

# Sexuality Education in Georgia

ADDRESSING THE NEEDS AND PERSPECTIVES OF SEXUALITY  
EDUCATION IN GEORGIA

## *Policy Brief*

*Policy brief provides overview of policy environment and key stakeholders attitudes towards realization of Sexuality Education in Georgia. Evidence-based policy brief brings local research evidence (from systematic reviews) to inform deliberations about sexuality education policies and programmes.*

## Background

Over decade, various actors are utilizing pathways to influence the provision of Sexuality Education in Georgia, still it is not incorporated into the national school curriculum. The first step to institutionalize sexuality education was an introduction of abstinence only program called Choosing the best in 2004. However, due to strong objection of parental organization in 2009, it was widely replaced with evidence-based programs.

Sexuality education is not part of the school curriculum but a few sexual education elements are included in the subject of biology and have been piloted in civic education and physical activity.

A healthy lifestyle curriculum started to be developed in late 2014, which is planned to include some sexuality-education topics. Main stakeholders involved in discussions are: local and international NGOs, Orthodox Church, nongovernmental organizations and a professional organization of teachers.



### Legislative Environment

Government of Georgia has taken an obligation to implement international human rights standards. Concluding observations of combined fourth and fifth periodic reports of Georgia to CEDAW emphasizes the “absence of age-appropriate sexual and reproductive health and rights education.” Committee on the Rights of the Child and UN Special Rapporteur also highlight the need of age-appropriate sexuality education in Georgia. However, There are no specific laws on sexuality education in Georgia.

Another important aspect underlined by UN Special Rapporteur under the CESCR General Comment 22 stands to “ensure that teachers are effectively trained to provide sexuality education and that youth are involved in the development of such education programs.”

EU-Georgia Association Agreement signed in June, 2014 emphasizes developing cooperation between parties in the field of public health, with a focus of promoting healthy lifestyle.

In 2017, the parliament of Georgia adopted a resolution, based on the Public Defender’s Office parliamentary report for 2016, recommending revisions to some aspects of the existing limited information provided in schools, this could not be seen as an introduction of the comprehensive life skills/sexuality education in schools.

Taking into the consideration human rights obligations taken by the government of Georgia as well as absence of barriers in national law for integrating sexuality education, the legislative environment can be characterized as a positive to implement CSE at formal and informal education systems.

## Policy Environment

Consecutive policy initiatives have been applied in order to address the importance of the provision of sexuality education in Georgia. Such efforts resulted in formulation of policy documents – specifically the “Georgian National Youth Policy” approved in 2014 by the government of Georgia and the Government’s Human Rights Action plan for 2016-2017 years.

### Georgian National Youth Policy

Georgia’s National Youth Policy for 2015-2020 states as an explicit objective to “Support development of modern educational programs on the issues of sexual and reproductive health and rights according to the best modern international standards for formal and informal education systems.” Policy emphasize positive impact of sexuality education alongside with healthy lifestyle as it “contributes to the reduction of the incidence of abortions and sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV... the incidence of early marriages, and adolescent pregnancy and negative consequences, and related maternal and child health risks.”

In 2015 Government of Georgia approved "Action Plan for development of State's Youth Policy 2015-2020", which will result in implementation of aims and objectives of "State's Youth Policy Document" adopted in 2014. However, there is no financial allocations for the implementation of

### Human Rights Action plan

One of the objectives of The Government’s Human Rights Action plan for 2016-2017 had been to prepare age-appropriate guidelines for education on reproductive health, violence against children and the problem of early marriage. These guidelines should be executed by the Ministry of Education and Science. Unlike the Action Plan for development of State's Youth Policy 2015-2020 there had been financial allocations even though the objective is not implemented yet.

## Implementation of CSE in formal education system.

According to Georgian policy documents, the government should provide sexuality education and the formal educational is best option delivering this. Sexuality education is not part of the school curriculum but in 2017 sexual education thematic elements are being discussed to be included in the third generation of national curriculum of biology. Some lessons and on HIV and sexually transmitted infections were introduced as non-mandatory classes several years ago. A healthy lifestyle curriculum started to be developed in late 2014, and a renewed version for 6-11 year old learners was presented officially in 2016. NGOs are already involved in piloting subject “Me and Society”, under the civic education topic for 9-11 year-old learners in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Science.

In addition to this, despite the efforts of executive bodies to enact healthy lifestyle education, it still does not include specific topics on sexual and reproductive health and rights.



## Non-formal Sexuality Education

Association HERA XXI, IPPF member association alongside with other local and international organizations is utilizing several pathways to influence the provision of CSE in Georgia. HERA XXI has been working with universities on a certified CSE course for teachers and school doctors, school advisory boards, conduct educational sessions on prevention of HIV/STTI, family planning, prevention of early marriage, sexual and reproductive health and rights, gender and sexual health of minorities based on peer education methodology.

## Resources for Non-formal Sexuality Education

### It’s All One Curriculum



It’s All One Curriculum is a resource kit for developing a unified curriculum on sexuality, gender, HIV, and human rights.

It’s All One Curriculum enables educators and policymakers to address not only the individual determinants of young people’s sexual and reproductive health, but also the social determinants of their health and well-being. Association HERA XXI adapted this resource kit to local needs emphasizing needs and attitudes of young people in Georgia.

The course has been formulated in accordance to international standards of WHO, UNESCO and General Assembly of UN and is recommended by UNESCO to be used as a manual for teachers in providing sexuality education in Georgia.

### EHERA.GE – Innovative Learning Platform

EHERA.GE is an innovative learning platform worked out by Association HERA XXI, which unites certified online education courses for different target audience: Family Doctors, School Doctors, teachers and educators.

Online Courses aims to develop and increase the knowledge of targeted audience through gaining practical skills for the effective implementation of interaction with adolescents and their family regarding bio-psycho-social development and sexual and reproductive health and rights.

## Surveys and Datas

Policy makers mention various the restraining factors for implementation of sexuality education such as: Parents' and teachers' attitudes towards implementation of sexuality education; and conservative societal attitudes towards the issue. In order to map exact picture, Association HERA XXI conducted several studies including youth surveys, survey of parents' needs and attitudes towards sexuality education, research of teachers' attitudes towards teaching reproductive health and rights.

According to Youth Survey 2017 conduction by HERA XXI, the most important source of information on sexual and reproductive health and rights has been identified as family and school.

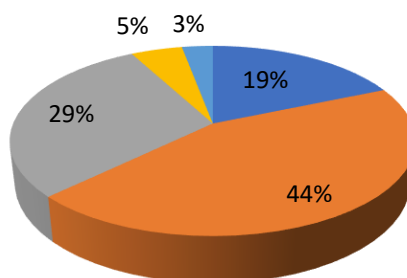
### Parents' attitudes towards informing their children on sexual and reproductive health and rights

In 2017, Association HERA XXI conducted survey among parents in order draw a pathway for creating evidence based programs for parents. According to Survey, 95% of parents believe they need to inform their children on sexual and reproductive health and rights.

### Teachers' attitudes towards teaching sexuality education topics

According to survey on Teachers' attitudes towards teaching sexuality education topics conducted by HERA XXI in 2018, 97% of teachers believe it is essential to teach sexuality education topics in school-based settings. Like parents, teachers also highlight puberty period as most relevant time to start teaching. 33% of respondents emphasize biology lessons and 42% tutor hours as most relevant subject to include sexuality education topics in their curriculum. Teachers understand the need of raising qualification in order to deliver such kind of topics.

#### What is the most effective way to raise awareness and qualification of teachers on sexuality education topics



- certified online course
- methodology and thematic trainings
- meetings, discussions
- not necessary
- other



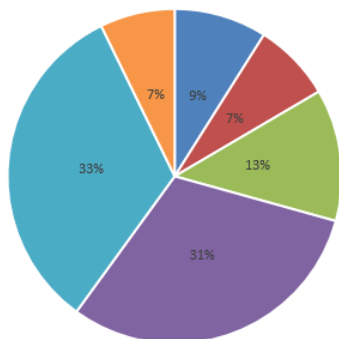
Association relies on evidence-based approaches through provision and analysis of studies and assessments. Conducted studies and assessments intends to analyses situation regarding sexual and reproductive health and rights in Georgia, identify needs and attitudes towards implementation of laws and international recommendations

## Challenges

Lack of political will and conservative attitudes among decision makers is one of the key challenge for realization of sexuality education in Georgia. Another challenge includes a lack of networking and willingness to join efforts among key stakeholders to influence political agenda. Finally, Lack of evaluation and evidence about efficiency of CSE programs implemented by Ministry of Education and Science in Georgia with support of international agencies.



In your opinion, what is the most appropriate age for starting conversation with your children on SRHR



Surveys and data have canceled out a widely spread misconception that parents and teachers stand against sexuality education in Georgia. Lack of age-appropriate and right information was named as main challenge that parents and teachers face nowadays.

## Reccomendations

### *For the Government of Georgia*

- *The Government of Georgia should ensure that realization of international human rights standards human rights obligation regarding sexuality education is in place.*

### *For the Parliament of Georgia*

- *The national legislative body of Georgia should initiate and adopt specific law on sexuality education in accordance to European Union's standards.*

### *For the The Ministry of Education and Science in Georgia:*

- *The Ministry of Education and Science in Georgia should ensure that a strategy and national human rights action plan is implemented as a matter of priority.*
- *The Ministry of Education and Science in Georgia must ensure that age-appropriate sexuality education should be in line with international standards and UNESCO guidelines.*
- *The Ministry of Education and Science in Georgia should promote school-based discussions of curriculum with active participation of teachers and parent councils.*
- *The Ministry of Education and Science in Georgia should ensure that the needs of adolescents and youth is reflected in designing national curriculums.*

### *For the National Center for Teachers Professional Development*

- *The National Center for Teachers Professional Development should develop evidence-based methodology guidance for teachers on sexuality education.*
- *Mandatory programs for teachers professional development should be developed and delivered.*

### *For the Local Municipality Bodies:*

- *Local municipalities should ensure the implementation of National Youth Policy at the local level specifically having they have financial allocation for promoting healthy lifestyle activities as well as non-formal education on SRHR.*

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