

RESOURCE

Sample “Core Story” for comprehensive sexuality education

ABOUT THIS RESOURCE

This brief “Core Story” is one example of well-framed information people need to understand and support CSE. It underlines that CSE is evidence-based in a narrative form, as well as emphasizes values and positive frames that Projet Jeune Leader has found are relevant to our context.



About Projet Jeune Leader

PJL is a youth-founded, youth-led, and youth-centered nonprofit organization established in Fianarantsoa, Madagascar. Since 2013, Projet Jeune Leader has delivered comprehensive sexuality education to young and very young adolescents (ages 10-16) in Madagascar's public middle schools, partnering closely with schools and school districts. To do this, we recruit dynamic young adults (aged 18-25) for their positive gender attitudes and potential as role models, train them rigorously over two months, and hire them under a full-time, paid contract if they pass an end-of-training assessment. We then integrate each of them into a partner public school where they teach a year-long, time-tabled CSE course to multiple grades using our age-segmented, gender-transformative, 27-module curricula. When they are not teaching, educators provide a package of other essential services (enrichment activities, counseling, medical referrals, and programs for parents and teachers).

About the Guidance Tool: *CSE We Can Count On*

Projet Jeune Leader has developed “CSE We Can Count On,” a publication sharing strategies, actionable guidance, and tools that we use in our work with tens of thousands of students, parents, teachers, and school officials in Madagascar to build and harness community support for in-school comprehensive sexuality education. This document, which accompanies the guidance tool, shares one of the resources that we use regularly.



Read “CSE We Can Count On” and accompanying resources at www.projetjeuneleader.org/resources/community-support.

The uses and success of this resource are undeniably dependent on the context in which CSE is being delivered. Even so, we hope that it serves as a source of inspiration and creativity for others – civil society organizations, international non-governmental organizations, and even governments – committed to delivering in-school comprehensive sexuality education in their own contexts.



Shifting the narrative on CSE

Descriptions of comprehensive sexuality education programs do not necessarily need to include long, technical descriptions of what it is and statistics about why it is needed. Instead, strategic communications can use framing to ensure CSE clearly resonates with the values, interests, and worldviews of the stakeholders we work with.

The sample “Core Story” of CSE below models this; Projet Jeune Leader uses this positive, values-based narrative (translated into the local language) as often as possible in communication materials targeting local communities.

“Core Story”

Puberty, healthy relationships, and preparation for building a home and having a family are among those aspects of life that the [CSE program] teaches in schools.

Addressing such topics can no longer be avoided because children are already being exposed through many, widely available channels. Unless a trusted source addresses it first, our children are at risk of taking wrong turns in life because of the things they read on the Internet, see on TV, or discuss with their friends. It is no secret that the information they stumble upon may not be trustworthy, age-appropriate, or evidence-based.

For this reason, the [CSE program] educates children on:

- How to successfully navigate puberty, as they draw closer to it,

• Appeal to strongly-held values of *family* and *lineage* (especially among many cultures in the Global South) to orient thinking towards why CSE matters for us all.

• Use language like “we,” “us,” and “our” to reinforce the idea of collective responsibility.

• Point out the alternative (often less-trustworthy) sources children are getting their information from.

• Frame CSE content as desired outcomes.

- How to foster healthy relationships, especially once they are a little older and start to have romantic feelings,
- How to exercise due care when they near adulthood, until they are ready to start their own family.

Outline how CSE information is segmented by life and developmental stages (to emphasize age-appropriateness).

We can see that this education is tailored to be appropriate to children’s age and developmental stage. The information is approved by our education authorities, including the school district and the regional and national ministries of education. All in all, the [CSE program] is tested, verified, and structured for the school setting.

Highlight buy-in from authority figures to build credibility and legitimacy.

This education also involves partnerships with leaders, educators, and caretakers in the community. This collaboration starts at school with teachers and the principal. It also includes religious and local leaders. It even goes down to the household level by training parents on how to discuss these aspects of life with their children. This ensures that the [CSE program] is adapted and complements the education of our children across society.

Center the value of *community* to show that teaching CSE is feasible and interconnected with healthy youth development.

The [CSE program] offers comprehensive education – not just about puberty, healthy relationships, and preparation for starting a family. Indeed, the goal of is to support children in becoming well-rounded individuals.

Amplify values-based aspirations adults have for children in their community.

As such, the [CSE program] not only teaches information, but also how to carefully think actions through and make decisions that are mature and healthy.

In the grade where they learn about puberty, for instance, children are also taught about self-

Highlight the benefits of CSE beyond gaining knowledge.

confidence. Together, those two aspects will enable them to practice good hygiene during puberty.

Later, when learning about healthy relationships, youth will already have built their self-confidence. They will therefore have the guts to resist pressures that they might face in the context of relationships – romantic or otherwise.

When learning about establishing a household and starting a family, students are also taught to set life goals and a vision for a bright future. With clearly established goals and an outlined pathway to them, youth are in better position to take the actions needed to start their family at a time when they are ready for it.

All [CSE program] activities are geared towards one purpose – to help the children become well-rounded individuals. To this end:

- The information provided is **customized to match their age and developmental stage**.
- The information provided is **tested and endorsed by the Government**.
- The [CSE program] operates in **collaboration with other leaders, educators, and caretakers** in society.
- The education is **comprehensive** to help children have the motivation and self-confidence to make decisions that are responsible and well thought-out, within an environment that supports them to do so.

The [CSE program] and our partners are convinced that this is the pathway for our children to become well-rounded individuals!

Shift from using “children” to “youth” to reflect the evolving capacities and choices of young people.

Focus on future benefits.



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