

# ASSESSING COMPREHENSIVENESS OF SEXUALITY EDUCATION

## A VISUALISATION TOOL

Sexual &  
Reproductive health

Sexual and  
Reproductive health

Sexuality &  
Relationships

Sexuality &  
Relationships

Learning Environment  
& Approach

Learning Environment  
& Approach

Inclusivity &  
Connectedness of  
the Programme

Youth rights,  
Participation  
& Agency

Inclusivity &  
Connectedness of  
the Programme

Gender Equality, Power  
relations & Social norms

Youth rights,  
Participation  
& Agency

Gender Equality,  
Power relations &  
Social norms



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# 1 INTRODUCTION

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*Comprehensive sexuality education is widely recognised as crucial to efforts to enhance young people’s understanding of sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), a healthy and satisfactory sexual and reproductive life and to advance equal gender relations.*

To assess whether a sexuality education programme can be considered comprehensive, the ‘comprehensive sexuality education’ (CSE) visualization tool scores sexuality education programmes on six different dimensions, with each dimension sub-divided into seven criteria. The tool allows for the creation of a visual image of the total score in a spider chart. The CSE tool can be used by organisations, schools, health centres or departments working on sexuality education to:

1. Monitor and evaluate the comprehensiveness of sexuality education,
2. Facilitate (multi-)stakeholder discussions with a view to improving understanding between stakeholders on (current and potential) comprehensiveness of sexuality education, which can lead to:
3. Take measures to improve the comprehensiveness of sexuality education.

The criteria for CSE in the first edition of the tool (2018) were developed on the basis of reviews of literature, programme documentation on CSE and discussions between researchers at the University of Amsterdam and practitioners working on CSE. The format of the tool is based on the Girls QUAT tool developed by International Child Development Initiatives (ICDI).<sup>1</sup> The tool was revised following a study on the experience of four ‘Her Choice alliance’ partner organisations who had used the 2018 CSE tool as part of their programmes in four different countries. This second edition of the tool thus builds on these four organisations’ experiences and recommendations.

It is important to note at the outset that those who wish to use the tools have the creative license and authority to adapt criteria to suit their particular needs and contexts (see Section 3, Box 2).

## **BOX 1: Organisations’ responsibilities:**

Organisations and facilitators who use the CSE tool are not responsible for facilitating or funding measures to improve the comprehensiveness of a sexuality education programme. In other words, while organisations that wish to support programmes - for instance in schools, health centres or communities - in implementing changes identified during the use of the tool can do so, it is not obligatory.

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<sup>1</sup>ICDI (2012) “GIRLS-QUAT” Quality Assessment Tool of Services for Girls and Young Women”. International Child Development Initiatives ([www.icdi.nl](http://www.icdi.nl))

# 2 HOW TO USE THE TOOL

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Section 3 presents a scoring sheet with six dimensions of comprehensive sexuality education. Under each dimension there are seven statements relating to the criteria that are to be scored. The scores for the statements in each dimension have to be added up, and these total scores are then inserted into the visualisation tool. The dots on each axis of the spider chart are then connected to develop a visual image of the overall scores.

Section 2.1 provides suggestions on how this tool can be used in sessions with different stakeholders, and Section 2.2 gives advice to facilitators on how to prepare for and conduct the sessions.

## 2.1 Using the CSE visualisation tool with different stakeholders

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This tool can be used to assess how comprehensive sexuality education programmes are, but is also useful for discussing the development and implementation of comprehensive sexuality education policies and programmes. The tool works best when it is used in conversation with multiple stakeholders, for example, school staff, students, health staff, members from the broader community and, where relevant, civil society representatives working on CSE in the community. When conducting multi-stakeholder discussions, it is critical that all those taking part feel sufficiently safe to speak out about their views and experiences, either within the group as a whole or within sub-groups. Please note that a number of questions that can be used as a starting point for a dialogue between stakeholders are included in Section 5.

### 2.1.1 - Using the tool with persons providing sexuality education

The tool can be used to structure group discussions among different people who implement sexuality education programmes. In this case, the group discusses each of the criteria on the checklist to develop a score together. The participants in the group may agree or disagree on whether a criterion is addressed by the sexuality education programme. If managed well, this process in itself can be eye-opening, and result in productive discussions that improve understanding between sexuality education providers and can contribute to the sexuality education becoming more comprehensive. Alternatively, each person can score the criteria individually (each having a copy of the form with the different sets of criteria). In this case, the individual scoring sheets can be collected, the different scores then used as a starting point for discussions.

### 2.1.2 - Using the tool with young people

As young people are the primary target group of CSE programmes, gathering their views and input on the programme is highly recommended. By doing so, it is possible to assess whether sexuality education programmes are: a) in line with young people's needs, and b) are delivered in a way that meets their needs. There are a number of ways that this tool can be used with young people, the best approach will depend on how comfortable they are with openly and critically discussing their needs with respect to SRHR-related education and the CSE initiative itself with their peers, in mixed-gender groups, and/or with those running the CSE programme.

## **Option 1**

### *Young people are a part of the discussion with those providing the sexuality education*

If young women and/or men feel sufficiently safe to openly voice their opinions in front of the providers of the SRHR-related education initiative, then a joint session can be organised in which the persons running the programme and young people together score the CSE criteria. In this scenario, the group as a whole would jointly discuss and come to an agreement regarding the scoring for each of the criteria. If this set up is used, it is crucial that the young people are given the space and freedom to contribute to the discussion, and that if they disagree with the educators' perspectives, that this disagreement is accepted and respected. As noted in section 3.1 below, if participants cannot reach an agreement on a score, a 'compromise' score can be given, i.e. half a point (0.5) instead of a '1' or a '0'.

## **Option 2**

### *Young people have their own discussion, in single- or mixed-gender groups*

A second option is to share the tool with young people, in single- or mixed-gender group, and they jointly discuss each of the criteria on the checklist and agree on a score. They can then share the final scores with the facilitator (and if possible a short report on how the discussion went, for example, highlighting whether there were any areas of disagreement and if so, the reasons for these disagreements). In many contexts, it is advisable to organise separate sessions for young women and young men. Especially for young women it can be important to offer single-sex and single age discussion groups as a way to create a safe and comfortable environment to talk about SRHR-related issues.

The facilitator can compare the final scores and/or spider chart developed by groups and compare these with the scores and/or spider charts developed by educators to see where there is agreement and disagreement, and explore the differences and commonalities in scoring of criteria. The comparison of these different sets of input will be useful in itself, but if it is then possible to have a discussion between young people and providers of sexuality education, it is likely that more useful input will be gathered that can: a) enhance the comprehensiveness of sexuality education and b) may contribute to increasing understanding between the groups.

## **Option 3**

### *Young people score individually*

A final option is that young people are given the scoring sheet and visualisation tool and that they individually complete the scoring. The individual sets of final scores (and spider charts) can then be collected and compared with each other, possibly developing an average score for each of the dimensions, and then compared with the score(s) developed by educators. Again, where possible, organising a discussion involving both young people and educators can lead to better understanding of young people's and educators' opinions and experiences and how scores were arrived at.

### 2.1.3 - Using the tool with other stakeholders

Facilitators may also find it useful to go beyond those directly involved with the programme (educators and young people) and use the tool with other stakeholders in the wider community. Several Her Choice partners reported that it was useful to involve other stakeholders in the sessions, such as community leaders, parents, and district education, youth and health officers. These stakeholders may act as liaisons between young people, parents, schools and health centres, and may have necessary position and/or means to facilitate follow up actions identified to increase comprehensiveness of sexuality education.

## 2.2 Conducting sessions: advice for facilitators

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The following section presents some practical advice for facilitators who will conduct sessions using the CSE tool. The ‘tips and tricks’ are based on the experiences of the Her Choice partners who have previously used the CSE tool. It is advised that facilitators are well-aware of the different dimensions of CSE and well-versed in the topics mentioned in the scoring tables (see section 3.2). The CSE tool covers sensitive topics such as contraception, extra-marital sex, abortions and sexual health more broadly. The facilitator of CSE discussions must be comfortable and confident to speak the issues addressed in the tool, and be able to guide others as they share their opinions. As noted, the criteria can be adapted if these are believed to be inappropriate or irrelevant in a particular setting (see section 3).

### Preparation

1. Be well aware of the aims of using the tool, scoring criteria, terminology and spider chart construction so you will be able to a) clearly explain to participants how the sessions will be done, with who and why, and b) guide discussions.
2. Practice filling in and drawing the spider chart before you conduct a session with participants for the first time.
3. Translate the tool, especially the criteria statements, in local languages prior to the sessions, not during them. Doing so allows for clear understanding by facilitators and participants, and reduces the time needed for sessions.
4. Draw the empty spider chart on a flip chart paper before the session or bring a large printed copy of the chart.
5. Bring stationary, including copies of scoring sheets, flipchart paper, markers, and tape.
6. Plan sufficient time for the sessions: sessions generally last at least one-and-a-half hours, but can take longer. This time frame allows for a clear and in-depth introduction of the aims of the tools and session procedures, and allows for in-depth discussion regarding the scores.
7. Organise the scoring sessions as part of regular programme visits to communities, health centres, schools, or other places where sexuality education is provided. Doing so reduces travel costs and session expenses.

## Conducting sessions

1. Provide a clear introduction, explaining the session aims and procedures. To motivate participants to actively take part, clarify the relevance of using the tool in relation to the local context and issues young people face in the community. For instance, a central concern in the community may relate to teenage pregnancy. Linking the tool to community concerns is likely to increase participation.
2. The tool is designed to support efforts to make sexuality education more comprehensive. It is important not to present the CSE tool as a 'negative checklist', that is, to assess the topics or approach that a sexuality education programme does not address. Doing so can particularly discourage educators from participating. Therefore, it is important to encourage participants in the work they are doing and to present the tool as a supportive mechanism, rather than as a 'negative checklist'.
3. To the extent possible, make sure each participant or participant group has their own scoring sheet to increase their engagement.
4. If a session has more than 20 participants, split the total group into sub-groups of 10. If multiple stakeholders are present, make sure that each sub-group includes a few of each stakeholder 'type'. Discuss the CSE criteria, fill out the scoring sheets and make a spider chart in each sub-group (e.g. one per sub-group), and then enter the average scores of the groups into a total CSE score and spider chart. A potential additional activity is to have sub-groups present their scores and spider charts to one another for further discussion.
5. When logistically possible, conducting multiple sessions using the tool for the same sexuality education programme over an extended period (for example, twice a year) can help organisations and educators to monitor progress made. It also allows partners to identify obstacles to progress and to support participants in identifying priorities.



# 3 CHECKLIST COMPREHENSIVE SEXUALITY EDUCATION

## 3.1 Instructions

Please look carefully at the six tables below, each of which relates to a different dimension of comprehensiveness and includes seven CSE related statements or criteria. Please identify whether a particular statement does or does not apply to the SRHR-related education programme.

Score one (1) point when the statement applies to the sexuality education programme that is being assessed, and zero (0) points if the statement does not apply. If a straightforward answer cannot be given or it is not possible for participants to come to an agreement regarding the score give the statement half a point (0.5).

Add the total scores per dimension and insert this total score into the spider chart on the axes that correspond with the dimensions. For instance, if the total score for the dimension sexual and reproductive health and rights is 4, a dot is put at point 4 of the sexual and reproductive health axis. Connect the dots on the six axes to create a visual image (see Section 5 for an example of a completed spider chart).


### **BOX 2: Adaptations by organisations**


This tool is intended to be generic, with criteria that can apply in many contexts. However, organisations can adapt the criteria to suit their particular contexts, and type of participants. These adaptations can include adapting language and terminology as well as removing or inserting criteria. For example, the criteria can be adapted to suit government standards of comprehensive sexuality education.

One Her Choice partner used “smart adaptations” to overcome obstacles related to cultural codes regarding the kinds of topics that could be discussed during the scoring sessions. For example, in the communities in which the organisation worked, it was deemed inappropriate for unmarried women to speak of or be educated about contraception and safe sex practices. In order to educate young women about safer sexual practices whilst avoiding the stigma attached to extra-marital sex (especially for unmarried women), contraception and education on safer sexual relations were discussed within the framework of sexual abuse and abusive relationships. In other words, young women were educated about condoms and emergency contraception during discussions on rape or abuse, thereby indirectly allowing young women to learn about contraception and health care access.

Please note that the total number of criteria for each of the six dimensions must be the same in order for the spider chart to work. Therefore, if one criterion is added to one dimension, a criterion should also be added to each of the other five dimensions. Similarly, if one criterion is removed in one dimension, a criterion should also be removed from each of the other five dimensions. The spider chart should be also adjusted, i.e. if one criterion is removed the maximum point for each axis is 6; if one criterion is added the maximum for each axis is 8.


## 3.2 Scoring tables

|  <b>Dimension 1 - Sexual and reproductive health and rights</b> | <b>SCORE</b><br>(0, 0.5 or 1) |
|--|-------------------------------|
| 1. The programme provides information on sexually transmitted infections and HIV   |                               |
| 2. The programme provides information on teenage pregnancy   |                               |
| 3. The programme provides information on female genital mutilation/cutting   |                               |
| 4. The programme provides information on emotional wellbeing related to sexual and reproductive health and rights                                |                               |
| 5. The programme provides information on contraception and does not take an abstinence-only approach   |                               |
| 6. The programme addresses sensitive or taboo issues, including abortion   |                               |
| 7. The programme dispels myths and misconceptions relating to sexual and reproductive health, such as HIV and AIDS                               |                               |
| <b>TOTAL SCORE</b>   |                               |

|  <b>Dimension 2 - Sexuality and relationships</b>                        | <b>SCORE</b><br>(0, 0.5 or 1) |
|---|-------------------------------|
| 1. The programme provides information on sexuality and sexual relationships   |                               |
| 2. The programme supports young people in understanding their own sexualities   |                               |
| 3. The programme dispels myths and misconceptions relating to sexuality and sexual relationships  |                               |
| 4. The programme supports young people to build healthy, equitable relationships (for example, discusses the importance of mutual respect in relationships) |                               |
| 5. The programme addresses pleasure and desire in relationships   |                               |
| 6. The programme addresses the importance of consent in sexual relationships  |                               |
| 7. The programme discusses gender-based violence  |                               |
| <b>TOTAL SCORE</b>  |                               |

|  <b>Dimension 3 - Youth rights: participation and agency</b>   | <b>SCORE</b><br>(0, 0.5 or 1) |
|---|-------------------------------|
| 1. The programme informs youth about sexual and reproductive health and rights  |                               |
| 2. The programme addresses the fact that sexual and reproductive rights apply to <i>all</i> people, regardless of, for example, their gender, age, sexual orientation or marital status |                               |
| 3. The programme supports young people in exercising their agency with regards to their sexual and reproductive health and rights   |                               |
| 4. The programme fosters independent decision-making based on critical thinking   |                               |
| 5. The programme encourages young people to make their own informed choices regarding contraceptive use   |                               |
| 6. The programme encourages young people to make their own choices regarding relationships  |                               |
| 7. The programme strengthens youth led advocacy and political engagement, for example, in school or community councils  |                               |
| <b>TOTAL SCORE</b>  |                               |

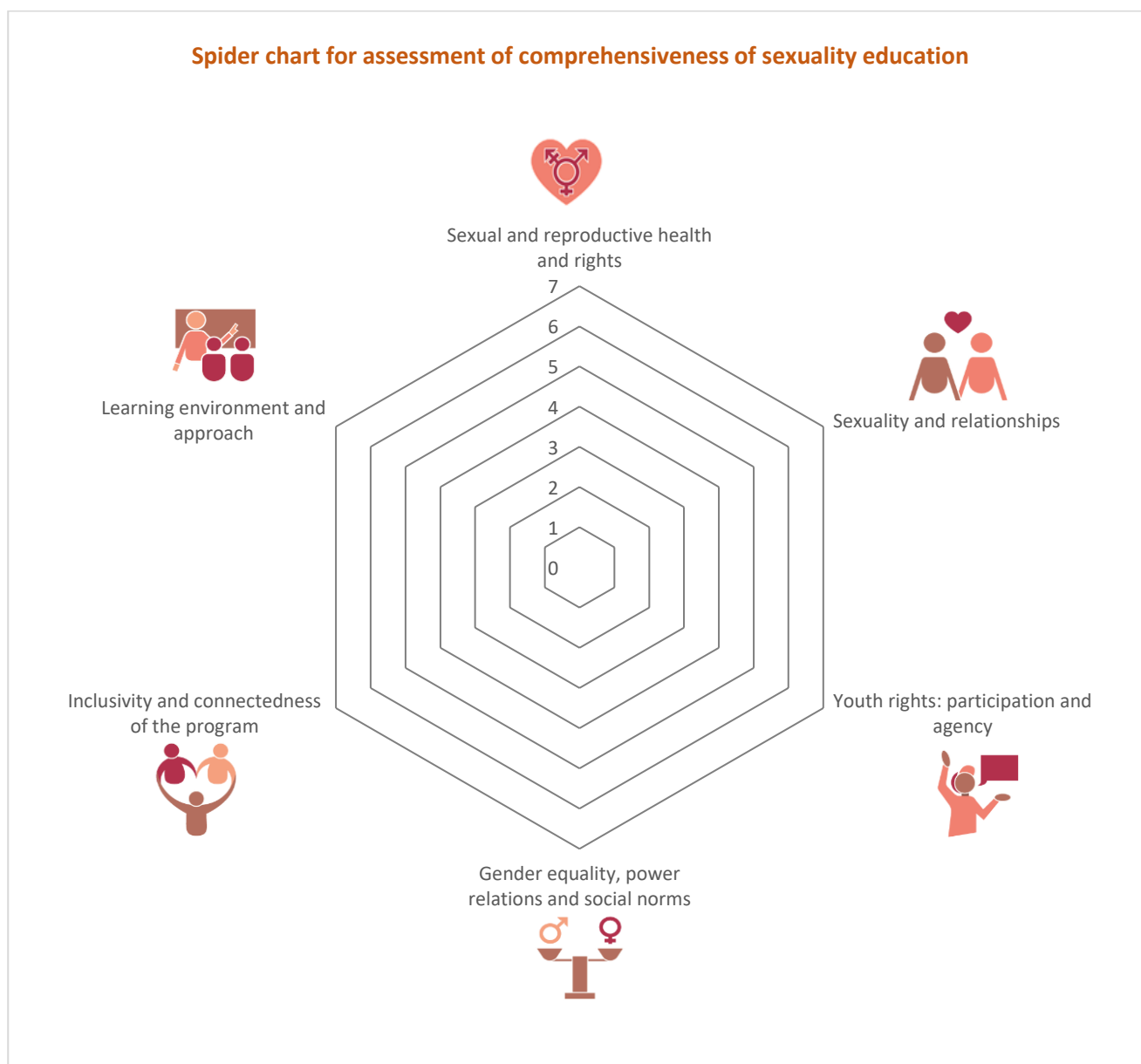
|  <b>Dimension 4 - Gender equality, power relations and social norms</b> | <b>SCORE</b><br>(0, 0.5 or 1) |
|--|-------------------------------|
| 1. The programme critically discusses gender relations in society  |                               |
| 2. The programme critically discusses the social norms that (negatively) impact girls and women, and boys and men  |                               |
| 3. The programme addresses how gender norms and inequality affect the experience of sexuality  |                               |
| 4. The programme addresses how gender norms and inequality affect the experience of sexual and reproductive health and rights                            |                               |
| 5. The programme has an overarching aim of redressing damaging gender norms, including for boys and men  |                               |
| 6. The programme seeks to empower women and girls in decision-making concerning their sexual and reproductive health and rights                          |                               |
| 7. The programme normalises non-sexual relationships (friendships) between genders   |                               |
| <b>TOTAL SCORE</b>   |                               |

|  <b>Dimension 5 - Inclusivity and connectedness of the programme</b>                        | <b>SCORE</b><br>(0, 0.5 or 1) |
|--|-------------------------------|
| 1. The programme includes the voices of young people in its design   |                               |
| 2. The programme reaches and is relevant to all young people, including LGBT+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and other sexual minorities), and non-binary young people |                               |
| 3. The programme reaches young people from all socio-economic backgrounds, races, ethnicities and castes   |                               |
| 4. The programme reaches and is accessible to young people from all educational backgrounds, including out-of-school youth   |                               |
| 5. All participants have access to the same information and discussions (for example, unmarried girls get access to information on contraception)                            |                               |
| 6. Parents and the wider society are involved in, and informed about, the programme, to encourage acceptance of young people's sexuality and dispel SRHR-related myths       |                               |
| 7. The programme is linked to SRHR-related services and informs youth on where and how to access such services   |                               |
| <b>TOTAL SCORE</b>   |                               |

|  <b>Dimension 6 - Learning environment and approach</b> | <b>SCORE</b><br>(0, 0.5 or 1) |
|--|-------------------------------|
| 1. The programme is based on young people's needs  |                               |
| 2. The learning environment is safe and free from bullying, discrimination, harassment and violence  |                               |
| 3. Teachers/facilitators have received adequate training and are knowledgeable about SRHR  |                               |
| 4. Teachers/facilitators are open-minded, and have a positive, non-judgmental attitude towards young people and young people's sexuality   |                               |
| 5. Teachers/facilitators are comfortable discussing sexuality and accept students as sexual beings   |                               |
| 6. Teachers/facilitators approach young people as capable of making their own decisions, and avoid a problem-based approach                |                               |
| 7. The programme acknowledges (sexual) diversity and offers choice, rather than imposing one solution                                      |                               |
| <b>TOTAL SCORE</b>   |                               |

# 4 VISUALISING SCORES IN A SPIDER CHART

Below is an empty spider chart that can be used for visualising total scores for each dimension. The chart can be enlarged and adapted to suit a reduced or increased number of criteria. Changes can be made in the excel sheet that is linked to the chart (in the Word version of the visualisation tool or this [link](#)). To access the Excel sheet: Click on the spider chart, select 'edit data', and then select 'edit data in Excel'.



# 5 DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

The questions below can be used to start and guide discussions on the visualisation tool and the processes leading up to the final scores.

1. In your view or experience, are some dimensions or criteria in the checklist more important than others? Can you explain the reasons why?
2. Is there any important dimension or criterion that you felt were missing?
3. Was there disagreement within the group on which score to give to certain criteria? What were the reasons for this disagreement?
4. On which criteria was it easy to reach a consensus? What made this easy, in your view?
5. On which criterion/criteria or dimension(s) did the sexuality education programme not score well? What were the reasons for these lower scores? What actions do you suggest are taken?
6. Based on your use of the visualisation tool, what next steps do you plan to take, and who will take action to ensure these steps are taken (and when)?

