

**7 WOMEN
DELIVER 2023
CONFERENCE**

**YOUNG PEOPLE'S
ACCESS TO SEXUAL
AND REPRODUCTIVE
HEALTH (SRH)
INFORMATION
AND SERVICES**



I. INTRODUCTION

The Asia Pacific region hosts over 60% of the world's young population. This translates into more than one billion young people aged 10-24, constituting more than half of the global youth population.¹ However, young people face significant barriers to their sexual and reproductive health and rights. Young people's access to sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) is integral to their empowerment to make important decisions about their bodies and their relationships and States are obligated to respect, protect, and fulfill their rights including their SRHR which encompasses access to information, services, goods and facilities. Many young people in the Asia Pacific region transition to adulthood with inadequate information, including on matters of SRHR such as sexuality, contraception and safe abortion, and this has adverse effects on their physical, social, emotional health and well-being and development. This leaves them vulnerable to risk taking behavior, sexual and gender-based violence, exploitation, sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and HIV infection, and other harmful and negative health, education and well being outcomes.

To date, States are yet to fulfill their obligations on matters concerning young people's SRHR, which means that young people, particularly women and girls within marginalised communities, face obstacles to the realisation of their SRHR. This includes their right to have universal access to SRHR information and services, including comprehensive sexuality education (CSE). A significant body of evidence shows that comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) enables children and young people to develop accurate and age appropriate knowledge, attitudes and skills; positive values, including respect for human rights, gender equality and diversity, and attitudes and skills that contribute to safe, healthy, positive relationships. CSE is also important as it can help young people reflect on social norms, cultural values and traditional beliefs, in order to better understand and manage their relationships with peers, parents, teachers, other adults and their communities.

Sexual and reproductive health and rights, and sexuality, in most of the countries in the region is a taboo subject and remains a challenge, hindering young people's access to accurate and reliable information on their bodies and sexuality, despite commitments by states to international agreements such as the International Conference on Population and Development Programme of Action (ICPD-PoA), Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to ensure the right to CSE. Although it is encouraging that in some countries efforts have been made to ensure the delivery of CSE through legal and policy measures, in practice, in most of these countries the curriculum does not comprehensively cover topics of sexuality and sexual health and is only mandated to include the components of reproductive health and STIs.²

This regional brief has been developed by ARROW and young people who were part of various ARROW youth focused initiatives from Asia and includes specific recommendations from the region with a call to action from States to fulfill their obligations with regards to access to SRHR information and services for young people.

II. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Develop an accessible, inclusive and comprehensive digital platform at national, sub-national and local level with authentic and youth-friendly information and data related to sexual and reproductive health services and the service providers that is easily obtained. This includes availability of the information in multiple languages and formats including Braille, audio, sign language and caption, local and indigenous languages.
- Ensure full and comprehensive integration of CSE in the school curriculum and increase capacities of teachers to deliver CSE in line with the International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education (ITGSE) and ensure meaningful and inclusive engagement of young people for integration of their inputs in national and local level policy and programmes related to CSE and provision of youth friendly services.³
- Develop and implement comprehensive sexuality education programmes in and out of schools to empower women and girls, and LGBTIQ+ communities from diverse backgrounds to make informed decisions on their bodies and sexuality. These programmes should provide accurate, age-appropriate, and non-judgmental information about contraception, sexually transmitted infections (STIs), SOGIESC, puberty, relationships, consent, and gender equality as well as sexual identity, using intersectional approach. Ensure that these programmes are inclusive and evidence based, and sensitive to cultural contexts, and teachers are well trained to deliver the contents in order to provide evidence based and age appropriate information on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) and CSE. The aim of such education should also be to address harmful traditional practices such as early, child and forced marriages and FGM/C.
- To ensure and amend existing laws and policies to be inclusive and include comprehensive SRHR for everyone including people of marginalised sexual orientation, gender identity and sex characteristics (PoMSOGIESC).
- Allocate budget and public funding for SRH information and services including creating awareness, CSE and hormone counseling services in HIV Care clinics for transgender and gender diverse people.
- Provide free and accessible adolescent-friendly SRH services in hospitals that are confidential and judgment-free, including gender-affirming health care, for all young people from all demographics and socioeconomic backgrounds. Access to youth-friendly SRHR services and information as per international human rights standards is important and should take into account the needs of the emerging contexts of crises.
- To include young people from different intersections of society in decision making at all levels including designing, planning, implementing and monitoring access to SRH information and services.
- To advance quality research to assess the needs, challenges and bring forward the experiences related to sexual and reproductive rights faced by women and girls in all their diversities, women and girls with disabilities, PoMGIESOSC, including other marginalised identities.
- To ensure adequate monitoring of child club committees whether they are operational or only formed for the allocation of budget, along with the review of yearly plan of child club committees so that delivery of SRH services and child rights is ensured in Nepal.
- Conduct a comprehensive audit of contraceptive devices, addressing the diverse needs of humanity to ensure the devices used for family planning are user-friendly. Specifically for individuals with visual impairments, any contraceptive devices should incorporate tactile or sound-based features. For example, when visually impaired couples/individuals are testing for pregnancy, the test kits should provide information through touch or sound. This eliminates the need for visually impaired individuals to rely on assistance from sighted individuals, preserving their right to privacy.
- Generate disaggregated and comprehensive data regarding youth access to SRHR. This is essential for targeted interventions.

Notes and References

1. "Population trends," UNFPA Asia and the Pacific, <https://asiapacific.unfpa.org/en/populationtrends>.
2. Rinaldi Ridwan, Shiwa Karmacharya, and Sangeet Kayastha. Scoping Study on Young People's SRHR in the Asia Pacific Region. Asian-Pacific Resource and Research Centre for Women (ARROW), 2022. <https://arrow.org.my/publication/scoping-study-on-young-peoples-srhr-in-the-asia-pacific-region/>.
3. Samreen Shahbaz. Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) in Asia: A Regional Brief. Asian-Pacific Resource and Research Centre for Women (ARROW), 2018. <https://arrow.org.my/publication/comprehensive-sexuality-education-cse-in-asia-a-regional-brief/>

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The #CSE4ALL regional advocacy campaign, spearheaded by ARROW and regional partners, focuses on the demand for Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE), its implementation and access to young people in all their diversities. The campaign positions young people from Asia and the Pacific region at the forefront to increase public support for young people's Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR), and contribute towards changing attitudes, improving policies and strengthening the advocacy around implementation of CSE both in and out of educational settings. Learn more about the campaign at www.bit.ly/cse4all.



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