

Following is an email written by me to the Family Planning Association of Sri Lanka on 13 January of 2020. I'm publishing this because believing that it will help to other activists working on sex ed in Sri Lanka besides the FPA.

From: Sachintha Madushan <sachimadush@gmail.com>

Sent: Sunday, January 12, 2020 12:52 AM

To: fpa <fpa@fpasrilanka.org>

Subject: Some Suggestion on Sex Education

I'm writing this letter to present some suggestions that will contribute to enhancement of sexuality education and to reduce community oppositions and accelerate the process.

When I did my individual project report, which is imperative to be eligible for AL, on that very topic, “ශ්‍රී ලංකාවේ ලිංගිකත්ව අධ්‍යාපනය” , 4 years ago, I found following problems and I thought about what will be the solutions. So now time has come to present those observations and recommendations to someone who is responsible and courageously working for the same goals.

The lack of awareness on broadness, benefits and goals of SRE among the adults. And not considering children as sexual beings.

I found that most adults, including the educated figures like graduate teachers understand sexuality and thus sexuality education in a very primary and narrow sense which may be result in opposition to SRE or neglecting it's necessity. Parents have same understanding as evident by the qualitative [study done by P.K.S. Godamunna](#).

So we must held public seminars on every major city, to teach parents about value and broadness of SRE. In the same seminars we can provide them the knowledge about psycho-sexual development of the children (pages 22-27 of [WHO standards](#)) which will result in an open minded attitude towards child sexuality. Most adults think children (including adolescents!) should not have any taste on human sexuality.

We can change this by providing them knowledge about psycho-sexual development of children which may help them to get rid of their childish views on children and sexuality. This may contribute to gain social acceptance (even the support) for providing SRE for young children. In Europe, it was the scientific research on human sexuality made them open minded by showing it's a human potential and thus repression of it is very unnatural and unusual and illogical. Together with west's strong emphasis on individual liberty it create a social climate in which supportive to sexual freedom movements. See [Why did sexual revolution happen?](#)

Furthermore this may lead (at least some educated middle class parents) to talk about “where babies come from” with their children when they ask by honestly answering it, instead of telling lies.

Furthermore you can either make available this information in a book for parents or give the idea to the government to give essential knowledge and guidance regarding sexuality education (since it begins at birth) through midwives to parenting couples. You can also give short term trainings on SRE and give resources to preschool teachers as an NGO.

We can also involve religious figures in aforementioned seminars along with doctors. It will helpful to gain social acceptance.

Lack of materials and guidance for parents.

There are no materials for parents to know how to answer kids' questions about reproduction or talk other issues like protection/relationships/ [like this](#). you can make available them in bookstores instead of on line in order to go to the wider public. Publishing with a back cover note or forward by a Buddhist monk (instead of a Doctor) will make it accepted for many. In fact you should have involved in religious figures when planing the controversial book. I think including religious attitudes on marriage, family (eg. Singalowada Suththa) and sexuality along with other information will reduce community oppositions since then it will seems like a "some other book" than a "sex ed" book.

Lack for books for Children

when I was a teen and when I did my research also I found that there's no material for children to know sexuality and relationships. In other countries they have series of books especially written for children beginning with 5 years to 18 years. But here, we haven't resources even for 13+ students. there's some books translated by Leelananda Gamachchi but even they have stopped the talking when it comes to most wanted information. Books like රනිය විදුඤ්ඤාසීන් by Dr: Mahesh Rajasooriya and පුද්ගලිකයි, රහසිගතයි by Dr: Ariyaseena U. Gamage are written and recommended for adults. Actually such books must be frank [like these](#). So you can translate suitable ones from [foreign books](#) or write our own (you can call for a manuscript competition) for every age group. I suggest at least following kinds of books. Then our society will have at least one resource for each age group written in their native languages.

- 4-8 – book about where babies come from like [Mummy Laid an Egg](#) or [Where Willy Went](#).
- Few books about relationship and societal issues like different bodies, different kind of families, who can touch me and so on. (see suggested books at the end of [TSTO](#) and books by [R. Harris](#))
- few books for 8-12 discussing above issues more broadly (see upper primary and lower secondary at FPA Victoria catalog)
- A book for 13+ discussing issues like outer looks of genitals, erection, orgasm, masturbation, foreplay, role of clitoris, vaginal intercourse and other pleasurable activities, sex positions, myths about masturbation (common among the boys) and myths about virginity and their other questions (you can know them by doing a pilot test on the book or doing a qualitative study before planing it on group of 13/14 year olds.) which is very similar to [Sex: Your Own Way by RFSU](#).

You can make available such books in bookshops and in public libraries. You can also make available last book on the web and send free copies to public libraries and to school libraries.

This may very helpful to them. According to researches most students haven't received such knowledge via teachers since they don't talk them. Training them to do so and making them doing so will took a long time. And adding such sensitive topics to school textbooks maybe result in an outrage among the public. But we can't wait until they change. So I think that this will be the most effective and simple solution. Even after we change the textbooks it will serve as an additional reading book. You can do more radical things at your own than in the cooperation with government. Since then you have no need to restrict yourselves to avoid oppositions.

Youtube videos

You can go more on this way as to the extent of creating some sex ed videos. And some sex ed films also. You can also use youtube as a media for give essential messages and attitudes on gender equality, identity, roles, forms of sexism & violence and respectful relationships via short films or dramas.

A few years ago I found an interactive Q and A on STI s on your website. But it was in English. After some time when I looked for it I found that it have been removed. I appreciate if you can provide web articles with comment sections to ask more and forums and interactive Q and A s like you have provided before. It will very much helpful to young. But they should be more focused on practical issues and must be in native languages.

you can create a separate website to give sex education to teens. There are many such foreign sites, but here we see all is for adults.

Establish a youth clinic at the school

When it comes to school education most practical and effective solution is establishing youth clinic or youth counseling center in every school. According to Godamunna most parents admired and accepted teachers, school textbooks and doctors as best sources. On the other hand according to [BMC research](#) and [Hewagama et al](#) students preferred doctors to teachers. So this will accepted by both. Doctors don't reluctant to talk sex stuff. It's important that such sessions must be held without teachers in the vicinity and give time to every adolescent to talk privately, with protecting their privacy (even from the parents) and not judging them. I think it's better to held such clinics in a school hours and attend students as little groups/classes and held in a room. There are examples of these kinds by from France (school nurses visit schools), Bangladesh (youth clinic for every month) and Australia (an appointed Doctor visits schools). You can consult government to train and appoint special health care providers for youth, like the sport teachers recently appointed. [Chaturica's study on adolescents perception on school counseling](#) may also tell some important things in this regard.

I appreciate works you have done and doing and hope you'll pay attention to these suggestions if you think they are practical and effective.

Thank You
Sachintha Madushan

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Thank you Sachintha for your email and concern. It has been forwarded to the Advocacy Unit for their attention.