

The place of Comprehensive Sexuality Education in preparing children & adolescents to make & act on choices for healthy & happy lives.

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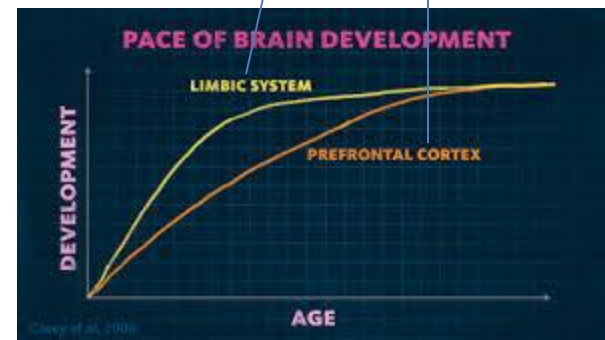
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1/5 What we know about brain maturation & adolescent development, & what are the implications of this for our work with adolescents ?

Brain maturation

- ❑ Previously it was believed that brain development ended in early childhood. We now know that brain maturation continues through childhood & adolescence & into early adulthood.
- ❑ **During adolescence, profound changes occur in brain connections & in signalling mechanisms. Some of the most important changes take place in the pre-frontal cortex. This region is responsible for organizational ability, strategic thinking & impulse control**
- ❑ Brain changes are affected by social influences.



Cognitive development

Learning to think differently:

- ❑ Thinking shifts from concrete to abstract
- ❑ Reasoning skills become stronger & creative thinking abilities blossom



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Emotional development

Learning how to understand & manage oneself & one's relationships:

- Self awareness** (*learning to recognize one's emotions*)
- Self management** (*learning to monitor & regulate one's emotions & to words desired goals*)
- Social awareness** (*learning to understand & take into account the thoughts & feelings of others*)
- Social management** (*learning to establish & maintain healthy, rewarding relationships with adults & peers based on cooperation, effective communication & the ability to resolve conflict & resist inappropriate peer pressure*)

Social development

Learning how to navigate new relationships:

- ❑ **Early adolescence** - One primary group of friends whose members are generally similar & belong to the same sex
- ❑ **Middle adolescence** - Part of peer groups which include some who are different (can include both sexes if socially permitted)
- ❑ **Late adolescence** - Diversified relationships beyond a single group; close relationships (including romantic ones if socially permitted)



Bringing the threads together

What are the implications of our understanding of brain maturation, & cognitive/social/ emotional development in adolescents for our work ?

COMMUNICATION:

- ❑ Assess adolescents' life circumstances & cognitive development
- ❑ Match communication with where adolescents are
- ❑ Stimulate them to reason & to think creatively
- ❑ Help them understand the effects of emotions & the presence of peers on their actions

BUILDING SKILLS:

- ❑ Build their decision making skills: Stimulate them to consider how they would decide & act on their decisions
- ❑ Build their emotional & social competencies (self awareness, self management, social awareness, social management)

ASSURE SAFETY:

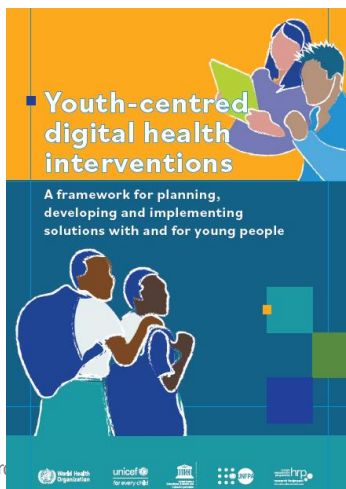
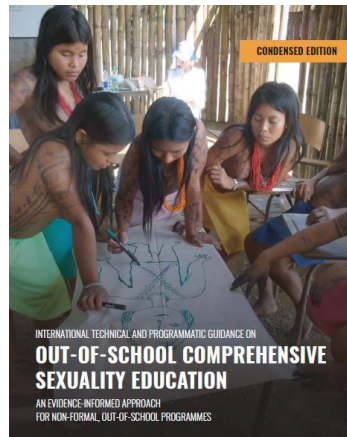
- ❑ Make their environments safer, as far as possible



“Ultimately, actions to support adolescent health, development & wellbeing should consider decision making processes. “

G C Patton et al. Our future: A Lancet Commission on adolescent health & wellbeing, 2016.

2/5 What do we mean by Comprehensive Sexuality Education?



Comprehensive Sexuality Education is not just about teaching children & adolescents about sex, reproduction & avoiding sexually transmitted infections and unwanted pregnancies. It is more than that.

- ◆ **It aims to improve knowledge & understanding, and to correct misconceptions by providing age-appropriate, scientifically accurate, & culturally relevant information.**
- ◆ **It aims to promote self-awareness & norms that are equitable & respectful of others, by providing opportunities to discuss & reflect on thoughts & feelings, attitudes & values.**
- ◆ **It aims to build social skills needed to make responsible choices & to carry them out, by providing structured opportunities to practice those skills.**

It aims to prepare children & adolescents for the choices they will need to make and the challenges they are likely to face in their sexual and reproductive lives, healthy & happy lives.

3/5 Why do children & adolescents need Comprehensive Sexuality Education?

Global prevalence estimates of lifetime and past 12 months physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence (IPV) against ever-partnered women by age group

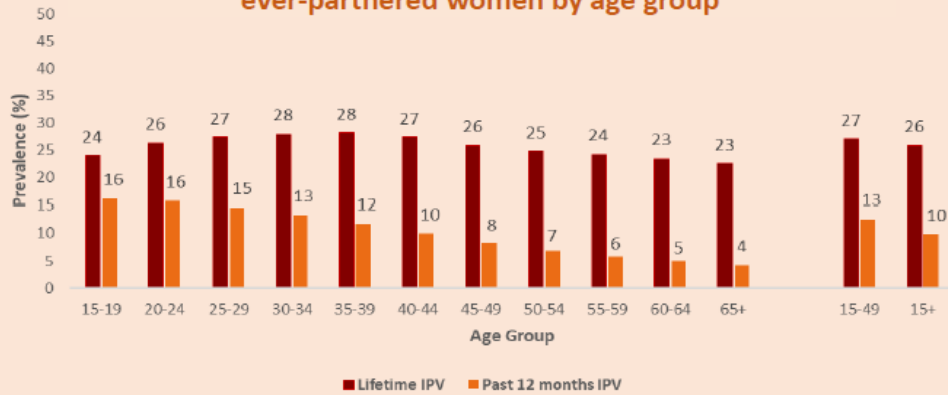
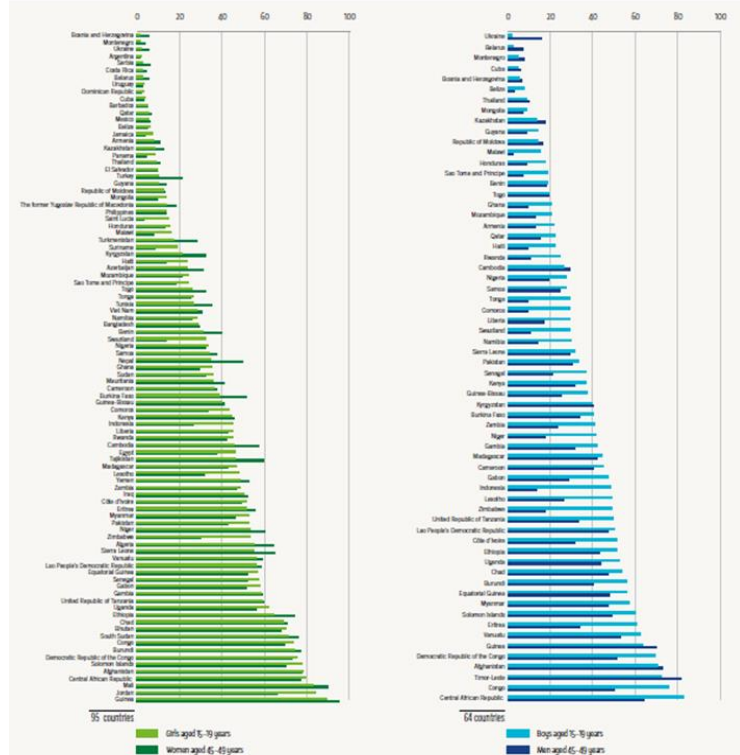


Figure 2: Adolescents' attitudes, Justifying violence against women



Percentage of girls aged 15-19 years and women aged 45-49 years who think that a husband/partner is justified in hitting or beating his wife or partner for at least one of the following reasons: if she burns the food, if she argues with him, if she goes out without telling him, if she neglects the children or if she refuses sexual relations with him.

Percentage of boys aged 15-19 years and men aged 45-49 years who think that a husband/partner is justified in hitting or beating his wife or partner for at least one of the following reasons: if she burns the food, if she argues with him, if she goes out without telling him, if she neglects the children or if she refuses sexual relations with him.

Source: UNICEF global databases, 2017, based on DHS, MICS and other national surveys, 2010-2016. Prepared for the IAP by Nicole Piotrowski and Claudia Cappa, Data Analysis Section, Division of Data, Research and Policy, UNICEF.

Violence Against Women Prevalence Estimates, 2018

Global, regional and national prevalence estimates for intimate partner violence against women and global and regional prevalence estimates for non-partner sexual violence against women



WHO, on behalf of the United Nations Inter-Agency Working Group on Violence Against Women Estimation and Data (IAW-WAGEED)



2017 TRANSFORMATIVE ACCOUNTABILITY FOR ADOLESCENTS

Accountability for the Health and Human Rights of Women, Children and Adolescents in the 2030 Agenda

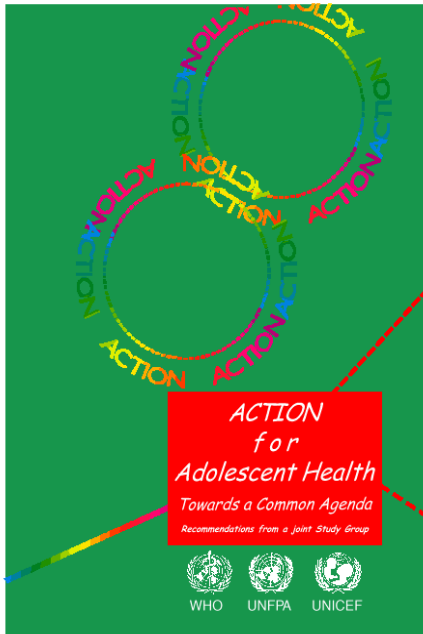


INDEPENDENT ACCOUNTABILITY PANEL

Nearly 1 in 4 girls ever-married/partnered aged 15-19 have experienced intimate partner violence or sexual violence. Inequitable gender norms are widespread across populations. They begin early & are deeply ingrained.

4/5 Can Comprehensive Sexuality Education *on its own*, contribute to improve health & well being in children & adolescents ?

What do children & adolescents need to grow & develop in good health ?



- ❑ **Information & skills**
(they are still developing)
- ❑ **Safe & supportive environment**
(they live in an adult world)
- ❑ **Health & counselling services**
(they need a safety net)



- ❑ **A sense of connection & belonging to their families, their schools & their communities**
- ❑ **A sense of hope & optimism built on opportunities *to get* (e.g. to study & to work) & *to give* (i.e. to contribute to those around them)**
- ❑ **A sense of spirituality, that is above & beyond any specific religious group or affiliation**



5/5 Who needs to provide Comprehensive Sexuality Education ?

