Regional mapping of sexuality education in digital spaces and Conceptualization and facilitation of a regional event to promote engagement and learning

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Type of Contract: Contract for Services

Duration: 10 June 2018 – 30 Nov 2018

Closing date: 31 May 2018

1. Background:

1.1. Comprehensive Sexuality Education:

Comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) is critical for equipping young people with the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary for fostering healthy relationships. Evidence has shown that curriculum-based CSE that includes a focus on gender and human rights can delay sexual debut, decrease frequency of sexual intercourse, decrease the number of sexual partners, reduce risk-taking, and increase the use of condoms and contraception.1

CSE increases knowledge of one’s rights within sexual relationships and promotes the development of socio-emotional skills, such as interpersonal communication skills and decision-making, that are necessary for young people to express healthy sexuality and develop healthy intimate relationships.2,3 Research shows that socio-emotional learning (SEL), a core concept of CSE, can also yield improved mental well-being (reductions in substance abuse, anxiety, depression, and suicide ideation), reductions in bullying and harassment and increased academic achievement.4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12,13 CSE encourages young people to critically reflect on how social and cultural norms positively and negatively impact sexual behavior and influence gender roles in their communities.

UNESCO recently revised the International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education, which was produced in collaboration with UNAIDS, UNFPA UNICEF, UN Women and WHO. The revised guidance urges a comprehensive approach that promotes health and well-being, respect for human rights and gender equality, and empowers young people to lead healthy, safe and productive lives. The Guidance provides a comprehensive set of key concepts, topics and illustrative learning objectives - across the domains of knowledge, attitudes, and skills - to guide development of locally adapted curricula for learners aged 5 to 18+

The Guidance acknowledges the urgent need for quality CSE to complement or counter the large body of material of variable quality that young people find on the Internet, and, therefore, includes a focus on equipping young people with a better understanding of the benefits and risks posed by digital spaces and the skills to negotiate these spaces.

Although there has been progress in implementing CSE programmes in the region, there remain gaps in the content/curricula and teaching methodology employed, often due to a lack of capacity-building
opportunities and the attitudinal changes required to enable teachers’ delivery of content in appropriate and gender-responsive ways. In addition to concerns on quality of CSE, there are also limited CSE programmes that are implemented at-scale, and those that reach at-risk, and out of school youth.

A UNICEF review of CSE implementation in Thailand, identified inadequate focus on gender rights and power relations, did not equip young people with the skills they require to lead safe, healthy sexual lives. A review of adolescence and life skills education (AEP) initiatives in India revealed that teachers’ comfort levels were low for topics such as: ‘How pregnancy occurs’; ‘Violence, for example forced sex’; and ‘Gender diversity (third sex, transgender persons)’ and that there were a significant proportion of teachers who reported not being comfortable or not teaching the topic of ‘contraception’. The AEP study also found that only 56% of teachers in the study chose the correct definition of menstruation, revealing serious gaps in teachers’ knowledge and awareness on menstruation-related issues. The lack of comfort and understanding of teachers on particular topics may be a contributing factor for 1 in 4 of Grade 9-10 students in the study believing that oral contraceptives can prevent HIV/AIDS, revealing the harmful potential that misinformation can pose for sexually active youth.

1.2. Sex education information online

Evidence has shown that by the end of 2015 more than half of the world’s population, or over 3.2 billion people, were connected to the internet – a third of these were children. Surveys of children aged 8-18 years have revealed that a majority of them use a mobile phone, and of those that do, they generally use the internet. Children around the world are increasingly gaining access to mobile devices, and are going online at younger ages. Research shows that a majority of children using the internet report learning something new every week.

Available data on internet use by age, albeit sparse in most countries, suggests that children below the age of 15 are often as likely to use the internet as adults above the age of 25, while youth (15-24) tend to be much more likely to use the internet than the general public.

There is a growing body of evidence that young people are increasingly engaging with the digital world to gather information about sex and sexuality. A 2015 review found that youth search the internet for information on sexual health more than any other health issue. This is corroborated in the AEP study that found that 66% of students in Grade 11-12 reported the internet as the most important source of information on sexual and reproductive health issues, followed by books, teachers, friends, television, and mothers. The study also revealed a gender discrepancy in internet access with boys accessing the Internet significantly more than girls.

According to a 2013 study by GLSEN, an organization dedicated to ending discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity and expression in schools, LGBT adolescents usually do not receive LGBT-relevant health information in schools or at home, and thus turn to online resources to find information on topics of health and sexuality.

Reviews of CSE implementation point to the need for investing and exploring opportunities to strengthen CSE by way of digital platforms. According to the AEP study in India, there is a need for developing an online adolescence resource centre. Recommendations from the CSE implementation review in Thailand, call on ministries to create online learning materials, such as games, to provide alternate channels for learning for students and teachers. The review also calls on education institutions, public health facilities, relevant government stakeholders, CSOs, and private companies to
strengthen linkages and explore opportunities for learning outside of educational institutions. **xiv.**

### 1.3. Digital sexuality education platforms

Over the past decade, the world has seen a proliferation of public health and social programmes that use mass media for behavior change. Due to the anonymity, accessibility, portability and engagement options provided by the internet, there are also various digital sex education initiatives in existence – which may be categorized across various modalities – social media platforms, websites, YouTube channels, and applications (apps).

An unpublished exploratory review of digital sex education in East Asia and the Pacific, conducted by UNICEF EAPRO, mapped a range of digital tools in the region. This includes a UNICEF-supported online cartoon series called Teen Mom that aims to help prevent teenage pregnancy in Thailand. In China, UNESCO in collaboration with Baidu, and the University of China, jointly launched **YouthKnows**, an interactive knowledge platform on HIV prevention. Whilst in the Philippines, the UNFPA supported U4U initiative uses a range of online and mobile platforms (website, social media, videos, app and interactive text) to improve youth access to sexual and reproductive health information with the goal of reducing rates of teenage pregnancy and STIs.

The review found that ‘digital solutions for sexuality education that are currently available do not maximize their full potential’. This may be due to design and operational modalities that limit reach, access, appropriateness and targeted content. The review also highlighted the lack of user-driven content and format, which may be a factor in existing initiatives not gaining ‘viral’ coverage like many initiatives that include user engagement mechanisms. In addition, the review also found that there was need for improved monitoring and evaluation and quality assurance mechanisms to ensure that these digital solutions are reaching their target audience with accurate and evidence-based information.

The review concluded that digital media solutions provide an opportunity to positively influencing sexual and reproductive health (SRH) knowledge and behaviors, and to complement in-person sexuality education programmes that may be provided within the formal education sector. In addition, such digital solutions also have the added potential of being able to reach key and vulnerable groups without the constraint of an individual’s discomfort on SRH rights issues and socio-cultural barriers.

Some of the recommendations of the review included: the need to support ‘out of the box’ digital media solutions that are youth led; collaborate with a range of key influencers and stakeholders from across various sectors; create/enable platforms to empower young people to be active creators in the process; and the need for the International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education to include an expanded guidance/framework, including operating principles for sex education in the digital space.

### 1.4. Regional Commitment on CSE

UN Agencies UNESCO, UNFPA and UNICEF are co-publishers of the revised ITGSE, and have an informal working partnership at the regional level to advance CSE and gender equality. Some of the collaborative outputs of this partnership have included:

1. **A mapping of existing educational resources on CSE, gender equality, GBV and the prevention of child marriage.**
2. **A regional consultation to advance CSE and gender equality, Bangkok August 2016**
3. A three-day consultative workshop brought together representatives from five UN agencies—UNFPA, UNESCO, UNICEF, UN Women, and WHO—to discuss, collectively for the first time in Asia Pacific, the importance of integrating gender and power into comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) advocacy and programming. This included UN focal points from Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, China, India, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan, PNG, Thailand, Timor-Leste and Vietnam

4. UNICEF report: *The Opportunity for Digital Sex Education in East Asia and the Pacific*

5. *Satellite session on CSE at the World Congress on Adolescent Health*

6. A human centered design project led by UNICEF to better understand, from a young person’s perspective, what gaps exist in sexuality education in Thailand and Indonesia as well as identifying emerging initiatives they find effective.

The three agencies are also in the process of developing a regional blueprint on CSE that will identify priority strategic actions that are required to accelerate CSE efforts in the region. Although, ministries, UN agencies, and civil society partners have and will continue to address the gaps in CSE content and delivery in the formal education sector, it is imperative that UNESCO and other UN partners recognize the growing influence of these digital spaces, and engage with various stakeholders that make up the digital landscape, to strengthen and promote age-appropriate, youth-centric, evidence-based sexuality education in digital spaces.

2. **Nature of Consultancy**

To conduct an in-depth regional mapping of digital sex education initiatives, and to design, facilitate and execute an innovative, cross-sectoral platform that enables collaboration and learning across existing initiatives, and promotes the development of ‘out of the box’ digital solutions on sexuality education.

3. **Work Assignments**

Under the authority of the Director of UNESCO Bangkok Office, the overall supervision of the Chief of Unit for Inclusive Quality Education, and the direct supervision/guidance of the Senior Project Officer for HIV, the consultant is expected to perform the following tasks:

1. Build on the UNICEF EAPRO review of digital sex education initiatives, to identify examples of social media influencers and platforms in the region promoting sexuality education and information regarding SRHR and healthy relationship.

2. Conduct an in-depth qualitative interview with a maximum of 20 select digital sexuality education initiatives/stakeholders and social media influencers in the Asia-Pacific region. These interviews will be conducted with the creators/developers of these initiatives to gather insight on design, operational modalities, content and their perspectives on the digital sexuality education landscape.

The review of content will plot the focus of the digital initiatives against the conceptual framework of the ITGSE and the learning domains i.e. skills, attitudes and knowledge – to identify gaps and opportunities for strengthening, particularly to promote gender equality.

Design and operational modalities will assess mechanisms for youth engagement, quality assurance for content development, child protection safeguards, and referral/offline links with service providers. Where possible, UNESCO and UN partners will facilitate support of UN Volunteers to collect national-
level data and ensure contextual analysis of the data.

The data will be analyzed and presented as a regional digital landscape Powerpoint deck and detailed case studies that will present the gaps, trends, good practices/models, and recommendations for strengthening comprehensive sexuality education in digital spaces and how these could complement sexuality education programmes in the formal education sector.

3. The regional digital landscape Powerpoint deck will inform the consultant to conceptualize and facilitate a 2-day “Share-a-thon” event in Bangkok, Thailand, that will bring together youth activists, social media influencers, website and mobile application designers, and online stakeholders e.g. Google, YouTube, Facebook etc. to share trends, opportunities, good practices, and recommendations for strengthening CSE in digital spaces.

The consultant will be responsible for designing and facilitating the ‘Share-a-thon’ event that will be youth-centric and youth-led, using contemporary digital technology and spaces to promote collaboration and learning. The design aesthetic and location of the event should encourage engagement amongst the participants and promote creativity. The Share-athon will include “incubator” sessions in which presenters will share innovative ideas and explore the development of collaborative solutions for promoting CSE in the region. The sessions should draw on expertise from various disciplines (i.e.: anime cartoonists, video game developers, online series scriptwriters, website and mobile application designers, and marketing specialists) and private sector stakeholders (i.e.: Google, YouTube, Facebook, television broadcasters) to offer inputs on proposed solutions.

In line with UNESCO’s overall gender mainstreaming strategy, the consultant is expected to integrate a gender perspective and apply gender analysis and mainstreaming concepts whenever feasible.

4. Deliverables and Estimated Dates
   1. Qualitative interview research guide (5 pages) to provide guidance on the protocol and content of the semi-structured interviews and list of tentative interviewees (max 20 with a rationale provided for selection). (25 June 2018)
   2. Qualitative interview analysis of select innovative digital sexuality education/gender/social impact initiatives/social media influencers. The analysis should include reach, engagement platforms, and messaging. The key findings will be developed into a regional landscape Powerpoint deck and 20 one-page case studies with infographics. (15 August 2018)
   3. Concept Powerpoint deck on the share-a-thon, which includes the strategic approach, draft agenda, session plans, meeting format and key constituencies to be invited. The concept Powerpoint deck will be informed by the in-depth qualitative interviews, and findings from the scoping will be included. (15 August 2018)
   4. Report (5-7 pages) documenting discussions and recommendations sourced during the meeting. (30 November 2018)

All deliverables should be in English.

5. Estimated Duration of Contract

10 June 2018 – 30 Nov 2018
6. Official Travel Involved

If the applying institution is located outside of Bangkok, please include travel costs in the proposal submission.

7. Qualifications or Specialized Knowledge/Experience Required

- Institution with demonstrated experience working in the thematic areas of media and digital analytics, sexuality education, sexual and reproductive rights, SOGIE/LGBTI rights, gender equality, education and health;
- Staff with advanced degrees related to digital marketing, education, gender studies, public health, development studies, public policy or public administration;
- Proven track record in conducting youth-focused trainings and consultative meetings on sensitive topics (i.e.: sexuality education, sexual and reproductive health rights, LGBTI/SOGIE rights);
- Strong skills in research methods including the development and administration of online surveys, conducting focus groups discussions with youth, and data analysis;
- Demonstrated experience in the design and development of communications products including infographics, social media messages, and short promotional videos;
- Excellent analytical, writing and communication skills;
- Previous experience working with the UN/multilateral/bilateral institutions is an asset;
- Institutions with previous work experience in Asia-Pacific and an understanding of the social and political sensitivities associated with sexual and reproductive health and CSE is preferred.

Application

Interested institutions are invited to submit the following in writing:

a. A short (3-5 pages) proposal including budget and relevant examples/reports of successfully undertaking such contracts.

b. CV of the individual(s) that will lead this assignment.

Your application should be submitted no later than **31 May 2018, 17h00 Bangkok time (GMT +7:00)** to the attention of:

Chief, IQE Section
UNESCO Bangkok Office
E-mail: iqe.bgk@unesco.org

*Only short-listed candidates will be contacted.*


