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# **The Whole School Approach for Sexuality Education Findings from Uganda**

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# 1 Introduction

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The implementation of (comprehensive) sexuality education (CSE) programs remains a challenge in many parts of the world. Common implementation challenges are a lack of program fidelity by school staff, whereas lessons are skipped or shortened, especially those on sensitive topics such as abortion or sexual diversity (Vanwesenbeeck, Westeneng, de Boer, Reinders, & van Zorge, 2016). Also, insufficient teacher skills including a lack of motivation and attitude contribute to decreased program fidelity and effectiveness. Another implementation challenge is composed of contextual barriers such as differences in the perception of gender and opposing opinions within the socio-cultural and religious levels that demand the involvement of a broad spectrum of stakeholders in implementing CSE programs (Vanwesenbeeck et al., 2016). These challenges are a small sample of the barriers that exist in the process of implementing sexuality education in schools. In order for SE programs to be successful, it is of high importance that the implementation process is accurate and adapted to the needs of the different stakeholders. It is, therefore, important that governments, communities, families and young people are engaged in the implementation process (Boonstra, 2011).

A framework for the implementation of SE, called the Whole School Approach (WSA) for sustainable sexuality education was developed by Rutgers, SchoolNet Uganda, Straight Talk Foundation (Uganda), and the Centre for the Study of Adolescence (Kenya). The WSA aims to move beyond classroom teaching and addresses the whole school environment, including supportive school policies and school facilities. The WSA emphasizes the involvement of all relevant stakeholders including students, school management, government officials, peer educators, teachers and sexual and reproductive health service providers (Rutgers, 2017).

Between 2013 and 2015, Rutgers and partner organizations piloted the WSA for SE at 12 schools across western Kenya and eastern Uganda. Preliminary results of the WSA pilot study showed promising outcomes regarding the use of the whole school approach (Rutgers, 2017). The results showed that an increased number of students received sexuality education due to the introduction of the WSA. It was also found that the sense of safety among students increased and, subsequently, drop-out and absentee rates decreased. Finally, the number of collaborations with external stakeholders and support for teachers and other SE educators increased.

Now, more than 4 years after the pilot study, the WSA is implemented in many schools across Uganda under the Get Up Speak Out (GUSO) program. The current research investigates how the WSA is functioning in its current state, how it is exactly contributing to SE implementation at local level and how it can lead to a more sustainable and scalable implementation of SE in schools. Gaining more insight how the WSA addresses the implementing challenges, such as teacher skills, contextual barriers and other potential unknown challenges is assumed to contribute to improving the implementation process of SE. This research seeks to describe and explore how the Whole School Approach for sexuality education addresses challenges related to the implementation of SE programs. Additionally, the current study is seeking evidence on how to increase the scalability, and sustainability of WSA. Therefore, the research question of this study is:

***How does the Whole School Approach (WSA) improve the implementation of sexuality education in Ugandan schools?***

## 2 Background

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### 2.1 Whole School Approach: its core

The Whole School approach is a comprehensive framework that aims to effectively implement CSE curricula. The WSA is not an entirely new approach, it is based on existing frameworks and experiences of partner organizations that have been adapted to the field of implementing comprehensive sexuality education. One of those frameworks is the “Whole School Approach for Health”, developed by the WHO (1997). The WHO describes a so-called “health promoting school” as a school that is constantly strengthening its capacity as a healthy setting for living, learning and working. The aim of this framework is to promote cooperation between the education and health sectors to improve the health of children at school age by including relevant concepts that are equally important to the WSA for SE. These concepts will be described in the following paragraphs.

The first concept is ownership, whereas the school should be in the driving seat directing the process of CSE implementation. This is assumed to increase the participation and motivation for school management and teachers, as well as other stakeholders (World Health Organization, 1997). Secondly, integration of SE in the school’s existing curriculum is important to increase the program fidelity. If schools rely on their own resources, procedures, regulations and practices, they program will become their own, which relates back to the concept of ownership (World Health Organization, 1997). Thirdly, parental involvement is important since parents are able to highly influence young people’s lives and opinions. In order to avoid conflicting messages and parents’ opposition to SE, they are asked to participate in the CSE program. Fourthly, student’s participation is crucial for CSE. The WSA is based on equity of access to SE, no student should be excluded. Additionally, students are able to contribute to a better content of the program and to the implementation of CSE by providing their opinions and ideas. Next, a key role is given to teachers since they are the facilitators of CSE and have direct contact with the students. Teachers receive extensive training in CSE and student-centred education methods. Finally, the role of the school within the community is an important concept in the WSA. Schools are active in communities, maintaining relationships with a variety of stakeholders, such as parents and health providers. The school itself can also influence the community by setting positive norms and values regarding SE and respectful communication between adults and young people. These concepts and examples are used to provide insight in the roots of the complex, multi-level, aspects of the WSA.

Based on the previously mentioned concepts and wide variety of stakeholders, the WSA incorporates five action areas in three domains. Note that action areas refer to topics that should be targeted to improve implementation of CSE. The first domain is ‘school policy and environment’ and has two action areas: (1) management support and (2) safe and healthy school environment. The second domain is ‘cooperation with (external) stakeholders’ and has two action areas: (3) parent’s involvement, (4) access to health services and information. The third domain is ‘school curriculum and teaching capacity and quality’ and has one specific action area: (5) teaching capacity, figure 1 helps to visualize this overview. The five action areas and the implementation process are described in the following paragraphs.

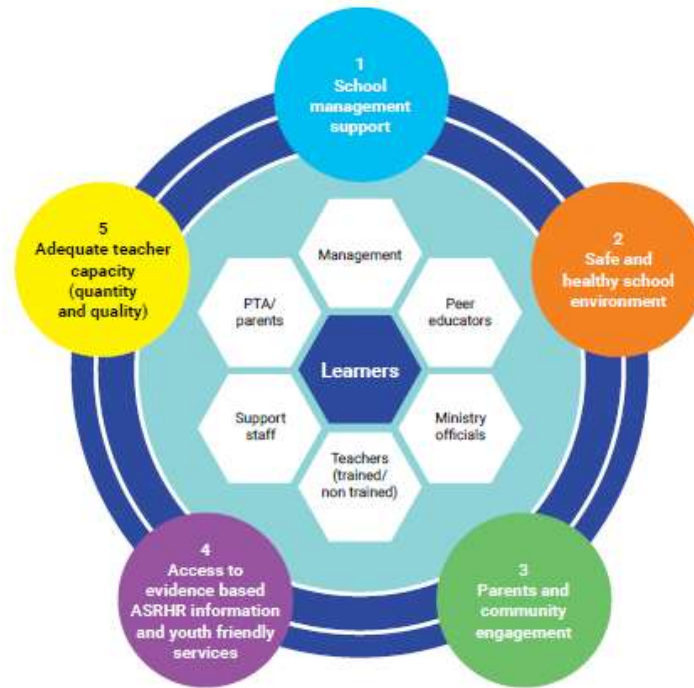


Figure 1 Visualization of actor involvement in 5 action areas (Rutgers, 2016)

The first action area, school management support, focuses on budgeting and timetabling SE. Support from the management towards SE teachers in terms of facilitation and encouragement is crucial to implement the WSWM. The second action area, a safe and healthy school environment, concerns both social and physical issues that should be addressed by the school. Social issues, such as positive and respectful communication, a violence free environment and supportive policies are addressed by the WSA. The practical environment concerns good hygiene, lockable restrooms, sufficient water supply, and a clean and secured school compound. Parent's involvement is the third action area of the WSA. Parents should support both their children and teachers, meaning that they are not only expected to approve sexuality education, but also comprehend the motivation and need for SE. Additionally, parents can also take the role of SE advocate to engage with other parents, other schools and other community members. The fourth action area focuses on access to youth-friendly health services and reliable SRHR information. Cooperation with health providers is crucial as students are able to obtain information that is not provided in class. By creating connections with local clinics, schools can easily refer students to a health service. Additionally, establishing an in-school youth corner could provide further (reading) materials for students with questions concerning SRHR. The fifth and last action area focuses on the quantity and quality of teaching capacity. Training, monitoring and peer exchange are crucial to increase the teacher's ability to efficiently provide SE. Increasing knowledge and skills on how to deal with sensitive topics in way that is comfortable for both the teacher and the student requires extensive teacher training. Additionally, in-school sharing of SE knowledge should be used to prevent a loss of information when a trained teacher leaves the school or when there is a general lack of staff.

Approximately three years are needed to implement the WSA at a school. A local NGO has a guiding and facilitating role when it comes to implementing WSA and is the school's main contact. In the first year, together with the school, the NGO conducts a self-assessment workshop and establishes a school action plan based on the results of the assessment. After this process, training for teachers and management staff starts. During the second year, the school will be responsible for the full implementation of the action plan that was made in the first year. Based on the outcome of the self-assessment, the school also has to ensure that improvement is made within the five action areas. At the end of the second year, a new self-assessment workshop will indicate if progress has been made and which indicators need more attention. During the third year, schools continue to implement sexuality education independently.

## 2.2 Sexuality education in Uganda

The Presidential Initiative on AIDS Strategy for Communication to Youth (PIASCY) is the Ugandan sexuality education program that is used nationwide to inform students about the health risks of having intercourse. Its primary function is to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS by advising pupils to abstain from sex until marriage. PIASCY consists of 26 abstinence centred messages that are spread by the teachers to the pupils during life skills lessons. PIASCY is not considered to be a comprehensive sexuality education program but is currently the only program allowed by the government.

Despite the effort of increasing awareness on responsible sexuality and reproductive health through PIASCY, there is still a shortage of written materials that outline the appropriate standards for providing sexuality education in Uganda (Ministry of Education and Sports & MoES, 2018). This was a reason for the Ugandan government to develop the National Sexuality Education Framework. The themes include: human development, relationships, sexual behaviour and sexual health, each of which is further broken down into many key topics. The values that will be promoted are cultural, religious and ethical values that enhance family life, sexual and reproductive health specific to the Uganda context. However, information concerning the utilization and reach of the Sexuality Education Framework is currently not available.

### **2.3 Partner organization in Uganda**

Straight Talk Foundation (STF) is a Ugandan NGO, registered in 1997 and operating nationally. STF's mission is to improve the sexual and reproductive health and well-being of young people through quality social and behavioural change communication. STF was one of the NGOs that were at the forefront of developing the WSA. STF is currently using the WSA to guide schools during implementation of sexuality education and, therefore, a crucial actor in the SE delivery process.

## 2 Methodology

### 3.1 Study setting and participants

A qualitative research setting was used to investigate the use of the WSA for SE implementation. The study was carried out in June 2019 in two districts in eastern Uganda, Bugiri and Iganga. A total of 12 schools were included, 6 in Bugiri and 6 in Iganga. In each district, half of the schools were primary, the other half were secondary schools. The research team consisted of four researchers, three researchers conducted semi-structured interviews and one made observations around the school compound. Interview-guides and observation sheets were used to structure each school visit. At each school, at least 4 persons were asked to participate in the research: (1) head master or deputy teacher, (2) SE teacher, (3) teacher to guide observations, (4) one or more peer educators.

### 3.2 Consolidated Framework for Implementation Research

To provide this study with a theoretical ground, a framework for implementation research was used. The range of available frameworks for implementation research is relatively narrow since this field of research is fairly new (Peters, 2013). In their research, Damschroder et al. (2009), performed an analysis of 19 different currently existing theories and frameworks that related to implementation research and suggested that there is a considerable amount of overlap between them. Yet, it is stated that none of the existing frameworks is complete, each framework is missing one or more key concepts. Based on the different existing theories, Damschroder et al. (2009) extracted important concepts and established the CFIR framework: the Consolidated Framework For Implementation Research. For this study, the CFIR framework offers a theoretical basis as it is considered to be the most comprehensive implementation framework currently available. The structure of the CFIR framework is used to systematically guide an assessment of a multi-level implementation process and identify factors that might influence the intervention implementation and effectiveness (Damschroder et al., 2009). The CFIR includes five major domains, (1) characteristics of the intervention, (2) inner setting, (3) outer setting, (4) the individuals involved and, (5) the implementation process. The CFIR has been adjusted to fit the WSA situation. This resulted in a conceptual framework which is presented in figure 2.

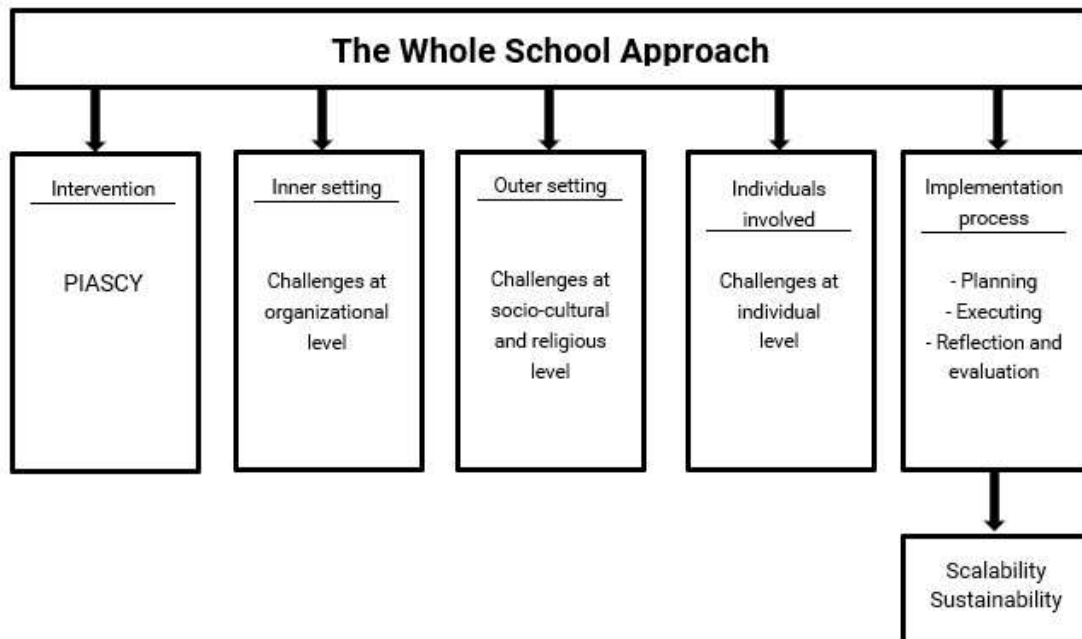


Figure 2 The Whole School Approach: conceptual framework for implementation research

## 3 Results

The following result section presents the findings from analysis of key informant interviews and observations. Results are structured according to the conceptual framework as shown in figure 2. In each section of this chapter, the contribution of the WSA to the implementation of sexuality education in each field of interest is described. These are respectively:

1. The school's inner setting: challenges and experiences from management perspective
2. The outer setting: challenges and experiences from a socio-cultural and religious perspective
3. The individuals involved: challenges and experiences from individual level (e.g. teachers, peer educators)
4. The implementation process: a focus on sustainability and scalability challenges

At the end of each section, an overview of key findings is presented. An important note, as this study was not designed to assess the outcomes of the PIASCY program, this topic will not be covered in the results section.

### 3.1 Inner setting: the organizational level

This section respectively describes the findings regarding the organizational level of the school. The organizational level comprises the school management, more specifically, the head or deputy teacher. The following section describes findings based on their experiences and challenges regarding the WSA. Topics that are discussed in the following paragraphs are the main themes that have brought up during key informant interviews, these are the head or deputy teacher's attitude towards the WSA, change that is attributed to the WSA, experiences with monitoring and evaluation, and the establishment of a youth corner.

#### 3.1.1 Attitude towards WSA

All school managements across Bugiri and Iganga have shown a positive attitude towards the implementation of the WSA. Head and deputy teachers have experienced that the WSA is a useful tool that helps to bring the different stakeholders onboard, both within and outside the school environment.

*"I am positive about it! Because, we embrace the WSA, that means every child, every personnel in this school, be it a teacher, a learner or the support staff, will be enlightened. We cover a number of topics, self-awareness, personal hygiene, menstrual hygiene, things concerning HIV/AIDS, we make everybody to come on board". – Head teacher, Bugiri*

While all head and deputy teachers show a positive attitude, there are differences in their understanding of the WSA and their efforts to actively implement WSA. First, it has been found that the WSA is not always a clearly understood concept and that the level of understanding differs between schools. When asking head and deputy teachers if they are familiar with the WSA manual, quick guide or toolkit, answers are negative. Head and deputy teachers are generally aware of the main goals as they mention that the WSA "brings everybody onboard" or "has a sensitizing role". When asking respondents about the different elements of the WSA, such as a doing self-assessment, or making a workplan, answers sometimes remained superficial. For this more detailed information about the process of the WSA, researchers were often referred to a senior women or senior man teacher as they were, in some cases, assigned to execute the WSA. This finding also emphasizes the role of head and deputy teachers, as they often mention that facilitation, in terms of time, space and resources, is their main function within the WSA. While minor, differences have been found in the motivation to execute this role. Head and deputy teachers have a range of important responsibilities that may cause implementation of the WSA to be given a lower priority. However, this might also be a consequence of the fact that not every head or deputy teacher took the opportunity to participate in WSA training.



### 3.1.2 Change attributed to WSA implementation

Head and deputy teachers mention that the WSA is bringing positive change to the school environment. This positive change is often attributed to the participation of stakeholders in and outside of the school environment and their awareness of sexuality education. According to head and deputy teachers, the WSA emphasizes the inclusion of all in-school actors: students, teachers, administrators, cooks, matron, patron and watchmen. In addition, it has been found that the WSA generally helps them to see the importance of making connections with different stakeholders, such as bring parents onboard by inviting them to meetings and the establishment of parent teacher associations (PTAs), making a connections with a local health centre, cultural leaders, religious leaders and district officials.

Positive change, attributed to the initiation of the WSA, is described in various ways. First, head and deputy teachers mention the decrease in dropouts due to pregnancy, early marriage, and STDs. According to them, sexuality education, sensitization and the awareness of all stakeholders has caused students to be less shy, open up, speak and speak for themselves. This has resulted in the students' ability to say "no" to (coerced) sexual activities and has reduced the number of girl dropouts. In addition to the decrease of dropouts, head and deputy teachers mention that since the arrival of the WSA, more girls come to school. While girls were always less in number when compared to boys, the change in school environment has caused the ratio of boys and girls to become more equal. When asking respondents which change in school environment causes girl retention, it was often mentioned that girls are now able to openly talk about menstruation issues. According to the respondents, the WSA induced awareness has caused menstruation to be seen as normal by boys, girls, and teachers and initiated the making of reusable sanitary pads and the availability of a clean school uniform in case of an accident. Both the de-stigmatization and the availability of reusable sanitary pads help girls to feel more comfortable during their menstruation period.

*"I'm positive because I see a positive behaviour change among young people. Before the WSA, there were challenges, children were fearing to express themselves, like during menstruation periods, that changed, they talk about it. Second, rapport has been built between teacher and students, there is no fear for teachers, this relationship is positively changed. Also, children open up to their parents due to the exhibition"* – Head teacher, Iganga

Second, positive change is also attributed to an increased inclusion of parents in the school environment. According to head and deputy teachers, parent involvement has improved the ability of both the parent and the student to talk about sexuality related issues. By establishing PTAs or GUSO committees (including a group of parents), and inviting parents to general assemblies, schools seek to create awareness regarding sexuality education and emphasize that it is not about teaching their children to have sex, which is a common perspective among parents, but about issues and challenges that relate to their sexuality.

### 3.1.3 Monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the WSA

A task that should rest within the responsibility of the head or deputy teacher is monitoring and evaluating the progress of the WSA implementation process and sexuality education lessons. It has been found that almost every school has a workplan, which is based on their self-assessment, that describes which steps have to be taken to keep up with the implementation process of the WSA. However, there are often no documents available in which the school keeps track of this progress. The process of monitoring both implementation of the WSA and the progress of sexuality education lessons is done by observing which steps have been taken or which lessons have been completed. There are no signs that the process of implementing the WSA is thoroughly evaluated by the school. Evaluation of sexuality education lessons is generally done by the teacher who orally discusses the content of the lessons with the students by asking their opinion on the SE program.

Statistics are rarely available in terms of documented records. This result is in line with the previous paragraph, monitoring and evaluation is executed but rarely documented. This lack of documentation also includes keeping track of statistics that should be able to back up the decrease in student dropout rates. Systems that have written documentation available are often records of referrals to health centres if students need medical attention and a record of peer educator interactions.

### 3.1.4 Establishing a youth corner

All schools included in this study have made an effort to establish a youth corner. With help from STF, this effort has resulted in almost all 12 schools having a youth corner available. Youth corners vary in size, location, and available materials. Generally, schools have put up youth corners by, for instance, creating a separate space within a classroom, an empty classroom or a separate building. While most youth corners should create a safe space for students to obtain information that concerns sexuality, they are often also used as a place where girls can rest, change their uniform after an accident and store or make reusable sanitary pads. As a result, boys rarely make use of the youth corner. The following quote illustrates this issue and a solution that has been proposed by the school.

*“Almost every month most girls would take 2 to 3 days without coming to school. But when we established this youth corner, a girl can come there, we have pads she can use and also clean herself. Even for the boys we also established a youth corner after discussions in the committee meeting. One youth corner cannot serve people of different biological make because for example, a girl can be in the space padding herself then now a boy also comes and also needs assistance, this cannot happen in the same space”.* – Teacher, Bugiri.

However, the following quote illustrates that boys should not be excluded from a youth corner and that it is important to include mixed genders. According to this teacher, they also have to learn that they have a role to play during the menstruation period of a peer student.

*“Each one needs sexuality education, so they stay in their society when they know that a boy can teach can help a girl when she is in problem, like skirt is spoiled or a dress is spoiled, a boy can make a pad which a girl is to use. In a social way a boy can help to bring water in the youth corner which the girls can use to wash”* – Teacher, Bugiri

A point of attention is that the amount of information regarding sexuality, which should be available in the youth corner, generally lacks behind. There is often no access to internet and the information, if available, limits itself to PIASCY handbooks. A reason for a lack of resources in the youth corner, such as other informative books, brochures or a computer is repeatedly attributed to a lack of finances or available materials.

### 3.1.5 The organizational level: summary of key findings

Within the organizational level of the school, the head and deputy teacher have provided insight in current challenges and experiences with implementing the WSA. The following points can be identified as key findings:

- Management attitude towards WSA is positive. Schools embrace the WSA under the GUSO project and the management aims to implement WSA within their capabilities.
- Management confirms the positive impact of involving stakeholders both within and outside of the school environment.
- WSA induced change is based on sensitization and creation of awareness on the importance of sexuality education among all stakeholders. Change is described as:
  - Increased number of girls that come to, and remain in, school.
  - Decrease in student dropouts, especially girls.
  - Students are less shy and openly talk about sexuality issues.
  - Involving parents has shown to improve the relationship between students and parents in terms of discussing sexuality issues.
- Documented records for monitoring and evaluation do often not exist. Keeping record of progress is mostly done by observing the workplan.
- Youth corners exist in almost all schools. The main challenge is to equip youth corners with relevant resources and making them inclusive for both boys and girls.

## 3.2 Outer setting: physical, socio-cultural and religious environment

The following paragraphs present the results that concern the physical, socio-cultural and religious environment. First, results regarding the physical environment is described. It entails the school environment in terms of a safe, healthy and clean school compound. Second, results regarding the socio-cultural and religious environment are presented. These entail the influence of the cultural and religious context on the implementation of the WSA.

### 3.2.1 The school's physical environment

WSA training emphasized the importance of providing a safe and healthy school environment. This is a crucial element within the WSA because it is assumed to contribute to the well-being of the students. Up to different extents, each school has made efforts to ensure the presence of (night) watchmen, proper fencing, providing clean and lockable toilets with water and soap, and the establishment of a connection with a youth-friendly health centre which students can be referred to. Each school has a different physical environment and not all schools are considered to be fully safe and healthy due to a lack of resources. However, emphasizing the importance of a safe and healthy school environment has helped the school staff to realize that improvements can be made in the future. The quote below illustrates the vigilance that was created by WSA training:

*“Our watchman is now so much enlightened up to the extent that if he sees any male person, an unknown male person moving around here, he has to be cautioned and then we keep them off. The same like the matron, we ordered her, no unknown person should move near any of these girls, if he is a parent he should come straight to the office, then we give him or her a go ahead to talk to our children. So both are equally very good”.* – Head teacher, Bugiri

### 3.2.2 The socio-cultural and religious environment

The socio-cultural and religious environment is found to be supportive towards sexuality education. It was assumed that cultural or religious norms and values would potentially form a barrier for the in-school delivery of sexuality education. However, results show quite the opposite. Generally, no schools experience serious opposition from cultural or religious leaders. In fact, in most schools, cultural and religious leaders are involved in the school environment, as emphasized by the WSA. It must be taken into account that low levels of opposition may also be the consequence of avoiding discussions of sensitive topics such as homosexuality and abortion, as argued by an STF staff member. However, cultural and religious leaders speak to the students during an assembly where they do not evade the topic of sexuality.

*“My role is mainly to talk to the students that I am treating because I got skills and knowledge from the GUSO workshops. I make sure that with all the knowledge I have, I am able to translate it into culture to implement.”* – Cultural leader, Bugiri

The quote above shows that cultural and religious leaders participate in the GUSO workshop. The WSA has made them aware of the importance of being involved in the school environment. After attending the workshop, religious and cultural leaders feel that they have a role to play in the school environment. The following quote illustrates the change that a religious leader has experienced since he became active in the school environment.

*“There are about three ways I can say that we have seen change by involving the religious leader. First, GUSO came at a time when we as parents were shy to talk to our children. This has now changed. Second, it has helped to follow the teachings that talk about things like not having sex outside marriage, which has helped young people. Thirdly, GUSO has helped young people to understand their bodies is very important.”* – Religious leader, Iganga

### 3.2.3 The outer setting: summary of key findings

The physical, socio-cultural and religious environment of the school should provide a supportive and facilitating elements. The following key findings concerning this environment are:

- Almost all schools were made aware of the importance of creating a healthy and safe school environment. Providing a supportive physical environment in terms of providing guards, fencing, clean and lockable toilets and water and soap remains challenging but efforts are made to keep improving the physical environment in the future.
- There are no signs of major opposition towards sexuality education. The WSA has contributed the involvement of cultural and religious leaders.

### 3.3 The Individuals involved: experiences and challenges

The following section provides results from the perspective of different individuals. It starts with presenting challenges and experiences that emerged during interviews with teachers, peer educators, health workers and district officials.

#### 3.3.1 Teachers: challenges and experiences

Almost all teachers are aware of the goal and use of the Whole School Approach and see the importance of disseminating the knowledge they receive during workshops. Sexuality education teachers have the crucial role to deliver sexuality information to the student. To fulfil this role as a sexuality education teacher, providing them with adequate support is found to be crucial. Support comes in terms of facilitation, appreciation, the provision of training and the emphasis on cascading training (passing knowledge to fellow teachers and schools staff). No cases have been found where teachers receive financial incentives.

To execute sexuality education, the school management and STF have the role to facilitate teacher with materials and resources. The management has the role to allocate time during weekly assemblies or include SE in the timetable. STF provides the teacher with the necessary knowledge and skills during workshops. SE teachers share positive experiences towards the this facilitation process and the appreciation they receive is seen as a motivation to sustain SE. The following quote illustrates the importance of appreciating their efforts in providing sexuality education.

*“The support we get, one of them is emotional support, the school has been coming in and thanking us or thanking me for the work done. When they see changes, so only that has made me to feel so strong and love sexuality education in the school. The head teacher thanks teachers who ware conducting sexuality education, saying that if it wasn’t for you maybe even we would be experiencing problems. So, I as a person I have been developing a lot of strength whenever I receive such kind of support”. – Teacher, Bugiri*

Teachers also express positive feelings towards the training they receive. They are happy and grateful to be a part of the WSA / GUSO and acknowledge the importance of their role as being the messenger of sexuality education. When asking teachers how the training could be improved, no problems or ideas for improvement have been brought forward. The following quote shows how teachers view the training they receive.

*“This trainings have helped me as a sexuality educator in that they awaken my understanding. I get knowledge, we have come to learn, that all the youth are not the same and they need this knowledge to be equipped with knowledge and the trainings have helped me to know that my services to the youth can change them into useful people. It has even helped me to know that these youths once equipped with skills they can start studies and complete. It has also helped me to know that handling these youths in their problems is not a disturbance, it is my responsibility to help them grow”. – Teacher, Iganga*

WSA training emphasizes the importance of cascading training. Teachers have shared their experience with this concept. They acknowledge that it is important to train fellow teachers who did not attend the training and also inform other staff members, from cook to head teacher, to increase awareness on the topic of sexuality. Generally, it has been found that the management facilitates meetings where teachers, and peer educators, can share the knowledge and experience they have obtained during STF workshops. The following quote shows a teacher who tells about the process of cascading training.

*“We wanted it to be integrated and now even our head teacher advised us that whenever you go for a workshop the first thing you come to do is to go the office. You report what inspired you in the workshop and after that we have to call the whole staff. You brief them about what have learned and how to move on. So that if you are not there somebody else can do your job and, indeed, that thing is working. It is working because, now there is that solidarity every person knows what to do. Even someone who is not a patron can arrange the youth corner very well”. – Teacher, Iganga*

A critical finding that concerns teachers is that they are generally unfamiliar with the WSA approach toolkit, manual or quick guide. This is a remarkable finding since all of the included teachers in this study have participated in a workshop where they should have been introduced to, and supplied with, these documents. Having access to these documents might help to gain insight in the different steps of the WSA and provide necessary background information.

### 3.3.2 Peer educators: challenges and experiences

Peer educators have been found to be present at every school included in this research. They fulfil a major role in terms of informing their peers and referring them to teachers, matrons or patrons in case they feel more help is needed. The presence of peer educators is assumed to be an outcome of using the WSA, the students who are peer educator are not expected to be aware of the WSA. However, a few interesting topics have emerged from interviews with peer educators which might help to improve the WSA. To illustrate how peer educators see their role, the following quote is presented.

*“We made local pads, liquid soap, and others. We are many doing this. Apart from this, I assemble and mobilize my fellow students. We have books on PIASCY and share the topics with them. We do this in their classes, and sometimes in free lessons or when the teacher is absent for a lesson. Also on the school compound I approach students, if I find a group, I talk to them”.* – Peer educator, Bugiri

Peer educators show a great amount of own initiative. It has been found that they actively seek students that need help with sexuality related issues. They are always open for questions and provide advice if other students approach them. The peer educators also show own initiative through advocacy related ideas. Many of them want to start visiting other (non-GUSO) schools and reach out to the community to talk about sexuality with young people who are not in school. In addition, they train each other to get self-confident in discussing issues of sexuality and ensure cascading training. To illustrate these initiative, the following quote shows how peer educators organize their own meetings

*“During lunch time, we meet in the youth corner, share and get ready for sessions in the evening after classes. We also come over to school to meet on Saturday, as time allocated is not sufficient for S.E sessions [...] We often train ourselves especially when we are going to discuss the topics, we support each other to understand the topics. When we discuss, we get self-confidence, and we do this as all peer educators. We train others, we have other students in senior one and two whom we are mentoring. Because next year I am willing to step out and allow another person lead..”* – Peer educator, Bugiri.

Peer educators face a few challenges. As the previous quote already shows, peer educators have to deal with a lack of time. It has been repeatedly found that peer educators need more time to share information with their peers. In addition, peer educators have the feeling they are not always taken seriously when they have organized a GUSO meeting. They are sometimes being ignored, their fellow students think they are showing off or think that peer educators are being spoiled. In most cases, peer educators are backed up by teachers or other staff members. However, one case has been found where peer educators mention that a teacher has said that peer educators are “time wasters”. The following quote touches on the challenges peer educators face.

*“The biggest problem is mobilizing many of my classmates in P6 especially after classes, they will all run away to play football instead of coming for learning group sessions. Some of the pupils ask for refreshment every time you inform them that there is GUSO Learning group session, which is not there. Some students also leave much work of STF GUSO Club for the peer educators saying that it is peer educators who benefit the most. But when the patron/matron intervenes, they all do the task at hand as required”.* – Peer educator, Bugiri

### 3.3.3 Health workers: challenges and experiences

Health workers are (external) school staff members that help students with health related issues, including sexuality related issues. There are cases where a nurse is permanently stationed at the school, taking care of the sick bay, or is an external health worker who is invited to the school. In the latter case, a health worker from a nearby clinic (where students are referred to in case of medical issues) is invited to come and do a check-up on

students or talk with them about different matters. Health workers are often included in the school environment as part of the WSA. While health workers are not always found to be familiar with the WSA, they emphasize the importance of being involved in the school environment to discuss and assist with sexuality related topics.

*“It is good to collaborate with the schools like [names of schools] where we usually go to do HIV , pregnancy tests and other services. It is very important to visit the schools because in my visits we have been getting sexuality related challenges from schools which the teacher does not know enough about. After visiting a school the students come and call us and ask: please come and help us we have this issue and we share then sometimes solve the issue.” – Health worker, Bugiri*

### 3.3.4 District officials: challenges and experiences

The WSA prescribes that district officials, also referred to as district education officers, should be included in the school environment as they have the crucial role to support schools in providing sexuality education. Two key informant interviews reveal that district officials in Bugiri and Iganga are actively involved in the school environment. They share positive views towards the GUSO program and the WSA. The following quote shows how the district education officer in Bugiri fulfils his role within the WSA.

*I am a focal point person. I coordinate all the stake holders offices, to I ensure that what we agree on as stakeholders is carried out and I make a follow-up on what we have agreed on in sort of resolution. For example if I have invited the district officials or sub county officials and they have committed themselves to helping the continuity of the GUSO program, I have to make a follow-up. Like they say we are going to create some budget line for this project, like we say I am going to ensure my inspectors who go to the field look at the time table and see whether GUSO is on the timetable I can also say can you go as you inspect and see if the youth corners have what is necessary so that’s my role. – District education officer, Bugiri*

### 3.3.5. The individuals involved: summary of key findings

The previous paragraphs have described the challenges and experiences of the different individuals who fulfil a key role within the WSA. The following key findings can be extracted from the results:

- Teachers share positive views towards the WSA and training they receive.
- Appreciation for the work they do seems to be a motivational factors.
- Teachers recognize the importance of cascading training and, in cooperation with the school management, meetings are organized to share knowledge and skills.
- Teachers are generally unfamiliar with the WSA manual, toolkit or quick guide.
- Peer educators are present all 12 schools.
- Peer educators share positive experiences and show a great amount of initiative to improve their peers’ sexual health.
- Peer educators face the challenge that they are not always taken seriously and need backup from school staff to ensure they are able to perform their duty.
- Health workers are available for students to reach out to. Health workers acknowledge the importance of participating within the school environment.
- District education officials are positive towards the GUSO program and the WSA. They provide support to scale-up and sustain in-school sexuality education.

## 3.4 Implementation process: scalability and sustainability

The last section of the results presents the findings that relate to the implementation of the WSA. Within this section it is discussed how the WSA contributes to the scalability and sustainability of sexuality education. Key informant interviews with school staff, district education officers, peer educators, cultural and religious leaders and a STF staff member have revealed different positive findings and future challenges to scale-up and sustain sexuality education by using the WSA.

### 3.4.1 Scalability

The term scalability or scaling-up refers to increasing the number of people that are reached through sexuality education. Analysis of key informant interviews identified the following elements as contributors to the scalability of sexuality education: timetabling, inclusion of different stakeholders, the presence of peer educators and cascading training.

It has been found that timetabling is a major contributor to the scale-up of sexuality education. Schools have limited time available to include extra-curricular activities, under which sexuality education is currently categorized. Schools have struggled to include sexuality education in the timetable but many of them have successfully found the opportunity to structurally dedicate time for SE. It has also been found that schools choose to address sexuality education during a weekly assembly and other schools have GUSO clubs in which sexuality education is provided. In the latter case, it must be noted that only students who choose to join the GUSO club will be receiving sexuality education. A challenge that has been brought forward is that while SE may be in the timetable, priority is sometimes given to subjects that are otherwise compromised.

As already described in chapter 5.1, the inclusion of in- and out of school stakeholders increases the number of people that are aware of the importance of sexuality education. The increase in awareness is found to lead to a more supportive and open environment to discuss issues of sexuality. Important to mention is the ownership that is taken by different stakeholders to increase scalability (and sustainability). The following quote shows how a district education official is stimulated to implement GUSO and WSA at other schools:

*“We have been focusing on a few schools and I was wondering how we can scale it up to cover the rest of the schools. Because now if a child transfers from a GUSO school to a non-GUSO school without that continuity then we will fall back. It is my humble appeal to ensure that we can look for a way of scaling it up to the rest of the schools in the catchment area.”*

The presence of peer educators has been revealed as a factor that increases the reach of sexuality education. As found, peer educators actively seek other students that have to deal with issues regarding their sexuality. Peer educators provide help and assistance or refer the student to a teacher, senior women or man teacher or a health worker. By actively addressing their students, organizing GUSO meetings, exhibitions and developing ways to advocate for SE in- and outside the school environment, the presence of peer educators seems to be a major contribution to the scalability of sexuality education.

Cascading training is another element that is presented as a contributor to the scale-up of sexuality education. Most schools included in this study organize meetings where teachers and peer educators are asked to share knowledge with the other staff members at the school. Schools experience positive change due to these meetings. It is mentioned that more people, such as the cook, the guard and other actors, became aware of the importance of dealing with sexuality related matters.

### 3.4.2 Sustainability

In the context of this study, sustainability is best described as the school’s ability to sustain (maintain and continue) the provision of sexuality education. A goal of the WSA is to address the importance of sustaining sexuality education, also when STF support is phasing out. This study did not include schools that are already phased out. Therefore, the following paragraphs present findings on how schools are currently finding and planning ways to increase sustainability. These findings describe plans to achieve financial sustainability and ensure the continuity of providing sexuality education.

Financial sustainability is a topic that was often addressed during key informant interviews. Currently, schools receive support from STF in terms of the provision of materials and financial resources. When STF support phases out, schools should be able to provide their own (financial) resources such as buying materials to equip the youth corner. Schools have different ways to address issues of sustainability but generally three categories can be identified: developing a sustainability committee, organizing income-generating activities and asking parents for a small financial contribution.

The development of a GUSO sustainability committee is repeatedly found as a way to address the continuity of the GUSO program. Sustainability committees or teams generally consist of a group of parents and a few school staff members who help to mobilize other parents to contribute to the GUSO program. The following quote illustrates the work of the sustainability committee.

*“We have to call the school sustainability committee, that’s a group of parents who were chosen in order to sensitize the ideas of GUSO in case it stops, and if does not stop, still they can help us to spice up, to come up and give us a helping hand where need be. So we call the sustainability committee we brief them that we are going to discuss. We want children to talk to the parents, so that we share views with parents, so they get involved because they help us to mobilize. Because when we had just started it was very difficult for us to mobilize parents, but when we got the sustainability committee, it’s now mobilizing the parents.” – Teacher, Iganga*

In addition to the development of a GUSO sustainability committee, district officials have also made efforts to ensure the continuity of the GUSO program. The district official is aware that STF support will phase out at a certain point in time and is already taking steps to ensure the school continues to receive support for sexuality education. The following quote illustrates this effort.

*“I have brought on board all the departments in the district to own it [WSA]. The bigger issue is to own it because we are aware that Straight Talk Foundation has to move to other schools. Now unlike other programs and clubs that have come here and died, we found it prudent that we should have a sustainability approach and that’s the essence of having all the district leadership getting on board. Not just to give us blessings but for them to be members of the committee for the purpose of sustainability. Now this sustainability, we thought that if we brought the office of the district administrative officer, who can mobilize counsellors and technical staff like the planners of the district, because a planner does a lot on budgeting and if the district owns the programs it is incorporated into the budget. Then we also brought the head teachers on board by having one representative to have a voice for the rest. We also thought that, as a way to stop this issues like abortion, school dropout and early marriages we should also bring a representative of the religious faith and representative traditional leaders so that all these are constituents for these people”. – District official, Bugiri.*

Key informant interviews also revealed different forms of income-generating activities. Examples are making and selling arts and crafts, handmade stoves, brushes, local pads, and the start-up a GUSO garden to grow and sell foods from. These income-generating activities involve the learning of practical skills and provide a way gaining financial resources to buy, for instance, materials for the youth corner.

*“We also introduced GUSO garden. Last year we had eggplants there, we sold those eggplants and we got 25,000 shillings. We went to the headmistress and said we have sold our eggplants and this is the money. But we are lacking a mattress, please, can you give us a push so the head teacher was good, he said oke you bring that money and he gave us a mattress which we are using currently.” – Teacher, Iganga*

As a last source, school managements are planning to ask parents for a small contribution (ranging between UGX 100-500 each term) to address SE sustainability. However, not many parents have yet made this contribution. It is expected to be a future challenge but schools hope that when levels of awareness on the importance of sexuality raise among parents, this will stimulate them to make a small contribution.

### **3.4.3 The implementation process: summary of key findings**

The previous paragraphs have described findings that present how the WSA addresses the concepts of scalability and sustainability. The following key findings have been identified:

- Contributing elements for scaling-up are identified: timetabling, inclusion of different stakeholders, the presence of peer educators and cascading training.
- Sustainability plans are important in the event STF phases out their support. These plans consist of:
  - Developing a sustainability committee
  - Organizing income-generating activities
  - Asking parents for a small financial contribution.



## 4 Conclusion and recommendations

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This last chapter provides the main conclusions and recommendations based on the results of this study. These conclusions and recommendations aim to contribute to future improvements of the Whole School Approach. This chapter is structured according to the same structure as the results; conclusions and recommendations will be provided for each level that this research has aimed to address. Important to note is that the recommendations that are presented in this chapter are also partly based on the input of an STF staff member. First, conclusions and recommendations will be presented for the inner setting of the school (organizational level), these are followed by the outer setting, the individuals involved and scalability and sustainability. Together, these conclusions and recommendations form an answer to the question: how does the Whole School Approach (WSA) improve the implementation of sexuality education in Uganda?

### 4.1 The inner setting: conclusion and recommendations

Within this setting, the WSA has found to be contributing to the implementation of sexuality education by creating awareness on the following topic: the inclusion of in- and out of school stakeholders. The awareness on the importance of sexuality education and the recognition of bringing all stakeholders on board has resulted in a decreased number of student dropouts. Management staff has embraced the WSA, however, head and deputy teachers across the 12 schools show different levels of dedication due to their other responsibilities. In addition, monitoring and evaluation skills lack behind, especially in the form of structurally documenting the progress of SE and WSA.

The following recommendations have been developed:

1. Separate management training to emphasize the importance of the role of the schools management within the WSA and increase the level of dedication of the head or deputy teacher (ownership) clearly explaining “the bigger picture” (e.g. how all different elements relate together).
2. Within this training, pay special attention to monitoring and evaluation skills and the process of keeping (documented) track of the WSA and SE implementation progress.

### 4.2 The outer setting: conclusion and recommendations

Within this setting, the WSA has found to be contributing to the implementation of sexuality education by creating awareness on the topic of creating a safe and healthy school environment and the involvement of cultural and religious leaders to conquer opposition towards sexuality education. Generally, no major signs of opposition were found due to the extensive involvement of cultural and religious leaders. Creating a safe and healthy school environment by addressing physical elements within the school’s compound seems to be a challenging aspect. Schools have made efforts to improve the school environment but there is still much to gain.

The following recommendations have been developed:

1. During school visits or workshops, emphasize the importance of continuing to improve the school environment.
2. Monitor the steps schools have been taking to improve the school environment and provide tailored advice for future improvements
3. If improvements stagnate, suggest that gaining financial resources from income-generating activities might provide a solution.

### 4.3 The individuals involved: conclusion and recommendations

Within this setting, the WSA has found to be contributing to the implementation of sexuality education by providing workshops for teachers and peer educators in which their knowledge, attitudes and skills regarding are sexuality education are addressed. SE teachers and peer educators are generally sharing positive views towards SE and the WSA and efforts for cascading training are made. However, teachers are generally unfamiliar with the WSA manual, toolkit or quick guide, documents that could provide important information to ensure progression of the WSA for SE. In addition, as peer educators face the challenge of not always be taken seriously, they need to be backed up by school staff to earn credibility from their fellow students.

The following recommendations have been developed:

1. During training and workshops, distribute the WSA manual, toolkit and / or quick guide. Explain how these documents can be used and that they are important to keep up the progress of implementing the WSA for SE.
2. During training and workshops, emphasize that peer educators face credibility challenges and that this could potentially be addressed by intervention of school staff.
3. During training and workshops, emphasize the importance of appreciating the work of SE teachers and peer educators.

### 4.4 The implementation process: conclusion and recommendations

Within this setting, the WSA has found to be contributing to the implementation of sexuality education by focusing on ownership by the school to ensure scalability and sustainability. The major contribution to the process of scaling up is the emphasis on timetabling, the inclusion of in- and out of school stakeholders, peer educators and cascading training. Plans to ensure sustainability have majorly been developed by the school itself: developing a sustainability committee, organizing income-generating activities and additional GUSO parents fee.

The following recommendations have been developed:

1. Continue to improve the process of scaling up by providing tailored advice for each school. This could potentially be done by follow-up training in which the initial scale up steps could be evaluated and adjusted (if needed).
2. The WSA could incorporate and elaborate on the idea of starting income-generating activities to sustain GUSO / WSA activities by making it a part of training and workshops.

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