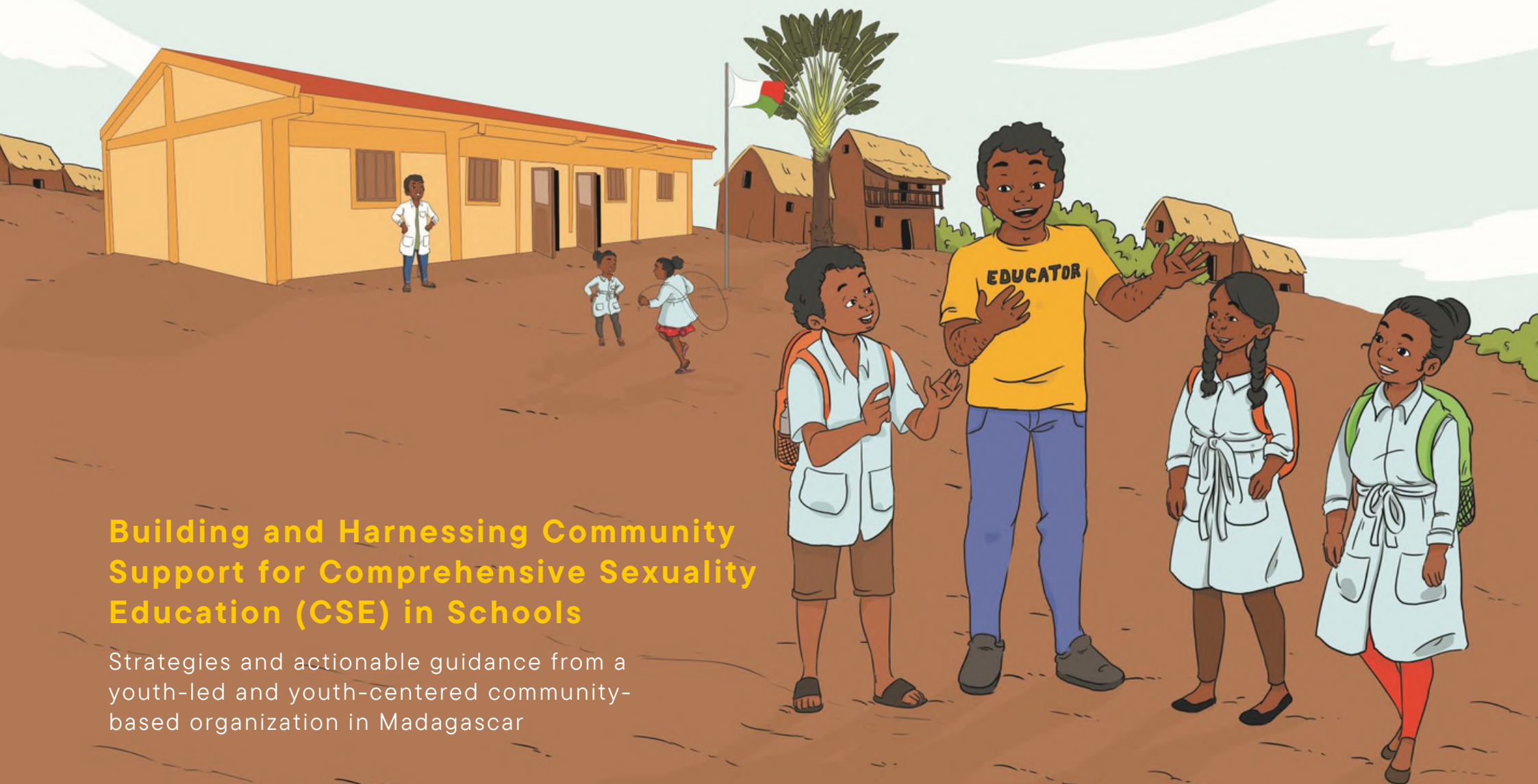


CSE We Can Count On

PROJET
JEUNE
LEADER

Building and Harnessing Community Support for Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) in Schools

Strategies and actionable guidance from a youth-led and youth-centered community-based organization in Madagascar



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Finally, none of our work would be possible without the hundreds of dynamic Projet Jeune Leader educators who have worked – and continue to work – school year after school year to teach, support, and mentor their younger peers across Madagascar.

The views and opinions expressed in this document are solely those of Projet Jeune Leader and do not necessarily reflect the official position or policy of donors or partners.



WomenStrong International finds, funds, strengthens, and shares women-driven solutions that will transform lives in urban communities. Their partners start by listening to women, who know best what they need, in order to thrive. They then bring these partner organizations together in a Learning Lab, to develop, test, sharpen, and disseminate their solutions. Through their collective learning and sharing, WomenStrong is building a global community of organizations better equipped to advance the rights and wellbeing of women and girls. Projet Jeune Leader has been a member of WomenStrong's Learning Lab since 2020.



AMPLIFYCHANGE

AmplifyChange is a fund that supports civil society organisations (CSOs) who advocate for improved sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR). Their vision is to secure full attainment of sexual and reproductive health and rights for all. They believe this can only be achieved through building a stronger civil society, with diverse organisations who are resilient and work together to form movements for change. Projet Jeune Leader has been a repeat grantee of AmplifyChange since 2015.

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OVERVIEW

A global challenge at the local level: Building community support for comprehensive sexuality education

At the intersection of health, education, and gender equality, **comprehensive sexuality education (CSE)** is an evidence-based mechanism that equips young people with an understanding of the cognitive, emotional, physical, and social aspects of sexuality. [1, 2] Beyond knowledge on sexual and reproductive health, CSE promotes positive beliefs, values, attitudes, and skills that enhance gender equality, respect for others, awareness of rights, self-efficacy in decision-making, enhanced quality of interpersonal relationships, and freedom from discrimination, exclusion, and violence. [3, 4]

For widespread impact, comprehensive sexuality education can be delivered to children and adolescents where they already spend most of their time: in school. [5] **However, CSE is an inherently complex, sensitive, and morally imbued intervention because it involves teaching young people about sex and relationships.**

Communities' concerns about CSE – driven by misconceptions about its purpose and scope – are strikingly similar across the globe. Common fears are that it ruins children's innocence, leads to early sexual activity, causes "gender confusion," encourages "non-conforming" sexual orientation, and contradicts religious or cultural values. [6-8]

One of the main challenges to delivering in-school CSE is adequately addressing these misconceptions and generating support at the school and community levels. [9] In fact, lack of support for CSE disrupts its delivery, according to UNESCO and the Global Education Monitoring Report:

"Social opposition, in the form of resistance or backlash to comprehensive sexuality education, may negatively affect several areas: policy-makers' and civil servants' diligence in taking the necessary measures; teachers' attitudes and readiness to deliver the curriculum and create the right classroom conditions for effective teaching and learning; students' motivation; and parents' cooperation." [10]

Despite numerous CSE technical guidance documents, there is still a lack of **practical discussion** on approaches to build support or overcome resistance within communities. Only a few publications cover **research or first-hand experiences** on this global challenge. [11-15] More systematic and tested strategies are needed to build community support, if CSE is going to be implemented at scale within school systems.

Building and harnessing community support for comprehensive sexuality education in Madagascar

Since 2013, partnering closely with local schools and school districts, **Projet Jeune Leader** has delivered comprehensive sexuality education to young and very young adolescents (ages 10-16) in Madagascar's public (government-run) middle schools. **Today, our youth-founded, youth-led, and youth-centered organization works across three regions of Madagascar. We sustain and expand our program each school year because of positive word-of-mouth and high demand, especially from increasingly hard-to-reach rural communities.**

We recruit dynamic young adults (aged 18-25) for their positive gender attitudes and potential as role models, train them rigorously over two months, and hire them as educators under a full-time, paid contract if they pass an end-of-training assessment. We then integrate each educator into a partner public school where they teach a year-long, time-tabled CSE course to multiple grades, using our age-segmented, gender-transformative, 27-module curricula. When they are not teaching, educators provide a package of other essential services (enrichment activities, counseling, medical referrals, and programs for parents and teachers).

As our program and organization has grown, we have developed, tested, and integrated **key strategies and actions** to improve our transparency, responsiveness, and overall accountability to youth and the schools in which we work. These strategies help us build lasting, trusting relationships with students, parents, teachers, and school officials. Importantly, they also prevent and address misconceptions and misunderstandings about CSE within our partner communities.

Excitingly, by building (and documenting) support and demand from communities, we were able to secure an official partnership agreement with the national Ministry of Education in late 2020. This unprecedented partnership clears a path for us to deliver our CSE program in any school across the island.

As the only organization – public or private – that delivers in-school CSE in Madagascar, we have an ambitious goal of bringing our model to all Malagasy youth. **Building and harnessing community support** for CSE is a vital part of achieving our vision where every young person in Madagascar accesses quality, in-school comprehensive sexuality education.



About Projet Jeune Leader (PJL)

PJL is a youth-founded, youth-led, and youth-centered nonprofit organization established in Fianarantsoa, Madagascar.

PJL has reached over 100,000 middle school students with in-school comprehensive sexuality education since 2013. We form official partnership agreements with the Ministry of Education at the local, district, regional, and national levels to deliver in-school CSE. PJL also partners with the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Population to create school-based linkages to social services for students. 100% of partner school administrations have requested that PJL's CSE program be continued in their schools.

Quasi-experimental studies show Projet Jeune Leader has a positive effect on adolescent students' knowledge, attitudes, self-efficacy, and behavioral intentions towards sexual and reproductive health and rights and gender equality. Participatory community-based research has shown that after participating in Projet Jeune Leader's programs, students feel more self-confident, feel more connected to their schools, take on more responsibility in their lives, and experience improved relationships with their parents and teachers.

"CSE We Can Count On"

About This Guidance Tool

There are a handful of guidance documents that include strategies for building community support for CSE. However, many are quite general, making it difficult to know how to use the recommendations in practice.*

"CSE We Can Count On" is meant to fill the gap. In it, we share **strategies, actionable guidance, and resources** that Projet Jeune Leader uses in our work with tens of thousands of students, parents, teachers, and school officials in Madagascar.

The strategies are based on our understanding that the presentation of facts and research is not always effective in convincing people about the importance of CSE. This is especially true when data points are inconsistent with people's preexisting worldviews about sex and relationships.

Instead, we believe that people will meaningfully change their opinions on CSE **through relationships** and **through experience**. Many of our strategies to build awareness, understanding, and support for CSE are based on this assumption, and where we can, we share our own stories and evidence.

The uses and success of the actions outlined in this tool are undeniably dependent on the context in which CSE is being delivered. Even so, we hope that they serve as a source of inspiration and creativity for others – civil society organizations, international non-governmental organizations, and even governments – committed to delivering in-school comprehensive sexuality education in their own contexts.

* Examples of Recommendations in CSE Literature and Guidance Tools

"Parents, teachers, religious leaders, role models and service providers are gatekeepers to young people accessing CSE. It is crucial to work with them to counter inaccurate information and dispel myths and misconceptions around sexual and reproductive health, citing published evidence whenever possible."

– "DELIVER+ENABLE TOOLKIT: Scaling-up comprehensive sexuality education (CSE)," IPPF

"Be prepared for opposition and know how to respond."

– "From Evidence to Action: Advocating for CSE," IPPF

"Consult with members of the community to find ways to talk about CSE which are culturally sensitive and use evidence and statistics to reassure parents that CSE is not damaging."

– "We Demand More!: A Sexuality Education Advocacy Handbook for Young People," The PACT

"It is also important to document and disseminate evidence on the impact of sexuality education."

– "Levers of Success: Case studies of national sexuality education programmes," UNESCO



EMPOWER THE MESSENGERS

1. Select educators who have potential to create “brand power” for CSE.
2. Equip educators with tools to spread a new narrative about CSE.
3. Train educators in the skills needed to respond to CSE resistance.
4. Provide educators with a dedicated time to reflect, share, and problem-solve about their work in schools.
5. Use supportive supervision to help educators navigate difficult situations, continually improve their competencies, and feel heard and motivated in their work.

Teachers and educators are not only deliverers of CSE – they are also the main messengers that convey its purpose and content. CSE educators inherently influence the way people perceive sexuality education. [16] Sometimes, a CSE educator is a school or community’s first exposure to what sexuality education is all about.

That is why it is important to **intentionally recruit** those who will serve as CSE brand messengers. Those selected should then be **equipped with the tools** to showcase their work and **trained, supervised**, and **supported** to be able to effectively spread new ways of thinking about CSE.

By doing this, CSE educators will feel more empowered to “normalize” sexuality education in places where it is new, or where misconceptions already exist.

The principal at Anjoma middle school was a little indifferent when Projet Jeune Leader began working at his school in 2020.

He of course welcomed the partnership – school dropouts and teenage pregnancies were a problem in his rural community. But he did not attend Projet Jeune Leader's introductory meeting with partner school principals at the beginning of the school year, nor did he come around on the PJL educator's first day at his school.

It was not until a few weeks into the school year – when he saw the work, passion, and drive of the PJL educator at his school, Ranjah – that his mind began to change. Ranjah, an experienced 3rd year educator known for his dynamism and tirelessness, quickly gained the admiration of his students. The principal heard from students – his son among them – that they could not wait to attend Ranjah's CSE courses each week. He noticed that Ranjah was always the first to arrive at school. And he saw that when Ranjah was not teaching, he was busy engaging students in reading books and playing games during their free time. Eventually, the principal was able to spend some quality one-on-one time himself with Ranjah, when they attended a funeral in the community together.

Now, the principal of Anjoma middle school is one of Projet Jeune Leader's most engaged partners. He and Ranjah collaborate closely to provide new and improved services to the students at Anjoma middle school. Parents of the students at the school have all come to know and love Ranjah, as well, because of the stories their children tell them about learning and playing with the PJL educator and their positive interactions with him out in the community.



Even though the community of Anjoma had never heard of or experienced CSE before, they are now fully supportive of providing it to their children because of the positive “**brand power**” that Ranjah holds. To them, CSE is associated with their PJL educator, Ranjah. And because they like, trust, and feel inspired by him, they fully believe in the CSE that he is bringing to their school and community.

ACTION 1

Select educators who have potential to create “brand power” for CSE.

“Brands” are the relationships responsible for the way that most people come to change their thinking, reshape their feelings, and redirect their behaviors. [17] People are very influenced by others that they like, trust, or feel inspired by. A person with “brand power” can shape the way others feel toward an issue.

CSE educators who are inherently warm, dynamic, and knowledgeable can change the minds of parents, teachers, and school officials who are otherwise hesitant about sexuality education. Near-peer mentors – adults that are young enough to be relatable to youth, but old enough to be seen as role models – can embody those qualities and they do not face the status and power differences with students that older teachers do. [18] Near-peer mentors can also promote positive youth development in many other ways. [19, 20]



Projet Jeune Leader recruits young adults (ages 18-25) as CSE educators. We have found that **young adult educators** have a close understanding of the issues affecting young people's lives and are therefore seen as credible messengers for CSE among adolescents and adults. Teachers and parents recognize that adolescents look up to Projet Jeune Leader educators for guidance and support, and these adults even trust the young adult educators to share advice about raising adolescent children. [21]

We regularly publish our educators' personal stories online and in **constituent voice magazines** to showcase their dedication, values, warmth, humor, determination, and the insights they have as young people and educators. Feedback from readers show that they find the educators' stories profoundly inspirational, suggesting these stories help spread the “brand power” of Projet Jeune Leader educators across different communities.

FEATURED RESOURCES



Tip sheet for recruiting young adults as CSE educators

It can be hard to find people with the right educator profile when recruiting among the general young adult population. This tip sheet explains our open recruitment approach, which includes a step-wise process of group and individual interviews to assess candidates' potential to be positive messengers of CSE.



Example stories to introduce educators as credible and authentic messengers for CSE

Read some example stories to get a better sense of how we boost the credibility and authenticity of our educators in engaging and accessible ways.



Look out for this icon, which links to the resources featured in this section.

ACTION 2

Equip educators with tools to spread a new narrative about CSE.

Public meetings and community dialogues are common approaches to increasing understanding and support for CSE at the local level. [22] Like any good advocates, CSE educators need access to the best strategies to present themselves, their work, and the purpose of CSE. They need to be prepared to respond to common misconceptions that arise. And they need reliable support during isolated cases of opposition.



At the beginning of the 2020 school year, educators presented the CSE program to teachers and parents at Projet Jeune Leader's 45 partner schools – 20 of which were completely **new partners**. Projet Jeune Leader tracked the results of these presentations. Both educators and school principals reported that **neither parents nor teachers had concerns about the purpose or content of the CSE program after 100% of presentations**. Instead, the most common follow-up questions were: Will the program cost anything to parents? (answer: no); Will there be educational sessions for parents, too? (answer: yes).

Projet Jeune Leader's educators present the CSE program to teachers and parents at the beginning of the school year. When possible, our educators **present alongside the main gatekeeper** for CSE implementation in their school – often the school principal. This authority figure helps convey **legitimacy** of the program to teachers and parents.

We have learned that these meetings go smoothest when our educators are equipped with tools to engage parents and teachers and respond to any additional questions and concerns after the meeting. These tools include:

- A **detailed script** that includes our tested messaging about our CSE program that is clear, relevant, highlights the points parents and teachers most often ask about CSE, and allows us to explain CSE using our own language – rather than leaving it up to CSE opponents!
- A **visual diagram** of the CSE program printed on a large, sturdy banner. This helps parents and teachers envision the holistic programming that our CSE educator will deliver. Also, it subtly enhances cultural appropriateness and acceptability of the program in the eyes of local parents and teachers by depicting a common Madagascar rural setting. Finally, the visual breaks up an otherwise lecture-based meeting and allows the educator to engage with a pedagogy tool – giving parents and teachers a glimpse into their teaching style in the classroom.
- **Constituent Voice Magazines** that contain example lessons in our curricula and testimonies from other parents, teachers, and school officials.

ACTION 3

Train educators in the skills needed to respond to CSE resistance.

Commonly, CSE educators are trained in the content they will teach, the teaching tools they will use, and/or the pedagogical approaches they will adopt. But CSE educators also benefit from training on ways to spread awareness, understanding, and support for CSE and ways to respond to potential backlash they may encounter in their work.

FEATURED RESOURCE



Sample in-service training module on managing and resolving conflict

Our educators participate in this two-hour workshop as part of their in-service capacity building. We find that covering this theme in-service – versus pre-service – is more relevant and effective, as by then, educators have experiences that they can critically reflect on.

At the end of the 2020 school year, 50 Projet Jeune Leader educators completed “**Importance versus difficulty matrices**” to rank how important the different aspects of their jobs are to carrying out Projet Jeune Leader’s mission. They ranked **in-service trainings** as one of the most important parts of their jobs – second only behind teaching the CSE courses to students – to achieving the goals of Projet Jeune Leader.

Projet Jeune Leader’s educators are **trained for two months** before stepping foot in the partner school they are paired with. This training covers our history, values, and mission, the health and educational context in Madagascar, defining CSE, the multifaceted role of a Projet Jeune Leader educator, classroom management and teaching tips, and the actual content of our multi-grade curricula. Our educators also receive **in-service capacity building** to equip them with practical skills to respond to CSE resistance that may arise during the year. Topics covered include managing stress, public speaking, personal communication, decision-making styles, and managing and resolving conflict.



ACTION 4

Provide educators with a dedicated time to reflect, share, and problem-solve about their work in schools.

In-service opportunities for CSE educators should include “discussions on troubleshooting potential challenges that might occur in one’s community.” [23]

FEATURED RESOURCE



Sample participatory activity to use during check-in meetings with educators: After Action Reviews

We often use After Action Reviews during our monthly meetings with our educators. After Action Reviews are a structured way to de-brief during or after a project to analyze what happened, why it happened, and how it can be done better. We particularly like After Action Reviews because they are quick, can be done in groups, and allow all educators to share what is going well (and not so well) in their work.

Projet Jeune Leader schedules monthly, mandatory meetings to give educators time and space to shift mental gears away from their day-to-day work. With their peers and supervisors, educators can **think strategically, brainstorm, share new ideas, and feel social cohesion**. Sometimes, educators have experiences to share about resistance to CSE in their schools. During the meeting, their supervisor and other educators offer support and share ideas about how to best respond.

ACTION 5

Use supportive supervision to help educators navigate difficult situations, continually improve their competencies, and feel heard and motivated in their work.

Being a CSE educator can be a difficult and lonely job. CSE guidance documents maintain that the role of supervising staff is to assess educators’ performance. [24] However, supervisors that act more as coaches and mentors can improve educators’ problem-solving skills, professional relationships, and job satisfaction [25, 26] – leading to more motivated and skilled educators that stick with their work even in the face of resistance. [27]

FEATURED RESOURCES



Sample questions for supportive supervision during in-person site visits to educators

Our supervising staff use these indicators and questions during in-person site visits to educators. These questions help supervising staff assess educators integration into their school/ community, for instance, or their satisfaction with work – all important to educator motivation and performance.



Sample questions to provide remote supportive supervision

Because our educators work in hard-to-reach and rural communities, in-person site visits are not always feasible. Our supervising staff use structured phone calls as an opportunity to support educators, follow up on previously-identified problems, and provide encouragement and praise. Data from the phone calls also help supervisors prioritize sites needing an in-person visit.

“After the first scorecard, I immediately noticed a change in my supervisor’s behavior. He became more outwardly friendly and tried to help me with anything that was bothering me in my work.

– Projet Jeune Leader educator, Amoron’i Mania region
Quote translated from Malagasy

The best supervisors have experience delivering CSE themselves. We found that **promoting previous educators to supervisor positions** is an effective approach. Near the end of every school year, we transparently advertise open supervisor positions to all current educators and invite them to submit their CVs and letters of interest. We then employ a competitive hiring process (including performance reviews of their work as educators, interviews, and written tests) to identify the best-suited candidate for the job description. Because they used to work in schools as educators themselves, supervising staff understand the life context of youth beneficiaries and the complexity of the systems Projet Jeune Leader works within. They know first-hand the challenges of being a CSE educator and can find creative ways to mediate and represent educators’ needs in partner communities and within the organization.

Projet Jeune Leader supervisors do give performance feedback to educators, but they are not the only ones. **Middle school students are also an important component of supportive supervision.** During in-person site visits, Projet Jeune Leader’s supervising staff use a **participatory youth-led rating system** to enable students to confidentially share their thoughts, opinions, and experiences with the CSE program by “voting” with beans on a number of questions and criteria. Supervising staff triangulate results from the rating system with their own observations and rubric evaluations of the course to provide immediate feedback to educators. Educators report that using youth input provides a better foundation for the constructive feedback from supervisors. They say it helps open a dialogue between them and their supervisors during the feedback exchange, instead of holding a one-sided discussion. Importantly, educators also feel more validated and motivated when they see students give them positive ratings. [28]

FEATURED RESOURCE



Sample scorecard educators can use to assess and provide feedback to supervising staff

Our educators fill out this short, anonymous survey 2-3 times a year to provide feedback to their supervisors. It has both quantitative and qualitative sections. Quantitative scores enable us to track changes in ratings over time, while qualitative questions help educators elaborate beyond the quantitative scores and share what improvements they would like to see. Educators report that the scorecards lead to more satisfaction with their supervisor’s behavior and work.





BUILD ENGAGEMENT & REDISTRIBUTE POWER

1. Run youth-centered extracurricular and enrichment activities to build students' and communities' excitement around the CSE course.
2. Prioritize participatory, interactive, and game-based learning in the CSE curriculum so that learning is fun, and students are excited to participate.
3. Share students' experiences with CSE and its impact to build community excitement.
4. Collect and respond to feedback from students and other key stakeholders, like parents and teachers, so that they feel listened to and heard by the CSE program.

Across many contexts, youth and parents support CSE in their schools. [29,30] Unfortunately, we rarely hear their voices, opinions, and preferences on the issue. When youth and parents are excluded from conversations on CSE, it creates a void that risks being filled with false narratives from small, yet extremely vocal conservative and religious groups. These false narratives serve to justify ongoing resistance against CSE.

If youth's needs, interests, priorities, and voices are included and amplified from the beginning, CSE is more attractive, relevant, and effective. [31] When CSE is effective, communities can see and experience positive changes in youth – and they end up more likely to support CSE.

We have found that when we build and redistribute power to youth and less-heard stakeholders – like parents in rural areas – we create an exciting mass of support for CSE across a broad range of communities.

ACTION 1

Run youth-centered extracurricular and enrichment activities to build students' and communities' excitement around the CSE course.

Organizing extracurricular activities can help introduce and implement CSE in schools [32] and can improve students' satisfaction and connectedness to school. [33] These activities may also reassure otherwise indifferent or hesitant adults that there are myriad benefits of implementing CSE in schools, beyond the formal CSE courses themselves.

Projet Jeune Leader's educators use their full-time positions in school not only to teach CSE, but also to offer fun extracurricular enrichment activities for students. Educators frequently occupy students with enrichment activities when other teachers are late or absent (a common problem in public schools in Madagascar) – which also helps to **integrate CSE educators into the school personnel and structures**.

With input from PJL educators and staff, we published an **extracurricular and enrichment program guide** as a resource for educators. They use the activities in the guide with students who have free time before and after school, during recesses, and when other teachers are absent. The guide gives educators ideas of activities, depending on time available, number of participating students, and accessible materials. For example, for free time ranging from 5 to 15 minutes, educators have a list of icebreakers and teambuilding activities. For longer periods, educators can provide books, run a reading circle, or play games like chess and checkers. Other examples include playing sports or doing Zumba when there are many participating students, or practicing theatre, public speaking, or foreign languages when a material-free activity is needed.



ACTION 2

Prioritize participatory, interactive, and game-based learning in the CSE curriculum so that learning is fun, and students are excited to participate.

Participatory and student-centered pedagogy is a part of quality CSE delivery. [34] It not only helps learners practice and internalize curriculum content, but also gets students engaged and excited to attend CSE courses.

FEATURED RESOURCE



Tips for developing a low-cost, participatory, CSE curriculum adapted for large class sizes

We found best practice CSE curricula developed in high-income countries to be too expensive and impracticable for resource-constrained settings in Madagascar. We developed a few tips to mitigate this challenge, while keeping our curriculum fun and participatory for students.

ACTION 3

Share students' experiences with CSE and its impact to build community excitement.

Students are the most important constituents of CSE – and sharing their opinions and perceptions should be a top priority to build parent engagement around the program.



Look out for this icon, which links to the resources featured in this section.

Projet Jeune Leader's CSE curriculum is **interactive and activity-based**, yet designed to be delivered to large class sizes (>50 students) at low cost. Teachers from Projet Jeune Leader's partner schools report that these participatory activities in the CSE curriculum not only excite students to attend school, but they also improve students' levels of engagement in their other courses.

Even though Projet Jeune Leader's weekly CSE courses are not graded, we consistently see **95% average attendance** from across our partner middle schools – a testament to students' motivation to attend fun, participatory CSE.

Students in Projet Jeune Leader's program have **showcased their experiences with CSE** in a variety of ways, ranging from theatre and dances at school events, to digital storytelling clubs, [35] to end-of-the-year magazines filled with their stories and testimonials. Through these mechanisms, parents and teachers know that students value CSE and understand why it is a necessary part of their education.

ACTION 4

Collect and respond to feedback from students and other key stakeholders, like parents and teachers, so that they feel listened to and heard by the CSE program.

Trust and accountability are essential for any program – and especially CSE – to survive. To build trust and accountability, program implementers need to have meaningful interactions with key stakeholders. [36] As a start, CSE programs should employ feedback mechanisms that are “accessible, easy to understand, have a clear and explained purpose, use non-technical language, meet their stakeholders where they are, and happen at eye level in a mutual partnership.” [37]

Between 2018 and 2019, Projet Jeune Leader developed innovative accountability mechanisms to improve transparency, trust, and responsiveness in our work as part of the CIVICUS **Resilient Roots initiative**. These feedback mechanisms take into consideration barriers such as poor access to information and communication technologies, strong courtesy bias (i.e., tendency to respond positively out of a desire not to offend), low literacy, and very rural and distributed locations.

After nearly 18 months of this accountability experiment, a higher percentage of our students, parents, and partner schools highly rated (scores of 9/10 or 10/10) Projet Jeune Leader against the key characteristics: responsiveness, trust, accountability, and respect. We refer to individuals who provided these highest scores – 9/10 or 10/10 – as “**Promoters**.” These individuals are likely to be our strongest supporters and, as the term suggests, *promote* our program to others.

We have found that systematically collecting and responding to feedback has not only made our program more accountable to the people we are serving, but it has also improved our capacity to communicate with clarity and creativity, enhanced our adaptive capacity, and strengthened our situational awareness.

AT RIGHT: Percentage of Promoters (individuals who gave scores of 9/10 or 9/10) from Net Promoter Score surveys conducted by Resilient Roots before (n=201) and after (n=174) the project

FEATURED RESOURCES



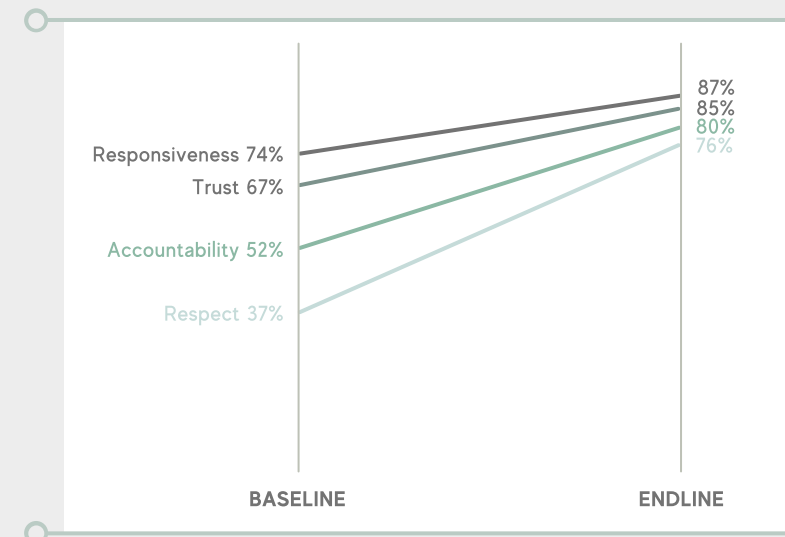
Sample feedback mechanism: Youth-led rating tool

In systematic and regular intervals, students give their feedback on our CSE course by “voting” with beans. This participatory research method is a fun alternative to more traditional tools such as interviews, focus groups, and surveys – and it provides “real-time” data to our educators and staff to serve students better. We have used this method to assess different dimensions of our accountability, such as students’ trust in their educator, students’ opinions on the quality of CSE courses, and if students feel the CSE program is relevant to their lived experiences. [39] Learn more about our approach in this webinar hosted by Bridge-47: [“Collecting Evidence of the change you are making through Global Citizenship Education.”](#)



Sample accountability mechanism: Constituent Voice Magazines

We produce and use paper-based magazines to collect and respond to feedback from students, parents, teachers, and school administrators, a process also known as “Constituent Voice” [40]. The magazines contain program news, articles about our work, and testimonies from students, parents, and school staff. Students can check out magazines to bring home and share with their parents, and a special place for feedback in the magazines enables any reader to send us their comments or suggestions.



STUDENT VOICES. Thousands of our middle school students across three regions of Madagascar have sent in feedback with their **emotions, beliefs, preferences, perceptions, behaviors, and accomplishments** with the CSE program – providing incredible insight into Projet Jeune Leader’s influence and providing powerful evidence for advocacy at all levels.

Quotes translated from Malagasy

ENHANCED AGENCY

empowering knowledge
self-esteem
ambitions

"I have benefited from PJJ courses because I have learned about puberty. I learned **what to expect** and I was **not afraid** when I got my period because I knew beforehand."

"I really feel prepared for my future thanks to the PJJ Educator's lessons. I hope that they continue because since I've been with those PJJ Educators, I've started to **believe in myself** and started to have **better relationships**."

"I've seen a difference in myself since having PJJ and I wish that **one day** I can be a PJJ Educator, too."

CHANGED RELATIONS

trust
harmony
advice

"When I have a problem I prefer to talk to the PJJ Educators because they are **mature** and they **don't judge**, even if it is about something embarrassing."

"PJJ has taught us students and our parents well, so our household is much more **pleasant**."

"The PJJ Educator **solves** your problems, and even **encourages** me to continue my education."

IMPROVED SCHOOLS

motivation
creativity
inclusion

"It's awesome to attend PJJ courses and they make you **motivated**."

"Ever since [the PJJ Educator] arrived it has been really **fun** here at school because we can do new activities and hobbies with him."

"School feels much more **comfortable** since the PJJ Educator arrived."



SHIFT THE NARRATIVE

-
1. Package information about the CSE program in ways that engages people's values and emotions first.
 2. Collect and share stories about the broader (intrapersonal and institutional) benefits of CSE.
 3. Make deliberate choices about the content of the CSE curriculum: what to include, what to leave unsaid, and how to present it.

The phrase “comprehensive sexuality education” is loaded jargon – and community resistance may be fueled by the obscure (and in some contexts, Westernized) meaning of terms like “comprehensive” and “sexuality.” [41]

Many implementers have mitigated this barrier by labeling their CSE program with phrases like “family life”, “health education”, and “life skills based education”. [42-46] This careful use of language is one way to frame the conversation on CSE.

In addition to watching the words that we use, [47] we may need to reframe the narratives we use surrounding the purpose and content of CSE to resonate with the values, interests, and worldviews of the stakeholders we work with.

ACTION 1

Package information about the CSE program in ways that engages people's values and emotions first.

Descriptions of comprehensive sexuality education programs are often packaged using rational lines of thought: long, technical descriptions of what it is and statistics about why it is needed. We often think that people do not agree with CSE because they do not have all the facts (also known as the information deficit model of communication). [48] That may explain why most CSE guidance documents primarily recommend presenting evidence of CSE's effectiveness when trying to convince communities.

There's no denying that evidence is important. But when talking about CSE (especially with people whose existing views may run counter to CSE), we need to activate people's positive emotions and values – and we need to do so first. After all, people respond with emotions first, and intellect second. [49] Invoking positive values in language and imagery helps people make sense of CSE in their existing worldviews. This opens the door to a narrative (and eventually, facts) about its content and purpose.

“Projet Jeune Leader’s work is very important in the Amoron’i Mania region right now. It is greatly helping our social development, especially in the education sector. We feel that their work is complementary to our areas of responsibility. My message for parents is: children are generally the responsibility of parents at home and teachers in the classroom. Children need to be physically, mentally, and spiritually raised, and I urge you all as parents to welcome this [CSE] program because it is a platform whereby we can help one each other better support our children.

– Department Head for Secondary Education, Amoron’i Mania Region
Quote translated from Malagasy

FEATURED RESOURCES



Sample participatory activity to generate ideas on values and language to use when describing the CSE program

We use this simple, participatory activity with partner school principals to generate a list of locally relevant, descriptive phrases to describe the CSE program. [54] From this activity we gained insight into one values-based aspiration that teachers and parents have for youth, which relates to CSE: “becoming a well-rounded person.” We now amplify this frame in our strategic communications about our CSE program. In their feedback to Projet Jeune Leader, thousands of students, parents, and teachers continue to use this phrase and frame, suggesting that this narrative really sticks.



Sample survey to understand if, how, and why people understand and support CSE

To develop an effective narrative on CSE, it is useful to know what frames already exist in the community. This simple survey (conducted both as a paper survey and a rapid interview) helped Projet Jeune Leader to understand not only concerns and misconceptions about CSE among parents and teachers, but also the helpful and positive frames that already exist. We were then able to integrate and amplify positive, locally-relevant frames in our communications strategy.



Sample “Core Story” for comprehensive sexuality education

This brief “Core Story” is one example of well-framed information people need to understand and support CSE. It underlines that CSE is evidence-based in a narrative form, as well as emphasizes values and positive frames that Projet Jeune Leader has found are relevant to our context.



Look out for this icon, which links to the resources featured in this section.

This testimony invokes the **community value** without explicitly naming it – and because the person quoted is a **respected, credible authority figure** in the public education system, their testimony holds more weight in the eyes of local communities. We use this quote frequently in strategic communications to target audiences of parents or school officials.

Amplifying Community Values to Build Community Support and Trust

When Projet Jeune Leader asks parents who they think should teach their children about puberty and reproductive health, they most often say the school. Yet, when we talk to schools, they say such discussions are parents' responsibility. By **expanding definitions of community (and moving away from the “us” versus “them” narratives)**, we find that parents and teachers are more likely to be supportive of and engaged with CSE.

One reason is because the *community value* also activates the *compassion value* and stimulates people's concern for others. [50] Parents sometimes tell Projet Jeune Leader that they view issues like early pregnancy as problems that only affect other, “ill-disciplined,” and/or older adolescents – not their own children. Using framing that emphasizes community and compassion **encourages concern and collective responsibility** for supporting all young people – and prevents people from solely holding adolescents or their parents/teachers responsible for their development and outcomes. [51]

Emphasizing *community* within a broader context in CSE also helps adults see that **teaching kids about sexuality is feasible**. Adults are not only daunted by the sensitivity surrounding sexuality education; parents also often tell us they are too overwhelmed by the stresses of daily life (for example, earning income) to talk to their children about such issues. Teachers, meanwhile, say they are already overburdened by their teaching schedules, and teaching CSE would be an impractical demand for which they receive little support. Invoking values of community in CSE helps **distribute responsibility across household, school, and community systems** – and lets adults see themselves as part of the solution, while having involvement from other allies (especially those **viewed as professionals**) to help support youth's healthy development. [52]

Finally, using the community frame also helps us introduce our CSE educators as **interconnected mentors, youth leaders, and role models in the community**, and explain the role they play in supporting adolescents' healthy development. This is important, as one of main tactics CSE opponents use is to frame CSE as an “outsider intervention” – especially in the Global South. [53] Strategically – and genuinely – showing CSE educators are essential parts of the community helps protect CSE against the “us vs. them” narratives that CSE opponents use.



ACTION 2

Collect and share stories about the broader (intrapersonal and institutional) benefits of CSE.

In our frames on the importance of CSE, we have an opportunity not only to discuss how CSE impacts individual adolescents – but also how CSE benefits those around them (families, teachers, etc.) and tackles broader social problems (educational achievement, power imbalances, etc.). Stories – especially those that center around adolescents' lived experiences – can help connect CSE to broader social problems in a way that frames CSE as an aspirational solution for positive youth development and engagement.

FEATURED RESOURCE



Example illustrated story to amplify the testimonies of young people in explaining the broader benefits of CSE

This brief story – shared both in our constituent voice magazines and online social media – was specifically framed to convey the broader (and often unexpected) benefits of CSE, while keeping a realistic balance between personal agency and structures that lead to adolescent outcomes. The illustrations and short text were also specifically designed to be accessible and attractive to students, parents, and teachers in the rural areas where Projet Jeune Leader works.

One example of an intrapersonal benefit of CSE is that it **improves communication between parents and their adolescent children**. Projet Jeune Leader amplifies this benefit by sharing testimonies we receive from both parents and adolescents about how they have improved relationships and are more comfortable talking about sexuality issues with one another after participating in the program. These testimonies also invoke positive values about family and community.

We have also seen that CSE creates a **more welcoming school environment**. Students are more engaged in their other classes, have better hygiene, take more responsibility, and are more well-behaved. Naming these broader benefits of CSE is an effective way to answer frequently asked questions such as: “Isn’t it the parents’ responsibility to talk about sexuality with their children?” We use testimonies from school principals and teachers to **magnify this institutional benefit of CSE**. We strategically group and share different testimonials in a series of constituent voice magazines to create a powerful advocacy tool; Projet Jeune Leader gatekeepers and advocates can show them to hesitant parents or teachers to convince them that others – and a significant mass – approve of the program. Feedback from parents and teachers suggests that they find the testimonials interesting and relevant to their lived experience.

In 2019, UNICEF Madagascar posted a Facebook status with one data point from the results of their 2018 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey: 1 in 5 girls have had sex before the age of 15, as compared to 1 in 10 boys.

The comment section of the Facebook post quickly filled up with comments like “Youth have such bad behavior nowadays” and “That’s normal since boys will be with more than one girl, and both are naughty, anyways.” [55] This reflects a counterproductive narrative about adolescence: that youth, themselves, are to blame for poor outcomes. [56] Focusing on these negative data points can also perpetuate fatalism, where people feel too overwhelmed by problems to act [57] (indeed, one of the Facebook comments on the same post read, “All that is left to do is to pray that they will make the right decision.”).

These common and harmful narratives are one reason why Projet Jeune Leader focuses so heavily on strategic communications with constituents. By **centering the stories of youth**, for example, we can challenge the idea that youth are always to blame for their own problems and help people understand adolescents’ lived experiences. By **amplifying the voices of other constituents**, from parents to school officials to health service providers, we can show the many tangible personal, interpersonal, and structural benefits of CSE.



“As a school principal, I feel it is important to teach students about sexual and reproductive health at school, because it tremendously helps them with their behavior. As a Christian and a pastor, I feel even more strongly that teaching sexual and reproductive health in school is a really good thing... because God devised everything on the human body for our good.

The impacts of our collaboration with Projet Jeune Leader are tangible. For instance, this year, none of the students got pregnant, when we used to have 8 or 6 – at least 4 – pregnancies per year... Also, the kids act more mature in everyday school life because they now know what they are supposed to do. Kids are no longer teasing each other or being violent or bullying others, or breaking equipment. They have learned to live together in harmony, they are like little adults in their behavior and it is safe to say they are well on their way to becoming well-rounded individuals.

– Mr. Tidson, Pastor and Partner School Principal

Quote translated from Malagasy

ACTION 3

Make deliberate choices about the content of the CSE curriculum: what to include, what to leave unsaid, and how to present it.

It is widely recognized that when developing curricula, CSE programs should “be prepared to make adaptations to existing curricula based on community norms, language, needs assessment results including young people’s views, CSE policies, and the input of international and regional CSE expert consultants.” [58] In some very conservative contexts, this means taking out lessons that are considered sensitive and controversial. It is still possible to address controversial-deemed content by preparing educators to cover sensitive subjects with students outside of the classroom setting.

Even after carefully designing the curriculum, deciding how to present it to an outside audience (parents, teachers, school administrators...) and discuss what youth will be learning requires careful consideration from the start, to minimize misunderstandings – and even outright backlash.

To avoid outright backlash against CSE in the context in which we work, Projet Jeune Leader does not include formal in-school lessons on LGBTIQA+ issues and other topics that are still regarded sensitively, such as abortion. Other organizations also take this conservative approach when adapting CSE curricula [59]. However, our CSE educators are **prepared and encouraged** to address these topics during confidential, one-on-one counseling sessions with students. By carefully recruiting educators with positive social norms who are credible young adults, we have found that students feel they can approach their educators with questions or concerns about culturally-sensitive issues.

We supplement educators’ capacities to guide their students through sensitive topics with **supportive supervision check-ins**, **monthly group meetings**, and **in-service trainings**, as well as a **counseling guide** that helps them respond to frequently asked questions about LGBTIQA+ and abortion, among the many other questions and concerns young adolescents approach them with during counseling.

something behind their backs. We should share our point of view with them in a positive and respectful way. Here are some strategies that we can use to improve communication with our parents or guardians”.

On the board, put up the flipchart paper where you wrote in advance the following (keep the flipchart paper on the board for the rest of the class):

- Use assertive communication (don’t use aggressive or passive communication!)
- Use good listening skills
- Be prepared: Know what you are asking for and think through the consequences of your request.
- Pick the right time to talk, when the situation at home is relaxed.
- Be calm: Present your arguments calmly and with facts.
- Listen to what your parents or guardians have to say: Consider their point of view and whether they might be right on all or some points. Remember that parents generally have your best interest at heart.

Read out loud this content. Then say: “By applying these strategies, we can better communicate with our parents or guardians so that they can better understand our point of view. This will help us come to a conclusion with our parents or guardians so that is good for everyone – for us and our parents.”

Then, next to the flipchart paper above, put up the 3 flipchart papers where you wrote in advance the following scenarios (write each scenario on a separate flipchart paper):

Scenario 1: Your parent/guardian told you not to spend time with a certain boy because he comes from a ‘bad family’. Yet you are really good friends with this boy and have never had any problems with him or his family. You want to keep spending time with your friend.

Scenario 2: You wake up every morning at 5 A.M to help with the household chores. One day, your mother announces that she wants you to wake up an hour earlier (at 4 A.M) every day to help with more chores. You really do not want to do this.

Scenario 3: You want to participate in a program over the summer with the PJL Educator. The program meets every day, for 2 hours. Your father doesn’t want you to participate in this program because he says you should be doing things to help at the house. You really want to participate in this summer program.

Read out loud the three scenarios.

Divide students into pairs.

Explain: “You and your partner should choose one scenario that you would like to discuss together. One of you will pretend to be the parent and the other will pretend to be the child. Imagine that the child chose a calm time to talk to his/her parent about the situation that they disagree about. I would like the child to apply the strategies on the list on the board to communicate with his/her parent about the scenario. The person

Projet Jeune Leader uses **scripted lesson plans** to ensure CSE educators are delivering clear, evidence-based, non-biased information to students – and thereby avoiding misconceptions and controversy about what exactly they are teaching. Scripted lessons also enabled us to gain quick authorization from the national Ministry of Education – who could easily see and understand the exact purpose and content of the CSE program .

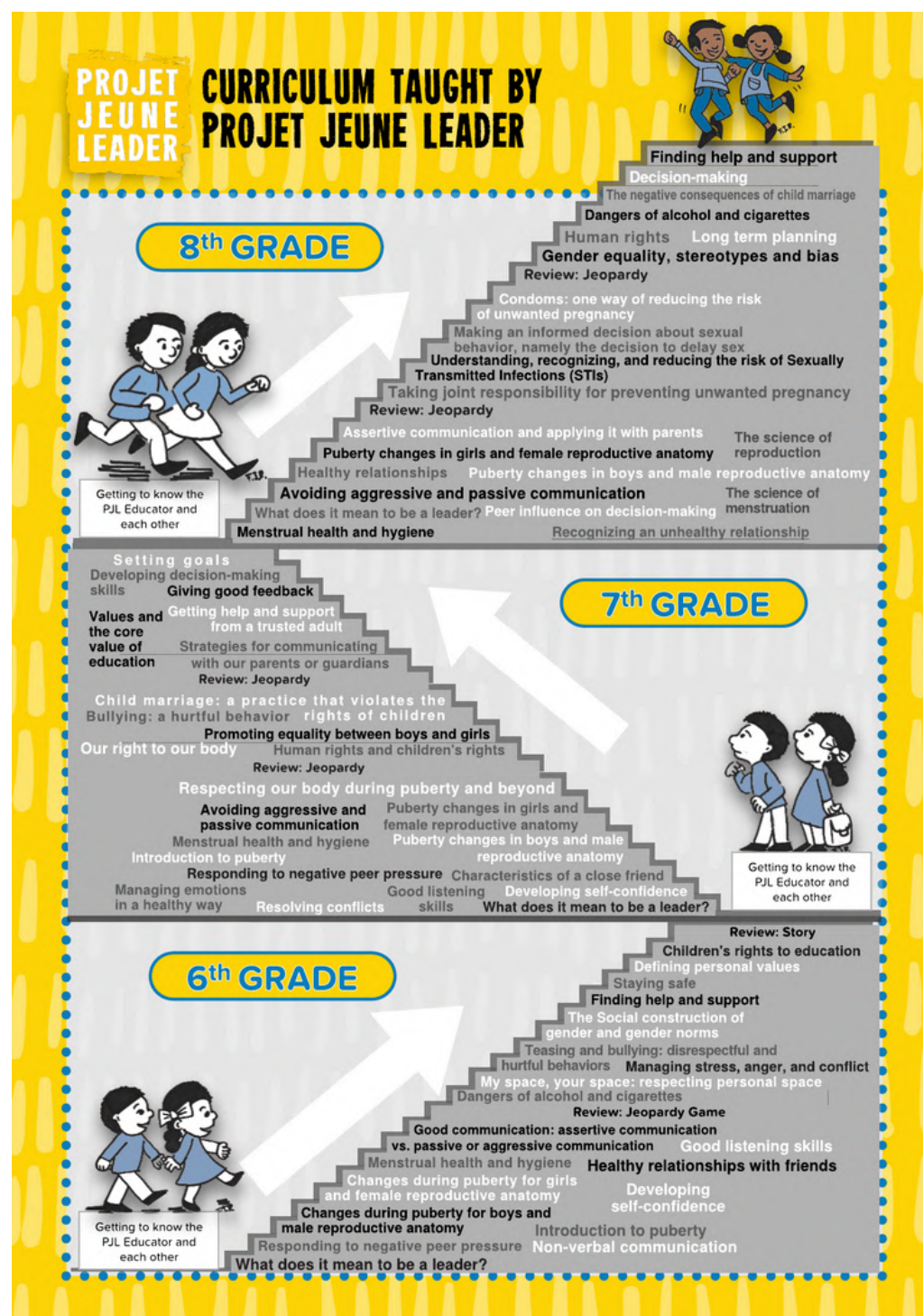
TOP: Excerpt from the English language translation of one of our scripted lesson plans.

Employing Intentional Language to Describe Our Curricula

Projet Jeune Leader **adapts and translates** lessons from evaluated and effective CSE curricula for use in Madagascar. Some of the lessons we pull from were originally entitled "Deciding whether to have sex" and "Sexual Decision Making". We realized these lesson titles could be easily misinterpreted by any audience – not just CSE opponents. In fact, when reverse-translated from the local language, the lesson title ended up saying "Am I ready for sex?" We now ensure that our lesson titles are labeled as **descriptive phrases** (such as "Making an Informed Decision about Sexual Behavior, Especially the Decision to Delay First and Early Intercourse.") rather than broad terms or catchy jargon, to prevent misunderstandings about what is being taught.

Projet Jeune Leader then uses a **staircase diagram** to visually represent all lessons in our curricula. One of parents and teachers' key concerns – common in many other contexts – is that CSE lessons are not taught in an **age-appropriate** manner. This metaphor conveys that adolescents "climb up" and progress through lessons which are clearly segmented by age and grade. This metaphor resonates quickly with adults, and they even recall it later when talking to others about how the CSE program is structured and age-appropriate.

AT RIGHT: Staircase diagram that, translated into Malagasy, we use to explain our curricula and approach to age-segmented CSE.





NURTURE COMMUNITY & MEANINGFUL PARTNERSHIPS

-
1. Bring together key local gatekeepers and champions from across different communities for network building, peer exchange, and mutual learning (as well as to celebrate CSE!) from the start.
 2. Deliver parallel programs for parents and teachers to enhance their engagement – and ultimately, their understanding and support – for CSE.

If we want to build a base of CSE supporters in our communities, we must forge sustained and accountable partnerships. It is difficult – if not impossible – to create long-term support for CSE with extractive or transactional relationships that only focus on short-term tactical gains.

Since our start in 2013, Projet Jeune Leader has taken a “Build Together” approach whereby we work closely with local school principals to determine our CSE program’s design, implementation, and impact.

As our program has grown – both in size and geographic reach – we have developed and tested new ways to ensure that we continually nurture community and dialogue with parents, teachers, and school administrators at our partner schools. These meaningful partnerships have resulted in shared ownership leading to a more durable and sustainable approach, a CSE program aligned with all stakeholders’ needs, and stronger understanding of operational nuances for responding to sensitivities and misconceptions about CSE in local communities.

ACTION 1

Bring together key local gatekeepers and champions from across different communities for network building, peer exchange, and mutual learning (as well as to celebrate CSE!) from the start.

Meaningful stakeholder engagement is more than a one-off conversation. Unfortunately, two-way discussion is still rare in CSE; for example, implementers are encouraged to “update community members about your progress in implementation, as well as changes in your plans and any challenges and ideas for improving CSE delivery.” [60] Beyond providing updates, CSE programs should work closely with key stakeholders (e.g., school principals) to understand how they want to be engaged and how they can advance CSE programs and ideas so as to maintain strong, trusting relationships.

Projet Jeune Leader brings together school principals – key local gatekeepers for CSE – twice a year for network building, peer exchange, and mutual learning.

Our **pre-year orientation meeting** ensures that our educators, supervising staff, and school principals understand their roles and responsibilities for the school year. We have found that these orientation meetings 1) improve principals’ understanding of CSE and its purpose; 2) enhance principals’ personal commitments to improving support for CSE among parents and teachers in their schools; and, 3) ease principals’ concerns about the professionalism and quality of the CSE educators.

Our **mid-year partner school symposium** brings together school principals to share, learn, reflect, and collaborate. Among many other benefits, these symposia have enabled us to co-design relevant and clear feedback mechanisms [61] and adjust our working relationships to further boost local ownership of the CSE program. [62]



Look out for this icon, which links to the resources featured in this section.

FEATURED RESOURCES



Participatory activities to co-design feedback mechanisms with key gatekeepers and understand how they can and want to be engaged in the CSE program

Discover sample activities Projet Jeune Leader used during partner school symposia, both to co-design clear and feasible feedback mechanisms with school principals and to shift more power to principals for integrating and managing CSE educators in their respective schools.



Sample participatory activity to generate and synthesize local expertise on responding to resistance to CSE

Projet Jeune Leader used this participatory activity to engage key local gatekeepers – school principals – to understand their strategies for responding to common negative frames about CSE in their schools. We then synthesized their insights and expertise to develop simple advocacy tools that would minimize the barriers for other gatekeepers to act and respond to concerns about CSE in their own schools and communities.



Sample school and CSE program partnership agreement

To help ensure that Projet Jeune Leader works towards fair and respectful partnerships to achieve the shared goals of CSE, our one-page partnership agreement with schools clearly defines roles, responsibilities, and commitments for each partner.

ACTION 2

Deliver parallel programs for parents and teachers to enhance their engagement – and ultimately, understanding and support – for CSE.

Showcasing school programs can increase understanding and transparency around CSE. [63]

For example, to enhance parent engagement for CSE, one suggestion is to prepare and deliver CSE courses for parents. [64]

Since 2017, Projet Jeune Leader has offered workshops to parents from partner schools focused on improving their **communication skills and confidence** to address reproductive health issues with their children starting at a young age. [65] Both parents and students report that these workshops improve parent-adolescent relationships through more effective communication and parenting techniques. Importantly, these workshops also enhance parents' trust in CSE educators to help teach and raise their children.

Teachers are often the stakeholders least likely to understand or engage with Projet Jeune Leader's CSE program. To address this, our educators deliver a **two-hour session for teachers in their partner schools** to present the themes in our curricula, simulate one example CSE lesson, and conduct a small training course on communication techniques with adolescents. Follow-up assessments reveal that teachers better understand Projet Jeune Leader after the session and demonstrate a new commitment to supporting the CSE educator in their school.

FEATURED RESOURCES



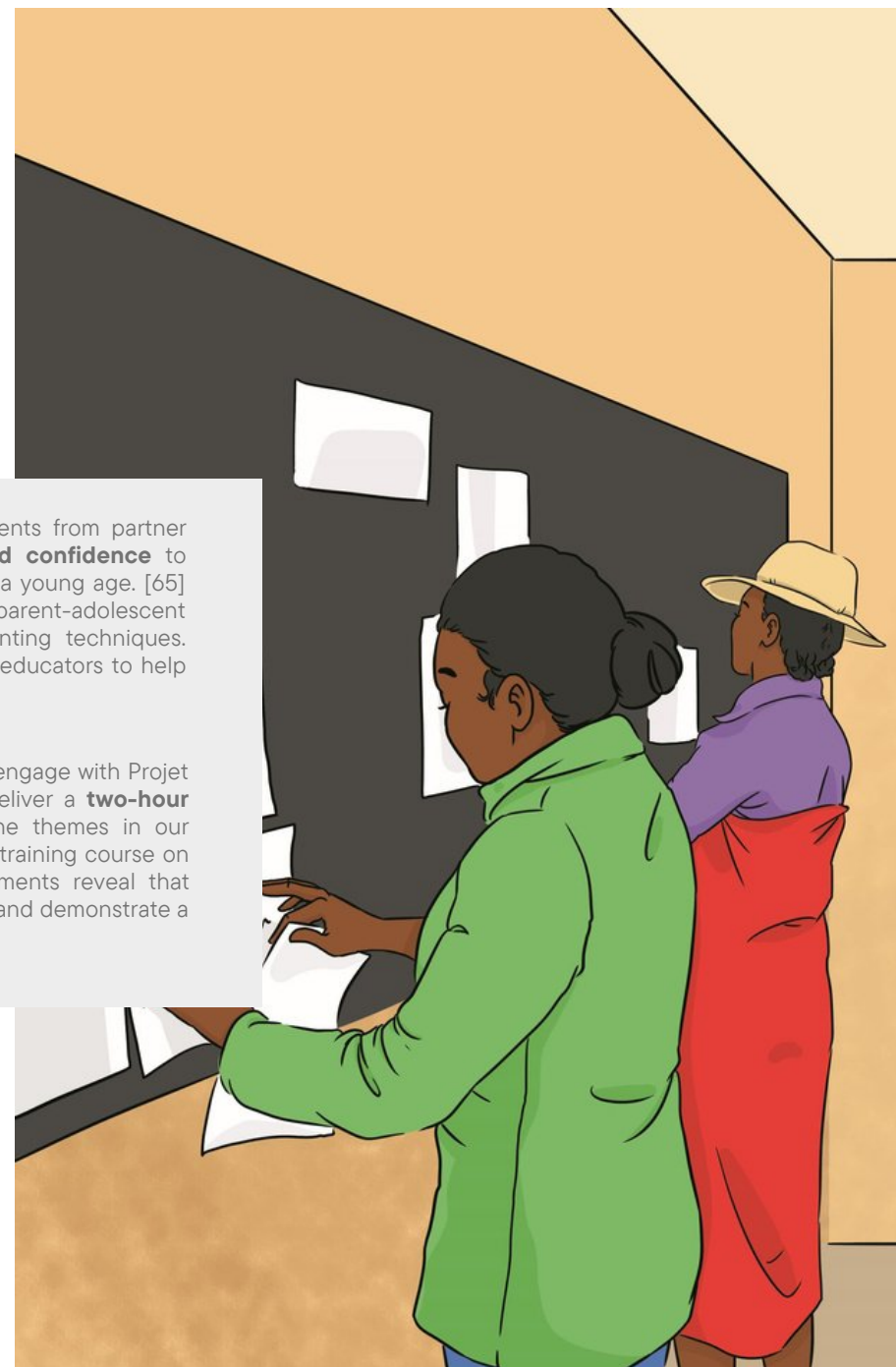
Engaging teachers in supporting CSE: Projet Jeune Leader's lessons learned from a parallel teacher's program

We captured our lessons learned from delivering a special session for teachers in our partner schools in this document.



Workshops for parents: Lessons learned from Projet Jeune Leader

This document details our lessons learned from delivering workshops for parents.



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fianarleader@gmail.com



@PJL_Madagascar



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