

YOUTH ADVOCATES, ACT!

**A handbook on how to campaign for better sexuality education
using the International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education**

Youth Advocates, Act! was created through a partnership between UNESCO, IPPF, and The PACT. The International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) is a global service provider and a leading advocate of sexual and reproductive health and rights for all. IPPF works towards a world where women, men and young people everywhere have control over their own bodies. And therefore their destinies. The PACT is a global coalition of youth-led and youth-serving organizations that work together to ensure the health, wellbeing and human rights of all young people, with a focus on sexual and reproductive health and rights, and ending the AIDS epidemic in young people.

The guide was written and designed by Karen Torres, a youth intern at the IPPF Central Office, with the support of Laura Hurley and Hayley Gleeson. Special thanks to UNESCO, Akosua Agyepong, Dennis Owusu, Kato James, Camila Ochoa, and to all youth advocates who completed the Sexuality Education Advocacy survey.

Published May 2018

Copyright IPPF, 2018.



CONTENTS

Introduction.....	4
Your CSE rights.....	5
Your advocacy power	6
Problem identification exercises.....	7
Engaging potential allies.....	12
Government advocacy.....	13
School advocacy.....	15
Advocacy in religious institutions	18

introduction

In 2017, The PACT and IPPF developed a couple of advocacy handbooks that you should check out – *CSE and Me*¹ and *We Demand More*², which provide guidance and support for youth advocates, particularly those in restrictive and challenging environments. Thanks to those guides, we have a clear advocacy foundation to guide other young allies, and now we want to equip you with all the practical tools you might need to engage your government representatives, friends and family to advocate for better Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE). Additionally, we are very excited about UNESCO's recent update of the International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education (ITGSE)³, which serves as a support document for countries' sexuality education programmes, and we believe it can also be useful to you and your advocacy project.

Young Advocates, Act! is designed to guide you on how to engage different allies that can ultimately support you in your CSE advocacy. We acknowledge that, depending on where you are in the world, you might be able to campaign only in certain environments, perhaps it's your school, your religious group or your local government. In order to maximise your advocacy potential, you need as many allies as you can get. Therefore, we've created a toolbox for you to use throughout your campaign - this guide is accompanied by a few templates, conversation starters and a quiz using the ITGSE as a reference.

¹ https://www.act2030.org/uploads/1/0/0/3/100350982/cseandme_final_11217.pdf

² https://www.act2030.org/uploads/1/0/0/3/100350982/wedemandmore_feb2017_en.pdf

³ <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0026/002607/260770e.pdf>

your CSE rights

ITGSE describes CSE as *"a curriculum-based process of teaching and learning about the cognitive, emotional, physical and social aspect of sexuality. It aims to equip children and young people with knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that will empower them to: realise their health, well-being and dignity; develop respectful social and sexual relationships; consider how their choices affect their own well-being and that of others; and, understand and ensure the protection of their rights throughout their lives"*.⁴

In other words, sexuality education is not just about the biological aspect of reproduction (although that's still very important!), but it's also about giving young people the skills and knowledge they need to have a healthy relationship with sexuality across their lives, such as how to identify toxic relationships, how to love one's body just the way it is or how to use social media safely. Unfortunately, certain individuals and institutions fail to recognise the importance of including sexuality education in academic/institutional curricula (we have included institutional curricula because we believe that religious institutions and community organizations are channels that can also deliver CSE). That's why you, a youth advocate, are so important! You can help change that.

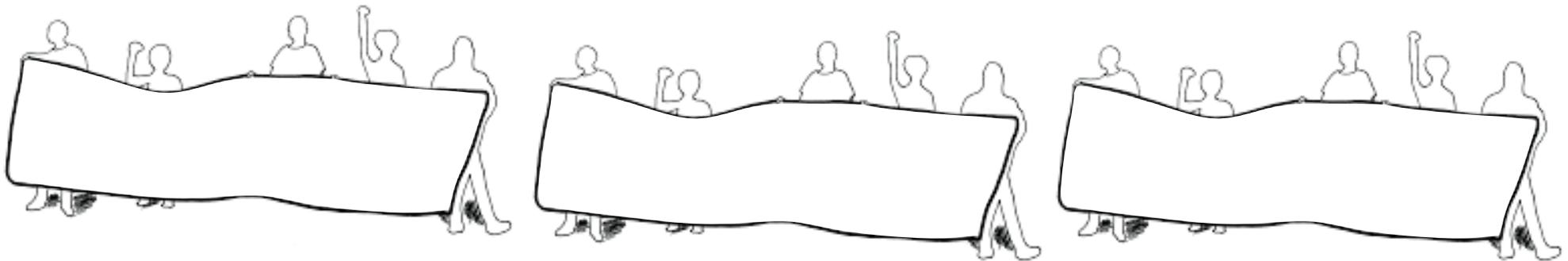
A number of international agreements such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Sustainable Development Goals recognise the importance of high quality sexuality education in the healthy development of young adults' lives.

⁴ <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0026/002607/260770e.pdf>

your advocacy power

As a young person, you have an inherent superpower - your **voice**. Odds are that, if you're reading this guide, you've noticed that something in your environment is off in regards to the provision of sexuality education. It's fantastic that you're interested in this topic! Like we emphasised earlier, being aware of one's sexual and reproductive health is central to the positive development of many other aspects of our lives.

However, far too often, young people feel like they can't act upon injustices that they see because they're afraid they won't be listened to. We want to challenge that. You have access to a series of networks that can be very useful to campaign for better CSE - your teachers, your parents and your peers. You're advocating for a change in a field that affects your everyday life.



first things first: figuring out where the gaps are

In order for you to successfully spark a change in the provision of sexuality education in your community, you need to begin by identifying what specifically are the shortcomings of the current system. This part is very important - you can't show up to the headteacher's office demanding for the entire curriculum to change. Instead, you should identify the good, the bad and the missing and what specific points need to be reinforced. To help, we've designed two exercises for you to gauge the current state of CSE provision in whichever environment you want to change.

1. Problem identification exercise

The objective of this exercise is to turn a gut feeling into a specific proposal for your school/government. Draw a table with the three following columns: "Problem", "Cause" and "ITGSE Point" (**see example in pages 9-10**). This structure will help you to identify which issues your community is struggling with the most in relation to sexual and reproductive rights; these can be specific health problems such as high rates of HIV transmission or less tangible cultural attitudes like sexism or homophobia. Once you've identified which specific points are an issue in your community, try to relate it to one of the key points in the ITGSE. Each key point targets a specific section of what an ideal CSE curriculum should look like and therefore serves as a useful reference on how to tackle the issue you have identified.

Here are the key concepts and topics included in the ITGSE as essential in any CSE curriculum, for your reference:

Key concept 1: Relationships	Key concept 2: Values, Rights, Culture and Sexuality	Key concept 3: Understanding Gender	Key concept 4: Violence and Staying Safe	Key concept 5: Skills for Health and Well-being	Key concept 6: The Human Body and Development	Key concept 7: Sexuality and Sexual Behaviour	Key concept 8: Sexual and Reproductive Health
1.1 Families 1.2 Friendship, Love and Romantic Relationships 1.3 Tolerance, Inclusion and Respect 1.4 Long-term Commitments, and Parenting	2.1 Values and Sexuality 2.2 Human Rights and Sexuality 2.3 Culture, Society and Sexuality	3.1 The Social Construction of Gender and Gender Norms 3.2 Gender Equality, Stereotypes and Bias 3.3 Gender-based Violence	4.1 Violence 4.2 Consent, Privacy and Bodily Integrity 4.3 Safe use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT's)	5.1 Norms and Peer Influence on Sexual Behaviour 5.2 Decision- making 5.3 Communication, Refusal and Negotiation Skills 5.4 Media literacy and Sexuality 5.5 Finding help and support	6.1 Sexual and Reproductive Anatomy and Physiology 6.2 Reproduction 6.3 Puberty 6.4 Body Image	7.1 Sex, Sexuality and the Sexual Life Cycle 7.2 Sexual Behaviour and Sexual Response	8.1 Pregnancy and Pregnancy Prevention 8.2 HIV and AIDS Stigma, Care, Treatment and Support 8.3 Understanding, Recognising and Reducing the Risk of STIs, including HIV

1.1: Example

Problems related to CSE in my high school

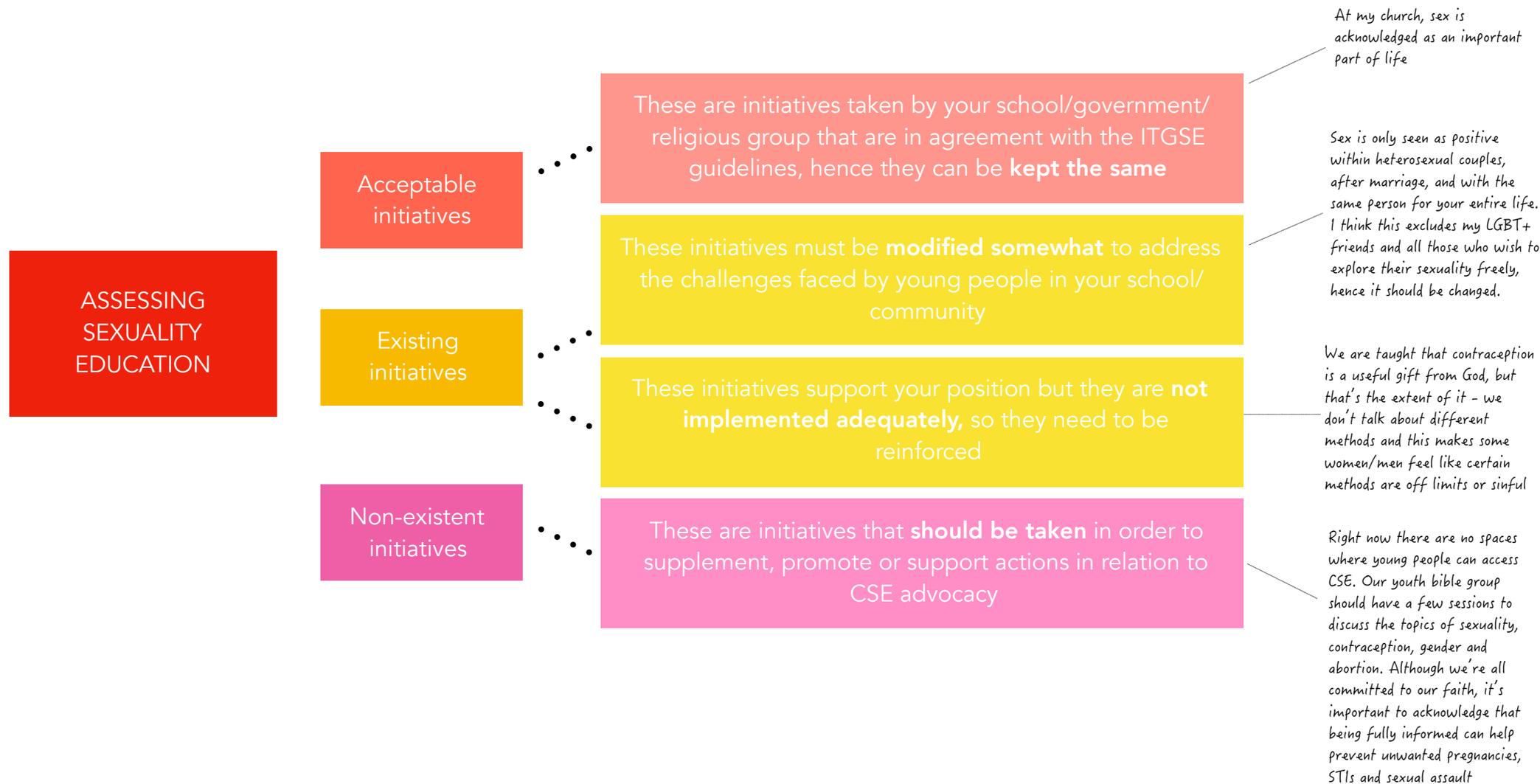
Problem	Causes	What Needs to Change?	ITGSE Point
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I've noticed that some of my friends miss class when they get their period, I think their parents don't let them come because they think periods are embarrassing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stigma around menstruation Not enough emphasis on how periods are normal and women are capable of carrying on with their daily lives as usual when they're on their period 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sex education should emphasise the processes of puberty and normalise it for both girls and boys as well as provide information on personal hygiene, sanitation practices and how to deal with period pain School should give out sanitary products 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Key concept 6 (6.3 - Puberty) Section 7 - 7.3 designing and implementing CSE programmes

Problem	Causes	What Needs to Change?	ITGSE Point
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At school parties, some boys try to make out with girls when they are very drunk and are unable to express their consent. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School/lad culture - friends encourage that behaviour Lack of understanding of how consent works Sexism? (happens mostly to girls) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> My school needs to provide better consent education with a particular focus on consent after consuming alcohol More young men need to feel like they can tell off their friends when they're doing something wrong 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Key concept 4 (4.2-Consent, Privacy and Bodily Integrity) Key concept 5 (5.1 - Norms and Peer Influence on Sexual Behaviour) Key concept 3 (3.3 - Gender-based Violence)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Our sex-ed class teacher said that the pill was the best form of birth control for girls because it cleared up their skin and protected them from pregnancy. Now a lot of girls in my class are on the pill - some seem to be okay but a lot of close friends are acting very strangely lately, they seem depressed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not enough information provided on different types of contraception and the side-effects of hormonal birth control The teacher emphasised the benefits of the pill a lot but failed to highlight its shortcomings (no protection from STIs) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Classes on contraception have to be comprehensive and must include the side-effects that the methods can have so girls can detect when something isn't working for them Better teacher training? Teachers are not being neutral 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Key concept 8 (8.1 - Pregnancy and Pregnancy Prevention) Section 7 - 7.3 designing and implementing CSE programmes

2. Identifying the good, the bad and the missing

Once you have successfully identified which issues affect your community the most, you should assess the quality of the initiatives that are currently being made by the institution in question. You can make this assessment by revising your school’s curriculum on sexuality education, looking up your government’s policy proposals on CSE nation-wide, or your religious group’s attitude towards discussing the topics of sexuality. At this stage, think big! Don’t let any potential obstacles hold you back.

To do so, we have created a mind map that you can re-draw yourself and fill out depending on your situation:



second: engaging potential allies

What began as a gut-feeling is now suddenly materialising into an actual project that you'll be able to present to your school, community or government. But in order to get the full attention and success that this cause deserves, you need to engage potential allies. You'll notice that, depending on who your target audience is, different actors will have different impacts.

1. **Government advocacy:** engaging voters

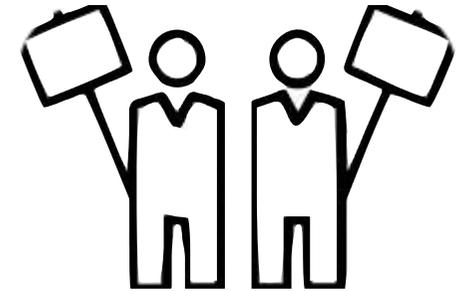
Governments should have citizens' best interests at heart but, at times, they fail to recognise what imminent issues are affecting their constituency. Additionally, they're eager to be reelected, so any cause that mobilises a large group of voters will be in their interest, as these represent an opportunity for them to secure future votes. That's an angle you can take advantage of.

If you refer to our **Template 1: Letter to Government Representatives**, the last paragraph acknowledges three things:

*"I have mobilised **several members of our constituency**, including **teachers** from two different **school boards**, who want to participate in this quest for better sex education and who classified this as a **key issue in their voting preferences for next year's election**."*

You've reaffirmed that **you are the leader of this project**, which **members of the constituency were mobilised** (bearing in mind that individuals in **school boards have a wide range of influence over other schools and teachers, hence potential voters**), and that **this issue is of pressing importance and will be a deciding factor on who they will vote for in the next election**.

So how do you find a support group that will mobilise with you for this issue?



1.1 Petitions

An efficient way to get politicians to discuss an issue in parliament or congress is through a petition. Every country has a different set of rules when it comes to petitions, some may require you to be over 18, others may require a minimum of 10,000 signatures to get a response from government, others may require 100,000 for the issue to be directly included in the Parliament agenda (British case). Have a look at what your government requires, and, if the threshold is too high, you can start a petition on an independent site like change.org which will still be ammunition that you can use when you bring the issue up to your local representative.

The key point when starting a petition is to be specific and appropriate - you cannot submit a petition titled "Better sex education in Colombia now!". Rather, choose points/laws that can be amended or easily created, this will make policymakers' lives simpler as well as highlight that you're informed on the topic: "Amendment to Law 115 of 1994, Article 13 to expand the legal requirements for sexuality education to students of all ages and sexual orientations".

However, before creating your own petition, you should browse around to see if there are any that already target the same issue or at least a similar one. A common problem with petitions is that there are many out there with a few votes and although these may be targeting the same issue, politicians only consider single petitions that have passed a certain threshold. If you find a petition that targets a similar issue but is missing something you deem important, try to contact the leader and see if you can work out a coalition.

change.org

Start a petition Browse Subscription



David Cameron: Bring sex and relationship education into the 21st century #bettersexeducation



Yas Necati started this petition to Prime Minister of the United Kingdom Rt Hon David Cameron MP

It was the summer of 2009 and we were sitting on the shed roof in my friend's back garden, three young girls talking about sex. "Do you ever feel pressure," one of my friends asked rather nervously, "to watch porn?" We all went a little quiet at this, we're girls; we weren't supposed to talk about porn. But we had felt pressure - not just to watch porn, but at some point, to act out in a relationship what we thought went on in porn.

The past 10 years have seen incredible changes in how people - particularly young people - interact with each other. Mostly, this is brilliant. It's given millions of people access to information with the touch of a button, or the swipe of a finger across a phone screen.

Confirmed victory

This petition made change with 51,905 supporters!

David Cameron: Bring sex and relationship education into the...

Add a personal message (optional)

Post to Facebook

Send a Facebook message

Send an email to friends

Tweet to your followers

Copy link

Embed

Example: Screenshot of a petition started by youth activist Yas Necati urging the British government to update sexuality education standards. The petition gathered 51,905 signatures and it sparked some change - a spokesperson at the Department for Education said that it was working on new advice produced by expert groups to update the teaching materials on sex education.



1.2 News outlets/social media: make some noise!

In today's day and age, social media and online news outlets are some of the most powerful tools one can use to mobilise individuals on a topic. The great thing about these is that they can help you reach well out of your community and cross national and regional lines without leaving your house. A good starting point is through your own social media, you can use it to share articles on the topic, gather support for a petition you've created or to gauge popular opinions on a topic.

Another method you can try is to get the attention of radio channels, magazines or newspapers, perhaps this is through submitting opinion pieces on CSE-related topics or by creating visual content such as videos sharing your perspectives, as a young person, on your country's approach towards sexuality education. These outlets can help you amplify your voice and get the attention of policy-makers faster. Remember to always include trustworthy sources in whatever pieces you write and to keep it relevant to your context. For example, if your city has an issue with high rates of HIV but the national curriculum encourages an abstinence-only approach, gather trustworthy academic resources that emphasise the lack of effectiveness of these methods in preventing the spread of HIV (e.g: **ITGSE Key concept 8.3: Reducing the Risk of HIV**).

"It's shocking how the national curriculum in Swaziland is based so strongly on abstinence when 1/3 of the population is HIV+" Age: 20, Country: Swaziland

1.3 Seek potential allies

Finding allies who may already have a base of support can be really helpful to your advocacy project. A natural connection would be to look for the IPPF Member Association in your country, which you can find using the following link: <https://www.ippf.org/about-us/member-associations>. Or you could also look for PACT Member Organizations here: <https://www.theyouthpact.org/who-we-are.html>. Member Organizations may already have a channel of communication with government representatives and you may be able to express your concerns to them. Additionally, they have resources and a good understanding of the cultural context, which may help to engage allies in conservative environments.

Alternatively, finding politicians or parties who are outspoken about issues of gender equality, sexual and reproductive rights and LGBTQ+ rights may be a shortcut to promote political debates on the topics you are trying to highlight. Mobilising support for these politicians during election time is also a way of promoting the CSE agenda.

2. School advocacy: engaging teachers, students and parents

2.1 Cafeteria conversations

Everyday campaigning is one of the most effective methods of advocacy available to young people. Cafeteria conversations, for example, can be great opportunities for you to get your peers on board to help you with your cause. You can either engage by starting the conversation or by responding to certain points that may arise naturally. Don't feel scared to be outspoken! It can be daunting at first to speak up, it's probably on everyone's minds bursting to get out, so be the one to break the silence! We've come up with some "conversation starters" (**Template 2: School Conversation Starters**) that you can have a look at and use as guidance.

2.2 Social media

Besides using social media as an outlet for your opinion, you can also use it as a platform to mobilise your friends. If you don't have the time to commit to an after-school group, perhaps you can create an online forum with people from your school and have that be a safe space to discuss issues. This helps to have a united front and a large base of support for when you bring up proposals to your school.

You may encounter people that are rude or hostile on social media - not everyone will be on the same progressive page as you are. In this case, you have two options - you can either ignore them and delete the comment/delete the friend, which is likely to be the best outcome if the person is simply being insulting and you see no potential for a discussion; or alternatively, you can try to engage with them and stir the conversation in a productive direction. You can do so by citing official figures and studies and not letting them get personal. These people will usually want to get a rise out of you - don't take the bait!

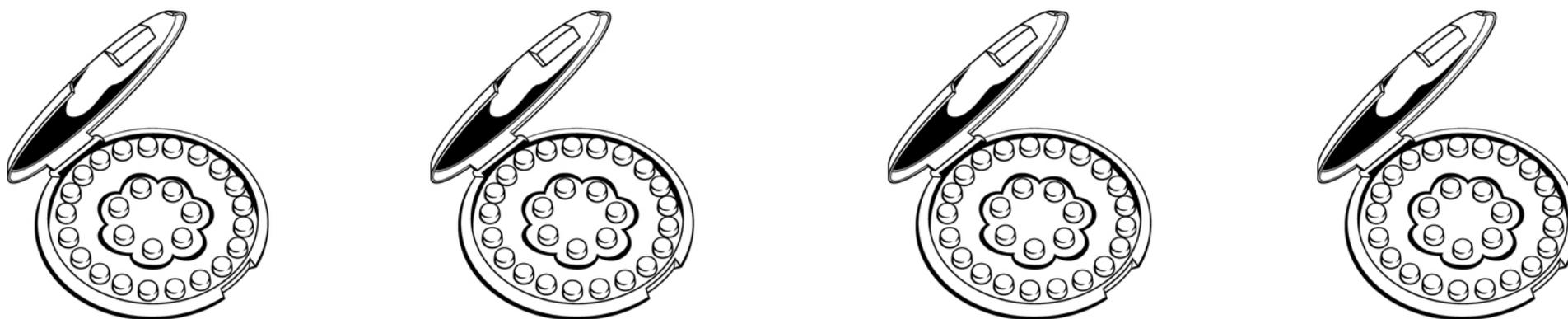
The screenshot shows a social media post creation interface. At the top, there are three options: "Make Post" (selected), "Photo/Video Album", and "Live Video". Below this is a circular profile picture placeholder. The main text of the post reads: "Hey guys! I recently came across this article by UNESCO explaining the huge impact that Comprehensive Sexuality Education can have on reducing teenage pregnancy rates and STIs: <https://en.unesco.org/news/urges-comprehensive-approach-sexuality-education> Let me know what you think - I'd like to show this to the school's administration to see if we can expand our sex education curriculum, anyone who would like to help with that as well?". To the right of the text is a smiley face emoji. Below the post is a link preview for "UN urges Comprehensive Approach to Sexuality Education" from UNESCO, with a subtext: "Close to 10 years after its first edition, a fully updated International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education published today by UNESCO advocates...". At the bottom of the interface are three buttons: "Photo/Video", "Feeling/Activity", and a three-dot menu.

2.3 Office hours - talking to your teachers

Engaging members of faculty in your advocacy project can be really powerful. It can happen that, if you're in a conservative environment, you may find it difficult to even bring the issue up with your teachers. However, it's still worth giving it a shot. Certain teachers may be more likely to support you because of their area of academia (e.g: Biology and Geography teachers have to touch upon the topics of health, reproduction and population to some degree).

A good way of getting teachers on board is through evidence-based advocacy. Presenting clear facts will give little room for opposition. We encourage you to refer to the ITGSE as much as you can, as it's already gathered the most important information on sex education curricula in one place. If you have noticed that sexual harassment is an issue in your school, start by sharing this concern with your teacher and proceed by showing them the evidence you've found that demonstrates that this problem can be tackled through CSE. If your teacher does not agree with a need for better CSE, we have included a quiz (**See Templates 3: Quiz**) in this toolkit for you to show to your teacher. It includes a few basic questions covering cross-cutting themes in the ITGSE. You can propose that this quiz is taken by your peers and, once you collect them back, your teacher and you can work collectively to figure out which areas of CSE need to be reformed/strengthened in your class.

Lastly, once you've gathered support from your peers and your teachers, we encourage you to try and communicate directly with the Headteacher/Principal at your school. You can refer to **Template 4: Letter to Headteachers** as an example of how to write them a letter.

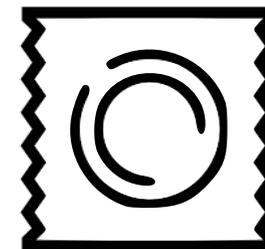
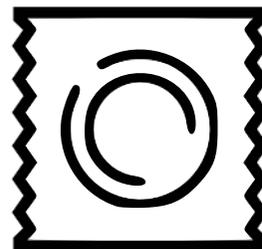
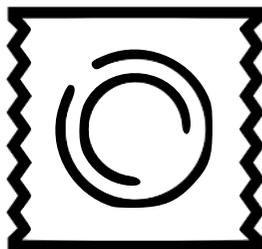
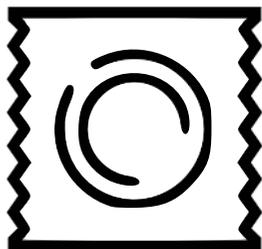


2.4 Getting your parents on board

When it comes to school advocacy, engaging parents can be useful. If you manage to mobilise both the student body and the parents, the school's administration will have very little to hold onto and will have to implement the changes you are proposing. However, we understand that sexuality can be an awkward topic in certain households, even though it shouldn't be. Therefore, we **challenge you to give your parents "the talk"**: get them to talk about sexuality, gender and health with you! Remember they were young once and they have probably gone through very similar situations as you - only now they have lots of wisdom and hindsight to provide. We designed some conversation starters for you to refer to (**see Template 5: Conversation Starters with Parents**).

"My mom and I had never talked about sex until I had a pregnancy scare at 16 (due to my own misconceptions about how to use a condom, how embarrassing). That experience shook us both. After that, we started to talk much more and she told me about every single contraceptive method she tried with all their benefits and downsides. It feels amazing to be able to talk to her about these things. She even supported me when I started campaigning for free condoms at school."

Age: 21, Country: Ecuador



3. Advocacy in religious institutions: engaging religious leaders

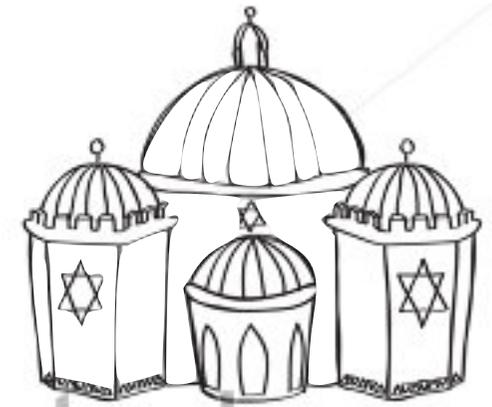
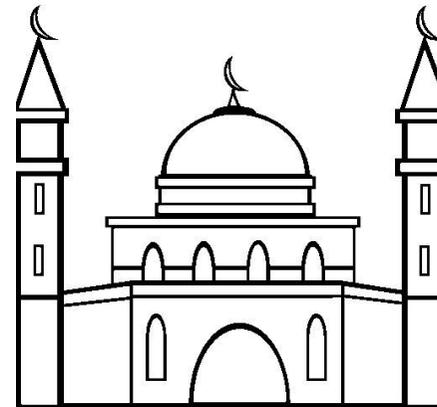
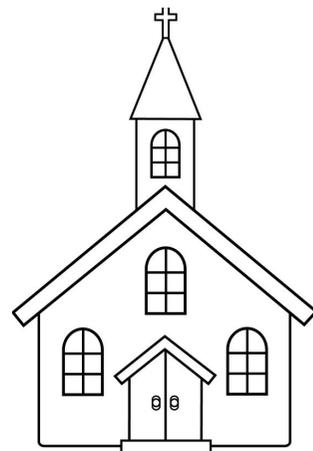
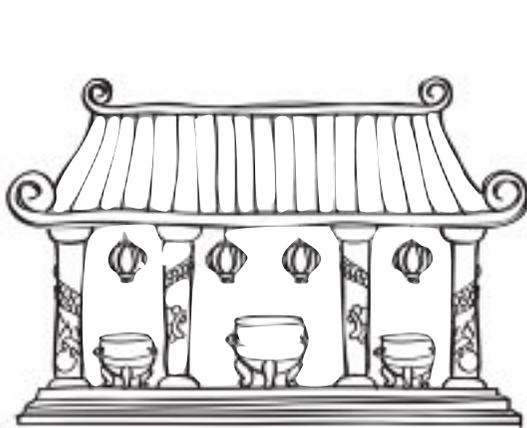
3.1 Learn about your religion's stance on sexuality

While some faiths might view sexuality as a taboo subject, others embrace and recognise sexual expression as a fundamental part of life. Most religious views on human sexuality are based on sacred texts, which contain diverse ideas, and sometimes rules, about the role sexuality plays in our world. Whether these religious scripts are interpreted to the letter will depend on the specific religious branch (whether it's traditionalist or modern), the religious leaders, and the country where you live.

Understanding your faith's stance on sexuality will allow you to cater your advocacy and develop an appropriate tone that doesn't scare off any religious members. It can be tough to have to persuade people to support you with something that should be the norm in any society, but you need to be patient - remember that in many contexts sexuality has negative connotations, and some people nowadays still struggle with those confusing feelings of shame and guilt. You can slowly get religious members on board by introducing concepts of CSE that you feel they would support (e.g: how CSE teaches young people about important values such as self-respect, tolerance and long-term commitments).

"At the beginning, when I went to talk about CSE in Muslim communities, I wouldn't get a positive response from people. Then I realised that they found my way of dressing, jeans and a regular top, disrespectful. So I changed it. Next time I went, amazingly, I got way more support from them"

Age: 27, Country: Ghana



3.2 Include religious leaders in the process

Being an advocate of CSE in a religious institution will most likely be a different experience from campaigning in a government or a school. This is due to the long traditions of religion and the strong moral imperatives they stand for. However, this doesn't mean that you shouldn't try, you simply need to work out an angle that will work for everyone.

First, gather solid, research-based evidence on the benefits of CSE in tackling certain issues - if you can, tie it to a problem that's affecting your community. Religious leaders tend to have a strong position in communities too, and therefore any solution to tackle a public health problem may interest them. You may find that religious leaders may be averse to discussing condoms if it implies a conscious decision to have premarital sex, but if instead you focus on how your community has been experiencing high rates of sexual assault and many young girls are at risk of pregnancy and STIs in these situations, they may respond more openly to the idea of promoting condom use.

Afterwards, try to gather segments from your religious scripts that will support or complement your position - this will show your religious leaders that you have thought of this in a religious context. Then, if you find that they are responding positively, show them the ITGSE guide and explain to them how it is a great standard of what to include in a CSE curriculum - perhaps they won't agree with all the points, but you can work out a compromise together. Lastly, find an opportunity where you can discuss these issues with other community members, for example youth bible study groups.

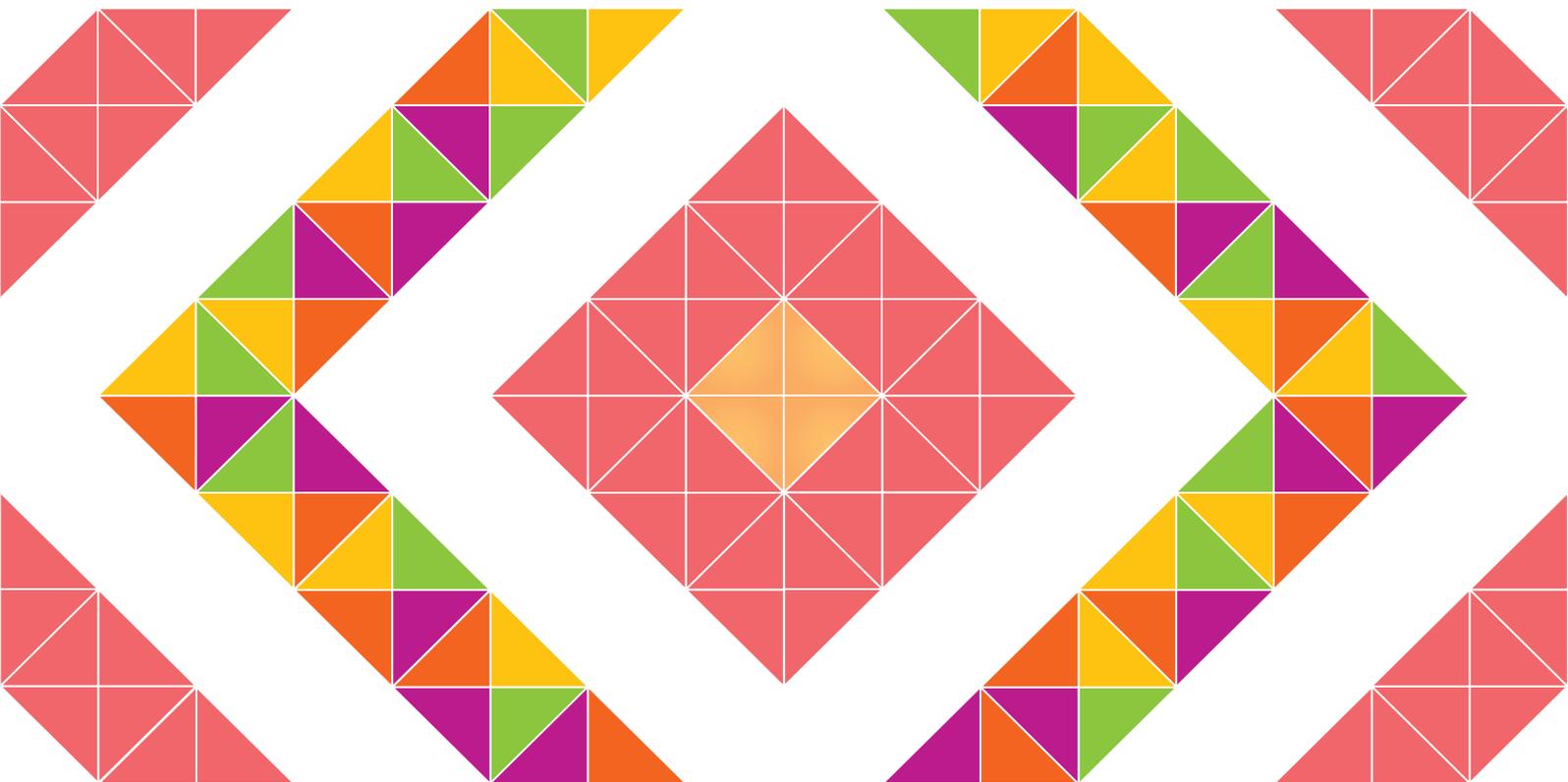
"The way we found around the opposition of religious leaders was to bring up how sexual abuse and rape occurred even in abstinence-only environments and that it was useful to teach young women and men how to use a condom in the unfortunate case they could not escape a horrible event like that. It was really a lot about focusing on how the condoms are going to be used in times of violence. So we tried to change to tone and focus on prevention of gender-based violence tactics"

Age: 20, Country: Swaziland

3.3 Find organizations that are on your side

If you're finding it difficult to engage your religious leaders, try to look up religious organizations that may be on your side. A lot of these organizations have done significant work in trying to find a balance between religion and sexual and reproductive rights and they usually have access to resources and religious analyses that may help to convince your religious community about the imminent need for CSE.

Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice: <http://rcrc.org> ; **Catholics for Choice:** <http://www.catholicsforchoice.org>



This handbook is a project of The PACT and IPPF, with the support of UNESCO

