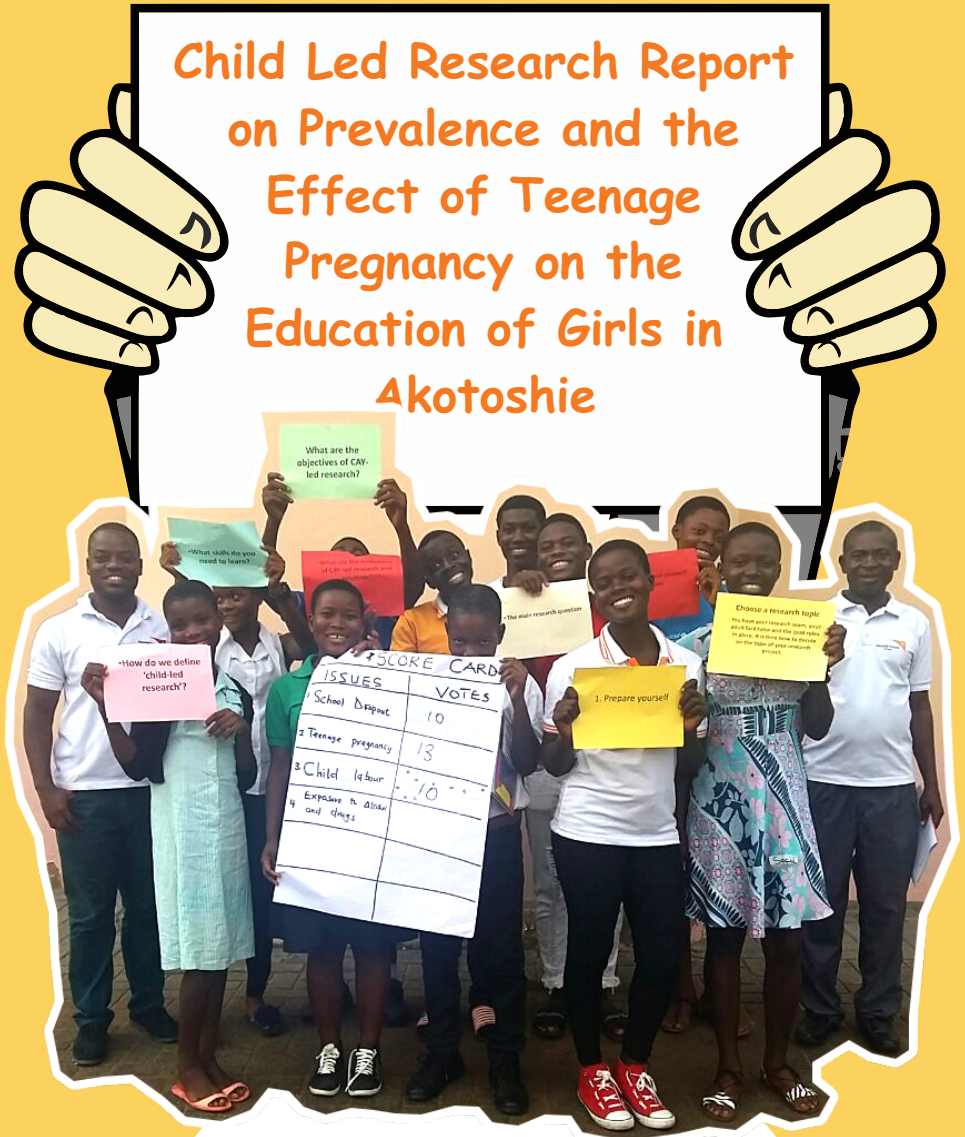


Child Led Research Report on Prevalence and the Effect of Teenage Pregnancy on the Education of Girls in Akotoshie



By
Akotoshie Children's Club
Ga West Municipal
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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We wish to also extend our profound gratitude to those who participated in this research, especially the respondents. We say Ayekoo and God bless you

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

The Children and Youth /Young People (CAY) Research methodology has been developed by World Vision International to support children and young people, aged 12 to 18, to conduct their own research on violence against children.

Young school children from 4 different locations in the Ga West Municipality were selected to participate in a research on Violence Against Children (VAC) to enable them identify the issues and identify possible solutions.

During the design stage there were open discussions and presentations from the various groups and common among them was the issue of teenage pregnancy which is affecting the academic progression of many girls in communities such as Medie, Akotoshie and Kotoku communities. Hence teenage pregnancy was acclaimed the priority VAC issue.

All the groups identified VAC issues in their respective communities. These VAC issues were written down for members to vote on the most pertinent VAC issue in their communities. It was out of this process that, teenage pregnancy was prioritized for the research.

The research employed interviews, focus group discussion and key informant interviews to really understand children's perception of what teenage pregnancy is, the prevalence as well as the effect on girls' education and health.

The research sought to find out the following

1. Causes of teenage pregnancy
2. Effects of teenage pregnancy
3. The prevalence of teenage pregnancy

CHAPTER TWO

Profile of Ga West Municipal

The Ga West Municipal Assembly was carved out of the erstwhile Ga Municipality which was created in 1988 in pursuance of the government decentralization and local government reform policy.

In 2004, the Ga Municipality was divided into two with **Amasaman** remaining the capital for the newly created Ga West Municipality. The Municipality forms part of sixteen (16) metropolis, municipalities and districts in the Greater Accra Region. The Municipality lies within latitude 5°35' North, 5°29' North and longitude 0°10' West and 0°24' West. It shares common boundaries with Ga East and has Accra Metropolitan Assembly to the East, Akwapem South to the North and Ga South and Ga Central to the South. It occupies a land area of approximately 284.08 square kilometres with about 412 communities.

The Ga West Municipality according to the 2010 Population and Housing Census has a population of 219,788 with relatively more females (51.0%) than males (49.0%). The population of the Municipality is youthful with 33.4 percent of the population aged below 15 years and the elderly persons (aged 60 years and above) in smaller proportion (4.0%).

Cultural and Social Structure

In the Ga West Municipal area, the major ethnic group is Ga, although there are other ethnic groups such as the Akans, Ewes and the Dangbes.

At the community level, authority is vested in traditional rulers and their elders or sub chiefs. The traditional chiefs continue to wield some amount of power hence their contribution to, and influence in the decision making process cannot be under estimated.

The major festival which is celebrated among the Ga people in the Municipality is *Homowo*, which literally means hooting at hunger. It is celebrated in the month of August each year and marks the end of the harvest season of maize.

Literacy and Education

Of the population 11 years and above, 92.3 percent are literate and 7.2 percent are not literate.

Occupation

Of the total workforce in the Municipality, nearly two-fifth (38.0%) are service and sales workers and 22.6 percent are engaged as craft and related trades workers. Whereas females (56.7%) are more likely than males (20.1%) to be engaged in service and sales work, males (31.5%) are more likely than females (13.3%) to be engaged in craft and related trades work.

CHAPTER THREE

Literature Review

Teenage pregnancy is simply defined as a teenaged or underage girl becoming pregnant. The term connotes that the girl has not yet reached legal adulthood before conceiving. A teenage girl may become pregnant because of various reasons or situations but all teenage pregnancies are a result of sexual activities either voluntary or not.

Teenage pregnancies are a growing problem. Of all births registered in Ghana in 2014, 30% were by adolescents, and 14% of adolescents aged between 15 and 19 years had begun childbearing.

16.5% of girls aged 15-19 had experienced sexual violence and 14.9% of women said their first sexual experience was forced against their will. Incidents of sexual abuse are commonly under-reported.

The onset of childbearing at an early age has a major effect on the health of both mother and child. It also lengthens the reproductive period, thereby increasing the level of fertility. Teenage mothers are more likely to have more children than women starting child bearing later.

Newborn mortality is almost 50% higher among children born to teenage mothers compared with mothers aged 20 and over. Children to teenage mothers are at greater risk of dying in the period between their second months and their fifth birthday than children to older mothers.

Root causes of teenage pregnancies include: consensual sex peer to peer, risky sexual behaviour of children and youth, families not speaking about reproductive health issues with children and youth, parental neglect, families living too close together because of poverty – children and youth on the streets and exposed to risky behaviour, lack of access to appropriate youth-friendly reproductive health services, stigma related to teenage pregnancies disappearing in urban context, when communities mix together and lose their traditions, this leads to acceptance of teenage pregnancies.

Causes of teenage pregnancy related to sexual abuse include parental neglect, low family income puts children at risk of transactional sex for money, food etc. (that implies some families push children especially girls into acts that expose them to teenage pregnancy, girls being coerced into sex by older men, child prostitution (urban contexts), weak empowerment of women and girls, lack of positive role models for both women and men, impunity for offenders, no risk of being caught and punished for sexual abuse.



Traditional and religious leaders are seen as endorsing teenage pregnancies when they conduct naming ceremonies ,poor water and sanitation coverage, and long distance to school and health clinics. Children are put at risk of sexual assault, abduction etc. when fetching water or transporting themselves to these facilities.

The following category of girls is at risk to teenage pregnancy:

- Girls in conflict zones - girls are vulnerable to sexual assault from security personal during curfews, and also at higher risk of sexual abuse from other community members
- Girls escaping abuse or trafficking
- Girls in foster care / serving as domestic help
- Homeless girls
- Urban street girls who escape to the city from early marriage or to earn money to prepare for marriage
- Young boys who travel South to urban areas to work in order to save money to complete school are likely to get involved in risky behaviour with peers, impregnating girls, or be involved in violence.

This research explores the prevalence, the causes and effects of teenage pregnancy on the development of girls, who the perpetrators are and which category of girls are most vulnerable in Akotoshie, Medie, Kotoku and Doblou surrounding communities in the Ga West Municipal.

CHAPTER FOUR

Methodology

This chapter will explain clearly the research methodology and process employed during the research by the team. These will include the type of research, research problem, objective of the research, justification for the research, the research question, type of research and the process.

Research Objectives

Type of Research

The researchers during the design of the research opted for qualitative research methodology over quantitative research methodology based on their level of skill, capacity and competence. Hence data collection was purely through interviews, focus group discussions and collection of testimonies from boys and girls in relation to their experiences and knowledge of the problem. The adoption of the qualitative methodology informed the sampling technique used for the research. The purposive sampling technique was employed to identify respondents during the research.

The research objectives were to:

- Gather evidence on the prevalence of teenage pregnancy in Akotoshie and surrounding communities
- Find out the causes of teenage pregnancy among girls
- Find out who the perpetrators are
- Find out the effect of teenage pregnancy on girls
- Based on the findings, make recommendations to key stakeholders to address the problem.

Research Problem

Teenage pregnancy is on the rise and affects the education of many girls in Ghana particularly those in rural and peri-urban communities of which the Ga West Municipal is no exception. Data gathered from the ministry of health on the proportion of deliveries by teenage mothers and the Ghana Demographic and Health Survey on the proportion of who had a child before they turned 18 is very alarming. This research therefore sought to confirm or otherwise the prevalence, causes and effects of teenage pregnancy in Akotoshie, Medie and Kotoku communities.

The main research question was;

- What is the prevalence, cause(s) and effect of teenage pregnancy on girls' education in Akotoshie and surrounding communities?

Sub-questions included the following

- What is the prevalence of teenage pregnancy?
- What are the causes of teenage pregnancy?
- Who are most affected; girls in school or girls out of school?
- Who are the perpetrators, adults in the community or colleagues in school?
- What are the effects of teenage pregnancy?

Research Justification

So many research findings and reports exist on the subject matter of teenage pregnancy in different parts of Ghana. However what is not common is to find out a research report on the subject by children. This research therefore provides the space for the voice of children to be heard, as children express how teenage pregnancy affects girls from their own study and research. Hence children will generate their own evidence and suggest solution to the issue.

Sampling Technique

The sampling technique employed was purposive sampling. Respondents were selected based on knowledge of researcher, because they attend the same school and are either class mates or age mates, live in same community and worship together.

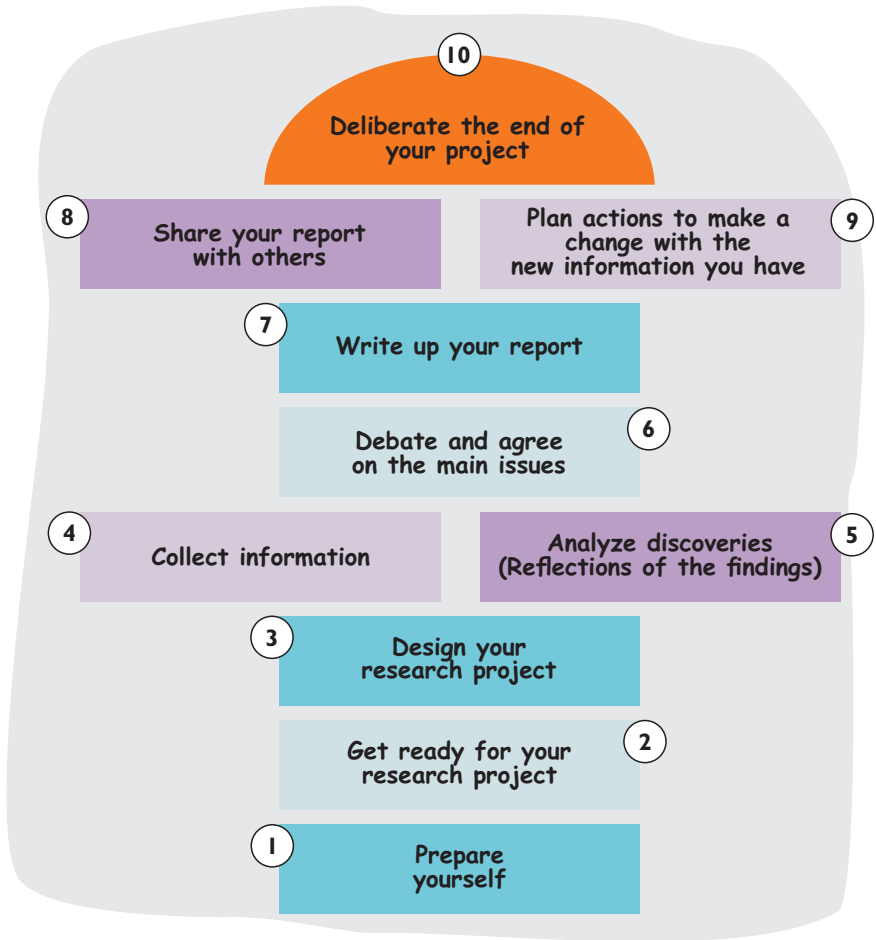
As part of the research design, the researchers agreed to interview the following number of children per community; Akotoshie (40), Medie (30) and Kotoku (30).

Respondents by criteria determined by the research team should be between 12-18 years of age.

It was also agreed that for ethical reasons boys should interview boys while the girls interviewed their fellow girls to bring out the issues.

The Process

The selected children were guided using the research methodology through the ten steps outlined to guide CAY research. These included the following:



Time Frame and Coverage

The research was conducted between November 2016 and March 2017 covering the Akotoshie, Medie, Kotoku / Dovlo communities in the Ga West Municipality of the Greater Accra Region.

CHAPTER FIVE



1.1 Sex of Respondents

100 respondents were interviewed during the research in the GaWest Municipality.

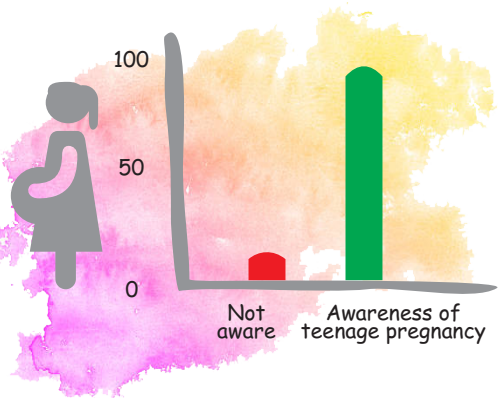
Forty (40) respondents interviewed were from Akotoshie community, 30 from Medie community and the remaining 30 also from Kotoku community. The number of boys and girls interviewed were 50 each.

1.2 Knowledge and Awareness of Teenage Pregnancy

Teenage pregnancy generally is the condition by which a child below 18 years has engaged herself in sexual act and has become pregnant. All 100 respondents from the three communities demonstrated understanding and awareness of teenage pregnancy.

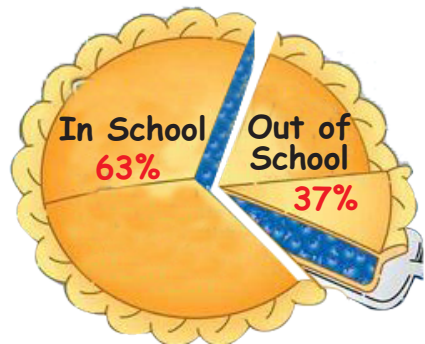
1.3 Awareness of Teenage Pregnancy Incidence in the Communities

The bar chart shows the awareness level of respondents of teenage pregnancy issues in the Ga South Municipality. 29 people from the Medie community, thirty-eight (38) people and twenty-seven (27) people from the Kotoku group were aware of teenage pregnancy cases in their respective communities. Only six (6) people were not aware of teenage pregnancy cases in the Community.



1.4 An analysis of where Victims of Teenage Pregnancy were before the Incidence

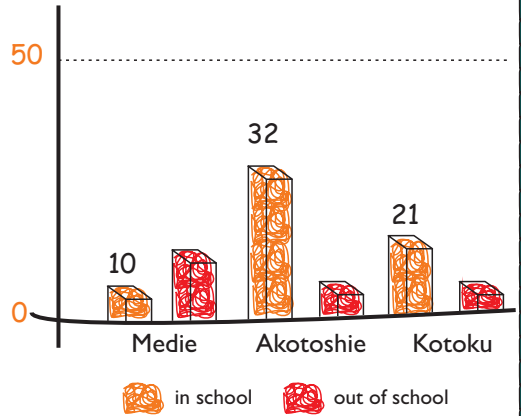
From the pie chart, it can be observed that, out of the 100 respondents that were interviewed 63 of the respondents indicated that most teenage girls who got pregnant were in school while the remaining 37 people indicated that, the teenage girls who got pregnant were out of school.



A pie chart showing whether victim were in school or out of school

From the bar chart above, it can be deduced that, out of the 30 respondent that were interviewed at Medie community, 20 of the respondents explained that, the girls were in school while the remaining 10 people were out of school.

At Akotoshie community, 32 of the respondents also indicated that, 32 of the victims were in school while the remaining 8 were out of school. The research also ascertained from Kotoku community where 21 respondents indicated that, the victims were in school, while the remaining 9 people were out of school.



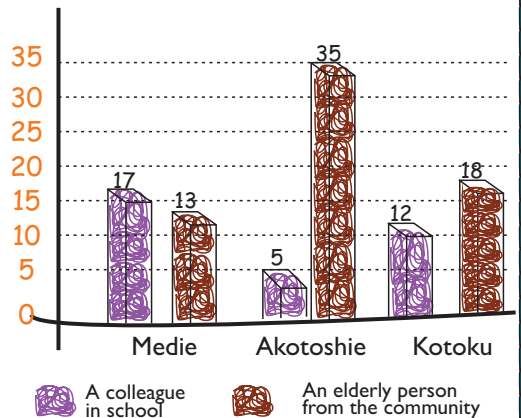
An analysis of where victims of teenage pregnancy were before the incidence

1.5 An Analysis of who the Perpetrators of Teenage Pregnancy are

From the bar graph, it is observed that most of teenage pregnancy was caused by colleagues in school at Medie. Hence 57% of respondents agreed with the observation while 43% said it is by adults or elderly people in the communities.

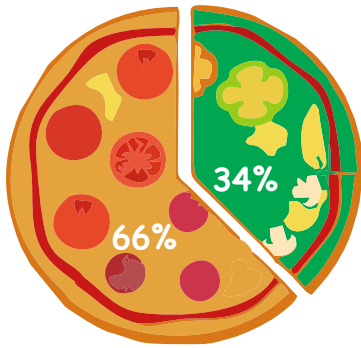
Unlike Medie, in Akotoshie community only 12% said teenage pregnancy was caused by a colleague student and the remaining 88% said it was by an adult in the community.

At Kotoku community the response was not different. However, the difference between those who said it was caused by colleagues in school was close to those who said it was by adults in the community. Forty percent (40%) of respondents said it was caused by colleagues in school while 60% said it was caused by adults in the community.



An Analysis of Perpetrators of teenage Pregnancy

The pie chart indicates that 66% of teenage pregnancies in the communities was by an adult or elderly person while 34% was by colleague students also in the community.



- colleague in school
- elderly person in the community

An Analysis of who the Perpetrators of Teenage Pregnancy are in the community

1.6 An Analysis of causes of Teenage Pregnancy

The three groups identified peculiar causes of teenage pregnancy in their communities. The group identified the causes that run through all the group presentations. The 3 groups then ranked the top most causes of teenage pregnancy from their communities.

1.6.1 Medie Community



1. Poverty
2. Lack of education
3. Broken homes
4. Peer pressure
5. Lack of parental care
6. Single parenting

1.6.2 Akotoshie Community



1. Broken Homes
2. Bad peer pressure
3. Poverty
4. Lack of Parental Care
5. Streetism
6. Lack of Education

1.6.3 Kotoku Community



1. Lack of parental care
2. Peer Pressure
3. Curiosity
4. Broken homes
5. Lack of education
6. Poverty

1.7 Cross themes of causes of Teenage Pregnancy

After the identification of the various causes of the teenage pregnancy in the three communities, the team then identified common causes in all the communities.

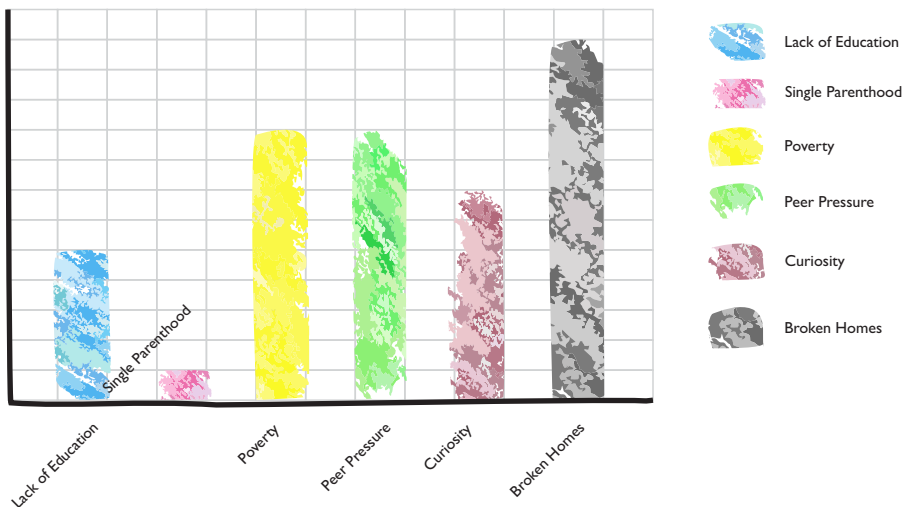
The following causes were ascertained

1. Poverty
2. Peer pressure
3. Lack of education
4. Broken Homes
5. Curiosity
6. Single parenting

The team ranked the causes to identify the 3 most crucial causes of teenage pregnancy that needs to be addressed immediately or later in the ladder of ranking.

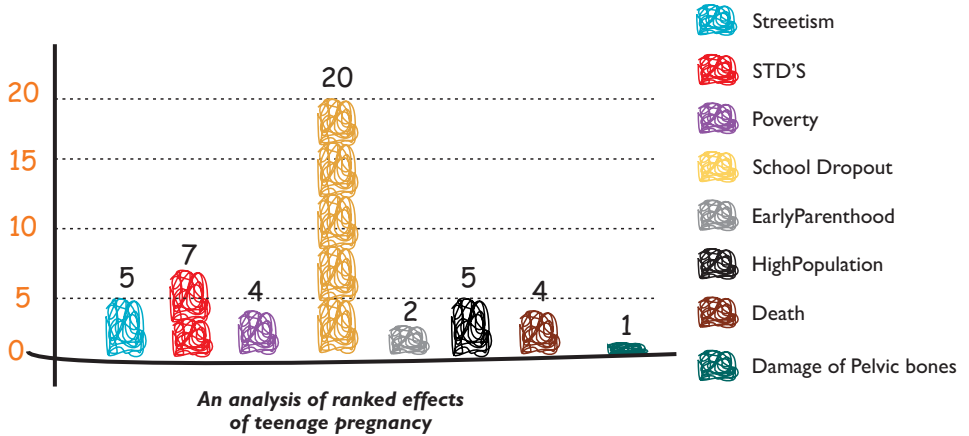
From the bar graph, it is observed that the cause with the highest number of respondents was broken homes (11) followed by peer pressure and poverty. In the third place was curiosity (7). The explanation being that most girls want to experiment sex and as they attempt, they get pregnant.

Number of votes per themes of causes of teenage pregnancy



1.8 An Analysis of Effects of Teenage Pregnancy

The study revealed streetism, sexually transmitted diseases, poverty, early parenthood, high population, death and damage of pelvic bones during delivery as the effects of teenage pregnancy. On the ladder of the most common effect on teenage girls, dropping out of school was ranked the highest as illustrated on the bar graph above followed by STDs, streetism and high population among others.



1.9 Specific Scenerios of Reasons why Teenagers get Pregnant

As part of the research, the team engaged with selected girls who have experienced teenage pregnancy and ready to share what they have been through in the Kotoku and Akotoshie communities. Difficult though the exercise was, because they did not want disclosure, the teenage girls opted to provide brief testimonies which were captured almost verbatim in the local language and translated into English.

I got pregnant because of lack of care from my parents and as a result, I had to take care of myself by going after men

I needed money to register for my basic school certificate examination when I was in my final year and could only do so sleeping with boys to get money leading to pregnancy

I lived with my mother who could not afford to pay my fees and so my friends advised me to have sex with boys so that they can help me in my schooling but it ended me getting pregnant

For me, it was lack of sex education. Since I was not enrolled in school. I engaged in sexual activity and that is how I got pregnant

I used to live with my uncle and he is the one who takes good care of me. So when I reach my adolescent age, my uncle started sleeping with me. So I decided to go and report my uncle. But my uncle told me that if I go and report, he will kill me. So I didn't go and report that is how I got pregnant.

I lived with my stepmother who was so wicked to me. She does not take good care of me. She forced me to sleep with boys and take money from them, so I ended up getting pregnant

My parents divorced and were staying separately, so I decided to stay with my mother who started bringing men into the house to have sex and through that I got involved with men and I became pregnant

Motivations

It was an opportunity to educate children in our communities especially those who did not know anything about teenage pregnancy

"We are excited about the experience and ability to undertake a research that will bear our names .We never thought we could do it but we have done it"

Challenges

- Framing of research questions
 - Initial difficulty of understanding of how to state the main research question
- Time of the data collection coincided with vacation making difficult to assess respondents
- Unwillingness of respondents to express themselves on the subject matter
- Respondents expectation of support from the interviewer such as request for money before answering questions
- Sarcastic/rude attitude from respondents
- Fear of non-confidentiality
- Request for refreshment by some respondents before responding to questions
- Multiple follow-ups with respondents
- Language barrier with some respondents

CHAPTER SIX

Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusion

The research found out that teenage pregnancy was rife and thus affected the educational development of girls in Akotoshie. It was evident that 66% of teenage pregnancies was by adults, while 34% was by peers. The research also found out that the causes of teenage pregnancy was due to the following; poverty, lack of education, broken homes, peer pressure, lack of parental care and single parenting. The research also identified the following as effects of teenage pregnancy; contraction of sexually transmitted diseases, poverty, early parenthood, high population, death and damage of pelvic bones during delivery and school dropout.

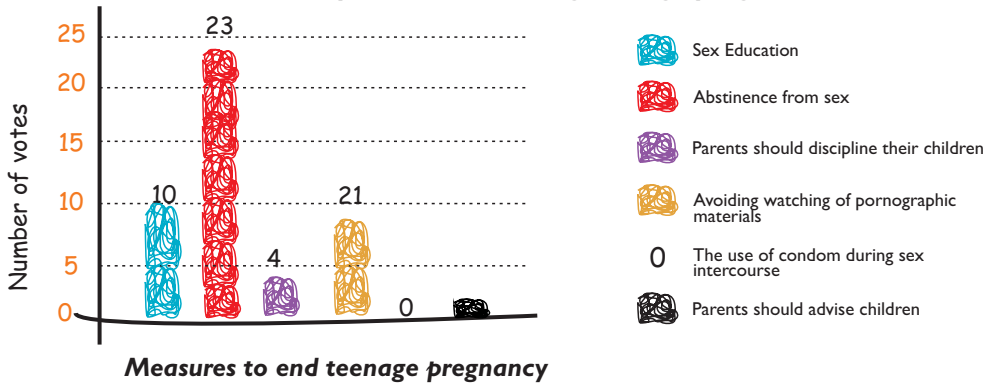
Recommendations

Respondents suggested sex education, abstinence from sex, parents should discipline their children, children should avoid watching pornographic materials, the use of condoms during sexual intercourse and also parents should advise their children.

Respondents suggested the following recommendations to the research team;

- Children should be taken through sex education, abstinence from sex to make them more aware of the consequences
- Parents should discipline their children,
- Children should avoid watching pornographic materials,
- Teenagers who engage in early and unsafe sex should protect themselves by adopting family planning measures including the use of condoms
- Parents should advise their children on the consequences of unplanned pregnancies.
- Sex education must be intensified both at school and community levels
- Perpetrators of teenage pregnancy must be prosecuted.
- Children clubs and health clubs must be formed in various communities to educate members on personal life skills and opportunities
- Child protection committees should be formed in all communities.

Recommendations by respondents on ending teenage pregnancy



From the bar chart above, it can be observed that, the major solution to teenage pregnancy is that children abstain from sex. Sex education should be intensified to help address some of the cases of teenage pregnancy and educate people to avoid watching pornographic films.

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