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Sexuality Education in Guatemala Must Be Fully Implemented to Meet Adolescents' Needs

Teachers Need Access to Curriculum and Training

Guatemala has a policy framework that requires schools to provide comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) intended to prepare adolescents to lead healthy and fulfilling sexual and reproductive lives. However, a new [study](#) finds many sexuality education programs are not covering the full range of topics that constitute a CSE curriculum. The research, conducted in 2015 by the [Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales–Guatemala \(FLACSO–Guatemala\)](#) and the U.S.–based [Guttmacher Institute](#), looked at sexuality education programs for adolescents at 80 secondary schools in three geographically and culturally diverse areas: Guatemala City, Huehuetenango and Chiquimula. Overall, researchers found that only 7% of surveyed students aged 14–17 said they had been taught all of the topics that constitute CSE.

CSE is vital to ensuring that adolescents have the knowledge and skills they need to lead healthy sexual and reproductive lives. Students recognize the importance of these skills—89% of surveyed students who reported having received sexuality education considered it useful or highly useful in their personal lives.

According to standards established by the United Nations and other international agencies, CSE should cover a range of topics in five key categories identified by the study team: sexual and reproductive physiology, prevention of HIV and other STIs, contraception and unintended pregnancy, values and interpersonal skills, and gender and

The report highlights several disparities in the teaching of these topics, which are currently taught in the context of other subjects. Most students (72%) said they were taught about topics related to sexual and reproductive physiology. Far fewer were taught about topics related to contraception and unintended pregnancy (31%) and values and interpersonal skills (16%). The authors also found that incomplete and sometimes inaccurate information was being provided. Among teachers who discussed condoms, 43% incorrectly taught that condom use is not effective in preventing pregnancy.

“Approximately half of surveyed students said they wanted to learn more about communication with partners, contraceptive methods, and prevention of HIV and other STIs,” says [Dr. Sarah Keogh](#), senior research scientist at the Guttmacher Institute and a coauthor of the report. “The evidence shows that current programs are not meeting students’ needs.”

GUATEMALA SEXUALITY EDUCATION

NO ≠ YES

**Comprehensive sexuality education
can teach adolescents the importance
of consent in sexual relationships.**

SURVEYED STUDENTS AGED 15-17

27%
of males

& **10%**
of females

believed that when girls say no
to sex, they usually mean yes.



A lack of training and resources for educators is a major barrier to CSE

teachers said that a lack of teaching materials was a problem.

“Making sexuality education comprehensive is critical to ensure adolescents have the skills and information they need to lead healthy lives,” says [Dr. Ana Silvia Monzón](#), research professor at FLACSO–Guatemala and lead author of the report. “Giving students the proper knowledge when they are young will allow them to make informed choices that can improve their health outcomes throughout adulthood.”

The study’s authors recommend that policymakers strengthen CSE in Guatemala by designing and implementing a national program overseen by a permanent team in the Ministry of Education. They also urge enriching the curricula to ensure content is comprehensive; placing greater emphasis on practical skills, such as contraceptive use and communication; promoting equality between women and men; and tailoring content to local contexts. The researchers highlight the importance of effectively implementing the existing legal framework, allocating budgets for teacher training and materials, and establishing ongoing monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to measure the quality of the education students receive.

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For more information, see the full report:

“[From Paper to Practice: Sexuality Education Policies and Curricula and Their Implementation in Guatemala](#),” by Ana Silvia Monzón, Sarah Keogh, Ana Lucía Ramazzini, Elena Prada, Melissa Stillman and Ellie Leong (currently available in Spanish only).

This release is also available in [Spanish](#).

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[español](#))

Infographic: [Resources for teachers on sexuality education, Guatemala](#)
(en [español](#))

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