

Teachers, like everyone else, are socialized in an environment with specific norms around gender and sexuality. This influences the way they teach Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE). A gender transformative approach (GTA) engages teachers in critically examining these norms and strengthens their CSE teaching.

Comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) is a rights-based and gender-focused approach to sexuality education, whether in school or out of school. It includes all aspects of sexual development, behaviour and relationships as well as contraception. But it also goes beyond information, helping young people to explore and nurture supportive values regarding their sexual and reproductive health and rights.

We know that sexuality education that explicitly addresses power and harmful gender norms is proven more effective.¹ CSE that encourages reflection on where gender norms come from and encourages critical thinking about the negative consequences for both boys and girls, helps to empower boys and girls. This enables them to resist harmful norms such as those prescribing that boys must be tough and aggressive and girls humble and subservient. Where the CSE curriculum and its teachers do not pay explicit attention to gender and power, they can reinforce gendered sexual and social norms and exclusion and thereby – often unconsciously – counteract the effectiveness of the CSE provided.²

“In the first place, I didn’t realise what perpetuates gender-based violence, but after the training, I knew what causes that. Our parents and society socialised us in a way that always holds boys as superior and girls as inferior and we grow up with that. Now I am trying to instill right values and gender norms in my children.”

TEACHER, IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW AFTER APPLYING HER GTA TRAINING

Teachers, like everyone else, are socialised in an environment with specific gender and sexuality norms and their own gender biases are likely to influence their teaching. In practice, this can lead to the exclusion of “sensitive” topics (like contraception and sexual orientation), skipping CSE sessions altogether, and to sharing gendered messages about sexuality. It can also

Building teachers’ capacity in delivering gender transformative sexuality education in Zambia

EVIDENCE BRIEF

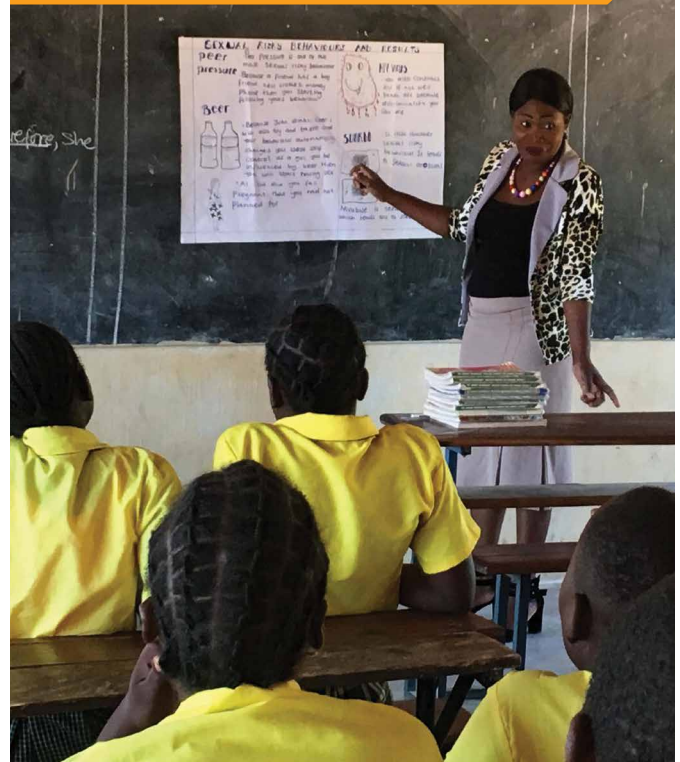


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lead to gender inequality in the classroom and school environment and support for those norms that lead to or seem to legitimise forms of sexual and gender-based violence (GBV) in schools.

Gender transformative approaches (GTA) highlight the importance of critical reflection on gender and power and on harmful gender and sexual social norms, with the aim of establishing more inclusive and more gender-equitable attitudes, practices and relations among people. Through GTA capacity building, teachers’ CSE teaching can be strengthened.

Research was conducted in 2019, with the University of Zambia to study the effects of GTA capacity building with teachers in Eastern Province, Zambia. This region was chosen to pilot *Module 2: The Gender Transformative Approach and Sexuality Education* of the Rutgers GTA toolkit.

1. Haberland, N. A. (2015). The case for addressing gender and power in sexuality and HIV education: a comprehensive review of evaluation studies. *International Perspectives on Sexual and Reproductive Health*, 41(1), 31–42.

2. Le Mat, M. L.J. (2017). (S)exclusion in the sexuality education classroom: young people on gender and power relations. *Sex Education*, 4, 413–424.

The pilot was part of the larger *Yes I Do* project that addresses child, early and forced marriage, teenage pregnancy and female genital mutilation, on various levels of the socio-ecological model in seven countries.³ The operational research followed 20 CSE teachers from Petauke and Chadiza Districts in Eastern Province, Zambia over five months, using quantitative and qualitative methods. Surveys and focus group discussion were also conducted with these teachers' pupils.

Key findings

The findings show that while teachers' gender attitudes and biases may be harmful towards women and girls, they can be shifted during and following an intervention. All the teachers reported high gender equitable attitudes at the end of the five months (as opposed 50% at the start of research). **Especially, attitudes towards GBV had shifted positively.** Also teachers started questioning and changing the gendered division of labour at home and in school and spoke about gender inequality and harmful gender norms frequently in their everyday encounters with their own relatives, peers, fellow believers, colleagues and pupils. The changes in their attitudes to adolescent sexual and reproductive health showed more mixed results however compared to those on GBV with a few teachers expressing that they still only taught abstinence and did not talk about contraceptives in class, although the larger majority reported they did so confidently as a consequence of the GTA capacity building. Encouragingly, the findings show that the **experiential forms of learning and reflections on the workings of power increases teachers' empathy with adolescent pupils** and the issues they are dealing with, leading to more support and engagement.

3. <https://www.rutgers.international/programmes/yes-i-do>



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Furthermore, teachers and pupils **confirm that after the intervention, CSE is being taught more frequently and with more confidence and ease.** Some teachers reported encountering opposition towards their approaches to gender equality and their support for promoting condom use. Some were able to engage their opponents (a fellow teacher or a pupil's parents) successfully and win them over. While teachers were really active in promoting gender transformative thinking in their surroundings, **the findings also show that there is more work to do to establish a more supportive environment for CSE and gender transformative approaches in eastern Zambia.** Teachers reported various constraints to GTA implementation, including having limited time to integrate CSE and related GTA content in lessons, and the limited number of teachers being trained in GTA for them to make a real difference in the school environment.

Recommendations

- 1 Pay even more attention in GTA capacity building to making schools safe and free from sexual harassment
- 2 Promote diary writing for GTA trainees as a means of stimulating continuous reflection and engender sustainable changes in values, attitudes and behaviour
- 3 Simplify language around the GTA, making it easier to grasp and work with at the level of pupils
- 4 Actively engage other teachers, caregivers and the community to reduce opposition and increase support for CSE and related GTA messages
- 5 Engage the Ministry of General Education to change CSE into a standalone examinable subject, to ensure that sufficient resources (teacher time, materials) will be allocated
- 6 Engage the Zambian Ministry of General Education to ensure in-service teachers are adequately trained in the new CSE curriculum and combine those trainings with GTA capacity building
- 7 Engage the Zambian Ministry of General Education to Integrate GTA in the teacher training college curriculum, next to CSE so that a more effective teaching of CSE is sustained

Visit www.rutgers.international/GTA for the full report and the Rutgers GTA Toolkit