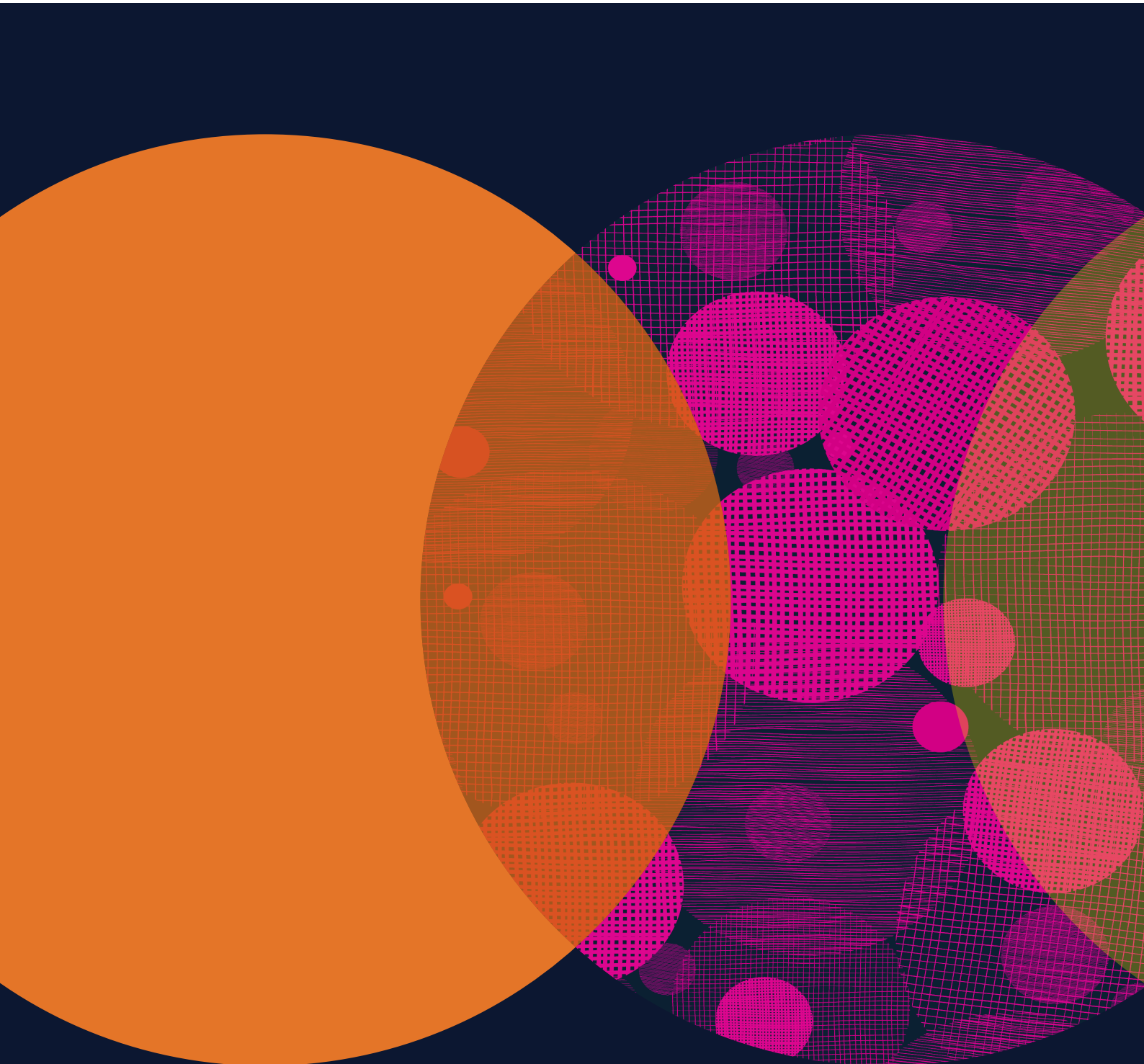




CSE TEACHERS' TRAINING IN NEPAL

Position Paper



BACKGROUND

Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) is a curriculum-based teaching and learning process which enables young people to make safe and informed decisions about their bodies and their lives by equipping them with knowledge, skill and attitude. In Nepal, however, CSE rather than being a stand-alone subject, its components and topics have been incorporated in school curriculum, i.e., in different subjects. In 1999/2000 integration of adolescents' reproductive health (RH) matters in school was initiated to incorporate ASRH (Adolescent and Sexual Reproductive Health) issues in 'Health and Population Education' subject which is taught in grade 9 and 10.¹ Then after, in 2002, this process was accelerated to introduce ASRH topics in grades 6, 7 and 8 also. However, in 2018, this subject was made optional for grade 9 and 10.

In 2017/18, Center for Education and Human Resource Development (CEHRD) collaborated with UNFPA developed Teacher's Resource Material and Trainer's Guide Book on Comprehensive Sexuality Education in line with International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education (ITGSE) 2009. Based on this Trainer's guide, UNFPA has been implementing teachers' training on CSE in its ten working districts, i.e., Accham, Bajura, Bajhang, Baitadi, Sunsari, Sarlahi, Rautaha, Udayapur, Rukum, and Sindhuli, through its implementing partner Family Planning Association of Nepal (FPAN) since 2018. Altogether 521 teachers have been trained on CSE in two years, i.e., 287 teachers and 235 teachers trained respectively in 2018 and 2019.²

CSE Teacher Training in Nepal Position Paper

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¹ Review of curricula in the context of CSE against 2009 UNESCO ITGSE Vol. II, 2014.

² Survey to assess the feasibility of online CSE review and refresher training.

INTRODUCTION

The evidence behind effectiveness of school based Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) has been growing and shows positive results among young people.¹ In Nepal's context, limited CSE related topics such as reproductive system, puberty, menstruation have been incorporated in the in-school subjects, yet, teachers are observed to be skipping these chapters leaving young people devoid of crucial knowledge and information. Therefore, a lot of concerns on the necessity to strengthen capacity of teachers on CSE has come up over the years. As a result, since 2018, UNFPA has been implementing 5-day teachers' training on CSE with an aim to enhance teachers' capacity to teach CSE to the students. With no concrete mechanism to monitor the impact of the teachers training, this mini pilot aimed at understanding the actual outcomes of the much-needed teachers' training on CSE.

The report analyses perspectives of both set of teachers who had and had not undergone teachers' training on CSE, the impacts of training on their teaching process as well as learning process of their students. The report captures voices of teachers and their experiences while teaching CSE in a Nepali context where sexuality related topics are tabooed.

¹ <https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/ITGSE.pdf>

METHODOLOGY

This mini-pilot focused on learning about the impact of CSE teachers' training on the delivery of CSE. A total of 30 teachers, i.e., 20 trained on CSE and 10 untrained on CSE were selected on the basis of gender and place of residence, i.e., municipality and rural municipality. For the mini pilot, Province 7 and Province 1 were selected on the basis of their geopolitical location and socio-economic diversity. Two districts from each province, i.e., Achham and Bajura districts from Province 7¹ and Udayapur, Sunsari districts from Province 1 were selected respectively.

In addition to this, two trainers were also selected to understand trainers' perspective on CSE teachers' training.

This mini pilot was conducted during the lockdown period of COVID-19 pandemic, and therefore, the interviews were carried out through telephone calls using a semi-structured questionnaire. Consent was taken from participants and their confidentiality was ensured. An Excel sheet was used to record the information. Thematic coding was used for data analysis.

¹ Province 7 has nine districts, which are Achham, Baitadi, Bajhang, Bajura, Dadeldhura, Darchula, Doti, Kailali and Kanchanpur. Province 1 has 14 districts: Panchthar, Tehrathum, Dhankuta, Bhojpur, Khotang, Okhaldhunga, Udayapur, Morang, Sunsari, Illam, Taplejung, Jhapa, Solukhumbu and Sankhuwasabha

FINDINGS

A. TRAINED TEACHERS

UNDERSTANDING OF CSE

General understanding of CSE revolved around the idea of educating young people, in formal educational settings, on sex, sexual behaviour, norms and prejudices surrounding it. Almost all of the teachers believed that CSE was an adolescent-specific subject matter that aimed to clarify doubts and sexuality related pre-conceptions. Though topics like menstruation, family planning, gender-based discrimination, violence, reproductive functions, sexually transmitted diseases were easier to discuss, certain topics like sex, sexuality, sexual behaviours, adolescent reproductive health, relationships, etc., always came as umbrella terms. Pleasure, respect, consent, sexual orientation or privacy were topics that were rarely mentioned and were overshadowed with more apparent social constructs like harassment and violence.

Almost every teacher mentioned the fact that information received during these training sessions focussed on adolescents, their sexual behaviour, their sexual and reproductive health and growth, their problems and services available for them. Most of the teachers also acknowledged the fact that popular topics of discussions, like menstruation, family planning, sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), especially HIV and AIDS, female centric gender roles, discrimination and violence and the importance of CSE among growing school going children of Nepal were brought into light during the training sessions.

“My own perception was that these topics are not to be discussed and they are associated with indecency and vulgarity. But after the training, I realized that this is an important lesson for my students and if I, being their teacher do not teach them, they are going to remain unaware and they will suppress these feelings and curiosity. I now believe that it (CSE) is an essential part of their curriculum.”

- A trained female teacher of Province 1

IMPACT ON TRAINED TEACHERS

All of the teachers have responded with great positivity regarding the impact of CSE delivery training. This training has helped change teachers' perception on components of CSE as well as improved their delivery by boosting confidence and bringing new methodologies to adopt in classrooms.

While admitting to the fact that societal beliefs and perception have been driving their personal understanding of sexuality as something immoral for years, they also mentioned that training has instilled a sense of awareness in them that their role as teachers is very crucial in imparting this vital information to younger generation of their society.

The teachers who taught Health, Population and Environment (HPE), the subject which involves majority of CSE components, shared that after training, some of them practiced group discussions, interaction and experience sharing with the students and a few mentioned they used demonstration of family planning devices, sanitary pads and videos too. One of them also mentioned that they looked up for resources online and used them in classes to have a better delivery of CSE to adolescent boys and girls and they believe teachers' training of being one of the reasons behind this motivation.

“Before this training, I was very hesitant in teaching this subject in school, I used to skip the chapters and asked students to learn on their own. Even if they had any questions, they would write it in a paper but oral conversation about it was very difficult both for students and myself. But now, it has been a lot easier for me and I try my best to deliver as much as I know and have learned from the training.”

- A trained female teacher of Province 1

Even non-HPE teachers agreed that their understanding on importance of CSE has been levelled and some of them shared their learnings from the training in classes too.

While not all the respondents have actually delivered CSE sessions after the training, those of whom have, admitted that they were less hesitant in classes about using the terminologies involved and are more comfortable having an interactive class when teaching CSE.

IMPACT ON STUDENTS

More than half of the teachers noted that the training has not only been helpful to the teachers but the students also have been indirect beneficiaries. Teachers believe that there was more of an open environment between the teachers and students so that they could share their queries and curiosities. Now that the teachers are more open and non-hesitant in classes, the students too seem to be taking the topics seriously. Some of them mentioned that students, especially boys, are more interactive in classes now that the teachers talk about it in detail and they can see students being curious about it in a positive way.

Most teachers felt that topics like menstruation, violence, abortion, etc., were specifically helpful to female students. Most of the responses when it came to benefitting students had to do with female students being more comfortable asking for help during menstruation and taking this process as an important and natural phenomenon.

“Students avoided eye contact when contents on sexuality used to appear in class or some used to ask insensible questions. But after providing information and demonstrating the materials provided in the training, students showed enthusiasm and curiosity. Around 30-35% students started asking questions without hesitation and started sharing their feelings.” - A trained male teacher of Province 7

CHALLENGES

The existing restrictive social construct has been seen as the origin for the challenges faced by teachers to teach CSE. There is still a misconception about sexuality being synonymous to sex, a topic which is taboo in context of Nepal, therefore, CSE is not taken very positively. Many parents find CSE irrelevant and misleading for their children to learn about it in their school setting, therefore, teachers are fearful while teaching CSE. The respondents have observed that this has resulted in their reluctance to express confidently in classes while talking about CSE.

Besides this, almost all of the teachers have shared that students seem to be hesitant about it too and hence shy away from participating in classes and sharing their questions or curiosities. According to the teachers' observation, most students from marginalized groups and female students are the most hesitant to learn about CSE. Teachers have also shared that male students are mostly seen making inappropriate comments and mocking the topics, making the classes uncomfortable.

Another major challenge that has been pointed out is that they have no access to technology, audio visual aids to better facilitate the teaching and learning process on CSE and that only lectures are not effective. Also, connecting schools with facilities like internet and teaching learning resources has been extremely challenging due to difficult terrain and geographical barriers.

“...The girl students would shy away from even looking at diagrams of reproductive organs and boys used to make fun of these topics.” - A trained male teacher of Province 1

“A teacher talking openly about these topics is perceived to have an immoral character and a bad influence on the students.” - A trained female teacher of Province 7

B. UNTRAINED TEACHERS

UNDERSTANDING OF CSE

Most of the teachers were quite open about the fact that they had little knowledge regarding CSE and that too was because of the word sexuality. Almost every teacher related CSE to safer sexual practices, intimacy and reproductive health of individuals. They identified beneficiaries for delivery of CSE to be young people to address problems of adolescent health and puberty.

Every single teacher thought that it was significant for students to learn about CSE and they mostly related the importance of teaching CSE to students with avoiding violence and unintended accidents like teenage pregnancy, taboos related menstruation, child marriages, etc. Since, students at school are coming off their ages and growing rapidly, it is important for them to understand different aspects of growth that are related with sexuality like attraction, growth of sexual organs, puberty, etc. They believed that menstruation, reproduction, rape and discrimination affected women in comparative significance and CSE is an important tool that can be utilized to address these malpractices.

“Mostly, male students would joke about such topics and ask unnecessary questions and create situations that would make the female students uncomfortable. The female students would usually shy away from discussing things like marriage, relationships, menstruation, childbirth, etc and it would be really difficult to assess their level of understanding.”

- An untrained male teacher of Province 7.

CHALLENGES

Every untrained teacher outlined that students either shy away or misbehave when these topics are discussed in classes and this uncooperative behaviour is a challenge for the teachers. Most of the time, they are either unwilling to participate, avoid eye contact with teachers, ask no questions and share no curiosities, or they are sometimes asking silly questions, making irrelevant comments, embarrassing each other and not taking the classes seriously during CSE-related topic discussion. Some of their observations are that male students are mostly noisier while female students are shy and quiet during such sessions.

It has also been pointed out that teachers do not feel confident enough to deliver sessions on these topics. Some of them believe their level of understanding, ways of delivering content to students by using appropriate words and techniques, and their skills in handling classroom behaviour have been inadequate to them.

Two teachers have mentioned about the curriculum not being sufficient and that they have not been guided enough about cultural relevance of these topics.

Another major challenge that has been pointed out is the lack of access to necessary resources like demonstration materials, teaching materials (posters, pamphlets, charts) or audio visual equipment. These resources are very essential for teachers' own references as well as for delivering the sessions.

“I feel shy about discussing such matters with my children and my students and they are also shy or highly curious about such matters. Also, the fact that teaching in Nepali language, talking about sexuality related topics in exact Nepali words, it becomes a matter of joke in the class and I find it difficult to explain such subject matters....” - A female untrained teacher of Province 1

TRAINERS

The trainers shared the need for teachers' training on CSE. This is because they realise that the concept of CSE is relatively new which has its own approaches and key concepts. For this, teachers require training on CSE so that they can comprehend the core concepts that CSE brings forward and such training helps to make teachers realise the importance of equipping their students with CSE and learn the methodologies and techniques which capacitate them to effectively deliver it among their students. Trainers shared that they have carried out pre- and post-test measures in the training which shows significant increase in knowledge level, i.e., from 50-60% in pre-test to 80% in post-test. However, they reflected upon the challenges faced to bring significant attitudinal changes in teachers within training period of 5 days. In a couple of training sessions, the trainers have found few of the male teachers highly influenced by their culture and patriarchy, and therefore, when discussed about gender equality, those teachers had shown uneasiness to accept and re-learn knowledge and information being provided to them.

The trainers also shared no monitoring of teachers trained from their end, and shared that they are unsure about the monitoring mechanism for the teachers' training in place.

“It is important. The teachers have knowledge but they don't have the capacity. For capacity development, such training plays an important role. If we observe five days, we can see beginning of a substantial change on the last day of the training in terms of their capacity and attitude. CSE is different from health education, though it is a part of health education. Contents of CSE are there in the curriculum from grade 6 to12, it has not been effectively delivered. Even the teachers participating in the training shared that as a student in school they were never taught about it though it was the topic of their interest, and now when they themselves are teachers, they are not teaching the students and shared that they received insights to bring change through teachers training.” - CSE Teachers' Trainer

As a way forward, the trainers recommended to include CSE in college and university programs with a need to provide training to the professors of the university as well. They further recommended to expand teachers' training beyond the working districts of UNFPA Nepal and also pointed out the necessity to conduct such training for the teachers based in urban areas as well.

“We don't know about how the teachers teach after they receive the training but as a trainer we do have contacts with them through email, phone calls where they send their feedback. On that basis, we evaluate them and their results have been brilliant. They share their case stories about how students have opened up. There is one example where a teacher shared how initially their girl students would try to hide about their menstruation but after teaching the students on menstruation being a natural process, girls have started to come alone to take the pads.” - CSE Teachers' Trainer

CONCLUSION

Overall, this mini-pilot has been able to analyse teachers' perspective on CSE and on its importance to shape young people's lives. This mini-pilot included not only the trained teachers and trainers on CSE but also the untrained teachers, because of which it can showcase comprehensive outlook on existing pathways in the teaching-learning process of in-school CSE.

The report summarizes the key learning and reflections of teachers regarding the training which they claim to have made them more confident in teaching CSE contents. They have also shared positive outcomes on the students due to the change brought in their teaching learning process as a result of the training.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations emerged from the mini-pilot to pave a way forward for CSE in Nepal:

1. Conduct follow up and refreshers training regularly to help trained teachers update on CSE and ensure the effectiveness of the training, especially focusing on behavioural change of the teachers.
2. Include parents and adolescents in the training and discussions around CSE so as to enable teaching-learning process on CSE.
3. Ensure the teachers' training on CSE emphasizes on less known subject matters like sexuality, sexual orientation, gender identity, consent, privacy, pleasure, etc.
4. Ensure in-school curriculum has comprehensively incorporated all of the CSE components.
5. Ensure that local youth clubs and children's clubs have a space for CSE provision to conduct peer to peer education approach.
6. School administration should initiate collaboration with local bodies and health centres for timely and need based dissemination of CSE related information in schools and communities.
7. Ensure that teachers' training on CSE is gender-friendly including women facilitators and ensure equal number of female teachers have meaningful participation and engagement.
8. Initiate and ensure effective monitoring mechanisms for overall CSE teachers' training.
9. Scale up the teachers' training on CSE to the districts beyond the working districts of UNFPA.
10. Ensure availability of various resources (pamphlets, posters, reading materials as well as electronic equipment for audio-visual presentation) to the teachers for effective CSE delivery.
11. Ensure safe and security and self-care of trained teachers so that they are able to cope with the oppositions.



The YUWA research team: Riju Dhakal, Sajja Singh, Urja Humagain (left to right)

This mini-pilot was part of an APA initiative on building evidence for sexual and reproductive rights in Asia Pacific. The full report "Shifting the SRHR Narrative: The importance of CSO-generated evidence in Asia Pacific" is available on the [APA website](#).

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