

Reviewers' note from TARSHI for TYPF's KYBK YR curriculum

TARSHI congratulates The YP Foundation (TYPF) on this curriculum they have developed for 9-13-year-olds as part of their Know Your Body, Know Your Rights (KYBK YR) programme. Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) provides children and young people information that they need to grow up happy and healthy, and this curriculum from TYPF lays the foundation for children and young people to understand and treat with respect changing bodies, mental health, and decisions related to gender and relationships – their own and others'.

It is an unfortunate reality that it is difficult to this day for children and young people across India to access rights-based, non-judgmental information and perspectives about their bodies, gender, and sexuality. This KYBK YR curriculum is rights-based and places children and young people's right to know about their bodies and rights at its centre. Information has been presented in a simple but not simplistic way, giving care to the evolving capacities of children and young people to understand varying levels of information and perspectives as they grow older. The YP Foundation has taken care to not overwhelm the facilitator or the programme participant with too much information, while also not missing out nuances such as diversity in families, mental health, awareness about the self, consent, and being non-judgmental of one's (and others') appearances, experiences, identities, or choices. This emphasis can help children locate themselves better in their ecosystem, while also building their own capacities to become more empathetic to diverse life experiences.

It is adults' responsibility to give children and young people the information and tools needed to be safe, healthy, and happy – even if that requires adults to talk about sensitive, taboo subjects. This responsibility includes equipping ourselves with accurate information and tools to provide the information and tools to children and young people in an age- and stage-appropriate manner.

Facilitating sessions on CSE with young people is challenging, even if one starts out with the best of intentions. Facilitators need to learn accurate information, reflect on their own attitudes and values, and be mindful of the contexts in which their potential participants are based, and therefore, what they can say and how to say it. The curriculum has been written by young facilitators, for young facilitators, both those who have experience transacting CSE and those who may be new to it but are interested in taking rights-based messages on gender and sexuality to children and young people. It helps facilitators understand how to demystify and simplify messages on sexuality education for children and young people in an age-appropriate, responsible manner.

Notes in the curriculum detail various aspects of preparing and facilitating sessions on sexuality education. It includes tips to keep the young participants eager and engaged, while also offering facilitators suggestions on things to look out for, simple errors that can be avoided, and more. It encourages facilitators to experiment with methods to be responsive to the participants' needs and gives them flexibility with the methodology, but also spells out essential key messages that are to be conveyed with each section. It can boost the confidence of young people from different backgrounds who want to facilitate sessions on sexuality education.

The curriculum also details the preparation required by organisations and facilitators who wish to facilitate such sessions. This includes engaging with teachers/parents pre-implementation as it is important to get their support and to ensure that conversations on rights-based sexuality go on even after the sessions are over. Other important preparatory suggestions include encouraging the facilitators to study the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act (2012) to better help their session participants, creating a referral plan, resources such as a list of child-friendly helplines and services, and suggestions to be mindful of the facilitators' mental health. Keeping with the times when it was drafted, piloted and released, the curriculum also accounts for virtual facilitation and other tips to keep the implementation COVID-19 safe.

The curriculum has been successfully piloted with several groups and if used as suggested - with suitable preparation by the facilitator and their organisation, with the consent and assent of stakeholders, and a referral plan and resources in place - it promises to fill a valuable gap in CSE for the age group 9-13.

We wish TYPF and anyone who wishes to use this curriculum the very best in their attempts to build a safe, inclusive and self-affirming environment for children and young people.

- TARSHI Team