

Committee: Political Committee

Topic: Creating and Strengthening Effective Sexual Education Systems in all Member States

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I. Introduction

Comprehensive sexual education is an indispensable tool for all young people, and yet the frequency at which the practice of sexual education is diffused is alarmingly low. This practice is not only relevant in ensuring the health of the public, but also in ensuring that young people be capable of making grounded, conscious, and responsible choices in their journey to adulthood. Although this is a valid claim, the particularities make this issue more complex. Systems of values and interpretations of interpersonal relationships will stimulate conflict, and establish a great deal of difficulty in finding a common ground.

II. Definition of Key Terms

CSE (Comprehensive sexual education):

According to the United Nations, comprehensive sexual education is a program incorporated within a school curriculum that “enables young people to protect their health, well-being, and dignity”.

Cultural barriers:

Cultural barriers are the differences in certain traditional beliefs that lead to miscommunications between different cultures and make it difficult to understand each other.

Gender Inequality:

Gender inequality refers to the disparity between the rights of men and women in society, and often also concerns discrimination against women.

STI:

An STI is a sexually transmitted infection. They are passed on through unprotected sex or close sexual contact. STIs are treatable, but if they remain untreated they can lead to more severe issues.

STD:

An STD is a sexually transmitted disease. STDs and STIs are often interchangeable terms. However, STDs are technically a more severe form of STIs as they occur as a result of an infection. If left untreated, an STD can be fatal.

AIDS/ HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus):

HIV is a virus that can be passed on through unprotected sex. It targets a person’s immune system and, if left untreated, leads to AIDS which is an autoimmune disease. HIV/ AIDS can be fatal.

III. General Overview

While it is important that the United Nations come to an agreement on this matter and establish a well-defined sexual education system to implement in schools, it is important that in doing so each state keeps in mind the reasons for the urgency of this debate. The reasons are as follows:

1) **Cultural barriers:**

As with most global conflicts, they are partially born from differences in cultural beliefs. Hence, this matter is also categorized within these limitations. Cultural barriers are perhaps the most demanding factor to surmount as culture is extremely integrated into societal values. According to a more liberal/ western perception, some beliefs degrade women or view sexual activity as a tool of exploitation and therefore stimulate hostility between states. Despite the specificities of certain disagreements between societal practices, the common denominator that unites most nations is the need to maintain the health and well-being of the people.

2) **Gender Inequality:**

Gender inequality is also closely tied to the discussion of sexual education. Whereas many cultures have gender inequality as the basis of their values and practices, others have jumped on the bandwagon of feminist movements. Practices tied to a disparity between genders is the first fruit of abiding by the value of tradition; many justify men's superiority to women through recalling ancient Aristotelian teachings or backing it with scientific studies on the physical disparities between men and women. Different practices follow a more contemporary view on gender; while men and women are not the same, they are equal in their rights and abilities. The relationship between gender inequality and a lack of sexual education is symbiotic; a lack of sexual education leads to the stimulation of gender inequality in that it deprives women of the recognition of their own rights, while gender inequality is used as a sort of justification for not diffusing sexual education.

- a) It is also important to note that in many nations, women do not actively protest mistreatment because of "self-enforcing social conventions", meaning that women conform to certain practices in order to avoid social exclusion.

Despite the clarity of why this matter must be discussed, the most significant tool of understanding the reason for which this topic is of utmost importance is being aware of the benefits of strengthening sexual education for all member states. They are as follows:

1) **Unintended pregnancy:**

Unintended pregnancy is an issue that has plagued the world for a great deal of time. Amongst many issues, one that concerns global well-being most is the risk of overpopulation; between 2010 and 2014, it was recorded that 44% of all pregnancies were unintended. This is an immensely large portion of population increase, and pose a

problem while attempting to limit population growth. A reason for such a large percentage of unintended pregnancies is largely tied into a lack of awareness; with a lack of awareness, many do not know how to properly use contraception or limit the possibility of pregnancy. Along with this, unintended pregnancies can lead to tolls on a person's mental health, an increased number of infants inserted into foster care, and a disruption of family dynamics or familial relationships. In implementing a well-constructed sex-ed program, the number of unexpected pregnancies would decrease.

2) **STIs:**

A decrease in sexually transmitted infections would come as a result of a proper focus on sexual education. With a lack of awareness of the proper use of contraception or the risks or the lack thereof, young people (especially those who are inexperienced and have no reference to base their actions off of) are more prone to sexually transmitted infections. The danger of this is for those who do not have access to healthcare, being left untreated, to develop more severe issues.

3) **HIV/ AIDS:**

HIV is perhaps one of the biggest risks of a lack of sexual education at a young age. The risk of fatality is high in countries that do not have access to treatments or sexual education. In places such as Sub Saharan Africa, HIV has become the lead cause of death (especially premature deaths) due to both a lack of education and a lack of access to healthcare. If sexual education was diffused in territories experiencing a similar issue, the amount of HIV cases would drastically decrease.

IV. Major Parties Involved and their Views

Consider these parties when forming a bloc, allying, and drafting your resolutions. Even if your member state is not listed, that does not mean your nation is irrelevant to the topic at hand. Each nation has a policy on this pressing issue, so please work to have your nation's policy represented in debate!

United Nations

The United Nations is highly committed to implementing sexual education. It has many sub-parts, such as the United Nations Population Fund, who work with governments to implement effective sex education in schools and in communities. They also work to fundraise and invest in sexuality education programs so that all programs meet internationally agreed-upon standards.

India

In India, sex education is not compulsory in schools and it is often completely absent in schools. The Times of India reports that more than 50 percent of girls in rural India are unaware of menstruation or even what it means. The culture around sex promotes widespread silence and shame to young people in India leading to a mass lack of information and misinformation as well. Such a culture has resulted in sexual abuse to over 50% of children between the ages of five and 12, with nearly all of these children unable to recognize the abuse they endured. However, strides are being made to improve the SRHR. The YP foundation designed and implemented a progressive sex-ed curriculum to engage students across the 14 classes it runs. While the YP foundation runs a successful program, it needs to be implemented in all schools to have a positive effect. India has failed to implement such a program thus far.

China

China has an underdeveloped sexual education program that is slowly progressing. In the traditional concept of China, sex is considered a shameful thing. The Public Health School of Peking University reported in 2015 that, “only 10% of nearly 20,000 university students had received any sexuality education in primary school.” However, China has made attempts at improving this with the 2019 Healthy China Initiatives which aim to create comprehensive sex ed. Still, China lacks widespread sex-ed. There is such a deficit of sex-ed that there are even 330 licensed summer camps where parents send children to counter the lack of holistic sex-ed in schools. Another one of China’s main struggles is that the older generation lacks education which is not only problematic for them, but also for younger generations as they are unable to receive support from relatives. China is in need of either a reformation or the effective implementation of the planned comprehensive sex-ed system.

The Netherlands

The Netherlands outperforms many nations with their progressive and comprehensive sex education systems. The Dutch have extremely low STI cases and very little teen pregnancies as well as abortions. The Atlantic reports that they have achieved this through being, “almost unbelievably open with children of all ages about bodies and relationships.” The Dutch begin educating children as young as four years old on their bodies as well as sexual conduct and research shows that implementing early sex ed prevents unwanted pregnancies and sexual abuse later on. The Dutch are proof that strong sex education, normalizing sex, and each unique body, as well as transparency and open conversations, are highly effective. Member States should take an example from the Netherlands.

Uganda

Uganda’s sex-ed takes a large influence from religion and preset morals. The National Sexuality Education Framework 2018 in Uganda preaches abstinence-only, assigns women and men to traditional gender roles, and criminalizes homosexuality and same-gender sex. The framework calls for premarital abstinence and yet Uganda has high teen pregnancy rates and extremely high unsafe abortion statistics. Additionally, it limits choice, prevents students from accessing

and trusting contraception, and prevents them from questioning harmful gender roles. Uganda's policy contradicts the reality of the situation in the nation and needs support.

Poland

The Polish government (PIS) promotes a misogynistic, anti-abortion, anti-contraceptive, homophobic and conservative ideology. Recent legislation in Poland bans sex education and criminalizes it as, "encouraging underage sexual activity." Teachers who attempt to teach sex-ed will face up to 5 years in prison. Sex ed in Poland is described as pedophilia and PIS calls attempts to implement sexual education, sexualizing children.

V. Relevant United Nations Documents

The United Nations have discussed this topic multiple times and has a vast array of documents such as the...

- a) **UNCRC (Convention on the Rights of the Child):** The UNCRC is a treaty established in 1990. Although the right to sexual education is not the focus of the treaty, the United Nations states, that it is "the right of all children and adolescents to receive sexual and reproductive health (SRH) information, education and services in accordance with their specific needs". It also further explains that their view of sexuality education goes beyond "the provision of information alone" and also puts focus on the children's right to "acquire essential life skills and develop positive attitudes and values".
- b) **CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women):** Although many argue that the right of women to sexual education is grounded within the principles of the treaty, it is never explicitly stated, thus prompting an argument on whether or not sex education should be considered a human right.
- c) **(Conference) Improving the Sexual and Reproductive Health of the Adolescent Girl: The Role of First Ladies:** This is not a UN document. However, all delegates are encouraged to read about this assembly that took place on February 10th, 2020. It was organized by the Organisation of African First Ladies Against HIV/AIDS. They discuss the strong effects of the diffusion of HIV in Africa and the benefits of introducing a comprehensive sexuality education system: <https://www.unaids.org/en/keywords/oafila>

VI. Questions to Consider

When drafting your resolutions and planning for solutions, it is important to consider the vast subcomponents and various ways to approach the issue at hand. Consider the following questions, as well as of course your nation's policy, when brainstorming your clauses.

-> Should schools be responsible for sex-ed? Or does that responsibility lie for an exterior body such as community outreach programs?

-> How can the millions of children who don't have access to schools or don't attend school receive sex education?

-> To what extent does culture, religion, and morals within a member state effect and prevent the development of its sexual education systems?

-> Should Sex Education become a statutory subject within Primary Schools?

-> Should there be a universal system and framework to guide how sex-ed occurs and its standards?

-> Could implementing punishments for parties that do not have sex-ed be effective? Or will this only further harm a nation's citizens?

-> What are alternative methods to teaching sex-ed? Could the internet be a useful way to teach sex-ed?

-> For Member States without or with weak sex ed, what are the consequences of a lack of sexual education? How can these side effects be addressed?

-> Should modern issues such as the exchange of intimate photos via the internet be included in sex-ed?

-> To what extent does the older generations' lack of sexual education affect the younger generation's knowledge and comfort on discussing sex?

-> Are "abstinence-only" programs an appropriate form of school-based sexual health education?

-> What are the social and economic benefits to society of implementing broadly based sexual health education in schools?

-> How can comprehensive sex-ed be implemented universally but quickly?

-> How can we incentivize nations which lack sex-ed to add it to their education systems?

VII. Conclusion

In finding a sexual education system that can be agreed upon, it is important to keep in mind that there must be a common denominator as a foundation of a resolution (or a common ground that will benefit every nation and complies with most cultural systems of values). It is overwhelmingly clear that with the introduction of comprehensive sexuality education would not only benefit states themselves, but additionally would allow the world to come nearer to a common goal of ensuring health and well-being to its people.

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