



## SOCIAL & BEHAVIOR CHANGE FOR SERVICE DELIVERY COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

### Normative Influences on Service Delivery: Pleasure and SRH

#### Outcomes

February 27, 2024

This meeting focused on pleasure as it relates to priority area 1 in our [Shared Agenda](#): normative influences on service delivery. During this session, we heard from several speakers about what pleasure is, how it influences SRH outcomes, and SRH programs that have addressed pleasure. At the end of the meeting, members discussed how pleasure has shown up in their own work and what can be done to more intentionally integrate pleasure into SBC for Sexual and Reproductive Health Service Delivery.

#### Agenda

- Welcome & announcements
- Presentations
  - The case for Pleasure in SRHR Building an Evidence Base (Lianne Gonsalves)
  - The Pleasure Principles and SRH Programming (Anne Philpott)
  - Integrating Pleasure into SRH Programming: The Young and Alive Project (Innocent Grant)
  - Integrating Pleasure into SRH Programming: A Pleasure-Based Approach to Positive Sexuality and Midwifery in the DRC (Jess-Alfred Nondho Ombenny)
- Group discussion

#### Materials

- [Meeting Recording](#)
- [Meeting Slides](#)

#### Resources shared during the meeting

- [What is the added value of incorporating pleasure in sexual health interventions? A systematic review and meta-analysis](#) [PLOS One; publication]

- [Enhancing Male Engagement in Family Planning: Lessons Learned from EngenderHealth's Broadening Accountability of Men Campaign in Karnataka and Maharashtra](#) [EngenderHealth; project resource]
- [The Pleasure Principles](#) [Pleasure Project; website]
  - [How to Endorse the Pleasure Principles](#) [Pleasure Project; website]
  - [Organisations who endorse The Pleasure Principles](#) [Pleasure Project; website]
- [Is sexual well-being part of subjective well-being? An empirical analysis of Belgian \(Flemish\) survey data using an extended well-being scale](#) [The Journal of Sex Research; publication]
- [Talking Pleasure with Pleasure: A guide to the "Why" and "How" of Pleasure-Based Sexual Health in Youth Programming](#) [Pleasure Project; project resource]
- [The World Association for Sexual Health's Declaration on Sexual Pleasure: A Technical Guide](#) [WAS; publication]
- [Sexual Pleasure in Precolonial Africa](#) [IPPF; website]

## Announcements

- If you are interested in contributing to a visual document that illustrates the ways SBC can be concretely applied to the WHO health system building blocks, please reach out to Rahin Khandker at ideas42 ([rkhandker@ideas42.org](mailto:rkhandker@ideas42.org))

## Presentations

### The case for Pleasure in SRHR: Building an Evidence Base

*Dr. Lianne Gonsalves, Scientist, Department of Sexual and Reproductive Health and Research, World Health Organization*

Lianne began by highlighting the lack of focus on pleasure in Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) work, which primarily centers on preventing ill health. She presented findings from an extensive literature review, demonstrating that incorporating sexual pleasure into interventions yields positive impacts on outcomes such as knowledge, motivation, and behavior such as condom use. The review categorized pleasure interventions into low, medium, and high pleasure inclusivity, emphasizing the need to convert enthusiasm into action and mainstream pleasure into existing interventions.

### The Pleasure Principles and SRH Programming

*Anne Philpott, Founder and Co-Director, Pleasure Project*

Anne emphasized the importance of pleasure-inclusive programming in SRHR interventions, citing its benefits on physical and mental health, empowerment, and challenging damaging gender norms. She introduced the Pleasure Project's seven pleasure principles and shared promising practices of projects integrating pleasure principles into their work, emphasizing the need to prioritize sexual rights.

### Integrating Pleasure into SRH Programming: The Young and Alive Project

*Innocent Grant, Program Director, Young and Alive Initiative*

Innocent discussed how the Young and Alive Initiative has partnered with Amplify Change in Tanzania to incorporate pleasure into their programming. He outlined the development of a Swahili SRH curriculum that integrated pleasure and described how Young and Alive Fellows led engaging community dialogues and a national youth summit on health and development, sparking conversations about sex among young people.

### Integrating Pleasure into SRH Programming: A Pleasure-Based Approach to Positive Sexuality and Midwifery in the DRC

*Jess-Alfred Nondho Ombenny, Obstetrician/Midwife, National Coordinator, GVP-MASAR RDC*

Jess-Alfred shared the GVP-MASAR RDC's pleasure-based initiative with midwives in DRC, which aimed to address the stigma surrounding sexual pleasure. He detailed the training of midwife mentors in pleasure-inclusive communication and the positive outcomes observed in improved client communication and reduced stigma around sexual pleasure.

### **Discussion Summary**

- Integrating pleasure is difficult because of norms and taboos around discussing sex. As implementers (especially coming from outside the context), we don't want to be seen as inciting people to talk about controversial topics.
- We tend to see women as mothers and wives, not sexual beings. Their non-mother needs are often ignored. Even basic gynecological functioning is ignored.
- There are expectations/perceptions that pleasure-inclusive programming is for certain groups e.g., people with multiple partners, or youth. We need to shake off those preconceptions.
- We are often worried about the consequences of integrating pleasure. Policy makers, decision-makers are always pushing back. There is the pervasive narrative that educating people on SRH (especially pleasure) will make people promiscuous and encourage sexual behavior.
- Pleasure can be difficult to talk about because it is an intimate topic and can make people feel uncomfortable.
- We need to address the whole life course - not just women having babies. There are important opportunities to integrate with menopause programming.
- The whole point is that people are having sex. We cannot gloss over pleasure!
- In DRC there was a toll-free number and apps where people could call in/discuss pleasure.

## Additional Questions

### 1. Could you share more about the relationships between gender norms and teaching/learning about pleasure... and related outcome?

**Jess-Alfred:** *Inequalities in gender relations are not a natural or historical phenomenon, but it's human society that has constructed this inequality, which is at the root of male domination through the sexual act, imposed or consented to, and this is leading us towards gender-based sexual violence.*

*Gender norms in our communities do not allow women to talk about sex, especially not in public. With the integration of the pleasure-based positive sexuality approach, women are beginning to talk about pleasure publicly and openly, which exposes them to marginalization, frustration and exclusion.*

*Social norms in some communities require women to scarify their bellies to give sexual pleasure to their husbands. A woman without scarification is considered a fish without scales, i.e. a woman who can't please a man; whereas a woman with scarification is a fish with scales who can sexually excite the husband. Although this practice is a myth, it gives a positive sense of pleasure and needs to be monitored to bring it back into line with the right approach to pleasure.*

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**Anne:** *Pleasure based sexual health is helpful as it can de-bunk gender stereotypes – such as females don't like sex, and males always want it. We know comprehensive sex education ensures more people make informed safer choices.*

*This article brings this evidence together and shows how pleasure inclusive sex education can reduce gender based violence <https://thepleasureproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/7.-Mark-et-al-Integrating-Sexual-Pleasure-for-Quality-Inclusive-Comprehensive-Sexuality-Education.pdf>*

*These resources – that show a clear link between gender equity and make safe and sexy and comfortable choices for yourself.*

*Section 4 – 8 in this literature review [https://thepleasureproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/TPP-20-Questions\\_v6.pdf](https://thepleasureproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/TPP-20-Questions_v6.pdf)*

*And gender disparities impact on sexual pleasure <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/19317611.2021.1965689>*

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/19317611.2019.1654587>

*You might also want to read about the orgasm gap – obviously pleasure is not orgasm but the gender and sexual identity disparity is striking [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Orgasm\\_gap](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Orgasm_gap)*

2. **Empowerment is a hard construct to define and measure. If you have measures that you're using in this work, please share.**

***Jess-Alfred:** It's really optional, but in exchanges with the women and men we've met, they measure their pleasures in terms of intensity, duration and scope.*

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***Anne:** Please see this work The Pleasure Project have done on how to measure pleasure, which also shows strong overlap with empowerment. Annex 1 in this document <https://thepleasureproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Talking-Pleasure-with-Ease-A-guide-to-the-Why-and-How-of-Pleasure-Based-Sexual-Health-in-Youth-Programming-with-back-page.pdf>*

*As related in the webinar we are currently working on a framework for gender equity/empowerment and pleasure*