



Family Policy Brief

The International Guidelines on Sexuality Education: Comprehensive Sexuality Education Defined

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

Since we created this policy brief and presented it to three voting blocs of UN delegates that comprise over one-third of UN member states, UNESCO has revised their sexuality education guidelines and toned them down significantly. This policy brief examines the original publication, which is no longer available online but which can be accessed on our Web site. An analysis of the new publication, *International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education*, is forthcoming.

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”¹ 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*,² 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)
- “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.³

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.

¹ 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.

² International Guidelines on Sexuality Education: An evidence informed approach to effective sex, relationships and HIV/STI education.

³ 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.