

PROFESSIONAL GUIDANCE NOTES WITH CURRICULUM REQUIREMENTS AND LEGAL PROTECTIONS FOR TEACHERS FACING COMMUNITY PRESSURE

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YPAR findings consistently show that schools are the primary setting where young people receive CSE. That makes teachers and school administrators, the primary implementer and frontline messengers of CSE in practice. These groups also act as the connection point between learners and parents or the wider community, which can expose them to personal criticism if content or delivery becomes contested. This guidance exists to make this role safer and more sustainable for teachers and school administrators.

As a starting point, it is useful to understand some of the challenges and barriers facing teachers in Uganda, Malawi and Ethiopia. These barriers were identified in the YPAR country specific reports.

Uganda

01

Research indicates that teacher capacity remains uneven. Most educators receive limited specialised CSE training with many reporting discomfort teaching sensitive topics.

02

Delivery quality varies significantly by teacher confidence and local support.

03

The research found that many lessons remain lecture-oriented, with limited opportunities for confidential discussions, practicing skills learned, or genuine learner engagement, limiting their effectiveness.

04

The findings reveal a critical gap between policy mandates for teacher training and actual capacity on the ground.



Ethiopia



01

Many educators reported limited training and insufficient teaching materials to deliver CSE effectively.

02

As a result, some teachers felt uncomfortable addressing sensitive topics or relied heavily on textbook-based instruction without interactive learning approaches.

03

Without adequate institutional support, teachers avoid controversial subjects or focus only on basic biological information.

Malawi



01

Challenges focus mainly on a lack of resources and training. Youth participants noted that teachers sometimes rushed through sexuality education topics due to limited time allocation within the school timetable.

02

Other participants reported that Life Skills lessons lacked practical teaching approaches and supporting materials.

03

Teachers reported relying mainly on general teaching training and expressed uncertainty about handling sensitive SRHR topics. Some educators felt confident delivering lessons but emphasised the need for caution when discussing sexuality with learners.

04

Studies across different contexts show that many teachers lack adequate understanding of both CSE content and appropriate teaching methods, which limit their confidence and effectiveness in delivering CSE.

STEP 01

Know your policy environment and what you are required to teach

As the above challenges clearly indicate, teachers in all three countries feel inadequately trained to deliver effective CSE in schools. While each country has its own varying degree of formal policy covering the delivery of CSE, a teacher's strongest protection will be to ensure that they are teaching exactly what is set out in the approved national curriculum or syllabus, at the approved grade level, using approved materials. Further support for this type of preparation includes YPAR findings in Ethiopia that teacher preparedness emerged as a critical determinant of CSE implementation quality.

In order to ensure that the correct content is being taught, locate the official syllabus and any Ministry circulars covering CSE-related content for your grade level, under whatever local name it is taught.

Malawi	"Life Skills Education" at primary level; "HIV Education" or "Sexual and Reproductive Health Education" at secondary level.
Uganda	"Sexuality Education" is taught as part of "Life Education".
Ethiopia	"Sexual education" "AIDS education" or "life-skills education".

The policy environment in Uganda is more advanced than in Ethiopia or Malawi. For example, the [National Sexuality Education Framework](#) developed by the Ministry of Education and Sports clearly sets out the key themes, topics and developmental message areas for each schooling phase. This helps teachers understand whether the CSE curriculum that they have been asked to teach is nationally acceptable and correct. Knowing precisely what you are required to cover removes one of the most common reasons teachers fail to adequately deliver CSE content.

Ethiopia has the least formalised policy environment with no specific CSE policy, while Malawi currently delivers sex education primarily through the LSE curriculum rather than through a standalone, UNESCO-aligned CSE framework. Evidence from YPAR suggests that LSE delivery is inconsistent across schools and influenced by sociocultural and religious resistance.

[A regional UNESCO/UNFPA teacher-training module](#) developed for East and Southern Africa notes that teachers commonly avoid certain topics or questions because of personal discomfort, unclear agency policy, or uncertainty about what the curriculum actually requires, not because the topic is genuinely outside the syllabus. While leaving out approved content may feel safer, it can also weaken your position if a complaint arises, since your protection rests on delivering the approved curriculum as a whole. Raising this tension with your school leadership before it becomes a crisis is a more sustainable path than resolving it alone, lesson by lesson.



RESOURCE

UNESCO have developed a [Regional Module for Teacher Training on Comprehensive Sexuality Education](#) for East and Southern Africa complete which “provides a core set of lesson plans to equip teachers with the basic knowledge and skills necessary to deliver effective sexuality education in the classroom.” While this does not absolve government training initiatives, it is a useful resource for teachers looking to upskill or train fellow colleagues in these topics.

Teacher

Training

Confidence

Classroom

Learners

STEP 02

Keep a record

First, confirm with your school leadership which materials are approved for classroom use, and keep a copy. Then also keep a simple record of what you taught, when, and using which approved materials. This is one of the most effective protections available to you if a complaint is raised later.

It may also be helpful to keep a record of any anti-CSE messaging that arises so that you can identify trends of organised opposition or backlash.

Legal protection available to teachers

The regional UNESCO/UNFPA teacher-training module recommends that every CSE-delivering teacher should be able to answer a specific set of questions about the law and policy in their own country, ideally through a briefing from a Ministry official, the school's legal or HR office, or your teachers' union, arranged before you need the answer under pressure.

Use the questions below, extracted from the regional training module, as a checklist to work through with your school leadership:

01. What do national, provincial and school-level laws or policies say about what can and cannot be taught in CSE?
02. Is there a mandatory national curriculum or standard you must follow, and do you know where to find the current version?
03. Are there laws or policies requiring parents to be notified about CSE content before it is taught?
04. What are the confidentiality rules between you and a student, and under what circumstances are you required to report something a student discloses to a supervisor or the authorities?
05. Can you refer a student directly to sexual health, HIV/STI, or mental health services, and under what conditions?
06. What are the relevant age-of-consent, sexual violence, and HIV-disclosure laws you may need to explain accurately if a student asks?

Where the answer to any of these is unclear or the law is silent, the same module recommends having an agreed, ethical decision-making process for that situation worked out in advance with your school leadership rather than deciding alone, in the moment, under pressure.

Alongside these country-specific answers, some general protective practices apply everywhere:

- ✓ Delivering the officially approved curriculum, as authorised by the Ministry of Education, is generally understood to fall within the scope of your professional duties provided you remain within the approved content and materials.
- ✓ Documentation is protective: a simple record of what was taught, when, and from which approved source materials strengthens your position if a parent or community member raises a complaint.
- ✓ Know your school's and Ministry's complaint-handling and escalation procedure before you need it, so you are not working it out for the first time under pressure.
- ✓ Threats, harassment or intimidation directed at you personally should be reported to your head teacher or school administration, and where necessary to local authorities. You should not be expected to manage serious threats to your safety alone.
- ✓ A teachers' union or professional association, where you are a member, may offer additional support and representation if a complaint escalates.