



# THESSISMUN

THESSALONIKI INTERNATIONAL STUDENT  
MODEL UNITED NATIONS

## Executive Board of UNESCO

*United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization*

*Topic Area A: "The importance of  
comprehensive sexuality education  
combating gender-based violence"*



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## *Topic Area A: The importance of comprehensive sexuality education combating gender-based violence*

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## 1. Welcoming Letter

Distinguished Delegates,

We officially welcome you to Thessaloniki International Student Model United Nations (ThessISMUN) 2019 and especially to the Executive Board of UNESCO, where we have the outmost honor to serve you as your Board Members. We are very thrilled that we will cooperate with you and that we will discuss two very important issues regarding our committee's mandate.

Above all, we would like to inform you that the Executive Board of UNESCO, as an Organization of the United Nations, is being committed in existing challenges regarding educational, cultural and scientific issues. We are very keen on this year's topics since we believe that they are innovative enough, as well as interesting and debatable.

To start with, we strongly believe that the comprehensive sexuality education is an issue of great importance globally due to the fact that gender-based violence is a common phenomenon regarding which there are still many stereotypes and taboo subjects. On the other hand, the preservation and promotion of cultural diversity depends on the tangible cultural heritage part of which is the underwater one, which has been enriched, especially after the World War II; many actions have been implemented by the UNESCO and other Organizations - nevertheless, there are lot yet to be done.

This Study Guide is being provided to you as an initiative step of our cooperation and as a first tool so that you start your research on the Topic Areas. Of course, you can make use of this Study Guide in order to focus properly on the substantial matters that should be discussed during our sessions, but under no circumstances you are limited to use further resources; on the contrary you are encouraged to do so in order to deepen at your debates and to be able to deliver a complete position paper.

We hope to contribute efficiently to your study and we are really looking forward to meeting you all in person and to having fruitful and interesting discussions. We will remain always at your disposal.

With kind regards,

The Executive Board of UNESCO,  
Andrigiannaki Emmanouela, *President*  
Fessatidou Erato, *Vice-President*

## 2. Introduction to the Committee

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization was introduced right after the Second World War as an initiative of the Conference of Allied Ministers of Education (CAME)<sup>1</sup>. The conference resulted into the founding of UNESCO under the auspices of The Constitution of UNESCO, which came into force in 1946 after the ratification of only 20 countries<sup>2</sup>.

Today UNESCO counts 195 Member States and 11 Associate Members<sup>3</sup> with the sole purpose to build and promote peace via international cooperation in Education, Sciences as well as Culture. In the spirit of comprehensive dialogue and mutual understanding, UNESCO develops educational tools and programmes, encourages cultural heritage and equal dignity amongst all nations and highlights the right to freedom of expression. The aforementioned are mostly accomplished through the adoption of particular international standards and the management of national programmes, that encourage the free flow of ideas worldwide<sup>4</sup>. In addition, UNESCO's programmes also contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals as defined in the 2030 Agenda, adopted in the UN General Assembly in 2015<sup>5</sup>.

UNESCO operates mainly through the General Conference and the Executive Board. The General Conference, occurring every two years, is the primary decision-making body that comprises representatives of all Member States. Each General Conference aims to determine the policies and main lines of the Organization<sup>6</sup>. On the other hand, the Executive Board, composed by 58 Member States, meets twice a year and is responsible for a) monitoring the implementation of decisions taken by the General Conference, b) preparing the agenda for the latter, while c) examining the Organization's budget and performances<sup>7</sup> in general. Furthermore, it is important to underline UNESCO's two main standard-setting legal instruments; International Conventions and Recommendations, which are both prepared in accordance with a pre-established procedure<sup>8</sup>. International Conventions<sup>9</sup>, being adopted by the General Conference and being subject to ratification, acceptance or accession by States, basically define the rules under which States undertake to comply. On the contrary,

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<sup>1</sup> Unesco.org. (2010). *History | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization*. [online] Available at: <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/unesco/about-us/who-we-are/history> [Accessed 17 Dec. 2018].

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

<sup>3</sup> UNESCO. (n.d.). *Member States*. [online] Available at: <https://en.unesco.org/countries/member-states> [Accessed 17 Dec. 2018].

<sup>4</sup> UNESCO. (n.d.). *UNESCO in brief*. [online] Available at: <https://en.unesco.org/about-us/introducing-unesco> [Accessed 17 Dec. 2018].

<sup>5</sup> Ibid

<sup>6</sup> Portal.unesco.org. (n.d.). *UNESCO.ORG | How does it work ?*. [online] Available at: [http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL\\_ID=3332&URL\\_DO=DO\\_TOPIC&URL\\_SECTION=201.html](http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=3332&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html) [Accessed 17 Dec. 2018].

<sup>7</sup> Ibid

<sup>8</sup> Portal.unesco.org. (2012). *Rules of Procedure concerning recommendations to Member States and international conventions covered by the terms of Article IV, paragraph 4, of the Constitution*. [online] Available at: [http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL\\_ID=21681&URL\\_DO=DO\\_TOPIC&URL\\_SECTION=201.html](http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=21681&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html) [Accessed 17 Dec. 2018].

<sup>9</sup> Portal.unesco.org. (n.d.). *Conventions*. [online] Available at: [http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL\\_ID=12025&URL\\_DO=DO\\_TOPIC&URL\\_SECTION=-471.html](http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=12025&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=-471.html) [Accessed 17 Dec. 2018].

Recommendations<sup>10</sup> are norms that are not subject to ratification, however Member States are invited to apply with the intention to influence their national law and practices.

To sum up, as stated in Article 1 of The Constitution<sup>11</sup>, UNESCO's vision for a "universal respect for justice, for the rule of law and for the human rights and fundamental freedoms" that will apply to all people of the world indiscriminately, can be proven by the tremendous work of the Organization, that stands out both from a quality and quantity perspective.

### 3. Introduction to Topic Area A

In 2009, the fact that far too few young people receive proper and complete information concerning their sexual and social identity, resulted with the UNESCO entering in an inter-agency collaboration with UNAIDS and its Cosponsors (UNFPA, WHO, UNICEF and the UNAIDS Secretariat), as well as with a number of independent national experts, developed the International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education<sup>12</sup>. With the purpose to provide a clear understanding of what sexual understanding comprises and enhance institutional capacity and policy advocacy<sup>13</sup>, the Technical Guidance brought groundbreaking changes for that period of time.

Today, taken that new elements have emerged concerning gender perspectives and their social influence in the health sector, Comprehensive Sexuality Education remains at the forefront of UNESCO's Agenda, as it was only in January 2018 that a fully updated International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education was published<sup>14</sup>. As the UNESCO Director-General, Audrey Azoulay, quotes "Based on the latest scientific evidence, the International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education reaffirms the position of sexuality education within a framework of human rights and gender equality"<sup>15</sup>.

More specifically, it was a variety of vital factors that lead to the revision of the Technical guidance such as -but not limited to- the new global development framework of the UN 2030 Agenda, within which the scope of sexuality education should be addressed, the major influence of social media that caused misinformation and misinterpretation of related aspects of the topic and of course the extensive exposure to bad sexual health outcomes, gender based violence as well as unintended pregnancy<sup>16</sup>.

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<sup>10</sup> Portal.unesco.org. (n.d.). *Recommendations*. [online] Available at: [http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL\\_ID=12026&URL\\_DO=DO\\_TOPIC&URL\\_SECTION=-471.html](http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=12026&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=-471.html) [Accessed 17 Dec. 2018].

<sup>11</sup> Portal.unesco.org. (n.d.). *UNESCO Constitution*. [online] Available at: [http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL\\_ID=15244&URL\\_DO=DO\\_TOPIC&URL\\_SECTION=201.html](http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=15244&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html) [Accessed 17 Dec. 2018].

<sup>12</sup> Unesdoc.unesco.org. (2009). [online] Available at: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000183281> [Accessed 17 Dec. 2018].

<sup>13</sup> Ibid

<sup>14</sup> UNESCO. (2018). *UN urges Comprehensive Approach to Sexuality Education*. [online] Available at: <https://en.unesco.org/news/urges-comprehensive-approach-sexuality-education> [Accessed 17 Dec. 2018].

<sup>15</sup> Ibid

<sup>16</sup> Unesdoc.unesco.org. (2018). [online] Available at: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0026/002607/260770e.pdf> [Accessed 17 Dec. 2018].

All in all, comprehensive sexuality education could be characterized as a multidimensional concept. On the one hand, it includes the cognitive, emotional and physical aspects of sexuality while on the other it addresses gender norms and their influence on gender equality and human rights understanding<sup>17</sup>. Therefore, a balanced and complete sexuality education generally aims to engage young people with the full content of sexual behaviors while highlighting all the positive aspects of sexuality, meaning mostly love and relationships that are based upon mutual respect, human dignity and equality<sup>18</sup>.

## 4. Definitions of key-words regarding the Topic Area

Before proceeding with the analysis of the Agenda, it is of utmost importance to define all individual words and key terms related to the Topic Area. In that way, the argumentation as well as the national policy research will deem clearer and more informative on the process.

### 4.1 Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE):

According to Future of Sex Education, which is a partnership between Advocates for Youth, Answer, and Sexuality Information and the Education Council of the U.S.<sup>19</sup>, comprehensive sexuality education can be defined as a planned and complete school guidance that addresses age-appropriate physical, mental, emotional and social dimensions of human sexuality. The curriculum should be designed to motivate and assist students to maintain and improve their sexual health, prevent disease and reduce sexual health-related risk behaviors. It includes a variety of sub-topics including anatomy, physiology, families, personal safety, healthy relationships, pregnancy and birth, sexually transmitted diseases including HIV, contraceptives, sexual orientation, pregnancy options, media literacy and more<sup>20</sup>.

### 4.2 Sexuality:

According to the Pan American Health Organization, sexuality may be understood as “a core dimension of being human which includes: the understanding of, and relationship to, the human body; emotional attachment and love; sex; gender; gender identity; sexual orientation; sexual intimacy; pleasure and reproduction”. Sexuality is complex may differ in different languages based on different individual cultural contexts<sup>21</sup>.

### 4.3 Comprehensive:

When referring to comprehensive we mean a sexuality education that will acquire complete, accurate, evidence-informed and age- appropriate information on sexuality. CSE

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid

<sup>18</sup> Ibid

<sup>19</sup> Futureofsexed.org. (n.d.). [online] Available at: <http://www.futureofsexed.org/index.html> [Accessed 17 Dec. 2018].

<sup>20</sup> Futureofsexed.org. (n.d.). [online] Available at: <http://www.futureofsexed.org/definition.html> [Accessed 17 Dec. 2018].

<sup>21</sup> Unesdoc.unesco.org. (2018). [online] Available at: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000260770> [Accessed 17 Dec. 2018].

shall cover the full range of topics that are important for all learners to know, including those that may be challenging in some social and cultural contexts <sup>22</sup> .

#### **4.4 Age- and developmentally-appropriate:**

It is vital that the content of CSE remains responsive to the changing needs and capabilities of the child and the young person as they grow. CSE addresses developmentally-relevant topics when it is most timely for the health and well-being of students. It accommodates developmental diversity, meaning it is presented when the internalization of sexual and reproductive health and relationship-related messages are most likely to be processed accordingly <sup>23</sup> .

#### **4.5 Gender-based violence:**

Gender-based violence is violence directed against a person because of their gender. Gender-based violence is a phenomenon deeply rooted in gender inequality and consists one of the most notable human rights violations within all societies. Both women and men experience gender-based violence but the majority of victims are women and girls <sup>24</sup> . Characteristic examples of gender-based violence are; physical, sexual, psychological, which is also referred to as emotional violence, and economic violence.

#### **4.6 Gender-based discrimination:**

According to Article 1 of the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), gender-based discrimination can be defined as *“any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field”*<sup>25</sup>.

#### **4.7 Stereotypes:**

Preconceived ideas whereby females and males are arbitrarily assigned characteristics and roles determined and limited by their gender<sup>26</sup>.

<sup>22</sup> Unesdoc.unesco.org. (2018). [online] Available at: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0026/002607/260770e.pdf> [Accessed 17 Dec. 2018].

<sup>23</sup> Ibid

<sup>24</sup> EIGE. (n.d.). *What is gender-based violence?*. [online] Available at: <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-based-violence/what-is-gender-based-violence> [Accessed 17 Dec. 2018].

<sup>25</sup> Un.org. (1981). *CEDAW 29th Session 30 June to 25 July 2003*. [online] Available at: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/text/econvention.htm#article1> [Accessed 17 Dec. 2018].

<sup>26</sup> EIGE. (2015). *gender stereotypes*. [online] Available at: <https://eige.europa.eu/rdc/thesaurus/terms/1222> [Accessed 17 Dec. 2018].



## 5. Legal basis concerning sexuality education and gender-based violence

It is undeniable that comprehensive sexuality education and its value would not be effective if understood only from a theoretical perspective. Therefore, the international community aimed to guarantee from the one hand that sexuality education shall be conceived as a legal obligation from Member States while on the other that gender-based violence shall be condemned accordingly. In addition, the aforementioned was mainly accomplished through a variety of International Conventions and Agreements with the most important ones being listed below:

### 5.1. *Legal basis on sexuality education:*

With too many young people receiving confusing and conflicting information about relationships and sex there is a constantly increasing demand for reliable information on the topic<sup>27</sup>. Therefore, international initiatives lead to the legitimization of a comprehensive sexuality education that can eventually prepare young people for a safe, productive and fulfilling life.

#### 5.1.1. *The Committee on the Rights of the Child General Comment 4*

The Committee on the Rights of the Child<sup>28</sup> during its Thirty third Session in 2003 addressed the Adolescent Health and Development in the Context of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. More specifically, in the General Comment 4 the Committee called upon States parties to develop and implement legislation, policies and programmes to promote health and development for adolescents<sup>29</sup>. The main aim was to provide extensive information and parental support for the development of a relationship of trust and confidence, in which issues including sexuality, sexual behavior and risky lifestyles can be openly discussed (para 27).

#### 5.1.2. *The International Conference on Population and Development Programme of Action*<sup>30</sup>

In 1994, the International Conference on Population and Development<sup>31</sup> (ICPD), under the auspices of the United Nations Population Fund<sup>32</sup>, created the International Program

<sup>27</sup> UNESCO. (2018). Why comprehensive sexuality education is important. [online] Available at: <https://en.unesco.org/news/why-comprehensive-sexuality-education-important> [Accessed 2 Jan. 2019].

<sup>28</sup> Ohchr.org. (1993). *OHCHR | Committee on the Rights of the Child*. [online] Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hrbodies/crc/pages/crcindex.aspx> [Accessed 17 Dec. 2018].

<sup>29</sup> Refugees, U. (2003). *Refworld | General comment No. 4 (2003): Adolescent Health and Development in the Context of the Convention on the Rights of the Child*. [online] Refworld. Available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/4538834f0.html> [Accessed 17 Dec. 2018].

<sup>30</sup> Unfpa.org. (2014). *International Conference on Population and Development Programme of Action*. [online] Available at: <https://www.unfpa.org/publications/international-conference-population-and-development-programme-action> [Accessed 17 Dec. 2018].

<sup>31</sup> Unfpa.org. (n.d.). *International Conference on Population and Development*. [online] Available at: <https://www.unfpa.org/icpd> [Accessed 17 Dec. 2018].

of Action. The ICPD Program of Action today celebrates its 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary being adopted by 179 governments and continuing to address the needs, aspirations and rights of individual women and men worldwide<sup>33</sup>.

Particularly, the main two objectives are; a) to develop responsible sexuality, promoting relations of equity and mutual respect between the genders and contributing to improving the overall quality of life of individuals, and b) to ensure accessible related information, education and services that are needed to enhance good sexual health and exercise of the individuals' reproductive rights and responsibilities<sup>34</sup>. The Programme also addresses the urgent need to prevent the rapid spread of sexually transmitted diseases and unintended pregnancies and therefore highlights that “Governments should base national policies on a better understanding of the need for responsible human sexuality and the realities of current sexual behavior”<sup>35</sup>.

### 5.1.3. The United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women Platform for Action

The 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women (FWCW) in Beijing<sup>36</sup> resulted in the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action (PFA), which are now adopted unanimously by 189 countries and set strategic objectives for the empowerment of women and the achievement of gender equality<sup>37</sup>. The PFA specifically, permits actions that need to be taken by Governments, international bodies including relevant United Nations organizations, bilateral and multilateral donors and non-governmental organizations towards the promotion of mutually respectful and equitable gender relations, enabling adolescents to deal in a positive and responsible way with their sexuality. Even more, it affirms their specific needs and implements related appropriate programmes, such as education and information on sexual and reproductive health issues, as well as on sexually transmitted diseases<sup>38</sup>.

### 5.1.4 The United Nations General Assembly Special Session on HIV/AIDS, Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS

In June 2001 exclusive attention was drawn exclusively to the HIV/AIDS epidemic, when the UN General Assembly Special Session on HIV/AIDS<sup>39</sup> occurred and the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS<sup>40</sup> was unanimously adopted and signed by 189 Member States.

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<sup>32</sup> Unfpa.org. (n.d.). *UNFPA - United Nations Population Fund*. [online] Available at: <https://www.unfpa.org> [Accessed 17 Dec. 2018].

<sup>33</sup> Unfpa.org. (1999). [online] Available at: [https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/programme\\_of\\_action\\_Web%20ENGLISH.pdf](https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/programme_of_action_Web%20ENGLISH.pdf) [Accessed 17 Dec. 2018].

<sup>34</sup> Ibid

<sup>35</sup> Ibid

<sup>36</sup> UN Women. (n.d.). *World Conferences on Women*. [online] Available at: <http://www.unwomen.org/en/how-we-work/intergovernmental-support/world-conferences-on-women> [Accessed 17 Dec. 2018].

<sup>37</sup> Unwomen.org. (1995). [online] Available at: [http://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/csw/pfa\\_e\\_final\\_web.pdf?la=en&vs=800](http://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/csw/pfa_e_final_web.pdf?la=en&vs=800) [Accessed 17 Dec. 2018].

<sup>38</sup> Unesdoc.unesco.org. (2009). [online] Available at: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001832/183281e.pdf> [Accessed 17 Dec. 2018].

<sup>39</sup> Un.org. (2001). *UN SPECIAL SESSION ON HIV/AIDS SEEKS TO SPUR MASSIVE GLOBAL RESPONSE TO CRISIS | Meetings Coverage and Press Releases*. [online] Available at: <https://www.un.org/press/en/2001/aids20.doc.htm> [Accessed 17 Dec. 2018].

<sup>40</sup> Hivlawandpolicy.org. (2001). *Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS, G.A. Res. S-26/2, U.N. Doc. A/RES/S-26/2 | The Center for HIV Law and Policy*. [online] Available at:

The main goal of the Declaration was to enhance coordination and intensification of national, regional and international initiatives combating HIV/AIDS and educating children, by “*expanding good quality, youth-friendly information and sexual health education and counselling service, strengthening reproductive and sexual health programmes*”<sup>41</sup>.

## 5.2 *Legal basis against gender-based violence:*

A world in which all humans fully embrace their dignity and inalienable rights was one of the first priorities when the founding of the United Nations took place<sup>42</sup>. Alarming, the numbers of violent behaviors and gender-based violence in particular remain startling resulting into the undermine of the following vital and landmark Conventions;

### 5.2.1. *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights*

Proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948<sup>43</sup>, The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) is considered a milestone document in the history of human rights. Whereas building a concept of freedom, justice and peace in the world, articles 2 and 3 of the Declaration claim that everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of a person while at the same time all people are entitled to their rights and freedoms without distinction of any kind, such as race, sex (...)<sup>44</sup>.

### 5.2.2. *The Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment*

Entering into force in 1987 and having regard to the obligation of States to promote universal respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment firstly defines “torture” as any act by which severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, is intentionally inflicted on a person<sup>45</sup>. Article 1 of the Convention also catalogues a list of different purposes that may result into such prohibited behavior one of which is “*discrimination of any kind*”, meaning that gender discrimination resulting into violence is definitely included in the Convention’s core<sup>46</sup>. Additionally, it is noted that each State Party shall take effective legislative, administrative, judicial or other measures to prevent acts of torture in any territory under its jurisdiction (Article 2§1)<sup>47</sup>.

### 5.2.3. *The Convention on the Rights of the Child*

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<https://www.hivlawandpolicy.org/resources/declaration-commitment-hivaids-ga-res-s-262-un-doc-aress-262>  
[Accessed 17 Dec. 2018].

<sup>41</sup> Unesdoc.unesco.org. (2009). [online] Available at: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001832/183281e.pdf>  
[Accessed 17 Dec. 2018].

<sup>42</sup> HISTORY. (2018). United Nations. [online] Available at: <https://www.history.com/topics/world-war-ii/united-nations> [Accessed 2 Jan. 2019].

<sup>43</sup> Un.org. (1948). *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. [online] Available at: <https://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/index.html> [Accessed 17 Dec. 2018].

<sup>44</sup> Ibid

<sup>45</sup> Ohchr.org. (1987). *OHCHR / Convention against Torture*. [online] Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/cat.aspx> [Accessed 17 Dec. 2018].

<sup>46</sup> Ibid

<sup>47</sup> Ibid

Recalling that the United Nations have proclaimed that childhood is entitled to special care and assistance in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights<sup>48</sup>, the Convention on the Rights of the Child aims to guarantee that all States Parties shall take the appropriate measures to ensure that the child is protected against all forms of discrimination or violence (Article 2§2), while also highlights the obligation of States to ensure to the maximum extent possible the development of the child (Article 6)<sup>49</sup>.

#### 5.2.4. *The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women*

Taking into account that studies have shown that the most common victims of gender-based violence are women, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which was adopted 1979, wished to incorporate the principle of equality of men and women in the legal system of States<sup>50</sup>. The Convention condemns any act or practice of discrimination or violence against women and seeks to ensure that public authorities and institutions shall act in conformity with this obligation<sup>51</sup>.

## 6. Gender-stereotyping resulting into the emergence of gender-based violence

As gender-based violence operates against a person occasioned exclusively by his/her gender, it is important to pinpoint and comprehend the source of the problem. With gender stereotypes having still a great impact on our judgment and decisions in numerous aspects of life, it is no surprising that forms of gender-based violence are constantly emerging.

### 6.1 About gender stereotyping

Gender stereotyping is considered as “*the practice of ascribing to an individual woman or man specific attributes, characteristics, or roles by reason only of her or his (...)*” sex accordingly<sup>52</sup>. Therefore, as a generalized and preconceived habit it can be proven wrongful when it results in violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms. In fact, under international human rights law, stereotyping is strictly prohibited as it promotes a concept of discriminatory and prejudicial behaviors that can undermine the human identity and dignity in all aspects of both public and private life<sup>53</sup>.

<sup>48</sup> Ohchr.org. (1990). *OHCHR / Convention on the Rights of the Child*. [online] Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx> [Accessed 17 Dec. 2018]

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>50</sup> Un.org. (1979). *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women*. [online] Available at: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/> [Accessed 17 Dec. 2018].

<sup>51</sup> Un.org. (n.d.). *CEDAW 29th Session 30 June to 25 July 2003*. [online] Available at: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/text/econvention.htm> [Accessed 17 Dec. 2018].

<sup>52</sup> Ohchr.org. (n.d.). *OHCHR / Gender stereotyping*. [online] Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/issues/women/wrgs/pages/genderstereotypes.aspx> [Accessed 17 Dec. 2018].

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid*

Taken that adolescence is definitely a critical life stage, meaning it is the time during which the biggest part of our personality gets into shape, boys and girls are then thinking more abstractly yet critically. It is basically the phase during which the physical, cognitive, emotional and social development of the individuals takes place, as their social networks expand, and a variety of factors may influence their judgement<sup>54</sup>. Families, teachers, peers as well as the media have a major impact on shaping adolescents' social network and its content and can sometimes prove poignant when enforcement of social norms, and particularly gender norms becomes reality. The more the exposure to gender norms and stereotypes, the more likely it is that a subconscious pressure on a teenager's mindset may conform to what is presented as "gender-appropriate behaviors"<sup>55</sup>.

For instance, a typical example of a stereotype that is persistently up to date, even in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, is the hegemonic myth. The hegemonic myth projects girls as nice and submissive with their physical appearances being vital to their self-worth, whereas boys are expected to be tough, outdoorsy, and assertive. However, such stereotype, that establishes a clear gender inequity, prescribes accordingly a differential behavior, status and power among the genders<sup>56</sup>.

As a result, stereotypical behaviors and practices can elevate discriminatory laws, policies and sociocultural practices and even project violence as something expected and normal due to the "naturally" unequal distribution of power between men and women, boys and girls.

## 6.2 The emergence of gender-based violence

As gender stereotypes lead to socially defined norms about masculinity and femininity, it is an expected outcome for gender-based violence to emerge. Alarmingly, due to the fact that women and girls prove to be the most at risk when referring to gender-based violence, the terms "gender-based violence" and "violence against women" are used interchangeably as a result<sup>57</sup>.

Gender-based violence can result into a variety of stages throughout a person's life cycle. It is more than unfortunate that episodes of gender-based violence may occur even during prenatal period and continue through childhood to adulthood and old age<sup>58</sup>. Most common forms of gender-based violence include sexual, physical and emotional abuse, prostitution, pornography, harassment, trafficking, rape or abuse. Even more, phenomenon of forced marriage, forced pregnancy and honor crimes most commonly victimize women, while

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<sup>54</sup> Jahonline.org. (2017). *Journal of Adolescent Health*. [online] Available at: <https://www.jahonline.org/article/S1054-139X%2817%2930358-0/fulltext> [Accessed 17 Dec. 2018].

<sup>55</sup> Ibid

<sup>56</sup> Medium. (2017). *The Silent Health Risks of Gender Norms – University of Miami Health System – Medium*. [online] Available at: <https://medium.com/university-of-miami-health-system/the-silent-health-risks-of-gender-norms-5e0b6449f744> [Accessed 17 Dec. 2018].

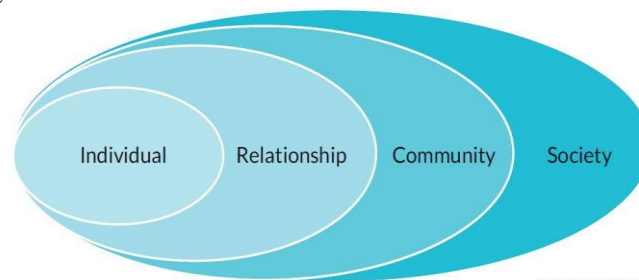
<sup>57</sup> Usaid.gov. (n.d.). [online] Available at: <https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1865/USAID%20Toolkit%20GBV%20EG%20Final%20Section%202.pdf> [Accessed 17 Dec. 2018].

<sup>58</sup> Sida.se. (2015). [online] Available at: <https://www.sida.se/contentassets/3a820dbd152f4fca98bacde8a8101e15/preventing-and-responding-to-gender-based-violence.pdf> [Accessed 17 Dec. 2018].

on the other hand forced recruitment of soldiers, gang violence, gun violence as well as violence in the army and in conflict target mostly men<sup>59</sup>.

In general, it is widely understood that gender-based violence is with certainty not caused by a single factor. On the contrary, it is a combination of several factors that were catalogued in the so called “ecological framework” developed by Lori Heise<sup>60</sup>, an advocate and researcher on women’s health. This particular framework distinguishes risk factors at four levels, as shown below, and are basically associated with an increased likelihood that an individual will become either a victim or a perpetrator of such violence<sup>61</sup>.

The ecological framework:



Source: Heise 1998

© UNFPA and WAVE 2014

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More specifically, the individual-level factor refers to the biological and personal history factor that may increase the risk of violence. For instance, low level of education, low-economic status or past experiences of violence usually play a vital role<sup>63</sup>.

Secondly, the relationship-level factors enhance the risk of gender-based violence on the level of relationships with intimate partners, family members and peers<sup>64</sup>. Studies have shown that men having multiple partners, for example, are more likely to engage risky sexual behaviors or perpetrate sexual violence. Furthermore, the community-level factor is involved with the extent of tolerance shown towards gender-based violence in our closest surroundings, meaning, the workplace, schools or the neighborhood and last but not least, society-level factors include the sociocultural norms that shape specific gender roles and therefore unequal relationships<sup>65</sup>.

All in all, it can be easily understood that the prevention and elimination of gender-based violence are closely linked to efforts aiming to increase gender equality. Precisely, efforts to enhance and inform about sexual and reproductive health and rights are crucial for

<sup>59</sup> Ibid

<sup>60</sup> Justassociates.org. (n.d.). *Lori Heise | JASS (Just Associates)*. [online] Available at: <https://justassociates.org/en/bio/lori-heise> [Accessed 17 Dec. 2018].

<sup>61</sup> Health-gendviolence.org. (n.d.). 1.3. *Causes of gender-based violence | The response to Gender-Based Violence in Eastern Europe and Central Asia*. [online] Available at: <http://www.health-gendviolence.org/guidance-for-health-care-professionals-in-strengthening-health-system-responses-to-gender-based-vi-0> [Accessed 17 Dec. 2018].

<sup>62</sup> Health-gendviolence.org. (1998). [online] Available at: [http://www.health-gendviolence.org/sites/default/files/download/figure1-\\_ecological\\_framework\\_for\\_understanding\\_violence\\_against\\_women\\_0.jpg](http://www.health-gendviolence.org/sites/default/files/download/figure1-_ecological_framework_for_understanding_violence_against_women_0.jpg) [Accessed 2 Jan. 2019].

<sup>63</sup> Health-gendviolence.org. (n.d.). 1.3. *Causes of gender-based violence | The response to Gender-Based Violence in Eastern Europe and Central Asia*. [online] Available at: <http://www.health-gendviolence.org/guidance-for-health-care-professionals-in-strengthening-health-system-responses-to-gender-based-vi-0> [Accessed 17 Dec. 2018].

<sup>64</sup> Ibid

<sup>65</sup> Ibid

fighting against gender-based violence given the close relationship between the two<sup>66</sup>. Therefore, taking into consideration that education is indeed the key, with a comprehensive sexuality education stereotyping can be sidelined and positive perceptions about genders and the beauty concerning their natural differences will finally blossom.

## 7. The importance and content of a Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE)

Taking into consideration that the revision of the International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education occurred only in 2018, one can understand that the topic is at the forefront for various international organizations' agenda<sup>67</sup>. UNESCO reports that opponents of sexuality education often claim that it refers only to sex, however this misconception clarifies the need to further elaborate on the real content of comprehensive sexuality education and its benefits.

### 7.1 The importance of CSE

In order to fully comprehend the necessity of a comprehensive sexuality education, one must firstly acknowledge that sexuality is an original and basic aspect of human life. It may indeed happen that rules concerning sexual behaviors differ widely across and within cultures, however this shall not prevent us from analyzing the various interesting aspects of a proper sexuality education<sup>68</sup>.

It is undeniable that far too few young people worldwide receive adequate preparation concerning their sexual lives today<sup>69</sup>. However, exposing children and young people to ignorance and unawareness not only increases the risk of bad sexual health outcomes but most importantly it perpetuates a wrongful situation at which it is "normal" for young people to feel concerned and confused on this particular topic. This shall not be the case, nevertheless, and young people should ideally feel more than open to discuss and solve any of their concerns referring to sexuality and all its related sub-topics, because, in reality, it is not a taboo subject, but a fundamental human right and aspect that concerns the mankind.

Even in the case where young people actually address adulthood -particularly with their parents or teachers- concerning their sexuality, this is often accompanied by feelings of

<sup>66</sup> Sida.se. (2015). [online] Available at: <https://www.sida.se/contentassets/3a820dbd152f4fca98bacde8a8101e15/preventing-and-responding-to-gender-based-violence.pdf> [Accessed 17 Dec. 2018].

<sup>67</sup> UNESCO. (2018). Comprehensive sexuality education to prevent gender-based violence. [online] Available at: <https://en.unesco.org/news/comprehensive-sexuality-education-prevent-gender-based-violence> [Accessed 2 Jan. 2019].

<sup>68</sup> Unesdoc.unesco.org. (2009). [online] Available at: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001832/183281e.pdf> [Accessed 17 Dec. 2018].

<sup>69</sup> Ibid

embarrassment, disapproval and shame, which result eventually into silence<sup>70</sup>. According to the first edition of the International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education, countries, on the other hand, are increasingly marginalizing the importance of equipping young people with comprehensive skills to make responsible choices in their lives which at the end of the day leaves young people seeking the necessary information via Internet and other media<sup>71</sup>. Anyone can confirm, however, that in this case the risk of misinterpretation or misinformation is more than alarming due to the fact that media is not always the proper source on sensitive subjects like the aforementioned.

To conclude, an effective comprehensive sexuality education program can easily put an end to this problematic situation and supply the youth with a massive variety of positive effects, such as but not limited to; the increase of correct and accurate information, enhanced skills on making responsible and legitimate decisions, improved perceptions concerning social norms and peer groups as well as improved dialogue and therefore relationships between the family members<sup>72</sup>. Finally, there is no better timing than the adolescence to explore our self, our preferences and needs and there is not a better way to do so than receiving a field-specific and comprehensive education.

## ***7.2 Key issues affecting the sexual and reproductive health of children and young people***

Healthy practices and understandings on how to maintain a healthy life begin in early childhood, while during adolescence due to the ongoing physical and emotional change, healthy habits and lifestyles begin to establish<sup>73</sup>. Therefore, it is the opportune time for young people to comprehend the physical, emotional, social and mental dimensions of sexual and reproductive health as they start to explore their sexuality and develop relationships with others<sup>74</sup>. This section of the Study Guide summarizes the most important sexual and reproductive health (SRH) needs of children, as well as key issues that may affect their well-being;

### ***7.2.1 HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases***

The global HIV epidemic is one of the most crucial factors that point out the necessity of a comprehensive sexuality education, since in order to address HIV -which is mostly sexually transmitted- we must acquire a proper understanding of gender and its link with sexuality<sup>75</sup>. According to the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and the World Health Organization (WHO), it is reported that more than 5.5 million young

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid

<sup>71</sup> Ibid

<sup>72</sup> Ibid

<sup>73</sup> Unesdoc.unesco.org. (2009). [online] Available at: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001832/183281e.pdf> [Accessed 17 Dec. 2018].

<sup>74</sup> Ibid

<sup>75</sup> Unesdoc.unesco.org. (2018). [online] Available at: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0026/002607/260770e.pdf> [Accessed 17 Dec. 2018].



people globally are living with HIV with 45% of the infections affecting mostly the age group of 15-24 years old<sup>76</sup>.

Under any circumstances young people affected with HIV should be treated in a way that it's in accordance with the whole variety of their needs. To be more precise, HIV patients apart from the clear medical part of their treatment, are in definite need to discuss about life opportunities in general, living positively with HIV, sexuality and relationships and issues relating to disclosure, stigma and discrimination as well.

These needs are up to now poorly met, and access to full medical and psychological support does not seem to be the case in all countries. In addition, concerning other Sexual Transmitted Infections (STIs) apart from HIV, the World Health Organization reports that one in 20 young people is believed to contract an STI each year. What is even worse is that the minority of adolescents has actual access to effective and affordable STI services while the data on STIs remain limited and inconsistent between and within countries<sup>77</sup>.

### 7.2.2 *Pregnancy and unsafe abortion*

Early pregnancy can have significant health and social consequences for young girls and the World Health Organization has concluded that early childbirth is the second cause of death among girls aging under 19 years old<sup>78</sup>. Complications and their consequences referring to teenage pregnancy mostly involve: delay of receiving proper maternal health, limited knowledge on pregnancy, abortion and post-abortion care, constraint from access to medical services due to restrictive laws or policies related to age of consent to sexual intercourse and in some cases school dropout and discontinuance of education<sup>79</sup>.

Furthermore, the World Health Organization also indicates that globally around 3 million girls undergo unsafe abortions annually<sup>80</sup>. Both due to legal restrictions on access to safe abortion as well as the fear of social stigmatization, adolescents may resort to dangerous procedures administered by unskilled providers and it is even likely self-induce an abortion<sup>81</sup>.

### 7.2.3 *Violence and gender-based violence (GBV)*

Every year, an estimated 246 million children are subject to some form of gender-based violence with the most common cases being forced sexual intercourse, child abuse, dating violence, female genital mutilation, forced marriage and pregnancy related the GBV<sup>82</sup>. With the percentages of both physical and emotional violence being extremely high, young people are exposed to HIV infections and other related sexually transmitted diseases and unintended pregnancy.

But most importantly they are exposed to a crucial variety of social issues such as bullying, cyberbullying, the use of alcohol and drugs, social stigmatization and exclusion. Violence based on sexual orientation and gender identity/expression is also a tactic phenomenon, also known as homophobic and transphobic violence witnessed mostly during

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid

<sup>77</sup> Ibid

<sup>78</sup> Ibid

<sup>79</sup> Ibid

<sup>80</sup> Ibid

<sup>81</sup> Ibid

<sup>82</sup> Ibid

or after schools<sup>83</sup>. All indications show that students who resist to conform to prevailing sexual norms and gender stereotypes, being mostly those who are lesbians, gays, bisexuals or transgenders, are highly more vulnerable to violent behaviors<sup>84</sup>.

#### 7.2.4 *Poor mental and emotional health*

Surprisingly, little research has been done on the link between mental health problems, sexual and reproductive health. Although, there is an important relationship between the two and it has a major impact on young peoples' health and overall wellbeing. Adolescents struggling with sexuality and reproductive matters often appear stress, mental disorders and poor academic performances or grade repetitions<sup>85</sup>.

A concrete example can be that of a young person belonging in the LGBTQ+ community. These children are in serious lack of a support system, because they do not fit into the traditional social norms, with their differences resulting into anger, depression, sadness and fear<sup>86</sup>.

### 7.3 *Delivering an effective CSE Curriculum*

An interagency collaboration among the UNESCO, the WHO Europe, the UNFPA and other organizations specializing in CSE policies and practices, indicated that the delivery of a comprehensive sexuality education is as important as its own content<sup>87</sup>.

It is vital for young people to feel comfortable and safe throughout the whole educating process. Their privacy shall be respected and protected from related experts and educators and the school ethos in general shall reflect the principles and life-lessons that CSE promotes<sup>88</sup>.

Having said that, this section aims to portray some of the requirements that deem most essential for the proper delivery of comprehensive sexuality education at schools.

#### 7.3.1 *Involving qualified and specialized experts and pedagogues*

It should be understood by all member states that, just like all other regular subjects, sexuality education programs require field-specific experts. More specifically, experts that are fully familiar with issues concerning sexuality, genders, health and of course human rights<sup>89</sup>.

Thus, qualified academics with such research and knowledge should be exclusively responsible for selecting, adapting and developing the school curriculum. Last but not least, sexuality educators should ideally be open to interact with other comprehensive sexuality programmes worldwide since exchanging different and new ideas can strengthen efforts on the subject and therefore its positive outcomes<sup>90</sup>.

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid

<sup>84</sup> Ibid

<sup>85</sup> Ibid

<sup>86</sup> Ibid

<sup>87</sup> Unesdoc.unesco.org. (2018). [online] Available at: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0026/002607/260770e.pdf> [Accessed 17 Dec. 2018].

<sup>88</sup> Ibid

<sup>89</sup> Ibid

<sup>90</sup> Ibid

### 7.3.2 *Enhancing parent support*

Taken that parents in most of the cases have the first and greatest influence when it comes to a young person's opinions and decisions on sexual issues, their involvement in delivering comprehensive sexuality education is essential<sup>91</sup>. Parents shall not hesitate to intervene and further sensitize with their children's sexual and reproductive health.

In fact, delivering open discussions on aspects of sexuality even the most sensitive ones, is the ideal way for young people to embrace sexuality education and its benefits. Parents should also remain in contact with the related school curriculum programmes or even consider delivering after-school sessions between them, their children and sexuality educators, when issues on sexuality education are commonly considered as interestingly crucial<sup>92</sup>.

### 7.3.3 *Asking for further access to resources*

It is not a rare phenomenon for schools that are willing to welcome comprehensive sexuality education in their curriculum, to be held back due to the poor quantity and quality of the necessary infrastructure<sup>93</sup>. For instance, school supplies such as manuals, guides, toolkits and action frameworks as well as facility spaces or extra staff time, are the most characteristic examples of a CSE program's necessary resources, that in reality are hardly met<sup>94</sup>.

However, because sexuality education is not a regular subject and needs to be developed in the most effective and interactive way possible, resources shall be, additionally to the aforementioned, considered as a vital priority for the proper engagement and comprehending from the students' perspective.

### 7.3.4 *Addressing consent and life skills*

As sexual relations and sexual health are directly related to human rights and human dignity protection, adolescents must learn from an early stage to recognize and respect a person's personal boundaries<sup>95</sup>. To be more specific, the factor of consent is of utmost importance for building healthy relationships, encouraging good sexual health and preventing vulnerable people from potential harm.

A part of comprehensive sexuality education curriculum must therefore focus on quality education on consent and how young people can either shamelessly engage in sexual activity, or on the contrary reject and revoke consent at any point<sup>96</sup>. Assessing the risks of unwanted sexual practices will nevertheless lead to the conclusion that healthy relationships are indeed positive relationships, meaning relationships of love, mutual respect and self-respect<sup>97</sup>.

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid

<sup>92</sup> Ibid

<sup>93</sup> Ibid

<sup>94</sup> Ibid

<sup>95</sup> Ibid

<sup>96</sup> Ibid

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#### 7.4 *Responding to various concerns related to CSE*

As explained thoroughly above, comprehensive sexuality education as a school subject may rise a variety of concerns that are based exactly upon the nature of the subject's main context – namely, the sexuality. Having said that, sexuality is undeniably a sensitive issue and the fact that comprehensive sexuality education originally involves sub-topics such as values, rights, culture, the human body or sexual behaviors, may seem more worrying than beneficial for hesitant parents or teachers.

The first and most common concern refers to the belief that CSE is linked with the “deprivation” of a child's innocence or his/her early sexual initiation<sup>98</sup>. However, such opinions are completely baseless for two main reasons; According to the International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education, researches have shown that CSE either leads to later and more responsible sexual behavior or has no direct impact on the age of sexual initiation whatsoever<sup>99</sup>.

In addition, the “comprehensive” aspect of sexuality education lies exactly to the fact that it is scientifically accurate and appropriate in terms of age, in a carefully planned and predetermined process<sup>100</sup>.

A second and quite popular concern as well, is that CSE can be contradictory with cultures or religions worldwide<sup>101</sup>. Responding to that, it is more than expected for comprehensive sexuality education and its progress to differ across nations. It is a fact that the community itself is responsible to adapt CSE to the corresponding content of local cultural and religious context, while in some cases key stakeholders, including religious leaders, are even responsible to assist CSE program providers<sup>102</sup>.

Last but not least, it is also believed that CSE is already covered in other subjects, such as biology or civics education, therefore it does not deem necessary to present CSE as an individual school subject<sup>103</sup>. To reject such concern, one must simply take into consideration the dynamic range of CSE which is also rapidly and constantly changing; CSE consists of a number of attitudinal and skill-based learning outcomes which may not always seem relative to other subjects<sup>104</sup>.

So, the question that arises is why favoring a mixture of subjects with different messages, that may probably result into confusion and not guidance, when by teaching them separately maximum results can be achieved?

To conclude, the above are only few from the numerous hesitations that confine the development of comprehensive sexual education during times when it is mostly needed. However, it must be understood that through cooperation, well-intentioned understanding and willingness, Member States can turn down each of these obstacles and start developing the preferred frameworks that will guarantee the best for the future of younger generations.

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<sup>98</sup> Unesdoc.unesco.org. (2018). [online] Available at: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0026/002607/260770e.pdf> [Accessed 17 Dec. 2018].

<sup>99</sup> Ibid

<sup>100</sup> Ibid

<sup>101</sup> Ibid

<sup>102</sup> Ibid

<sup>103</sup> Ibid

<sup>104</sup> Ibid

## 8. International and European Initiatives working on CSE and gender-based violence

In October 2014 an expert group meeting convened by UNFPA, UNESCO, WHO and IPPF published the “The Evaluation of Comprehensive Sexuality Education Programs: A Focus on the Gender and Empowerment Outcomes”, with the purpose to review and evaluate the various stages of development of CSE from different contexts worldwide<sup>105</sup>. Therefore, different yet concrete examples of international and European programs or frameworks working on CSE, indicate that sexuality education is indeed a topic of interest globally.

### 8.1 “*Sexuality Education Review and Assessment Tool (SERAT)*”:

Alarmed by the fact that national CSE programs worldwide have to deal with massive amount of data and lengthy reports that complicate the monitoring procedure of the programs, the UNESCO developed the Sexuality Education Review and Assessment Tool (SERAT)<sup>106</sup>. The SERAT is basically an interactive Excel-based tool openly accessible, that enables stakeholders to undertake detailed evaluations of CSE programmes within the formal education sector. SERAT also helps users gain a high-quality CSE experience by identifying both strengths and gaps in all aspects of CSE program implementation whilst highlighting critical data on health and social issues, such as gender-based violence<sup>107</sup>.

### 8.2 “*Standards for Sexuality Education in Europe*”

The German Federal Centre for Health Education in collaboration with World Health Organization Regional Office, published in 2010 the Standards for Sexuality Education in Europe, as a framework for assuring the quality of sexuality education<sup>108</sup>. Even though many countries had implemented their independent related programmes, no specific standards were set for the whole European Continent related to CSE. This European approach aims to address the content and delivery of sexuality education, while giving great emphasis on human rights, gender equality and acceptance of diversity<sup>109</sup>.

### 8.3 “*United Nations 2030 Agenda*”

According to the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Member States have confirmed their commitment to the Sustainable Development Goal Target 3.7 which refers to “*a universal access to sexual and reproductive health care services, including for family planning, information and education, and the integration of reproductive health*”

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<sup>105</sup> Unfpa.org. (2015). [online] Available at: <https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/UNFPAEvaluationWEB4.pdf> [Accessed 17 Dec. 2018].

<sup>106</sup> Ibid

<sup>107</sup> Ibid

<sup>108</sup> Ibid

<sup>109</sup> Ibid

into national strategies and programmes by 2030”<sup>110</sup>. Another related SDG is Target 5.6 that promotes universal respect for reproductive rights as agreed in accordance with the ICPD Program of Action and the Beijing Platform for Action<sup>111</sup>.

#### 8.4 “The Global Strategy for Women’s, Children’s and Adolescents”

The UN Secretary-General Ban-Ki moon in 2015 launched the *Global Strategy for Women’s, Children’s and Adolescents’ Health* (2016-2030) in order to enhance the 2030 Agenda with its Sustainable Development Goals<sup>112</sup>. The *Global Strategy* is a new roadmap for the overall health and wellbeing of women and adolescent by 2030. The main vision is to keep this particular target group in the heart of the development agenda, unlocking their vast potential for transformative changes in various aspects of life<sup>113</sup>.

Moreover, an additional Operational Framework has been developed in order to accompany the Global Strategy for its first five years with the sole responsibility to guide countries as they develop and refine their plans for women’s, children’s and adolescents’ health, based particularly on country-identified needs and priorities<sup>114</sup>.

## 9. Cases of national sexuality education programmes worldwide

### 9.1 The YP Foundation in India

A groundbreaking change for India’s status quo was the creation of the YP foundation under circumstances that were not conducive mainly due to the fact that Indian politicians disapproved of any CSE program in general<sup>115</sup>. The YP foundation operates in all regions of India and is basically a progressive curriculum that consists of a variety of classes addressing children from 12 to 20 years old.

The main aim is to present and discuss matters such as sexual diversity and gender equality, while highlighting the influence of stereotypes and how they can dictate our way of thinking and living<sup>116</sup>. The foundation includes a variety of different individual programmes, with the “Know your body, Know your Rights” being an ideal example of a CSE program that assembles all proper values and life-lessons<sup>117</sup>.

<sup>110</sup> Euro.who.int. (2016). [online] Available at: [http://www.euro.who.int/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0018/314532/66wd13e\\_SRHActionPlan\\_160524.pdf](http://www.euro.who.int/__data/assets/pdf_file/0018/314532/66wd13e_SRHActionPlan_160524.pdf) [Accessed 17 Dec. 2018].

<sup>111</sup> Ibid

<sup>112</sup> Who.int. (2015). [online] Available at: <https://www.who.int/life-course/partners/global-strategy/globalstrategyreport2016-2030-lowres.pdf> [Accessed 2 Jan. 2019].

<sup>113</sup> Ibid

<sup>114</sup> World Health Organization. (2016). Global Strategy Operational Framework. [online] Available at: <https://www.who.int/life-course/partners/global-strategy/ewec-operational-framework/en/> [Accessed 2 Jan. 2019].

<sup>115</sup> the Guardian. (n.d.). *Six of the best sex education programmes around the world*. [online] Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development-professionals-network/2016/may/20/six-best-sex-education-programmes-around-the-world> [Accessed 17 Dec. 2018].

<sup>116</sup> Ibid

<sup>117</sup> The YP Foundation. (n.d.). *Programmes — The YP Foundation*. [online] Available at: <http://www.theypfoundation.org/programmes/> [Accessed 17 Dec. 2018].

## 9.2 The “Keep me safe” Program in Romania

The problem of uneducated young people on sexuality doubles when we are referring to children with learning difficulties. It is a fact that sexual education is hardly taught in many special needs schools around the world<sup>118</sup>. Responding to that in an innovative way, Romania’s local communities have partnered with the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) towards the development of the “Keep me safe” program. With the vision to protect young people with intellectual disabilities and to empower them to understand their sexuality, the program focuses on consent, boundaries and sexuality in general<sup>119</sup>.

## 9.3 The “Karaz” website in the Middle East

Noting that the subject of sex and sexuality is a very sensitive one for the Middle East, efforts on delivering formal sexual education barely exist. Bearing that in mind, Ashraf Abumaraq, a software company employee, found that by taking advantage of the internet and social media, which definitely appeals the youth, comprehensive sexual education can be properly delivered<sup>120</sup>. As a result, he set the Karaz, which is an Arabic website providing information and advice about sexual and relationship issues. The website made profound achievements reporting 60,000 unique visitors every month, 60% of were women<sup>121</sup>.

## 9.4 “My Question and Answer” in Nigeria

When sex educators in Nigeria realized gaps in the process of sexuality education mainly due to the omission of human rights from the subject, a local Non-Governmental Organization named Education as a Vaccine (EVA) created My Question and Answer (Q&A)<sup>122</sup>. My Q&A is accessible either by text, phone call or the social media, and it allows young people to cover their questions and worries on sexuality and relationship matters anonymously. It is significant that around 12.000-15.000 questions are being send each month by text alone, exactly because the application provides confidential, scientific accurate and most importantly non-judgmental information<sup>123</sup>.

<sup>118</sup> the Guardian. (n.d.). *Six of the best sex education programmes around the world*. [online] Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development-professionals-network/2016/may/20/six-best-sex-education-programmes-around-the-world> [Accessed 17 Dec. 2018].

<sup>119</sup> IPPF European Network. (n.d.). *Keep Me Safe | IPPF European Network*. [online] Available at: <https://www.ippfen.org/our-approach/programmes/keep-me-safe> [Accessed 17 Dec. 2018].

<sup>120</sup> the Guardian. (n.d.). *Six of the best sex education programmes around the world*. [online] Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development-professionals-network/2016/may/20/six-best-sex-education-programmes-around-the-world> [Accessed 17 Dec. 2018].

<sup>121</sup> LaunchGood. (n.d.). *Karaz, Sex Ed for the Middle East | LaunchGood*. [online] Available at: [https://www.launchgood.com/project/karaz\\_sex\\_ed\\_for\\_the\\_middle\\_east#!/](https://www.launchgood.com/project/karaz_sex_ed_for_the_middle_east#!/) [Accessed 17 Dec. 2018].

<sup>122</sup> the Guardian. (n.d.). *Six of the best sex education programmes around the world*. [online] Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development-professionals-network/2016/may/20/six-best-sex-education-programmes-around-the-world> [Accessed 17 Dec. 2018].

<sup>123</sup> Evanigeria.org. (n.d.). *My Question and Answer « Education as a Vaccine*. [online] Available at: <http://www.evanigeria.org/our-projects/my-question-and-answer/> [Accessed 17 Dec. 2018].

## 10. Conclusion

It is with great sadness that in March 2018 the UNESCO reported an estimated 246 million children being subject to some form of gender-based violence. Phenomena such as but not limited to sexual harassment, psychological abuse, mistreatment or bullying do not seem to back down<sup>124</sup>. As a result, a lot of questions are being raised concerning what can be done in a long-term process to guarantee the safest future possible for all young people worldwide.

With education being the only true way to address the problem of gender-based violence from its root, Member States should start their efforts towards delivering a high-quality, evidence-based and age-appropriate comprehensive sexuality education. Because of the fact that CSE consists of a variety of different sub-topics, if delivered well we are going to guarantee not only the safety and health being of children but their respectful mindset towards human rights and most of all their attention to gender equality's importance<sup>125</sup>. Even more, life skills such as empathy, decision-making and critical thinking cultivated via CSE will enhance children's' ability to question gender and power structure, as well as social and cultural norms in general, which often lead to violent behaviors. Finally, zero tolerance policies to discrimination and stigma on the grounds of gender identity, will enable children to receive the proper messages concerning the harm and consequences caused by gender-based discrimination<sup>126</sup>.

To conclude, comprehensive sexuality education may seem as a new entry to the field of education, however taking into consideration the facts and figures on violence against children and even more gender-based violence, it is imperative to take action today more than ever.

## 11. Points to be addressed

1. Is the existing legal basis adequate when addressing comprehensive sexuality education and its link to gender-based violence?
2. What are the sources and consequences of gender stereotyping and which aspects of life does it mostly affect?
3. Which are the forms of gender-based violence and how can such phenomenon be eliminated?
4. How important and widespread is Comprehensive Sexuality Education?
5. What are the key-aspects for delivering properly CSE?
6. How can the existing concerns related to CSE be resolved?
7. How can CSE contribute to the elimination of gender-based violence?
8. How can international collaboration towards the issue be achieved?

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<sup>124</sup> UNESCO. (2018). *Comprehensive sexuality education to prevent gender-based violence*. [online] Available at: <https://en.unesco.org/news/comprehensive-sexuality-education-prevent-gender-based-violence> [Accessed 17 Dec. 2018].

<sup>125</sup> Ibid

<sup>126</sup> Ibid



9. Which Organizations/ Programs/ Non-Governmental Organizations can get further involved with CSE?

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