



**Country Support Team for
Latin America and the Caribbean**

**Background, current situation
and challenges of Sexuality Education in
Latin America and the Caribbean**

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Introduction

UNFPA: Because everyone counts.

Since its foundation in 1969, UNFPA has supported efforts made in Latin American and Caribbean countries to integrate contents linked to the responsible exercise of sexuality, reproductive health and rights, gender equity, the empowerment of girls and women, gender violence prevention, male responsibility and HIV/AIDS prevention in the areas of formal and non-formal education, in the light of the visions promoted by the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (Cairo, 1994), based on a human rights framework and a sustainable human development paradigm.

These contents are developed through Sexuality Education, or the corresponding Population Education component, and help new generations break the culture of silence around sexuality still prevailing in previous generations. However, as a component of comprehensive education, Sexuality Education is also children and adolescents' right to knowledge and building the skills required to develop responsible behaviors and live life fully.

UNFPA's Executive Director, Ms. Thoraya Obaid, has stated our commitment is to improve people's quality of life and ensure their rights are honored, respected and protected. She has emphasized that we are a development agency committed to human rights, diversity and cultural sensitivity, and also to expanding every individual's choices and opportunities to live free from fear and want, and free to participate in the decisions affecting their lives.

We are also committed to the achievement of the Millennium Goals but, as stated by the United Nations Secretary General, "the Millennium Development Goals, particularly the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger, cannot be achieved if questions of population and reproductive health are not squarely addressed. And that means stronger efforts to promote women's rights and greater investment in education and health, including reproductive health and family planning."

Paragraph 57, subparagraph g, of the outcome document of the 2005 Millennium World Summit, approved by the United Nations General Assembly on September 20, 2005, reads, "Achieve universal access to reproductive health by 2015, as set out at the International Conference on Population and Development, integrating this goal in strategies to attain the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration and aimed at reducing maternal mortality, improving maternal health, reducing child mortality, promoting gender equality, combating HIV/AIDS and eradicating poverty."

The 1994 Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development Programme of Action had already highlighted the following:

- ✓ Education is a key factor in sustainable development, indispensable for promoting wellbeing, health and quality of life of individuals, contributing to a great extent in decreasing fertility and mortality rates, delaying the age of marriage, reducing the size of families, empowering women and girls, fomenting gender equity, democracy and the full exercise of universal human rights and sexual and reproductive rights.

- ✓ It is essential to promote the harmonious development of educational systems, give high priority to investments in education, include subjects on population and development, sexuality, reproductive health, gender equity and HIV/AIDS in programmes of study, thus promoting sensitization of families and teacher training as well as that of other specialists participating in education, information and communication programmes.
- ✓ Countries must support the right to education in sexual and reproductive health, with a particular focus on adolescents' needs. These subjects should be initiated at primary school level and be continued throughout all levels of academic and non-academic teaching, guaranteeing community and family support to educational programmes, as well as complementing them through social communication strategies and current Information and Communication Technologies.

We know expanding education opportunities for girls and women increases their income-generating potential, reduces maternal and child mortality and improves reproductive health. Higher education levels are also related to lower HIV/AIDS infection rates, the delay of marriage, the onset of genital sexual relations and fertility rates. We also know that both boys and girls have the right to education, which promotes self-esteem and personal growth and facilitates the creation of a life plan, but also represents a strategic tool to fight poverty and achieve sustainable development with social justice.

Because UNFPA is a development agency whose actions are based on a rights framework, we are committed to promoting the right to education, as well as quality education for every individual. In other words, an education developing skills for life and including Sexuality Education as an integral part of the shaping of personality.

This paper aims to be a contribution towards the development of conceptual and methodological guidelines in Sexuality Education, as well as a proposal for relevant strategies for the development of institutional capacities and supporting the institutionalization of Sexuality Education in education systems in the region as a way of contributing to the exercise of children and adolescents' rights and actions to eradicate poverty.

In this regard, UNFPA's technical and financial support for the implementation of Population Education and Sexuality Education policies, strategies and programmes has positioned it as a key stakeholder in this field with visibility, recognition and convening power. Considering these comparative advantages, one of the challenges we face today is that of capitalizing on this expertise to continue to move forward.

While the Fund has made progress with the Technical Consultation on the role played by UNFPA in Education (New York, 2003), we still face the challenge of contextualizing Sexuality Education approaches and methodologies, considering the particular sociocultural traits of Latin America and the Caribbean, the different socioeconomic and political scenarios in each country and the educational ideology characteristic of the Region. From the Rio Grande to Patagonia, our peoples treasure a broad humanist pedagogic tradition and transcendent contributions to universal pedagogy, which are embodied in the works of Paulo Freire and other renowned educators. These contributions are worth revisiting and should be creatively included in proposals for Latin American and Caribbean countries.

Chapter 1

A historical review of UNFPA's work in the field of Population Education and Sexuality Education

1.1. Background

The concern over topics related to Population Education in the international context has its origins in the early decades of the last century, when in 1935 the Swedish Education Committee expressed their concern over the reduction of birth rates in that country and proposed an education campaign aimed at awakening a sense of responsibility for the population's wellbeing and future. Between 1937 and 1938, the United States of America expressed a similar position, and in 1943 several demographers proposed the inclusion of population contents in school programmes.

In India, the concern over high population growth rates fueled a debate around population, which started around 1935 and led to the creation of a Planning Committee by the National Congress. After India's independence (1947), discussions around these issues intensified, and India became the first country in the world to have a family planning programme with education activities on population topics sponsored by the State.

Regardless of whether concern over population issues stemmed from the reduction of growth rates in developed countries or high growth rates in developing countries, the inclusion of an education component to raise awareness of these problems was clearly justified.

Between the 1950s and the early 1960s, many countries carried out activities targeted at the adult population to raise awareness of the consequences of high birthrates and population growth through family planning government and non-government programmes. These programmes often conveyed a simplistic and sometimes dogmatic vision of the problem, in the understanding that reducing the size of families would allow them to solve the complex problems linked to social and economic development.

By the late 1960s, there was an increasing awareness of the need to include demographic variables in development actions and programmes in order to understand the causes and foresee the consequences of rapid demographic growth, migrations and urbanization processes, among others.

In the sphere of the United Nations, the concern over population-related topics started only a few years after the creation of UNESCO. Its first Director General, Sir Julian Huxley, highlighting the consequences rapid growth might have on the environment and nourishment, proposed the inclusion of education actions to analyze and understand the causes and consequences of population phenomena in the organization's programme. In 1966, the UNESCO General Conference authorized the Director General to encourage scientific studies on the relations between development of education and the evolution of population. The 1968 General Conference, on the other hand, passed three resolutions authorizing UNESCO to position itself in the field of demographics in three of its sectors: Education, Social Sciences and Communication.

1.2. The emergence of Population Education

Thus, Population Education is considered to have emerged in the late 1960s as an education component aimed at raising awareness of the interrelations between population variables and development processes, at a historic moment where the pace of population growth in developing countries was a source of concern for developed countries, just like the decline in fertility rates and their effects on the aging of populations in their own societies. For this reason, the origin of Population Education was not dissociated from the debate at the time between Neo-Malthusian positions (based on the idea that demographic growth was the main obstacle to development objectives and, therefore, it was necessary to influence the decline of the fertility variable), and those who affirmed the solution to demographic problems lied in development programmes.

Population Education followed an approach that, on a macro level, privileged the analysis of fertility, mortality, migrations, urbanization processes, population spatial distribution processes and the historical evolution of population at the global and national levels in terms of their relationships with socioeconomic development processes. On a microsocial level, the analysis of the family and its composition and evolution; the relationships between its members and their reproductive behaviors, as well as family planning, were the main subjects to deal with. From a theoretical standpoint, the relationship between the macro and micro levels was based on the notion that demographic dynamics and the influence of the behavior of its variables on social life were elements facilitating decision-making regarding individuals' reproductive behavior. But this relationship has not been demonstrated to date. On the contrary, everyday aspects are known to have a larger impact on individuals and their quality of life compared to global ones. We also know that individuals do not make the decision to have more or fewer children simply because population grows at an accelerated rate that hinders access to services and resources in their environment. In fact, the historical fertility decline trend is associated to increased women's education levels, their empowerment and their entry into the labor market, and not to an increased awareness of the potential problems resulting from accelerated population growth.

In 1969, with the collaboration of UNESCO and support from the Family Planning Association of India (FPAI), the first National Seminar on Population Education was held in Bombay. In 1968, the introduction of "population dynamics education" was proposed to the Maharashtra state government by FPAI, thus coining the name of this education component, which would spread to the rest of the world in the following years. FPAI had already worked on Sexual Education activities and continued to do so after 1969, although with a limited reach, as Sexual Education was not fully accepted in the country due to its alleged links to family planning.

In the 1960s and the early 1970s, the United Nations bodies intensified their efforts to address these population issues; the UN Population Division intensified its demographic studies and reinforced its advisory services for countries interested in knowing their own demographic situations through censuses and special surveys. We assume ILO, WHO and FAO, in the framework of their specific mandates, also started programmes related to Population Education subjects.

1.3. First Population Education Programmes

Since its creation in 1969, UNFPA has provided financial funding for the carrying out of Population Education activities, which are considered an important part of its mandate, by UNESCO, FAO and ILO.

During the period from the early 1970s to the early 1980s, several regions in the world began to undertake Population Education activities. In many countries, school programmes were preceded by non-formal programmes for adults. These pioneer programmes helped raise awareness of the interrelations between population processes and quality of life, and also paved the way for the acceptance of Education Population.

These activities included Regional Population Education Programmes implemented by UNESCO in Asia, Africa, the Arab States and Latin America, which played a significant role in the dissemination of this education component in the 1970s and 1980s, with the above-mentioned contents.

Thus, in Asia, Population Education projects were launched in India (1968), the Philippines (1972), Thailand (1972), Singapore (1973), Sri Lanka (1973) and Malaysia (1973), although they lacked sexual education contents. In Latin America, experimental programmes in Colombia and El Salvador were launched in 1971, thus ensuring a balance between the demographic, environmental and family and sexuality education components. In Africa, because demographic dynamics is not perceived as a problem, education programmes focused on the family and sexual education components. In the Arab region, the first programme was that in Egypt (1974), with the creation of the Population and Environment Unit in the Ministry of Education. Population Education was later introduced in Tunisia, Morocco, Sudan, Syria and Yemen, all of which adopted explicit population policies, just like Mexico, El Salvador and Peru did in Latin America in the 1970s. Most of these population policies set demographic goals or clearly expressed the need to reduce fertility rates. In this regard, Population Education was deemed a contribution to raising awareness of the causes and consequences of the behavior of demographic variables on the quality of life of individuals, which was associated with the pace of demographic growth.

An example of the evolving vision of population issues was clearly expressed at the Bucharest World Population Conference (1974), where 137 countries agreed that “population policies are an integral part of development policies but do not replace them” and that “the basis for an effective solution to demographic problems is, above all, social and economic transformation.” The World Population Plan of Action, approved by the participating countries, provided an ethical framework for the development of Population Education. It stated population policies must be congruent with human rights, the freedom of individuals, justice and the survival of national, regional and minority groups. In this context, it stated every couple and every individual have the human right to freely and responsibly decide the number and spacing of their children and have access to the information, education and means necessary to that end.

In 1978, UNESCO, always with UNFPA’s financial support, published a study (UNESCO, 1978) outlining the key concepts and methodological aspects of Population Education. The study considers that Population Education is an education approach that is part of the comprehensive social learning process; focuses on the definition and resolution of problems, derives its contents from population studies; deals with the interactions related to population issues of individuals, families, communities, societies and nations, and aims at improving the current and future quality of living. The field of Population Education is clearly defined based on the inputs from population studies. Chapter 4, paragraph 58, reads, “Human reproduction and sexuality and individual fertility are a relevant and important content in any consideration of population issues. However, they are in no way sufficient to constitute a programme which aims to facilitate decision-making regarding population behavior, which takes into account not only individual but also social consequences of action.”....” The basic difference between population education and sex education is the degree of emphasis which each gives to individual or social considerations and the fact that population education goes much more deeply into the interrelationship between the individual and society compared to sexual education.”

This conceptualization, which was broadly disseminated all over the world, does not escape the “original sin” of Population Education: the contents on reproduction, sexuality and fertility “are in no way sufficient to constitute a programme.” In other words, if human reproduction processes are not related to their sexuality components, to the behavior of population variables, it will not be possible to raise awareness of the fact that couples’ reproductive behaviors are the ones responsible for population growth, which is the actual cause of depletion of resources and the impossibility to advance development processes. This is the more or less explicit message that can be found in the countless number of school texts produced at the time. On the other hand, the above-mentioned document poses a dichotomy between the social (the analysis of the sociodemographic) and the individual (sexuality), a dichotomy that does not exist, considering sexuality is the result of social construction processes, just like reproductive patterns and their outcome, fertility itself.

1.4. The expansion of Population Education activities

The 1980s witnessed a significant expansion of Population Education activities. Over 80 countries in the world included PE in their formal education curricula (Sadik, 1991). While UNESCO and UNFPA did not produce -at the level of their headquarters- documents on conceptual advances, Regional Programmes increased the production of methodological guides and educational materials, always within the original conception of Population Education. In the meantime, countries prioritized contents based on their specific needs and sociocultural and religious traits.

In this stage, the curricular proposal developed by the Population Education Project in Colombia (1971), with UNESCO and UNFPA’s support, inspired the implementation of Population Education through national projects in countries such as Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru and the Dominican Republic. The four thematic areas in the above-mentioned proposal as far as contents are concerned were: Sociodemography, Human Ecology, Family Education and Sexual Education.

However, in this stage major debates also emerged in Latin America that led to national consultations for the implementation of Population Education. These debates were not only the result of the conservative nature of Education Ministries, but also of issues raised by very conservative sectors of society –that opposed sexuality education – and leftist sectors, which opposed family planning on the grounds that it was an instrument of imperialism.

These national consultations led to the inclusion of Population Education contents in three areas of study: Sociodemography (or Population and Development), Population and the Environment, and Family and Sexuality, in an effort to reconcile the study of sexuality in the framework of strengthening the family and establishing the interrelations existing between demographic dynamics, environmental problems and socioeconomic development. The most representative cases were those of Paraguay, Peru and Honduras.

1.5. The conceptual and methodological growth of Population Education

The decade of the 90s was characterized by scientific debate around Population Education, which led to its conceptual and methodological growth and also to surpassing its original goal. In the framework of this evolution, the following were major milestones resulting from the new visions contributed:

- **The World Conference on Education for All (Jomtien, Thailand, 1990)**, with the concept of basic learning needs, which recognized Population Education contents as one of their

components. This concept is supplemented by the four goals for education: learn to know, learn to do, learn to be and learn to live together. The Conference's contribution was not only the concern over girls' education, but also an education approach that places the human being in the center of the education process and recognizes that individuals build their own learning from the needs arising from their everyday problems, social demands and their individual and sociocultural history. The basic aspect of a need has to do with its potential to generate another need, this being the reason why learning needs are infinite. Meeting a given need potentially raises others that are increasingly complex, which makes learning to learn necessary. Thus, the education process becomes a policy dialogue of knowledge aimed at learning to know, learning to do, learning to be and learning to live together. This process is known as basic education and includes both formal and non-formal education activities. It refers to learning throughout one's life. This approach to Meeting Basic Learning Needs enriched the methodological aspects of Population Education, particularly in Latin America and the Caribbean, and helped overcome the behaviorist conceptions prevailing until then and reflected in Population Education educational materials produced at the time.

- **The First International Congress on Population Education and Development (Istanbul, 1993).** As part of the preparatory activities for this Congress, the UNESCO International Bureau of Education published a newsletter on the subject of Population Education (IBE/UNESCO, 1992), where Georges Vaideanu, a professor from the University of Iassy, Rumania, wrote about the present and future of Population Education. In that article he points out that, considering education can shape a fair number of attitudes, the objectives of formal and non-formal education should include the development of attitudes contributing to preserving the environment, reducing child mortality, favoring the demographic balance, reducing poverty and improving relationships between countries and communities, all of them contents assigned to Population Education. The working document prepared by UNESCO for this First International Congress states that "Population Education is an ongoing information, learning and action process thanks to which individuals and collectivities become aware of the importance for their own lives of the population phenomena they are involved in, as well as their social, cultural, environmental and economic consequences. Population Education contributes to the acquirement of knowledge, competencies and values, which allow every individual to achieve a critical understanding of population issues and base his/her judgments, decisions and behaviors on an analysis as rational as possible of relevant facts and factors." (UNESCO, 1993). While this Congress allowed for an assessment of the achievements made in the dissemination of Population Education, there were no significant changes in its conceptualization, as sociodemographic and environmental contents continued to be prioritized over Sexuality Education ones.
- **The International Conference on Population and Development (Cairo, 1994),** which led to a change of paradigm in the approach towards population issues, focusing actions not on demographic goals, but on human beings and their rights. The Plan of Action assigns education a crucial role in improving women's condition, building life plans for girls (Chapter 4), the enjoyment of reproductive rights and reproductive health (Chapter 7), HIV/AIDS prevention (Chapter 8) and Development (Chapter 11). It also contributed to Population Education through the concept of Sustainable Development, which focuses on individuals and is based on the exercise of Human Rights, Reproductive Health rights (which include Sexual Health and Family Planning) and Reproductive Rights (which include some of the Human Rights deriving from the principles recognized in the Charter of the United Nations, 1945, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948), as one of the conditions for human beings to enjoy the highest level of physical and mental health and also as a right of men and women to a satisfactory sexual and reproductive life free of violence, discrimination or coercion.

It was as a result of ICPD that UNFPA –which is making significant progress as a technical agency-, took over the leadership role in the field of Population Education and Sexuality Education that UNESCO has started to abandon.

The Report of UNFPA's Executive Director (UNFPA, 1995) highlights the new paradigm emerging from Cairo and points out that all programmes receiving assistance from UNFPA will be undertaken according to the principles and objectives of the ICPD Programme of Action. It establishes that this agency will focus its financial support on three programmatic areas: Reproductive Health, Advocacy and Population and Development. The Reproductive Health programmatic area is based on Principle 8 of the Programme of Action, which assigns a significant role to education: ...“Everyone has the right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health. States should take all appropriate measures to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, universal access to health-care services, including those related to reproductive health care, which includes family planning and sexual health. Reproductive health-care programmes should provide the widest range of services without any form of coercion. All couples and individuals have the basic right to decide freely and responsibly the number and spacing of their children and to have the information, education and means to do so.”

UNFPA made a proposal to continue efforts in the area of Population Education to ensure that curricula at all levels, and in all the different forms of the education system, include emerging and priority subjects facilitating the shaping of attitudes, as well as making decisions regarding responsible sexual behaviors, gender equity, environmental issues, human rights, population-environment relations, male responsibility and other key issues concerning reproductive health. The document makes an attempt to define the role of education with regard to emerging problems in the different countries, changes in education approaches and the roles currently assigned to education. The education work strategy is based on the Cairo Programme of Action (UNFPA, 1995).

The field of Population Education was enriched as a result of these contributions and, thus, was conceived under two thematic areas in Latin America and the Caribbean:

- Population and Sustainable Development, where, based on the analysis of the behavior of the fertility, mortality and migration variables, relationships with environmental problems and their contribution to sustainable development processes were established.
- Sexuality Education, which encompasses Sexual and Reproductive Health and Reproductive Rights, including the promotion of women's empowerment; overcoming sexual stereotypes; achieving gender equity in the family and society; women's health and safe motherhood; sexual health; maternal mortality; prevention of sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS; gender violence prevention and family planning.

During this stage, UNFPA supported the follow-up on the implementation of the Education for All Plan of Action, with an emphasis on girls' education. It also promoted and funded Population Education and Sexuality Education (depending on options available in the different countries), including Sexual and Reproductive Health in formal education systems; non-formal education programmes for men and women organized in unions, co-ops and rural associations; literacy programmes; community education programmes and education activities in Health Services under the name of Information, Education and Communication (IEC) activities or Behavioral Change Communication (BCC). It also supported the formulation and implementation of Sexuality Education policies and their inclusion in the education systems' curricula, which was

largely initiated in the countries in the region. At the same time, Population Education continued to be implemented in other countries such as Guatemala, Haiti, Mexico, Nicaragua and Peru.

Regional Population Education Regional Projects executed by UNESCO, ILO and FAO came to an end in 1992 with the creation of Country Technical Assistance Teams, which were developed by UNFPA as interagency and interdisciplinary teams that, in addition to representing a major achievement in the conceptualization of population issues, have enhanced the vision of the role played by education.

1.6. The spread of Sexuality Education in the Latin American Region

As previously explained, starting in the late 1990s, there was an initial tendency to implement Sexuality Education programmes in most countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, although the Population Education component –which includes the contents of sexuality, gender, and reproductive health and HIV/AIDS prevention, among others– has only been maintained in some cases.

Names used by countries in Latin America and the Caribbean						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sexual Education ▪ Sexuality Education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Population Education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Population Education ▪ Sexuality Education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Population Education ▪ Family and Sexual Education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Family and Sexual Education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Population Education ▪ Sexual Education ▪ Education for Family Life 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Education for Health and Family Life
Argentina Bolivia Brazil Chile Colombia Costa Rica Cuba Ecuador Haiti Uruguay Venezuela	Guatemala Mexico Panama	El Salvador Nicaragua	Honduras	Paraguay	Peru	CARICOM

This trend is associated, first of all, with a change in the vision of population issues. In effect, the decline in fertility rates on a global level; the world population stabilization trend; the increase in access to modern contraception and women’s increased positioning in the exercise of their reproductive rights, among other factors, have been chasing away the ghost of demographic explosion and depriving Population Education from its clear original objectives.

Second, the Educational Reforms undertaken in the light of pedagogic conceptions emerging from Jomtien led to curricular changes in basic education (which includes 9 school years in almost all countries in the region), introducing numerous Population, Development and Environment contents in social science and natural science subjects. At the same time, the repercussions of problems linked to the exercise of sexuality, such as the increase in the number of adolescent pregnancies and HIV/AIDS cases, caused the transversal inclusion of Sexuality Education contents to be perceived as an emerging need. And while it already had a long history in the Region, most countries started working with Sexuality Education as a cross-cutting theme in the curricula of formal education systems.

While the spread of Sexuality Education was supported by UNFPA during this stage, the role of education had not been clearly defined in its mandate. At the same time, conceptual confusions regarding the differences between education, communication and advocacy processes still prevailed.

From this perspective, it is important to point out that on the occasion of the fifth anniversary of ICPD, the United Nations General Assembly held a special session, from June 30 through July 2, 1999, to assess the progress made with respect to the Cairo Programme of Action. At the end of the meeting, governments made a call to intensify actions in the key areas of sexual and reproductive health; maternal mortality; adolescent reproductive health needs; reduction of abortion; raising awareness of the consequences of unsafe abortion; HIV/AIDS prevention; gender equity and equality, and education. The document "Key Actions for the Further Implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action" highlighted, among other substantive aspects, the following:

"With due respect for the rights, duties and obligations of parents, and in a manner consistent with the evolving capacities of the adolescent and their right to reproductive health education, information and care, and respecting their cultural values and religious beliefs, ensure that adolescents, both in and out of school, receive the necessary information on prevention, education, counseling and health services to enable them to make responsible and informed choices regarding their sexual and reproductive health in order, *inter alia*, to reduce the number of adolescent pregnancies." (Chapter 4, paragraph E)

Chapter 2, section E, paragraph 35, reaffirms that governments "should include, at all levels, as appropriate, of formal and non-formal schooling, education about population and health issues, including sexual and reproductive health issues, ...to promote the well-being of adolescents, enhancing gender equality and equity, as well as responsible sexual behavior, and protecting them from early and unwanted pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS, and sexual abuse, incest and violence." Likewise, Chapter 4, section E, which deals with adolescents, readdresses the importance of education.

As far as the evolution of Population Education is concerned, the key measures to further the ICPD Programme of Action raised two problems: one was the emphasis on adolescents only; the other, the emphasis on Sexual and Reproductive Health. In the case of the former, because the target age group of skills development processes would be smaller. In the case of the latter, because the thematic field of Population Education would be reduced to Reproductive Health Education. The emphasis on the adolescent population, however, does not mean other age groups, such as children, should be neglected. Children should start, from an early age, developing skills to exercise responsible behaviors during adolescence and adulthood. As far as contents are concerned, referring to Reproductive Health Education means limiting the field of both Population Education and Sexuality Education.

Now well, the aim of this document is to contribute so this fourth stage can lead to a higher level of priority being assigned to education in UNFPA's mandate and, at the same time, to define whether Population Education will continue to be supported or Sexuality Education will also continue to be promoted. We are also interested in defining the objectives and contents of the latter. However, regardless of the need for more clarity around these subjects, we can not forget that this stage has also been characterized by UNFPA's significant support to the education component in Country Programmes and projects developed in the region. What have been the achievements made? What are the persisting limitations or lacks? What are the main challenges faced by UNFPA in the region? These are precisely the aspects to be examined in the second chapter.

Chapter 2

Current Situation and Challenges of Sexuality Education in Latin America and the Caribbean

Over the course of the last few decades, UNFPA has achieved significant leadership in the field of Sexuality Education in the region, with major comparative advantages in the areas of negotiations with governments and civil society; building partnerships and collaboration relationships; addressing sensitive topics in diverse sociocultural contexts; supporting education policies and reforms in the education sector, and implementing strategies, programmes, methodologies and materials, as well as capacity building and knowledge management.

However, lessons learned show the path towards sustainability is long and complex, as the social and individual impacts of Sexuality Education depend on the confluence of multiple factors, such as the economic, sociocultural and political context in each country; the status of education and the population's education level -particularly that of women and girls-; the political willingness and commitment of government and social stakeholders; reaching consensus and effective synergies; available technical and financial support; the participants' expectations and interests, and the installed capacities of institutions, groups and individuals leading formal and non-formal education processes, among others.

From this perspective, and in the light of UNFPA's future projections for Latin America and the Caribbean, it is appropriate to open up a space for the critical review of achievements made and current challenges in different areas of the Fund's work.

2.1. The presence of the education component in UNFPA's Programming

Based on the Cairo Programme of Action, it would seem clear that for UNFPA the Reproductive Health programmatic area includes actions in two interrelated fields: education and health care.

Being able to enjoy a state of physical, emotional and social wellbeing depends on both health self-care skills developed by individuals and access to services provided to them. Skills development formal education processes require support from non-formal education actions in services, the community and the areas of social and interpersonal communication, to increase their impact. The importance of education for universal access to reproductive health services is undeniable

However, in the 2004-2007 Multi-Year Funding Framework (MYFF), which identifies the objectives/goals UNFPA contributes towards and the results it is responsible for, no explicit reference is made to education or BCC as activities necessary to increase access to reproductive health services. On the other hand, codes established to classify country actions in the ERP, which must be framed in the MYFF, discriminate the following areas in the output related to strengthening the demand for Reproductive Health: Reproductive Health and Gender Awareness-raising; the capacity to express commitment; BCC for young people; male involvement in Reproductive Health and Gender; Reproductive Health Planning and Monitoring Capacity, and Life Skills Education for young people.

Can Life Skills Education be understood as Reproductive Health and Sexuality Education, as well as Population Education? And only limited to young people?

Given the MYFF fails to consider the education component, and also that in practice education is often subsumed into advocacy, which in turn has been identified with IEC or BCC, no Sexuality Education indicators exist, which means the analysis of these issues does not hold a significant place in CPAs, CCAs, UNDAF, and also that the follow-up, evaluation and systematization component in educational processes is weak. However, the Strategic Direction implementation guidelines, as well as joint programming guidelines, in the framework of the United Nations System Reform, are replacing the project-based approach with broad designs that emphasize policy dialogue and the design of programmes based on the systemic change via sectoral and cross-sectoral approaches, sectoral reforms, poverty reduction strategies and results-based management.

Bearing in mind processes do not follow a lineal path, the participants in the Technical Consultation on Education held in New York in December 2003 continued to discuss Population Education Projects and Programmes at the same time they discussed actions carried out by Ministries of Education, and they even referred to the need for specific management units for those projects and programmes, which they defined as “the institutionalization of Population Education” (UNFPA/TSD, 2003). However, institutionalizing Population Education and/or Sexuality Education should mean their contents are a “natural” part of the curricula, just like mathematics, literature or geography. In this regard, more significant achievements have been made in Latin America, considering Education Population and Sexuality Education contents have been, or are being, included as horizontal and cross-cutting elements in the curricular areas defined in each country.

In November 2004, on the occasion of UNFPA’s Global Meeting, our Executive Director stated the objectives/goals of the 2004-2007 Multi-year Funding Framework (MYFF), “Ensure access to reproductive health; support countries in working on interactions between the population and poverty dynamics, including the impact of HIV/AIDS, and advancing gender equity and women’s empowerment.” She also pointed out that Reproductive Health continues to be one of UNFPA’s pillars, because it is a human right and UNFPA promotes human rights.

Now well, ensuring access to reproductive health -which involves the Millennium Goals of reducing maternal mortality and the spread of HIV/AIDS-, as well as ensuring gender equity and universal education, must consider education as a crucial task. Education is not only an instrument to increase the demand for contraceptives or reproductive health care; it is a human right. Access to reproductive health, on the other hand, is not only a problem of availability of services and contraceptive methods. Care received as part of services must be supplemented with education so people can exercise their rights via a systematic effort to develop life skills in the areas of sexuality and reproduction.

Another problem identified as a result of UNFPA’s work in the field of Population Education and Sexuality Education is the invisibility of the educational, a component replaced by behavior change programmes. Over the last few years there has been a visible tendency to hyperbolize the advantages of BCC strategies, naively considering they can solve all the problems in the spheres of sexuality and reproductive health.

Information, Education and Communication (IEC) and BCC Programmes lay emphasis on information and the dissemination of “appropriate” messages to achieve behavior changes, without considering they are support instruments and that, by themselves, they do not enable the development of permanent life skills and competencies.

Thus, the implementation of Population Education and/or Sexuality Education must be visualized in the understanding that:

a) Education is a key element in the fight against poverty, the fight for women's empowerment, the promotion of human rights -including sexual and reproductive rights- and democracy.

The main challenge today is related to the need to prioritize the education component in the framework of UNFPA's programming processes.

b) Education is more than the education system.

Therefore, one key element is that of coordinating formal education, non-formal education and community (or informal) education, as well as coordinating these forms of education and communication and promotion activities supporting education processes.

Only by doing this will it be possible to link results expected from the MYFF to the Millennium Goals and introduce them in country programmes by positioning them in the national development agendas.

Bearing in mind this document has been prepared from the perspective of Latin America and the Caribbean, we will further address Sexuality Education, a common education component in most countries in the region including gender equity and sexual and reproductive health and, as part of the latter, HIV/AIDS prevention and family planning, from the perspective of human rights and the approach of respect for the population's sociocultural characteristics.

2.2. Conceptual limitations and achievements in the field of Sexuality Education

In the context of the region, where most countries carry out formal and non-formal Sexuality Education activities, the need for a solid and coherent conceptual framework emerges as an unmet demand. Conceptual achievements in this field have been relatively limited, considering UNFPA's leadership in the production of knowledge in areas such as population and development, demography and handling of censuses, among others.

An analysis of these problems reveals several conceptual confusions and inaccuracies still persist.

First, topics related to sexuality, gender equity, reproductive health and HIV/AIDS are addressed as independent spheres, an aspect that can be seen in the insufficient level of coordination between education actions and programmes. In the sphere of HIV/AIDS prevention, for example, it is surprising to find that the questionnaires sent to Country Representatives during the process of developing UNFPA's Regional Strategy (DALC/EAT, 2003) were aimed at researching specific activities in this field separately from education activities carried out by Reproductive Health Subprogrammes. But something even more surprising is the fact that countries in Latin America and the Caribbean have reported they only have a limited number of "HIV/AIDS prevention education" activities, considering HIV/AIDS prevention modules have been included in all Population Education and Sexuality Education programmes promoted by UNFPA in the region since 1987.

Along these lines, as stated by Gita Sen on the occasion of UNFPA's Global Meeting (Princeton, 2004), the creation of a high-level Task Force and call for consultations with experts would be required in order to come up with a statement on UNFPA's position regarding sexuality (Sen, 2004), bearing in mind the role played by conceptual guidelines in the orientation of programmatic and operational processes.

As a matter of fact, gender identity, gender roles and sexual orientation are all components of human sexuality, whereas reproductive health represents a process and a state relative to every person's sexuality. Therefore, education actions aimed at promoting equality, shaping new masculinities and femininities, preventing gender-based violence, developing competencies for reproductive health care, HIV/AIDS prevention and the exercise of rights are an integral part of Sexuality Education programmes.

On the other hand, there is not enough clarity on the differences and links between Education, Life Skills, IEC, BCC and Advocacy. The IEC (Information, Education and Communication) approach, promoted by UNFPA since its creation, was defined, in its 1997 guidelines, as a set of activities aimed at “motivating policy-makers, programme managers, service providers and communities to incorporate the reproductive health concept ... to produce efficient messages, and to get service provision systems to respond to the increase in the demand generated by those messages.” In this framework, a lot of effort was invested in the production of educational materials and advertising as a means to convey messages, but sensitive mistakes were made, such as equating IEC with the production of materials, or identifying it with non-formal forms of education or advocacy processes, whose sphere of action is the promotion of political and social supports and resource mobilization to improve reproductive health, gender equity and reduce poverty. In other cases, the IEC approach was replaced by BCC, and several internal documents produced by the Technical Support Division (TSD), even state that education was part of BCC.

However, recognizing the importance of the media in conveying messages aimed at achieving behavior changes in the population does not mean education is limited to the transmission of appropriate messages. Education is a constructive, gradual and systematic human development and transformation process that takes place through formal, non-formal and informal systems; communication messages can contribute to expanding information and modifying some behaviors, but they do not shape active citizens capable of acting as individuals with rights.

These confusions have generated impacts on an organizational level, and actually led to a reduction in the number of Education Advisor positions in some of UNFPA’s Technical Assistance Teams in Asia and Africa or their replacement with Advocacy and BCC Advisors between 2000 and 2002. In other cases, support provided to Education Ministries for the institutionalization of Sexuality Education or Population Education was interrupted, a situation that has also occurred from time to time in Latin America and the Caribbean.

While Population Education and Sexuality Education actions continued in several countries, many chose to work following the new BCC guidelines, which attracted most of the financial and substantial efforts under the Interregional Programme and generated less resistance among the often conservative Ministries of Education. To confirm this, all one has to do is take a look at Country Programmes and budgetary allocations to education and IEC/BCC activities.

In mid 2002, the IEC and Advocacy area of UNFPA’s Technical Support Division drafted the BCC Support Guidelines, which establish the differences between IEC, BCC and Advocacy, both in terms of their objectives and methodologies, and conclude that BCC replaces IEC. The Division later called a Consultative Meeting to review UNFPA’s support to education programmes (UNFPA/TSD, 2003 y 2004). One of the most significant achievements of that meeting was establishing the difference between education and communication processes. However, the conceptual aspects of Population Education or Sexuality Education were not discussed; agreements reached have to do with the continuity of work in the education component and the use of the different names accepted in the different countries (Family Education, Sexual Education, Reproductive Health Education, and others), which clearly shows the Fund must still the education actions it will promote, or what their contents and reach are.

UNFPA's global survey conducted on the occasion of ICPD +10 shows the progress made in the implementation of the Cairo Programme of Action since 1994. There have been significant achievements in the area under discussion: 17% of the countries have included the gender approach in school programmes, and more than 54% of them have reviewed textbooks and curricula in the light of this approach, while 26% have implemented reproductive health education and programmes for young people and adolescents. In accordance with the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action, particularly in the areas of contributing to adolescents' well-being and increasing gender equity and responsible sexual behavior by increasing the focus on formal and non-formal education in population issues, the global survey reveals that 93% of the countries have taken at least one measure to introduce health education, including life skills, in school curricula and non-formal youth programmes. The most common measures taken are: curricula including reproductive health and life skills (89%), out-of-school programmes as part of health services (39%), reproductive health training for teachers (26%) and peer education programmes (19%) (UNFPA, 2004).

UNFPA must advance the construction of an expanded vision of Sexuality Education, with emphasis on its contribution to the Cairo Agenda and the Millennium Development Goals related to women's empowerment, universal and quality education, access to reproductive health, HIV/AIDS prevention and the fight against poverty and exclusion.

In this regard, it is worth noting that while section 5.3 of the ICPD Programme of Action refers to "attention paid to formal and non-formal education in population and health issues," UNFPA's survey is aimed at collecting information only on reproductive health education and gender issues. On the other hand, its structure clearly shows the classification of responses in the areas of education for Gender Equity and Reproductive Health, under the headings IEC/BCC/Advocacy/Education understood as a single component.

If UNFPA is to continue implementing the area of the ICPD Plan of Action assigning importance to education (achieve universal reproductive health, gender equity, women's empowerment, the reduction of maternal and child mortality, etc.), as an element contributing towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals, we must further the reflection process started in 2003 with the Technical Consultation on Education in order to define its mandate in Education, consider the development of skills for the exercise of sexual and reproductive rights as part of the MYFF, and assume our role as a leading agency in the areas of Population Education and Sexuality Education.

2.3. Supports and partnerships for Sexuality Education policies, strategies and programmes

On the occasion of our Global Meeting held in November 2004, our Executive Director highlighted the need for UNFPA to become a policy dialogue and advocacy organization, the critical importance of this area for ICPD's sustainability, and the need to understand and respond realistically and effectively to the political, cultural and economic environment we work in to translate the Cairo Agenda into strategic and relevant strategies (Obaid, 2004).

In the field of Sexuality Education, policy dialogue and negotiation play a key role in the creation of a favorable environment, the establishment of partnerships and generating support around particularly sensitive issues such as human sexuality, reproductive rights -including sexual rights-, reproductive health and gender equity. From this perspective, it is important to consider there are multiple stakeholders and social forces participating in Sexuality Education, which demands multidisciplinary, multisectoral and interagency work to optimize efforts and resources.

Therefore, priority should be given to raising awareness and obtaining commitment from governments and state institutions, the education and health sectors, teacher training and education centers, NGOs, civil society groups, teachers unions, parents associations and cooperation agencies, among others. The key partners in the United Nations System are UNESCO, UNICEF, UNAIDS, WHO/PAHO and UNIFEM, due to their expertise in areas related to Sexuality Education, such as basic education, health, gender equity, violence prevention, the fight against HIV/AIDS and teacher training, among others.

On a regional level, UNFPA's participation in national consultation and policy dialogue processes in Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Guatemala and Panama, among others, has been widely recognized.

A series of systematization studies conducted by the Technical Support Team for Latin America and the Caribbean (Castellanos and Moyano, 2001, 2003 and 2005) have documented that, to date, 5 countries -which account for 23,8% of the total- have policies regarding Sexuality Education: Chile (Sexuality Education Policy), Costa Rica (Comprehensive Human Sexuality Education Policies), Nicaragua (Population Policy and Population Policy Plan of Action) and the Dominican Republic (National Adolescence and Youth Policy). However, it must be pointed out that in some cases these policies are based on reductive approaches of an informative-preventive and/or moralizing nature.

At the same time, 9 countries (42.8%) have programmes or plans including Sexual Education either directly or built-in with other more general objectives: CARICOM (Caribbean Youth Summit Regional Action Plan), Colombia (National Sexual Education Programme), Cuba (National Sexual Education Programme), Ecuador (National Sexuality Education Plan and Programme), El Salvador (National Education for Life Programme), Honduras (National Action Plan for Human Development, Children and Youth), Mexico (National Population Programme), Nicaragua (Plan of Action of Population Policy in the Area of Population Education and Sexuality Education; National Development Plan) and Peru (National Sexual Education Programme and National Population Programme).

Other countries lacking policies and/or national plans and programmes have a legal framework based on Educational Reform laws and official curricular guidelines and designs. That is the case of Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Haiti, Paraguay and Venezuela.

Nevertheless, under the weak governance and political crisis scenarios that predominate in many of the countries in the region, the practical effectiveness and sustainability of laws, policies and juridical bases are often subject to the willingness of education authorities and governments, as well as pressures from right-wing fundamentalist groups.

There has been a significant increase in fundamentalism's systematic actions over the course of the last decade, a phenomenon expressed in the form of direct attacks against UNFPA and the United Nations System; the support to campaigns to discredit human and reproductive rights; setbacks in the areas of public policies and legal frameworks, and resistance to the introduction of Sexuality Education in schools, among others. These groups have gained control of public and institutional spaces, such as media outlets, Women's and First Ladies' Offices, Secretariats and Ministries of Family, Health, Labor and Education, with a powerful influence on state structures. In the education sector, their strategies have been aimed at turning schools into ideological battlefields, manipulating institutions to impose a culture of sexuality based on their moral precepts.

Strengthening policy dialogue and partnerships is critical in positioning Sexuality Education among governments and civil society, thus contributing to translate the Cairo Agenda into strategic interventions.

The advances of the Christian right wing are the result of strategies agreed with economic and political power groups on the regional and international levels. However, it is rather obvious that in some cases the capacity of Country Offices, teams in projects with UNFPA support and other partners and allies in the areas of advocacy and establishment of partnerships, has been insufficient. The role played by UNFPA in this regard has been highly reactive, in circumstances demanding a shift towards proactive positions, the implementation of mid and long-term strategies and the consolidation of supervision and social enforceability mechanisms in partnership with civil society, legislators and other social institutions and stakeholders.

2.3.1. Arguments for policy dialogue and negotiation

Developing effective strategies to mobilize political and social supports and establishing partnerships aimed at positioning the Cairo Agenda and neutralizing the impact of conservative campaigns on the public opinion, policies and laws, civil society and education for children, adolescents and young people, demands, on one hand, understanding, from culturally sensitive positions, the ideology of Conservatism with regard to Sexuality Education, their strategies and their supports. It also demands, based on country experiences, revisiting lessons learned in the past for purposes of future projections.

At the same time, bringing Sexuality Education to the public agenda involves engaging in political and technical policy dialogue with different government and civil bodies, particularly Ministries of Education. Negotiation processes should rely, on one hand, on scientific-pedagogic arguments, considering most education authorities have a background in Education Sciences, which means understanding their theory is necessary to be able to debate and engage in policy dialogue. Just like physicians and health personnel are required to engage in policy dialogue with Ministries of Health, pedagogues are the right people to engage in technical discussions with Ministries of Education. Another key element is that of advocacy arguments based on documented evidence, such as the findings of research showing Sexuality Education does not promote the early onset of sexual relations and promiscuity (Hakkert, 2003).

2.4. Regional, national and local capacities for the integration of Sexuality Education into different education levels and systems.

As a development agency with a mandate based on a human rights framework, one of the basic principles of UNFPA's work has been the promotion of capacity-building strategies to ensure the empowerment and autonomy of countries and individuals to define and achieve their own goals.

From this perspective, it is essential to increase the capacity of decision-makers, institutions, specialists and organizations on the regional, national and local levels, for the design and implementation of policies, strategies, plans, programmes, methodologies, didactic materials and actions to evaluate and follow up education processes in the field of Sexuality Education. In this case, we identify 3 interrelated fields of action: formal education systems, non-formal systems and training for educators (teachers, professors and literacy teachers).

2.4.1 Sexuality Education in Educational Reforms

Over the last decades, major efforts have been made and initiatives have been developed by countries in the region to achieve universal basic public education, ensure the decline of absolute and functional illiteracy rates, implement transformations in education systems, and increase the quality of education.

Investing in the formal sphere, and particularly in public education, involves working towards goals related to the expansion of educational coverage, equal access, children's permanence in the system, the quality and relevance of curricula, and achieving education results privileging a comprehensive understanding of the codes of modernity and skills for social and individual life.

This is a strategic factor to achieve sustainable development with social justice and advance the eradication of poverty, exclusions and inequalities. As stated by the Latin America and the Caribbean Regional Education Project, which is aimed at complementing and strengthening the Dakar Framework for Action, Education for All, as well as achieving the Millennium Development Goals and the commitments of other international and regional summits: “it is essential for education policies to aim at strengthening the public school, to the extent it can lead to more equality and the construction of more inclusive and equitable societies.”

In the framework of Educational Reform processes, Sexuality Education contents have been introduced in the basic school curricula, addressing, to a greater or lesser extent, human sexuality issues through a series of strategies, such as curricular mainstreaming, their inclusion in specific areas of knowledge and school subjects, and addressing them through extracurricular activities, among others.

However, progress in the areas of design and implementation of Sexuality Education through different formal systems is generally slow and uneven, to the extent it relies on multiple and complex factors, the main being the following:

- The economic, sociocultural and political conditions that interact in global, regional, national and local scenarios.
- The current situation and perspective of education in the region and each of the different countries and communities.
- The level of political willingness, awareness and commitment of social stakeholders and forces in the different States, civil society and families with regard to education in general and Sexuality Education in particular.
- Advances in the construction of effective synergies and consensus among the different educational influence forces and channels, particularly with regard to the supplementation of formal, non-formal and informal education systems.
- Installed capacities on the regional, national and local levels to undertake education challenges and tasks in Ministries of Education, intermediate education structures, schools, institutions, and groups and organizations promoting formal and informal alternatives.
- The willingness and potential to disseminate and share knowledge, information and experiences related to problems in this field.
- The technical and financial support provided by States, institutions, civil society groups and international cooperation and development agencies and bodies.
- The expectations, interests and needs of the individuals directly participating and benefiting from education processes.
- Others.

UNFPA's assistance in the field of Educational Reforms has contributed to advancing the mainstreaming of topics related to sexual and reproductive rights and health in school curricula. To date, 85.6% of the countries in Latin America and the Caribbean have introduced these contents or are in the process of designing their programmes; 19% have introduced them on a national level, 33.3 % only partially and 33.3% are in the stage of developing demonstrative experiences. However, curricular implementation

Supporting Educational Reforms is a key priority to ensure the institutionalization and sustainability of comprehensive Sexuality Education, based on a rights, gender approach and cultural sensitivity framework.

and design still face challenges, considering it has not always been possible to get these contents to be addressed through comprehensive approaches based on rights, gender equity and cultural sensitivity, with scientific visions of human sexuality, and education and teaching-learning processes.

At the same time, the decentralization of Latin American education systems poses new challenges, considering the strategies to strengthen them must consider territorial, administrative, directive and technical levels and bodies. In some countries decisions are made at the level of federal states, provinces, departments or districts, which design their own curricula, education and teacher training programmes and forms of participation by the education community and society in general. To this end, UNFPA's support must be contextualized bearing in mind the different ways in which education is organized in each country, thus making Sexuality Education relevant based on specific local needs in the framework of national policies.

On the other hand, it is important to consider that Educational Reforms depend, to a great extent, on the level of conviction of authorities in schools or institutions promoting non-formal education processes in terms of levels of awareness, capacities, opportunities and funding. The dynamics of communities themselves are also essential to adapt sexual education in terms of its development and depth. Therefore, as far curricular and pedagogic proposals are concerned, decentralization is a factor to bear in mind in facilitating the effective inclusion of Sexuality Education.

2.4.2. Meeting the most vulnerable groups' educational needs on rights, sexuality, gender equity, reproductive health and HIV/AIDS prevention

The unmet demand for education in Latin America and the Caribbean, the most inequitable region in the world, is critically reflected in the existence of groups living in a situation of social disadvantage resulting from poverty and different forms of exclusion, such as out-of-school children; adolescents; young people; people with disabilities; mobile and migrant populations; communities displaced due to armed conflicts; indigenous people and people of African descent, among others.

Strengthening non-formal Sexuality Education programmes and strategies poses a challenge in terms of meeting the education needs of groups in a situation of social disadvantage, such as out-of-school children and young people, migrant populations; populations displaced due to armed conflicts, indigenous people and people of African descent, among others.

Most of these individuals lack access to formal education programmes. The Educational Reforms movement in the region, on the other hand, has assigned non-formal education a secondary level when it comes to technical and financial supports. In fact, the focalization of education policies in the formal sphere, with the aim of increasing the quality and coverage of public education, has led to a substantial weakening of non-formal actions, which in most countries are not coordinated in national education systems, with a few exceptions, like Mexico (National Adult Education Institute). Thus, out-of-school Sexuality Education programmes are implemented by civil society groups and organizations and international cooperation, a situation that hinders the achievement of uniform quality and coverage, sustainability and institutionalization.

As stated by UNFPA's Executive Director, rights are at the heart of the Cairo Agenda, and in order to ensure those rights we need to make them more accessible to the poor, those who live in remote areas and those affected by conflicts (Obaid, 2004).

Therefore, UNFPA's support to these sectors could be visualized along the lines of strengthening country capacities to implement policies, programmes and actions meeting these groups' education needs, within the framework of strategies to fight poverty and social inequality. That involves, on one hand, working towards ensuring universal access to public education, as well as strengthening the education offer for non-school sectors or sectors with low formal education levels.

From this perspective, the State of World Population (UNFPA, 2005) states achieving the Millennium Development Goals by 2015, as well as the promise for equality, require countries to make investments in three critical areas: education (particularly for girls and women), reproductive health services and providing economic opportunities to women.

Promoting and ensuring the right of the most marginalized groups to quality education, including relevant and significant contents related to the responsible exercise of sexuality; decision-making in the reproductive and family spheres; reproductive health care; gender equity; HIV/AIDS and STI prevention; dealing with violence and harassment or sexual exploitation, among others, is an effective strategy to break the vicious circle of deprivations and inequalities.

Out-of-school children, adolescents and young people

Not going to school or the lack of access to basic education levels is one of the factors leading to children, adolescents and young people' increased vulnerability to various problems linked to sexual and reproductive life.

As far as the HIV infection is concerned, evidence shows that "going to school protects" (UNAIDS, 2004b). According to estimates of the 2004 Global Campaign for Education, if every child had access to elementary education, 700,000 new HIV cases would be prevented among young adults (7 million in one decade), which represents 30% of new infections in this age group. In fact, young people with a low education level or no education are 2.2 times more vulnerable to the HIV infection compared to those who have completed at least a 5-6 year education cycle, while the biggest preventive impacts are related to completing elementary education (GCE, 2004).

In the case of girls, female adolescents and women, who are more vulnerable due to biological factors and sociocultural gender dynamics, those who stay in school longer and receive sexuality and life skills education delay the onset of sexual activity, have more knowledge about HIV prevention, show higher rates of condom use if sexually active, and have a better understanding of the HIV test (UNAIDS, 2004b).

Experiences and international and regional studies show investing in systematic Sexuality Education actions –including SRH and HIV/AIDS contents– during the school stage is more effective than investing in compensatory programmes. While adolescents and young people are a priority for UNFPA's work, we can not forget that shaping conceptions, attitudes, values and health behaviors starts in the early stages of life. If only adolescent programmes are supported, we would miss the opportunity to lay the foundations of healthy and responsible sexuality from childhood. Intervening during the adolescent stage without previously doing it in childhood involves the

In the framework of the Millennium Development Goals and the Cairo commitments, UNFPA should support country efforts so every child and adolescent can have access to, and complete, quality basic education.

It is also necessary to implement, in coordination with the different institutions and sectors involved, sustainable and effective non-formal education strategies to reach out to the out-of-school population and include sexuality, gender, SRH and HIV/AIDS prevention contents, among others, in programmes in the areas of literacy, ongoing education, job skills training, rural development, income generation, etc.

need for compensatory education efforts to modify or reshape aspects of sexuality developed based on misconceptions, prejudices and sexist stereotypes.

At the same time, while 93% of the children in Latin America and the Caribbean go to school, survival rates after fifth grade are of only 60-70% in countries such as Paraguay, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador and Nicaragua: 4 in every 10 children enrolled drop out of school (UN, 2005). By the early part of this decade, around 92 million Latin Americans had not completed elementary education (UN, 2005). In the case of adolescents, only 81% of the group ages 15 to 19 have completed elementary education, with the situation being more critical among groups living in extreme poverty: 1 in every 4 adolescents ages 15 to 19 in the 20% of the poorest population has not reached the elementary education level, while in El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua the proportion of young people living in extreme poverty who have not achieved the elementary education level ranges from 47 to 64%.

The situation of indigenous peoples

While actions aimed at empowering indigenous populations have been implemented by different countries in the context of poverty alleviation efforts, it is essential to promote strategies to increase performance in the areas of education, reproductive health and employment, bearing in mind ethnical, gender and generational differences and seeking pedagogic alternatives adapted to the world's cultures, visions, languages and beliefs, as well as the customs of the different ethnic groups.

Indigenous peoples currently account for 11% of the total population in the region (50 million people). They account for 50% or more of the population in countries such as Bolivia and Guatemala. Approximately 400 different ethnic groups and more than one thousand spoken languages have been identified.

However, their civil, social, economic, labor, political, cultural, sexual and reproductive rights are frequently violated. Therefore, their life, employment, wellbeing, health and education expectations are precarious: one in every four persons living in extreme poverty in Latin

From a cultural sensitivity perspective, it is also necessary to reinforce pedagogic work for the development of educational materials and methodologies adapted to the visions of indigenous peoples, ensuring their availability in different languages.

America is indigenous. They have high maternal and infant morbidity and mortality rates, are allocated less education and health care funds and have difficulty to access these services, which are concentrated in urban areas. They also characterized by high illiteracy rates (particularly among women), low education levels, absenteeism, high school dropout rates, poor learning results and low access to middle and higher education. While Educational Reforms

recognize the importance of interculturalism and multilingualism for those who can go to school, education programmes fail to take into account their needs and culture and are not actual instruments for empowerment, reaffirming cultural identity and construction of citizenship.

2.4.3. Teacher training in sexuality education

The insufficient level of preparation among teachers affects the quality and coverage of Sexuality Education in different educational contexts, as approximately one half of the countries in the region do not develop effective actions to train teachers through their Ministries of Education (Castellanos and Moyano, 2001, 2003 and 2005). Therefore, there is still an unmet demand in terms of implementing comprehensive training strategies, ensuring coverage for all

teachers and improving curricula and the quality of teaching-learning processes in education institutions, among others.

In particular, it has been confirmed that the quality of training processes does not meet the levels required, considering curricula tend to focus on academic contents with no socio-pedagogic relevance and rely on reductive and/or conservative approaches to human sexuality, gender, health and sexual and reproductive rights, using traditional methods not favoring the transformation of teachers' conceptions, attitudes and practices. These deficiencies are reflected in teachers' reluctance to include these subjects in teaching-learning activities with their students, as well as the insecurity and concerns experienced by many of them as a result of not mastering these contents and their prejudices regarding sexuality. The problem is worst in the case of educators in the non-formal sector, as they often have a lower academic level, lack titles and have no basic pedagogic training.

UNFPA has failed to visualize and highlight the need and importance of providing support in this area the way it should. Regardless of government changes, the weak implementation of policies and the actions of conservative forces, teachers sensitized and trained represent a transforming force based in all the schools in the region with real possibilities of systematically influencing millions of children and adolescents.

Supporting teacher training programmes and policies represents a window of opportunity to build capacities and achieve the institutionalization and sustainability of Sexuality Education.

However, after several decades of work in Latin America and the Caribbean, UNFPA has developed significant comparative advantages validating the relevance of reinforcing this strategic line, whose impacts would be reflected in:

- The contribution to quality education through improved levels of professionalization among teachers, professional identity and the responsible exercise of sexuality and sexual and reproductive rights.
- A higher level of responsibility, commitment and competence among teachers and other social education forces with regard to the objectives and tasks of Sexuality Education for children, adolescents and young people, understood in the framework of quality education for all throughout people's lives.
- The effective use of the full potential of curricula and other school, extracurricular and non-formal activities to promote Sexuality Education by trained teachers, which could be a significant contribution to the sustainability of actions.
- The contribution to family education through schools and the coordination of actions with other stakeholders, institutions, community groups, NGOs and health services, among others.

Training in Sexuality and Sexual and Reproductive Health Education for teachers must be targeted at developing specific personal and professional competencies that contribute to improving Sexuality Education for children, adolescents and young people, so they can, in turn, develop life skills linked to the exercise of rights and the enjoyment of a responsible, healthy and enriching sexuality. At the same time, we can not forget that teachers themselves are a target group for education programmes, considering they are not mere mediators in teaching-learning processes, but individuals entitled to education that must also be educated. Therefore, it is also essential to contribute to educating teachers on other levels and introduce these contents in the curricula of technical and university careers related to medical sciences, nursing, social work, counseling and psychology, among others.

2.5. Availability of relevant information for policy dialogue and the development of Sexuality Education

Finally, and from UNFPA's perspective as a leading agency in the field of knowledge, it is appropriate to address the issue of the systematization, dissemination and application of knowledge, lessons learned and best practices linked to the Fund's priority areas.

In the framework of a results-based strategic direction, information management is essential to strengthen advocacy strategies, empower cooperation relations and build regional, national and local capacities. The availability of data, documented evidence, conceptual frameworks and situation analyses, among other information inputs, is an essential starting point for the development of programming processes focusing on countries -field focused programming- and the implementation of relevant, viable and sustainable strategies, bearing in mind particular sociocultural, economic, demographic, political and education contexts.

In general terms, however, we still lack an information management culture enabling the rigorous monitoring and evaluation of processes and results; the analysis of variables and conditions intervening in achievements and failures; systematizing lessons learned; documenting and sharing them with other stakeholders and countries or between regions; replicating successful practices considering new contexts, and using knowledge and evidence for purposes of policy dialogue and the improvement of education processes themselves.

The following are some of the main weaknesses still prevailing:

- (a) Insufficient availability of useful data and information for decision-making in sensitive areas such as:
 - Policies, legal frameworks and national or sector strategies sustaining Sexuality Education, with emphasis on the status of their implementations and actions developed by social bodies linked to their monitoring and enforceability.
 - Sensitization and training in Sexuality Education for decision-makers in the State and in Ministries of Education, mid-level education authorities, teachers, parents, civil society groups, legislators, parliamentarians, cooperation agencies and other social stakeholders.
 - The design and implementation of the basic education and teacher training curricula, considering Sexuality Education contents, approaches and methodologies, as well as results achieved.
 - The mapping of fundamentalist groups operating in the region and their impact on the education sector, with emphasis on understanding their ideology, arguments, strategies, allies and supports in the field of Sexuality Education.
- (b) The systematization of experiences, lessons learned and best practices, based on the analysis of actions developed by UNFPA and other institutions and organizations working in this field is not yet a common practice in countries in the region, although studies have been conducted by Country Offices and the Technical Support Team for Latin America and the Caribbean.

The systematization, socialization and use of knowledge produced in the field of Sexuality Education for policy dialogue and the development of education policies, programmes, strategies, activities and processes, as well as the strengthening of networking and South-South cooperation, pose challenges to improving UNFPA's information management capacity.
- (c) The follow-up and evaluation component for projects and education activities is one of the weakest. In this regard, no progress has been made in terms of validating objective and agreed indicators showing the achievements made by Sexuality Education in formal and

non-formal education, as well as teacher training and education. Consequently, the data available are heterogeneous, which means making comparisons on the local, national and regional levels and documenting evidence to support policy dialogue and programming processes are difficult.

In the context of knowledge socialization and exchange, the creation of networks should become a basic tool for the promotion of solutions to different problems and actions. For this reason, it is necessary to consider the strengthening of existing networks or the creation of others fostering alliances between countries and regions, for example, networks of teachers, researchers, decision-makers, social communicators, and women's and youth organizations, among others. This strategy would also allow for the introduction of new approaches in the areas of education, sexual education policies and their relationship with poverty eradication, women's empowerment and others. Likewise, it would be possible to take advantage of this space to introduce problems, documents, research or newsletters to promote concrete actions favoring sexual education.

2.6. Advances, problems and challenges in the balance

Despite existing difficulties and the challenges making up UNFPA's pending education agenda, the critical balance is still promising. On one hand, today's situation in the region represents a field of new opportunities; many countries are making an attempt to politically reinforce or reposition various sensitive subjects related to sexuality, sexual and reproductive health, HIV/AIDS prevention, gender violence, child sexual abuse and sexual exploitation, among others, in order to include them in formal and non-formal education programmes. At the same time, there is a tendency to revitalize Educational Reforms processes, which had been interrupted due to the confluence of political and financial barriers, while other countries having delayed transformations in their education systems have joined the movement to improve education.

In this context, UNFPA and its partners need, like never before, spaces for gathering, reflection, consensus building and exchange of experiences allowing them to learn from successes and failures, strengthening their substantial and programmatic competencies in the area of education as a starting point to continue moving towards the new stage making its way in Latin America and the Caribbean.