

# Declaration on **Human Dignity and Sexual Education**

Virtual Conference, 2022

We are young people from diverse ethnic, cultural, economic, political, religious and social backgrounds from all regions of the world. We affirm that each human being possesses intrinsic value and unalienable dignity from conception to natural death. We are committed to fostering a society that protects everyone's right to education and to promoting the highest attainable standard of health, rooted in the inherent and inalienable dignity of the person.

As relational creatures, the physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual dimensions that make up the human person are oriented towards self-gift. In every area of our lives, we should exercise our freedom in accordance with human dignity. This also includes the sexual aspect of the human person, whose ability to give and receive expressions of love can be concretely conveyed in the creation and care of new life. The family, the most fundamental unit of society, is the place where children first experience self-gift by being loved and learning to love.

Later on, the awareness of human dignity and the capacity for excellence can be nurtured through education that is centered on human dignity. We believe that successful human dignity education orients children and young people towards a strong personal identity, excellence and values that enable them to make choices that foster a healthy lifestyle. Programs that approach the question of human sexuality one-dimensionally, or through an ideological lens, give children and young people an incomplete, incoherent and harmful understanding of their identity. Human dignity education teaches children and young people to articulate the unique dignity and value they have, while striving to achieve human excellence, despite failures and challenges they might face. The Human Dignity Curriculum (HDC) is an example of a program for children that prioritizes personal development and human dignity.

Sexual education programs must be rooted in a clear understanding of the human person. teenFEMM and teenMEN are programs that develop a strong conception of the child's dignity, value and worth, as well as the link between the human person and his or her biological reality. These holistic programs address physiological development, hormonal activity, and the emotional and physical changes that adolescents experience. This is done within a framework of the dignity of the person, while understanding the relationship between physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual needs. Helping children and young people understand that life is a long-term reality of striving for excellence provides a lens for integrating sexual education alongside the development of a strong personal identity.

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We reaffirm that international law does not oblige States to adopt sexual education programs and that States must never be coerced to provide specific curricula approach, such as Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE). When choosing to adopt a sexual education program, we urge States to ensure that it is person-centered, holistic, appropriate to each developmental phase, inclusive of parental and guardian involvement and sensitive to local beliefs, traditions and religions. States must also be aware of the values that these programs reflect and promote. International law recognizes the role that parents play in choosing their children's religious and moral education and it is the obligation of the State to support them in this role.

We call on the international community to support and implement educational programs that focus on building a strong personal identity for children. Human dignity education programs, public health campaigns and the culture at large must equip children and young people to pursue excellence and to make decisions that affirm their human dignity.