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**Christian Council
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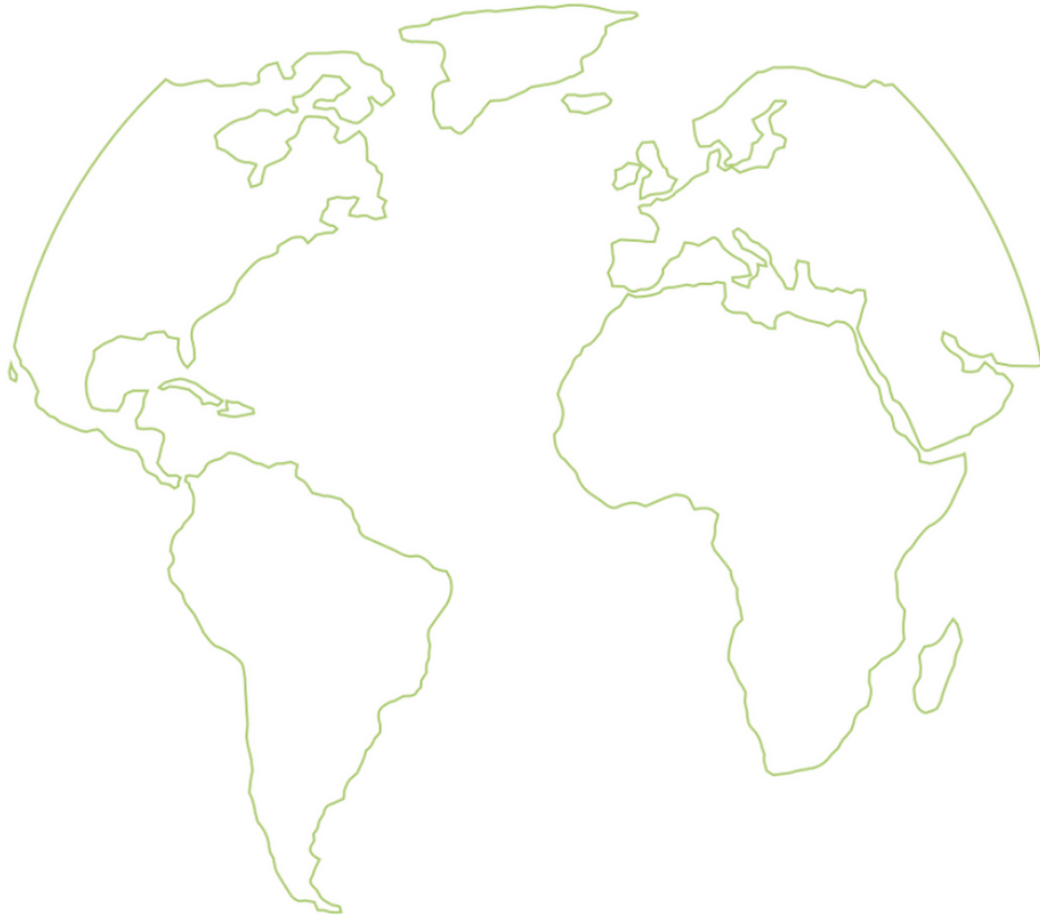
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Introduction

1. The Transatlantic Christian Council (TCC) was founded in 2013 and developed into the Christian Council International (CCI) in 2018. The main goal of TCC/CCI is to protect life, family, and freedom from a Christian perspective worldwide.
2. In the 3rd UPR cycle, Nauru accepted two recommendations aimed at promoting and safeguarding the institution of the family and preserving family values.¹ Based on these foundational commitments, this report offers a focused assessment of the human rights situation in Nauru through the lens of life, family, and freedom. Specifically, it addresses the protection of life in relation to abortion, the challenge of teenage pregnancy, protection of parental rights in education, and protection of the family.

Protection of Parental Rights in Education

Background

3. In Nauru, the family plays a central role in the upbringing and education of children. As in many Pacific Island countries, parents are viewed as the primary educators in matters of cultural identity, discipline, and moral development.² According to the World Bank, gross enrollment rates in Nauru reached 97.7% in primary and 95.5% in secondary education in 2021.³
4. While access to education is high, learning outcomes remain low. A 2023 World Bank analysis found that “student learning levels in Nauru are low by international standards,” citing challenges in literacy and numeracy at early grades.⁴ In this context, international agencies have promoted the integration of Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) as a strategy to improve adolescent sexual and reproductive health.
5. During the 3rd UPR Cycle, Nauru received two recommendations relating to CSE.⁵ One called for the integration of comprehensive sexuality education into the school curriculum (99.116, Denmark), and another encouraged efforts to align sexuality education with international guidance (99.117, Fiji). In its response, the Government of Nauru stated: “Issues related to sexuality are matters which are covered by national laws or are matters of individual choice in certain circumstances.”⁶
6. Critics of CSE note that many programs contain content on gender identity, sexual orientation, and sexual pleasure that may not align with local values or parental expectations.⁷ In addition, several reports raise concerns about the clear parental opt-out provisions and insufficient parental consultation.⁸ These concerns are relevant for Nauru, where parental authority in education is culturally significant and constitutionally protected.

International Framework

7. Parental rights in education are protected under multiple international human rights instruments. Article 26(3) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights affirms that “parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.”⁹ Similarly, Article 13(3) of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) signed by Nauru provides that: “States Parties undertake to have respect for the liberty of parents and, when applicable, legal guardians to ensure the religious and moral education of their children in conformity with their own convictions.”¹⁰
8. The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), to which Nauru is a State Party, reinforces this principle. Article 5 recognizes the responsibilities, rights, and duties of parents to provide appropriate direction and guidance in a

¹ United Nations Human Rights Council. *Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review: Nauru*, A/HRC/47/17, 12 April 2021, paras. 99.103 & 99.102. Available at: <https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/47/17>.

² Pacific Community (SPC), *Pacific Youth Development Framework 2014–2023*, p. 13.

³ World Bank (2023). *World Development Indicators – Nauru: School enrollment, primary and secondary (% gross)*. Retrieved from <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.PRM.ENRR> and <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.SEC.ENRR>.

⁴ World Bank (2023). *Nauru: Systematic Country Diagnostic Update*, p. 33.

⁵ UN Human Rights Council (2021). *Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review: Nauru* (A/HRC/47/17), paras. 99.116–99.117.

⁶ UN Human Rights Council (2021). *Addendum: Views on Recommendations* (A/HRC/47/17/Add.1), para. 33.

⁷ C-Fam (2019). *Comprehensive Sexuality Education: Sexual Rights vs. Sexual Health*, pp. 8–12. Available at: <https://c-fam.org>.

⁸ UNESCO, UNFPA, WHO (2021). *The Journey Towards Comprehensive Sexuality Education: Global Status Report*, pp. 34–35. Available at: <https://www.unfpa.org/publications>.

⁹ Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 26(3). <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>.

¹⁰ United Nations (1966), *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*, Article 13(3).

manner consistent with the evolving capacities of the child, while Article 14(2) states that: “States Parties shall respect the rights and duties of parents... to provide direction to the child in the exercise of his or her right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion.”¹¹

9. SDG 4 outlines the commitment to inclusive and equitable quality education. SDG indicator 4.7.2 states that schools need to provide skills-based HIV and sexuality education. In 2018, UNESCO published the International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education.¹² In this Guidance, a curriculum-based approach is described for sexuality education, also known as Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) or comprehensive sexual and reproductive health education.
10. With growing international efforts to integrate comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) into curricula worldwide, there are increasing concerns that parental rights may be sidelined, as many CSE programs are introduced without parental consent, include controversial content on gender and sexuality, and often omit parental opt-out provisions.¹³ The 2021 Global Status Report by UNESCO and partner agencies recommends that CSE be adopted as an essential component of national education systems, urging governments to embed it in law and policy frameworks and deliver it from early grades onward.¹⁴ The World Health Organization also recommends the CSE guideline to reduce adolescent pregnancies.¹⁵
11. The CSE guideline is not being referenced in any legally binding document; therefore, its implementation relies entirely on the sovereign will of individual states. As a result, effective alternatives to CSE that align with a country’s religious values, cultural context and parental consent, such as abstinence-focused sexuality education, can also fulfill the requirements of SDG Indicator 4.7.2.¹⁶

National Legal Policies

12. Nauru’s Constitution explicitly affirms parental rights in education. The Constitution of Nauru (Article 11(3)) protects the right of parents to determine whether their children receive religious instruction in schools, affirming a significant recognition of parental authority in education.¹⁷ Additionally, the Education Act 2011 mandates compulsory education between the ages of 6 and 16.¹⁸ Together, these national policies and international frameworks, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article 26(3)) provide Nauru with a legal foundation to regulate educational content in accordance with national, cultural, and religious values and to exercise discretion regarding foreign-funded programs that may conflict with these principles.
13. In practice, elements of sexuality education are integrated into the school curriculum through Family Life Education (FLE) and Physical Activity and Wellness Studies (PAWS), particularly at the secondary level (Years 7–10).¹⁹ FLE includes content on puberty, reproduction, and sexual and reproductive health and is delivered as part of the broader life-skills education strand. In 2013–2014, with support from UNFPA, Nauru’s Ministry of Education piloted FLE modules and conducted training for teachers and school principals.²⁰

¹¹ United Nations (1989), *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, Articles 5 and 14(2).

¹² UNESCO, International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education: An Evidence-Informed Approach, 2018, <https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/ITGSE.pdf>.

¹³ Family Watch International. *CSE: A Harmful Ideology Masquerading as Education* (2020). “CSE programs often promote early sexual autonomy, include graphic content, and are introduced into schools without parental consent or proper transparency, undermining parental authority and moral teaching.” Available at: <https://familywatch.org/resources/cse-toolkit/>.

¹⁴ UNESCO, UNFPA, UNICEF, UN Women, UNAIDS & WHO. *The Journey Towards Comprehensive Sexuality Education: Global Status Report* (2021). “Governments are encouraged to integrate CSE into national policy and legal frameworks and institutionalize its delivery from early grades.” Available at: <https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/journey-towards-comprehensive-sexuality-education-global-status-report>.

¹⁵ World Health Organization and Green Ink Publishing Services Ltd, WHO guideline on preventing early pregnancy and poor reproductive outcomes among adolescents in low- and middle-income countries, book, 2025, <https://iris.who.int/bitstream/handle/10665/381100/9789240104105-eng.pdf?sequence=1>.

¹⁶ Lack of Evidence of CSE Effectiveness in Schools: Research Reviews, ComprehensiveSexualityEducation.org, https://www.comprehensivesexualityeducation.org/wp-content/uploads/7_Research_Reviews-Lack_of_Evidence_of_CSE_Effectiveness_in_Schools-7-30-24C.pdf; Re-Examining the Evidence for Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) in Non-U.S. Settings, ComprehensiveSexualityEducation.org, <https://www.comprehensivesexualityeducation.org/wp-content/uploads/GlobalCSEReport061120.pdf>.

¹⁷ Constitution of Nauru, Article 11(3): https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Nauru_2015.

¹⁸ Government of Nauru. *Education Act 2011* (Act No. 6 of 2011), Part 4, Division 2, Sections 13–16 (Compulsory Attendance). <https://docslib.org/doc/9296275/education-act-2011>.

¹⁹ Education Profiles – UNESCO GEM Report (2022), *Nauru: Comprehensive Sexuality Education*. Available at: <https://education-profiles.org/oceania/nauru/~comprehensive-sexuality-education>.

²⁰ UNFPA Pacific Sub-Regional Office (2014), *Annual Report*, p. 7.

14. It is however the case that the Education Act 2011 limits parental involvement to providing consent with regard to children with disability in school. The Act is also silent on the role of parents in the examination and approval of education curricula. This has resulted in a value-free family life education program that is influenced by agencies which consider parental involvement a barrier to access to Comprehensive Sexuality Education.²¹

Recommendations

1. Continue to protect the family by affirming parental rights in national education policy.
2. Respect parental rights in education by allowing parental involvement in the development of education curricula.
3. Protect parental involvement in education by shielding it from threats posed by child sexualizing forces and content in all education curricula.
4. Promote parental rights in education by meaningfully including the faith sector and cultural leaders in developing education programs.

Protection of Life and Dignity

- Abortion

Background and National Legal Policies

15. Abortion in Nauru is regulated under the *Crimes Act*, which permits the procedure only to save the life or preserve the physical health of the pregnant woman. Outside of this limited exception, abortion remains a criminal offense: Division 4.4 of the *Crimes Act (2016)*, imposes penalties of up to 14 years' imprisonment for individuals who perform abortions, and 7 years for women who seek or consent to one.²²
16. There are no publicly available national policies or clinical guidelines that expand on these legal provisions. In 2016, a proposal to allow access to abortion for refugee women in Nauru was debated in Parliament. The proposal was ultimately withdrawn following opposition from members of the public and religious leaders, indicating broad cultural and societal resistance to expanding access to abortion.²³

International Framework

17. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), to which Nauru is morally bound as a member of the United Nations, affirms in Article 3 that *"Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person."*²⁴ Likewise, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), to which Nauru is a signatory, states in Article 6(1) that *"Every human being has the inherent right to life."*²⁵
18. During the 3rd UPR Cycle, Nauru received recommendations encouraging the government to promote sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR), including access to safe abortion services.²⁶ In response, the government stated: "The Republic is not pro-choice in regards to abortion. The Republic will take the necessary steps to improve its reproductive health-care services; however, it cannot support any efforts towards the realization of the free choice of abortion pursuant to what is already allowed by legislation."²⁷
19. At the 2019 session of the UN Commission on Population and Development (CPD), Nauru's representative stated that abortion represents "a great departure from our religious and societal norms" and emphasized that development assistance should not be used to impose ideological positions contrary to national values.²⁸

²¹ UNFPA and IPPF- ICPD Review: Bali Global Youth Forum Declaration ICPD+20.

²² Crimes Act 2016, Nauru Government. Available via Pacific Legal Information Institute (PaLI): https://www.paclii.org/cgi-bin/sinodisp/nr/legis/num_act/ca201682/ca201682.html?stem=&synonyms=&query=Crimes%20Act#disp4.

²³ ABC News, "Nauru scraps proposed abortion laws for refugees and asylum seekers" (11 November 2016), <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-11-11/nauru-scraps-abortion-laws-for-refugees-asylum-seekers/8018504>.

²⁴ United Nations. *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, Article 3. <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>.

²⁵ OHCHR. *Status of Ratification: Nauru – ICCPR*. https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/TreatyBodyExternal/Treaty.aspx?CountryID=121&Lang=EN.

²⁶ Human Rights Council (2021), *Report of the Working Group on the UPR: Nauru (A/HRC/47/17)*, para. 99.100.

²⁷ Government of Nauru (2021), *Addendum: Views on Recommendations (A/HRC/47/17/Add.1)*, para. 32.

²⁸ Nauru Statement at the 52nd Session of the UN Commission on Population and Development (CPD), April 2019.

Recommendations

1. Continue to recognize and promote the right to life by requiring in policy and law that any medical procedure that results in the death of an unborn child is documented, reported and archived.
2. Continue to respect the right to life by prohibiting the distribution of abortifacient drugs over the counter.
3. Continue to protect the right to life of the unborn by promoting maternal healthcare and early-childhood care services.

- Teenage Pregnancy

Background

20. Teenage pregnancy remains a serious concern in Nauru and represents one of the most persistent threats to the well-being of adolescent girls and the broader family structure. According to available regional estimates, Nauru has one of the highest adolescent birth rates in the Pacific, with rates ranging from 56 to 94 births per 1,000 girls aged 15–19²⁹, far exceeding the global average of approximately 39 per 1,000 documented by the World Bank in 2023³⁰. A 2007 health survey further reported that 49% of Nauruan girls aged 15–19 had already been sexually active, and over 12% of women aged 25–49 had engaged in sexual activity before age 15.³¹ These figures, though dated, reveal early sexual debut and high levels of adolescent fertility that can disrupt education, lead to social stigma, and increase vulnerability to poverty or exploitation.
21. Studies also show that increased exposure to Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) may contribute to earlier sexual initiation and increased sexual risk-taking among adolescents. A 2023 meta-analysis of 71 effect sizes published in *Sexuality Research and Social Policy* found that CSE exposure was associated with significantly higher levels of sexual risk behavior among adolescents, including earlier sexual debut and increased number of sexual partners.³² These findings challenge claims that CSE reduces teenage pregnancy and highlight the need for culturally appropriate alternatives that promote delay of sexual initiation and strengthen family-based guidance.

National and International Response

22. Nauru's Family Life Education (FLE) and school reproductive health components aim to address puberty and reproductive health through life-skills curricula in secondary education.³³ However, formal policies targeting teenage pregnancy prevention or support for pregnant adolescents are absent.
23. During its 3rd UPR cycle, Nauru received recommendations calling on the State to "redouble its efforts to reduce the high teenage pregnancy rate" and to "ensure access to and availability of sexual and reproductive health services and information for all women and teenage girls, particularly in rural areas."³⁴ These recommendations were noted by the government.
24. Nauru has also committed to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including Target 3.7, which calls for ensuring universal access to sexual and reproductive health-care services, including for family planning, information, and education.³⁵ Although Target 3.7 is often used in policy discourse to promote comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) and sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), neither CSE nor SRHR is defined in any binding international treaty.³⁶ As such, Nauru retains full discretion to determine how to implement SDG 3.7 in a manner consistent with its cultural and religious values.

²⁹ UNFPA Pacific Sub-Regional Office. *Adolescent Fertility in the Pacific: Reproductive Health Status and Needs* (2021). <https://pacific.unfpa.org>.

³⁰ World Bank, *Adolescent Fertility Rate (births per 1,000 women ages 15–19)*, World Development Indicators (2023).

³¹ WHO, Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC). *Pacific Island Sexual Health Survey Summary Report: Nauru*. (2007).

³² Ting, S., & Lou, C. (2023). *Sexual Risk Behavior and Comprehensive Sexuality Education: A Meta-Analytic Review*. *Sexuality Research and Social Policy*. Available at: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/15546128.2023.2189194>.

³³ UNESCO (2022), *Education Profile: Nauru – Comprehensive Sexuality Education*. Available at: <https://education-profiles.org/oceania/nauru/~comprehensive-sexuality-education>.

³⁴ UN Human Rights Council (2021), *Report of the Working Group on the UPR: Nauru (A/HRC/47/17)*, Recommendation 129.60 by Mexico. Available at: <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G21/085/90/PDF/G2108590.pdf>.

³⁵ United Nations (2015), *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, Goal 3.7. Available at: <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal3>.

³⁶ ADF International (2020), *CSE and SRHR: Legal Analysis of International Treaties*, p. 3. Available at: <https://adfinternational.org/resource/comprehensive-sexuality-education-international-law/>.

Recommendations

1. Respect the rights of teen mothers to return to school by establishing pregnancy response services.
2. Protect its teenagers from teen pregnancy by shielding children and teenagers from sexualizing content in education curricula, media and the arts.
3. Promote sexual risk avoidance content in the education curriculum.

Protection and Promotion of the Family

Background

25. With a total population of just over 10,000, Nauru is the smallest World Bank member by population.³⁷ In such a close-knit society, the family plays a central role in providing social support, transmitting cultural values, and maintaining community cohesion. Anthropological research and regional development frameworks confirm that in Nauru the extended family is central to daily life, often encompassing kinship networks, communal childrearing, and customary adoption practices that strengthen intergenerational caregiving and social stability.^{38 39}

International Framework

26. The importance of the family is affirmed in international human rights law. Article 16(3) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) states: "The family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State."⁴⁰ This principle is echoed in other instruments, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), to which Nauru is a party. Article 23(1) of the ICCPR provides that: "The family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State."⁴¹

National Policies

27. While the Constitution of Nauru does not contain an explicit definition of the family, domestic law affirms traditional family structures. The Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Act 2017, Section 49, defines marriage as "the voluntary union of one man and one woman."⁴²
28. Although the Crimes Act 2016 decriminalized same-sex conduct by omitting colonial-era language, Nauru does not recognize same-sex unions or partnerships in law or policy. During the 3rd UPR Cycle, Nauru received five recommendations to legalize same-sex unions and introduce SOGI-based protections. These recommendations were rejected, with the government reaffirming its sovereign right to preserve its national understanding of the family.⁴³

Recommendations

4. Enshrine a legal definition of the family as the natural union of one man and one woman, oriented toward the care and upbringing of children.
5. Continue to uphold the traditional family as envisioned by the people of Nauru.
6. To promote the natural family as the fundamental and basic unit of the Nauru society.

³⁷ World Bank (2024), *Nauru Country Overview*. Available at: <https://data.worldbank.org/country/nauru>.

³⁸ Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (2018), *Pacific Regional Culture Strategy 2010–2020*, pp. 5–7. Available at: <https://www.forumsec.org>

³⁹ UNFPA Pacific, *Family and Kinship in the Pacific*, p. 12. Available at: <https://pacific.unfpa.org>

⁴⁰ UN General Assembly (1948), *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, Article 16(3). Available at: <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>

⁴¹ UN (1966), *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*, Article 23(1). Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-civil-and-political-rights>

⁴² Government of Nauru (2017), *Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Act*, Section 49. Available at: https://www.pacii.org/nr/legis/num_act/bdamra2017473/

⁴³ UN Human Rights Council (2021), *Report of the Working Group on the UPR: Nauru (A/HRC/47/17/Add.1)*, paras. 18–20. Available at: <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G21/085/90/PDF/G2108590.pdf>