

# Health and Well-being

UNFPA APRO Policy Brief – October 2018

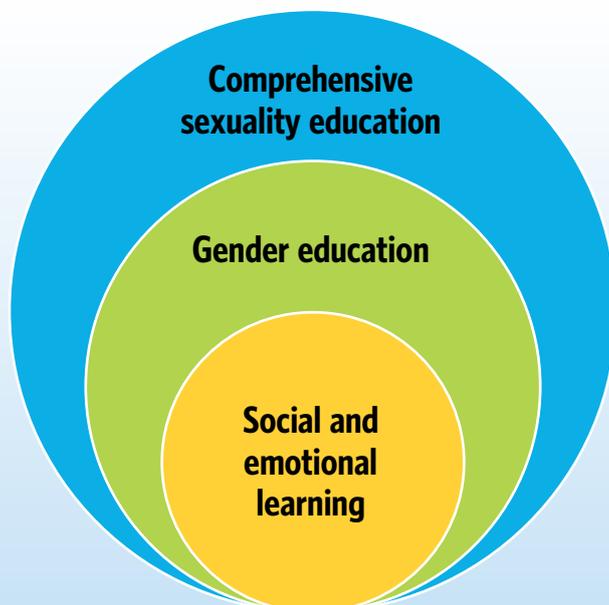
**Well**-being education programmes build the resilience of children, adolescents and young people, empowering them to relate to others with respect, to make and carry out responsible decisions, and to deal effectively with change and challenge. These programmes are called “life skills” because they are important to learning outcomes, well-being, future employability and healthy adult relationships.

This UNFPA APRO Policy Brief invites Ministries of Education and other stakeholders to consider the wide-ranging benefits of a package of life skills, including social and emotional learning, to enhance the health and well-being for all students.

## Well-being education builds respect, responsibility and relationship skills

- At the centre of well-being education is social and emotional learning (SEL). SEL programmes develop skills for positive social and mental health.
- Gender education (GE) promotes respectful gender relationships, and helps to reduce gender-based violence.
- Age-appropriate comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) programmes develop the knowledge, skills and values young people need to make informed, responsible and respectful decisions about their sexual lives. All education systems should provide for SEL, GE and CSE. <sup>[1], [2], [3]</sup>

## Building respect, responsibility and relationship skills



## A shared approach

Comprehensive sexuality education includes core components of social and emotional learning and gender education. Common elements and approaches include:

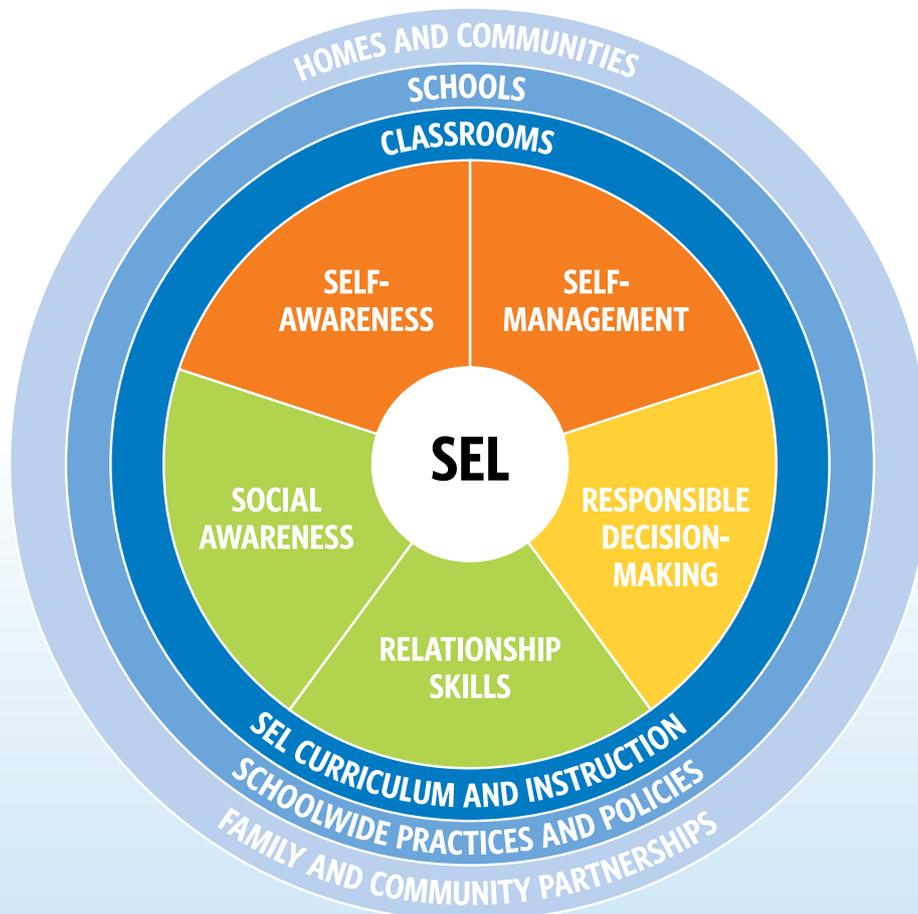
- teaching the values of respect and responsibility;
- building relationship skills; and
- empowering responsible decision-making.

## Social and emotional learning improves learning, well-being and employability

Social and emotional learning programmes teach the knowledge and skills to understand, manage and communicate about emotions; establish and maintain respectful relationships; use positive coping strategies; and make responsible decisions. Research shows a number of benefits, including:

- improved mental well-being and reductions in anxiety and depression <sup>[6]</sup>;
- improved social behaviour and reductions in bullying and harassment <sup>[7]</sup>;
- reductions in risk-taking with alcohol and other drugs <sup>[8]</sup>;
- improvements in connectedness to learning and to school;
- improved academic attainment <sup>[9]</sup>; and
- improved employability <sup>[1]</sup>.

### Socio-economic benefits of social and emotional learning



## Gender education improves gender equality and reduces gender-based violence

Gender education helps young people to understand how social norms influence people's attitudes, decisions and life opportunities. It aims to advance gender equality and prevent gender-based violence. Well-designed gender education programmes help:

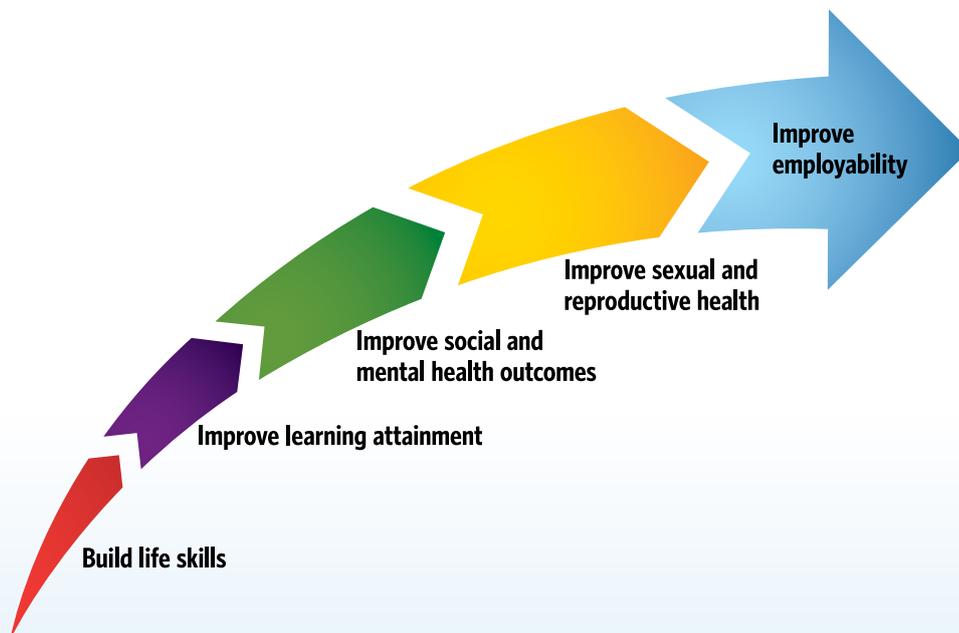
- reduce rates of gender-based violence;
- advance respect for human rights; and
- reduce gendered risk-taking and harmful practices <sup>[5]</sup>.

## Comprehensive sexuality education prepares learners for healthy adult lives

Effective comprehensive sexuality education programmes provide information about sexual and reproductive health and teach relationship skills. CSE programmes that also teach about gender are five times more effective in preventing STIs, HIV and unwanted pregnancy among young people than those that do not <sup>[4]</sup>. Research from around the world shows that well-designed CSE programmes:

- help reduce sexual risk-taking behaviours;
- delay sexual intercourse;
- reduce the number of partners; and
- increase condom and contraceptive use.

**Provide social and emotional learning, gender education and comprehensive sexuality education**



## Well-being education advances the Sustainable Development Goals

When education systems provide comprehensive sexuality education, with core components of social and emotional learning and gender education, they advance progress towards the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, including Goal 3: Health, Goal 4: Quality Education, Goal 5: Gender Equality and Goal 10: Reduced Inequalities.

Well-being education contributes in particular to Goal 4: Quality Education: Develop youth skills for employment. Ensure all learners acquire knowledge and skills for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence and global citizenship.

## Comprehensive sexuality education, with a focus on gender education and social and emotional learning, contributes to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals



### Resources on comprehensive sexuality education

- International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education (UNESCO et al 2018)
- UNFPA Operation Guidance for Sexuality Education (UNFPA 2014)
- Comprehensive Sexuality Education: A Global Review (UNESCO 2015)

### References

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