

Teacher Training

Preparing teachers to teach a comprehensive sexuality education subject

Training is a foundational driver for teachers to deliver comprehensive sexuality education effectively.

Since 2013, Projet Jeune Leader has equipped thousands of young adults, teacher-trainees, and community and government teachers to deliver a new sexuality education subject in lower secondary schools in Madagascar.

Our results to date have shown that effective training and ongoing support, alongside a suite of other tools and strategies, make high-quality comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) possible in a low-resource context.

This brief covers PJL's approach to preparing teachers to deliver sexuality education through initial training.



AT A GLANCE

Teacher Training

Preparing teachers to teach a comprehensive sexuality education subject

Our results show that when **well-prepared and supported**, teachers – even those that started out somewhat hesitant! – can effectively teach sexuality education courses, and in turn, have a positive impact on their students.

Training is the first step. It equips teachers with the foundational knowledge, skills, and confidence they need to start teaching comprehensive sexuality education. While that's the focus of this brief, it's important to note that **continued coaching** and **professional development** is just as essential to continue supporting teachers thereafter.

HOW

Before teachers start teaching their sexuality education course, they participate in 15-20 days (**approx. 120 hours**) of initial training.

p.3

HOW

Modeling is essential: facilitators create an experience during teacher training that reflects the intended student experience.

p.5

WHO

Training is led by at least two **experienced facilitators** who have first-hand experience teaching sexuality education in the classroom.

p.7

WHAT

Teachers-in-training participate in the **complete sexuality education curriculum** they will go on to teach in their classrooms.

p.10

WHAT

In addition to building **familiarity with the curriculum**, base training modules equip teachers to create **safe, empowering classrooms and support students outside of class**. Teachers also build skills to **advocate for themselves** and **protect their well-being**.

p.13



Why We Need Teacher Training for Sexuality Education

Training is a purposeful, skill-based, and adult-learning informed process to equip teachers with the skills and information they need to begin using a new program. It's the first step to ensure teachers are **ready, willing, and able** to teach comprehensive sexuality education.

Research consistently shows that without adequate training, teachers:

- feel ill-equipped, even outright uncomfortable, teaching this subject.
- struggle to create the supportive learning environments that sexuality education requires
- are unprepared to respond to the sensitive questions and disclosures that often arise beyond the classroom.

Effective training equips teachers to deliver the curriculum with confidence, support students outside the classroom, and protect their own well-being along the way.



REFERENCES FOR FURTHER READING:

- Macleod, Catriona Ida, and Ulandi du Plessis. 2024. Teaching Comprehensive Sexuality Education in a Traumatized Society: Recognizing Teachers as Sexual, Reproductive, and Mental Health Frontline Workers. *Frontiers in Education* 9.
- The Active Implementation Hub. 2015. The State Implementation & Scaling-up of Evidence-based Practices Center (SISEP) and The National Implementation Research Network (NIRN).
- UNESCO. 2021. The journey towards comprehensive sexuality education: global status report.

How We Structure Training

Just like any other standalone school subject – math, history, French, you name it – teachers **need deep knowledge and expertise to teach the subject**. That's why our **initial training** for teaching comprehensive sexuality education takes place over **at least 15 days**.

We recognize that's a lot of time for current teachers to be away from the classroom, so training often takes place **during school vacations**. When appropriate, we also **separate the training days into different chunks of sessions** (e.g., 10 training days, followed by 5 training days one month later).

This training time matters because teachers aren't just learning new content, they are **navigating a significant shift in their professional identities**. To effectively teach comprehensive sexuality education, teachers are being asked to move from authority figure to trusted mentor, from rote learning to participatory pedagogy, from silence to open dialogue on sexuality. That transformation requires dedicated time and space that starts during initial training.



Before teachers start teaching their sexuality education course, they participate in 15-20 days (approx. 120 hours) of initial training.



At first, training felt really strange: the new way to teach lessons, the energizers, the thanking of students for participating... But that's normal since it was our first time with this subject. So that's why the practice mattered, and keeping at it once you started teaching it in the classroom.

Public school teacher trained by PJL to become a CSE teacher



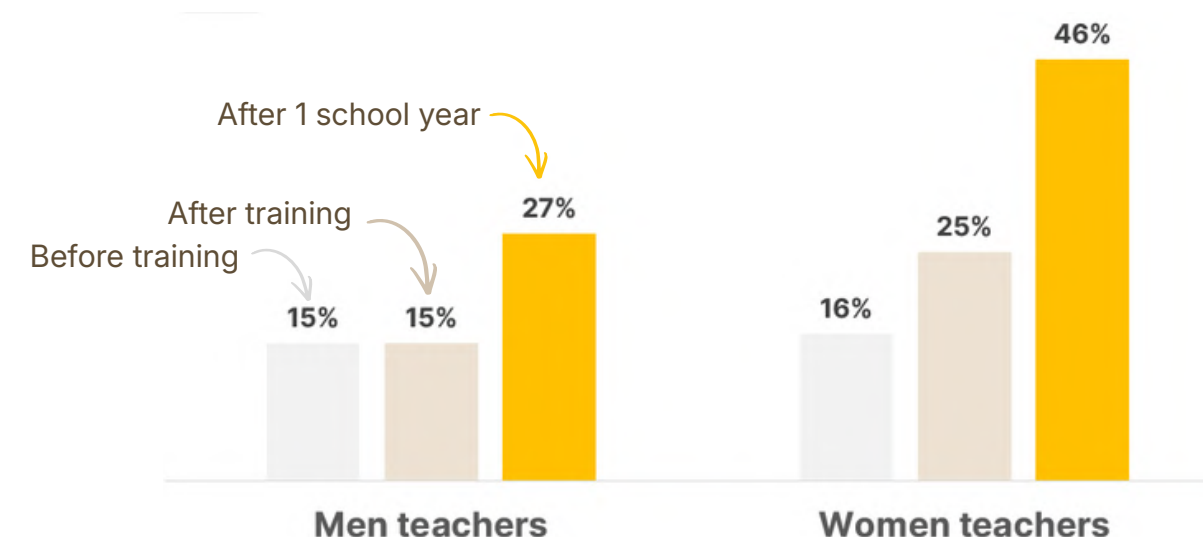
Change takes time (and practice)

Teachers entering initial training carry years of personal history, professional conditioning, and cultural norms that cannot be undone in a matter of days. For many, the training plants the seed; lived experience in the classroom is what makes it grow.

One clear example of this is attitudes towards gender and gender equality.

After initial training, we see that **teachers' gender attitudes generally shift in positive directions**. However, some gender attitudes that are constant throughout the training **later change at the end of the school year** after teachers' first year of teaching the curriculum, supporting their own reflections that delivering the subject changes them on a personal level.

Male teachers were more likely to report that changing diapers, giving a bath, and feeding kids can also be the father's responsibility **after teaching the CSE curriculum for one school year.**



How We Approach Training



Facilitators create a participatory, fun, and learner-centered experience during teacher training that reflects the intended student experience.

Unlike the lecture-based, rote learning most teachers are used to, training is intentionally **participatory, fun, and learner-centered** from day one. When teachers experience these approaches firsthand during training, they are more likely to **bring the same inclusive, interactive pedagogy** into their own classrooms.

Training is practical in two ways:

1. it builds teachers' confidence with new content and pedagogy through **repeated practice**.
2. it **mirrors the real conditions** of their classrooms.

Throughout training, facilitators deliberately use the same low-tech materials teachers will use to teach (no projectors or slideshows, just the tools that work in any classroom, which in our case are limited and low-tech!).

SOME EXAMPLES IN PRACTICE:

- From the outset, participants establish shared agreements, while facilitators continuously model inclusive and respectful classroom management.
- Some sessions open with teachers sharing their own experiences; others start by surfacing what they already know. New concepts build from there.
- Facilitators model icebreakers and energizers to keep energy up, and mindfulness activities to help participants refocus and regulate emotions.
- Teachers work through real classroom scenarios with role plays and skits (and often find their favorite part of training is taking on the role of their own students during curriculum simulations!)
- Teachers practice teaching curriculum lessons and receive peer feedback, not just facilitator feedback.
- Facilitators continually emphasize that every contribution matters, and that effort counts more than correct answers.



The teacher training I received before was always theoretical, it never went beyond the theory. But this training was so practical, you could live it. You could practice being a leader, an educator... and imagine how the students would receive the content. The [comprehensive sexuality] education isn't just for the students, it's for the teachers too.

Public school teacher trained by PJI to become a CSE teacher

Who Leads Training

Most teachers never had sexuality education as a school subject, so it's natural they are hesitant about how to teach it.

That's why facilitators with **first-hand experience teaching comprehensive sexuality education as a subject** are essential: they can address concerns with empathy, field varying questions, and offer real-life examples. Not to mention, they serve as living proof that it can be done!

While both Lead and Assistant Facilitators have sufficient in-classroom experience to model the curriculum for training participants, **Lead Facilitators undergo additional capacity building** on adult learning principles, feedback techniques, managing difficult participants, trauma-informed approaches, psychological first aid, and safeguarding and protection.

Throughout the teacher training, facilitators debrief with their technical supervisor to troubleshoot issues and address any unanswered questions.



Training is led by at least two experienced facilitators who have first-hand experience teaching sexuality education in the classroom.

LEAD FACILITATOR

Experienced sexuality education teacher

Leads curriculum simulations

Leads base training modules

Receives additional, advanced capacity-building

ASSISTANT FACILITATOR

Experienced sexuality education teacher

Leads curriculum simulations



Trusted implementation support specialists

In 2022, P JL designed and delivered a specialized pre-service training program for 114 teacher-trainees to deliver the comprehensive sexuality education subject during their practicum year — a new opportunity stemming from a partnership between P JL, Madagascar's Ministry of Education, and the Haute Matsiatra Regional Teacher Training Institute.

The training was delivered by P JL's Technical Managers, who had several years of experience teaching comprehensive sexuality education, and training, supervising, and supporting CSE Educators.

The lead training facilitator, Mamisoa, quickly gained rapport with the teacher-trainee cohort. **After just two weeks of training, trainees' ratings of their relationship with the facilitator improved to the same rating-levels as their relationships with peers and trainers at the institute** — people they had spent the entire last year with.

Feedback from trainees revealed that they felt Mamisoa was a trustworthy, experienced, responsive, and empathetic support lead:

"When I need help, she gave me ideas, she understands if we have problems."

"She gives a lot of information and is motivated to answer your needs and give advice. She is a good worker and has ample experience."



As a CSE educator in 2015

Mamisoa, former CSE educator and today the Technical Support Manager at Projet Jeune Leader

What We Train On

During training, I encountered topics I had never explored before: violence, personal limits, and boundaries. It changed me. Now I try to do no harm, both in my actions and in my words.

Public school teacher trained by PJL to become a CSE teacher

Training is built around two core components that develop the essential knowledge and skills teachers need to deliver the subject:

1. curriculum simulations
2. base training modules



Teachers participate in the complete sexuality education curriculum they will go on to teach in their classrooms.

Base training modules equip teachers to create safe, empowering classrooms and support students outside of class. Teachers also build skills to advocate for themselves and protect their well-being.



CURRICULUM SIMULATIONS

Because most teachers have never received any form of sexuality education themselves, curriculum simulations are especially valuable. **It's often the first time they are learning about topics such as gender, puberty, sexual health, and healthy relationships.**

Moving through the lessons as learners themselves, teachers see firsthand how directly the content connects to students' everyday realities.

Curriculum simulations offer a dual benefit: as teachers **absorb the content** for the first time, they are simultaneously **observing how facilitators maintain interactive, inclusive classrooms** — even when navigating sensitive topics.



Scripted Curricula

— FOR TEACHER PARTICIPANTS

Teachers receive Ministry-approved curricula for the comprehensive sexuality education subject, with **scripted lessons** and **detailed step-by-step instructions for participatory activities.**

Throughout the training, participants practice using the curriculum and discover the accessibility of its scripted lessons. We consistently see that both the **relevance** and the **usability** of the curriculum strengthen teachers' **motivation** and deepens their **commitment** to the subject.

“What motivates me to teach the subject is that the lessons to be taught are already in the curriculum. I no longer need to write a long preparation and find content to teach, I just need to do several readings to familiarize myself with the content. It's different from other subjects.”

Public school teacher trained by PJJL to become a CSE educator

— FOR TRAINING FACILITATORS

Our facilitators use a script, too! Delivering a nearly month-long training is no small undertaking. Facilitators have **detailed, scripted training guides** that help them deliver essential content while keeping participants engaged and energized.

Since teachers will also deliver a scripted curriculum in the classroom, this also gives facilitators a natural opportunity to **model how to balance structured content with dynamic classroom management.**



CURRICULUM MODULES

*Each lesson simulation during the training lasts approximately 30-40 minutes.
In total, we dedicate around 50-60 hours of initial training on the curriculum.*

GRADE 6

- 1 - Getting to know one another
- 2 - What does it mean to be a leader? (part 1)
- 3 - What does it mean to be a leader? (part 2)
- 4 - Good listening skills
- 5 - Developing self-confidence
- 6 - Non-verbal communication
- 7 - Effective communication: Assertive communication
- 8 - Healthy relationships with friends
- 9 - Responding to negative peer pressure
- 10 - Introduction to puberty
- 11 - Changes during puberty for boys and male reproductive anatomy
- 12 - Changes during puberty for girls and female reproductive anatomy
- 13 - Menstrual health and hygiene
- 14 - Review through the Jeopardy game
- 15 - The social construction of gender and gender norms
- 16 - Gender stereotypes and equality (part 1)
- 17 - Gender stereotypes and equality (part 2)
- 18 - Teasing and bullying: Disrespectful and hurtful behaviors
- 19 - Standing up for our right to learn
- 20 - Managing stress, anger, and conflict
- 21 - My space, your space: Respecting personal space
- 22 - Staying safe from violence
- 23 - Dangers of alcohol and cigarettes
- 24 - Defining personal values
- 25 - Finding help and support (part 1)
- 26 - Finding help and support (part 2)
- 27 - Review through a story

GRADE 7

- 1 - Getting to know one other
- 2 - Developing self-confidence
- 3 - What does it mean to be a leader?
- 4 - Good listening skills
- 5 - Avoiding aggressive and passive communication
- 6 - Managing emotions in a healthy way
- 7 - Resolving conflicts
- 8 - Characteristics of a close friend
- 9 - Responding to negative peer pressure
- 10 - Introduction to puberty
- 11 - Puberty changes in girls and female reproductive anatomy
- 12 - Menstrual health and hygiene
- 13 - Puberty changes in boys and male reproductive anatomy
- 14 - Respecting our body during puberty and beyond
- 15 - Review through the Jeopardy game
- 16 - Our right to our body
- 17 - Using the internet and social media in a safe and secure way
- 18 - Child marriage : a practice that violates the rights of children
- 19 - Bullying: a hurtful behavior
- 20 - Promoting equality between boys and girls
- 21 - Review through the Jeopardy game
- 22 - Giving good feedback
- 23 - Developing decision-making skills
- 24 - Values, and the core value of education
- 25 - Strategies for communicating with our parents or guardians
- 26 - Setting goals
- 27 - Getting help and support from a trusted adult





CURRICULUM MODULES

GRADE 8

- 1 - Getting to know the PJJ Educators and each other
- 2 - What does it mean to be a leader?
- 3 - Avoiding aggressive and passive communication
- 4 - Assertive communication and applying it with parents
- 5 - Puberty changes in girls and female reproductive anatomy
- 6 - The science of menstruation
- 7 - Menstrual health and hygiene
- 8 - Puberty changes in boys and male reproductive anatomy
- 9 - The science of reproduction
- 10 - Being confident to approach and talk with healthcare providers
- 11 - Review through the "Jeopardy" game (1)
- 12 - Making informed decisions to prevent early pregnancy
- 13 - The importance of having healthy, respectful relationships, free of violence
- 14 - Rejecting violence and staying safe
- 15 - Understanding sexually transmitted infections
- 16 - Healthy relationships
- 17 - Recognizing an unhealthy relationship
- 18 - Decision-making in the face of peer pressure
- 19 - The negative consequences of child marriage
- 20 - Dangers of alcohol and cigarettes
- 21 - Review through the "Jeopardy" game (2)
- 22 - Stereotypes and discrimination
- 23 - Human rights
- 24 - Decision-making
- 25 - A growth mindset
- 26 - Long term planning
- 27 - Finding help and support

GRADE 9

- 1 - Getting to know the Educator and each other
- 2 - Building positive self-esteem
- 3 - Making school a safe place, together
- 4 - Defending our opinions
- 5 - Communicating assertively
- 6 - Defining healthy relationships
- 7 - Communicating with respect
- 8 - Respecting my own and other people's boundaries
- 9 - The social construction of gender
- 10 - Human rights
- 11 - The importance of empathy
- 12 - Managing emotions in a healthy way
- 13 - Positive versus negative attention
- 14 - Understanding, coping with, & avoiding emotional or psychological abuse
- 15 - Rejecting sexual violence and staying safe
- 16 - Ending harmful relationships
- 17 - Understanding the science of puberty
- 18 - Delaying pregnancy
- 19 - Child marriage: a violation of children's rights
- 20 - Using the internet and social media in a safe and secure way
- 21 - Living free of alcohol abuse
- 22 - Distinguishing "needs" from "wants" in financial decision-making
- 23 - Understanding different types of power
- 24 - What does it mean to be leader?
- 25 - Making our communities safer
- 26 - Developing a growth mindset to reach your goals
- 27 - Our individual and collective ability to bring about positive change

BASE TRAINING MODULES

- To learn, students need to feel safe in the classroom. Base training modules build teachers' capacity to **understand and respond to challenging student behavior**, and to create **welcoming and respectful learning environments**.
- Sexuality education often sparks questions, concerns, and disclosures that go far beyond the lesson plan. Base modules also equip teachers to provide **socio-emotional support and referrals**, while also **protecting their own boundaries and well-being**.
- And because the comprehensive sexuality education subject is often new, we dedicate modules specifically to **advocacy**: building the **confidence** and **communication skills** teachers need to foster understanding and reduce the risk of backlash within their school communities.

Some of the trainings sessions really changed me. The way to teach, to interact with students,... I wasn't connecting with the kids before, I was really struggling. But [trainer] Olivia showed me how it's done.

Public school teacher trained by PJL to become a CSE teacher





BASE TRAINING MODULES

MODULE	OBJECTIVES	LENGTH (HRS)
1 Getting to know one another	– Trainers and participants get to know each other. – Participants set positive ground rules and routines for the training. – Participants express their expectations and concerns/worries for the training.	1
2 Becoming a teacher of sexuality education: The journey ahead	– Participants understand the role played by trusted adults in the lives of adolescents. – Participants explore and identify their own skills and areas of strength in order to become sexuality education teachers.	2
3 The types of power and the power within to bring positive change as a sexuality education teacher	– Participants can describe and compare the four types of power (power over, power within, power to, power with). – Participants understand how the four types of power can apply to their work as sexuality education teachers.	2
4 The structure and implementation of the sexuality education curriculum	– Participants can explain that the topics, lessons, and messages in the curriculum are adapted to the students' age and grade level throughout the four years of middle school. – Participants can give three reasons why it is important to follow the structure and written content of the curriculum. – Participants are familiar with the different pedagogy tools and are convinced of the importance of using them.	2
5 Training in Safeguarding and Protection	– Introduction to safeguarding and protection, including the values and guiding principle: "do no harm." – Introduction to and signing of the Code of Conduct, specifically related to safeguarding and protection standards. – Introduction to the reporting procedures and how reports are handled. –Addressing teachers' concerns regarding safeguarding and protection.	4
6 Introduction to trauma	– Participants understand what trauma is and its signs or manifestations. – Participants understand why a trauma-informed approach is important within the sexuality education subject. – Each participant knows strategies to prevent and reduce the effects of trauma in their work and in their personal life.	4

MODULE	OBJECTIVES	LENGTH (HRS)
7 Our role as counselors	– Participants understand their role as counselors (what they can do and cannot do). – Participants are able to provide Psychological First Aid when students experience incidents of violence. – Participants know at least three referral pathways where they can direct students for further support.	7
8 Effective student guidance and classroom management	– Participants identify adolescents' behaviors and attitudes and the possible reasons behind them. – Participants know effective strategies to respond to and address the causes of these behaviors. – Participants engage adolescents in activities that increase present-moment focus (mindfulness) and can explain the reasons for doing so.	7
9 Advocating for the sexuality education subject in the community	– Participants gain strategies to obtain community support and trust for the education they provide.	3
10 Feedback and accountability	– Participants understand the importance of feedback and accountability in their work. – Participants are familiar with feedback and accountability strategies they can use.	3
11 Teaching outside of the classroom	–Participants know how to facilitate low-resource team-building and leadership games – Participants are able to analyze icebreakers and participatory activities using the principle of "do no harm."	4
12 Introduction to quality data and data reporting requirements	– Participants understand what "data" means. – Participants recognize that data must be of high quality and are committed to ensuring this. – Participants understand data reporting tools and their reporting responsibilities.	3

LOOKING FORWARD

Opportunities

➤ How might we institutionalize teacher training?

Our goal is for Madagascar's Ministry of Education to fully own the comprehensive sexuality education subject — including embedding it into **teacher-training pathways**. By working within teacher-education institutes and continuing professional development systems to integrate the subject into pre-service programs and regular in-service training, understanding and delivering the curriculum **becomes a normal part of teachers' professional identity, rather than an external add-on**.

In 2022, we successfully integrated the training into a regional teacher-training institute, enabling teacher-trainees to deliver the subject during their practicum year. The priority now is to formalize this model and secure the government resources needed to sustain and scale it.

➤ How will training look different for different delivery models, especially at scale?

We advocate for a future where **comprehensive sexuality education reaches every adolescent in Madagascar** — including those outside the formal school system. Achieving this means **equipping a wider range of educators** to deliver the curriculum **across diverse contexts**: community centers, non-formal education settings, and programs serving adolescents with disabilities or other specific profiles. The facilitation skills and adaptations required in these settings differ meaningfully from classroom delivery, and training must reflect that.

Since 2023, we have worked with a range of civil society organizations to **adapt the sexuality education curriculum for adolescents across a range of contexts and profiles** — including adolescents who are out-of-school or orphaned, those who are incarcerated or newly reintegrated into their communities, survivors of violence, adolescents with physical disabilities, those who are Deaf or hard of hearing, those with visual impairments, and adolescents on the autism spectrum. Developing context-sensitive training pathways that maintain fidelity to the curriculum while meeting educators where they are is an ongoing area of work.

PROJET JEUNE LEADER

Projet Jeune Leader (PJL) is youth-founded, women-led organization in Madagascar working to ensure that every adolescent has essential knowledge, skills, and support through comprehensive sexuality education (CSE).

We train, equip, and support specialized teachers to deliver a comprehensive sexuality education subject in Madagascar's middle schools. They teach a structured 4-year curriculum across grades 6 through 9, targeting adolescents aged 10-15. Beyond the classroom, teachers offer students individual counseling, referrals to services, and workshops for their parents.



www.projetjeuneleader.org



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