

The Weekly

Information Resource Bulletin

FOCUS: Teens Under Pressure to Have Sex

Teenage pregnancies are one of the challenges the country is facing as poverty, peer pressure and other factors drive young girls into prostitution and relationships with older men.

The 2010 Malawi Demographic Health Survey (DHS) indicates that about 150 in every 1000 girls between the age 15 and 19 become pregnant.

Teenage pregnancy is a health and social problem as a result of physical, psychological and socio-economic consequences on the teenage mother, family and the society as a whole.

The rise in teenage pregnancy could be as a result of pressure to have sex from partners, peers and friends.

Pressure to have sex occurs often within the sexual relationships of teens. Consequences include: risk of contracting sexually transmitted infections, teen pregnancies and unsafe abortion.

The goals of the Weekly Bulletin are:

- To educate listeners about the importance of equipping the youth with skills that could help them to say no to unwanted sex
- To help create a positive attitude towards planning births, having smaller families and using the modern family planning methods
- To promote discussion and dialogue between listeners and other community members about the importance of saying no to unwanted sex

The Problem: Lack of Assertiveness among Young Girls in Refusing to have Sex

Sometimes when girls reach the adolescent stage, they are talked into having sex even if they haven't planned to have sex.

There can be many reasons for this: fear of losing their boyfriend or partner, wanting to please their partner or to avoid conflict.

In fact, pressure to have sex is a common element of many young girls' sexual experiences, often within the context of established romantic and sexual relationships.

Pressure to have sex occurs in a wide range of partnerships, from those in which the partner is barely known to a girl, for example; on a first date, to those in which the girl has been

sexually involved with her partner for a long time.

There are several other factors that may increase the health risks of having sex under pressure. For example, condom use may be difficult to negotiate in circumstances associated with pressure to have sex.

Therefore, there is a need for young girls to be taught skills on how they can say "no" when being pressured.

If the pressure is coming from peers, it is wise to stop being friends with them. If it is from a partner, it is best to communicate how one feels or if the pressure persists a girl could end the relationship.

Activities for Journalists

Use your radio station to help your community, especially young people, to understand that pressured sex can lead to pregnancy and unsafe abortion. Also emphasize that both boys and girls have the right to say “no.” when being pressured to have sex.

Let young people know that it is important to set limits and standards for themselves before they start a serious dating relationship.

Setting limits and boundaries ahead of time can make it a lot easier to avoid the pressures of having sex, since it can be difficult to resist this pressure in the heat of the moment. Therefore, it is important for them to know how to deal with the situation ahead of time.

It is a well-known fact that economic realities for many young girls make refusing sex difficult. Therefore, there is a need to encourage girls to find ways of helping themselves.

If young people are feeling pressured to having sex in order to hang on to a relationship, they need to work on their self-esteem by attending peer support groups or talking to someone older that they can trust. Non-governmental organizations or NGOs may be a place to look for

this kind of help.

Remind young people that there are several ways of saying no to sex. They include -- changing the subject, saying NO in a very strong and firm voice and using strong non-verbal body movements.

Understanding one’s sexual rights and developing a sense of empowerment to enforce them, are just some of the things that can lead them toward sexual assertiveness.

Sexual assertiveness could mean recognizing the warning signs of inappropriate sexual advances and having the sense of empowerment and skills to say no.

Do a vox pop with a few young people from your community and find out how they deal with pressure to have sex, either from a partner or friends.

During a talk show or panel discussion, ask young people to create scenarios of saying “no” to sex – inviting boys and girls to take part.

Interview a nurse about the consequences of pressured sex. Discuss with the nurse the skills that are needed for both boys and girls – in learning how to say no to sex when they don’t

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