

## ***Strategic Framework to Address SRHR Issue in Pakistan***

Today, many Pakistani women die during childbirth. These deaths, along with many other sexual and reproductive health problems, can be easily prevented. But to achieve this, better education on information on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) and life skills are needed, especially amongst girls and boys in their puberty. Getting comprehensive sexuality education in the school curriculum is a sustainable way to ensure this for most youth, also in the future.

A number of organizations have piloted initiatives around SRHR but none of them has been able to create a real breakthrough, mostly as their initiatives were localized and concentrated on service delivery and not on social change. This is why Oxfam Novib and Women's Empowerment Group joined hands to bring together an alliance of civil society organizations, together with a selection of technical experts, to jointly implement a strategy for national change, and to make a real difference all over the country.

Over the past one year we have held extensive stakeholder consultations, based upon which we have developed a long-term framework on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights in Education (SRHR-E).

The proposed framework strategically intervenes in four areas. First, it intends to mobilize the important gatekeepers and have the moral and political authorities speak out on the sexual and reproductive health situation of young women. Second, it intends to reframe the concept of sexual and reproductive health and rights, through 'Edutainment' (a methodology of using educational entertainment for social change) and community outreach campaigns. These are intended to lessen the resistance of parents, teachers and the general public against sexuality education, by engaging them with the idea that proper information is needed to protect the adolescents in their communities. Thirdly, it elaborates a comprehensive curriculum on sexual and reproductive health and life skills for adolescents and has this adopted by the examination board, included in the teachers training institutes. Finally, it intends to consolidate and strengthen the civil alliance driving these changes, in terms of their capacity, cohesion and sustainability.

### ***Important gatekeepers to be mobilised to promote sexual and reproductive health and rights education.***

On the basis of a stakeholder analysis, key gatekeepers were identified. These are the ones that have the power to block the road towards achieving our objective, but who can also become our allies.

The first most important ones are the religious opinion leaders from the different schools of thought. Therefore we need to start by engaging them actively, confronting them with the alarming facts and figures of the sexual and reproductive health situation, and asking them to develop reports with interpretations of the sections of Quran that deal with sexuality and reproduction, and that could contribute towards resolving the maternal mortality, adolescent stress and overpopulation problems. As most Pakistani cannot understand Arabic Quran, and these sections are usually not disseminated, it is essential that we start by demonstrating that some of the conservative beliefs around sexuality are in fact not based on Quran. Different schools of thought are to be asked to contribute and speak out.

The second key gatekeepers are the media. The framework suggests to ally with them and uses certain media as a platform to introduce the findings from the religious leaders to relevant politicians and the wider public.

Through this, and other methods such as lobby, the framework intends to influence the key political decision makers, the third key gatekeeper group, to get them to develop policies regarding sexuality education in the curriculum on provincial and federal level.

***Sexual and reproductive health and rights are reframed and popularised nationally.***

The fourth key gatekeeper groups are parents and, subsequently, teachers. They are addressed through large scale community engagement programmes, combining Edutainment, and community outreach.

As sexuality is a highly sensitive issue, surrounded by taboo and strong moral views, it is important that the program frames its communication in a way that is acceptable and engaging for the various stakeholders and the wider public. It is considered inappropriate or even rebellious for youth to claim their rights, and therefore the framework suggests not communicating externally that this is a rights based initiative. Rather, it suggests framing the initiative in terms that appeal to parents, teachers, politicians and religious leaders.

A central role in the suggested framework is a mass media strategy combined with on the ground campaigning tools. The concept is to use popular media such as soap series, interactive radio programmes, mobile phone applications or pop concerts to engage communities in social change campaigns. It is an effective way to reach large audiences, dealing with difficult subjects in a way that is positive and engaging, by using role models and everyday life situations.

The messaging will revolve around the need to protect adolescents from health risks and prepare them properly to make sensible decisions. The community outreach activities complement the mass campaign, and stage community dialogues between moral authorities, parent and teachers on SRH risks for adolescents and the need for protection. They will involve national role models engage opinion leaders, make use of testimonials, disseminate communication materials and make use of social drama.

***Comprehensive sexuality education is taught through formal school curriculum.***

An appropriate sexuality education curriculum is to be developed in cooperation with the Provincial and Federal Ministries of education, including all the corresponding pedagogical materials. It includes physical and emotional changes in puberty, conception and pregnancy, and sexually transmitted infections, but also life skills for confidence building, courage and problem sharing.

The framework suggests working with the Ministries to develop the curriculum and produce a plan for its implementation. Further this comprehensive sexuality education is incorporated into the examination board. Master trainers are trained who ensure that teacher training institutes are adequately capacitated.

***Civil society organisations' alliance is built to advocate for SRHR education***

The framework also suggests to develop an alliance of civil society organizations to advocate strongly for SRHR Education.

In order to boost its capacity and outreach the alliance members will strengthen their individual and joint campaigning force, gain more insight in the SRHR dynamics in Pakistan and deepen their knowledge of best-practices for influencing policy, public opinion and sexual and reproductive health education.

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