

## **Know Your Body, Know Your Rights**

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Online Campaign – Concept Note

### **What is the Know Your Body, Know Your Rights Campaign?**

The Know Your Body, Know Your Rights Campaign is a National online campaign that enables *young people to articulate and address their need for and ability to access Sexuality Education in India*. The aim of the campaign is to highlight young people's lived realities; their need, their experiences and the challenges they have faced in the to acquire and disseminated sexuality education. In addition, the campaign also seeks to address the lack of young people's response to and garner feedback from young people across India, on the latest draft of the Adolescence Education Programme (AEP)<sup>1</sup>, released by NCERT, UNFPA and UNESCO in 2010.

A rights-based approach to Sexuality Education seeks to equip young people with age appropriate and culturally sensitive information that gives them the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values they need to acquire essential life skills and develop positive attitudes and values. It views 'sexuality' holistically and within the context of emotional and social development and young people's right to access accurate information<sup>2</sup>. Additionally, sexuality education creates a space for a young person to clarify their own values about these issues and make choices that reflect these values, rather than being influenced by peers or other external factors. Young people need these skills in order to navigate the constantly shifting boundaries between cultural acceptability and sexual taboos.

The Adolescence Education Programme is an encouraging step towards recognizing the need for sexuality education amongst young people in India. However, with the present ban on the AEP in eight states in India, at last count, there is a critical gap, giving rise to the need to address the *form* of sexuality education being imparted to young people from these states. Education, being a state subject allows governments to implement a programme that is not entirely reflective of the needs and experiences of young people. *The absence of reflective sexuality education implies that a significant number of Indian youth reach young adulthood, a time when they are expected to largely make their own decisions regarding their sexuality, without the complete set of the tools or information to do so in an effectual manner.*

### **Who are the stakeholders?**

The campaign is being coordinated by The YP Foundation in collaboration with UNESCO, and will run online in Hindi and English across two months, from October to December, 2010, encouraging young people as well as stakeholders from across the country to submit their opinions and thoughts on the need for sexuality education; as well as their experiences, recommendations and feedback on the Adolescence Education Programme. These stakeholders include civil society, the educational and medical community, parents, teachers, donors, civil society organizations, practitioners and peer educators involved with implementing sexuality education for young people. As a culmination to the campaign, TYPF and UNESCO will collate the responses, comments and opinions into a public report that will be circulated and shared with key stakeholders including young people, school teachers and educators, curriculum setters and policy makers including the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT), Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), and Educationists, UN agencies addressing the AEP and implementing sexuality education in India.

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<sup>1</sup> The Adolescence Education Programme (AEP) is a key policy initiative of NACP II. The Ministry of HRD and NACO collaborated to develop this school-based programme that is implemented across 144,409 secondary and senior secondary schools with the objective of reaching out to about 33 million students within two years in India. The AEP is implemented by the Department of Education in collaboration with the State AIDS Prevention and Control Societies.

<sup>2</sup> Inputs: IPPF Framework for CSE, Jan 2010

## **Relevance**

There are 315 million people living in India between the ages of 10 and 24, their access to information and services regarding their sexuality, gender, health and rights is insufficient. Of the 2.5 million people currently living with HIV/AIDS, over 50 percent of all new HIV infections take place among young adults between 15-24 years, and 40% of all cases of sexually transmitted infections occur in the same age group. Among young women between the ages 25-49, 20% have been found to have sexual intercourse before the age of 15 and 55% before the age of 18. By the age of 18, 28% of Indian women will have given birth to a child, and 49% will be married<sup>3</sup>.

A recently conducted National Survey (2006-2007), by the Population Council and International Institute for Population Sciences on 'Youth in India' discovered that of a total sample population of over 50,000 young people, only 15% of had received any kind of sexuality education.<sup>4</sup> <sup>4</sup>Of the information that is available to young people, the inconsistency in accuracy as well as the lack of quality control mechanisms leaves young people with extremely limited avenues where they can clarify doubts or discuss related issues. Key documents such as the UNAIDS Outcome framework and The UNESCO Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education identify sexuality education as one of the critical methods of empowering young people to enable them to tackle challenges of HIV and health for young people. 'Comprehensive Sexuality Education' is provided keeping in mind the following principles:

- Information should be made accessible to children and young people of all ages in accordance with their evolving capacities.
- Whether sexually active or not, and irrespective of sexual orientation, young people should be given the information to enable them to feel comfortable and confident about their bodies and their sexuality.
- Comprehensive Sexuality Education helps young people acquire the skills to negotiate relationships and safer sexual practices, including whether and when to engage in sexual intercourse, should be available.
- Broad-based strategies are needed to address the needs of young people both in and out of school.
- Comprehensive Sexuality Education covers a broad range of issues relating to the physical and biological aspects of sexuality and the emotional and social aspects of human development.
- It recognizes and accepts all people as sexual beings and is concerned with more than just the prevention of disease or pregnancy.
- Addresses sexuality in positive way, wherein it helps counter shame and fear, essential for health and redressal in cases of child sexual abuse and violence

## **Goal:**

The main goals and objectives of the Know Your Body Know Your Rights Campaign are:

1. Create public awareness aimed at reducing stigma and discrimination faced by young people with respect to issues of sexuality, gender, rights and health,
2. To bring together young people to advocate for young people's sexual rights as human rights, with a focus on the need for Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) and access to information and services.
3. Making concepts of sexuality and rights more visible and accessible.
4. Enabling dialogue between young people and key stakeholders including school teachers and educators, curriculum setters including the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT), Ministry

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<sup>3</sup> Youth in India, Situation and Needs: 2006-2007, International Institute for Population Sciences and Population Council

of Human Resource Development (MHRD), and Educationists, as well as young people, and youth organizations on why CSE is a Right and is important for young people today.

### **What you can do.**

The Know Your Body – Know Your Rights Campaign aims to bring together young people’s voices and opinions on young people’s need for Sexuality Education. We would request your support in:

1. Circulating this concept note and the website link amongst your network and peers.
2. Encouraging young people and concerned stakeholders to fill out the survey on CSE given [here](#) and post their experiences, the challenges they have faced and/or their successes while imparting and/or receiving sexuality education on the website.

### **For institutionally endorsing the campaign, or for further information, please contact:**

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### **About The YP Foundation**

**The YP Foundation** is a youth run and led organization that supports and enables young people to create programmes and influence policies in the areas of gender, sexuality, health, education, the arts & governance. The organization promotes, protects and advances young people’s human rights by building leadership, and strengthening youth led initiatives and movements. Founded in 2002, the organization has worked directly with 5,000 young people to set up over 200 projects in India, reaching out to 300,000 young people.

**Know Your Body, Know Your Rights' (KYBBYR)** is a multi year peer education, capacity building and advocacy programme run by The YP Foundation addressing young people’s sexuality, gender, health and rights for the last 8 years at local, state and national levels. The programme trains young people to become Peer Educators and conducts a range of open forum programmes on issues of sexuality, gender, health and rights, and HIV & AIDS. TYPF has been running its peer education programme since its inception in 2002 and has gradually grown to work with youth organizations in over 10 states in India where the organization has focussed on building their technical capacity to execute youth led work. TYPF has hosted three National Capacity Building workshops since 2008, The Project 19 Festival (in collaboration with the Center for Human Progress), Vikalp – Searching for Alternatives (with UNESCO and UNFPA) and the Know Your Body, Know Your Rights National Training in 2010, with IPPF and support from the MacArthur Foundation. The national training forums from 2008 till date have brought together 360 young people working with issues of gender, disability, sexuality, health and education from 10 states across India.