

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT
ON THE
COMPREHENSIVE SEXUALITY EDUCATION (CSE) IN RELATION TO THE
INFORMATION CIRCULATING ON THE SOCIAL MEDIA
BY THE
MINISTER OF EDUCATION (MR SYAKALIMA), MP

Madam Speaker, the Government through the Ministry of Education implemented the revised Curriculum in 2014 that included information to help adolescents cope with numerous challenges as they transition from childhood to adulthood. The information covering various topics from grades five to twelve was put in a document called Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) Framework.

Madam Speaker, unlike other countries, CSE in Zambia is integrated into career subjects such as Integrated Science, Home Economics, Social Sciences, Religious Education and Civic Education. However, towards the end of 2020, there had been concerns from some members of society on the content of CSE. In responding to the demands from stakeholders Government appointed a multi-ministerial technical committee to review the CSE Framework. The review was preceded by consultative meetings that were conducted in all ten provinces of Zambia with sittings in three districts per province totaling thirty districts classified as rural, peri-urban, and urban that were sampled in each province.

Madam Speaker, the concerns and suggestions were submitted by traditional leaders, religious leaders, parents, learners, head teachers, community leaders, civil society organisations, standards officers, line ministries, service providers, and Ministry of Education officials.

Madam Speaker, the stakeholders did not entirely reject the teaching of CSE, however, they made the following observations:

- (a) Learners indicated that CSE was useful in their lives as it enabled them to make informed decisions and protect themselves from sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and early pregnancies.
- (b) Teachers were, however, not comfortable with the title “Comprehensive Sexuality Education”.
- (c) Parents and most religious leaders said that contraceptives should not be taught to school children, but the emphasis should be placed on abstinence. Most traditional leaders suggested that the title be changed to another appropriate name.
- (d) Stakeholders did not find any content that was promoting homosexuality in the textbooks produced by the ministry of education that are used from grades five to twelve.

Madam Speaker, the technical committee has since completed reviewing the CSE framework by addressing the concerns raised by stakeholders. The name has since been changed to ‘Life Skills and Health Education Framework’. However, the revised framework is yet to be validated. This is because following the Presidential directive to reform the curriculum, CSE is also under review since it is integrated into career subjects.

Madam Speaker, the recent posts on social media are probably meant to tarnish the Government and the great strides that the ministry and other partners have attained in combating teenage pregnancies and STIs. The post in question first went viral in Zambia in 2021, and has been forwarded many times. It actually originated in Tanzania.

Madam Speaker, as a ministry, we undertook a survey in bookshops and checked through titles of the books circulating on social media and our findings were that the books circulating on social media were not developed by the ministry. The cover of the book on the post is correct, however, the page circulating is not from any of the Zambian books. They are photo-shopped and even the pagination is different.

Madam Speaker, the ministry remains open to any further submissions and welcomes any opportunity to further raise awareness on CSE with stakeholders in Zambia including parents, traditional leaders and religious bodies.

Madam Speaker, we are also deeply concerned about misleading and alarmist information (both internal and through social media) on the content that is a clear misrepresentation of what is contained in the *Zambian CSE curriculum framework*.

I thank you, Madam.
