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## **LACK OF COMPREHENSIVE SEXUALITY EDUCATION RESULTING INTO HIGH TEENAGE PREGNANCIES AND HIV INFECTIONS**

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### **BACKGROUND**

In 2022, the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS) in collaboration with the Ministry of Health (MOH) conducted a survey which resulted in the Kenya Demographic and Health Survey 2022 report (KDHS)<sup>1</sup>. KNBS collected data through household questionnaires tailored at obtaining information from both women and men across all 47 counties in the country. The questionnaires were tailored to obtain information on reproduction, family planning, marriage, sexual activity, HIV/AIDS, other STIs. The survey revealed that 15% of young girls between the age of 15 -19 have ever been pregnant and the percentage increases with age to 31% to those aged 19. The report also indicated that knowledge on HIV prevention is lowest among adolescents aged 15 -17 years, who had little or no knowledge on the use of condoms during sexual intercourse to prevent unintended pregnancies and HIV infections.

### **OBJECTIVES**

The objective of this intervention is to advocate for the integration of comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) into the country's health and education systems to combat the continued unintended teenage pregnancies and HIV infections in Kenya.

### **INTERVENTIONS**

Article 43 of the Constitution of Kenya provide for the right to health, including reproductive health. This right is related to other rights including right to education and the right to access to information. The provision of comprehensive sexual education (CSE) is key to adolescents as it equips them with the necessary health information when it comes to their sexual reproductive health especially on pregnancy prevention and knowledge on HIV & AIDS and HIV prevention tools. This intervention therefore seeks to advocate for the government of Kenya to put in place measures that would adequately address this need.

### **RESULTS**

The findings from the KNBS 2022 survey demonstrate that adolescent girls, between the age of 15 -19 have engaged in sexual acts which have resulted in unintended teenage pregnancies. The effect of this is that majority of them have dropped out of school due to unintended or unwanted teenage pregnancies.<sup>2</sup> While this is the lived reality in Kenya, the Ministry of Education (MOE) and (MOH) have not adequately incorporated comprehensive sexual education (CSE) to adolescents in schools and established youth friendly facilities where they can readily obtain and easily access sexual reproductive health services (SRHS). The result of this, is that a relatively high number of adolescents do not have access to sexual reproductive health information and reproductive health services like contraceptives and appropriate family planning options. Consequently, the percentage of teenage pregnancies, unsafe abortions, and risk of HIV infections in Kenya continues to be on the rise.

### **CONCLUSIONS**

The lack of CSE has contributed to the unintended teenage pregnancies and the increase in HIV infections among adolescents. Adolescents continue to engage in risky sexual behaviors with little or no knowledge on HIV prevention or access to adolescent friendly health services.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Comprehensive sexual education must be prioritized in the country's development and planning agenda. Through CSE adolescents can be aware of what sex is, how to have safe sex, repercussions of having unsafe sex and where one can access contraceptives. This also goes along way on prevention of HIV infections.

### **KEYWORDS**

Comprehensive sexual education, HIV infections, reproductive health, adolescents, unintended teenage pregnancies

<sup>1</sup>The Kenya Demographic and Health Survey 2022 accessed at <https://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/PR143/PR143.pdf>

<sup>2</sup>Understanding teenage pregnancy in Kenya: The Magnitude and Policy Intervention <https://csakenya.org/resources/>