



## Family Policy Brief

### ***The International Guidelines on Sexuality Education: Comprehensive Sexuality Education Defined***

**NOTE:** In 2009 Family Watch conducted a campaign at the UN to try to stop UNESCO from distributing the original draft of their controversial *International Guidelines on Sexuality Education*. These guidelines, which were created in partnership with UNICEF, UNFPA, WHO and UNAIDS, suggest, among other things, teaching five-year-old children that they can touch their body parts for sexual pleasure.

After a number of UN Member States complained, UNESCO released a new publication called the *International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education*, which was not quite as controversial as their original guidelines. It was thought that these new guidelines would replace the original publication, however this is not the case. The original highly controversial “*International Guidelines on Sexuality Education*” are still in circulation and are available online at the UN High Commissioner for Refugees website.<sup>1</sup>

Sexual rights activists are becoming increasingly vocal regarding what they claim to be the “sexual rights” of all individuals. One of the most troubling developments is the focus of these activists on the sexual rights of children. Many activists assert that children are sexual from birth, and as such, are entitled to experience sexual pleasure. In order for children to understand their sexual rights and experience sexual pleasure, these activists believe that children are entitled to “comprehensive education on human sexuality”<sup>2</sup> beginning at a very young age—even as young as age five.

A publication issued by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in collaboration with other UN agencies including UNICEF, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), and the World Health Organization (WHO) maintains that children have a right to receive instruction in sexual pleasure, masturbation and homosexuality, among other things.

The publication, *The International Guidelines on Sexuality Education*,<sup>3</sup> is intended to drive sex education programs taught to children in schools worldwide and is being promoted under the guise of the prevention of unwanted pregnancy, coercive or abusive sexual activity, and sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV/AIDS.

The following are excerpts from some of the “Learning Objectives” in the Guidelines:

#### **Learning Objectives for Level I (ages 5-8)**

- “Girls and boys have private body parts that can feel pleasurable when touched by oneself.” (p. 43)

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4a69b8902.html>

<sup>2</sup> Commission on Population and Development, Report on the forty-second session (11 April 2008 and 30 March-3 April 2009) Economic and Social Council Official Records, 2009, Supplement No. 5, E/2009/25, E/CN.9/2009/10.

<sup>3</sup> *International Guidelines on Sexuality Education: An evidence informed approach to effective sex, relationships and HIV/STI education.*

- “It is natural to explore and touch parts of one’s own body.” (p. 48)
- “Bodies can feel good when touched.” (p. 48)
- “Touching and rubbing one’s genitals is called masturbation.” (p. 48)
- “Masturbation is not harmful, but should be done in private.” (p. 48)
- “People receive messages about sex, gender, and sexuality from their cultures and religions.” (p. 39)
- “All people regardless of their health status, religion, origin, race or sexual status can raise a child and give it the love it deserves.” (p. 51)

### **Learning Objectives for Level II (ages 9-12)**

- “Both men and women can give and receive sexual pleasure.” (p. 43)
- “Relationship between excitement and vaginal lubrication, penile erection and ejaculation.” (p. 44)
- “Many boys and girls begin to masturbate during puberty.” (p. 44)
- “Steps for proper use of condoms.” (p. 51)
- “Definition and function of orgasm.” (p. 49)
- “Legal abortion performed under sterile conditions by medically trained personnel is safe.” (p. 51)

### **Learning Objectives for Level III (ages 12-15)**

- “Respect for the different sexual orientations and gender identity.” (p. 48)
- “Both men and women can give and receive sexual pleasure with a partner of the same or opposite sex.” (p. 50)
- “Everyone is responsible for their own and their partner’s sexual pleasure and can learn to communicate their likes and dislikes.” (p. 50)
- “Access to safe abortion and post-abortion care.” (p. 52)
- “The size and shape of [genitals and other body parts] vary and do not affect reproduction or the ability to be a good sexual partner.” (p. 46)
- Definition and description of the physical changes and stages of male and female human sexual response including orgasm. (p. 50)

According to the Guidelines, by age 15, adolescents should be exposed to “advocacy to promote the right to and access to safe abortion.”

The concept of abstinence is mentioned as “only one of a range of choices available to young people,” and the Guidelines describe abstinence-only programs as “fear-based” and “designed to control young people’s sexual behavior by instilling fear, shame, and guilt.”

One of the most dangerous concepts promoted by the Guidelines is that sexual behaviors can be pleasurable and are without risk of unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections. Statements such as “Contraceptives and condoms give people the opportunity to enjoy their sexuality without unintended consequences” in the Guidelines give youth a false sense of security by failing to disclose the fact that condoms have high failure rates especially when used by youth.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> See Ranjit N, Bankole A, Darroch JE, Singh S. *Contraceptive failure in the first two years of use: differences across socioeconomic subgroups*. *Fam Plann Persp* 33(1):19--27. 2001. The two-year condom failure rate resulting in pregnancy for youth under 18 was 25.8 percent.

Much of the document promotes “respect” for “sexual and gender diversity” and “people with diverse sexual expressions,” and it encourages ministries of education to “consult with lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender groups” as programs are developed. Under the definition for “sexual orientation” this example is listed: “a man who becomes a woman and is attracted to other women would be identified as a lesbian.”

The Guidelines undermine parental rights and state that “teachers are likely to be the most skilled and trusted source of information” and “have a responsibility to act in the place of parents.”

These Guidelines ultimately will increase the very negative consequences of sexual behavior in youth they claim to prevent. So as defined by UNESCO, “comprehensive education on human sexuality” is very dangerous indeed.

### UNESCO’s Latest Version

As mentioned above UNESCO’s most recent version includes a title change: *International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education*. The most offensive parts of the original publication have been toned down, however, there is still some disturbing material.

By its own description the “companion document (Volume II ) presents a ‘basic minimum package’ of topics and learning objectives for a sexuality education programme for children and young people from 5 to 18+ years of age and includes a bibliography of useful resources.” (Vol. II p. 3) This latest UNESCO publication openly states that some of the learning objectives “**will attempt to change social norms,**” and are designed to “**remove social and attitudinal barriers to sexuality education.**” (Vol. II p. 3)

The resources and references listed are disturbing in and of themselves, listing material from the International Planned Parenthood Federation, SIECUS (including a publication called “Right from the start: guidelines for sexuality issues (birth to five years)”<sup>5</sup>), and a listing for a directory of information from The Pleasure Project entitled “Global Mapping of Pleasure: A directory of organizations, programmes, media and people who eroticize safer sex.”<sup>6</sup> (Vol II p. 36)

In this version, parents are still considered an obstacle to sexuality education: “Many young people approach adulthood faced with conflicting and confusing messages about sexuality and gender. This is often exacerbated by embarrassment, silence and disapproval of open discussion of sexual matters by adults, including parents and teachers, at the very time when it is most needed.” (Vol. II p. 2)

Cultural and religious values also are still viewed as an impediment: “Effective sexuality education is important because of the impact of cultural values and religious beliefs on all individuals, and especially on young people, in their understanding of this issue and in managing relationships with their parents, teachers, other adults and their communities. (Vol. II p. 2) In addition the UNESCO publication calls for “students to assume responsibility for their own behaviour as well as their behaviour towards other people through respect; acceptance; tolerance and empathy for all people **regardless of their health status or sexual orientation.**” (Vol II p. 5) Students often do not understand the difference between acceptance and tolerance for an *individual* as opposed to acceptance and tolerance for a *behavior*.

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<sup>5</sup> Available at [www.siecus.org/\\_data/global/images/RightFromTheStart.pdf](http://www.siecus.org/_data/global/images/RightFromTheStart.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> Available at [http://www.thepleasureproject.org/content/File/Global%20Mapping%20of%20Pleasure\\_2nd%20Ed\\_Nov09.pdf](http://www.thepleasureproject.org/content/File/Global%20Mapping%20of%20Pleasure_2nd%20Ed_Nov09.pdf)

The most offensive learning objectives and key concepts are below:

### **Learning Objectives for Level I (ages 5-8)**

- Define sexual abuse (Vol II p. 20)
- Inappropriate touching, unwanted and forced sex (rape) are forms of sexual abuse (Vol II p. 20)
- Describe the meaning of ‘body rights’ (Vol II p. 26)
- Everyone has the right to decide who can touch their body, where, and in what way (Vol II p. 25)
- Explain the concept of private parts of the body (Vol II p. 26)
- It is natural to explore parts of one’s own body, including the private parts (Vol II p. 26)
- All people regardless of their health status, religion, origin, race or marriage status can raise a child and give it the love it deserves (Vol II p. 29)

### **Learning Objectives for Level II (ages 9-12)**

- It is disrespectful, hurtful and a violation of human rights to harass or bully anyone on the basis of health status, colour, origin, sexual orientation or other differences (Vol II p. 10)
- Describe the structure and function of the sexual and reproductive organs (Vol II p. 21)
- Concepts such as the menstrual cycle, sperm production, erection and ejaculation (Vol II p. 21)
- Human beings are born with the capacity to enjoy their sexuality throughout life (Vol II p. 26)
- Many boys and girls begin to masturbate during puberty or sometimes earlier (Vol II p. 26)
- Masturbation does not cause physical or emotional harm but should be done in private<sup>7</sup> (Vol II p. 26)

### **Learning Objectives for Level III (ages 12-15)**

- Everyone has a responsibility to speak out against bias and intolerance (Vol II p. 10)
- Support mechanisms typically exist to assist people experiencing stigma and discrimination (e.g. homophobia) (Vol II p 10)

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<sup>7</sup> The two key concepts regarding masturbation now contain a footnote citing McCary J.L. 1978. McCary’s Human Sexuality. Third Edition. New York: D. Van Nostrand and Company, pp. 150 & 262. Strong, B., DeVault, C. 1988. Understanding Our Sexuality. Second Edition. Eagan MN: West Publishing Company, pp. 179-80. Haas, A., and Haas, K. 1990. Understanding Sexuality. Times Mirror/Mosby College Publishing: St. Louis. p. 207. Francoeur, R.T., Noonan, R.J. (Editors). 2004. The International Encyclopaedia of Sexuality. Volume 5. New York: Continuum Intl Pub Group.

- The size and shape of the penis, vulva or breasts vary and do not affect reproduction or the ability to be a good sexual partner (Vol II p 24)
- Non-penetrative sexual behaviours are without risk of unintended pregnancy, and offer reduced risk of STIs, including HIV (Vol II p. 28)
- Emergency contraception (where legal and available) can prevent unintended pregnancy, including as a result of lack or misuse of contraception, contraceptive failure or sexual assault (Vol II p. 30)
- STIs such as Chlamydia, Gonorrhoea, Syphilis, HIV and HPV (genital human papilloma virus) can be prevented [HPV is transmitted by skin to skin contact and is only prevented by abstinence.] (Vol II p. 32)

#### **Learning Objective for Level IV (ages 15-18)**

- Discuss how sexual and relationship issues can impact on the family - e.g. disclosing an HIV-positive status, an unintended pregnancy, being in a same-sex relationship (Vol II p. 8)
  - Respect for human rights requires us to accept people of differing sexual orientation and gender identity (Vol II p. 17)
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