



## COVID-19 IPPF Innovation and best practice: Digitalising for young people

**"I've developed new skills in making use of social media to plan for a youth online campaign. Not only was my understanding on contraceptives and safer sex enhanced, but I am also happy that I am involved in changing the attitude of my peers regarding self-protection."**

FPAKH peer educator

**Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) provides young people with accurate information and skills to make informed decisions about their sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) and take control of their sexual well-being. Reports have suggested that high adolescent birth rates occur in all countries where sexuality education (SE) is curtailed.**

CSE programmes addressing gender, rights and power are up to five times more effective in reducing negative outcomes, including unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections (STIs). CSE has a transformative impact with teaching methods that support students to question social and cultural norms around gender and develop gender-equitable attitudes, and leads to more consistent condom use, lower pregnancy rates, and reduced risk of HIV infection and partner violence.

COVID-19 saw the closure of schools and face-to-face gatherings worldwide, meaning a halt to CSE for many young people. In response, International Planned Parenthood Federation Member Associations got innovative in using digital tools to engage with young people and continue delivering Sexuality Education.\*

IPPF's COVID-19 impact survey conducted March 2020 indicated Family Planning Association of Hong Kong (FPAHK) adapted its approach to providing sexuality education sessions online to young people while schools are closed.

This Learning Brief highlights innovations through the FPAHK COVID-19 enhanced comprehensive sexuality education implementation plan in response to the pandemic.

\* Sexuality education through online tools is referred to as digital SE.



## COVID-19 impact

Hong Kong was one of the first cities affected by COVID-19. The first confirmed patient was diagnosed on 23 January 2020, with several more a few days after. The Government of Hong Kong promptly announced that schools would remain closed after the Chinese New Year holidays that ended on 27 January, and civil servants would work from home. Before the pandemic, FPAHK CSE programmes were conducted for schools, tertiary institutions, and community centres in a face-to-face mode. Youth volunteers also delivered peer-led sexuality education programmes in the local community. FPAHK's CSE programmes reached over 40,000 young people annually.

## Enhancing services in the pandemic

The long periods of social distancing measures and school closures may leave students without comprehensive sexuality education (CSE). In Hong Kong, the Education Bureau urged schools to use e-learning and calls for "suspending classes without suspending learning". Students from preschool through to tertiary students have been accessing their education online since the onset of the pandemic. Routines and schedules provide a sense of stability for students. FPAHK has been partnering with schools to deliver the scheduled programmes via online platforms to support young people aged 12–24 for their overall well-being and development.

## Digitalising for young people

FPAHK has a long working relationship with local schools. Over 200 existing primary and secondary schools approached the Association to arrange talks, seminars, workshops, or school activities on sexuality education (SE), serving over 30,000 students. FPAHK moved all SE efforts online with conferences and seminars via Zoom or Teams in response to the high volume of school requests. As most resources for sexuality education are classroom-focused, efforts were made to make learning interactive and engaging. For an online one-hour talk on a sexuality education topic, programme content and activities were adjusted by adding more interactive elements to engage students, such as using Mentimeter for collecting feedback, instant polling, and games. As schools can provide a stable IT network, FPAHK colleagues would visit the school for conducting online programmes. Before programme delivery, teachers are consulted to discuss the programme's flow, interactive activities, and other technical issues.

For many teenagers, schools allow them to form support networks with peers and develop identities. During the pandemic, this space to build their identities and peer relationships may be lost, affecting their social-emotional well-being. Economic distress and tension caused by the pandemic among family members may heighten the conflicts or arguments about autonomy and control between teenagers and their parents. Besides the increased time for online learning, students spend more leisure time in front of the screen, which opens them to various risks, particularly cyberbullying. FPAHK provides teenagers with the knowledge, skills, and resources to keep themselves safe online.





In 2012–13, FPAHK developed a mobile game on love and intimacy with the Faculty of Education, Hong Kong University. The mobile app game was provided on Facebook, iPad, and the web to educate young people on sex education and relationships. With extra funding, the mobile app game was enhanced with an additional dating game and supplemented with a reading portal to encourage students to acquire reliable sexual health information.

Youth volunteers ran a social media campaign called ‘Don’t Take Chances’ during the World Contraceptive Day in 2020 and included an online calligraphy workshop and video production posted on YouTube to dispel myths about contraception and disseminate positive messages on safer sex.

## Key challenges

- Students living in Mainland China may not have stable internet access at home and cannot participate in online programmes. To manage this, teachers would help distribute worksheets and online information for those who could not enter the programmes.
- Student motivation is a challenge for online learning. A lack of direct interpersonal interaction in the online lessons exacerbates the facilitators’ challenge of engaging reluctant learners. Consultation with teachers before the programme is essential, as teachers play a crucial role in encouraging students’ participation in online lessons.
- Significant human and financial resources are required to develop dynamic content for a digital learning environment.

## Lessons

- First developed in 2012–2013, the mobile application reached 1,123 students aged 12–16 years-old from six local secondary schools. Evaluating this interactive game showed that over 1,000 grade 7-9 students across six schools found the game fun and exciting and improved their knowledge of sex<sup>1</sup>.
- FPAHK engaged students through various interactive tools during the programme, where students and teachers positively responded. The overall satisfaction rate for the online school talks, workshops, and mobile app game (available on Facebook, Android, and App Store) remains high (>90 per cent).

## Next steps

- Digital sexuality education (SE) is now an integral part of the CSE programme of FPAHK. FPAHK will continue to implement programmes, including online talks and workshops through its digital platforms. FPAHK will invest in digital content creation and harness technology’s power to make sexuality education accessible to young adolescents aged 10-14, youth, parents, teachers and youth workers in the community.
- FPAHK will use social media to reach young people, parents, and educators through Facebook and YouTube. An online book fair will promote sexuality education resources and collaborate with social media influencers to attract young people to disseminate positive sexual health messages.
- IPPF is establishing a community of practice within the region to inform and guide the work around digital health and disseminate good practices and learning from the FPAHK experiences.



# Recommendations for SRH services, governments, and civil society organizations (CSOs)

- Based on the local experiences and needs identified during the COVID-19 response, guidelines for delivering online sexuality education (SE) and to provide technical assistance and capacity building should be developed. Digital SE interventions are likely to be more beneficial when mainstreamed and conducted along with online classes during routine school hours and should complement rather than replace face-to-face delivery.
- Governments should ensure that country-level emergency preparedness plans include continuous access to SE for all young people as part of contingency schooling systems, through online and other digital interventions aimed at reaching underserved young people.
- Governments and CSOs should invest in closing the digital gap and ensure that essential SRH services are available and linked with digital SE during emergencies.
- As the most active digital technologies users, Youth networks, youth volunteers and CSOs working on youth should develop digital platforms to promote SE and increase young people's broader engagement, including those most vulnerable. Online SE must be delivered in safe digital spaces, free of risks related to cyberbullying and sexual and gender-based violence, where young people's privacy or anonymity is protected.

**"The experience of working with youth volunteers in planning for a campaign has been fruitful for the staff involved. The creativity of youth has led us to think more about how we can better design our online programmes and social media activities to reach out to more young people in our community."**

FPAHK, staff member

The screenshot displays a Zoom meeting in progress. The main window shows a presentation slide titled "互動時間" (Interactive Time) with a cartoon illustration of a family and the text: "在家庭活動上，孩子因姨姨擁吻而掙扎，你會如何處理？" (During family activities, the child struggles because of the aunt's kiss, how would you handle it?). The slide also features the logo of the Family Planning Association of Hong Kong (FPAHK). To the right, a chat window is open, showing a list of participants and their messages. The chat messages include greetings and a link to FPAHK resources.

**Zoom 會議**

正在觀看 Melody (FPAHK) 的螢幕

發言畫面

**Zoom 群聊**

neio

我對所有人說：Hello

Keeley (FPAHK) 對所有人說：hello!

On Lee Yu 對所有人說：hello

GOU 對所有人說：hello

Michelle 對所有人說：2個都可以問，good!

Maple Lau 對所有人說：個公仔好得意，設計好好呀，好好用

GOU 對所有人說：where can buy

我對所有人說：幾多錢?

Ava (FPAHK) 對所有人說：大公仔\$600，細公仔\$280  
可以上家計會性教育網頁購買喇

Keeley (FPAHK) 對所有人說：  
<https://www.famplan.org.hk/sexedu/zh/sexuality-education-resources/publications-and-teaching-materials>  
書籍及教材

GOU 對所有人說：thank you!

我對所有人說：包唔包郵?

Ava (FPAHK) 對所有人說：我地依家做緊免郵費優惠呀~

我對所有人說：

發送：所有人

輸入消息...

## Endnotes

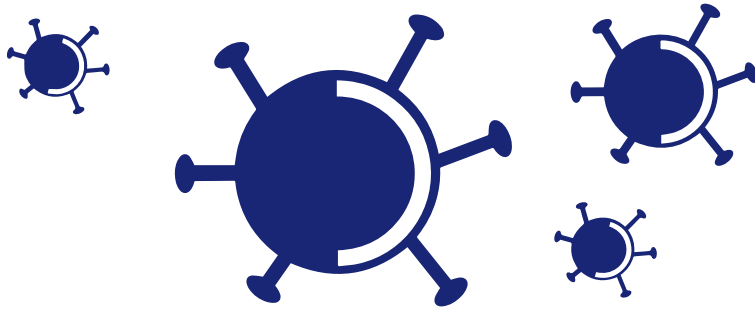
[1] Reference: (1) Kwan, A., S. Chu, and A. Hong, et al., 'Making Smart Choices: A serious game for sex education for young adolescents', International Journal of Game-Based Learning, vol. 5, no. 1, January 2015, pp. 18-30

## IPPF COVID-19 Impact Surveys

IPPF COVID-19 Impact survey 1 March 2020: COVID-19 Survey Results | IPPF ([ippf-covid19.org](http://ippf-covid19.org))

IPPF COVID-19 Impact survey 2 June 2020: COVID-19 Round 2 Survey Results | IPPF ([ippf-covid19.org](http://ippf-covid19.org))

IPPF COVID-19 Impact survey 3 November 2020: COVID-19 Round 3 Survey Results | IPPF ([ippf-covid19.org](http://ippf-covid19.org))



## About FPAHK

The Family Planning Association of Hong Kong (FPAHK) was one of the eight founding Member Associations of IPPF. Its services include contraception, abortion, pre-marital and pre-pregnancy check-up, cervical cancer screening, STI and HIV-based work and fertility support. The Member Association also provides family life and sexuality education to students and training to parents, teachers and related professionals.



## Who we are

The International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) delivers sexual and reproductive health services that let people make their own choices. We fight for everyone to exercise their right to make those choices. We are local, through our members and volunteers, and global, through our network. We meet need, wherever it is, whoever requires it, for as long as they want it.

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Image 1: Hong Kong/ FPAHK

Image 2: Hong Kong/ FPAHK

Image 3: Hong Kong/ FPAHK

Image 4: Hong Kong/ FPAHK

Image 5: Hong Kong/ FPAHK

Design: David Foster