



From Classroom to Community

A Study of the Multi-Level Impacts
of a Comprehensive Sexuality
Education School Subject
in Madagascar through
Collaborative Filmmaking





Introduction

Background

Since 2013, Projet Jeune Leader (PJL) has pioneered a comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) model in rural middle schools in Madagascar. PJL trains existing government teachers to become specialized CSE teachers, known locally as “Mpanabe Jeunes Leaders” or “Mpanabe JL.” In rural public middle schools across Madagascar, alongside their regular subject (e.g., math, Malagasy), these specialized CSE teachers deliver:

- | a structured sexuality education and life skills curriculum (approximately one hour per week per grade, taught over four years of middle school)
- | confidential one-on-one counseling
- | workshops for parents on adolescent development

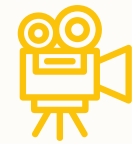
The CSE curriculum is a holistic, life-skills-based approach. It covers topics including menstrual health and hygiene, puberty, communication, self-confidence, decision-making, safe and healthy relationships, and early pregnancy prevention.

What makes the subject distinctive is that while, at its core, it is designed for young adolescent students, it also creates synergistic learning within families and communities.



Research Methodology

“What changes does a school experience through having a CSE teacher and subject? And how do these changes happen?”



Introduction to Collaborative Filmmaking

To answer our central research question, we employed the participatory research methodology of Collaborative Filmmaking (CFM), which enables field practitioners to document and narrate their own realities. It recognizes these actors not as research subjects, but as co-researchers best placed to observe and understand impact.

As part of this research process, 10 CSE teachers (Mpanabe JL) — each working in a different rural public middle school in the Haute Matsiatra region of Madagascar — served as the filmmaking researchers.

The research effort was overseen by and facilitated by PJJ's team with support from Dr. Sara Baumann, Dr. Jessica Burke, and PhD student Monica Merante from the Department of Behavioral & Community Health Sciences, School of Public Health at the University of Pittsburgh. The research effort was made possible with financial support from AmplifyChange.





Data Collection

Each CSE teacher produced a short film. Through videos they filmed in their school and community, they responded to the research question from their own perspective, drawing on their lived experiences and the situations they observed in their communities of work. They were trained in the CFM methodology at the outset.

The data used in our final analysis included:

- The videos filmed by the Mpanabe JL in their school and community contexts
- Audio transcriptions of the films and associated interviews
- Individual and collective analyses conducted with the CSE teachers
- Community data drawn from interactions with students, teachers, parents, and community members

The diversity of data collected made it possible to capture impact at multiple levels: students, teachers, parents, and the broader community. This allowed for a deeper understanding of the mechanisms through which change occurs.



Codebook Development and Analysis

The qualitative analysis was conducted with our research partners from the University of Pittsburgh School of Public Health. This collaboration took shape through regular coding calibration sessions, joint interpretation discussions, and an iterative approach to building the codebook.

The codebook (see Annex) was developed using a mixed approach that combined inductive and deductive coding. Transcripts were first coded openly, allowing themes to emerge without a predefined code list. Codes developed progressively across the full set of transcripts, enriching the codebook iteratively. Deductive coding drew on established theoretical frameworks, notably Bandura's theory of *self-efficacy*, while inductive coding surfaced themes directly from the data, such as the diffusion effect (*Flowing*) and peer support (*Student-to-Student Support*). Codes were then grouped into thematic families and mapped to chart the mechanisms of change at work.



Key Findings

What Changes Does a School Experience Through a CSE Teacher and Subject?

The qualitative data show that the presence of a CSE teacher and subject generate change at multiple, interconnected levels: among students, among teachers, within families, and more broadly across the community. These changes form a network of mutually reinforcing transformations.

Changes Among Students

Immediate and Observable Changes

Students, CSE teachers, other teachers, and parents all report deep, visible transformations among students who receive the CSE subject. These changes emerge at two distinct levels: positive self-assessment by students themselves, and external validation by those around them.

Students describe meaningful shifts in how they relate to learning and to themselves. They report increased motivation, greater self-confidence, and a better understanding of their own bodies:

"Since I started following from the Jeune Leader [CSE] education, I have become eager to learn, I have gained different types of knowledge, and I have learned to take care of my body."

STUDENT, TSARAMANDROSO PUBLIC MIDDLE SCHOOL

This inner transformation is also reflected in autonomous, responsible behaviors observed by others:

"These two children immediately take on responsibilities without being told."

MPANABE JL ELYSETTE

The analysis also shows that students demonstrate greater openness to communication, particularly with adults. As one CSE teacher observed:

"These students are more open than before because they can hold conversations with adults. First with their teachers at school, and then with their parents when they get home."

MPANABE JL LUDMILLA

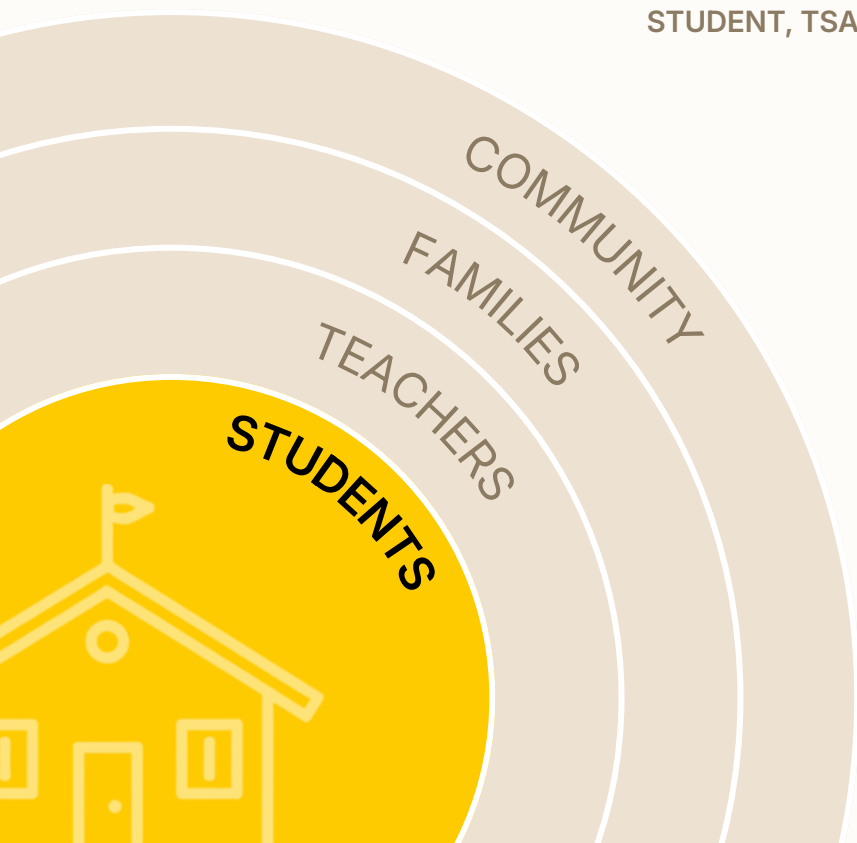
Expected Long-Term Changes

Beyond immediate changes, CSE teachers and school community members express their hopes for lasting transformation. These aspirations are framed in terms of citizenship and life trajectory:

"Our goal is to help students grow and become good, responsible citizens and leaders."

MPANABE JL NJARA

These hoped-for outcomes include reduced school dropout rates, improved exam performance, prevention of early pregnancy among girls, and stronger bonds between students and their families.





Changes Among Teachers

The CSE subject also influences teaching practices and professional culture within schools. The Mpanabe JL, who undergo specialized training — including on participatory pedagogy — with PJL to become CSE teachers, share strategies with their colleagues to improve student engagement and participation. Teachers, in turn, seek out their advice. This support takes the form of practice exchanges and professional mentoring, as one teacher at Ambondrona Public Middle School described:

"I have been really lost when it comes to certain situations, because this teaching work requires us to look for ideas, to look for solutions. As for me, after reflecting on it, the solution I found is that it is better to simply approach the Mpanabe JL teachers directly."

TEACHER, AMBONDRONA PUBLIC MIDDLE SCHOOL

The Mpanabe JL teachers also help build more positive relationships and open communication among colleagues. As one Mpanabe JL observed:

"Teachers have also changed, as they have become more comfortable interacting with one another and sharing their thoughts."

MPANABE JL MANANA

The impact of these CSE teachers extends well beyond their direct relationship with colleagues to influencing, more broadly, the school's professional culture. By observing and being around the Mpanabe JL, teachers are prompted to revisit their methods and their professional practices:

"The CSE subject has developed all of the teachers' skills in leadership and education since the Mpanabe JL shares lessons they learned about conduct, relationships with colleagues, and communication with the other teachers."

MPANABE JL NJARA

The relationship between CSE teachers and other teachers is often built through practical support and voluntary collaboration. This dynamic of mutual support enriches the school's professional culture and helps anchor the CSE subject's values of student-centered learning into everyday teaching practice.

Changes Within Families

One of the most significant observed transformations concerns the relationship between parents and their children. The CSE teacher and subject has fostered a stronger bridge between school and home: students are excited to share what they have learned with their families, strengthening family bonds and opening intergenerational communication:

"She talks to me when she gets home, telling me about the lessons covered at school and giving examples of what happened in class."

PARENT

"My child also teaches me what they learned with the Mpanabe JL when they come home."

PARENT

Students become more aware of their responsibilities, both at school and at home, which generates pride among parents and strengthens family cohesion.

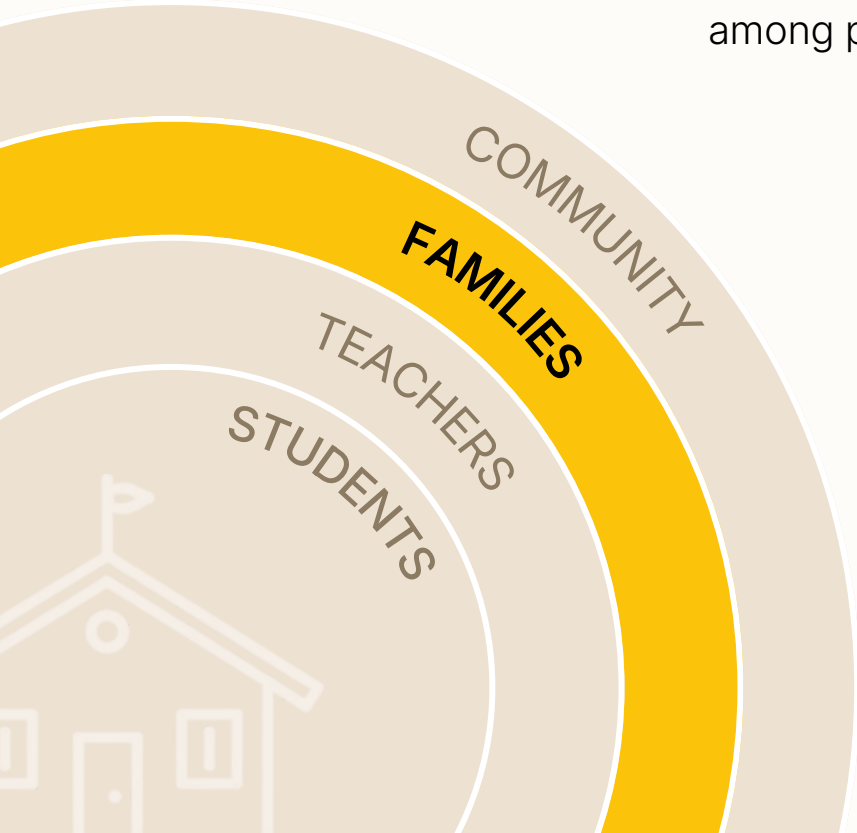
These changes produce strong buy-in from families. Parents express satisfaction and consistently call for the subject to continue and expand. One father’s account captures this appreciation:

"This JL course really helps us as parents in raising our children. We parents are truly happy and grateful for this subject, because it brings significant changes to our children’s lives, particularly in the relationship between parents and children."

Annito is in 8th grade, and since he has been studying with the Mpanabe JL, we ask him at home how his classes are going. He always says it is wonderful. This course should be maintained, because it really helps to strengthen the bond between parents and children every day. If it stops, children will quickly forget what they have learned. It should even continue into high school and university."

PARENT

Beyond strengthening family bonds, the CSE teacher and subject also engage parents directly through workshops, giving them practical tools to support their children’s development and better navigate the challenges of adolescence. Some parents continue conversations with each other after the parent education sessions led by the CSE teachers, noting how much the teachers’ presence supports them in their parenting role.



Changes at the Community Level

The subject's benefits extend beyond the school and family to ripple through the wider community. As one CSE teacher described:

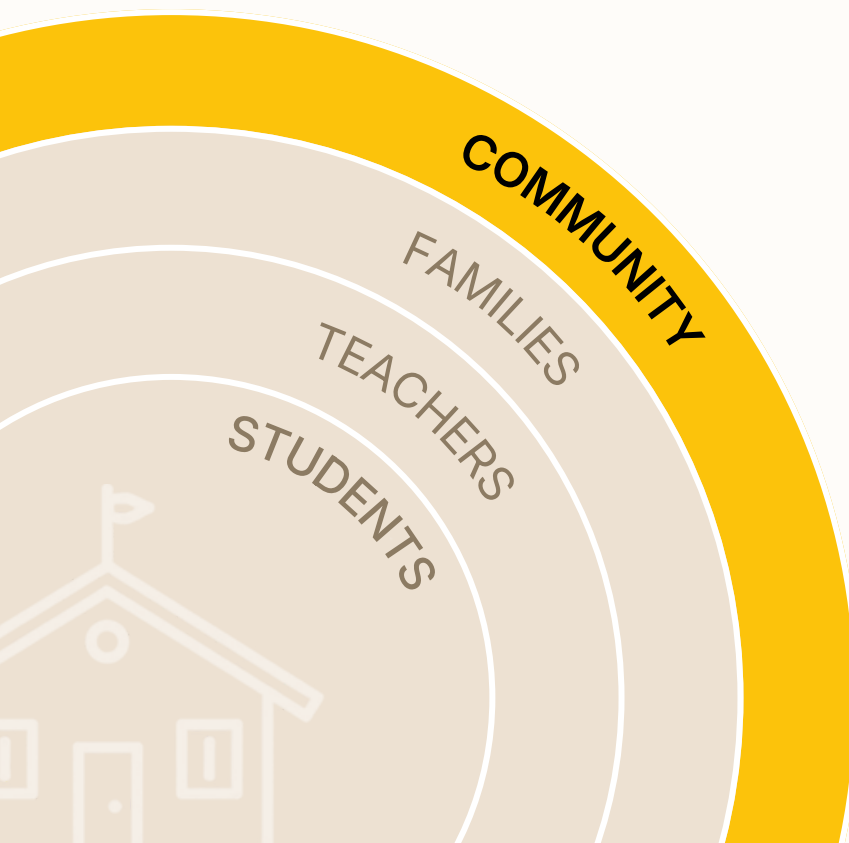
"The education provided by the Mpanabe JL to adolescents in rural middle schools is like a small stream that flows and brings significant changes to the students who benefit from it, impacting them physically, socially, and mentally."

MPANABE JL RADO

This momentum takes concrete forms: students are seen as behaving more desirably within communities, strengthening family pride. As one Mpanabe JL observed:

"Students commit to acting better in their communities, which makes their parents proud. In particular, speaking positively, openly, and respectfully to one's parents is truly a blessing, especially for our country."

At the community level, observed effects include reduced school dropout rates, improved performance on national end-of-middle-school exams (BEPC), fewer early pregnancies among girls, and a more cohesive community united around values of responsibility and positive behavior (frequently framed by local community stakeholders as "citizenship").





Key Findings

How Do These Changes Happen?

The analysis identifies **several interconnected mechanisms** through which CSE teacher and school subject generate change. These mechanisms represent the “how” behind the observed transformations, and understanding them is essential to grasping multi-dimensional impacts.

The Diffusion Effect (Flowing)

The concept of *Flowing* refers to the diffusion effect through which the impacts of the CSE subject cross the boundaries between different life spaces: from the classroom to the school, from the school to the home, and from the home to the community. More specifically, it describes the deep transformations and cascading effects generated by the CSE teacher and subject that extend well beyond the immediate circle of direct participants. This effect is not linear; it functions like a network of gears in which each constituent becomes, in turn, an agent of change for those around them.

This mechanism operates at several levels.

— **At the student and family level:** Learning from the classroom naturally extends into the home. Students bring lessons home, opening a space for dialogue with parents and siblings. This transmission supports better intergenerational communication and strengthens family bonds: students become more

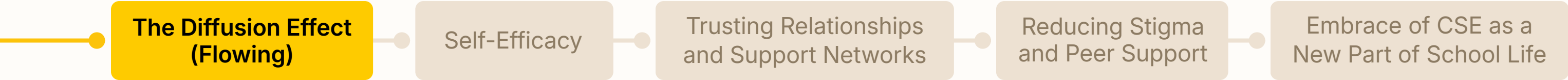
open, more respectful, and better able to engage with adults, first with their teachers at school, and then with their parents at home. Some parents extend these conversations with neighbors after the parent workshop sessions led by the CSE teachers, and they note how much the teachers’ presence supports them in their parenting role.

— **At the teacher level:** The diffusion effect shows up as an evolution in teaching practices. CSE teachers share concrete tools with their colleagues, such as icebreakers or other participatory activities, to maintain student attention and participation. Many teachers express interest in this collaboration and seek advice from the CSE teachers. Beyond teaching techniques, the CSE teacher builds teachers’ skills in leadership, communication, and professional relationships, fostering a more open and collegial work environment: Says one school stakeholder, *“Teachers have also changed, as*

they have become more comfortable interacting with one another and sharing their thoughts.”

— **At the community level:** Changes in young people’s behavior, their engagement, their sense of responsibility, and their interpersonal relationships radiate beyond the school and benefit those who did not participate in the subject directly. As one Mpanabe JL summarized: *“The presence of Mpanabe JL and their education improves the school because students are able to take on responsibilities at home, at school, and in the community.”*

This multiplier effect explains why the subject’s impact is seen as disproportionate relative to the number of direct instruction hours. The effects spread in concentric circles, far beyond the immediate circle of students in a classroom.



Self-Efficacy

Drawing on Bandura’s theory of self-efficacy, the analysis shows that the CSE teacher and subject build students’ confidence in their ability to accomplish what is needed to reach their goals. This strengthening of self-efficacy occurs across several dimensions.

Communication and Courage

Students develop the courage to ask questions, seek help, and speak up with adults. This skill is directly cultivated through the CSE curriculum, particularly through the lesson “Finding Help and Support from Trusted Adults.” As Roger, a Mpanabe JL, explained:

"Once these students dare to ask questions and seek support from trusted adults, they increase not only their knowledge and self-confidence, but also their capacity to make decisions."

ROGER, MPANABE JL

This transformation is especially visible among students who were previously the most reserved. One Mpanabe JL observed:

"Since the Mpanabe JL arrived here, students have dared to take initiative. They have become very active in class, they no longer hesitate to raise their hand, and they are less shy about sharing their ideas, whether in front of teachers or their classmates."

A student confirmed this change in their own words:

"Personally, I've become less shy since I started attending JL [CSE] classes. Before, I felt uncomfortable and was afraid to go to the board. I didn't dare participate in class or ask teachers questions about lessons I did not understand. My shyness and fear had a significant impact on my studies."

Students’ newfound confidence is concretely illustrated in their questions, whether asking for explanations of lessons, questions about puberty and health, or direct questions addressed to CSE teachers. It further removes the psychological barriers that were holding back learning:

"Even shy students now ask the teacher questions."



The Diffusion Effect
(Flowing)

Self-Efficacy

Trusting Relationships
and Support Networks

Reducing Stigma
and Peer Support

Embrace of CSE as a
New Part of School Life



Motivation and Engagement

The CSE teacher and subject builds intrinsic motivation among students, reflected in their enthusiasm for classes, active participation, and clear desire to achieve personal and professional goals. Accounts converge around a profound shift in students’ relationship with school and learning:

"Since I started following the Jeune Leader [CSE] education, I have become eager to learn, I have gained different types of knowledge, and I have learned to take care of my body."

"I have become more eager to learn and more motivated to go to school since I started attending JL classes."

"I am very diligent and committed in the Jeune Leader class. I never miss a single session."

This motivation also translates into concrete ambitions. Some students express a desire to become CSE teachers themselves:

"I am really interested in the JL [CSE] subject because I want to become a Mpanabe JL one day. It is truly inspiring and makes me so happy."

Others share their enthusiasm with peers to encourage them to get involved as well.

Student engagement extends beyond the classroom: students take on responsibilities of their own initiative, become involved in their communities, and show growing independence. As one parent observed:

"Now, my two children proactively take on their responsibilities without being told."

This dynamic is reflected in academic results — *"Thanks to their enthusiasm for taking on responsibilities, and especially studying, these students’ grades are generally good"* — as well as in other tangible indicators such as increased attendance, improved performance on national exams, and continued education beyond middle school.

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Trusting Relationships and Support Networks

A central mechanism of change lies in the distinctive quality of the relationships that the CSE teachers build with students, teachers, and parents. These trusting relationships create a safe space where people feel comfortable sharing their challenges, asking sensitive questions, and seeking support — foundational conditions for change to occur.

The Mpanabe JL-student relationship stands in clear contrast to the traditional teacher-student dynamic. Mpanabe JL teachers take on a mentoring role, which participants sometimes compare to that of an older sibling, that goes beyond knowledge transmission to encompass holistic support.

"Mpanabe JL are different from teachers in that they are more active in encouraging and supporting students. Children are closer to Mpanabe JL teachers than to other teachers, because they receive encouragement and can express their concerns more easily with them."

LUDMILLA, MPANABE JL

This closeness is evident in everyday interactions. Students bring both academic and personal questions to their CSE teacher, whom they often regard as a trusted friend:

"The Mpanabe JL is my friend here at Ialananindro middle school. When there is something I do not understand, I ask him for an explanation."

STUDENT, IALANANINDRO MIDDLE SCHOOL

This relationship supports not only academic success but also personal development:

"It has been a great experience for me, because it has really helped me as a young person. It has taught me how to live in the community and is preparing me for the future."



This support takes several concrete, complementary forms:

Guidance and counseling is a central dimension of the CSE teachers' work. Through individual and group counseling sessions, open discussions, and personalized support, they help students overcome challenges, make informed decisions, and resist negative peer pressure (*"She helped us to stay away from the bad influences of our friends."*) Teachers also guide students on essential topics including puberty, responsibility, interpersonal relationships, and their studies.

Encouragement is built in part through the practice of "fankasitrahana", a form of appreciation that recognizes and celebrates each student's participation and contributions, strengthening their self-esteem and motivation. The teachers' stated aim reflects this: *"My goal as a Mpanabe JL in this school is to help each of you and to make sure you benefit from all the activities we do here."*

Practical support takes the form of concrete, direct assistance, whether accompanying a student to a health center, directing them to appropriate resources, or advocating with teachers for better follow-up. This availability makes the CSE teacher a first point of contact for students facing difficulties.

This relational dynamic extends beyond students. It includes active collaboration with teachers built on shared experience, and direct support for parents through practical tools to accompany their children's development. The CSE teachers' culture of trust and support thus benefits the entire educational ecosystem.



The Diffusion Effect
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Reducing Stigma and Peer Support

One of the most significant mechanisms of change is the way the CSE school subject shifts how sensitive topics are handled, particularly menstrual hygiene, by reducing the stigma surrounding them and fostering support among peers.

The CSE course creates a classroom environment where students learn not only to respect one another but also to actively support each other. The CSE teacher plays a key role in building this culture, systematically encouraging students to celebrate their peers' efforts. Collective affirmations like *"Bravo, Najoro! Wonderful! Well done!"* (Mpanabe JL Manana, during a CSE class) punctuate the sessions and build a space of trust where everyone feels valued and safe to speak.

It is precisely in this safe space that students apply what they have learned in class to their everyday interactions. One particularly revealing example involves a student sharing menstrual hygiene practices learned during a CSE

class with a classmate. This act may seem small, but it illustrates a deeper process: knowledge moves beyond the sphere of the formal classroom and begins to circulate freely among students, in their own terms and according to their own codes. Ultimately, this plays a key role in normalizing bodily practices that were previously surrounded by silence and shame.

This mechanism highlights a close connection between several dimensions of change identified in the codebook: reducing stigma (Stigma), peer support (Student-to-Student Support), and the diffusion effect (Flowing). These three dimensions reinforce one another: the trust built in class through empowering teaching practices frees students to share CSE lessons in informal settings, which in turn extends the courses' reach well beyond classroom hours. Far from being a side effect, this phenomenon is one of the subject's most powerful and effective drivers of lasting change.



The Diffusion Effect
(Flowing)

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Embrace of CSE as a New Part of School Life

Principals, teachers, and parents express a desire to see the subject continue and expand, reflecting the value they place on this partnership:

"We hope and wish that students will succeed and achieve their aspirations. We are very grateful."

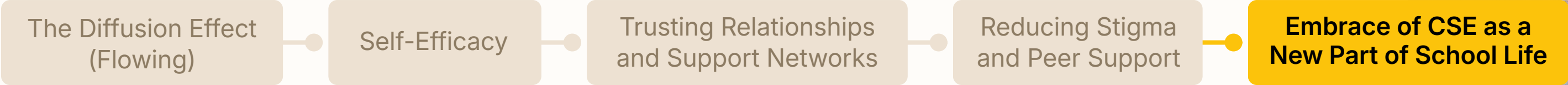
This gratitude reflects recognition of the unique value that the CSE subject brings to the school community, and strong alignment between its goals and families' hopes for their children.

One analytical observation requires a note here: in the data, the line between the CSE subject and the CSE teacher as an individual is often blurred in participants' accounts.

School community members attribute observed benefits sometimes to the curriculum and sometimes to the CSE teacher's presence and personality, without clearly distinguishing between the two.

This raises the analytical question: is this an artifact of coding, an inability on the part of participants to recognize the distinction, or is the distinction simply less meaningful to them than the concrete effects they experience?

For the purposes of this research, this blurring can itself be read as significant: it suggests that what makes the subject powerful is precisely the combination of a structured curriculum with a human presence, rather than either element alone. Testimonies focused on specific forms of support provided by the CSE teacher to particular students or teachers were coded separately under the code Support, in keeping with the codebook distinctions.





Conclusion

Conclusion

This qualitative analysis, grounded in documentary films created by ten CSE teachers, documents the systemic, multi-level impact of a CSE subject in rural middle schools across Madagascar.

The data suggests that **the presence of a CSE teacher and subject generates deep, interconnected changes at every level of the school community:** among students, teachers, parents, and the broader community. These changes are not the product of a one-time or surface-level intervention; rather, they reflect lasting transformation in behaviors, mindsets, and relationships, embedded in the daily life of schools and families.

These transformations unfold through a set of complementary, interdependent mechanisms: a diffusion effect that multiplies impact far beyond the immediate circle of direct student participants; the strengthening of self-efficacy that equips students with new confidence in their own abilities; trusting relationships that create a safe space for learning, self-expression, and support; a classroom culture grounded in mutual encouragement that reduces stigma and fosters peer support; and a school subject that durably anchors these values into the fabric of school life.

These mechanisms do not operate in isolation. They form a **coherent system in which each component strengthens and amplifies the others.** The metaphor of the “flowing stream,” spontaneously offered by one participant, captures this well: a well-designed intervention, deeply rooted in the needs and realities of the community, can generate waves of change that irrigate the entire social landscape, reaching far beyond what traditional quantitative evaluation tools could measure.

These findings carry several practical implications. They underscore the critical importance of education **continuity:** as many participants note, gains risk fading if the intervention ends prematurely. They make a case for expansion of the subject to **other levels of education,** including high school and university, to consolidate and deepen the changes already underway. And they call for a **re-evaluation of the CSE teacher's role:** not as a service provider, but as a catalyst for community transformation, whose active, relational presence is itself an irreplaceable driver of change.



Annex

Annex: Codebook

Prompt: "What changes does a school experience through having a CSE teacher and subject? And how do these changes happen?"

- **Gratitude:** Expressing thankfulness of the PJJL subject/CSE teacher
- **Self-efficacy:** An individual's confidence in their ability to do what needs to be done so they can achieve their goal or a certain outcome (Bandura). This code includes participants' statements indicating that students develop greater self-confidence through the CSE subject. It captures behaviors such as overcoming shyness, asserting themselves, asking questions, showing courage, setting goals, and maintaining a positive mindset. These changes are seen as a direct result of enhanced self-confidence.
 - **Communication:** Feeling comfortable asking questions, having the courage to ask for help
 - **Motivation:** Demonstrating drive to do what needs to be done so they can achieve their goal or a certain outcome.
- **Student changes:** This refers to any discussion about student changes (or lack of) in capability, opportunity, and motivation while participating in the CSE subject.
 - **Change:** Students have experienced change in some way, either by self-reporting, or by observation (by teacher, staff, community, etc.)
 - **Long term impact:** The impacts and changes that we hope will occur among young adolescents. No change has happened but maybe there will be.
- **"Flowing":** This refers to statements that talk about big changes or ripple effect brought about by the CSE subject that crosses boundaries (from one classroom to another, from school to home, home to community etc.)
 - **Teachers:** This refers to how impact goes into the teaching practice and culture at the school.
 - **Parents:** This refers to how impact goes beyond the child and spreads into the family.
- **Trusting relationships and supportive connections:** It reflects the positive relationship, mutual trust, and support between the CSE teacher and the people around them, showing that they are sincere, close, and connected.
- **Stigma:** A set of negative, unfair beliefs and stereotypes that society holds about a person or group, leading to disapproval, shame, discrimination, or exclusion.
- **Student to student support:** Students supporting each other, developing friendships, building trust, etc.
- **Support:** If the quote is talking about specific examples of how the CSE teacher helps other students/teachers.
 - **Advice:** CSE teacher talks through concerns with someone and provides advice/feedback/wisdom.
 - **Encouragement:** CSE teacher uses words of encouragement to support someone emotionally.
 - **Practical assistance:** CSE teacher offers visible help to someone (i.e., physically giving help).

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- **Partnership:** Any statements about the collaborative relationship between the school and PJJ organization and/or CSE teachers on a high level/as a whole (both good and bad partnerships)
 - *Note: If the quote is talking about specific examples of how the PJJ teacher helps other students/teacher, this should be coded under "Support"*
 - **Puberty:** Discussing this life phase during which adolescents experience many physical and mental changes.
 - **Menstrual hygiene:** Discussing health during menstruation, especially about the symptoms that may occur during the menstrual period.
 - **PJJ lesson:** A specific teaching given by the CSE Teacher to promote healthy habits and responsible behaviors among students
 - **PJJ curriculum:** A structured set of educational content and learning activities developed and used by PJJ to deliver its teaching and achieve its educational objectives to students or parents.
 - **Teacher's role:** CSE teacher introduces themselves and describes their goal/position at the school/with the CSE subject.
 - **CSE teacher self-reflection:** The CSE teacher shares personal reflections about what being a PJJ teacher means to them/the effect it has had on their life.



