

IGDS FACT SHEETS

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Sexual Rights and Justice



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"A Sexual Culture of Justice" Human Rights Project

Institute for Gender and Development Studies
Sexual Culture of Justice Project
www.portal.caribbeansexualities.org



**LOVE MORE
JUDGE LESS**

TALK YUH TALK
#JusticeDiversityTT



SEXUAL CULTURE OF JUSTICE

#endGenderBasedViolence
#endLGBTIdiscrimination
#SaferTogether
#JusticeDiversityTT

**CONSENT
SPECIALIST**
#endGBV

**PULL UP YUH
BREDREN**
#endGBV

Sexual Rights and Justice

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1 What are Sexual Rights?

Sexual rights are the right to control our own bodies and sexuality without discrimination, coercion, or violence is fundamental for empowerment and self-determination, especially for women and girls. When people have the power and resources to make decisions about their bodies, sexuality, and reproduction, especially groups who have been marginalized because of gender and sexuality (women and girls, as well as LGBTQI+ persons) – we affirm our sexual rights.



If we don't control our bodies, this can have a long-lasting impact on every other aspect of our lives. The push to ensure women and girls have control and freedom over their bodies is at the center of struggles for sexual, gender, racial, and economic justice.



“Sexual rights rest on the recognition that all individuals have the right—free of coercion, violence, and discrimination of any kind—to the highest attainable standard of sexual health; to pursue a satisfying, safe, and pleasurable sexual life; to have control over and decide freely, and with due regard for the rights of others, on matters related to their sexuality, reproduction, sexual orientation, bodily integrity, choice of partner, and gender identity; and to the services, education, and information, including comprehensive sexuality education, necessary to do so.”

**- International Women’s Health Coalition
Definition of Sexual Rights
1995.**



2 Declaration of Sexual Rights

The Declaration of Sexual Rights is a statement on sexual rights that was first proclaimed at the 13th World Congress of Sexology in 1997, led by the World Association for Sexual Health. The Declaration was revised and expanded in 2014.

1. The right to equality and non-discrimination
2. The right to life, liberty, and security of the person
3. The right to autonomy and bodily integrity
4. The right to be free from torture and cruel, inhuman, or degrading or punishment
5. The right to be free from all forms of violence and coercion
6. The right to privacy
7. The right to the highest attainable standard of health, including sexual health; with the possibility of pleasurable, satisfying, and safe sexual experiences
8. The right to enjoy the benefits of scientific progress and its application
9. The right to information



10. The right to education and the right to comprehensive sexuality education
11. The right to enter, form, and dissolve marriage and similar types of relationships based on equality and full and free consent
12. The right to decide whether to have children, the number and spacing of children, and to have the information and the means to do so
13. The right to the freedom of thought, opinion, and expression
14. The right to freedom of association and peaceful assembly
15. The right to participation in public and political life
16. The right to access to justice, remedies, and redress

This declaration of sexual rights is a goal for many who are working towards sexual justice and it provides a framework to build our movements, coalitions, and policy agendas.



3 Understanding Sexual Rights and Development

Mainstream approaches to “gender and development” have been criticized for not engaging with sex and sexuality enough. International agreements developed by civil society in collaboration with global and multilateral agencies offer clear guidelines as to what constitutes sexual rights especially in relation to development.

USEFUL GUIDELINES

- World Health Organisation. Sexual and Reproductive Health:
https://www.who.int/reproductivehealth/topics/gender_rights/sexual_health/en/
- World Association of Sexual Health. Declaration of Sexual Rights:
<https://worldsexualhealth.net/resources/declaration-of-sexual-rights/>
- Montevideo Consensus on Population Development:
<https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/resource-pdf/Montevideo%20Consensus-15Aug2013.pdf>



The Montevideo Consensus on Population and Development (2013) for the Latin American and Caribbean region has committed to:

“Promote policies that enable persons to exercise their sexual rights, which embrace the right to a safe and full sex life, as well as the right to take free, informed, voluntary and responsible decisions on their sexuality, sexual orientation and gender identity, without coercion, discrimination or violence, and that guarantee the right to information and the means necessary for their sexual health and reproductive health.”

This pledge affirms the place of sexual rights as fundamental to human rights. Sexual rights through sex positivity (beyond and inclusive of sexual health) means sexuality must be discussed openly, particularly through comprehensive sex education.



4 What is Sexual Justice?

Sexual Justice refers to a range of sexual politics involving the body, sex, sexuality, agency, autonomy, rights, and freedom. It is often understood through the context of sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR). Therefore, sexual justice includes reproductive justice (safe and legal access to sexual and reproductive healthcare) and the established view that *Sexual Rights are fundamental to our Human Rights*. While rights-based frameworks can be limiting and colonial, Caribbean scholars and activists have argued for regional and decolonial understandings of sexual and gender justice. Sexual justice offers space and expansiveness for local and regional activism and actions that are context specific.



Caribbean sexuality studies and research can help us face the difficulties we have as a region in talking about sex, sexuality, and sexual labour. These conversations are necessary in the struggle for sexual justice. We must pay attention to sex and pleasure alongside the needs for sustenance and safety.



This means our approaches to understanding sexuality must be examined in relation to gender, colour, race, class, location, ability, and other aspects of identity. Activism and research on Caribbean sexualities means understanding how colonialism, neocolonialism, globalisation, tourism, and cultural appropriations affect conceptions of self and sexuality. At the same time, sexual justice means affirming our local and regional understandings of sex and sexuality that are sex positive.



5 Why Sexual Rights and Justice?

As scholars, practitioners, and activists have argued, the control over women and girls' bodies and sexuality increases gender-based violence and places severe limitations on mobility, education, employment, and participation in public life. In similar ways, lesbians, gay men, bisexual people, transgender and gender non-conforming people, intersex people, sex workers, and others who transgress sexual and gender norms face greater risk of violence, stigma, and discrimination as a result of controlling mechanisms around sex and sexuality. Sexual and reproductive health professionals, sexual rights activists, and feminist scholars have long agreed that sexual rights underpin the enjoyment of all other human rights and are necessary for equity and justice for all.



Sexual rights are deeply connected to understandings of sexual citizenship, which means our rights and protection under the law related to sexuality. Human rights and LGBTQI activist Colin Robinson argues that we must not place too much emphasis on law and litigation in our struggles for sexual autonomy, but rather be guided and led by local and regional solutions. Transforming cultural norms related to gender and sexuality are just as important as law and litigation.



6 Why Comprehensive Sex Education (CSE)?

Young people must negotiate complex social, technological, sexual, and gendered spaces. The IGDS Break the Silence Research Project supports long standing and global research that shows CSE can prevent child sexual abuse, incest, sexual bullying and teenage pregnancy. CSE can help young people understand their bodies and sexualities, and empower them to make more informed decisions about sex, relationships, and consent.



In two recent reports in Trinidad and Tobago, the evidence is compelling that young people need and want access to comprehensive sex education. The 2020 Report on Legal Barriers to Sexual and Reproductive Health for Adolescents shows that young people lack access to information and services which has devastating effects on their well being. The National Climate Survey 2019 Report found that 65% percent of students surveyed believe that with CSE they will be better prepared to handle sexual situations.



Comprehensive Sex Education (CSE) means teaching and understanding consent, bodily autonomy, and mutual respect. These reports reveal how necessary it is for young people to be empowered and included in the creation of an enabling and safe learning environment for all students. This means teachers and counsellors must be supported and better equipped to provide social, emotional, and social justice learning, as well as creative strategies and restorative justice approaches to dealing with violence.



7 What is "A Sexual Culture of Justice"?

"A Sexual Culture of Justice: Strengthening LGBTQI & GBV Partnerships, Capacity & Efficacy to Promote & Protect Rights in T&T" (2017-2021) was an EU-funded human rights project implemented by the UWI IGDS in partnership with several civil society organisations. The project focused on the intersections of gender and sexual justice. We envisioned this "sexual culture of justice" as advocacy for social change to gender norms and sexual rights. This collaboration provided four years of support for long-standing and new efforts to transform approaches to violence, homophobia, bullying and policing, while building organisational capacity.

The project produced new local/regional analysis and solutions for ways to approach and mitigate GBV and LGBTQI discrimination. These approaches were developed and showcased through the intersectional action campaigns, education materials, training toolkits and workshops, as well as the research activities that produced data needed to support calls for gender and sexual justice policy and legislative changes. The methodology of the activities were rooted in transformational education, empowerment, Caribbean feminist praxis, and self-directed and creative action.





A SEXUAL CULTURE OF JUSTICE



KNOWLEDGE E-PORTAL

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8 Get Involved



Global and Local Campaigns:

- UN Free & Equal Campaign: <https://www.unfe.org/>
- Campaign against Discrimination based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI). Parliamentarians for Global Action: <https://www.pgaction.org/gei/sogi/>
- Campaign for Comprehensive Sexuality Education - ES Igualdad campaign: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/press-release/2021/04/americas-garantizar-derecho-educacion-sexual-integral-salva-vidas/>
- Know Your Body Know Your Rights Campaign: <https://theypfoundation.org/campaigns/kybkyr-campaign/>
- IGDS National Campaigns: <https://sta.uwi.edu/igds/national-campaigns>
- Sexual Culture of Justice Campaigns: <https://portal.caribbeansexualities.org/campaigns/>

Support Organisations Advancing Sexual Rights and Justice:

- "A Sexual Culture of Justice" Project Partners: <https://portal.caribbeansexualities.org/about-the-scj-project/project-partners/>
- IGDS Teaching | Research | Outreach : <https://sta.uwi.edu/igds/whatwedo>

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9 Useful Resources

- Break the Silence Toolkit, 2017:
https://sta.uwi.edu/igds/breakthesilence/documents/BTS_Toolkit_complete_AS13JUNE2017.pdf
- Caribbean Sexualities Knowledge E-Portal:
<https://portal.caribbeansexualities.org/>
- Caribbean Regional Youth Advocacy Framework on SRHR:
https://pancap.org/pc/pcc/media/pancap_document/Final_Caribbean-Regional-Youth-Advocacy-Framework-on-SRHR.pdf
- Center for Reproductive Rights. <https://reproductiverights.org>
- Colin Robinson. “Decolonising Sexual Citizenship: Who Will Effect Change in the South of the Commonwealth?”: https://sas-space.sas.ac.uk/4836/1/04_12_Opinion_v6a.pdf
- Exclaim – young people’s guide to ‘Sexual rights: an IPPF declaration’: <https://www.ippf.org/resource/exclaim-young-peoples-guide-sexual-rights-ippf-declaration>
- International Women’s Health Coalition, “Sexual Rights are Human Rights.”: <https://iwhc.org/articles/sexual-rights-human-rights/>
- Making of Caribbean Feminisms: <https://sta.uwi.edu/igds/mcf/>
- Right Here Right Now Database for SRHR advocates:
<https://rhrntools.rutgers.international/>
- Sexuality and Social Justice: A Toolkit: www.spl.ids.ac.uk/toolkit



Useful Resources

- Legal Barriers Affect Adolescent Access to Sexual and Reproductive Health Services in Trinidad and Tobago. UNFPA Sub-regional Office for the English and Dutch Speaking Caribbean. 2020.
<https://caribbean.unfpa.org/en/publications/legal-barriers-affect-adolescent-access-sexual-and-reproductive-health-services>
- National Survey on Gender Based Violence and Bullying in Secondary Schools. Trinidad and Tobago. 2019.
<https://portal.caribbeansexualities.org/national-school-climate-survey/>

