two thirds of evaluations show reductions in targeted risky behaviors and 60% of programs had a positive effect on at least one behavioral or biological outcome, such as increased condom use or reduced unplanned pregnancies¹². This informs youth about their rights and gives them the tools to protect themselves from HIV and other STIs through safer sex practices, such as negotiating condom use, and to identify when their rights are being violated, such as cases of sexual abuse or denial of services. In this regard, comprehensive sexuality education is a promising strategy by which to shift norms and attitudes, and empower young people.

CSE is internationally recognized and has a demonstrated impact on the health and well-being of young people¹³. CSE has been shown to increase correct knowledge, clarify and strengthen positive values and attitudes, increase skills to be able to make informed decisions and act upon them, improve perceptions about peer groups and social norms, increase communication with parents or other trusted adults, contribute to delayed sexual debut, reduce the frequency of unprotected sexual activity, reduce the number of sexual partners, and increase the use of protection against unintended pregnancy and STIs during sexual intercourse.

- **Training**

Several barriers exist in order for teachers to be able to provide quality, rights-based comprehensive sexuality education. These barriers include a lack of willingness, quality of training, censorship, a lack of facilities and a supportive environment¹⁴. Teachers are part of society and can either be opposed to CSE themselves or censor their lessons because of

¹¹ Underhill, K., Operario, D., & Montgomery, P. (n.d.). Systematic review of abstinence-plus HIV prevention programs in high-income countries. PLOS Medicine. available at <https://bit.ly/3L7g52J>

¹² Douglas B. Kirby, Ph.D.*, B.A. Laris, M.P.H., and Lori A. Rolleri, M.S.W., M.P.H. (n.d.). Review article sex and HIV education programs: Their Impact on Sexual Behaviors of Young People Throughout the World. available at <http://www.sidastudi.org/resources/inmagic-img/dd2891.pdf>

¹³ United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) et al (2018), International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education: An Evidence-Informed Approach, Paris: UNESCO, <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0026/002607/260770e.pdf>.

¹⁴ <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000368231/PDF/368231eng.pdf.multi>

opposition from the school leadership, parents or other stakeholders around the school. This censorship both limits the extent to which CSE is given in schools as well as its comprehensiveness. In cases where CSE is part of curricula and teachers are willing to provide CSE to their pupils, a lack of teacher training, budget and materials might limit the quality of CSE or capacity to give CSE in schools. Also large class sizes or a lack of teaching and pedagogical skills in general might hinder interactive learning when it comes to CSE.

- **Out of school CSE,**

Out of school CSE¹⁵ provides an opportunity to reach young people who are not in school and where CSE is not in the school curriculum or who prefer asking and receiving quality information anonymously. CSE provided out of school enables the contents to be tailored to the specific needs of young people who are out of school and also complements information provided to young people especially where it is not 'comprehensive'. In the provision of online CSE, attention should be paid to the gender digital divide and its impact on girls' education¹⁶. Girls are more likely to be denied access to computers and the internet. Access to digital technology as well as digital literacy is required for girls to access sexual and reproductive health information and education, including out of school CSE. Besides, girls can be particularly vulnerable to (online) sexual and gender based violence in virtual settings. Whereas, it is known that boys tend to prefer receiving information online, rather than reaching out to adults or health care providers.

Recommendations:

- *Fulfill the right to quality education for all children, especially girls, without discrimination of any kind.*
- *Recognize the provision of CSE as integral to improving the health and rights of adolescents and youth, as well as realizing gender equality and sustainable development by implementing the commitments made in the area of education, and include CSE in SDG4.7 policies, programs, implementation, budgeting and reporting.*
- *Ensure human rights-based comprehensive sexuality education is part of school curricula at all school levels and is implemented through a whole school approach.*
- *Ensure pre- and in-service CSE teacher/educator training and provide them with sufficient materials, budget and a supportive environment to the extent possible in order for them to deliver quality CSE.*
- *Ensure financing of non-formal CSE delivered by civil society and community-based organizations.*
- *Ensure all adolescents and young people receive support and can remain in and return to school in case of (adolescent) pregnancies.*
- *Ensure sufficient water, sanitation and menstrual health facilities and services in schools and integrate menstrual health and hygiene management into school curricula.*

¹⁵ [International Technical and Programmatic Guidance on Out-of-School Comprehensive Sexuality Education \(CSE\) | United Nations Population Fund \(unfpa.org\)](#)

¹⁶ [What we know about the gender digital divide for girls: A literature review.pdf \(unicef.org\)](#)