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# LIFE SKILLS EDUCATION IN BANGLADESH:

A review of the national curriculum in  
secondary education



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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# ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

BBS	Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics	LSE	Life Skills Education
BANBEIS	Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics	NCTB	National Curriculum and Textbook Board
CSE	Comprehensive Sexuality Education	NER	Net Enrolment Rate
DSHE	Department of Secondary and Higher Education	ITGSE	International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education
GED	General Economics Division	SERAT	Sexuality Education Review and Assessment Tool
GEMS	Gender Equity Movement in Schools	UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
GER	Gross Enrolment Ratio	UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund

# GLOSSARY

	Comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) is known as life skills education (LSE) in Bangladesh. It is a curriculum-based process of teaching and learning about the cognitive, emotional, physical and social aspects of sexuality (UNESCO et al., 2018).
LIFE SKILLS EDUCATION	<p>CSE aims to equip children and young people with knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that will empower them to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Realise their health, well-being and dignity,</li><li>• Develop respectful social and sexual relationships,</li><li>• Consider how their choices affect their own well-being and that of others,</li><li>• Understand and ensure the protection of their rights throughout their lives.</li></ul>
GRADE	The terms grade and class are used interchangeably in Bangladesh to refer to the sequential levels of schooling.
COMPETENCY-BASED CURRICULUM	Competency-based curriculum refers to the national curriculum rolled out sequentially in primary and junior secondary schools in Bangladesh in 2023 and 2024. It is based upon the National Curriculum Framework 2021, developed by the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB). At stakeholder consultations in May 2024, stakeholders referred to this as the ‘new curriculum’.



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## BACKGROUND

Adolescents in Bangladesh face significant challenges related to their health and well-being, including high rates of child marriage, early pregnancies, gender-based violence, and limited access to accurate information and services. Life skills education (LSE), also known as comprehensive sexuality education (CSE), can play a crucial role in addressing these issues by providing children and young people with the knowledge, skills, and values they need to make informed decisions about their health, relationships, safety, and futures.

In 2021, Bangladesh introduced a competency-based national curriculum for general and Madrasah education. This curriculum prioritises practical skills and real-life applications over rote memorisation. A key feature is the introduction of “Wellbeing,” a new subject focusing on physical and mental health and wellbeing for junior secondary students. This curriculum, developed by the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) and implemented by the Department of Secondary and Higher Education (DHSE) in junior secondary schools, aligns with the National Curriculum Framework 2021.

The Interim Government’s decision to revert to the 2012 curriculum in January 2025 underscores the dynamic nature of education reform in Bangladesh. Despite this shift, the Government’s commitment to enhancing educational quality and coverage remains steadfast. Therefore, an analysis of the 2021 curriculum retains its value, offering insights into broader education policy trends and highlighting the strengths and weaknesses of recent curricular innovations. This analysis provides valuable context for understanding the ongoing evolution of the education system.

UNFPA commissioned an independent review of the life skills education (LSE) content within the competency-based curriculum for grades 6 to 9 implemented in 2024. This review focused on identifying strengths and gaps in LSE provision and offering recommendations to ensure effective delivery by well-prepared teachers.



## METHODS

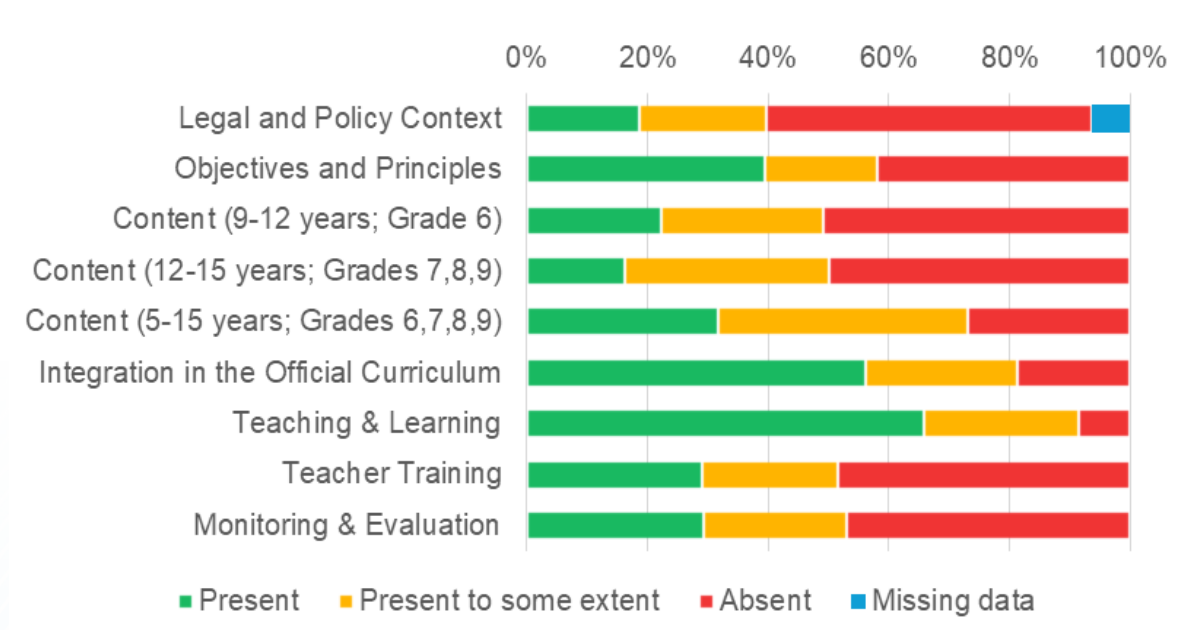
The Sexuality Education Analysis and Review Tool (SERAT), developed by UNESCO (2020), assessed the age-appropriateness, comprehensiveness, and integration of life skills education content in student books and teachers' guides in grades 6 to 9. The review included a participatory workshop, focus group discussions, and in-depth interviews with students, teachers, head teachers, and key government staff. Results were compiled and reviewed for quality, and NCTB, DHSE, and MOPME validated results.

## Results and Recommendations:

Stakeholder consultations revealed that students reported gaining more knowledge, developing positive attitudes towards each other and their teachers, and showing more respectful and confident behaviour. However, students and teachers requested more materials to support teaching and learning and suggested introducing age-appropriate life skills content earlier, starting in primary school.

Chart 1 summarises the findings of each area of analysis of SERAT.

*Chart 1 Summary results of SERAT analysis*





## LEGAL AND POLICY CONTEXT:

**Findings:** While Bangladesh has committed to international and national agreements that support the rights of women, children and young people, including gender equality and sexual and reproductive health, gaps remain in ensuring these rights are fully realised. Education policies lack specific references to LSE, the right to education irrespective of pregnancy or parenting students, clear connections between schools and sexual and reproductive health, and social and legal services.

**Recommendations:** Advocate for specific strategies that support adolescent health and wellbeing, including clear and specific sexual and reproductive health objectives integrated into the National Education Policy. Ensure policies guarantee the right to education for all students, regardless of marital or parenting status. Establish policies that connect students with relevant health, social, and legal services.

## OBJECTIVES AND PRINCIPLES:

**Findings:** The review found that approximately 30% of program objectives and principles indicators were fully present, and 50% were partially present. While the National Education Policy (2010) and National Curriculum Framework 2021 promote a competency-based curriculum based on human rights and gender transformation, they lack specific goals related to sexual and reproductive health and advancing gender equality, such as reducing child marriage and unintended pregnancies.

**Recommendations:** Advocate for the

inclusion of specific strategies supporting adolescent health and well-being, including objectives in the National Education Policy and curricula to reduce adolescent pregnancy and gender-based violence and advance gender equality. Increase the emphasis on gender transformative approaches across all subject competencies.

## AGE-APPROPRIATENESS AND COMPREHENSIVENESS OF CONTENT:

**Findings:** Only half of the recommended LSE content is age-appropriate for grades 6 to 9. There is minimal reference to romantic or sexual relationships beyond the context of child marriage in the curricula. Topics related to sexuality and sexual and reproductive health have the lowest coverage, with limited content included. Content on violence and safety is the most comprehensively covered (57% present). Content coverage was higher when age groupings were removed, and content from the 5-8 age group was included. Content from this group is important as it covers foundational content not covered in primary but overall demonstrates gaps in age-appropriate content for all grades. There is a strong focus on skills development and less on developing relevant knowledge and attitudes. The integrated focus on gender, norms and rights within LSE content was low throughout.

**Recommendations:** Enhance the comprehensiveness and age-appropriateness of content, especially in areas related to sexuality and sexual and reproductive health. Ensure content inclusion, exclusion, and grade level placement decisions are based on current health and education evidence, trends and



priorities. Improve the content accuracy and consistency across subjects and increase opportunities and skills for critical reflections on gender, norms, and rights.

## INTEGRATION

**Findings:** The curriculum meets 56% of the recommended integration indicators for LSE, with 81% present or partially present. Life skills education is incorporated across five mandatory subjects in junior secondary school. Although not covered in this review, LSE content is absent or very limited in primary education, especially about the human body and development.

**Recommendations:** Review and advocate for the inclusion of age and developmentally appropriate LSE in the primary curriculum. Continue to increase the comprehensiveness of content in grades 6 to 9. Develop age-appropriate and comprehensive content and continue rolling out LSE in Grade 10 and senior secondary school. Develop a comprehensive roadmap for LSE content from primary through senior secondary education.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING APPROACH:

**Findings:** The curriculum demonstrates strengths in its competency-based pedagogy, with 91% of recommended indicators related to the teaching and learning approach being present or somewhat present. It emphasises experiential learning and the development of life skills, which empower learners to make informed choices about their health and wellbeing. Students and teachers have complementary books and guides; however, more activities on LSE content and accurate teaching aids and materials, both online and

hard copy, are needed to support both teachers and students.

**Recommendations:** Provide additional teaching aids, materials, and guidance for teachers in delivering accurate and age-appropriate LSE content. Incorporate strengths-based, trauma-informed, and gender-transformative approaches into the curriculum.

## TEACHER TRAINING:

**Findings:** Teacher training on LSE is limited, with only a third of the recommended indicators fully addressed. While training aligns with the competency-based curriculum, changes in subject assignments mean teachers from various backgrounds may be teaching LSE content, which may be new to them. Concern exists about the quality of teacher training, particularly with the cascade delivery model.

**Recommendations:** Enhance teacher training to include skills for creating safe learning environments and implementing gender transformative and rights-based approaches to teaching and learning. Develop supplementary online training modules for teachers on specific content and skills relevant to LSE to build teachers' competence and confidence.

## MONITORING AND EVALUATION:

**Findings:** Approximately half of the monitoring and evaluation indicators (53%) were present or present to some extent. The education system captures limited data specific to LSE.

**Recommendation:** Develop a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation plan and include LSE-specific indicators in the education management information system (eMIS).

## NEXT STEPS

The recommendations have been organised into shorter and longer-term action points to be completed in 2024 and beyond.

### SHORT-TERM ACTION POINTS:

Advocate for the continued inclusion of life skills education within the national curriculum for junior secondary schools, including for a subject dedicated to health and wellbeing.

Revise LSE content in grades 6, 7, 8, and 9 curricula to ensure accuracy and to increase comprehensiveness and age-appropriateness.

### LONGER-TERM ACTION POINTS

- Develop a scope and sequence for LSE integration in grades 10, 11 and 12 and support curricula and teacher training development.
- Enhance the gender responsiveness of curricula across all grades and subjects.
- Advocate for the inclusion of LSE in education sector policies.
- Advocate for comprehensive and age-

appropriate LSE content, including on sexual and reproductive health in all grades, including primary.

- Develop a scope and sequence of incremental, age-appropriate and comprehensive content from primary to senior secondary education.
- Enhance the quality of teacher training to reflect the skills and content needed for effective LSE.
- Develop supplementary materials and teaching aids for LSE content.
- Encourage CSOs and NGOs to continue efforts in out-of-school, after-school, and online LSE, focusing on gaps in the national curriculum, such as pregnancy prevention and contraception.
- Conduct continuous monitoring of the comprehensiveness and age-appropriateness of LSE content of the national curriculum.







# INTRODUCTION AND OBJECTIVES

Life skills education (LSE), also known as comprehensive sexuality education (CSE), is crucial for adolescents in Bangladesh. LSE equips adolescents with essential knowledge, skills, and values, empowering them to make informed decisions about their health and relationships. LSE fosters responsible and empowered future citizens who can uphold and fulfil their rights. LSE equips adolescents to contribute positively to society, promoting healthier families and communities that are essential for sustainable national development. LSE addresses critical health and social priorities in Bangladesh, such as preventing child marriage, reducing gender-based violence, advancing gender equality, and preventing early and unintended pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections (STIs). These efforts are vital for enhancing adolescent health and social outcomes nationwide.

The National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) is responsible for developing curricula, teachers' guides, and learning resources for general and madrasah education in Bangladesh. In 2019, NCTB began revising the national curriculum for pre-primary, primary, and secondary education, shifting from a “memorisation and exam-oriented” approach toward a competency-based, student-centred, and experiential learning model (NCTB,

2021). This reform aimed to make education more relevant by reflecting technological development, enhancing employment skills, and supporting physical and mental well-being. These changes offered a unique opportunity to integrate LSE into the national curriculum. A key feature of this curriculum was the introduction of “Wellbeing,” a new subject focusing on physical and mental health and well-being for junior secondary students. This curriculum, developed by the NCTB and implemented by the Department of Secondary and Higher Education (DHSE) in junior secondary schools, aligns with the National Curriculum Framework 2021.

Previous versions of the national curricula had limited LSE: it was not mandatory and focused primarily on menstrual hygiene management for girls. To address this gap, the Gender Equity Movement in Schools (GEMS), a two-year gender equity and violence prevention curriculum for adolescents aged 12 to 14, was introduced in 2014 as part of the Generation Breakthrough Project—a joint initiative by UNFPA, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs, and Plan International Bangladesh. GEMS played a crucial role in shaping and integrating LSE content into the 2022 national curriculum framework.



The Interim Government's recent decision to revert to the 2012 curriculum with minor changes in January 2025 underscores the dynamic nature of education reform in Bangladesh. Despite this shift, the Government's commitment to enhancing educational quality and coverage remains steadfast. Therefore, an analysis of the 2021 curriculum retains its value, offering insights into broader education policy trends and highlighting the strengths and weaknesses of the 2022 curriculum.

UNFPA, the United Nations Population Fund dedicated to empowering young people, commissioned an independent review of Bangladesh's competency-based LSE for grades 6 to 9. This review aimed to identify strengths and weaknesses in how life skills are taught and recommend improvements for education service providers and teachers to deliver this crucial education.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE REVIEW:

UNFPA Bangladesh commissioned a review of the national curricula implemented in 2024 to assess the current state of LSE or CSE of grades 6 to 9 of general and Madrasah education in Bangladesh. The review used the Sexuality Education Review and Assessment Tool (SERAT) to assess alignment with the International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education (ITGSE) (UNESCO et al., 2018).

The objectives of this review are to:





- Assess the comprehensiveness, age-appropriateness, and pedagogical approach of the curricula content, materials, teacher training, and monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.
- Identify strengths and gaps and recommend interventions based on international best practices to improve the effectiveness of LSE in Bangladesh.



# METHOD

## USING THE SERAT

SERAT is an Excel-based tool that gathers data and evaluates the strengths and areas of improvement of school-based sexuality education programmes (UNESCO, 2020). SERAT Version 3.0 was used for this review. It aligns with the ITGSE and is based on global evidence and best practices of effective CSE programmes. It evaluates the following areas:

	Education and public health data
	Legal and policy context
	Programme objectives and principles
	Content for four age groups: 5-8 years, 9-12 years, 12-15 years, and 15-18 years/or older
	Integration of CSE into the national curriculum,
	Teaching and learning approaches and environments,
	Teacher training, and
	Monitoring and evaluation

This review covered all sections of the tool except for the content for ages 15-18+, which was excluded from the analysis due to the focus grades being younger. The tool analyses the age and developmental appropriateness

of the content by examining when various essential topics of CSE are introduced. SERAT assesses the comprehensiveness of content across eight key concepts, each with various topics, as outlined in ITGSE. These are:

1. **Relationships**, including families; friendship, love, and romantic relationships; tolerance, inclusion, and respect; and long-term commitments and parenting.
2. **Values, rights, culture, and sexuality**, including values and sexuality; human rights and sexuality; and culture, society, and sexuality.
3. **Understanding gender**, including the social construction of gender and gender norms; gender equality, stereotypes, and bias; and gender-based violence.
4. **Violence and staying safe**, including violence; consent, privacy, and bodily integrity; and the safe use of information and communication technologies (ICTs).
5. **Skills for health and well-being**, including norms and peer influence on sexual behaviour; decision-making; communication, refusal, and negotiation skills; media literacy and sexuality; and finding help and support.
6. **The human body and development**, including sexual and reproductive anatomy and physiology, reproduction, puberty, and body image.



7. **Sexuality and sexual behaviour**, including sex, sexuality, and the sexual life cycle; and sexual behaviour and sexual response.
8. **Sexual and reproductive health**, including pregnancy and pregnancy prevention; HIV and AIDS stigma, care, treatment, and support; and understanding, recognising, and reducing the risk of STIs, including HIV.

The tool also assesses comprehensiveness across three domains of learning: knowledge, attitudes and skills, and by the focus of learning: gender, rights, and norms.

## PROCESS

This independent review included a desk review of curricula materials for grades 6 to 9, student books and teacher's guides for nine of the ten subjects in the competency-based national curriculum. These include:

	Art and Culture
	Digital Technology
	English
	History and Social Science
	Life and Livelihood
	Mathematics
	Religious Education (Islamic studies, Christian studies, Buddhist studies)
	Science
	Wellbeing

The Bangla subject was not reviewed as English versions were not available. A complete list is in Appendix 1.

Materials were reviewed in detail for relevant content. This included identifying content in its age-appropriate tab: grade 6 in the 9-12 years tab and grades 7 to 9 for the 12-15 years tab. Additional tabs were created to capture data outside its age-appropriate range: All content in 9-12 years and 12-15-years groups. The 5-8 years and 15-18+ years tabs were also completed with content from any grade. The content from 5-8 years was combined with content from 9-12 years and 12-15 years to compile a review across grades. However, the content from 15-18+ was later excluded from the analysis as there was minimal relevant content. The content was organised as yes, meaning present; somewhat, meaning the indicator is present to some degree; or no. Comments were written in the comments column to identify the subject, grade, book and page number of the relevant content. Key government publications and other grey literature were used to complete tabs on relevant public health and education data, relevant legal and policy context, objectives and principles of the programme, integration of LSE within the national curriculum, teaching and learning approaches and environment, teacher training, and monitoring and evaluation. Sources are summarised in the references section of this report.

## TECHNICAL WORKSHOP:

A consultative three-day workshop was held in Dhaka from 25-27 May 2024. Participants were organised into groups for five key carrier subjects of life skills education content: Digital Technology, History and Social Science, Life and Livelihoods, and Science and Wellbeing. Each group included a curriculum writer for that subject from the NCTB, a master trainer of the subject, and an LSE expert. LSE experts included psychologists and staff from non-governmental organisations specialising in psychosocial well-being and out-of-school LSE programmes.

Each of the five subject groups identified LSE content and organised it by key concept area. Groups then used hard copies of the SERAT Content pages for 9-12 years to complete an analysis of content from grade 6 and 12-15 years for content in grades 7, 8 and 9. Groups then completed tabs for teaching and learning approaches and teacher training. Participants identified strengths and areas for improvement in content, teaching and learning approaches and teacher training by subject and presented them to the wider group. Results from the SERAT analysis were typed up and compiled across subjects, where a 'somewhat' or 'yes' from any subject was used as the response for all. Preliminary results of the comprehensiveness of content were compiled for 9-12 years and 12-15 years and shared with participants at the workshop.

A complete list of participants can be found in Appendix 2.

## STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATIONS:

Stakeholder consultation guides were developed to conduct focus group discussions with adolescent girls and boys in grades 7 and 8 and teachers. Questions were adapted from previous research on LSE conducted in the region and online by UNESCO. Consent forms were shared with schools for parents to sign.

Consultations were conducted with stakeholders from 4 junior secondary schools, including two general education schools (one public and one private) and 2 Madrasahs. Of these, one general education and one Madrasah were visited in the Noakhali district and Dhaka. Activities included three key informant interviews with head teachers, three focus group discussions with teachers, three focus group discussions with adolescent boys and three focus group discussions with adolescent girls from grades 7 and 8 combined. These grades were selected to align with the national rollout, where these students began receiving the competency-based curriculum in 2023. Groups were organised by gender. Teachers selected students to participate based on their willingness and likelihood of engaging in the discussion. Activities were conducted in Bengali with interpretation for the consultant. Key informant interviews were also conducted with Directors from NCTB.

A complete and detailed list of participants is in Appendix 3.



## RESULTS FROM STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION



### KNOWLEDGE CHANGE IN STUDENTS

Students reported feeling more informed and aware of life skills content. They expressed a greater understanding of gender stereotypes and norms, particularly those related to girls' roles in household labour and the workforce. Students found the content on pubertal changes, menstrual hygiene management, child marriage prevention, emotion management, and relationships to be the most useful. Additionally, students reported that they had uncovered and corrected myths about menstruation, wet dreams, and other pubertal changes, leading to a more accurate understanding of adolescence.



### BEHAVIOUR CHANGES IN STUDENTS

Students reported improved communication with their teachers and an increased tendency to seek help, particularly from GEMS teachers in schools where the GEMS programme was implemented. Students shared stories of successfully preventing child marriages with the support of their parents and schools. Students reported a notable reduction in teasing and bullying, especially from boys towards girls, and a decrease in violence among boys. Students mentioned that relationships between boys and girls became more respectful, with increased cooperation in group activities and fewer inappropriate interactions. Girls reported feeling more comfortable attending school during menstruation and discussing related topics with their teachers, resulting in increased school attendance.



### ATTITUDINAL CHANGE IN STUDENTS

Students reported a significant decline in shyness about discussing life skills content, with students becoming more confident in discussing these topics with their peers and teachers. Students reported a shift in gender norms, with a greater acceptance of women working outside the home and an increased understanding of the importance of respectful relationships between boys and girls. The acceptability of child marriage decreased, and students expressed an increased desire to protect their peers from getting married early. Students reported feeling safer and more confident in asking questions and seeking help from teachers. They observed noticeable changes in teachers' capacity and openness after attending the GEMS teacher training.



### SATISFACTION

Overall, students, teachers, and headteachers expressed high satisfaction with the competency-based curriculum. Most students said they were very satisfied with the changes, noting the positive impact on student engagement and learning. Students particularly appreciated the competency-based curriculum's practical and relevant nature.



## ACCEPTABILITY OF CONTENT

The competency-based curriculum was reported to be widely accepted among headteachers, teachers, parents, and students. Teachers and students said all content was being taught, except in some schools where content on gender diversity in grade 7 of History and Social Science was considered controversial and not taught. The GEMS curriculum was particularly well-received. Both teachers and students expressed a desire for more life skills content to be introduced earlier, starting from grades 4 and 5, especially on topics such as child marriage prevention, menstruation, and pubertal changes. Teachers requested more content on ethics and, values, and activities overall, while students wanted more information on STIs and HIV and violence prevention and response.



## PEDAGOGY

Teachers reported that the new curriculum promotes life skills development, increases student confidence, encourages teamwork and creativity, and emphasises experiential learning. Teachers mentioned that the performance-based assessment method reduces pressure on students while promoting and building life skills. However, teachers also noted challenges related to classroom setup for teamwork, material availability, and large class sizes. They also reported the need for more ICT equipment, additional content in the curriculum, including illustrations and cartoons, and teaching aids to support them, including anatomical images.



## TEACHERS' TRAINING

Teachers reported greater openness and awareness as a result of GEMS training. Teachers reported feeling more aware of and confident in supporting relationship management amongst students, including responding to bullying and supporting safe environments, especially after participating in GEMS training. Teachers felt more comfortable with the content and noticed improvements in their teaching quality. However, some teachers expressed concerns about combining subjects, which means they no longer align with their expertise. For example, a physical education teacher is now responsible for teaching all content in the Wellbeing subject. Teachers also expressed a need for more capable master trainers and training that reflects the pedagogy of the competency-based curriculum.



## REFERRALS AND SUPPORT SYSTEMS

Teachers reported actively referring students to services (e.g., child helpline, national helpline) and health centres for additional support. Students also mentioned using these resources to seek help in difficult situations.



## SCHOOL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

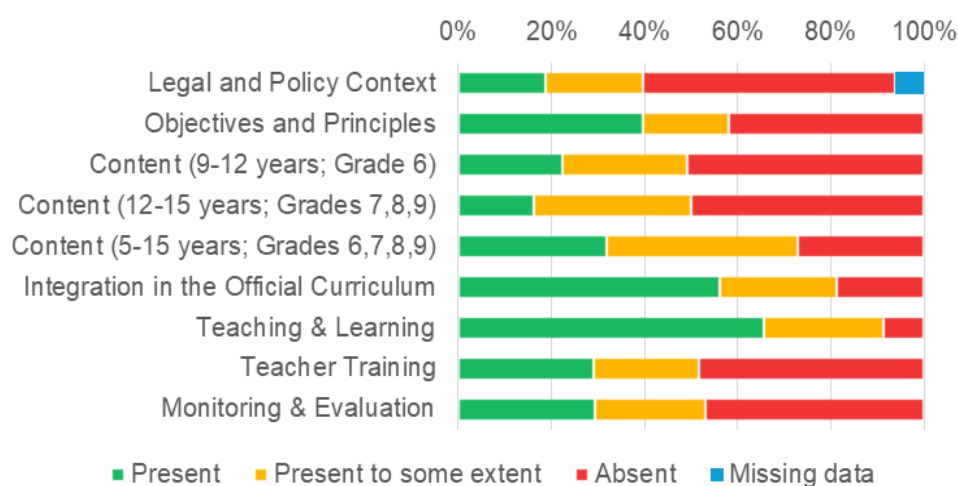
Head teachers had differing opinions and responses about married students attending schools; some did not allow it, and others actively encouraged re-entry. Teachers mentioned that sexual harassment prevention committees have been established to address this issue proactively.



## RESULTS FROM SERAT

This section summarises results from each area of the SERAT analysis. Chart 2 summarises these findings, which are discussed in more detail later.

Chart 2: Summary of results from SERAT Analysis



## EDUCATION AND PUBLIC HEALTH DATA

This section provides a snapshot of key statistics and data on the education and public health of adolescents and young people

in Bangladesh. These factors are crucial in understanding the context for LSE and identifying priorities for curricula development.

### ADOLESCENTS AND YOUTH DEMOGRAPHICS IN BANGLADESH:



**34 million**  
adolescents aged  
10-19 in 2022



**One-fifth**  
of the total  
population

Bangladesh has a significant youth population, with approximately 34 million adolescents aged 10-19 in 2022 (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics). This represents one-fifth of the total population, highlighting the need for investment in their education and well-being and prioritisation to ensure access to accurate, age- and developmentally-appropriate LSE.

## SCHOOL ENROLMENT TRENDS:



**20,000** schools

**12.2 million**

Total number of students in Junior secondary education

Including

**1.5 million**

Madrassa students



**97.8%**

primary school enrollment rate

**83.7%**

Girls enrollment in junior secondary schools

**66.6%**

Boys enrollment rate in junior secondary schools



**32.9%**

Dropout rates for boys and girls in junior secondary schools in 2023



**2023**

**22.5%**

Girls' dropout rate in senior secondary



**2022**

**47.7%**

**2023**

**57.2%**

Gross enrolment in higher secondary education

In 2023, over 12.2 million students were enrolled in junior secondary education (grades 6 to 10), including approximately 1.5 million in Madrasah education (BANBEIS, 2024). These students were enrolled across approximately 32,254 schools (BANBEIS, 2024). In 2023, the net enrolment rate (NER) in primary education was 97.8% and has been consistent for the past 10 years (DPE, 2024). While the achievement of near-universal primary education must be celebrated, enrolment rates

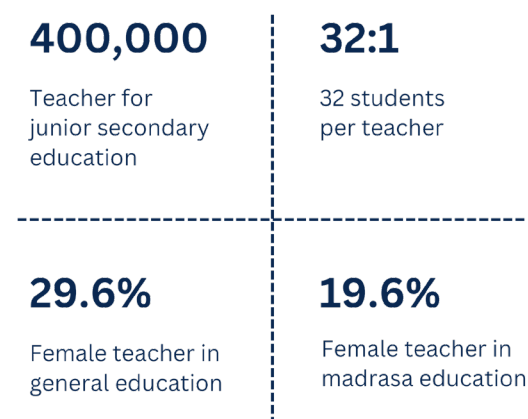
decline from primary to secondary, with less than three-quarters of young people enrolled in junior secondary schools (a net enrollment rate of 72.2% and a gross enrollment rate of 74.81%) (BANBEIS, 2024). Enrolment in junior secondary is noticeably lower for boys (66.6%) than for girls (83.7%) in 2023, a pattern consistent for over a decade (GER) (BANBEIS, 2024).

The dropout rates for boys and girls in junior secondary schools declined to 32.9% in 2023 (BANBEIS, 2024). This trend was disrupted in 2020 for boys and 2020 and 2021 for girls when dropout rates increased due to the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent school closures (BANBEIS, 2024).

Gross enrolment in higher secondary education is increasing, from 47.7% in 2022 to 57.2% in 2023 (BANBEIS, 2024). Girls' dropout rate in senior secondary was higher than boys': 22.5% and 20.5%, respectively, in 2023 (BANBEIS, 2024). This suggests that almost half of the young people did not continue to higher education, emphasising the critical need to provide age-appropriate LSE to young people in junior and senior secondary schools.

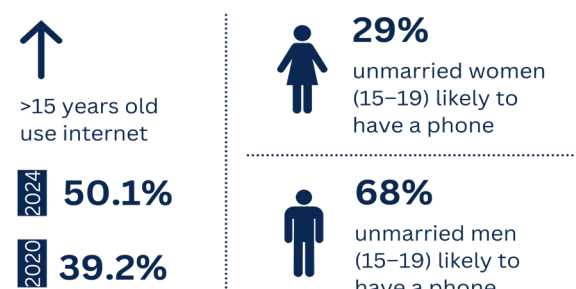


## STUDENT-TO-TEACHER RATIO:



More than 400,000 teachers are responsible for junior secondary education in Bangladesh (BANBEIS, 2024). Less than a third of teachers are female (29.6%) in general education, and less than a fifth are female (19.6%) in madrasah education (BANBEIS, 2024). The ratio of students to teachers was 32 students per teacher in secondary education (BANBEIS, 2024).

## USE OF TECHNOLOGY:



The use of and access to technology, including the internet, is increasing rapidly in Bangladesh. In 2024, 50.1% of people aged 15 and older were using the internet, an increase from 39.2% in 2020 (BBS, 2024). This highlights the importance of technology-based safety and communication as a critical focus of the curriculum. Young unmarried women aged 15–19 are much less likely to have a mobile phone than young unmarried men in the same age group (29% versus 68%) (NIPORT and ICF, 2023).

## CHILD MARRIAGE:

A significant concern for Bangladesh is the high prevalence of child marriage and adolescent childbearing, which limit young women's educational attainment, ability to fulfil their rights, and lifelong income potential. The Child Marriage Restraint Act of 2017 prohibits marriage before age eighteen for women and age twenty-one for men. Despite this, in 2023, 8.2% of 20–24-year-old women reported to have married before age 15. This reflects a

concerning increase from 6.5% in 2022 and 4.7% in 2021 (BBS, 2024). In 2023, 41.6% of 20–24-year-old women reported being married before age 18, with higher rates in rural compared to urban settings (44.4% and 33.5%) (BBS, 2024). The mean age of marriage is lower among women than men (18.4 years and 24.1 years, respectively) (BBS, 2024), which is expected given the inconsistency of ages in the marriage law, and yet raises

concerns for imbalances in power, and risk of gender-based violence. Staying in secondary school has a positive effect on delaying early marriage. The Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey 2022 identified that 60% or more of women aged 20–24 who have

not completed secondary schooling marry before 18, compared with 32% of those who have completed secondary school or higher (NIPORT and ICF, 2023).

**2023 8.2%**

20-24-year-old women have married before age 15

**4.7%** → **6.5%**  
in 2021 in 2022

**2023 41.6%**

20-24-year-old women married before age 18

<b>44.4%</b>	<b>33.5%</b>
Rural settings	Urban settings

 **18.4** years

 **24.1** years

mean age of marriage for women and men respectively

**60% v/s 32%**



women aged 20–24 who have not completed secondary schooling marry before 18 v/s who have completed secondary school or higher marry before 18

## ADOLESCENT PREGNANCY:



**1 in 10**

Adolescent girls aged 15-19 years old report sexual relationships before age 15



**84.3 live births per 1,000**

Among adolescents girls aged 15 to 19



**1 in 4 (24%)**

women aged 15–19 have ever been pregnant, and almost **one in five (18%)** have had a live birth

Linked to early marriage, high fertility rates and adolescent pregnancies are key concerns in Bangladesh. One in ten adolescent girls aged 15-19 years old reported start sexual relationships before age 15, reflecting the need for age-appropriate and accurate LSE before sexual initiation (NIPORT and ICF, 2023). The adolescent fertility rate remains high, with 84.3 live births per 1,000 adolescents aged 15 to 19 (BBS, 2024). One in four (24%) women aged 15–19 have ever been pregnant, and almost one in five (18%) have had a live birth (NIPORT and ICF, 2023).



## MATERNAL MORTALITY RATIO:



**89.6 per 100,000**

The maternal mortality ratio of women aged 15-49



**6.1%**

Maternal deaths in 2022 were among 18-19-year-olds

Adolescent pregnancies pose risks for both mothers and children. In 2024, the maternal mortality ratio was 89.6 per 100,000 women aged 15-49, showing an increasing trend from 2021 (DGHS, 2024). Assessments by the Maternal Health Program indicate that 6.1% of maternal deaths in 2022 were among 18-19-year-olds (DGHS, 2023).

## CONTRACEPTION ACCESS AND USE:

Married adolescents aged 15-19 years using any form of modern contraception have increased to 51% (NIPORT and ICF, 2023). However, the unmet need for contraception is 12.7% among married adolescents aged 15-19 years (NIPORT and ICF, 2023), and this figure does not account for the needs of unmarried adolescents who face significant barriers to access.



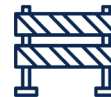
**51%**

Married adolescents aged 15-19 years using any form of modern contraception have increased to this percentage



**12.7%**

Unmet need for contraception is 12.7% among married adolescents aged 15-19 years



Unmarried adolescents who face significant barriers to access to contraception

## MENTAL HEALTH:



**12.6%**

In 2019, the prevalence of mental disorders in children aged 7 to 17 years old



**93%**

Children lacked access to treatment



**10 per 100,000 population**

Suicide rates among young people

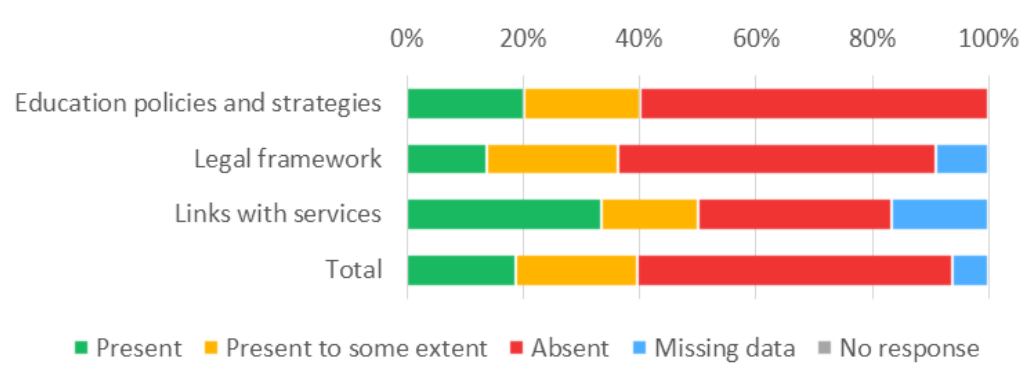
The prevalence of mental disorders in children aged 7 to 17 years old was 12.6% in 2019, yet 93% of children lacked access to treatment (NIMH, 2021). Suicide rates among young people have increased to 10 per 100,000 population (BBS, 2024), reflecting growing concerns about mental health among young people.

## LEGAL AND POLICY CONTEXT:

Bangladesh has made significant commitments to address adolescent rights, education, health, well-being, and empowerment. However, key

gaps remain for children and young people to fulfil their rights. The findings are summarised below in Chart 3.

Chart 3: Legal and Policy Context for LSE



An analysis of the legal and policy framework for LSE revealed that 44% of the recommended indicators were present or present to some extent. Similarly, education policies and strategies met 40% of recommended indicators present or present to some extent. The

prohibitive and protective aspects of the legal framework to fulfil adolescents' sexual and reproductive rights were analysed, and 36% were present or present to some extent. Finally, 50% of indicators relating to links with services were present or present to some extent.

## RELEVANT INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENTS:

Bangladesh has ratified key international agreements such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). These commitments protect and promote children's and women's rights, including access to healthcare and education. Additionally, Bangladesh supports the International

Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) Programme of Action and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), specifically targeting health (Goal 3), education (Goal 4), and gender equality (Goal 5), which emphasise adolescent sexual and reproductive health education and strive to achieve gender equality.



## RELEVANT LAWS:

The Bangladesh Constitution underpins the nation's legal framework, reinforcing the right to education, public health, gender equality, and non-discrimination as outlined in Articles 17, 18, 19, and 28. Key legislation designed to enhance adolescents' health, well-being, and rights includes the Child Marriage Restraint Act (2017), which sets the legal marriage age at 18 for women and 21 for men. The Dowry Prohibition Act (1980), revised in 2018, criminalises the giving and receiving of dowries, aiming to alleviate financial pressures that can precipitate child marriages. Other crucial legislation include the Children Act (2013) for child protection, the Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act (2010) to safeguard women and children, and the

Digital Security Act (2018) to enhance cyber safety. Additionally, the High Court Directives on Sexual Harassment (2009) mandate educational institutions to establish committees to combat sexual harassment and foster a safer educational environment. In Bangladesh, homosexuality is criminalised under Section 377 of the Penal Code, and there is no legal recognition of same-sex relationships or protections for LGBTIQ+ individuals in civil matters. However, in 2013, hijra or transgender individuals were legally recognised as a third gender, marking a significant step toward inclusivity and rights for gender-diverse populations. Despite this, significant social stigma and exclusion persist.

Child Marriage Restraint Act (2017)	Sets the legal marriage age at 18 for women and 21 for men	Digital Security Act (2018)	Enhance cyber safety
Dowry Prohibition Act (1980) revised in 2018	Criminalises the giving and receiving of dowries, aiming to alleviate financial pressures that can precipitate child marriages	Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act (2010)	Safeguard women and children
High Court Directives on Sexual Harassment (2009)	Educational institutions have to establish committees to combat sexual harassment and foster a safer educational environment	Children Act (2013)	Child protection
		Section 377	Homosexuality is criminalised. No legal recognition of same-sex relationships or protections for LGBTIQ+ individuals in civil matters

## RELEVANT POLICIES:

Bangladesh's national policies supporting adolescents include the Eighth Five-Year Plan (2020-2025), which emphasises inclusive development in education, health, and gender equality. The Ministry of Education's National Education Policy (2010) is the primary policy guiding the education sector, ensuring the right to education and promoting gender equality. However, neither explicitly addresses LSE. Furthermore, there is no policy ensuring the educational rights of pregnant adolescents or their re-entry into education after pregnancy.

Health-focused policies from the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MOHFW), such as the National Population Policy (2012) and the National Strategy for Adolescent Health (2016-2020), aim to improve adolescent health by ensuring access to youth-friendly health services and promoting sexual and reproductive health (SRH) education, explicitly stating the need for LSE. However, gaps exist in policies and service provision for unmarried

adolescents, particularly regarding their access to SRH services, indirectly stigmatising their access to essential health services and information. While abortion is officially restricted, Bangladesh permits "menstrual regulation," a procedure used to regulate menstruation when a period is absent, allowing a form of legal pregnancy termination within 10 weeks of conception under specific conditions (MOHFW, 2021).

From the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, The National Women's Development Policy (2011), and the National Action Plans to Prevent Violence Against Women and Children (2013-2025) aim to advance gender equality and reduce gender-based violence. The Ministry of Science and Information & Communication Technology's National Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Policy (2018) enhances digital literacy and online safety.

Ministry	Policy		Priorities and gaps
Ministry of Education	National Education Policy (2010)		Ensures the right to education and promoting gender equality. However, does not address LSE. Moreover, there is no policy ensuring the educational rights of pregnant adolescents or their re-entry into education after pregnancy.
Ministry of Health and Family Welfare	National Population Policy (2012)	National Strategy for Adolescent Health (2016-2020)	Improves adolescent health by ensuring access to youth-friendly health services and promoting sexual and reproductive health (SRH) education, explicitly stating the need for LSE. Gaps exist in policies and service provision for unmarried adolescents,
Ministry of Women and Children Affairs	National Women's Development Policy (2011)	National Action Plans to Prevent Violence Against Women and Children (2013-2025)	Advances gender equality and reduce gender-based violence
Ministry of Science and Information & Communication Technology	National Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Policy (2018)		Enhances digital literacy and online safety.



## EDUCATION STRUCTURE:

Bangladesh's secondary education system comprises three streams: general education, Madrasah education, and technical and vocational education and training (TVET). The Ministry of Primary and Mass Education (MOPME) is responsible for pre-primary and primary education from grades 1 to 5. Primary education is intended for students aged 6 to 10 years old. The Department of Secondary and Higher Education (DSHE) of the Ministry of Education is responsible for secondary education from grades 6 to 12 and higher education, including tertiary and technical and vocational education, intended for students aged 11 and above.

At present, primary education up to grade 5 is compulsory and free. This is mandated by the Primary Education (Compulsory) Act of 1990 and Article 17 of the Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh of 1972. According to the National Education Policy 2010, basic primary education was to be expanded to grade 8 by 2018. The Ministry of Education recently announced that compulsory and free or low-cost primary education will be

expanded to grade 8 (Dhaka Tribune, 2024).

Madrasah education is an independent stream regulated by the Madrasah Education Board, which specialises in Islamic education. There are different forms of Madrasah education in Bangladesh, but only Alia or government-supported Madrasah are of focus for this review. Madrasah education includes Ibtidai for grades 1 to 5, Dakhil for grades 6 to 8 and 9 to 10 (NCTB, 2021). Alia Madrasah education is implementing the competency-based national curriculum, with an additional learning area of Islamic studies, which includes five subjects (NCTB, 2021).

The Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) system provides vocational programmes for secondary education from grade 8 and is managed by the Directorate of Technical Education. The National Curriculum Framework 2021 aligns TVET with general education and is considered an equitable pathway that equips students with industry-relevant skills.

## LINKS WITH SERVICES:

There are no specific guidelines for implementing health services in schools, including sexual and reproductive health services. The National Education Policy 2010 emphasises the need for psychosocial support and student counselling. The National Strategy for Adolescent Health 2017-2030, issued by the Ministry of Health and Family

Welfare, highlights the importance of scaling up adolescent and youth-friendly health services (2016). Referrals to hotlines for reporting issues like child marriage and sexual harassment, as well as accessing counselling services, are well known, considered reliable and are referenced in both teachers' guides and student books.

## OBJECTIVES AND PRINCIPLES

This section outlines findings about the overall curriculum objectives related to LSE, including relevant skills it promotes and principles used to design the curriculum.

Chart 4 Objectives and principles for LSE

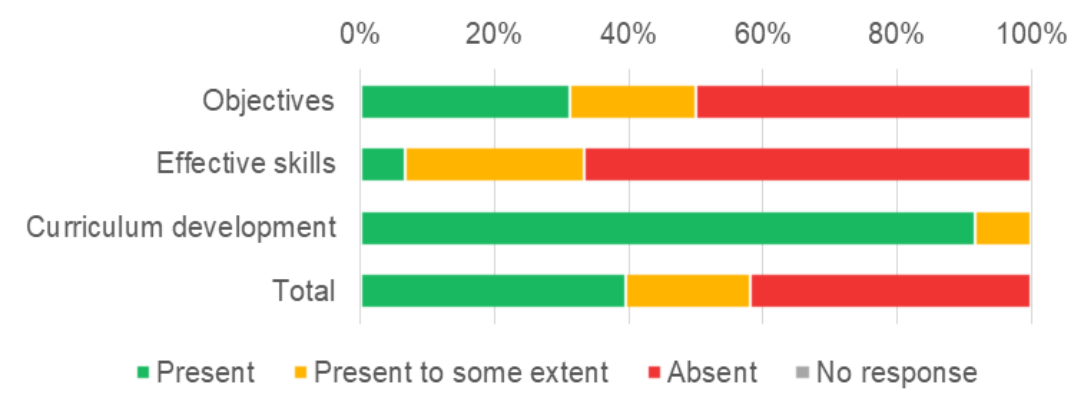


Chart 4 summarises the results from the analysis of objectives and principles related to LSE. 40% of recommended objectives and

principles were present, and 58% were present and present to some extent.

### CURRICULUM OBJECTIVES:

Approximately **30%** of the recommended objectives of the LSE curriculum were present, and **50%** were present or present to some extent.

The National Curriculum Framework 2021, developed by the NCTB, adopts a competency-based curriculum. It defines competency as the capacity to adapt to change through knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes. This definition encompasses elements of human dignity and social justice, including gender, equity, and respect for diversity, linking to the Constitution of Bangladesh, which advocates for human rights protection. The focus on knowledge, attitude, and skills-based objectives, as well as being grounded in

human rights and gender equality, are positive achievements necessary for a comprehensive and effective LSE programme (UNESCO et al., 2018). The National Education Policy 2010 further supports this by aiming to reduce discrimination, eradicate gender disparity, and foster respect for human rights through rights-based approaches (MOE, 2010).

The National Curriculum Framework 2021 promotes inclusivity and gender transformative approaches, focusing on developing critical thinking skills and empowering learners to challenge and change prevailing gender norms and discrimination. It promotes equal participation of all students without bias, including transgender individuals. While the



Wellbeing subject competency statement includes objectives on fostering safe, healthy relationships and managing the changes and challenges of adolescence, it lacks specific

objectives on sexual and reproductive health, such as reducing child marriage, unintended pregnancies, STIs, and HIV.

#### EFFECTIVE SKILLS:

Only **7%** of the recommended effective skills were present, and **33%** were present and somewhat present.

Competency-based curricula emphasise skill development as a core component of competency-based learning. These support social and emotional learning, empowerment, and cognitive development. The skills of focus in the curricula include critical thinking, creative thinking, problem-solving, decision-making, communication, self-management, collaboration, global citizenship, employability, foundational numeracy and literacy, and digital

literacy (NCTB, 2021).

While subjects strongly emphasise developing help-seeking behaviours and communication skills, such as negotiation, assertiveness, and refusal skills, the curriculum lacks examples and opportunities to apply these skills for managing safe romantic or sexual relationships, such as communication skills for healthy consensual romantic relationships. Moreover, while some activities address navigating social and gender norms, more opportunities are needed to practice and apply these skills effectively in real-life scenarios.

#### CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT:

**92%** of the indicators related to curriculum development were present, suggesting an effective, responsive development process.

Research was conducted between 2017 and 2019 to analyse the education situation and assess learners' needs (NCTB, 2021). The curriculum revision and development process used this research and included experts on gender and sexual and reproductive health and rights, educational psychologists, and education experts (NCTB, 2021). The process involved consultations with parents and guardians, teachers and specialists, and

young people (NCTB, 2021). The curriculum was piloted in 2022 before the national rollout (NCTB).

A new learning area, Physical and Mental Health and Wellbeing, was introduced in the competency-based curriculum and covered in a standalone subject—Wellbeing. Wellbeing is recognised as the primary carrier subject for LSE content, particularly content on the human body and development and sexual and reproductive health. The curriculum is under continuous review, with annual updates to the content in both student and teacher materials.







# CONTENT

This section presents results from the content analysis of the grades 6 to 9 curricula of 9 subjects of the competency-based national curricula. The International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education (ITGSE; UNESCO et al., 2018) recommends content that is considered age and developmentally appropriate in 4 different age groups. For this review, grade 6 curricula were analysed against the 9 to 12-year-old-group, as students are expected to be 11 years old; and grades 7,

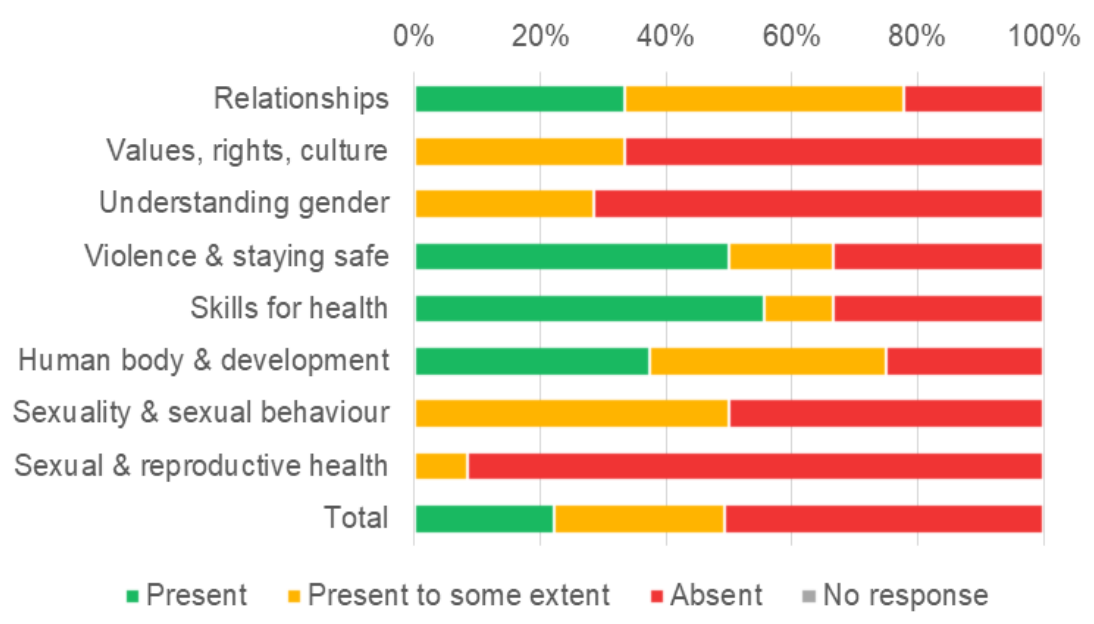
8 and 9 were analysed against the 12–15-year-old group, as students are expected to be 12, 13 and 14 years old, respectively. Given the high dropout rates in junior secondary education and the high rates of child marriage and early pregnancy, age-appropriate content is crucial. The analysis also reviews content based on comprehensiveness by eight key concept areas outlined in ITGSE, where a range of content across these eight areas is expected for a comprehensive programme.

## CONTENT RECOMMENDED FOR 9 - 12 YEARS FOR GRADE 6

Chart 5 shows the percentage of content included in the grade 6 curriculum recommended and considered age and

developmentally appropriate for 9–12-year-olds.

Chart 5: Content by key concept (9–12 years) for grade 6



Overall, **22%** of content was present for the 9-12 age group, and **27%** was somewhat present. Therefore, approximately half the content was present or present to some extent, and **50%** was not present.

Skills for Health and Wellbeing had the highest coverage of content present at 56%, followed by Violence and Staying Safe with 50% of content present. Human Body and Development had 38% of the recommended content present. When considering both present and somewhat present content, Relationships and Human Body and Development had more than three-quarters of content with 78% and 75%, respectively.

Sexuality and Sexual Behaviour, Sexual and Reproductive Health, Values, Rights and Culture and Understanding Gender had no recommended content present. All had content that was somewhat present. Sexual and Reproductive health was the lowest, with less than 10% of content somewhat present.

See Appendix 4 for recommended content analysis for each key concept for the 9-12 age group.

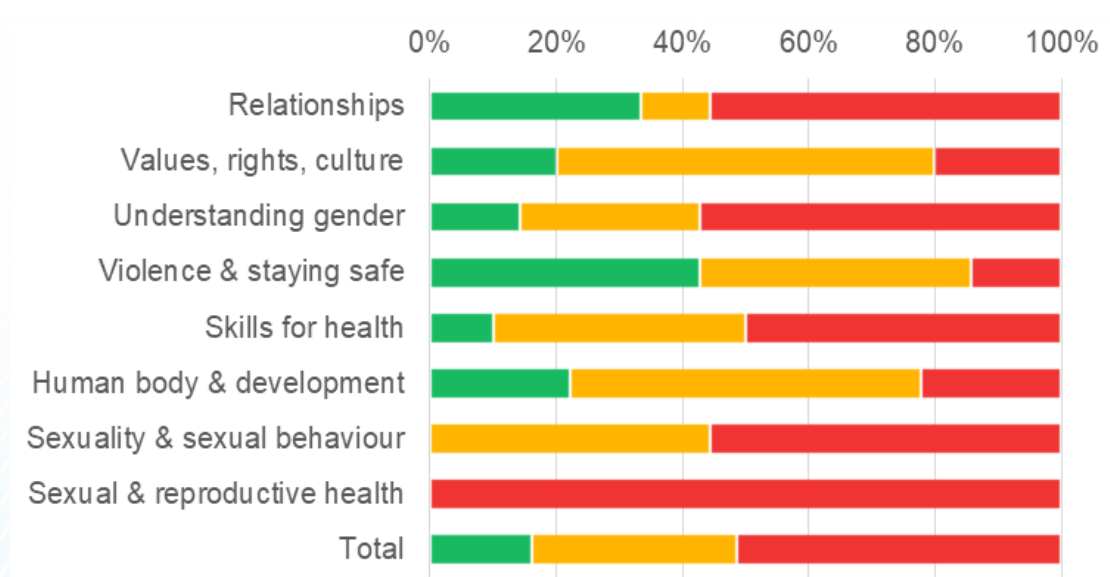
Although the curricula include relevant content, significant gaps exist in delivering age-appropriate and comprehensive content.

## CONTENT RECOMMENDED FOR 12 - 15 YEARS FROM GRADES 7, 8 AND 9 CURRICULA

The curricula of grades 7, 8 and 9 of the nine subjects were reviewed and assessed against recommended content that is considered

age-appropriate for 12–15-year-olds and are summarised in Chart 6.

*Chart 6 Content by key concept (12-15 years old) for grades 7, 8 & 9.*





A total of **16%** of recommended content was present, with an additional **34%** of content somewhat present, totalling half of the content was present or present to some extent.

Violence and staying safe had the highest percentage of recommended content present at 43%, increasing to 86% when considering content that was somewhat present.

Relationships followed with 33% of content present. Values, Rights and Sexuality, and Human Body and Development had 80% and 78%, respectively, when considering content present and somewhat present. There was no recommended content for Sexual and

Reproductive Health, and Sexuality and Sexual Behaviour had no content fully present but had 44% present to some extent. See Appendix 5 for a recommended content for each key concept for the 12-15 age group.

Beyond the content captured for the 12-15 age group, the grades 7, 8 and 9 curricula include LSE content not delivered at an age-appropriate level - content designed for younger learners. This is discussed further in the following section of this report. A fundamental limitation for this age group is the lack of discussion and application of relevant life skills to discussions and situations involving romantic and sexual relationships.

## CONTENT COMPREHENSIVENESS FOR THREE AGE GROUPS (5 TO 15 YEARS OLD) IN GRADES 6 TO 9

This section analyses the comprehensiveness of content from grades 6 to 9 across nine subjects. Unlike prior analyses, which focused on age-appropriateness, this analysis aims to evaluate the comprehensiveness of content regardless of the recommended age groups,

including content from 5-8, 9-12, and 12-15 years. It intentionally includes recommended content for 5-8 years, as due to the gaps in LSE in primary education, foundational concepts and content need to be covered from the start of junior secondary in grade 6.

Chart 7 Content by key concept (5-15 years old) from grades 6 to 9

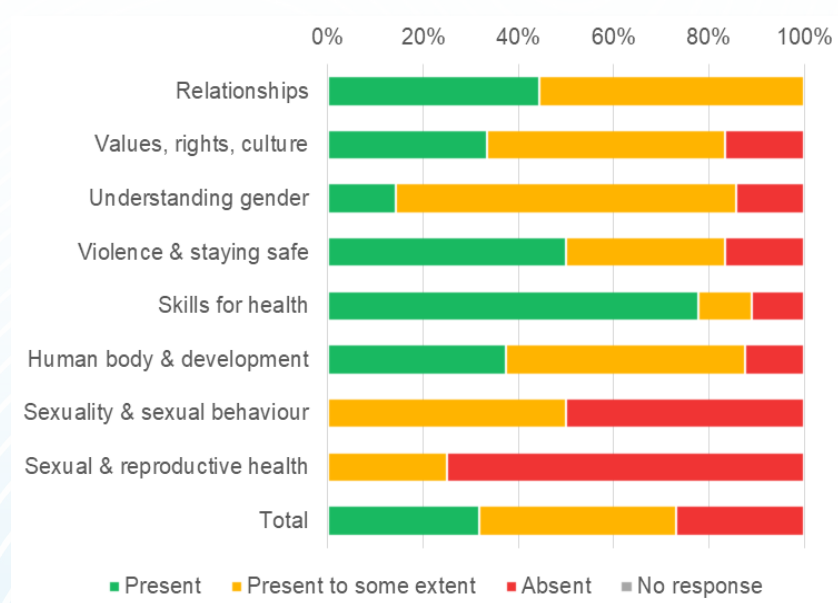


Chart 7 summarises the results of the comprehensiveness of content across three age groups—5 to 8 years, 9 to 12 years, and 12 to 15 years—within the grades 6 to 9 curricula.

Overall, **32%** of all recommended content for these age groups was covered across nine subjects of the national curriculum, and **73%** of content was present or present to some extent.

Violence and Staying Safe and Skills for Health and Wellbeing had the highest content coverage, with 57% present each. Relationships and Values, Rights, Culture and Sexuality covered approximately 40% of the

recommended content. Sexuality and Sexual Behaviour and Sexual and Reproductive Health had the lowest content coverage at 5% and 3%, respectively.

As there is minimal reference to romantic and sexual relationships beyond sexual abuse, this curriculum would not be considered comprehensive. A comprehensive approach to sexuality education is most effective and promotes options other than abstinence. There are no explicit references to abstinence, but the lack of age-appropriate information regarding sexuality, sexual and reproductive health, reproduction, and the impact of gender roles in romantic and sexual relationships, including as parents, is limiting.

## CONTENT BY TYPE AND FOCUS FOR THREE AGE GROUPS (5 TO 15 YEARS OLD) IN GRADES 6 TO 9

This section analyses content across learning domains or types - knowledge, attitudes and skills, where a range of learning objectives across domains is essential for LSE programmes to be effective. Content was also analysed for the focus of learning: gender,

norms and rights, which underpin effective LSE programmes that advance gender equality, promote human rights and challenge harmful social norms. The focus areas are intended to be covered as specific content areas and as integrated approaches across the curricula.

Chart 8 Content by type and focus of learning for recommended content for 5-15 years

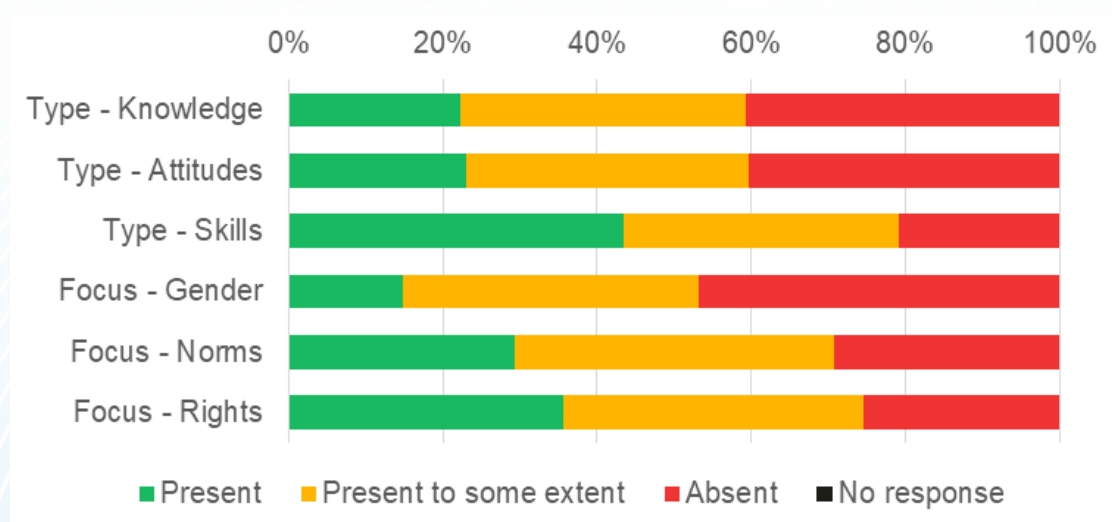




Chart 8 shows results from the content analysis by type and focus for 5-8, 9-12 and 12-15 age groups from grades 6, 7, 8 and 9.

The analysis shows a strong emphasis on skills development in the competency-based curricula, with **43%** present and **79%** present or somewhat present. Knowledge and attitudes had less content represented, with less than a quarter of the content present and **60%** present or somewhat present.

Rights-related content is the most prominent area of focus, with 36% of the content present and 75% present and present to some extent. Rights-based approaches are integrated across subjects and include content on bullying, violence prevention and responding to sexual abuse.

Social norms-related content had 29% present and 71% present or present to some extent. Gender-focused content had the lowest results, with 15% present and 53% present or somewhat present. History and Social Science covers some concepts of gender, such as defining gender, gender identity and

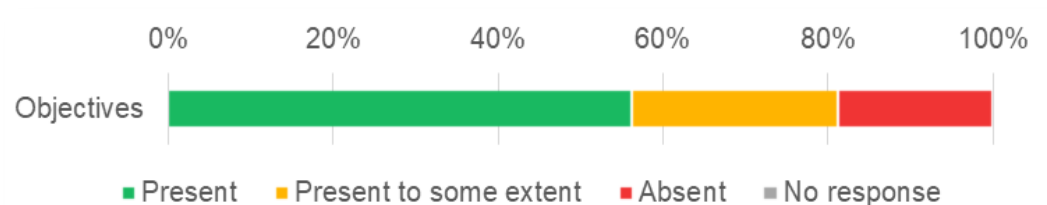
biological sex, with questions to guide learners to critically reflect on gender norms in grade 8. There are examples across subjects that promote gender norms transformation. For instance, in Life and Livelihoods, the story of a boy learning to cook rice with his mother challenges gender stereotypes in grade 7. Despite efforts to promote rights and gender equality across subjects, there was limited critical reflection on the impact of gender norms, power and its link to gender-based violence, and there is a need to enhance the consistency and depth of critical reflection on norms.

The curriculum features examples throughout subjects that promote inclusivity. For instance, illustrations and stories depict individuals with physical (e.g., using a wheelchair) and sensory disabilities (e.g., hard of hearing, visually impaired). Some gender inclusivity is evident, such as in Social Science grade 8 and Wellbeing grade 9, which include examples of transgender people and emphasise the importance of inclusivity. However, references to sexual diversity are notably absent.

## INTEGRATION

This section assesses the integration of sexuality education into the national curriculum and is summarised in Chart 9.

Chart 9: Integration of LSE into the National Curriculum



**56%** of the recommended means of integration are met, and **81%** are present or present to some extent.

From grades 6 to 10, the competency-based national curriculum has ten compulsory subjects for all students, with Madrasah education including additional subjects covering Islamic teaching. LSE content is integrated into the curriculum across various subjects. Five subjects have been identified as key carrier subjects: Wellbeing, History and Social Science, Science, and Digital Technology. Wellbeing, History and Social Science, and Science are standalone subjects compulsory from grades 1 to 10. In contrast, Digital Technology, which starts as an integrated subject in primary, becomes a standalone subject from grades 6 to 10. All subjects are examinable, with an emphasis on formative and competency-based assessment. Teachers are required to teach the entire curriculum.

The quantity of LSE content is variable across subjects and grades. For instance, in grades 6 and 7, Wellbeing accounts for 8% of total teaching time, or 82 hours per year, decreasing to 7%, or 72 and 77 hours, in grades 8 and 9, respectively (NCTB, 2021), and in Science grades 6 and 9 have LSE content whereas grades 7 and 8 have very minimal LSE content. Table 1 summarises which subjects include the most content for each key concept from ITGSE (UNESCO et al., 2018).

Other subjects also incorporate LSE content to develop life skills such as communication and analytical skills in examples that address bullying, promote mental health and well-being, and foster gender-equitable roles in the family. For example, English lessons include scenarios on responding to bullying, and Mathematics uses dividing a cake equally between male and female siblings to teach fractions.



*Table: Carrier subjects of LSE by Key Concept*

Sl.	Key Concept	Primary carrier subjects
1	Relationships	Wellbeing, History and Social Science, Life and Livelihood
2	Values, rights, culture and sexuality	History and Social Science
3	Understanding gender	History and Social Science, Wellbeing
4	Violence and staying safe	Wellbeing, Digital Technology
5	Skills for health and development	Wellbeing, Digital Technology, Life and Livelihood
6	Human body and development	Wellbeing, Science
7	Sexuality and sexual behaviour	Wellbeing, Science
8	Sexual and reproductive health	Wellbeing, Science

Teachers' guides support cross-subject linkages, particularly in preventing child marriage, digital safety, and violence prevention, including bullying. For instance, in Digital Technology, students learn to use technology to respond to child marriage incidents in grade 6, and in Wellbeing, learners analyse the harms of child marriage in grade 7.

As the curriculum is being rolled out sequentially, LSE has not yet been implemented in all grades. The National Curriculum Framework 2021 (NCTB) does not define the competencies or subjects for grades 11 and 12. Therefore, it is unclear how LSE will be integrated across subjects with more time dedicated to elective subjects. No evidence was found of measures to safeguard LSE content in the curriculum, including to prevent dilution within subjects.

This review did not include grades 1 to 5 primary curriculum. Stakeholder consultations indicated that LSE content is limited due to ideological concerns with LSE at the primary

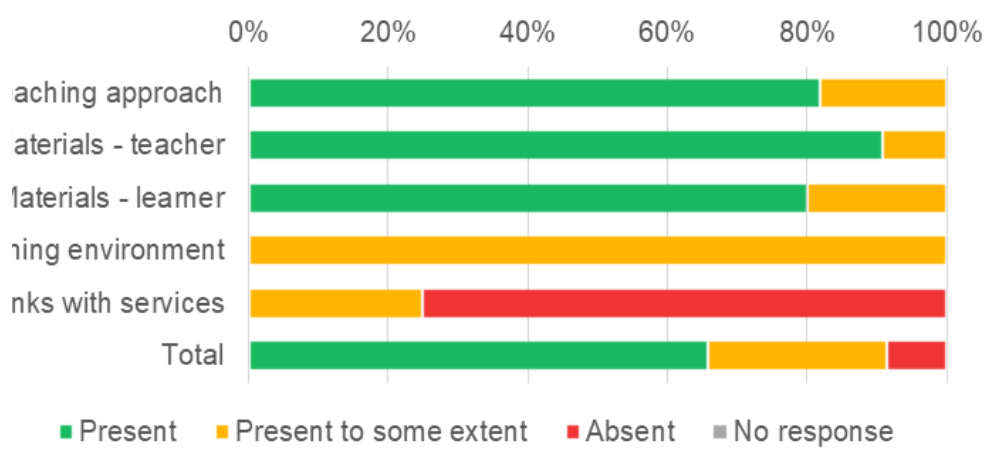
level. While there are political and cultural barriers to including age-appropriate content, such as discussions about adolescence and pubertal changes from upper primary, stakeholder consultations suggest that these barriers can be addressed, especially to incorporate age-appropriate content on adolescence, menstruation and child protection in primary education.

LSE is integrated through extra-curricular programmes. For example, the Gender Equity Movement in Schools (GEMS), an after-school LSE intervention of the Generation Breakthrough Project, a joint programme with UNFPA, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs, Plan International Bangladesh and Concerned Women for Family Development, is implemented in targeted schools. It is a 2-year gender equity and violence prevention curriculum designed for adolescents aged 12 to 14 years. Teachers receive training on this curriculum and lead the programme in schools.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING APPROACHES

This section analyses LSE’s teaching and learning approaches, including pedagogy, materials, the creation of supportive learning environments, and links with services. Chart 10 summarises these findings, showing that two-thirds of the recommended aspects were present, and 91% were present or somewhat present.

Chart 10 Teaching and learning approaches and environment



### TEACHING APPROACH

**100%** of the suggested indicators for teaching approaches were present or somewhat present.

In response to concerns about the “memorisation and examination-oriented education system” (NCTB, 2021) and poor educational outcomes, the pedagogy of the national curriculum has shifted to a competency-based educational framework. This change prioritises achieving competencies over mere subject matter knowledge, supporting a learner-centred approach—a significant departure from traditional teacher-

centred methods and an essential component of effective LSE programmes (UNESCO et al., 2018). The curriculum now incorporates a wide range of participatory strategies that support experiential learning, which is also considered essential for effective LSE (UNESCO et al., 2018). Examples include conducting interviews and surveys, creating role plays, organising health fairs, facilitating peer education, group work, and self-learning activities.

There has also been a significant change in how student learning is evaluated. Moving away from summative examinations to assess



a student's knowledge toward formative assessments to evaluate a student's learning to ensure that competencies are met, this shift is recommended for assessing competencies associated with LSE (UNESCO et al., 2018).

The Wellbeing Teachers' Guide provides information on promoting gender equality and inclusion in the classroom. It provides guidance on the inclusion of students with disabilities and strategies to promote gender equality in the classroom, such as adopting a zero-tolerance policy towards violence. This guidance was not found in the teachers' guides of other subjects.

## MATERIALS - TEACHERS

**100%** of the suggested aspects of teachers' materials were present or somewhat present.

Teachers' guides are available for each grade and subject and provide detailed outlines of subject-based competencies, the conceptualisation of the subject, and the competencies that students are expected to achieve. Each competency includes an experiential learning cycle with comprehensive explanations to guide teachers. According to the National Curriculum Framework (2021), each subject has a designated number of hours per year and week, such as the Wellbeing subject, which is scheduled for two 60-minute weekly sessions in grade 6.

Teachers' guides reflect the activities and information provided to students and primarily

There is a strong focus on life skills and social-emotional development, which are essential and influential determinants of a young person's health and well-being. These skills, practised across various subjects, include problem-solving, conflict resolution, goal setting, interpersonal and communication skills, emotional literacy, empathy, stress management, decision-making, self-awareness, creative thinking, and critical thinking. Some of these skills are applied to specific content and examples, such as using assertiveness skills to prevent bullying.

provide instructional information, with minimal subject-specific content provided through each competency. Each session explains the methods and tools required and provides step-by-step instructions to guide activities. In the Wellbeing subject, there is supplementary information at the end of each competency with relevant information for teachers. For instance, grade 7 includes extra content on HIV and STIs not found in the student book. There are some inaccuracies in the content provided, which would benefit from review.

Additional materials to support teachers in conducting experiential activities or to provide to students as reference materials could be beneficial. For example, the Wellbeing subject lists relevant resources on adolescence, including the Shahana cartoons.

## MATERIALS - LEARNERS

**80%** of the recommended indicators about learners' materials were present, and 100% were present or present to some extent.

All subjects provide student exercise books, a new initiative by the NCTB, and these books are distributed free of charge to all students. The exercise books feature descriptive explanations of activities, fostering self-directed learning. The amount of reference content varies by subject, grade and topic. For example, the History and Social Science books have much more descriptive information than the Wellbeing subject. The amount of content is intentionally limited. However, additional materials, including reference resources, could

be beneficial to ensure access to accurate and age-appropriate information relevant to LSE. The quantity and detail of reference content vary by subject, grade, and topic. For instance, the History and Social Science books are more like traditional textbooks, with a high quantity of written text. In contrast, the Wellbeing has more worksheet-style pages with less reference text. While the content is intentionally limited to reduce didactic methods and promote student-centred learning, access to accurate, age-appropriate information is essential for LSE. Therefore, the inclusion of additional materials and reference resources could be beneficial.

## LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

**100%** of the recommended aspects of creating a safe learning environment were somewhat present. However, none were fully present.

Guidance on privacy and confidentiality could be enhanced, including to reflect the needs of teachers for mandatory reporting of sexual abuse as per the High Court ruling. The Wellbeing subject's teacher's guide includes

additional content emphasising creating safe and inclusive learning environments. It features sections promoting gender equality and disability inclusiveness, which are absent in other subjects' guides. The guidance on privacy and confidentiality does not align with the requirements for mandatory reporting of sexual abuse as mandated by the High Court ruling and would benefit from review.

## LINKS WITH SERVICES

The current programme met **25%** of the suggested links to services to some degree.

Despite the lack of guidelines for providing health services in schools, including sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR)

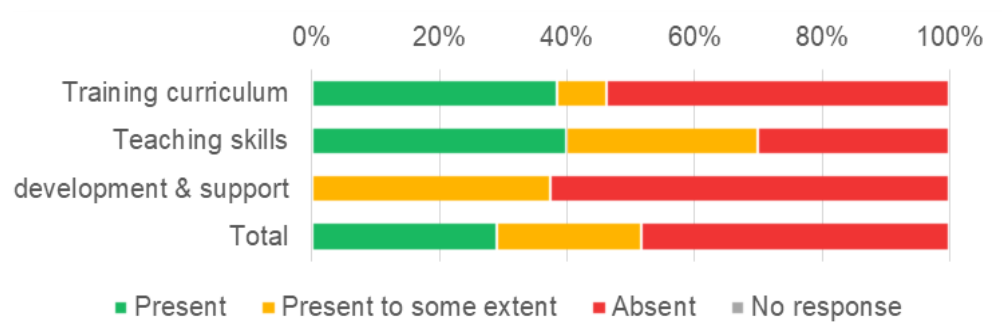
services, the curriculum strongly focuses on help-seeking behaviours. This focus is evident in the Wellbeing and Digital Technology subjects, which include identifying health and social services and developing communication skills to seek support.



## TEACHER TRAINING

This section summarises information on Teacher Training relevant to LSE, including in Chart 11.

Chart 11: Teacher Training



A third of the recommended indicators related to teacher training were covered by present,

and half were present or somewhat present.

### TRAINING CURRICULUM

Half of the recommended indicators for teachers' training curriculum were present or somewhat present.

To support the phased rollout of the competency-based national curriculum, the DSHE has implemented subject-specific in-service teacher training. This included eight training days for grades 6 and 7 curricula in December 2022 and grades 8 and 9 in December 2023. Given the significant task of reaching approximately 426,000 junior secondary teachers across 20,000 schools, the rollout involves multiple layers, including master trainers at national, district, and area levels (BANBEIS, 2023). As sexuality education is integrated across various subjects, teachers receive training specific to the content

integrated into the subjects they teach for each grade. This can result in teachers being unfamiliar with LSE concepts outside their expertise. For example, English teachers teach content about bullying. The training covers the competencies for each subject and grade and formative and summative assessments. It includes information about the national curriculum framework, the conceptualisation of each subject, and its purpose. However, LSE is not explicitly recognised or discussed in these training sessions. Pre-service teacher training, delivered by teacher training colleges and Madrasah Teacher Training Institutes, has not yet been updated to reflect the competency-based national curriculum.

## TEACHING SKILLS

**40%** of recommended teaching skills were present, or **70%** were present or present to some extent.

Teacher training emphasises competency-based learning and focuses on utilising participatory learner-centred activities, planning and delivering sessions based on competencies incorporating knowledge, attitudes, and skills-based objectives, and fostering learners' critical thinking. The training also emphasises enhancing teachers'

competencies, particularly in classroom management, to create positive learning environments, manage student behaviour, and promote a culture of respect and collaboration (DHSE, n.d.). The National Curriculum Framework 2021 (NCTB) highlights the importance of training teachers to support gender transformative approaches, including identifying and addressing their personal biases and discriminatory attitudes.

## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT

**None** of the recommended professional development or support indicators were fully present, although **38%** were somewhat present.

There is limited training specific to teaching sexuality education as part of a whole school approach, such as training on how to respond to opposition and concerns from guardians and community members, how to address instances of school-based violence, or how to refer students to health or social services.

The competency-based national curriculum mandates ten compulsory subjects from grades 6 to 10. This is a change from previous curricula, where subjects have been combined or new content areas have been added. As a result, teachers are now required to teach content that may be outside their previous areas of expertise. For instance, a Physical Education teacher must now teach Wellbeing,

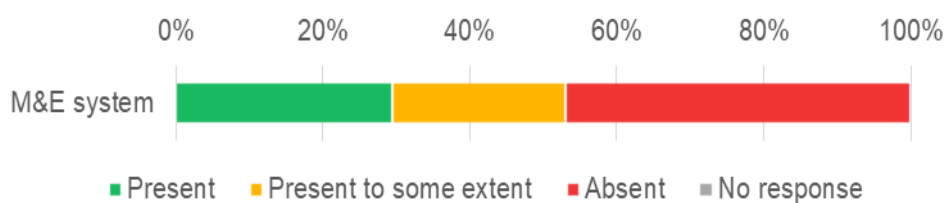
which includes physical education and health and life skills content. This highlights the importance of ongoing guidance, support and ongoing professional development for teachers, particularly those teaching key carrier subjects of LSE. In response to feedback about the quality of training delivered through training cascades, the NCTB plans to develop and roll out supplementary teacher training online via their website. No guidelines were found that reflect the minimum competencies and requirements for LSE programme educators. Examples from the GEMS programme and various non-governmental organisations (NGOs) suggest other efforts exist to provide continuous professional development to teachers.



## MONITORING AND EVALUATION

This section provides a brief overview of monitoring and evaluation related to LSE. Chart 12 illustrates the extent to which LSE and relevant data are captured within the education system's existing monitoring and evaluation efforts.

Chart 12 Monitoring and Evaluation of LSE Programmes



Approximately **half** of the indicators related to monitoring and evaluation of LSE were present or present to some extent.

Data on the sexual and reproductive health needs of young people in Bangladesh is captured through recent population-based

surveys such as the Bangladesh Demographic Health Surveys 2018 and 2022 and the Sample Vital Statistics Report 2023. However, significant gaps exist, including data on unmarried adolescents, as well as data on the prevalence and attitudes towards gender-based violence.

### EDUCATION SECTOR MONITORING AND EVALUATION:

The Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education (DSHE) Monitoring and Evaluation Wing (MEW) oversees the quality of secondary and higher education, including the implementation of the National Education Policy 2010 (MEW, n.d.). MEW also manages the Education Management Information System (eMIS). An annual school census conducted by DHSE for secondary and higher education and MOPME for pre-primary and primary education gathers data on student enrolment, gender parity, and dropout rates. However, reasons for dropout and re-enrolment are not included.

Following a high court ruling, DSHE developed and disseminated guidelines to all educational institutions to establish committees to respond to sexual harassment and abuse, including a monitoring system. However, it is unclear how this is monitored or what data is available.

As LSE is integrated across compulsory subjects at the secondary level, its reach can be measured by the percentage of schools implementing the competency-based curriculum. With the change in pedagogy of the competency-based national curriculum, there is a focus on assessing competencies.

For example, in grades 6 to 8, 80% of learning is through formative assessment, and 40% is summative assessment. Descriptive report cards assess proficiency in knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values that replace traditional marks-based systems. Further analysis of these indicators could support an outcome evaluation of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values relevant to LSE.

The National Curriculum Framework 2021 outlines the need to develop and implement a national assessment strategy to evaluate the entire education system and track learning progress. This strategy is still under development. No data on students' perceptions of LSE in the competency-based curriculum is currently available.





# RECOMMENDATIONS

## ALIGNMENT WITH EDUCATION AND HEALTH PRIORITIES

Align health and wellbeing priorities with public health data and educational trends.

Base decisions about LSE content inclusion, exclusion, and placement in each grade of the curricula based on health and education evidence, trends and priorities.

For example, to ensure that developmentally appropriate content on pregnancy prevention is taught before increases in dropout from education, sexual initiation and adolescent pregnancy.

## LEGAL AND POLICY CONTEXT

Advocate for including specific strategies to support adolescent health and well-being, including their sexual and reproductive health and rights and LSE in the National Education policy revision.

Advocate for a policy directive by the Ministry of Education that ensures girls and boys

the right to access education irrespective of marital, pregnancy or parenting status, with specific guidance on reintegration into the education system.

Sensitise teachers on relevant legal rights, including those of transgender people.

## PROGRAMME OBJECTIVES

Advocate for including health and wellbeing objectives within relevant policies to support LSE goals, including the fulfilment of sexual and reproductive health and rights, advancing gender equality, and the reduction of child

marriage, early and unintended pregnancy and gender-based violence.

Increase reference to gender transformative approaches and rights throughout competencies of carrier subjects of LSE.

## CONTENT:

Increase the comprehensiveness of LSE content across all key concepts, focusing on Sexuality and Sexual Behaviour and Sexual and Reproductive Health.

Increase the age-appropriateness of LSE

content from the 9–12 age group in grade 6 and the 12–15 age group in grades 7 to 9.

Increase accuracy and consistency of LSE content across subjects.

For example, definitions of basic concepts such as HIV in Science and Wellbeing and gender in History and Social Science.

Review the LSE content taught in Madrasah education to compare and address any inconsistencies with general education curricula.

Enhance content and focus on gender across subjects.

Include foundational concepts related to gender from grade 6 or earlier.

Revise content and concepts related to gender for accuracy and to ensure they are clearly defined.

Increase opportunities to critically reflect on gender norms, stereotypes and links between gender, power, inequality and gender-based violence throughout subjects and content areas.

Include references to gender diversity, such as the hijra community, across grades and in relevant subjects.

Enhance rights-based approach across curricula.

Include foundational concepts related to rights from grade 6 or earlier.

Explain the concept of rights from grade 6, enabling further references to Human Rights, children's rights, women's rights and sexual and reproductive rights throughout subjects.

Increase transformative norms reflection throughout curricula.

Advocate for LSE content to be incorporated into the primary curriculum.

Sensitise parents, guardians, and communities regarding the need for age-appropriate LSE in primary education.

## INTEGRATION

Advocate for including LSE content in primary education, specifically in Wellbeing, History and Social Science and Science subjects.

Incorporate accurate and age-appropriate LSE content, including rights-based and gender-transformative approaches, across subjects in the grade 10 curricula. Where possible, address gaps identified in the grade 6 to 9 curricula in grade 10.

Develop a scope and sequence document for comprehensive, age- and developmentally-appropriate LSE content in grades 11 and 12,

scaffolded from existing curricula in grades 6 to 10.

Develop a scope and sequence of age—and developmentally-appropriate content from primary through senior secondary that can serve as a roadmap for comprehensive, age—and developmentally appropriate LSE across a learner's schooling.

Address the impact of grades 6 and 7 becoming primary education on LSE integration.



## TEACHING AND LEARNING APPROACHES:

Increase strengths-based approaches that model positive behaviours and outcomes in situations.

For example, include more examples of positive peer influence in response to bullying, focusing more on the benefits of positive behaviour rather than the risks and negative consequences of certain behaviours.

Avoid abstinence and risk-based messaging around sexual and romantic relationships when they are included in the curricula.

Enhance gender transformative approaches across subjects.

Additional guidance for teachers and reflection questions that promote critical thinking around harmful gender norms could enhance the curriculum and support goals of gender equality, as well as a reduction in gender-based violence.

Incorporate trauma-informed approaches in content about violence and illness.

Utilising trauma-informed approaches within the curriculum could support safety in the classroom for all students and teachers.

Provide additional guidance for teachers in the teachers' guides and through supplementary materials to ensure activities reach the objectives of LSE, including promoting gender equality.

For example, to ensure that scenarios about bullying acknowledge that it is never a victim's fault. Provide more guidance to teachers to ensure gender norms and harmful behaviours are not reinforced.

Provide guidance to teachers about additional accurate and age-appropriate materials on LSE content that can be utilised in learning.

For example, given the acceptability and existence of these resources, incorporate information from the GEMS curriculum into the national curriculum, especially in grades 6 and 7.

## TEACHER TRAINING:

Enhance master and teacher training curricula of LSE carrier subjects to include skills for creating safe and supportive learning environments for LSE, such as child safeguarding and increasing gender responsiveness.

Review the master and teacher training curriculum to reflect the experiential and interactive pedagogy of the competency-based

curriculum.

Review GEMS teacher training strengths and incorporate them into LSE training for carrier subjects.

Develop minimum competencies relevant to LSE for teachers and master trainers.

Provide ongoing capacitation for master trainers who can provide in-depth and



specialised training to teachers, ensuring consistency and quality across different regions.

Develop supplementary online training specific to LSE and relevant skills for teachers through NCTB.

## MONITORING & EVALUATION

Develop a monitoring and evaluation plan for continuous monitoring and periodic evaluation of the inclusion of LSE within the national curriculum, its age-appropriateness and comprehensiveness across grades and subjects, teacher training, and implementation of LSE content.

Include LSE-specific indicators in the revised eMIS system.

Capture data on reasons for drop-out and re-enrolment in school in eMIS.





# NEXT STEPS

The recommendations have been organised into shorter and longer-term action points to be

completed in 2024 and beyond, respectively.

The following actions are recommended:

## SHORT-TERM ACTION POINTS:

- Advocate for the continued inclusion of life skills education within the national curriculum for junior secondary schools, including for a subject dedicated to health and wellbeing.
- Revise LSE content in grades 6, 7, 8, and 9 curricula to ensure accuracy and to increase comprehensiveness and age-appropriateness.

## LONGER-TERM ACTION POINTS:

- Advocate for the inclusion of LSE in education sector policies.
- Develop grade 10, 11 and 12 curricula, ensuring that gaps in junior secondary content, especially related to sexual and reproductive health, are addressed. This includes but is not limited to sexual and reproductive anatomy and physiology, pregnancy and contraception.
- Incorporate additional guidance on gender transformative approaches into teacher training for all subjects.
- Provide technical input to increase gender responsiveness of curricula across all grades and subjects.
- Develop a scope and sequence of incremental, age-appropriate and comprehensive content from grades 1 to 12.
- Develop a curriculum mapping framework for teachers to determine how existing supplementary materials (e.g., Shahana & AMAZE videos, activities from the GEMS curriculum, etc.) align with the competency-based national curriculum.
- Develop supplementary LSE materials aligned to the national curriculum (digital and hard copy for students and teachers).
- Provide technical input to continue to enhance in-service teacher training for priority carrier subjects that support the delivery of content for LSE within safe and supportive learning environments.
- Encourage CSOs and NGOs to continue efforts of out-of-school, after-school and online LSE focusing on gaps in content (e.g. pregnancy prevention, contraception).
- Conduct continuous monitoring of the comprehensiveness and age-appropriateness of LSE content of the national curriculum.
- Review Madrasah education content and compare health education taught through Islamic education subjects to content in general curricula to ensure consistency and accuracy.

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# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX 1: LIST OF CURRICULUM DOCUMENTS REVIEWED

This review included the following curricula documents:

Student books (English version) and teacher guides (Bangla version translated using Google Translate) for nine of the ten subjects of the competency-based curriculum. The English versions refer to the official English version of student books published by the NCTB to be used in English-medium schools. The Bangla subject was not reviewed as an English version was not available.

The English versions of the student books for the 2024 school year were reviewed. Official versions of the English teachers' guides were not available at the time of the review. For this reason, a combination of draft translations provided by NCTB and versions translated using Google Translate was reviewed.

The nine subjects reviewed include:

- Art and Culture
- Digital Technology
- English
- History and Social Science
- Life and Livelihood
- Mathematics
- Religious Education (Christian studies, Islamic studies, Buddhist studies)
- Science
- Wellbeing

The Bangla version of the teachers' training manual for Wellbeing subject was also reviewed using Google Translate.



## APPENDIX 2: LIST OF PARTICIPANTS FROM THE SERAT TECHNICAL WORKSHOP

Lists participants in the SERAT Technical Workshop, held from 25 to 27 May 2024 at the Holiday Inn in Dhaka, Bangladesh.

*Table: SERAT Technical Workshop Participants list*

Name	Position, Institution
Mr. Abu Syed Mohammed Mujib	Research Officer, Science; NCTB
Mr. Sheikh Noor Qutubul Alam	Research Officer, History and Social Science; NCTB
Mr. Sadekur Rhaman	Research Officer, Wellbeing; NCTB
Mr. Mainuddin Sheikh	Research Officer, Digital Technology; NCTB
Mr. Mohammad Abul Khair Bhunya	Expert, Life and Livelihood; NCTB
Israt Jahan	Master Trainer and teacher: Health and Wellbeing. Banglabazar Government Girls High School
Md. Abdur Rahim	Master Trainer and teacher: ICT Darunnazat Siddiqui Kamil Madrasa
Magdaline Annie Gomes	Master Trainer and teacher: Life and Livelihood Holy Cross Girls High School
Tahmina Begum	Master Trainer and teacher: Science Khilgaon High School & College
Sirin Akter	Master Trainer and Teacher: History & Social Science; Purbo Bashabo Kadamtala School & College
Arifun Nahar Soma	Psychosocial Manager, CWFD
Ms. Jakia Sultana	Psychosocial Counsellor, CWFD
Ulfat Ara, Khanam	Programme Manager-Humanitarian, CWFD

## APPENDIX 3: LIST OF KEY STAKEHOLDERS CONSULTED

Lists the stakeholders interviewed for the SERAT analysis, and below lists the schools visited to conduct these consultations.

*Table 2: Stakeholders consulted for SERAT Analysis*

Name	Role and Organisation	Date consulted
Prof. Md. Moshuazzaman	Member (Curriculum), National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB)	28 May 2024
Prof. Md. Mokhles Ur Rahman	Member (Primary Curriculum), National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB)	28 May 2024
Moss Nazma Akther	Secretary, National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB)	28 May 2024
Md. Abdul Latif Howlader	Principal, Khilgaon School & College, Dhaka	30 May 2024
Mr. Polash Chandra Dash	Headteacher, Mohammad Abdur Satter High School, Noakhali	20 May 2024
Chowdhury Nazneen Solaimani	Assistant headteacher, Mohammad Abdur Satter High School, Noakhali	20 May 2024
Mr. Mowlana Shahab Uddin	Ullor Wapda Kermamotia Alim Madrasah, Noakhali	21 May 2024

### SCHOOLS:

Stakeholder consultations were conducted in the following schools:

- Mohammad Abdur Satter High School, Noakhali
- Ullor Wapda Kermamotia Alim Madrasah, Noakhali
- Khilgaon School & College, Dhaka
- Darunnazat Siddiqui Kamil Madrasa, Dhaka.



## APPENDIX 4: CONTENT RECOMMENDED FOR 9 - 12 YEARS FROM GRADE 6

This section provides detailed notes from the content review of the grade 6 curricula compared to the recommended content for the 9-12-year-old group for the eight key concepts outlined in ITGSE (UNESCO et al., 2018).

**Key concept 1 Relationships:** Life and Livelihood, English, Wellbeing, and History and Social Science include some focus on family, with examples of equitable roles. However, the concepts of equality and the harms of stigma and discrimination are limited. Wellbeing covers developing healthy friendships and relationships with trusted adults.

**Key concept 2 Values, rights, culture and sexuality:** Although human, women and children's rights conventions are explored in other grades, they are not explained in grade 6. Digital Technology refers to child marriage victims, but concepts of consent and rights regarding marriage are not discussed in grade 6. Parenting as a shared responsibility of men and women is also absent. History and Social Science includes some concepts about social norms and practices, women's empowerment and changes in social roles but does not expand into other sexuality-related topics. Values and attitudes about sexuality being taught by parents are briefly mentioned in Wellbeing and linked to gender in History and Social Science but need further development.

**Key concept 3 Understanding gender:** History and Social Science explores social norms and begins to make connections to

gender norms, but diverse gender identities are not mentioned. Life and Livelihood includes examples of gendered roles in the family, such as a boy learning to cook with his mother, which promotes gender equality in the family. However, most examples do not have specific questions to reflect on this fact. Gender-based violence is not defined, the concept of fairness is not explored, and the link between gender norms and gender-based violence is missing. Child marriage is not explicitly stated as illegal or a violation of rights in grade 6.

**Key concept 4 Violence and staying safe:** Wellbeing discusses child sexual abuse and available services for victims, but the message that victims are never is not clear. Forms of violence are not defined in grade 6, although they are covered in later grades. Wellbeing practices expressing needs and assertiveness skills. This includes communicating the need for privacy, which increases during adolescence. Digital technology addresses online risks, including on social media. Sexually explicit media is not mentioned in grade 6.

**Key concept 5 Skills for health and wellbeing:** Life and Livelihood and Wellbeing include theory and opportunities to practice decision-making, problem-solving, and refusal skills, including role plays. Wellbeing includes practice communicating feelings, needs, and boundaries and respecting each other in a chapter about child sexual abuse. Digital Technology practices help-seeking skills by calling hotlines and identifying resources available in their community in Wellbeing. Negotiation skills are not explored.

**Key Concept 6 Human body and development:** Wellbeing and Science

(Investigative studies book) have information regarding adolescent changes. Wellbeing includes some misconceptions about menstruation and wet dreams. Science has limited information about the role or function of reproductive systems, including the menstrual cycle. Wellbeing discusses hygiene, including the importance of menstrual hygiene. However, it does not reflect on the rights and needs of females for adequate menstrual hygiene management and links to advancing gender equality. There are some inaccuracies in the Science investigative study book, such as the incorrect description of the vagina as external rather than internal genitals and adolescence lasting until “30 years or above”.

#### **Key concept 7 Sexuality and sexual**

**behaviour:** Wellbeing acknowledges emotional and physical attraction but frames it in a heteronormative way – referring to the “opposite” sex. There is no mention of sexual or gender diversity in grade 6. A statement notes that it is normal to be curious and have questions about changes as a young person grows up. Although there is no specific mention of masturbation, misconceptions about ejaculation are included that affirm this as a natural process for boys. There is no mention of healthy ways to express sexuality or references to pleasure.

#### **Key concept 8 Sexual and reproductive**

**health:** In Wellbeing, AIDS is mentioned as a communicable disease, but there is no explanation of HIV transmission or mention of STIs. The teachers’ guide includes further information about HIV and STIs but has some inaccuracies in the content. The grade 6 teachers’ guide includes information on HIV and STIs, though there

are inaccuracies. There is no mention of sexual or romantic relationships, pregnancy or pregnancy prevention, including condoms or contraception.

## **APPENDIX 5: CONTENT RECOMMENDED FOR 12 - 15 YEARS FROM GRADES 7, 8 AND 9 CURRICULA**

This section provides detailed notes from the content review of grade 7 to 9 curricula compared to the recommended content for the 12-15-year-old group for the eight key concepts outlined in ITGSE (UNESCO et al., 2018).

**Key Concept 1 Relationships:** Wellbeing, Life and Livelihood, and History and Social Science highlight the importance of family and values such as cooperation and respect for healthy family dynamics. Wellbeing teaches skills to resist negative peer influences, such as tobacco or drug use and includes methods for supporting friends under pressure. It covers building healthy peer relationships and conflict resolution with parents or guardians, though it does not discuss the impact of power in relationships and how it can be harmful or delve into the emotions of love, desire, or infatuation. Beyond discussions on child marriage, the curriculum lacks details on parental responsibilities, the various paths to parenthood, and the right to choose to become a parent. History and Social Science address the impact of discrimination on sexual and reproductive rights through Sharifa’s story—a transgender person. Still, topics of stigma and discrimination need deeper exploration.

**Key concept 2 Values, rights, culture and sexuality:** Wellbeing discusses integrity

and respect towards others but does not explore personal values towards sexuality or reproductive health or their impact on decisions. Wellbeing addresses laws on child marriage and sexual harassment response committees in schools, while History and Social Science discuss dowry prohibition. Broader sexual and reproductive rights, however, are not covered. History and Social Science define human rights, including children's and women's rights conventions, but the information is not applied. Wellbeing covers health care rights and respecting the rights of people with disabilities.

**Key concept 3 Understanding gender:**

History and Social Science has some description of biological sex and gender identity but omits sexual orientation. It uses the story of Sharifa, a transgender person, to illustrate how social norms influence perceptions of women, men, and gender-diverse individuals. The content addressing gender norms and roles is minimal and does not sufficiently connect gender stereotypes to broader issues of gender inequality or gender-based violence in intimate relationships. While child marriage is discussed as a detrimental custom associated with cultural and gender norms, this topic and its implications could be expanded in both History and Social Science and Wellbeing subjects.

**Key concept 4 Violence and staying safe:**

Digital Technology and Wellbeing subjects explain various forms of violence. However, the definitions are unclear and do not include the impact of gender, including gender-based violence. These subjects identify violence as a violation of legal rights and explain the role of sexual harassment response committees in schools. However, it is unclear that the onus is not on victims to prevent crimes

from happening to them – the message that violence is never a victim's fault needs to be clearly stated. Wellbeing explores ways to protect privacy and bodily integrity in response to sexual abuse, including through maintaining boundaries. However, the concept of consent is not explained in detail. Digital Technology and Wellbeing discuss ways to use media responsibly and offer examples of cyberbullying to discuss ways to reduce risk online. Wellbeing acknowledges sharing sexual images as a form of violence, though it does not cover sexually explicit media. Both subjects strongly advocate for seeking help in response to violence, with Digital Technology offering activities to identify steps to report and respond to cybercrimes, including cyberbullying and stalking.

**Key Concept 5 Skills for health and wellbeing:**

Relevant life skills are explored in Wellbeing, although they are not directly applied to romantic or sexual relationships. These skills include decision-making, negotiation, refusal, and assertiveness, particularly in scenarios where someone is being bullied or pressured. Examples are provided on how to assist a friend who is a victim of child marriage. Additionally, there is a strong focus on help-seeking skills, which include using hotlines and identifying trusted adults to approach in response to various challenges, such as violence, both online and in person.

**Key concept 6: Human body and development:**

The Wellbeing subject continues to expand on content about puberty from grade 6 into grades 7 and 8, with chapters dedicated to adolescent changes in each grade. Grade 8 includes clinical



aspects of menstruation, which might exceed developmentally appropriate details. Wellbeing explores social challenges like teasing during puberty but lacks detailed content on reproductive functions and sexual feelings, except for brief statements about attraction in adolescence. In Science, the role of hormones in maturity and the reproductive cycle is explained. History and Social Science discuss biological sex and gender identity as distinct concepts, though these definitions could be more precise. Comments on body image appear in Wellbeing, but the overall content on this topic is limited.

**Key concept 7 sexuality and sexual**

**behaviour:** Wellbeing acknowledges the development of feelings of attraction in adolescence; but presents this in a heteronormative manner, focusing only on the attraction between boys and girls. History and Social Science explores examples of indigenous groups and transgender people with different ways of expressing their sexuality. Wellbeing includes activities to navigate the mental, physical and social challenges of

adolescence, which could include managing emotions about sexual feelings, desires and fantasies, although this link is not explicit.

There is no content about the sexual response cycle or sexual behaviours, including making decisions or choices about sexual behaviours. The concept of power in sexual relationships is not considered, including relationships with transactions of money and goods and how these can contribute to increased vulnerability.

**Key concept 8 Sexual and reproductive**

**health:** The curriculum lacks content on sexual and reproductive health, notably in areas of pregnancy prevention. This includes discussing methods to prevent unintended pregnancies, such as emergency contraception. The curriculum does not cover young people's rights to access contraception, the skills to obtain it, or the risks associated with early childbearing and closely spaced births.







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