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प्रयास
Prayas (Health Group)



BECOMING A SEXUALITY EDUCATOR

Learning, Transformation and Pathways to Scale

Reflections from the 1st SAHAJ Educator's Fellowship Cohort
2025–26

Reflection Report of the 1st SAHAJ Educator's Fellowship Cohort (2025–26)

Becoming a Sexuality Educator

Learning, Transformation and Pathways to Scale

By Prayas Health Group

Aboli Moharkar | Shirish Darak | Trupti Darak

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Sarika Joglekar

Prayas (Health Group)

About Prayas:

Prayas (Initiatives in Health, Energy, Learning, and Parenthood) is a non-governmental, non-profit organization based in Pune, India. PHG focuses on public health issues, including HIV/AIDS, Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights, Climate Change and Health, and Preventive Oncology.

Acknowledgements

We extend our sincere gratitude to all the fellows who placed their trust in this journey and contributed their time, experiences, reflections, and commitment throughout the fellowship. Their openness to learning, unlearning, and engaging with challenging conversations made this fellowship a truly collective learning experience.

We are deeply grateful to Kalyani Firodiya for her generous support, trust, and belief in the vision of the SAHAJ Educator's Fellowship. Her contribution through financial support, guidance, and shared learning made this initiative possible.

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We also acknowledge the civil society organisations, schools, and co-travellers who shared our vision and strengthened this journey through collaboration and collective learning. Their partnership has been vital in advancing equitable, inclusive, and rights-based CSE.

At the heart of this work are the children, adolescents, educators, and communities whose experiences continue to shape and inspire it. Their voices remain central to our commitment to creating safer, more informed, and compassionate learning environments.

Executive Summary

The SAHAJ Educator's Fellowship was a nine-month hybrid professional learning programme developed by Prayas Health Group (PHG), Pune to support individuals working with children and adolescents to develop as a pool of sexuality educators across Maharashtra. The fellowship emerged from Prayas' experience of implementing SAHAJ, a spiral, age-appropriate Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) curriculum for Grades 1–10, and the recognition that meaningful CSE implementation requires more than a strong curriculum—it also depends on educators who are confident, reflective and equipped to facilitate these conversations. The fellowship was therefore conceived as a sustained professional learning space through which individuals could build the knowledge, perspectives and skills required to take CSE forward within their existing work and contexts. The first cohort, completed in May 2026, brought together 35 individual practitioners selected from 212 applicants across Maharashtra.

This report documents the learning journey of the first cohort and the changes fellows described in themselves and their practice. It draws on reflections, mentoring conversations, implementation records and fellows' experiences during the fellowship. It is not a formal impact evaluation. Instead, it seeks to understand how educators learn to engage with CSE, what helps them change their practice, and what is needed to take this work forward in different settings.

One of the clearest learnings was that **becoming a Comprehensive Sexuality Educator involves more than acquiring information.** Fellows needed opportunities to examine their own beliefs, social conditioning and discomfort around sexuality, gender, relationships and identity. Through reflection, dialogue, scientific learning, practice and mentoring, fellows described becoming more comfortable discussing sexuality, more aware of their own assumptions, and more open to different experiences and choices. This shift in the educator was important because the way an educator understands a subject can influence not only what they teach, but also how they respond to young people's questions and experiences.

Executive Summary

Fellows described **expanding their sessions beyond puberty, menstruation and reproductive health** to include topics such as consent, relationships, gender, safety, emotional wellbeing, HIV and STIs, contraception, and other aspects of sexuality. They also became more comfortable using accurate and inclusive language and responding to questions that they may have previously found difficult. For many, this meant moving from addressing only the topics they were familiar with to making space for the wider range of questions and concerns that young people bring to them.

The fellowship also changed how many fellows understood their role. **Rather than seeing themselves mainly as people who provide information, they began to see their role as creating a space where children and adolescents can ask questions, share their concerns and explore different perspectives without fear of judgement**. This shift was reflected in greater emphasis on listening, dialogue and participation, and on helping young people develop the confidence to understand and make informed choices for themselves.

The fellowship also showed that **CSE cannot be implemented in exactly the same way everywhere.** Fellows worked in schools, civil society organisations, counselling services, community programmes, residential and tribal schools, and Child Care Institutions (CCI's). They found different ways of building CSE into work that was already happening—for example, through life skills, social-emotional learning, menstrual health, counselling, child protection or community education. The experience suggests that effective implementation requires a balance between maintaining the core principles of CSE and adapting language, examples, activities and approaches to the age, setting and context of learners.

At the same time, **the fellowship highlighted an important limitation to thinking about scale as simply training more educators**. An educator may have the knowledge and confidence to discuss consent, relationships or safety, but meaningful and safe implementation also depends on the larger environment.

Executive Summary

Schools and organisations need time and space for participatory learning, supportive colleagues and leadership, ways of engaging with parents and communities, and clear mechanisms for responding to difficult situations and disclosures. Educators also need to understand safeguarding and the procedures that apply when concerns such as abuse arise. Scaling CSE therefore requires preparing the systems around educators, not only preparing the educators themselves.

Another important learning was the value of community and continued support. Many fellows described previously feeling alone when working on sexuality-related issues. The fellowship created a space to share difficult experiences, seek advice, learn from different contexts and collaborate with others. This suggests that communities of practice are not simply an additional feature of educator training; they can be an important part of sustaining motivation, confidence and continued learning.

Taken together, the experience of the first cohort has changed how Prayas thinks about developing and scaling Comprehensive Sexuality Educators. **The fellowship suggests that a stronger approach requires four interconnected elements**: 1) transformative learning that changes how educators understand themselves and the subject; 2) practical preparation to contextualise CSE; 3) organisational and institutional readiness; and 4) ongoing communities of support and learning. Rather than creating a parallel cadre of educators, working with practitioners who are already connected to children and adolescents may offer multiple pathways for CSE to grow through existing schools, organisations and community systems.

The first cohort does not provide all the answers, and the findings should be understood as practice-based learning rather than definitive evidence of impact. However, it provides an important foundation for the next phase of SAHAJ. It shows that scaling CSE is not simply about reaching more children or training more educators. It is about building educators who can learn, reflect, adapt and continue learning—and creating the systems and communities that enable them to do this well.

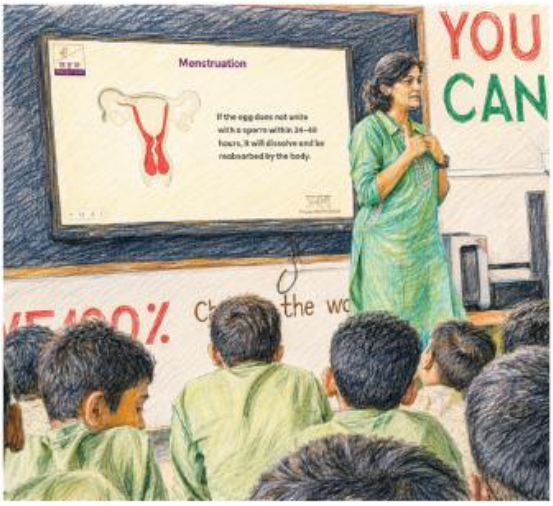
Table of Content

1. Why the SAHAJ Educator's Fellowship? 8
2. Theory of Change — SAHAJ Educator's Fellowship 10
3. About this Report: Documenting the Fellowship Journey 12
4. How was the Fellowship Designed? 14
5. Who Joined and Why? 20
6. What Changed? 26
7. Scaling Pathways 38
8. What We Learned from the SAHAJ Educator's Fellowship 52
9. Film on the First Cohort 56
10. Conclusion 57


सुविचार
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True or False

1. Why the SAHAJ Educator's Fellowship?

Prayas Health Group (PHG) developed SAHAJ (Sanman, Hakka, Jababdari – Respect, Rights, Responsibility), a spiral, age-appropriate, school-based CSE curriculum for grades 1–10, designed to support children's holistic development as they grow. Adapted from the globally recognised Rights, Respect, Responsibilities (3Rs) framework and aligned with the International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education (ITGSE), SAHAJ approaches sexuality as a normal part of human development rather than only as a matter of risk prevention.



It supports children and adolescents in developing age-appropriate knowledge, attitudes, and life skills related to relationships, values and rights, understanding gender, violence and safety, health and well-being, and communication and decision-making, enabling them to navigate adolescence and adulthood with confidence, respect, and responsibility.



However, our experience, supported by evidence, showed that a strong curriculum alone is not enough. The effectiveness of CSE depends largely on the educator's knowledge, confidence, values, and facilitation skills. Many educators receive only brief, one-time training and continue to feel uncertain about discussing sexuality-related topics, responding to young people's questions, or navigating community sensitivities. As a result, important conversations are often avoided, limited to biological information, or framed primarily through fear and risk.

The SAHAJ Educator's Fellowship was created to address this gap. Rather than offering a short-term training, it provided a nine-month professional learning journey that enabled educators to build knowledge, reflect on their own beliefs and biases, develop confidence in facilitating sensitive discussions, practice classroom skills, and integrate Comprehensive Sexuality Education into their everyday work with children and adolescents.

The fellowship is based on the understanding that becoming an effective sexuality educator is a developmental process. Sustained learning, reflection, mentoring, and peer support are essential for translating curriculum into meaningful classroom practice and creating safe, respectful, and inclusive learning environments for young people.



2.Theory of change — SAHAJ Educator's Fellowship

Existing practitioners

Professionals already working with children and adolescents who regularly encounter issues related to growing up, relationships, gender, safety and wellbeing, but often lack the confidence, scientific knowledge, facilitation skills, and affirmative, evidence-based approach needed to respond effectively.

↓

Transformative fellowship

A transformative professional development programme that equips existing practitioners with an evidence-based framework, practical resources, reflective practice, and implementation support for Comprehensive Sexuality Education.

Knowledge	Reflection & Perspective	Reflection & Perspective

↓

Reflective, confident educator

Apply scientific knowledge with confidence, critically reflect on their own values and beliefs, and facilitate age-appropriate CSE with empathy and competence.

↓

CSE integrated into practice

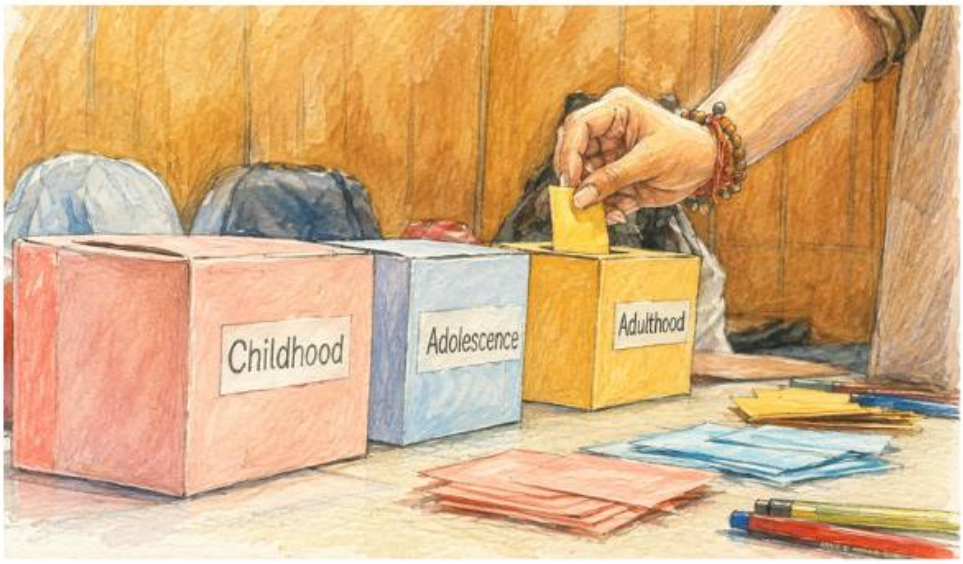
Evidence-based CSE, it's components and the affirmative perspective is embedded within existing schools, civil society organisations, counselling services, and community settings

↓

Children and adolescents reached

Strengthened educator capacity contributes to the quality, reach, and sustainability of Comprehensive Sexuality Education for children and adolescents across Maharashtra.

The SAHAJ Educator's Fellowship is based on the premise that strengthening Comprehensive Sexuality Education begins with strengthening the educator. Rather than creating a new cadre of educators, the fellowship works with practitioners who are already supporting children and adolescents through schools, civil society organisations, counselling services, and community programmes. By providing an evidence-based framework, opportunities for critical reflection, practical resources, mentoring, and sustained implementation support, the fellowship seeks to strengthen educators' knowledge, confidence, facilitation skills, and affirmative approach to Comprehensive Sexuality Education. These changes enable educators to integrate age-appropriate, rights-based CSE into their existing work, thereby strengthening the quality, reach, and sustainability of Comprehensive Sexuality Education for children and adolescents across diverse settings.



3.About this Report: Documenting the Fellowship Journey

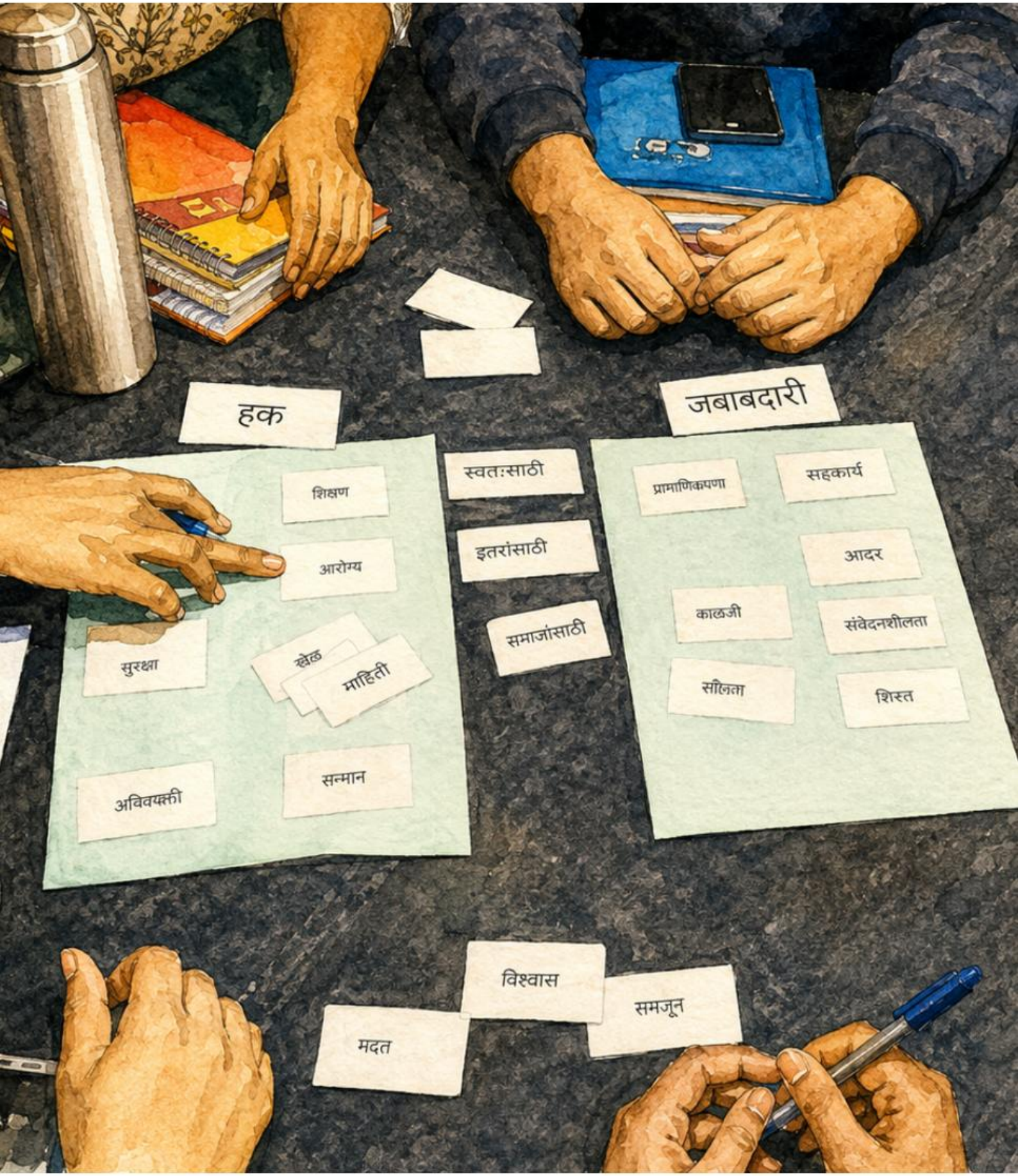
This report presents the journey and learnings from the first cohort of the SAHAJ Educator's Fellowship (September 2025 - May 2026). Rather than serving as a formal impact evaluation, it documents how the fellowship was experienced by educators, how their knowledge, perspectives, and practices evolved over time, and how these changes translated into the delivery of CSE in diverse settings.

To capture this journey, documentation was embedded throughout the fellowship. Information was collected at multiple stages to understand participants' motivations, track changes in their practice during the programme, and reflect on their learning and application at the end of the fellowship. Together, these sources provide a comprehensive understanding of both the fellowship process and the changes experienced by educators.

Stage of the Fellowship	Purpose	Information Documented
Before the Fellowship	Understand who the fellows are and why they joined	Participants' motivations for joining the fellowship, previous experience of working with children and adolescents, and their existing understanding and practice of comprehensive sexuality education.
During the Fellowship	Document changes in practice and implementation	Number of sessions conducted, age groups reached, topics facilitated, implementation settings, challenges encountered during facilitation, and emerging changes in educational practice.

Stage of the Fellowship	Purpose	Information Documented
Towards the End of the Fellowship	Capture learning, reflection, and perceived change	Structured reflections on changes in knowledge, perspectives, confidence, and facilitation practices; significant moments of learning; application of fellowship activities and resources; organisational and community-level changes; feedback received from others; value of the fellowship community; and the influence of the fellowship on personal and professional practice. Also, video feedback was received from fellows who wanted to share their experience

The findings presented throughout this report draw on these multiple sources of documentation, combining quantitative information on implementation with qualitative reflections from fellows. Together, they provide a rich account of how educators experienced the fellowship, integrated their learning into practice, and contributed to expanding access to Comprehensive Sexuality Education in their respective contexts.


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4.How was the Fellowship designed?

The SAHAJ Educator's Fellowship was designed not as a curriculum training programme, but as a professional learning journey through which educators could develop as sexuality educators. The starting premise was that preparing someone to facilitate Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) requires more than transferring information or familiarising them with a set of lesson plans. Educators also need opportunities to examine their own assumptions, become comfortable talking about sexuality, engage with different perspectives, practice facilitation, receive feedback, and reflect on what they encounter in their work.

This was particularly important because the fellowship was designed for professionals who were already working with children and adolescents through schools, civil society organisations, counselling services, and other community settings.



These practitioners were not starting from zero. They already had relationships with children, experience of working with young people, and, in many cases, experience of responding to questions and concerns related to growing up, relationships, gender, safety, and wellbeing. What was often missing was a common evidence-based framework, structured resources, and sustained opportunities to develop the confidence and skills to respond to these issues from an affirmative and rights-based perspective.

The fellowship therefore sought to strengthen existing practice rather than create a parallel cadre of educators. Some important components in the design are mentioned below.

4.1 Designing for Transformation: Becoming Comfortable Before Teaching

A central design principle was that educators needed to engage with themselves before they could confidently engage with young people. Sexuality is not a neutral subject for most adults. People's understanding of sexuality is shaped by family, culture, religion, gender norms, personal relationships, education, social expectations, and their own experiences of growing up. These experiences can influence what they consider appropriate for children to know, what they find difficult to discuss, and how they respond when young people ask questions.

The fellowship therefore did not begin with the SAHAJ curriculum or with techniques for conducting CSE sessions in the classroom. It began by creating a Common Ground—a shared understanding of sexuality and a shared perspective on what it means to engage with children and adolescents on these issues.

The first four-day residential workshop focused on building this common ground. Fellows explored sexuality as a multidimensional aspect of human development and considered questions of choice, diversity, rights, relationships, gender, identity, and respect. The intention was to move away from viewing sexuality only through the lens of risk, disease, or protection and towards an understanding that recognises young people's development, agency, diversity, and wellbeing



4.2 Learning Through Reflection, Not Information Alone

Once a common perspective had been established, the fellowship introduced more structured scientific and technical learning. Each month, fellows received a **self-learning module** followed by a reflective assessment. The modules covered areas such as human bodies and reproductive systems, puberty and adolescent development, pregnancy, conception, contraception and abortion, HIV and sexually transmitted infections, and sexual wellbeing and pleasure.



The purpose of these modules was to build a strong scientific foundation. However, information was not treated as an end in itself. The reflective assessments were designed to connect scientific knowledge with the social realities in which sexuality is experienced. Fellows were encouraged to consider how social norms, gender expectations, stigma, relationships, power, and their own surroundings shape the meaning and experience of these issues.

Reflection was therefore embedded throughout the fellowship rather than treated as a separate activity. It took different forms, including value-clarification exercises, discussions, written assignments, and responses to films and other situations that required fellows to take a position and examine why they held it.

4.3 Supporting Individual Learning Journeys

While collective learning was central to the fellowship which happened in workshops and beyond, the design also recognised that fellows would enter the programme with different experiences, questions, levels of confidence, and personal histories.



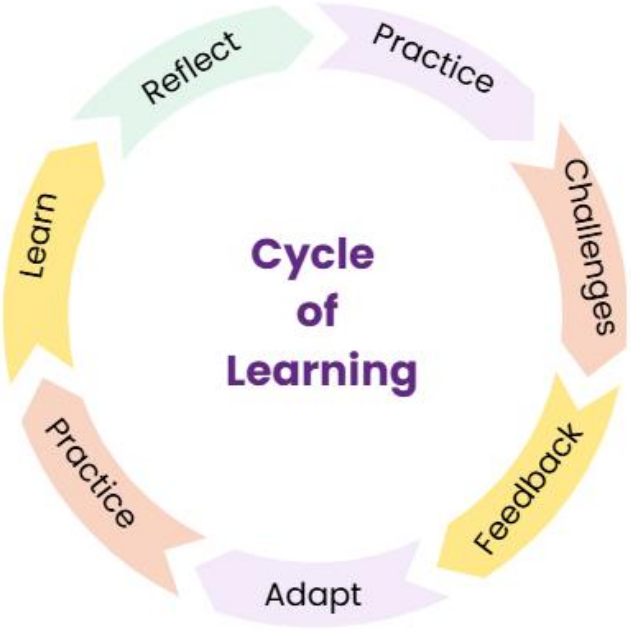
One-to-one mentoring was therefore built into the fellowship. Fellows had scheduled opportunities for individual conversations and could also approach the team when they needed more specific support.

These conversations included discussing difficulties they were experiencing, seeking guidance on sessions they were planning, and reviewing presentations or other materials before using them with children and adolescents.

The need for this individual space emerged from Prayas Health Group's earlier experience of working with educators on sexuality. Conversations about sexuality can sometimes intersect with people's own experiences of growing up, intimate relationships, gender expectations, fear, discomfort, or sexually abusive experiences. Not every fellow would want to discuss such experiences, and the fellowship did not require personal disclosure. However, the design recognised that some educators may benefit from having a confidential, voluntary space in which they could reflect on issues that affected their comfort or approach to sexuality education. It was also important then that the person conducting these conversations is well trained, has an intersectional perspective and adopted a trauma informed approach during the conversation.

Mentoring therefore served two purposes. It provided focused technical support for practice, while also giving fellows an opportunity to work through individual questions that could not always be addressed in a group setting.

4.4 Learning by Doing



The fellowship treated practice as an integral part of learning rather than something that began after the training was completed. Fellows were encouraged to use their learning in their existing work with children and adolescents during the fellowship itself.

This allowed the learning process to move beyond a simple sequence of learn and then teach. Instead, it became an iterative cycle:

The midline workshop was particularly important in this process. It provided a space for fellows to practice facilitation, receive feedback, and learn from the experiences of others.

4.5 From a Common Framework to Contextualised Practice

By the final residential workshop, the focus had shifted towards contextualisation — how the SAHAJ curriculum could be used meaningfully within the different settings in which fellows worked.

The fellowship provided fellows with a common evidence-based framework and structured resources, but it did not expect them to implement CSE and particularly SAHAJ curriculum in exactly the same way in every setting.

Fellows worked across different institutional and community contexts, with children and adolescents of different ages and with different needs. A session or example that works well in one setting may not work in another. The fellowship therefore emphasised the importance of contextualisation.

Contextualisation, however, was not understood as changing the essential principles of CSE. Fellows were encouraged to adapt language, examples, activities, pacing, and methods to their learners and settings while retaining the core elements of an age-appropriate, rights-based, affirmative approach.

This distinction was important. The aim was not to create identical delivery everywhere, but to develop educators who could make thoughtful contextual decisions without compromising the essential principles of CSE.

4.5 Resources That Enable Practice

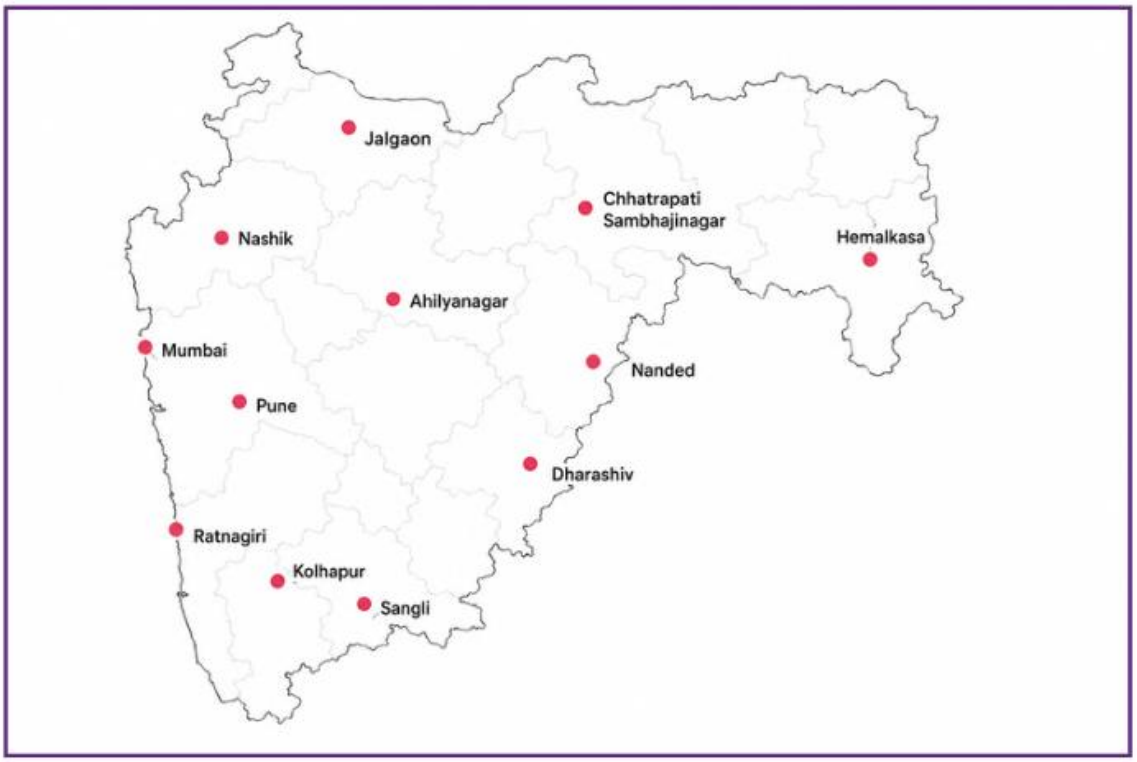
The fellowship was accompanied by structured resources so that fellows were not expected to translate their learning into practice entirely on their own. The SAHAJ curriculum, lesson plans, presentation materials, activities, implementation guides including making an MOU with the school, draft of letter to be sent to the parents etc were provided to fellows as a common foundation that educators could draw upon while adapting their delivery to their own settings. The resources helped translate the fellowship's perspective into concrete practice.

In this way, the fellowship brought together two forms of capacity building: developing the educator and strengthening the tools available to the educator. The combination was intended to make the transition from learning to implementation more feasible and sustainable.



5.Who Joined and Why?

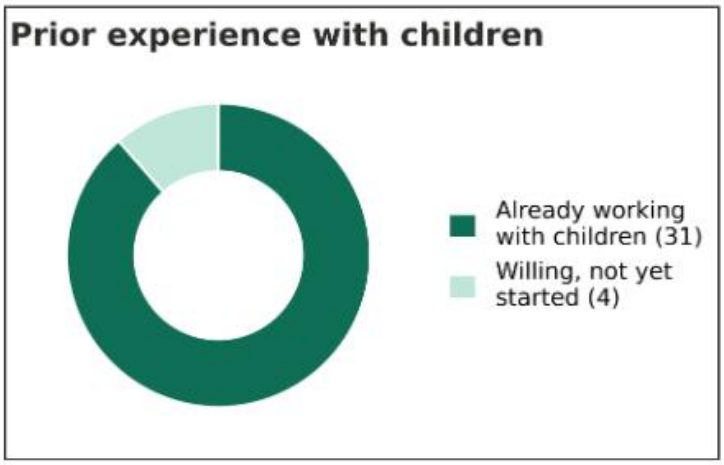
The inaugural cohort of the SAHAJ Educator's Fellowship was intentionally curated to bring together a diverse group of professionals working with children and adolescents across Maharashtra. Fellows represented different geographical regions - including urban, rural, and tribal communities—bringing perspectives shaped by the varied social, cultural, and institutional contexts in which children and young people grow and learn.

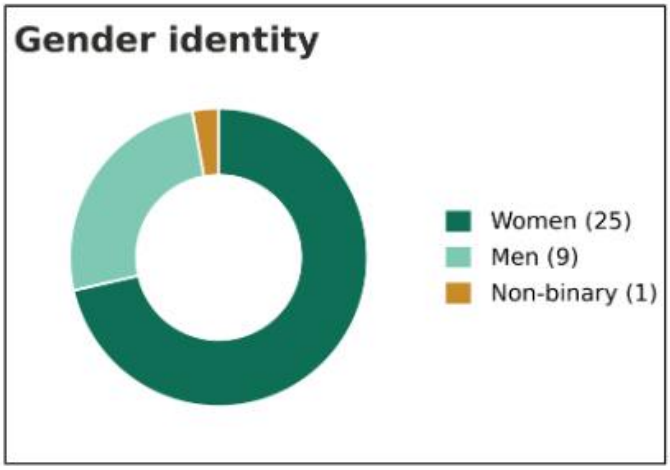


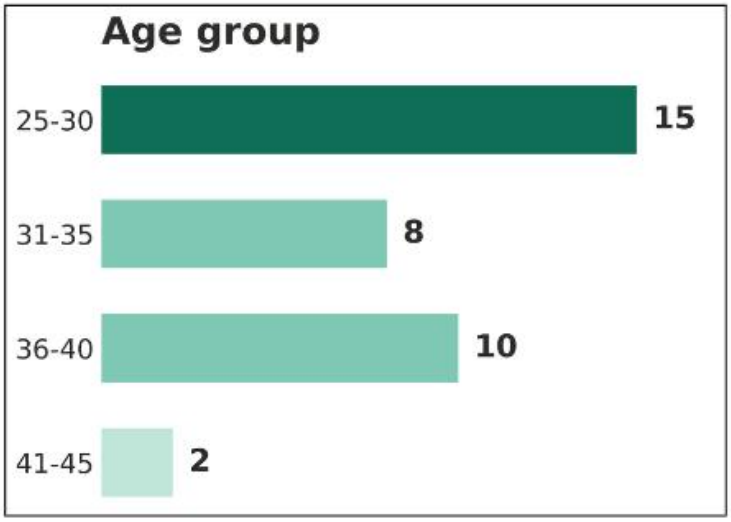
The map above illustrates the geographic distribution of fellows, representing the diverse cities and regions across Maharashtra from which participants joined the fellowship.

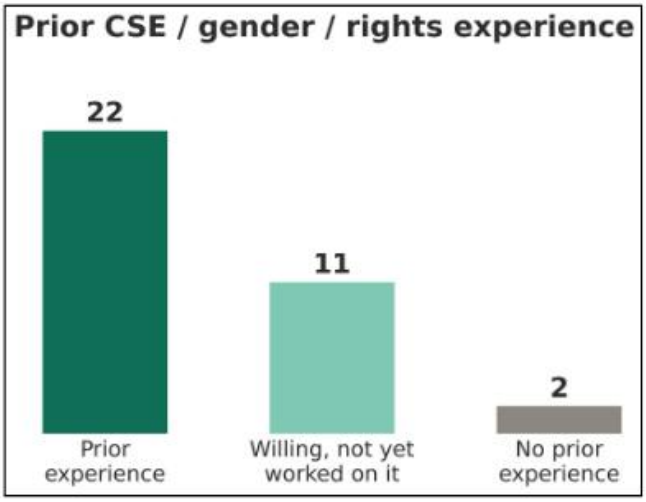
5.1 Profile of SAHAJ fellows

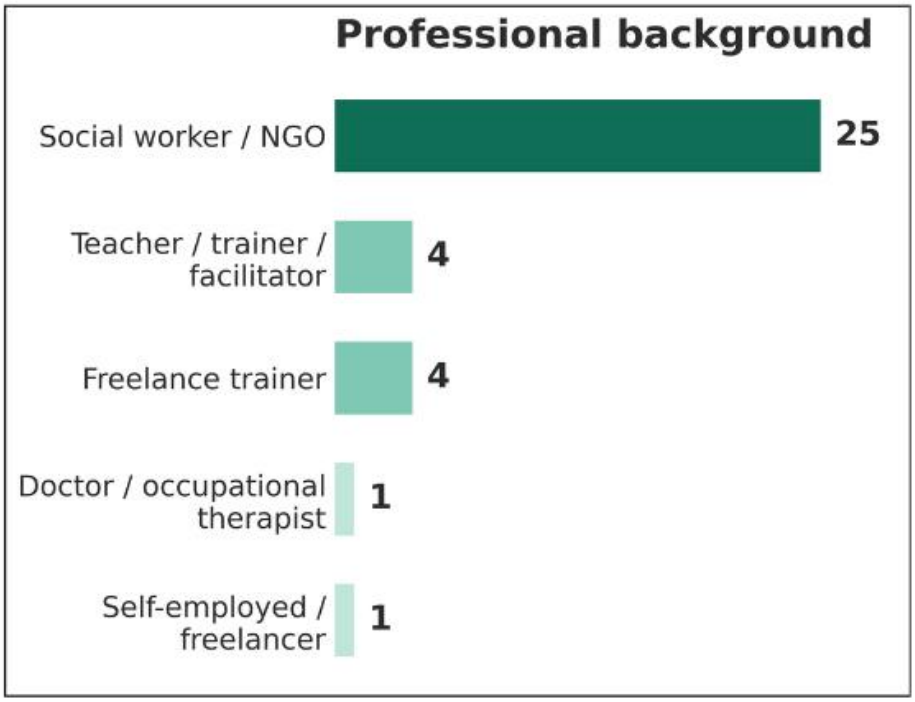
In the first cohort, 35 fellows were selected from 212 applications across Maharashtra. Most were already working with children (31/35) and had prior gender, sexuality, or rights-related experience (22/35), coming largely from social work and NGO backgrounds. The upper age was limited to years by design.

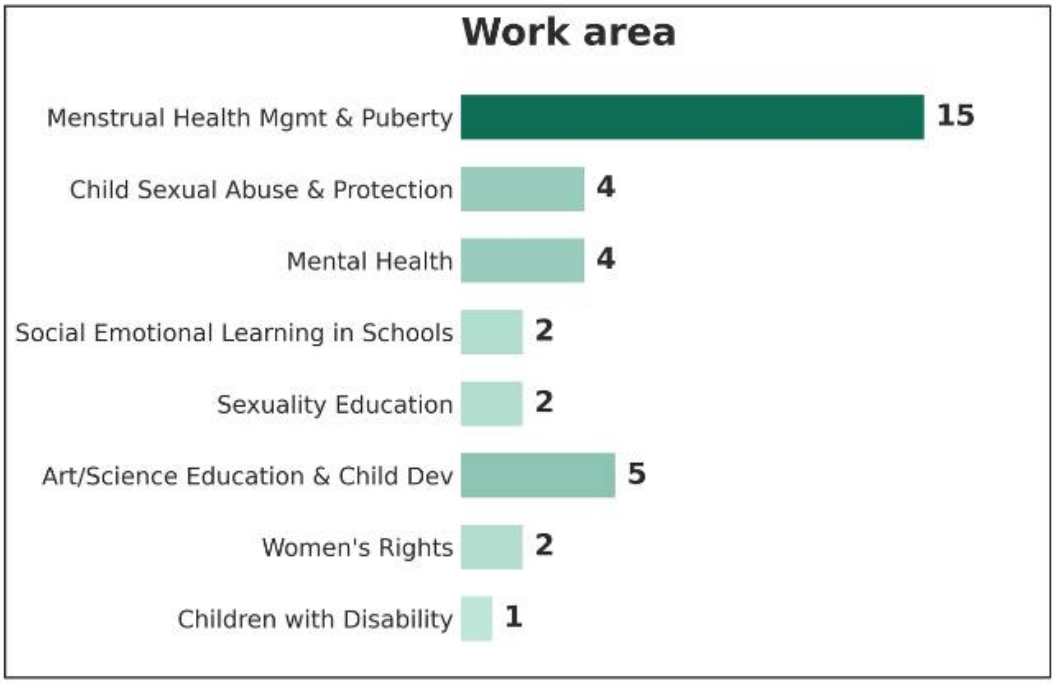












Above charts show the demographic and professional profile of the fellows selected for the SAHAJ Educator's Fellowship, including their age, gender identity, prior experience with CSE/gender/rights, experience working with children, areas of work, and professional backgrounds.

5.2 Motivation to join the fellowship

Across responses, motivation rarely came from a single source. Most fellows described a layered mix of a professional trigger (a moment of not knowing how to respond to a child or client) and a personal one (a long-standing gap in their own understanding or comfort with the subject).

Five key themes recurring themes emerged.

1. Professional inadequacy

The single most common driver: fellows working directly with children/adolescents repeatedly hit questions they couldn't confidently answer or didn't know what to say and how much to say, and joined to close that gap.

> *"I wanted to learn about how to handle the questions of sexuality, how to create an environment where I and others feel safe, how to deal with difficult questions, how to prepare a lesson plan, and how to ensure that the children understand the topic without rushing to complete the lesson every time."* - ***Soniya***

2. Personal growth: confronting one's own conditioning and biases

Distinct from professional need, several fellows framed the fellowship as inner work — unlearning what society/upbringing had conditioned into them.

> *"Because of the conditioning I've had about this subject since childhood... breaking my own prejudices was the first step."* — ***Namita***

3. Building confidence and comfort to speak about sexuality

A recurring motivation among educators was the need to develop greater confidence and comfort in discussing sexuality-related topics. The challenge was often not a lack of interest, but the fear of saying something incorrect, being unable to respond to a difficult question, or feeling uncomfortable while facilitating a session.

> *"I have always felt afraid when talking about these topics (related to sexuality) wondering how to begin and worrying that I might unintentionally share incorrect information. I thought this fellowship would be an excellent opportunity for me to overcome this fear and become more confident in discussing these subjects."* — ***Priyanka***

4. Wanting scientific, factual, and comprehensive (not just superficial) knowledge

Another important motivation was the desire to move beyond fragmented or surface-level knowledge about sexuality and gender towards a deeper, structured, and evidence-based understanding. Participants came with different levels of prior exposure—through academic study, professional work, or personal interest—but recognised that this knowledge was often incomplete or lacked a clear framework for Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE). For many, the fellowship offered an opportunity to strengthen their conceptual understanding and connect existing knowledge with a rights-based and developmentally appropriate approach to sexuality education.

> *"Since I had already been working on issues related to gender, sexuality, and masculinity, I wanted to understand sexuality education in a deeper and more structured way."* — ***Suraj***

5. Other Motivating Factors for Joining the Fellowship

In addition to building confidence and developing a deeper understanding of sexuality education, participants identified several other factors that motivated them to join the fellowship. Prior trust in Prayas and familiarity with SAHAJ played an important role for some participants. Exposure to SAHAJ through Prayas' digital content, previous workshops, recommendations from colleagues, or encouragement from organisational leaders created a sense of credibility and made the fellowship a trusted learning opportunity.

For others, the decision was rooted in an existing commitment to gender equality, rights, feminism, and social change. They saw sexuality education as a means of challenging restrictive social norms, enabling conversations about gender and relationships, and contributing to more equitable and respectful environments, particularly for young people.

> *"Working with adolescents, I have repeatedly found that they have a great deal of fear and misinformation about topics such as sexuality, relationships, consent, bodies and personal safety. I found it disturbing that there is only a little guidance available to explain these topics to them in an open, safe and scientific way. That strengthened my decision to participate in the Sahaj Fellowship."* - ***Nilam***

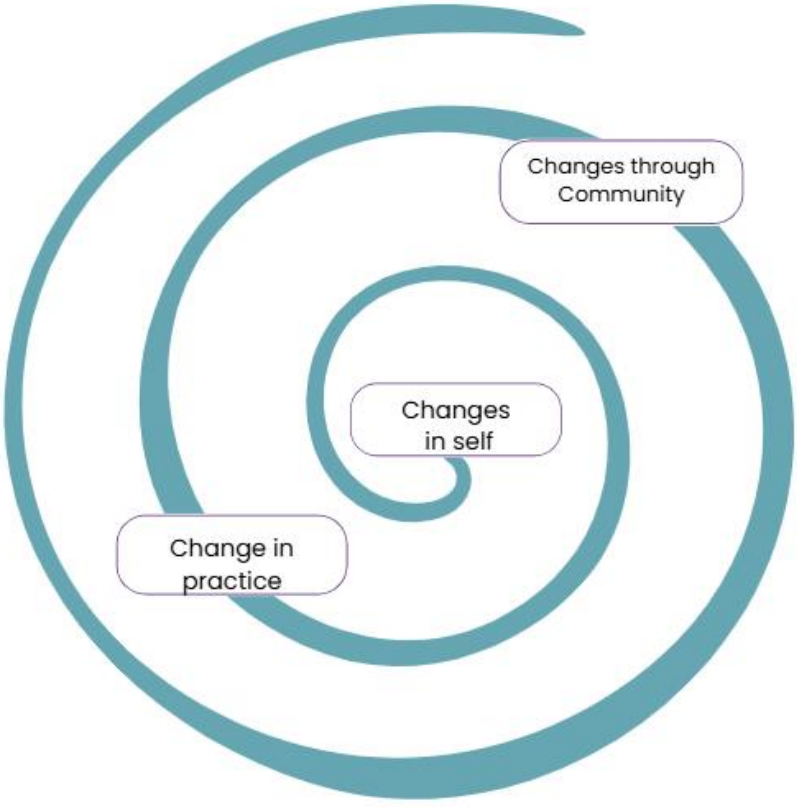
A smaller group was motivated by the specific needs of the communities they worked with. Participants working with children in shelter homes, rural communities, or queer communities saw the fellowship as an opportunity to develop the knowledge and skills needed to address sexuality, relationships, safety, and rights more effectively within their existing work. For these participants, joining the fellowship was closely connected to their desire to make their organisations and programmes more responsive to the lived realities of the people they serve.

Overall, these motivations suggest that participants were drawn to the fellowship not only as a training opportunity, but as a way of strengthening existing professional commitments, values, and community-based work through a more structured understanding of sexuality education.



6. What changed ?

Learning unfolded as a gradual and iterative process of meaning-making, reflection, dialogue and experimentation. These opportunities help them to critically examine existing perspectives and develop new ways of understanding CSE. As fellows engaged with these experiences, gradual shifts began to emerge, not only in what they knew, but also in how they understood themselves, relate it to others, and approached their work with children and adolescents. The following sections trace this learning journey through the shifts that fellows described in themselves, in their practice, and in the diverse ways these learnings were carried forward.



6.1 Changes in Self

One of the most significant aspects of the fellowship was the learning that unfolded within the educator. As fellows engaged in reflection, dialogue, and experiential learning, they described changes that extended beyond knowledge acquisition to greater self-awareness, confidence, empathy, and deepened alignment with the values of Comprehensive Sexuality Education.

Becoming more comfortable talking about sexuality

Fellows consistently described becoming more comfortable talking about sexuality across different spaces. Topics that had previously felt difficult, sensitive or awkward became easier to discuss as their scientific understanding and confidence grew. This greater ease extended beyond formal fellowship spaces to conversations with colleagues, friends, family members and partners, with fellows describing a greater willingness to initiate discussions, question misconceptions and speak about sexuality using more open and affirming language

> *"I am beginning to see sexuality as a basic right of every human. I am trying to see most of the gender or sexual expression/identity related statement from others and me, from a neutral perspective rather than an emotionally-charged one."* - ***Akshata***

> *"Now, I feel I can speak more confidently with family members. Initially, I was a little hesitant to share anything about sexuality outside my workplace."* - ***Nilam***

Looking inward: values, beliefs and assumptions

Through activities and discussions fellows critically explored their own values, beliefs, biases, assumptions, and social conditioning. Through value clarification, discussions and reflective activities, fellows described becoming more conscious of how socialisation, patriarchy, gender norms and personal experiences shaped the way they understood sexuality and responded to others. This suggests a shift from simply holding particular beliefs to becoming more reflective about how those beliefs are formed and how they influence one's interactions with others and are often reflected in language, responses, expressions and interactions with children.

"This Fellowship is a transformation for me with respect to my thoughts, my perspectives. My values and my actions."
- ***Pranali***

"Before fellowship I hadn't thought about consent and values that much. Both of these things are now very important to me, no matter how big or small it is. It has changed my behavior."
- ***Reshma***

Becoming more open to difference

The learning process encouraged greater empathy towards diverse identities, experiences, and realities. The process of encountering different experiences and perspectives within the fellowship also appears to have influenced how fellows approached difference. Fellows described becoming more open to perspectives other than their own and more conscious of responding without judgement. For some, this openness was accompanied by a greater sense of empathy and acceptance. Rather than assuming that people should experience or understand sexuality in the same way, fellows described becoming more attentive to individual experiences, feelings and choices.

"This fellowship has helped me reflect on how open I am to the queer community as part of society and what inhibitions I still have. Now, I am consciously trying to be an ally by learning how to support, what language to use, and how to participate in events such as pride parades."
- *Namita*

"This changed the way I looked at myself and the people around me. I realized that each person's experiences, feelings, and choices are different. So it became more important to listen to them without judging them, create a dialogue where they feel safe, and treat them with equality".
-*Ashish*

Expanding Perspectives on Sexuality Education –

A significant shift reported by fellows was the transition from viewing sexuality education as limited to sex education, puberty, or reproductive health to understanding CSE as a holistic process that includes relationships, consent, rights, gender, diversity, pleasure, emotional wellbeing, and children's lived experiences.

"I find this shift in thinking important, not just as a sexuality educator, but as a human being. When we say 'We, the people of India' in the pledge, we often forget that it includes everyone. This helped me understand the breadth and diversity of people's experiences and ways of being." **- *Prajakta***

6.2 Changes in practice

The changes fellows described in themselves gradually translated into changes in how they approached and conducted sexuality education. Fellows reported expanding the range of topics and age groups they worked with, becoming more comfortable with inclusive and scientifically accurate language, responding differently to questions, and using more participatory and dialogue-oriented approaches. Access to a structured curriculum and ongoing support also helped them translate their learning into practice within their own contexts.

> *"After the first workshop of the fellowship, I took a pause from my counseling practice in school to reflect. I found myself asking: Was I reinforcing morals and fear through my practice, or was I empowering children to make informed and confident decisions? That question transformed my perspective and has completely changed the way I approach my work with children."* - ***Manisha***

Broadening the Scope of Sessions

Many fellows expanded their sessions beyond puberty, menstrual health, and reproductive health to include more topics which emerged through fellowship on consent, relationships, love and attraction, gender identity, sexual orientation, bullying, emotional wellbeing, communication, pleasure, and safety, HIV & STI reflecting a more holistic understanding of Comprehensive Sexuality Education.

> *"I have been taking sessions on some topics of CSE before, such as menstrual health management, puberty, hygiene, gender. However, some topics like contraception, abortion, STIs and HIV I have never taken before but now I think I can talk about the topics of consent, contraception, abortion, HIV and STIs."* - ***Namita***

Expanding The Reach Across Age Groups

The fellowship encouraged fellows to work beyond the age groups they were previously comfortable with. Some who had primarily engaged with older adolescents began facilitating sessions with younger children, while others extended their work to older age groups, recognising the importance of age-appropriate sexuality education across age groups.

"Subjects I teach currently are only with students in grades 11 and 12. But I'm now going to conduct comprehensive sexuality education sessions for grades 1 to 12 in our school. And also, with teachers as well." - ***Pravin***

Expanding The reach Across Genders

Several fellows reflected that they initially felt more comfortable facilitating sessions with children of their own gender. Many described gaining the confidence to facilitate sessions with children across all genders, recognising that CSE is relevant for every child, irrespective of gender, while challenging traditional assumptions about who should facilitate these conversations.

"Especially looking at boys with empathy is the biggest change I observed in myself. I did not feel comfortable talking to the boys regarding sexuality earlier, but now I'm giving it a try and instead of my male teammates I will conduct their sessions."
- Shraddha

Using Inclusive and Accurate Language

Fellows described becoming more comfortable using scientifically accurate terminology for bodies and sexuality, including words such as penis, vulva, masturbation, pornography, and sex, which they had previously hesitated to use. They also reported becoming more conscious of using gender-sensitive and inclusive language, avoiding stereotypes and binary assumptions while facilitating discussions.

"During the fellowship, I have begun to make some new efforts in my work and in my interactions with others. In particular, I am making a conscious effort to use more inclusive language, which makes the other person feel safer and more accepted." - ***Asmita***

Responding to learner's Questions

Fellows felt better equipped to respond to questions that they had previously found difficult to address Importantly, many also shared feeling more comfortable acknowledging when they did not know an answer and responding with, "I don't know, but I'll find out and get back to you," rather than feeling pressured to respond immediately.

"While conducting a session, instead of just providing information, now I first think about what questions the participants might have, what confusions they might have. Then, I try to answer those questions in their language, appropriate to their age and understanding, and in a way that is easy to understand."
- ***Nilam***

Strengthening Practice through Resources

Fellows consistently highlighted the importance of having access to structured, evidence-informed, and contextualised teaching resources. The SAHAJ curriculum, lesson plans, facilitation guide, regional audio-visual materials, and participatory learning activities provided greater clarity on age-appropriate content and strengthened their lessons. Also, ongoing support from the team for discussing challenges, sharing experiences, and strengthening implementation within their own contexts.

"Since I started using Prayas's CSE videos in my sessions, students have started enjoying the content more."
- ***Padmal***

Reimagining the Facilitator's Role

Fellows described a gradual shift from viewing themselves as instructors responsible for delivering information to facilitators who create collaborative, rights-based learning spaces. They became more intentional about encouraging dialogue, respecting children's curiosity, and responding without judgement. This also included becoming more conscious of their own language, avoiding stereotypes and assumptions, adopting gender-sensitive and trauma-informed approaches, and using contextual examples that reflected children's lived experiences. Taken together, these changes suggest that the fellowship influenced practice in ways that extended beyond the acquisition of new knowledge or facilitation techniques. Fellows described greater confidence in engaging with sensitive topics, experimenting with new pedagogical approaches, broadening the scope of CSE, and integrating it into their existing work across diverse settings. At the same time, fellows also recognised that becoming a sexuality educator is an ongoing process, with continued reflection, peer learning, and implementation remaining central to their professional growth.

"I am becoming more of a person who tries to understand the children and their feelings rather than just a person who teaches. Previously, some subjects were viewed through a societal or moral framework, but now I have a better understanding that everyones's experience, feelings, orientation, expression, and thoughts may be different. For me, this change is an important step towards becoming a more sensitive, understanding, and safe facilitator." - ***Bhagyashali***

6.3 Changes through Community and Peer Learning

The fellowship created a space for fellows to learn not only from the SAHAJ team but from one another. Bringing together practitioners working in different settings gave fellows opportunities to share experiences, encounter different perspectives, and build relationships with others working on similar concerns. For many, this became an important part of their learning and continued beyond the formal fellowship.

Finding a Community with Shared Purpose

Many fellows described working in relative isolation, with few opportunities to engage with others working with children beyond their workplaces. The fellowship connected practitioners across Maharashtra who shared a common commitment to children's wellbeing, creating a sense of belonging and collective purpose.

"When we commit to a field and work on the same topic, it definitely impacts our learning, actions, behavior, and motivation. This is what this fellowship has proven."
- ***Yogesh***

Realising That the Struggles Were Shared

Engaging with the cohort helped fellows recognise that many of the challenges they experienced, responding to difficult questions, navigating resistance, or facilitating sensitive topics were common across settings. This normalised their experiences and strengthened their confidence to continue their work.

"Being part of this community of people working in the same field has a very positive impact on my learning and motivation. In this community, I feel heard and my experiences and ideas are valued, which increases my confidence while working."

- ***Nilam***

Learning Across Diverse Contexts

The diversity of the cohort became a valuable learning resource. Fellows from schools, community programmes, Child Care Institutions, after-school learning centres, counselling, and health settings exchanged experiences, enabling cross-learning on how Comprehensive Sexuality Education could be contextualised across different age groups, communities, and institutional realities.

"This is the first time I've experienced so many people coming together to learn and discuss sexuality. While I am able to discuss some issues, I've also learned from others about the diverse ways in which CSE can be taken forward".

- ***Reshma***

Collective Reflection and Problem-Solving

The community became a space for discussing implementation challenges, seeking feedback, exchanging resources, and collectively reflecting on facilitation experiences. These conversations encouraged critical thinking, exposed fellows to multiple perspectives, and supported continuous learning beyond individual experiences.

"The Fellowship group has participants working in very different places, which was an eye opener for me. I was able to speak to some of them individually during the session and was amazed to hear about their journey, experiences and work. There was a lot of comfort in the group which made it possible to express myself freely, this is a big learning experience." - ***Manisha***

Collaboration Beyond the Fellowship

For several fellows, peer learning gradually evolved into collaborative practice. Fellows co-facilitated sessions, invited fellow educators to support programmes within their organisations, shared resources, and continued to remain connected beyond the formal fellowship, strengthening the implementation of Comprehensive Sexuality Education across diverse settings.

"This group has not only broadened my understanding of these topics, but also helped me learn from the experiences and approaches of others working in this field. I have also collaborated with a few other fellows to take CSE sessions together and I now feel confident that we can can build more work and a community together." - ***Suraj***

A Network for Continued Growth

Rather than concluding with the fellowship, participants viewed the community as an ongoing source of support, encouragement, and professional learning. The relationships built during the programme created opportunities for continued reflection, collaboration, and collective growth as sexuality educators.

"Even after the fellowship period ends, we will remain connected to each other through this commitment towards CSE."
- ***Yogesh***





7. Scaling Pathways :

Different entry points for integrating CSE

A central objective of the fellowship was to contribute to scaling Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) across Maharashtra by building a pool of educators who could contextualise and integrate the SAHAJ spiral curriculum within their existing work. As the fellowship progressed, however, the experiences of fellows showed that there was no single pathway through which CSE was being taken forward. Fellows were positioned within different organisations, institutions and professional roles, and these positions shaped the opportunities, relationships and processes through which they could integrate CSE.

Some fellows worked within schools, as teachers, Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) facilitators or other school-based staff. Their work was situated within a particular school system, with ongoing relationships with students, teachers, school leadership and parents.

Others worked with civil society organisations (CSOs) that had established programmes with government and private schools. While these organisations often had sustained relationships with schools, fellows working in these settings were positioned outside the school's formal structure and therefore navigated both their organisation's programmes and the institutional processes of the schools they worked with.

Some fellows worked in residential schools, including tribal settings, where their work was situated within a residential and educational environment and involved a distinctive institutional context for engaging with children and adolescents.
Other fellows worked through community-based organisations and out-of-school learning centres, engaging with children in the communities where they lived. These settings were not necessarily organised around the formal school system and included children who may or may not be enrolled in the formal educational system.

The cohort also included individual practitioners, such as counsellors and educators, whose work involved engaging with children and adolescents as well as different stakeholders across schools, families, organisations and other settings. Their professional position differed from those working within a single institutional system or an established organisational programme.

These different positions created different entry points, relationships and pathways for integrating CSE. Fellows did not necessarily introduce CSE as a separate programme. In many cases, they built on existing work related to areas such as menstrual health, puberty, life skills, gender, personal safety, counselling, social-emotional learning and child protection, and explored how CSE could be incorporated within these existing programmes and relationships.

The **case studies** mentioned below illustrate these different pathways. They are not intended to represent fixed categories of CSE implementation, but to show how educators in different contexts began to integrate the same core CSE principles within the systems and roles in which they were already working.

Together, they demonstrate the diversity of entry points through which CSE can be taken forward, while highlighting the different processes involved in contextualising and embedding it in practice.



Padmal Jadhav



SEL Educator, Government School, Pune

Background

I work as a Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) educator in a government school in Pune. There are approximately 280 students from Grades 7–10 in our school, many of them come from marginalised communities and low socio-economic backgrounds. Through SEL, we work with students on areas such as emotions, relationships, communication, decision-making, and coping skills, with additional sessions on Adolescent Reproductive and Sexual Health (ARSH). While this provided a foundation for conversations around growing up and well-being, I increasingly encountered questions and situations from students that required space beyond the existing focus of SEL and ARSH.

Scale up Journey

Before joining the fellowship, I could see a gap between what we were covering through SEL and ARSH and the more practical and complex questions students were bringing into the classroom. Questions around relationships, consent, attraction, boundaries, safety, and abuse often needed more space than our existing sessions allowed.

I therefore started integrating CSE into the SEL and ARSH sessions I was already conducting, rather than treating it as a separate programme. I began including topics such as consent, healthy and unhealthy relationships, bullying, and love and attraction. Earlier, I would sometimes approach these conversations more from a moral or safety perspective; the fellowship helped me bring a stronger focus on rights, dignity, choice, boundaries, and agency.



The SAHAJ curriculum and regional audio-visual resources also made it easier for me to introduce sensitive topics. Videos helped me explain and discuss topics such as consent, pregnancy, and abortion in a way that students found engaging. I saw that they enjoyed learning through these resources, asked more questions, and often carried their curiosity into the next session.

I also learnt that using a resource at the right point in the learning journey can make it much more effective.

My implementation has gradually moved beyond my own classroom sessions. I have started involving teachers, school staff, and parents in conversations around children's development and sexuality education. This is helping me think of how the approach of CSE can become part of the wider school environment.

I now feel more confident about taking sessions that are factual, empathetic, and effective, using the SAHAJ curriculum, resources, and facilitation skills I developed through the fellowship to respond to students' questions with more clarity and sensitivity

Namita Bhave



Menstrual & Sexual Health Educator,
Badlaav Social Reform Foundation,
Pune

Background

I work as an educator across ten government schools in Pune and have several years of experience working with children and adolescents from marginalised communities. My work has primarily focused on facilitating sessions on menstrual health and puberty with young people aged 12–18. Since last year, we have expanded our work with schools to include additional areas such as mental health and gender.

Scale up Journey

We started our work in schools in 2019 with menstrual health management. Over time, as we saw the needs of children and schools evolve, we expanded into puberty and mental health. But we could also see that children were bringing questions and concerns that needed a more comprehensive approach to growing up. This made us think about how we could strengthen our existing work rather than continue with standalone, need-based sessions on a few topics.

For me, the first step was to build the capacity of the team that facilitates sessions in schools. Alongside my fellowship learning, I started bringing the CSE approach into our team through discussions on values, non-judgemental facilitation, and participatory methods. We also went back to our existing lesson plans and resources and began expanding the topics and age groups we work with, while adapting how we use audio-visual resources to suit the classroom realities of government schools.



I also started looking more closely at the language I use in our sessions and resources. We wanted our content to be more scientific, factual, gender-inclusive, and responsive to children's questions. This helped me strengthen not just what we were teaching, but also how we were introducing and discussing these topics.

Today, I can see CSE becoming a larger part of how we work with schools, rather than remaining limited to menstrual health management. We are approaching new and existing schools with a wider range of topics and age groups and using our current work as an entry point for broader CSE.

At the same time, government schools remain our main partners, where short-term menstrual health programmes are generally more accepted, while introducing topics such as relationships, consent, pregnancy, contraception, it continues to bring resistance. For me, the next step is to build on our existing school partnerships and strengthen CSE as a more consistent part of our work, while gradually expanding the range of topics and age groups we are able to reach.

Beyond my role in Badlaav, I will be implementing CSE in a rural school (Sondara Gurukul) in Beed district on my own.

CSE has given me a broader lens through which I now see my work. It has changed the way I approach my interventions, while also encouraging me to continually reflect on and work on myself as an educator.

Pranali Sisodiya



Founder
Vardhinshu NGO
Jalgaon

Background

I founded Vardhinshu in Jalgaon, Maharashtra, in 2013, with the aim of creating safe, nurturing, and self-sustaining communities where children can learn, grow, and develop confidence and leadership. Today, Vardhinshu works with around 300 children from waste-picker families and other vulnerable communities through after-school learning centres that provide educational and health support.

Scale up Journey

Through our work in these communities, we regularly encountered problems such as teenage pregnancy, child marriage, school dropout, and poor health outcomes. Much of our work has been about elimination of these problems. For me, the fellowship opened up possibilities for approaching these issues through a broader CSE lens, that considers children's rights, development, relationships, bodily autonomy, decision-making, and wellbeing alongside risk prevention.

While thinking about how to integrate CSE within our organisation, I began to see two interconnected fronts for implementation, the children front and the educators front. On the children front, I am planning to take CSE sessions alongside the other subjects we teach to children aged 5–16 years through our after-school community learning centres.

On the educators' front, under our Anandghar Fellowship Program, we work with fellows who teach different subjects within our organisation and regularly engage with children in these learning centers.

I see this as an opportunity to build their understanding and confidence around CSE, enabling them to gradually recognise and integrate CSE concepts into their existing work. These two fronts allow us to strengthen both the learning opportunities available to children and the capacity of the adults who support them.

This journey has also made me think about how the shifts I have experienced in myself can shape the way my organisation works with children. I am now thinking not only about what we introduce through CSE, but also about how we can contextualise the SAHAJ curriculum to reflect the realities, questions, and experiences of the children we work with.

Sukanya Phansalkar



Founder & Psychologist, Manasparsha Ahilyanagar.

Background

I am a psychologist and the founder of Manasparsha, a counselling and training centre in Ahilyanagar. I have been working with children across school and private settings, primarily through mental health and career guidance support. My work involves closely engaging with children as they navigate different stages of development, relationships, emotions, and the challenges of growing up.

Scale up Journey

I had begun to feel that I was becoming stagnant in my work and needed a deeper understanding of the diverse experiences children and young people bring to our work. The fellowship helped me recognise how closely mental health intersects with relationships, identity, gender, sexual orientation, consent, and growing up. This made me see CSE not as an additional component, but as something that can strengthen both our mental health work and children's preparation for wellbeing across different stages of life.

Over the years, I have seen how early mental health support can shape children's ability to navigate life, and I now feel the same about CSE - when introduced early and incrementally, it can help children better understand themselves, their relationships, and their choices as they grow.

For me, integration first began with value alignment. As I reflected on my own assumptions and developed a more inclusive, non-judgemental, and rights-based approach, I began taking the same principles into my team through discussions and training.



This became important for creating a shared approach to both individual counselling and group sessions.

We are now revisiting our existing mental health and growing-up curriculum to integrate CSE more systematically. We are adding topics such as human biology, pregnancy, contraception, HIV, and gender, while using more participatory approaches. I am also increasingly seeing the need to engage parents, particularly as we move into deeper conversations around CSE and the support children need beyond the session.

My existing network of schools, educational institutions, parents, and other stakeholders gives us an entry point to take this work forward. I am simultaneously building my team's familiarity with the SAHAJ curriculum and its approach. We have started discussions with schools and an observation home in Ahilyanagar to introduce CSE alongside our existing mental health and career guidance sessions. As the team builds readiness, I see this approach gradually extending to our work across other cities as well.

Pravin Ahire



Science & Mathematics Teacher,
Lok Biradari Ashram School,
Hemalkasa

Background

I work as a teacher in a residential tribal school serving around 500 students from Madia and Gond tribal communities in northern Maharashtra, from Grades 1 to 12. My primary role is to teach Mathematics and Science to students in Grades 11 and 12.

Scale up Journey

As I work in a tribal residential school, it gives me the opportunity to spend considerable time with students and build relationships beyond the classroom. Over the years, particularly with older students, I began encountering concerns around relationships, teenage pregnancy, school dropout, abuse, and bullying in the hostel. Students, especially boys, would sometimes approach me with questions such as, *"I cannot focus because I like a girl; what should I do?"* I wanted to support them, but I did not always know how to respond.

As a teacher, I also felt that teaching only Mathematics and Science was not enough. Children were being exposed to different information and experiences, including through media and their wider social environment, but often had limited access to reliable, age-appropriate sources to understand them within their own social and cultural context.





The fellowship gave me resources, support, and the confidence to begin experimenting with different ways. I started with indirect approaches, including sexuality-themed book exhibitions and introducing age-appropriate resources for students from Grades 7–12.

These became opportunities to understand students' responses and create openings for conversations. Gradually, students began approaching me more openly with their concerns, while the school administration also began supporting me to plan sessions in response to incidents related to bullying or abuse and I started with need based CSE sessions with students.

After the fellowship, I now see a more structured way for integrating CSE, which is more than addressing problems. I plan to begin with my exisiting 65 students in Grades 11–12 and gradually extend it to younger grades. As I do this, I also want to think carefully about how the SAHAJ curriculum can be contextualised for a residential setting, taking into account the experiences of the children, their social and cultural context, and issues that may be particularly relevant to their lives. For me, the next step is to implement the curriculum in a way that connects with the lives, questions, and realities of the children I work with.

Mayuri Madan Sushama



Programme Manager, Miracle Foundation

Background

I primarily work with staff across 25 Child Care Institutions (CCIs) in the state. My role involves planning, designing, and facilitating capacity-building programmes for social workers, caregivers, counsellors, and other frontline staff, including training through our Life Skills Education (LSE) modules. These teams provide care and support to children living in different institutes.

Scale up Journey

Working across CCIs, I regularly see our staff responding to children navigating complex and sensitive situations. Their everyday engagement brings them into conversations around diverse aspects of growing up, but they do not always have the knowledge or tools to address these questions. We do have a Life Skills Education (LSE) curriculum focused on areas such as goal setting, decision-making, self-awareness, and problem-solving, but I could see that it did not fully address the range of information and support children need as they grow.

As I started learning about CSE through the fellowship, I realised two things strongly: we needed to strengthen our curriculum beyond LSE, and we also needed to rethink how we approach these conversations with children.

Given my role, where I do not work directly with children but through the staff who engage with them every day, I felt this was the most relevant pathway for me to take CSE forward.



Therefore For me, implementation began on two fronts. I started discussions with senior management about integrating CSE into our curriculum and strengthening the capacity of staff who facilitate these sessions. While the curriculum redesign is currently under process, I also initiated a collaboration between the Prayas team and our organisation to build the capacity of 20 staff members from CCIs across Pune. This training-of-trainers approach allows us to build a common understanding and approach among staff who are directly engaged with children.

I aim to create a foundation for taking CSE beyond sessions and integrating it into the everyday care and support provided to children in CCIs, where staff are continuously engaging with their questions, relationships, safety, and experiences of growing up.

Apart from my role in Miracle Foundation, I have started taking CSE sessions with another fellow in different workshops for youth. In whichever way I can contribute to building CSE, I am consciously taking initiatives for that.

8. What We Learned from the SAHAJ Educator's Fellowship

A key strategic choice in the SAHAJ Educator's Fellowship was to work with practitioners already engaged with children and adolescents, particularly through civil society organisations, schools, counselling and community programmes. Rather than creating a parallel cadre of educators, the fellowship sought to strengthen the people and systems already connected to young people.

The first cohort showed us both the potential and the complexity of this approach. Fellows brought diverse experiences, perspectives and organisational contexts, and their journeys revealed important lessons about how educators learn, how CSE can be adapted and integrated into existing work, and what is needed to sustain and scale it.

The insights presented in this chapter are practice-based learnings from the first cohort, rather than definitive conclusions. They highlight areas that we believe require greater attention as SAHAJ and CSE evolve in the Indian context.

8.1 Becoming a CSE Educator Requires Transformative Learning

A key learning from the fellowship was that preparing **educators for CSE requires more than imparting knowledge.** Educators bring their own experiences, values and social conditioning around gender, relationships, sexuality and what children should know. These influences can shape how they understand and facilitate CSE and therefore need to be consciously examined.

The fellowship therefore combined scientific knowledge with opportunities for reflection, dialogue and questioning of assumptions. Fellows engaged with perspectives different from their own, explored areas of discomfort, and connected new knowledge with their personal and professional experiences.

These elements reflect key principles of transformative learning described by Jack Mezirow: experiences that challenge existing understandings, critical reflection on assumptions, dialogue with alternative perspectives, and opportunities to explore new ways of thinking and acting.

The first cohort reinforced our view that this **transformative dimension should be an intentional part of CSE educator preparation,** rather than an incidental outcome of training. However, there is limited scholarship in India on transformative approaches to preparing CSE educators. This points to a need for further research on how such approaches can be designed, implemented and evaluated in the Indian context.

8.2 Educators Need to Learn Not Only What to Teach, but How to Contextualise It

A second learning was the importance of preparing educators to contextualise CSE while retaining its essential components. Curricula need fidelity to their core learning objectives and principles, but their delivery cannot always be identical across settings.

Fellows worked with different age groups, organisations and institutional environments. The fellowship therefore helped them distinguish between what should remain constant—such as learning objectives and core CSE principles—and what can be adapted, including examples, language, activities and case situations.

This is particularly important in India, where even schools within the same city can differ significantly in their pedagogical approaches, institutional cultures and relationships with parents and communities. For CSE, which is closely connected to local understandings of gender, relationships, family and social norms, the ability to adapt is essential for meaningful implementation.

The learning for future programmes is clear: **implementation capacity must include the ability to contextualise a curriculum, not simply reproduce it.**

8.3 There Are Multiple Pathways to Scale Through Existing Organisations

The first cohort showed that CSE can be integrated into existing work in multiple ways. Fellows introduced CSE sessions into ongoing programmes, expanded the topics they addressed, worked with different age groups, adopted more gender-inclusive approaches, and brought CSE perspectives into existing conversations and activities. In some organisations, fellows also began influencing colleagues and initiating wider discussions on sexuality education.

This suggests that scale does not require every organisation to adopt an identical CSE programme. Instead, **existing organisations can become different entry points for integrating CSE according to their work, context and capacity.**

It also points to the potential of a distributed model of scale, in which trained practitioners and organisations become local CSE champions. With the right knowledge, motivation, resources and support, these actors can extend CSE within their own settings and contribute to its wider and more sustainable expansion. This could also build a larger community consensus and acceptance towards rights based affirmative approaches to CSE reducing the potential backlash for the programs.

8.4 Scaling CSE Is a Journey of System Preparation, Not Simply Programme Expansion

The fellowship reinforced that scaling CSE requires more than training educators or securing institutional agreements. Quality implementation depends on the wider environment in which educators work—including institutional culture, time for participatory learning, parent and teacher expectations, mechanisms for addressing concerns, and systems for responding to sensitive disclosures.

For example, an educator may be prepared to discuss topics such as consent or safety, but if a child discloses sexual abuse, they also need to know the school's child-protection procedures, whom to approach, and how to respond appropriately within the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012.

Similarly, a school may support CSE in principle but struggle to create space for participatory learning within an examination-focused system. These conditions directly influence whether CSE can be delivered safely and meaningfully.

Scaling CSE therefore requires preparing systems, not simply expanding programmes. Educator support must extend beyond curriculum delivery to include contextual adaptation, safeguarding, handling difficult conversations, and engaging the wider institutional environment.

8.5 Educators Need a Community of Co-Travellers, Not Only a Training Programme

One of the unexpected insights from the fellowship was how often fellows described feeling alone in their work. Although they came from different settings, many had few opportunities to discuss the challenges of working on sexuality with others who understood the nature of this work.

CSE can involve difficult questions, resistance, disclosures, and confronting realities such as child sexual abuse, early marriage and restrictive gender norms. These experiences can be emotionally demanding, particularly when educators see the gap between what they hope to change and what children continue to experience.

The fellowship provided a space where fellows could share these experiences, seek guidance, learn from each other, and feel understood. This sense of belonging was important not only for learning but also for sustaining motivation and confidence.

This suggests that a **community of practice is an important part of sustaining Comprehensive Sexuality Educators, rather than an additional feature of training**. While curricula provide content and training builds skills, a community provides the support and shared learning needed to continue the work.

9. A Film on Fellowship

As part of documenting the first cohort's learning journey, we developed a short film featuring fellows' reflections on their experiences through the fellowship. The film brings together their voices on what they learned, how their perspectives and practices evolved, and the different ways they are beginning to take CSE forward within their respective contexts.



You can watch the film using the link below.

https://youtu.be/XYHltRZPq2U?si=eheMH1OOi4nCV5UN

10. Conclusion

Taken together, these learnings have changed how we think about the role of an educator's fellowship. Building CSE capacity is not simply about preparing people to deliver a curriculum; it is about enabling educators to reflect, build knowledge and skills, contextualise their practice, navigate institutional realities, and sustain their work through supportive professional networks.

This also changed how we think about scale. CSE cannot be scaled simply by training more educators or adding more schools. Educators need supportive organisations, responsive school systems, engaged colleagues and mechanisms to address challenges that arise during implementation. Working with practitioners who are already part of these systems can therefore help CSE grow through existing structures rather than creating parallel ones.

The first cohort has not provided all the answers, but it has helped us identify what needs to be strengthened as SAHAJ grows: transformative educator development, contextualised implementation, organisational readiness and communities of practice. For us, these are not simply support for scale—they are what scaling CSE means.



SAHAJ Educator's Fellowship First cohort 2025-2026

Prayas (Health Group)