

# GLOBAL COALITION

*to Promote Comprehensive Sexuality  
and Personal Safety Education*

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FIFTH QUARTERLY MEETING

Theme:

Adolescents on Navigating  
Gender and Sexuality:  
What, When & How

*15th January, 2025*

# *Blossoms and Boundaries: Understanding the Journey of Adolescence*

In the mirror of youth, where questions arise,  
Media painted dreams, both truths and lies.  
Billboards of beauty, screens aglow,  
Set standards of worth we'd strive to know.

Culture whispered through guarded halls,  
In rituals, silence, and whispered calls.  
Lessons of modesty, tales untold,  
Bound in tradition's rigid hold.

Education knocked with timid grace,  
A textbook world, a cautious space.  
Diagrams, terms, yet hearts unprepared,  
For the storms within we scarcely shared.

The first red bloom, a private storm,  
The body's shift, a brand-new form.  
For boys, a night of startled dreams,  
For girls, a flow of silent streams.

The pressures loomed, of shape and size,  
Of flawless skin and perfect thighs.  
Sexual whispers, unspoken dread,  
What to embrace, and what to shed.

Yet in this chaos, roots were laid,  
Boundaries formed, and courage stayed.  
Lessons etched in the heart's deep core,  
Of trust, respect, and wanting more.

Now in love's glow, adulthood shines,  
With bonds that honor the sacred lines.  
Blossoms nurtured, boundaries strong,  
The journey of self where we belong.

**-by Aarthi N Rao**

# OVERVIEW

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## COMPREHENSIVE SEXUALITY EDUCATION (CSE) AND PERSONAL SAFETY EDUCATION (PSE) FOR ADOLESCENTS

The 5th Quarterly Meeting of the Global Coalition was held on the 15th January, 2025.

**Panelists:** Bibhuti (13), Samreen (16), Ashadul (17), Ayub (17), Zara (17)

**Countries of the Panelists:** India, Nepal and Pakistan

### **Objectives :**

1. Discuss the barriers to open conversations about gender, sexuality, and personal safety;
2. Understand sources of information and evaluate the role of technology;
3. Gather youth-led recommendations for creating safe, inclusive educational spaces.

# KEY

## TAKEAWAYS

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### 1 Secrecy and Shame Around Bodies

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Society constantly tells us that we should not tell anyone about our bodies. Even in our homes we see when girls get periods for the first time, our mothers, our elders are here telling us- you should not tell anyone and talk to anyone about these things because it's wrong.

- Samreen

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A major issue highlighted by the panelists is the lack of accessible, safe spaces for adolescents to discuss the development of their bodies & changes, gender identities, and sexualities due to shame and secrecy around bodies. These barriers hinder adolescents'

ability to navigate their physical and emotional growth with dignity, respect, and access to accurate information. They called for a cultural shift to create a more supportive and accepting society.

- They mentioned the cultural, social and familial factors that reinforce **misinformation, shame, and stigma**, around body parts and bodily processes **leading to adolescence feeling confused, and isolated**. For example, one of the panelists mentions that private body parts are often referred to as derogatory terms or curse words, leading to embarrassment and discomfort with our bodies, especially private parts. Also, menstruation continues to be treated as “impure” or “shameful”, leading to secrecy and exclusion for girls and women.
- Another panelist cited examples where their families actively discouraged seeking information about personal health and safety, deeming it unnecessary and wrongful.

## 2 Gendered Discrimination and Expectations

Panelists highlighted how societal norms perpetuate gender-based discrimination:

- Often expected to navigate bodily changes, such as menstruation, with little to no guidance. They face expectations to remain silent about their experiences and are shamed if they ask questions.
- Struggle with societal pressures to **suppress emotions and avoid seeking help, reinforcing harmful ideas of masculinities.**

These gender-based norms and expectations limit adolescents from engaging in open communication about their experiences, leading to emotional isolation.

## 3 Reinforcement of Misinformation by Authority Figures

The panelists noted that families and schools are the product of the same society, therefore, holding ideas that can be **harmful and derogatory**. For example, one of the panelists mentions that his teacher says that **“homosexuality is bad and the more we support them, the more they will grow in numbers.”**

This reinforcement of taboos and stigmas limits the opportunity for healthy self-discovery and personal growth. Moreover, when societal expectations prioritize silence and ignorance over open dialogue, young people are left to navigate complex issues without proper tools or support.

# 4 Lack of Access to Reliable Resources

“ We are bound to get information from somewhere, like through the internet... I feel that sometimes we do not learn the right things from the internet, as in we sometimes get correct information but along with it we also get wrong information.

– Asadul ”

The panelists spoke about lack of access to reliable, accurate information, leading to numerous risks that can impact their health, safety, and well-being. The adolescents also emphasized that **perpetrators can exploit the lack of information and lack of knowledge about their right to safety and dignity.**

The absence of reliable information can also result in confusion about **gender and sexuality**, contributing to mental health struggles, and limiting their ability to make informed, empowered decisions, leading to confusion and isolation, especially for LGBTQIA+ children.

## Internet as a Source of Information :

The **internet is a primary source where adolescents seek answers** regarding bodily changes, sexuality, and relationships. However, one of the panelists highlighted that **pornography** is one of the most prevalent forms of information young people access when learning about sexuality. Unfortunately, pornography often portrays distorted, unrealistic, and harmful representations of relationships, consent, and body image, leading to misconceptions about what healthy relationships and sexual behavior look like.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

## Role of Safe Spaces and Trusted Adults

Panelists strongly reiterated the need for safety networks such as families, schools, community centers, NGOs where adolescents can access trustworthy, age appropriate information in a non-judgemental way.

They emphasized the importance of having **safe adults**, such as teachers, parents, and counselors, who can serve as primary sources of information and support.

## Importance of Open Dialogue About the Body

It is very important to know about the changes happening in our bodies, gender roles and individual safety. By knowing about these things, we can better take care of our health and safety.

- Ayub

Adolescents stressed on open dialogues to stay healthy, make informed decisions, and understand how to protect themselves and others both physically and emotionally.

- **Education about body parts and personal safety** equips adolescents to recognize and navigate unsafe situations effectively.
- When families, schools, and communities **normalize these discussions**, adolescents are more likely to seek information from trusted people/sources rather than turning to harmful or unreliable platforms.
- These conversations should be **non-judgmental, inclusive, and supportive**, allowing adolescents to seek help, ask questions, and feel comfortable discussing sensitive topics.

- Encouraging open dialogue can reduce the risk of adolescents seeking answers in unsafe or inappropriate places, helping them build a healthier understanding of sexuality and relationships.

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## ✦ Understanding Gender Roles and Respect for Diversity

Education about gender and diversity was identified as essential for adolescents to:

- Develop respect for themselves and others.
- Challenge harmful stereotypes and societal norms.
- Make informed, empowered choices regarding their own bodies and relationships.

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## ✦ The Role of Prior Knowledge in Building Confidence

Panelists also stressed the importance of receiving **accurate**

**and timely information** about menstruation before experiencing it helped them navigate the changes confidently. The same is true for children of all sexes, having accurate and age appropriate information can help the child be better prepared. This will help reduce confusion and discomfort during critical developmental phases.

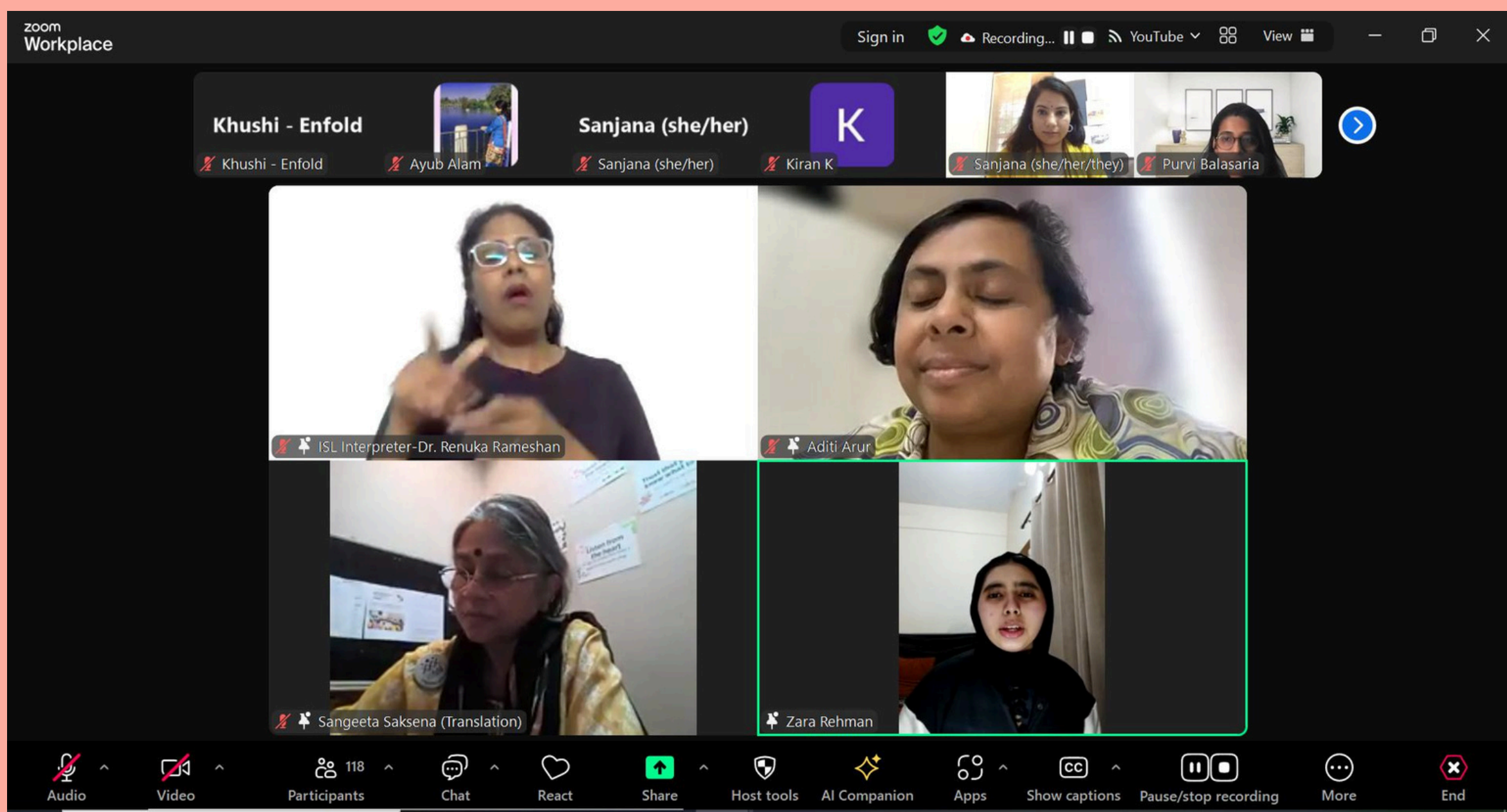
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## ✦ Need for Continuous Education and Support

The panelists stressed that discussions about bodies, gender, and safety should not be one-time conversations. They need to be **continuous, inclusive, and age-appropriate**, enabling adolescents to build confidence, self-awareness, and resilience over time.







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## Reach out to

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