

## Zorgniotti Fund 2022 – Summary proposed project from SASSM

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Adolescence is a time of opportunity when it comes to sexual and reproductive health. This is the time when adolescents explore their sexuality, build relationships and experience a rapid physical, psychological and social change. The stigma surrounding sexuality, gender inequality, controversial religious and political opinions and social media boom has made the adolescents of today even more vulnerable. They are prone to negative reproductive health outcomes like early pregnancy, STI and HIV, unsafe abortions, sexual violence and abuse. Most educational institutions have a school counselor, who is the first point of contact for all adolescents and youth.

Unfortunately, when it comes to sexuality related issues, the counselors lack the training that is so important to address sexual health concerns and initiate proper referral. At present, there is no formalized comprehensive sexuality training curriculum or training for counselors and therapists in India & South east Asia. Most counselor training programs do not have a component on sexuality other than a section on sexual psychopathology.

By developing an exclusive Youth Sexuality Training Module for counselors, we will be bridging an important gap and paving the way for more advanced training. Research indicates that a counselor's comfort and positive attitude in dealing with sexuality related issues in youth could make a huge impact on youth sexual health related risk behavior. This training module will help build the necessary knowledge, attitude and skills in counselors, which in turn will help them to communicate about sexuality related issues openly and comfortably with their clients.