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# Ways To Reduce Incidences Of Teenage Pregnancy In Developing Countries

The World Health Organisation (WHO, 1948) defines Health as a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.

There are many causes of teenage pregnancies and these include lack of knowledge/ low educational level, lack of parental care, communication and supervision, poverty, peer pressure, forced marriage, non-use of contraceptives, lack of school fees and need for dowries. Many Organisations have joined hands in coming up with different measures to prevent teenage pregnancies across the Globe and these include the World Health Organisation (WHO), UNICEF (it supports the needy so that they will not drop out of school because of lack of funds), other organisations like World Vision are involved in economic empowerment of families, young people and adolescents and it is effective in reducing poverty which was identified as a major contributor to early / teenage pregnancies in Zimbabwe.

As a developing country Zimbabwe has also come up with the Zimbabwe Family Planning Services (ZNFPS) which offers outreach services which are free and they encourage young people to visit those places for contraceptives to safeguard their future. They offer their services to everyone regardless of age but they give counselling to that person first. The Ministry of Health and Child Care has made contraceptives accessible at all clinics without discrimination so as to prevent teenage pregnancies in all the places in the country. Even at schools Condoms have been made available for students so that those who are sexually active can use them. The strategies which have been put in place by various organisations or health practitioners include the following:

- Reduce marriages before age of 18 years.
- Abstinence education programs.
- Education for teens about sex and relationships.
- Reproductive health services for teens.
- Sexually transmitted diseases education programs.
- Condom Distribution in schools.
- Communication programs for teens and parents.
- Career Guidance programs.
- Youth development programs.
- Emergency contraception prescriptions.
- Reduce marriages before the age of 18 years.

The World Health Organisation, (2011) stated that over 30% of girls in developing countries get married before 18 years of age. Marriage is a risk factor for early pregnancy and poor reproductive outcomes. Early marriages also result in poverty and lower level of education. WHO recommended that in order to reduce early marriages policy makers can prohibit early marriage that is they should put in place and enforce laws that ban marriage before 18 years of age. In some parts of the world girls are encouraged or expected to have children in their early adolescent years. Parents feel pressured by prevailing norms, traditions and economic constraints to marry their daughters at an early age hence to avoid this community leaders must

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work with all stakeholders to challenge and change norms around early marriage.

## **Abstinence Education Programs**

O'Brien, Jodi (2009) defines Abstinence as a self-enforced restraint from indulging in bodily activities that are widely experienced as giving pleasure. Most frequently, the term refers to sexual abstinence or abstinence from drugs, alcohol or food. Sexual Abstinence is the practice of refraining from some or all aspects of sexual activity for medical, psychological, legal, social, financial and moral or religious reasons (O'Brien, Jodi (2009)). Some think it is old fashioned, others think that it is morally the best thing to do. Abstinence education programs are there to help teenagers understand that the safest method of preventing pregnancy is sexual abstinence. Abstinence programs motivate young people to resist media and peer pressures to have sex and actively support the many teenagers who choose to abstain from sexual activity. For one to abstain from sexual intercourse he/she has to carefully choose friends as friends should want which is best for someone and should respect one's decision of not having sex and should not pressure him/her to have sex. Teenagers should also avoid a group of friends drinking or taking drugs which will lead to having sex. They are also supposed to listen and learn from those who have gone through teenage pregnancy so that they know the advantages and disadvantages and it will help them not to make the same mistakes.

Some abstinence programs also encourage sexually active teenagers to renew their abstinence. Abstinence education programs come in any forms. Some programs promote sexual abstinence until marriage whilst others encourage abstinence atleast through high school, but do not expect teenagers to refrain from sex until marriage. Still others which are often termed abstinence plus deliver a strong abstinence message to younger teens but offer information on contraception as well as recognizing that many teens become sexually active in later adolescence.

## **Education for Teens about Sex and Relationships**

At the most basic level teenagers should get essential information about reproductive health from abstinence to practising safe sex. For young people to understand the risk of sex, comprehensive sexuality education should be promoted. In Denmark students are now receiving comprehensive sex education when beginning the middle school. In addition to classes, students can seek out individual counselling sessions. The curriculum covers self-esteem, setting sexual boundaries and how to effectively use contraception. Teenagers are also taught about relationships, things that they are supposed to do and those that they are not supposed to do when they are in those relationships. They are also taught on how best to avoid sexual intercourse when they are in relationships hence reducing cases of teenage pregnancies. Teenagers are also taught about the consequences of being a parent at an early age and this has had a greater impact on reducing teenage pregnancies as most of the teenagers do not want to destroy their future by having a baby or being parents at a very young age since they will not be financially stable to take care of themselves and the newly born baby.

## **Reproductive Health Services for Teenagers**

Teens who are sexually active must use some type of contraception to avoid pregnancy. This is why many teen pregnancy prevention programs offer access reproductive health services and

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products, including condoms and emergency contraception. Teens can get these services in a number of ways and these include Family planning clinics where many teenagers and adults receive health and reproductive health care services from public and private family planning clinics.

## **Sexuality and Sexually Transmitted Diseases Education programs**

Sexuality education programs teach young people about human sexual development, pregnancy, reproduction and contraceptives and how they work. They also help teens learn how to deal with sexual situations that is how to refuse sex if one is not ready for it and how to negotiate contraceptive use. STD/HIV education programs focus especially on safer sex practices so that one will not be infected with any of the sexually transmitted diseases which will have a greater impact in his/her life in worst cases these diseases can lead to death.

## **Condom Distribution in schools**

Condom distribution in high schools gives students a false sense of security when having sex and this is because most teenagers lack experience with condom implementation and use, causing the condoms to be less effective. When used perfectly every single time during sex, condoms are very effective in preventing pregnancy.

## **Encourage Mentoring**

The older teens are encouraged to serve as mentors to their younger peers, particularly since not every adult in the community is comfortable with talking about the issue of sexuality at home. Students have the opportunity to meet together in smaller, one hour focus groups to talk through topics related to teen sexuality and healthy relationships and some are specifically trained as peer educators. Hearing messages about safe sex from peers is often more impactful than hearing it from adults.

## **Communication Programs for Teens and Parents**

Parents, guardians and caregivers can talk with their teenagers about sex and this should include encouraging them to abstain from sexual intercourse. Teenagers should be encouraged to use effective birth control to prevent pregnancy along with condoms to protect against sexually transmitted diseases. Teenagers also can talk openly to parents or other trusted adults and ask how they can get birth control if they choose to be sexually active. They can also talk with a health care provider to learn about the best types of birth control for them and how to use condoms correctly every time.

## **Career Guidance Programs**

A lack of future orientation is thought to contribute to some teenage pregnancies. One way communities help teens set goals for their future is by connecting them with work and career opportunities. Teenagers need quality education and skills to be successful in life. Teenagers who do poorly in school or drop out are not only more likely to get pregnant or cause a pregnancy but they are also unable to provide for themselves and their families once become

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adults. It is of great importance to organise career guidance programs for teenagers so that they can make informed decisions about their future.

## **Youth Development Programs**

These may or may not focus on reproductive health but are primarily designed to increase pro-social behavior, positive relationships, school achievement or health outcomes broadly. Several of these programs have successfully reduced teen pregnancies or delayed sexual initiation in addition to positive impacts on other youth development outcomes. Youth development programs provide youth with engaging activities and a chance to develop their talents and interests. They are sponsored by schools, churches, community organizations and local and state government and involve young people in recreation, sports, community service and religious activities among others. Many young people develop interest and goals out of these kinds of activities. Youth development programs are particularly powerful for young people who are vulnerable and who live in unstable families and communities. Most youth development programs focus on promoting good health behaviors, even if they do not specifically address sexual issues. Some seem to have a positive effect on reducing teen pregnancy and birth rates.

## **Emergency Contraception Prescription**

Emergency contraceptives are 'morning after' methods used following sexual intercourse but before pregnancy is established and these methods include the use of morning after pills and they also have time frame hence once that time elapses they can no longer work after that period.

## **References**

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