

## In response to 4th CEDAW CONCLUSIONS AND

## RECOMMENDATIONS–Points 10.23、10.24、10.27

Topic : Recover and strengthen school sexuality education and the advising mechanism to improve cooperation, integration, and student sexual health.

### ~Taiwan Association for Sexuality Education~

#### I. Overview of the current situation

##### *1. Unintended pregnancy among underage girls is prevalent*

The statistics provided by Ministry of the Interior<sup>1</sup> reveals that over the past ten years, there are approximately 3000 teenage mothers aged 15 to 19 annually in Taiwan. No sign of effective decrease in adolescent pregnancy is displayed. The significant difference between the teen birth rate in six special municipalities (e.g. the rate in Taipei is 0.001) and rural areas (e.g. the rate in Hualien is 0.011) indicates issues such as urban-rural gap and the even distribution of medical and prevention resources. Control Yuan issued a corrective measure on this matter to Ministry of Health and Welfare and Ministry of Education via a press release in 2017<sup>2</sup>. According to The Garden of Hope Foundation<sup>3</sup>, of all 590 pregnancy cases it assisted in 2019, nearly half (48.1%) were teenage girls and 11.7% were repeat unintended pregnancies.

## *2. Elementary and high school students are in urgent need of more sexuality education*

Ministry of Education discovered in 2014<sup>4</sup> that sexual knowledge among high school students have not substantially improved (rated 69%) in the past few years. Among those who have had experienced sexual intercourse, 13% have been pregnant or have impregnated their partners and only 26% have worn condoms. When asked about the school sexuality education on “pregnancy and contraception,” merely 30% of the students regarded the topic covered was in detail and sufficient, yet 14% commented that the topic was not discussed or was touched on briefly. Nonetheless, research also suggested that the more detailed the topic was taught and the more satisfied students felt, the more accurate sexual knowledge and more positive attitude students possessed. In addition, a survey carried out by Child Welfare League Foundation<sup>5</sup> in 2016 indicated 26% of families had never talked about sexual knowledge, 67.6% and 56.3% had never discussed sexual behavior or relationships; 29.6% of students responded that teachers deliberately avoid sensitive topics at class. The older the students, the further teachers steer clear of the topic.

## *4. There is no sexual health education advising project of our Ministry of Education.*

The “Campus Sexuality Education (including HIV/AIDS

Prevention)” project was under the bigger project of the Taiwan Health-Promoting Schools, and was aimed to advise and assist local governments as well as schools to implement sexual health education and sexual health promotion. However, it was terminated in the year of 2020, leaving all school children and adolescents at risk of low sexual knowledge, STD infection, unintended pregnancy, sexual exploration, as well as the negative influences of the internet.

## **II. Recommendations**

Nip the problem in the bud. It is suggested that courses on sexual and reproductive health education to be firmly implemented, and the government project funded by the Ministry of Education – Campus Sexuality Education (including HIV/AIDS Prevention) to be resumed and revised accordingly. The following are specific suggestions:

### ***1. Implement specialized teaching:***

“Sexuality education” is a part of “Health Education” under the current Curriculum Guidelines for elementary, middle and high schools. Nevertheless, due to teacher shortages, it is common for non-specialized teachers to teach such courses. The competent authority should set concrete goals to recruit more health education teachers to meet the demand. Courses related to sexuality education should be added to the Elementary Teacher Education Program.

*2. Teaching improvement plans:*

Teachers often feel inadequate lack of formal training in teaching sexual health, therefore, more related training and competition should be held. (There aren' t enough workshops.)

*3. Upgrade the counselling system:*

Student counselling system should be upgraded to assist and accompany students when facing sex-related problems.

*4. Parenting improvement plans:*

Support groups or consultation platforms should be established to help parents better equipped with parent-child communication skills and sexual health knowledge.

*5. Professional consultation:*

Websites and consultation line on sexuality education should be restored to provide service for schools, teachers, and parents, who can seek for help via phone, email, or Q&A session online.

*6. Teaching materials and teachers' training programs:*

Teaching materials and teachers' training programs should be up to date.