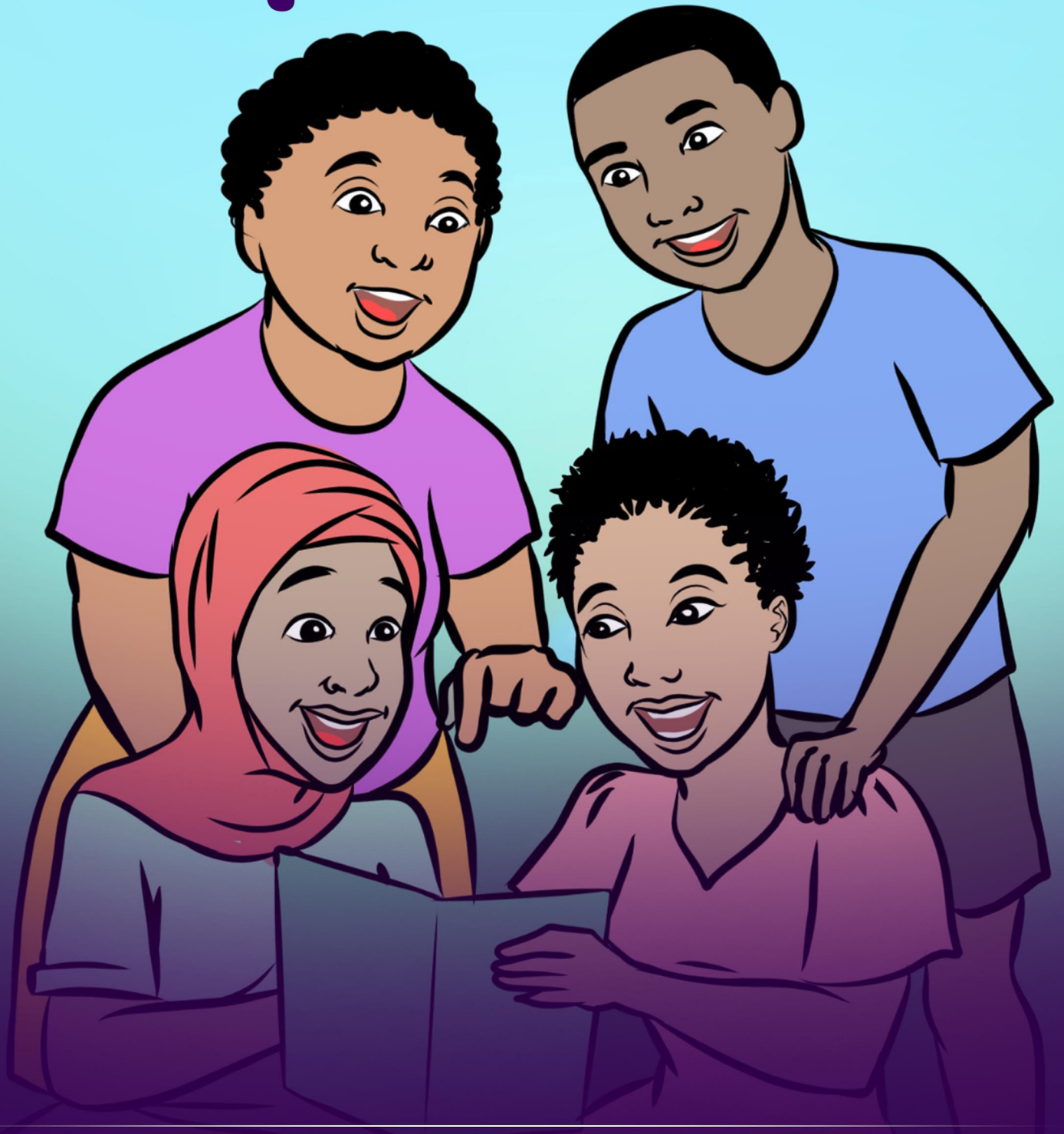


# Get & Up Speak Out



EMPOWERING YOUNG PEOPLE IN SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH  
AND IN THE SCHOOL READMISSION POLICY IN MALAWI



## PREFACE

This guide had been developed to support the efforts of the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology (MoEST), UNESCO and UNFPA to reduce and eliminate EUP among adolescents, improve life skills–based HIV and sexuality education and improve access to youth–friendly Sexual Reproductive Health (SRH) services.

In November 2019, the MoEST was supported by UNESCO and UNFPA to launch the revised School Readmission Policy alongside UNESCO's Early and Unintended Pregnancy (EUP) campaign "Let's talk!." With support from UNESCO, HeR Liberty youth–led organisation developed this Get Up and Speak Out (GUSO) guide as part of the EUP campaign that is aimed to support adolescents aged 15–19 years of age to learn more about their SRH and build their confidence to stand up and speak out on the school readmission policy. This guide contributes to the body of knowledge on SRH in Malawi and is informed by existing National Comprehensive Sexuality Education curriculums.



# **Preface<sup>1</sup>**

**What do these letters stand for?**

## **Introduction**

Why do you have this book?

What is in the GUSO Guide?

## **Part A**

### **Puberty**

What is puberty?

Feelings during puberty

Changes that happen in boys

Changes that happen in girls

### **Love and Sexual Feelings**

### **Menstruation**

What is menstruation?

### **Personal Period Care**

### **Pregnancy**

How does pregnancy happen?

How do I know if I am pregnant?

### **Early and unintended pregnancy**

What are the consequences of EUP?

What if I fall pregnant while I am in school?

What will happen to the boys responsible for the pregnancy?

Myths and misconceptions about pregnancy

Real-life stories from adolescents who experienced EUP

### **Prevention of EUP**

Abstinence

Learn more about contraceptives

Myths about contraceptives:

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Pregnancy in cases of rape or sexual assault:

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## **Sexually Transmitted Infections**

How to prevent STIs?

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What is HIV?

Stages of HIV

How do people get HIV?

How can I reduce the risk of getting HIV?

## **Relationships**

### **a) Family relationships**

Have you heard about parent-child communication?

Why should I talk to my parents/guardians about pregnancy and STIs?

### **b) Peer relationships**

### **c) Male-female relationships**

What is a healthy relationship?

What is an unhealthy relationship?

What should you do if you are in an unhealthy relationship?

Questions about having sex

## **In Summary**

## **Part B**

### **a) Learning about the school Readmission Policy**

### **b) Get Up!**

Know the Stakeholders

Know how to talk about the problem

Rights and responsibilities

### **Speak out!**

Knowing your goals for Speaking out

How can you approach an EUP and school dropout challenge at school?

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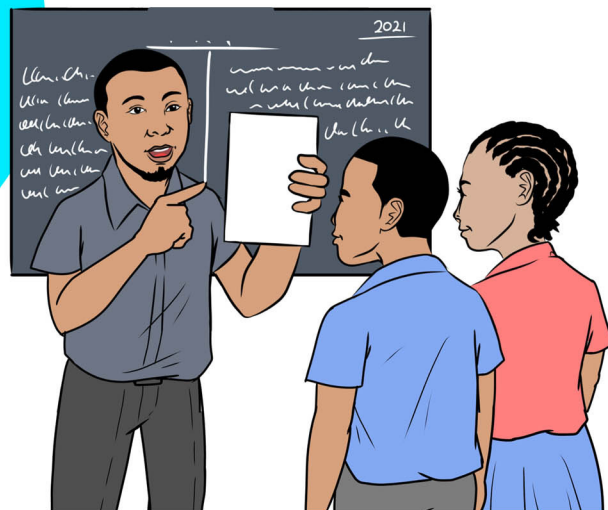
# WHAT DO THESE LETTERS STAND FOR?

When going through this book, there can be something that you do not understand, like capital letters that look like a word, for example: SRH. This is called an abbreviation; each letter stands for a certain word. When you see an abbreviation and do not remember what it stands for, you can check on this list.

<b>AIDS</b>	Acquired immunodeficiency syndrome
<b>CVSU</b>	Community Victim Support Unit
<b>EUP</b>	Early and Unintended Pregnancy
<b>GBV</b>	Gender Based Violence
<b>HIV</b>	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
<b>ICT</b>	Information Communication Technology
<b>MoEST</b>	Ministry of Education Science and Technology
<b>OSC</b>	One-Stop Centers
<b>PEP</b>	Post-Exposure Prophylaxis
<b>PrEP</b>	Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis
<b>SGBV</b>	Sexual and Gender-Based Violence
<b>SRHS</b>	Sexual Reproductive Health services
<b>STI</b>	Sexually Transmitted Infection
<b>UNESCO</b>	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
<b>UNFPA</b>	United Nations Population Fund
<b>VMMC</b>	Voluntary Medical Male Circumcision



# INTRODUCTION



Growing up is not easy, there are a lot of changes happening to your body and it is important to understand what is happening to you, especially when you begin to experience puberty, fall in love and start getting into relationships. It is important to learn about your sexual health so that you can make wise choices about your body, life and future.

We want to make sure you have a bright future and that will require for you to finish school. Did you know that there are girls aged between age 10–18 experiencing teenage pregnancies? You might know someone in your school or community that got pregnant at a very young age and had to drop out of school. When you get pregnant at this age, it can prevent you from finishing school.

When you fall pregnant and drop out of school, it can be very difficult to return. You might feel scared and ashamed. You might also have challenges at home with poverty or not have anyone to help you look after your baby when you decide to return to school. But Malawi has a policy called the School Readmission Policy that can help you return to school. This book is going to tell you about the policy too.

## WHY DO YOU HAVE THIS BOOK?

This book will help build your knowledge, delay sex until you are ready to enjoy a healthy relationship that you have agreed to and practice safe sex to avoid HIV and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs). It will address questions you could have, fears, myths, and misconceptions. This book will also help you learn about the School Readmission Policy and how you can use the policy for yourself or to help a friend who got pregnant and needs to return to school.

PART  
A



PUBERTY

LOVE AND SEXUAL FEELINGS

MENSTRUATION

PREGNANCY

SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS

HIV AND AIDS

RELATIONSHIPS



## PART B

### **GET UP**

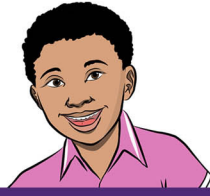
Learning about the revised  
School Readmission Policy  
Rights and responsibilities  
of the Head Teacher

### **SPEAK OUT**

How to approach the  
Head Teacher, school  
administrators and  
community leaders  
How to make sure  
girls return to school



# PUBERTY



Hello, my name is Chikondi.



Hello, my name is Chimwemwe.



I am in standard 6 and I am here to help you learn about puberty



I am also in standard 6 and I am here to help you learn about puberty, especially on the boys' experience"

## What is puberty?

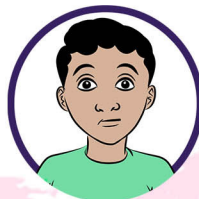
This is the time when our bodies transform from a child's to an adult's body. During this time, we can go through many changes and new experiences. Your emotions might feel different and more intense— it can be confusing! People usually start going through puberty between the ages of 8 and 14. Girls often start puberty before boys do.

## Feelings during puberty

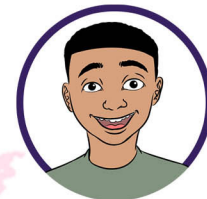
Puberty is controlled by hormones (hormones are special chemicals your body makes to help it do certain things— like grow up! For example estrogen and progesterone), and these hormones affect your feelings as well as your body. You might experience any of the following feelings:



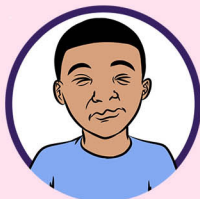
CURIOUS



UNCOMFORTABLE



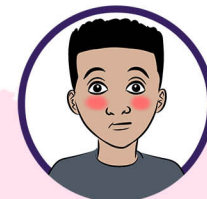
EXCITED



DISGUSTED



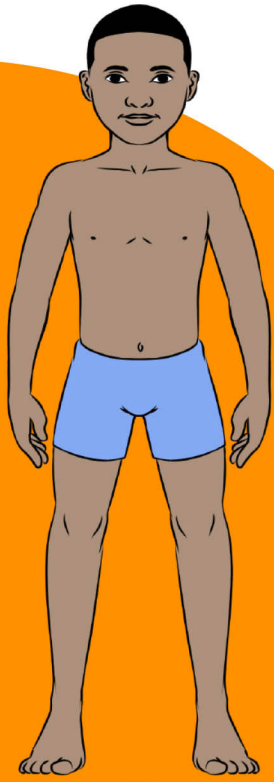
SHY



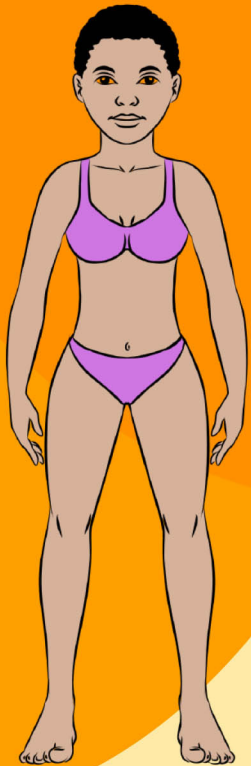
EMBARRASSED

These feelings can happen when talking to friends, family or even someone you may have a crush on.

Besides feelings, there are some physical body changes that happen too!



- Their testicles get bigger
- Their penis grows
- Hair grows under their arms and genitals
- They start to sweat more
- Sperm matures and wet dreams begin ("You must be wondering what wet dreams are? Don't worry we will learn more about wet dreams in the next section")
- Their voice gets deeper
- They may develop pimples
- They become taller and more muscular
- Hair starts to grow on the face, chest, and back



- They grow taller.
- They start to get pimples.
- Their breasts develop and grow.
- They start to sweat more.
- Hair grows under their arms and genitals.
- Their hips get wider and their bodies may even become curvier.
- They release more vaginal fluid.
- Ovaries mature, they start getting their period and can become pregnant.

Puberty can be a very strange time in your life, but it is a biological process that has to happen. Finding activities that are fun and healthy can help you deal with stress and any feelings that are bothering you. Some examples of coping strategies are:

- Exercising
- Eating well especially fruits and vegetables
- Sharing how you feel with family, friends, or religious leaders
- Reading
- Laughing
- Doing something you enjoy
- Participating in community activities
- Eating well especially fruits and vegetables
- Sharing how you feel with family, friends, or religious leaders
- Reading
- Laughing
- Doing something you enjoy
- Participating in community activities

Can you write down three experiences or emotions you have experienced during Puberty and list out three coping strategies you are using or are going to start using?

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### DID YOU KNOW?

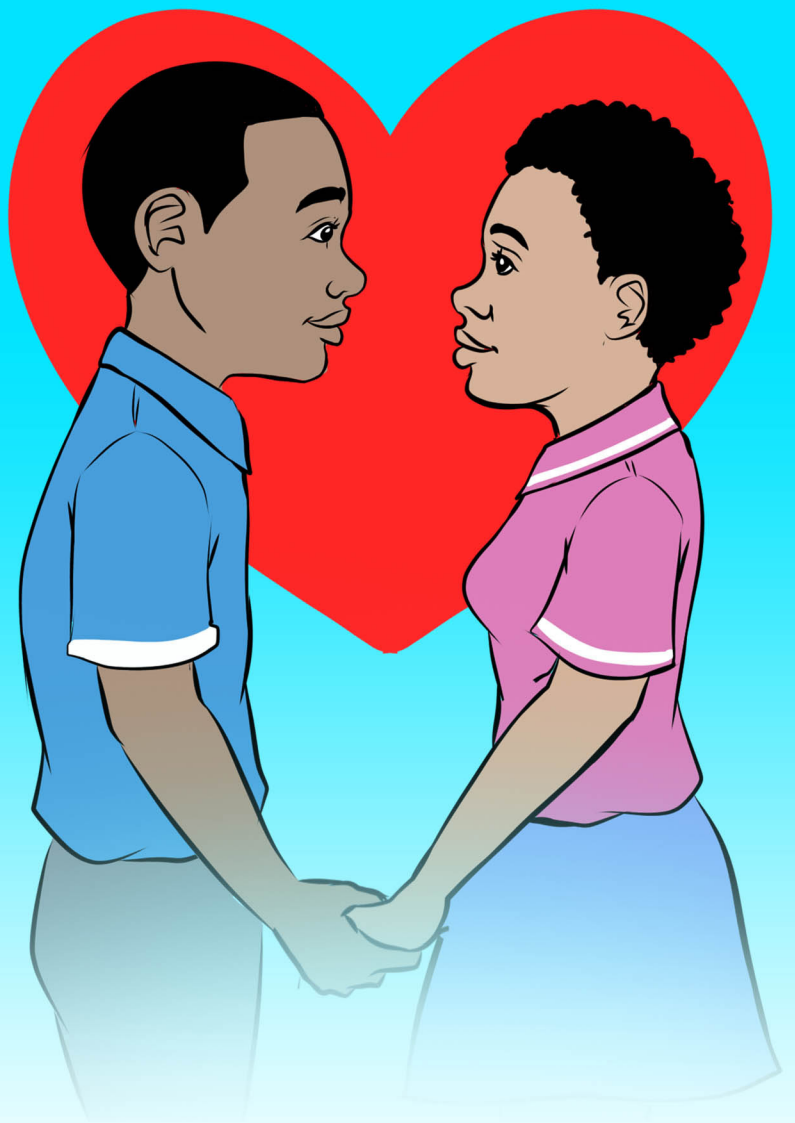
Everyone changes at their speed during puberty. Some of your friends may develop faster than you but in time, everybody catches up. Remember that there is no right or wrong way to look. It is important to love yourself just the way you are.



**LOVE**

**AND**

**SEXUAL FEELINGS**



As your body begins to change with puberty, you will probably notice that you develop new emotional feelings too. This is a moment in your life when you tell your friends or best friend that you “like” or have a “crush” on someone. Sometimes when you “like” or have a “crush” on someone you can experience some physical changes during puberty that tell your body to prepare itself to have a child. But this does not mean you should go ahead and have a child when you feel like this. First, it is important to understand what is happening to your body at this stage and then you can learn more about making the right decisions on who to date and when the best time to have children is. This book will help guide you on that decision too.

# WHAT ARE WET DREAMS?



AS A BOY, WHEN WE HAVE SEXUAL FEELINGS, YOU CAN GET ERECTIONS AND HAVE WET DREAMS.

During puberty, the body produces a hormone called testosterone that tells the testicles to start making sperm. Once the body starts making sperm, semen (which is the fluid that contains sperm) is released through the penis. This is called ejaculation. So wet dreams happen when ejaculation occurs spontaneously while a boy is sleeping and having a dream of a sexual nature. Sometimes, when you have that first wet dream, you may think you have peed on the bed or mattress or clothing, but it can be semen. Wet dreams are normal if you have them and normal if you don't. You don't have to feel guilty or shy when it happens to you.

With adolescent girls, they can have wet dreams too but wet dreams with them may result in a sexual stimulation that results in a pleasurable feeling which is also called an orgasm as well as the vagina releasing body fluids known as vaginal secretions.



AS A GIRL, WHEN YOU HAVE SEXUAL FEELINGS, YOU MAY FEEL THE WETNESS IN YOUR VAGINA AND SWELLING OF YOUR BREASTS.

## So what about sexual arousal?

This might happen in situations like:

- When you are relaxed
- When you are anxious or frightened
- When you feel attracted to someone for no reason at all

Being attracted to or loving someone does not mean you have to have sex with them! There are many ways of expressing your feelings, whether sexual or not, as we will see later.



# MENSTRUATION



OKAY BOYS AND GIRLS, I WILL TAKE YOU THROUGH THE TOPIC OF MENSTRUATION. BOYS DON'T FEEL LIKE THIS IS JUST FOR GIRLS. YOU NEED TO UNDERSTAND WHAT HAPPENS TO A GIRL'S BODY TOO.

## WHAT IS MENSTRUATION?

Menstruation is also known as 'getting your period.' A period is the 2–7 days that a girl or woman has her menstrual flow, which is when blood and tissue leave her body through the vagina. Each month, blood and tissue build up in the uterus (the place inside the woman's body where a baby will grow) to prepare for a fertilized egg in case a woman becomes pregnant. Fertilization occurs when the male sperm combines with the female egg (ovum) through sexual intercourse. The fertilized egg plants itself into the uterus and pregnancy happens. If the egg isn't fertilized, that uterus lining leaves the body through the vagina and the girl or woman has her period.

### Something that you should know;

Although females menstruate each month, periods are irregular for many people.

Do not be afraid if this happens to you.

It is important to know the truth about menstruation. We will now look at some facts.

- Menstruation is an important change in a girl's life and means that she is now able to become pregnant. It is a natural and healthy process. It is important to fully understand the process of menstruation. Let's look at some facts:



- Ovulation usually happens 12–16 days before menstruation begins. If a woman's cycle is shorter or longer than 28 days, ovulation will not occur in the middle of her cycle. This is normal and it is something you should not worry about.
- Sperm can live inside a woman's body for up to seven days. So, if a woman with a short cycle has unprotected sex during the last two days of her cycle and ovulates 3–4 days later, the sperm can still be alive and potentially fertilize the egg.
- Different women have different cycle lengths. The length of a cycle can be anywhere between 21 and 35 days or even longer. How often a woman gets her period depends on the length of her cycle. It can be shorter or longer than one month. Her cycle can also be regular (always about the same length) or irregular (different lengths). More than 4 out of 10 women have cycles that vary by more than 7 days each month.
- Medication, illness, stress, depression, and poor nutrition can all change the menstrual cycle.
- The days immediately after the period ends can be very risky for getting pregnant, depending on the girl's cycle. The only safe time during the menstrual cycle is the days after ovulation. However, it is difficult to know exactly when ovulation has occurred unless you keep a calendar of your cycle.
- Many adolescents have painful periods. They can take common pain medication like Panado or Ibuprofen.
- Contraceptives (methods of birth control) can be used to prevent girls from getting pregnant. Some examples of contraceptives are condoms, pills, injections, and the patch. (learn more about contraceptives on page 22–23)

## PERSONAL PERIOD CARE

Personal period care is also called menstrual hygiene management. This is about hygiene practices during menstruation. Now that you know what is happening in your body during your period, let's talk about care and hygiene during 'that time of the month.'

Girls, when you are on your periods, you need to make sure you use:

- Menstrual hygiene products to absorb or collect the flow of blood during menstruation (this can be sanitary pads).
- Private facilities to change your sanitary pad or any other period product as often as necessary for the duration of the period (e.g., toilets).
- Wash your body and keep your vagina clean daily or as required.

Good menstrual hygiene helps to protect you from bacterial infections and vaginal irritations, and other health problems. It can help maintain confidence, self-esteem and ensure you feel comfortable with your bodies when you are menstruating.

## WHAT IS CARE AND HYGIENE DURING YOUR PERIODS?

- Always wash your hands and change sanitary pad or any other period product every 2–4 hours or 4–6 hours.
- Wash your vagina twice a day with warm water.
- Wear clean underwear every day and change if you feel like the panties are wet from discharge.
- Once used, wrap up your sanitary pad or any other period with tissue paper and throw it in a bin. Never throw the pad in the toilet, it can block toilets. Do not throw it outside in the bush either, it is bad for the environment.
- If you use reusable pads, make sure you wash reusable sanitary pads once used and dry them in the sunlight.



### DID YOU KNOW?



Menstruation is a completely natural process and it is important to use menstrual sanitary pads when we are on our periods so that we do not leak and mess our dresses, skirts or where we sit or sleep.

## PREGNANCY



IN THE OTHER SECTION, WE TALKED ABOUT MENSTRUATION. NOW LET US TALK ABOUT PREGNANCY.

Pregnancy happens when you have sexual intercourse. This is when a man or boy inserts his penis into a woman's or girl's vagina and releases sperm that fertilizes the egg.

### How does pregnancy happen?



#### Here is an explanation on the process of fertilization again:









Once every menstrual cycle, ovulation happens, which means one ovary releases an egg. When the egg leaves the ovary, it begins to travel down the fallopian tube towards the uterus. After the man ejaculates semen into the woman's vagina, the sperm contained in the semen begin to swim towards the egg. On average, each time men ejaculate they release nearly 100 million sperms, but it takes only one sperm to fertilize the egg. When the sperm finds the egg, one of them may enter it. This joining of sperm and egg is called fertilization. If you have unprotected sex at the time of ovulation or in the five days immediately before it, then pregnancy can occur.



## How do I know if I am pregnant?

The safest way to know if you are pregnant is to visit a Youth Friendly Health Clinic or Health Center to have a pregnancy test two or three weeks after having unprotected sex.

Here are some symptoms of pregnancy that can alert you:

-  Feeling like vomiting but not vomiting
-  Vomiting
-  Headaches
-  Tiredness
-  Faintness and dizziness
-  Disliking or craving food
-  Missed period
-  Tender, swollen breasts



### NB:

Sometimes, these symptoms just mean that you are sick or that you are going to have your period so it is important to get a pregnancy test to know for sure, whether you are pregnant or not.

Can you think of other ways you can get pregnant? List them down below:

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### DID YOU KNOW?

A girl can get pregnant without having penetrative sexual intercourse if the sperm comes into contact with her vagina.

# EARLY AND UNINTENDED PREGNANCY



NOW THAT YOU KNOW HOW PREGNANCY HAPPENS, WHAT IS EARLY AND UNINTENDED PREGNANCY (EUP) ALL ABOUT?

The term early relates to an underage and unplanned pregnancy. These pregnancies increase the risk of negative health and social consequences for the mother and her newborn. Unfortunately, EUPs are common in Malawi and often lead girls to drop out of or be expelled from school, resulting in long-term negative consequences such as poverty, substance abuse and child marriage.

## WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE CAUSES OF EUP?

### CAUSE

### EXPLANATION



#### LACK OF KNOWLEDGE

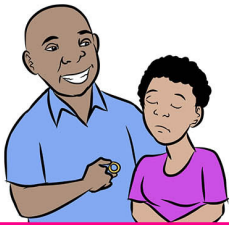
ACCESS TO CLEAR AND ACCURATE INFORMATION ABOUT PREGNANCY AND STIs, INCLUDING HIV, AND OTHER RELATED SUBJECTS IS IMPORTANT.

SO THAT ADOLESCENTS HAVE THE KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS TO MAKE INFORMED AND HEALTHY DECISIONS.



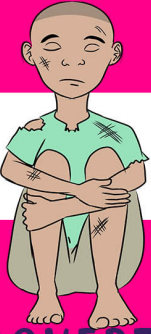
#### SUBSTANCE ABUSE

ALCOHOL AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE INCREASE RISKY BEHAVIOR BECAUSE THEY CAN IMPAIR JUDGMENT AND LEAD TO UNPROTECTED SEX, AS WELL AS INCREASE VULNERABILITY TO BEING ABUSED OR TAKEN ADVANTAGE OF.



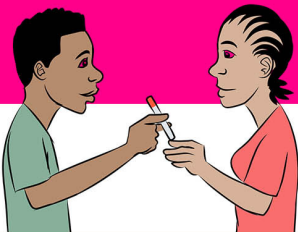
## CHILD MARRIAGE

CHILD MARRIAGE INCREASES THE CHANCES OF EARLY PREGNANCY. ADOLESCENTS WHO MARRY EARLY ARE LESS LIKELY TO USE CONTRACEPTION TO DELAY THE FIRST PREGNANCY.



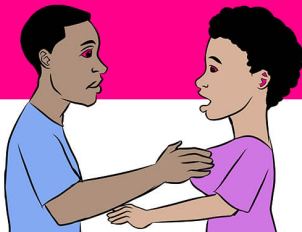
## POVERTY

POVERTY CAN LEAD ADOLESCENTS TO ENGAGE IN RELATIONSHIPS WITH OLDER MEN AND WOMEN WHO PROVIDE THEM WITH MONEY, CLOTHES, FOOD, AND OTHER MATERIAL THINGS IN EXCHANGE FOR SEX. MOST ADOLESCENTS IN THESE SITUATIONS ARE UNABLE TO REFUSE UNPROTECTED SEX.



## PEER PRESSURE

ADOLESCENT GIRLS AND BOYS TEND TO COPY EACH OTHER'S BEHAVIOUR AND MAY INDIRECTLY INFLUENCE, OR DIRECTLY PRESSURIZE, THEIR PEERS INTO ENGAGING IN EARLY SEXUAL ACTIVITY. GIRLS WHO ARE PRESSURIZED ARE MORE LIKELY TO GET PREGNANT THAN THOSE WHO DO NOT RECEIVE PRESSURE.



## SEXUAL ABUSE

SEXUAL ABUSE, INCLUDING RAPE, CAN LEAD TO PREGNANCY. IN MOST SEXUAL ABUSE CASES THERE IS NO USE OF PROTECTION, WHICH ALSO INCREASES THE RISK OF HIV AND OTHER STIS.



## IMPROPER USE OF INFORMATION COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

APPROPRIATE USE OF ICT CAN ENHANCE ADOLESCENTS' KNOWLEDGE AND DEVELOPMENT. HOWEVER, IF ABUSED, ICT CAN HAVE NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES. FOR EXAMPLE, DOWNLOADING AND SHARING PORNOGRAPHIC MATERIAL CAN PROPEL ADOLESCENTS TO WANT TO EXPERIMENT AMONG THEMSELVES OR WITH OLDER PEOPLE, WHICH CAN LEAD TO RISKY SEXUAL SITUATIONS.





## HARMFUL SOCIAL, CULTURAL, AND RELIGIOUS PRACTICES

THERE ARE SEVERAL HARMFUL TRADITIONAL, RELIGIOUS, AND CULTURAL PRACTICES IN OUR COMMUNITIES THAT CAN LEAD TO ADOLESCENT PREGNANCIES. THESE INCLUDE FISI, KULOWA KUFA, KUCHOTSA FUMBI AND CHILD MARRIAGES.



## LACK OF ACCESS TO SRH SERVICES

SRH SERVICES, INCLUDING CONTRACEPTION, ARE INACCESSIBLE TO MANY YOUNG PEOPLE AS A RESULT OF HIGH COST, JUDGMENTAL SERVICE PROVIDERS AND LONG DISTANCES.



# WHAT ARE THE CONSEQUENCES OF EUP?

## Physical consequences

- Physical health risks for the mother include pregnancy complications, such as obstetric fistula and uterine rupture, unsafe abortions, and maternal death.
- Physical health risks for the child include pre-term births, low birth weight, malnutrition, and child mortality.
- Emotional stress, particularly if the girl has been rejected by her partner, family, and community, can lead to low self-esteem, depression (feeling very unhappy and sad), substance abuse, and even suicide.

## Educational consequences

- School dropout or expulsion are common.
- Educational development can be affected by pregnancy through tiredness and lack of concentration. Pregnant adolescent girls struggle learning as they suffer from anxiety and depression which affects the learning process and feel like missing classes for medical reasons.
- Adolescent mothers risk falling behind with schoolwork due to their double responsibility as learners and mothers.
- Not completing school can lead to fewer livelihood options such as finding a job or starting a business, and therefore limited economic independence.

## Social consequences

- EUP is highly stigmatized in Malawi. Pregnant girls are often shamed both at school and in their communities.
- Getting pregnant early can lead to early marriage as the girl is forced to marry the father of her baby.
- Some girls are neglected and shamed by their families and are left with no place to stay and this can result in further sexual abuse.



## What if I fall pregnant while I am in school?



EUP threatens school completion because of school dropout but this does not need to be the case! Girls are encouraged to return to school after giving birth so that they can finish school and still follow their dreams for a better future.

The revised Readmission Policy for Primary and Secondary Schools in Malawi allows learners who fall pregnant while they go to school “to take leave from school to deliver and come back to school six months after delivery”. The learner can also be allowed to come back before the six months if she is coming to sit for examinations.

School Head Teachers also have an obligation to support the female pregnant student and to facilitate her re-enrolment in the same standard or form (example standard 8 class or form 2) which she was before she took leave to deliver her child. The school Head Teachers can facilitate the transfer of the same learner to another school as well, provided the parents/ guardians and the learner agree.



WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO THE BOYS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE PREGNANCY?

### The boy will also be withdrawn and will have to fill in readmission forms to return back to school

It is important that both the boy and girl receives counseling from a member of staff. This counselling should include, developing an understanding of the need for supporting the girl morally, emotionally, and financially. When the female learner return to school, she should also recieve counselling from a mamber of stuff to help her adjust.

The boy should be made aware of the consequences of accepting or denying that he is the father, and of the possible consequences of providing false information. It must be made clear to them that all pregnancy perpetrators especially forced sex will be reported to appropriate authorities such as the police.



## What is abortion?

Abortion, or termination of pregnancy, is when a pregnancy is ended so that it does not result in the birth of a child. Abortion must be taken seriously. In Malawi, abortion is only allowed by law if the pregnancy poses a danger to the life of the mother.

### Something that you should know about abortion:

“ It is illegal and extremely dangerous to let an untrained person give you an abortion, or try to do it yourself. This is what they call unsafe abortion. It can cause severe infection to your sexual organs, loss of fertility, and even death. It can also lead to arrest as it is a criminal offense. ”

I know it is scary when you get pregnant, and you did not plan for it. Do not be afraid and know that there are people you can talk to. It is important to talk to your parents even if you are scared because they can help you too. You can also speak to someone at your nearest youth friendly health corner, health facility and church leaders who can find ways to support and help you.

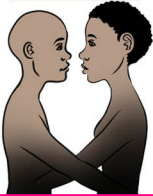


# MYTHS AND MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT PREGNANCY

## MYTHS



I WILL NOT  
GET PREGNANT  
IF I HAVE SEX  
DURING MY  
PERIOD.



I WILL NOT  
GET PREGNANT  
IF I HAVE  
SEX WHILE  
STANDING.



I WILL NOT  
GET PREGNANT  
IF I SHOWER  
IMMEDIATELY  
AFTER SEX.



IF I HAVE SEX  
WITH SOMEONE  
MUCH OLDER THAN  
MYSELF, I WON'T  
GET PREGNANT.



IF I USE  
A CONDOM,  
IT'S 100%  
PROTECTION AGAINST  
PREGNANCY.

## FACTS

YOU ARE STILL FERTILE WHILE YOU ARE MENSTRUATING AND THEREFORE CAN GET PREGNANT IF YOU ENGAGE IN UNPROTECTED SEX DURING THIS TIME.

ENGAGING IN SEXUAL ACTIVITY IN ANY POSITION CAN RESULT IN PREGNANCY.

ONCE THE SPERM IS INSIDE YOUR BODY, WASHING YOURSELF WILL STOP IT FROM ENTERING AND REACHING THE OVUM. SHOWERING WILL ALSO NOT PREVENT HIV OR OTHER STIs.

IT DOES NOT MATTER WHAT AGE THE MALE PARTNER IS BECAUSE WHEN IT COMES TO MALE FERTILITY, THEY WILL ALWAYS PRODUCE SPERM UNTIL THEY ARE OLD.

CONDOMS CAN BREAK OR TEAR AND SPERM CAN BE RELEASED CAUSING PREGNANCY. GIRLS NEED TO BE PROPERLY EDUCATED ON HOW TO USE CONDOMS.

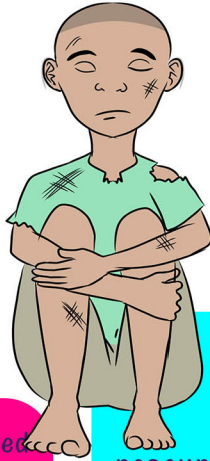
## REAL-LIFE STORIES FROM ADOLESCENTS WHO EXPERIENCED EUP

### A STORY

### ABOUT

### POVERTY

### -TIYANJANE



"I had a boyfriend and he started providing my family with financial support. My family accepted this financial support and even demanded more. I was left with no choice but to sleep with him. My intention was not to get pregnant but to express my gratitude for helping my family."

Poverty is the main factor leading to transactional sex, where young girls have sex in exchange for resources like school fees. In most times girls lack the power to negotiate for safer sex. This not only exposes them to unwanted pregnancies but HIV and other STIs.

In Tiyanjane's case, it is important to have relations with boys of the same age. In addition, there are several ways of expressing love and feelings to your partner without sexual intercourse. For example, holding hands and hugging in public spaces.

### A STORY

### ABOUT

### FORCED SEX

### -GRACE



"My boyfriend invited me to his house when he was alone. We were chatting until late. He asked me for sex and I told him I was not ready. When I told him that I wanted to go home, he locked the doors and refused to let me out unless I had sex with him. I was forced to have sex with him so that I could leave because I was afraid that my mother would chase me from home if I got there late."

Meeting in private places can increase the risk of having sex (willingly or unwillingly), which could result in pregnancy. Grace should have asked her boyfriend to meet in a public space or the company of others or make her whereabouts known to someone close to her, to avoid this situation. Grace should also have reported to someone close to her or a police station or health service provider that she was raped. Whether in a relationship or not, Sex without consent or approval of the other is considered as rape, and against the law, therefore, it should be reported.





## A STORY ABOUT PEER PRESSURE -CATHERINE

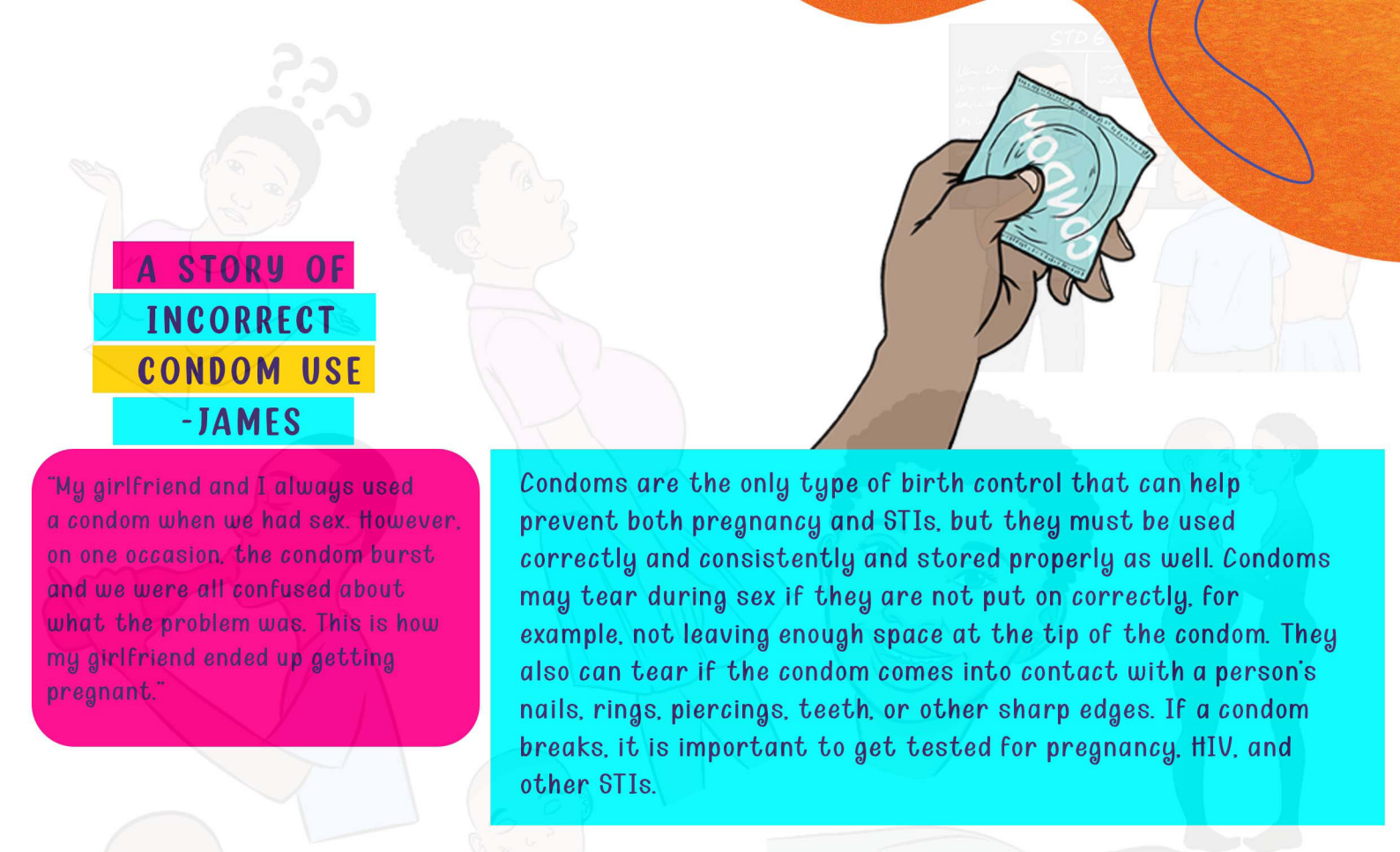
"My friends had been discussing their sexual experiences for a long time and I was always left out of these discussions. They then started leaving me behind, as I did not have any experiences to share. I felt pressured to have sex so that I could have something in common with my friends. However, my friends had never talked about protection so when I had sex, I had no idea that I needed to protect myself from EUP or STIs, and as a result, I fell pregnant."

Peer pressure is normal among young people. Friends are important to young people as they grow up. However, it is important to identify which practices are good and which ones are not. In Catherine's case, her friends having sex early was not a practice she should have followed or been pressurized into. Although not easy, she should have been strong enough to tell her friends that she was not yet ready, or sought out information on sex before she engaged in it to protect herself from pregnancy and STIs, including HIV. Your friends should accept you the way you are, otherwise, they are not good friends and don't deserve to be around you!

## A STORY ABOUT PORNOGRAPHY -LINDA

"My boyfriend visited me when I was alone at home. We started watching pornography on his phone. We both started feeling the desire to do the same and we ended up having unprotected sex. I never thought that I would get pregnant from only one sexual encounter."

Pornography paints an unrealistic picture of sexuality and relationships that can create an expectation for real-life experiences that will never be fulfilled. You cannot learn the truth about sex from pornography. Pornography is not meant to educate, but to sell and make money. They will show you whatever they think will make you come back and buy more. Pornography gets you to think that sex is something you can have anytime, anywhere, with anyone, with no consequences, such as pregnancy and STIs. It portrays a shallow perspective that relationships are built on sex, with no commitment, caring, and mutual trust. This is not how relationships should be – and are – in real life. Avoid watching pornographic videos as they can influence you to have sex. Linda should have met her boyfriend in a public place



## A STORY OF INCORRECT CONDOM USE -JAMES

"My girlfriend and I always used a condom when we had sex. However, on one occasion, the condom burst and we were all confused about what the problem was. This is how my girlfriend ended up getting pregnant."

Condoms are the only type of birth control that can help prevent both pregnancy and STIs, but they must be used correctly and consistently and stored properly as well. Condoms may tear during sex if they are not put on correctly, for example, not leaving enough space at the tip of the condom. They also can tear if the condom comes into contact with a person's nails, rings, piercings, teeth, or other sharp edges. If a condom breaks, it is important to get tested for pregnancy, HIV, and other STIs.

## PREVENTION OF EUP



THERE ARE DIFFERENT WAYS YOU CAN PREVENT PREGNANCY SUCH AS ABSTINENCE OR USING CONTRACEPTIVES.

### Abstinence

Abstinence is the safest, most effective way to prevent pregnancy. Abstinence is the only 100% effective way to avoid pregnancy and STIs because there is no sexual contact that is involved. Abstinence can also help adolescents to focus on things that are most important in their lives, like education, sports, family obligations, and having fun with friends! Adolescents who delay having sex in their teens cannot get pregnant or contract HIV or other STIs.



## What is good about abstinence?

**It's free:** It costs nothing.

**It's based on your plan for your life,** for example, to avoid pregnancy, I will only engage in sex after I finish school.

**It's flexible:** You can wait as long as you want to.

**It's healthy:** You will not get STIs, including HIV.

While abstinence is the safest choice, there are some cases where young people engage in sexual activity or are married early. To prevent pregnancies in such cases, it is advisable to use contraceptives to avoid pregnancy.

## Learn more about contraceptives

Before you use any contraceptives, you need to learn about them to choose the best method for you.

We talked about some of the contraceptives when we were talking about menstruation and blocking the sperm from meeting the egg. Here is a full list of many different contraceptive methods available.

TYPE	USE	HIV PRE-VENTION	ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES	SIDE EFFECTS
Male condom	Use a new condom each time you have sex. Use a polyurethane condom if you are allergic to latex.	Yes	Low-cost, reliable. Often for free at clinics. One of the <b>ONLY</b> contraceptives that protect against both pregnancy and STIs, including HIV.	Needs to be used correctly and consistently.	Rare side effects for condoms such as skin irritation for people with allergies to latex
Female condom	Sheath made of polyurethane worn inside the woman during sex.	Yes	Same as a male condom. Also gives women the control to protect themselves against pregnancy and STIs! stocked by some clinics	Needs to be used correctly and consistently.	Rare side effects for condoms such as skin irritation for people with allergies to latex
The pill	The contraceptive pill is taken by women that prevents the egg from being fertilized by sperm.	No	If taken properly, the pill can be up to <b>99.5%</b> effective against pregnancy	No protection from STIs, including HIV. Therefore, it is important to still practice safe sex by using a condom.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Bleeding or spotting between periods</li><li>■ Headaches.</li><li>■ Nausea.</li><li>■ Bloating.</li></ul>



Emergency contraceptive pill	It works best the sooner you take after unprotected sex. Two high doses of birth control pills are taken within three days of unprotected sex.	No	It is a safe and effective way of preventing pregnancy if used within three days.	No protection from STIs, including HIV. Women under 17 years need a prescription for some brands and not easily available in Malawi.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Nausea or vomiting.</li> <li>■ Dizziness.</li> <li>■ Fatigue.</li> <li>■ Headache.</li> <li>■ Breast tenderness.</li> <li>■ Bleeding between periods or heavier menstrual bleeding.</li> <li>■ Lower abdominal pain or cramps.</li> </ul>
Intrauterine device (IUD)	A special type of plastic or copper device that is placed in the woman's uterus to prevent pregnancy	No	IUDs are an effective way of preventing pregnancy.	Painful insertions, IUDs do not protect from HIV and other STIs and are not recommended for women under 25 who have not had children.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Headache.</li> <li>■ Acne.</li> <li>■ Breast tenderness.</li> <li>■ Irregular bleeding, which can improve after six months of use.</li> <li>■ Mood changes.</li> <li>■ Cramping or pelvic pain.</li> </ul>
Injections and implants	Chemical substances injected/ implanted into a woman's body to prevent pregnancy	No	Effective means of contraception	No protection from HIV and other STIs can cause a delay in the return of periods and fertility once you stop using them	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Irregular periods</li> <li>■ Headaches</li> <li>■ Vaginal Inflammation</li> <li>■ Pain in the breast</li> <li>■ Mood swings</li> <li>■ Depression</li> </ul>
Tubal ligation or "tube tie"	Fallopian tubes are cut and sealed, preventing eggs from reaching the uterus.	No	Permanent form of contraception (99% effective).	No protection from HIV and other STIs, and have a low success rate if they want to be reversed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Bleeding</li> <li>■ Infection</li> <li>■ Ectopic pregnancy (a pregnancy outside the womb)</li> </ul>
Withdraw	Tubal ligation or "tube tie"	No		Reduces sexual pleasure for both partners, is unreliable, messy, high risk of pregnancy and STIs, including HIV	No side effects
Calendar method	Women/couple calculates days when they are most likely to get pregnant and abstains from sex on those days.	No	Costs nothing and is easily accessible.	Unreliable, easy to forget to count the days properly, high risk of pregnancy and STIs, including HIV.	No side effects

## MYTHS AND MISCONCEPTIONS

### MYTHS

### FACTS

CONDOMS REDUCE COMFORT AND SEXUAL PLEASURE.

CONDOMS PREVENT YOU FROM GETTING PREGNANT OR CONTRACTING AN STI AFTER A SEXUAL ENCOUNTER. YOU CAN EXPERIENCE SEXUAL PLEASURE WITH A CONDOM TOO.

TWO CONDOMS ARE BETTER THAN ONE.

USING ONE CONDOM CONSISTENTLY AND CORRECTLY DURING SEX IS THE BEST WAY TO REDUCE YOUR RISK OF PREGNANCY AND STIS. PUTTING ON MORE THAN ONE CONDOM AT ONCE MAY MAKE THEM LESS EFFECTIVE AND MAY CAUSE FRICTION AND EITHER ONE OR BOTH TO TEAR.

CONDOMS ARE A BOY'S RESPONSIBILITY

YOUR HEALTH WILL ALWAYS BE YOUR RESPONSIBILITY. SO, WHETHER YOU ARE A BOY OR A GIRL, NEVER FEEL ASHAMED TO ASK YOUR PARTNER TO USE A CONDOM!

YOU ONLY NEED TO USE CONTRACEPTIVES ON THE SECOND SEXUAL ENCOUNTER AS YOU CANNOT FALL PREGNANT OR IMPREGNATE SOMEONE ON THE FIRST ENCOUNTER.

YOUR HEALTH WILL ALWAYS BE YOUR RESPONSIBILITY. SO, WHETHER YOU ARE A BOY OR A GIRL, NEVER FEEL ASHAMED TO ASK YOUR PARTNER TO USE A CONDOM!

CONTRACEPTIVES HAVE LIFE-THREATENING SIDE EFFECTS.

CONTRACEPTIVES INDEED HAVE SIDE EFFECTS, BUT THEY ARE NOT LIFE-THREATENING. IT IS IMPORTANT TO NOTE THAT EVERY MEDICATION HAS SIDE EFFECTS. AS ADOLESCENTS, YOU ARE ENCOURAGED TO CONSULT A HEALTHCARE WORKER WHEN YOU NOTICE SIDE EFFECTS.

USING CONTRACEPTION, LIKE THE PILL, WILL CAUSE YOU TO BECOME INFERTILE

CONTRACEPTIVES ONLY DELAY PREGNANCY. WHEN A COUPLE IS READY TO HAVE CHILDREN, THEY CAN SIMPLY STOP USING CONTRACEPTIVES.

CONTRACEPTIVES ARE INEFFECTIVE IN PREVENTING PREGNANCY OR STIS

CONTRACEPTIVES ARE EFFECTIVE IN PREVENTING PREGNANCY, PARTICULARLY WHEN USED AS PRESCRIBED BY THE DOCTOR, NURSE, OR HEALTHCARE WORKER. HOWEVER, OTHER THAN CONDOMS AND ABSTINENCE OR "NON-PENETRATIVE SEX", THEY DO NOT PROTECT YOU FROM HIV AND OTHER STIs.

ONLY MARRIED COUPLES SHOULD USE CONTRACEPTIVES

CONTRACEPTIVES SHOULD BE USED BY PEOPLE IN A SEXUAL RELATIONSHIP WHO WISH TO DELAY PREGNANCY AND PREVENT STIS, REGARDLESS OF WHETHER THEY ARE MARRIED OR NOT.

A PARTNER WHO SUGGESTS USING CONTRACEPTIVES SHOWS THAT HE/SHE IS HAVING SEX WITH OTHER PEOPLE.

A PARTNER WHO SUGGESTS USING CONTRACEPTIVES IN A RELATIONSHIP IS SHOWING THAT THEY ARE RESPONSIBLE AND CONCERNED ABOUT THEIR HEALTH AND THAT OF THEIR PARTNER.

AN UNMARRIED PERSON USING CONTRACEPTION SHOWS THAT HE/ SHE IS PROMISCUOUS.

USING CONTRACEPTIVES SHOWS THAT YOU ARE BEING CAREFUL AND RESPONSIBLE SO THAT YOU DO NOT CONTRACT HIV AND OTHER STIS OR FALL PREGNANT.

Can you tell us about other myths you have heard in your community?



Now that you have learned about contraceptive methods, it does not mean you should go experience sex with anyone. Be WISE! During your adolescent years, focus on things that are most important in your life, like education, your future dreams, and career goals! Remember adolescents who delay having sex in their teens cannot get pregnant or contract HIV or other STIs. That's why waiting for the right time and the right partner is best.



It is okay if you have been pregnant in your teens. You do not have to be embarrassed or feel judged!

### Pregnancy in cases of rape or sexual assault:

In case you may experience a situation such as rape or sexual assault, immediately report to Community Victim Support Units (CVSUs) or One–Stop Centers (OSC).

Things you should know:

CVSUs are based at police stations. They provide immediate emergency response after instances of violence. They also provide legal and psychosocial support and referral services for girls, women and children survivors of violence, abuse and exploitation.

OSCs are available at all district hospitals and provide health, social, legal, and police services in one place.

### Child/GBV Helpline

The Tithandizane Helpline number **116** allows both children and adults a place to call and seek help, counseling, and information. It is also a referral mechanism for children who have experienced abuse where they (or their caregiver/parent/service provider) will be referred by a helpline counselor to appropriate services in their local area at the earliest possible opportunity. The GBV Helpline **5600** is for cases of Hgender–based violence.



## SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS



WE KEPT MENTIONING STIs IN THE SECTION ON PREGNANCY BUT NOW IT IS TIME TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THEM.

STI is an infection (bacteria, virus, or parasite) that is passed from one person to another through unprotected sexual contact. Sexual contact can be oral, vaginal, or anal.

What are the common STIs? (these names are hard to say but this is what they are called!)

### GONORRHEA

THIS IS THE MOST COMMON STI CAUSED BY BACTERIA AND AFFECTS BOTH MEN AND WOMEN. IN MEN, THE DISEASE USUALLY CAUSES PAIN OR A BURNING SENSATION WHEN PASSING URINE AND IS ACCOMPANIED BY A THICK DISCHARGE FROM THE PENIS. GONORRHEA IN WOMEN MAY NOT BE RECOGNISED EASILY AS SYMPTOMS MAY NOT BE OBVIOUS BUT IT IS GOOD TO VISIT A HEALTH CENTER IF YOU SCREEN YOU FOR THIS STI IF YOU HAVE HAD UNPROTECTED SEXUAL CONTACT.

### CHLAMYDIA

THIS IS A BACTERIAL INFECTION OF THE TISSUES LINING THE URETHRA, THROAT, RECTUM, AND THE OPENING OF THE UTERUS. IF NOT TREATED IT HAS THE SAME SYMPTOMS AS GONORRHEA.

### SYPHILIS

THE INITIAL SYMPTOM ONLY CONSISTS OF A SOFT, SMALL PAINLESS SORE IN THE GENITAL AREA, PENIS, OR VAGINA. IT IS CAUSED BY GERMS AND TRANSMITTED DURING SEXUAL INTERCOURSE WITH AN INFECTED PERSON. IT DEVELOPS IN STAGES:

1. A SMALL AND PAINLESS SORE IN THE GENITAL AREA OR VAGINA IS SEEN.
2. FEVER AND PAIN OCCUR IN THE BONES AND MUSCLES.
3. SYPHILIS WILL CONTINUE TO HAVE EFFECTS FOR AS LONG AS 20 YEARS AFTER ITS INITIAL CONTRACTION.

### CHANCROID (GENITAL SORE)

THIS DISEASE CAUSES SHALLOW, PAINFUL SORES OR ULCERS AROUND THE GENITAL AREA AND INSIDE THE VAGINA.

## GENITAL HERPES

HERPES IS A VIRAL DISEASE THAT CAUSES PAIN OR ITCHING AND SWOLLEN BLISTERS OR SORES ON THE PENIS, VULVA, VAGINA, PUBIC AREA, OR AT THE ENTRANCE OF THE ANUS.

## GENITAL WARTS

GENITAL WARTS USUALLY APPEAR AS SMALL, HARD, PAINLESS BUMPS IN THE VAGINAL AREA, AROUND THE PENIS, OR THE ANUS. IF UNTREATED, THEY MAY GROW AND DEVELOP A FLESHY CAULIFLOWER-LIKE APPEARANCE. A PERSON WHO HAS GENITAL WARTS SHOULD HAVE A CHECK-UP WITH A TRAINED HEALTH PROFESSIONAL EVERY YEAR.

## CANDIDIASIS

THIS IS AN INFECTION CAUSED BY A FUNGUS. IT IS CHARACTERIZED BY THICK, WHITISH DISCHARGE RESEMBLING CURDLED MILK. IT IS EXTREMELY ITCHY AND MAY BE ASSOCIATED WITH SWELLING OF THE LABIA IN FEMALES. MEN CAN BE CARRIERS WITHOUT SHOWING ANY SYMPTOMS. IT IS THEREFORE IMPORTANT TO TREAT BOTH PARTNERS EVEN THOUGH THE MALE PARTNER MAY HAVE NO SYMPTOMS. IT MIGHT ALSO BE A RESULT OF OTHER HEALTH ISSUES AND NOT ONLY AN STI.

## HOW TO PREVENT STIs?

The most effective way for you to make sure that you do not get infected with, or transmit, an STI is to practice abstinence. The second most effective way is to use a condom (male/female) during all sexual contact and not have sexual contact if you have a rash or infected area on the skin.

### Something that you should know:

**“Most STIs do not show symptoms, but the infection is still harming the body and can be passed on to another person if it is not treated. If you are sexually active and have been practicing unprotected sex, you are encouraged to visit your health center for an STI test.”**





# HIV AND AIDS



"NOW THAT YOU HAVE LEARNED ABOUT STIs WITH CHIKONDI, LET ME TELL YOU ABOUT HIV AND AIDS?"

## What is HIV?

HIV, the full word for this is Human Immunodeficiency Virus. This is a virus that attacks your immune system. The immune system is what protects us from any infections. The immune system becomes weaker, making it harder for the body to fight off infections, including those that have nothing to do with HIV itself.

## Stages of HIV

There are 3 stages of HIV infection:

**1. Acute HIV Infection:** The early symptoms of HIV can feel like having the flu. Around 1 to 4 weeks after getting HIV, you may start to experience flu-like symptoms. These normally don't last long (a week or two). You may only get some of the symptoms and some people don't have any symptoms at all.

Symptoms can include:

- Fever (raised temperature)
- Rash
- Sore throat
- Swollen glands
- Headache
- Upset stomach
- Joint aches and pains
- Muscle pain

These symptoms occur because the immune system is reacting to the virus by developing antibodies to fight the virus— this is called seroconversion.

**2. Asymptomatic HIV Infection:** when someone says asymptomatic, it means you are not seeing or experiencing any symptoms, but you still have the virus. At this stage, you often start to feel better, and HIV may not cause any other symptoms for up to 10 or even 15 years. However, you still have the virus in your body infecting new cells and making copies of itself and HIV can still be passed on during this stage.

**3. AIDS:** The third stage of HIV infection is when your immune system is severely damaged. At this point, you are more likely to get serious infections or diseases that the body would otherwise be able to fight off.

#### Symptoms can include:

- Weight loss
- Long-lasting diarrhea
- Night sweats
- Fever
- Persistent cough
- Mouth and skin problems
- Regular infections
- Serious illness or disease

#### How do people get HIV?

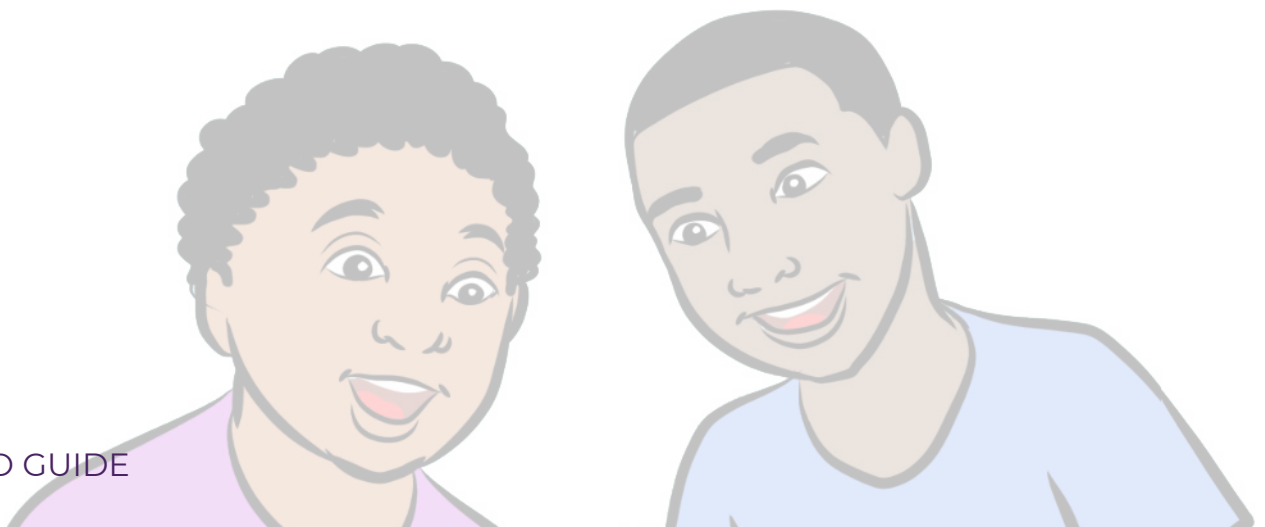
HIV spreads when the blood or body fluids (such as semen or vaginal fluids) of an infected person enter the body. This can happen:

- during sex (especially anal sex and vaginal sex)
- through sharing needles for injecting drugs or by getting stuck with a needle with an infected person's blood on it
- HIV also can pass from mother to child during pregnancy, childbirth, or breastfeeding. This is called mother-to-child transmission of HIV

#### HIV is NOT spread through:

- Pee, spit, throw-up, or sweat (as long as no blood is present)
- Coughing or sneezing
- Holding hands
- Sharing eating utensils or drinking glasses

You can have friends or family members living with HIV and it is okay to hold their hands. It is not easy living with HIV so make sure you are always helpful and supportive to friends or family living with HIV and do not judge people living with HIV.



## How can I reduce the risk of getting HIV?

### 1. Abstinence

The absence of sexual contact is the best way to protect yourself from contracting HIV and other STIs.

### 2. Get tested and know your partner's HIV status

Talk to your partner about HIV testing and counseling before indulging in sexual activities. Voluntary HIV counseling can be accessed from all health care facilities. In Malawi, HIV testing and counseling services are provided where health care providers offer tests to patients in health facilities, mobile testing units, people's homes, health events and sometimes at Youth Friendly Health Corners.

### 3. Be faithful to one uninfected partner

The more partners you have, the more likely you are to have a partner with an STI or poorly controlled HIV. Both of these factors can increase the risk of HIV transmission.

### 4. Avoid risky sexual behaviors

If you decide to engage in sexual activities, always use condoms correctly and consistently. You should also avoid having multiple sexual partners at the same time.

### 5. Talk to your health care provider about PrEP

Pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) is the use of specific antiretroviral drugs (ARVs) taken daily to prevent HIV. It is used by people who do not have HIV but who are at high risk of becoming infected, including adolescents and young people.

### 6. Get PEP from your nearest health facility in emergencies

Post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) is a series of pills you can start taking very soon after you've been exposed to HIV that lowers your chances of getting it. It is only for use in emergencies, like the morning-after pill. You should use it if you have been exposed to HIV through cuts by infected objects or sexual abuse/rape

Important information about PEP:

- PEP is intended for emergencies only! It cannot be taken routinely, even by people who are continuously exposed to HIV.
- PEP must be started within 72 hours (three days) after possible exposure to HIV. The sooner you start PEP after a possible HIV exposure, the better. If you are prescribed PEP, you will take HIV medicines every day for 28 days.



### 7. Voluntary medical male circumcision

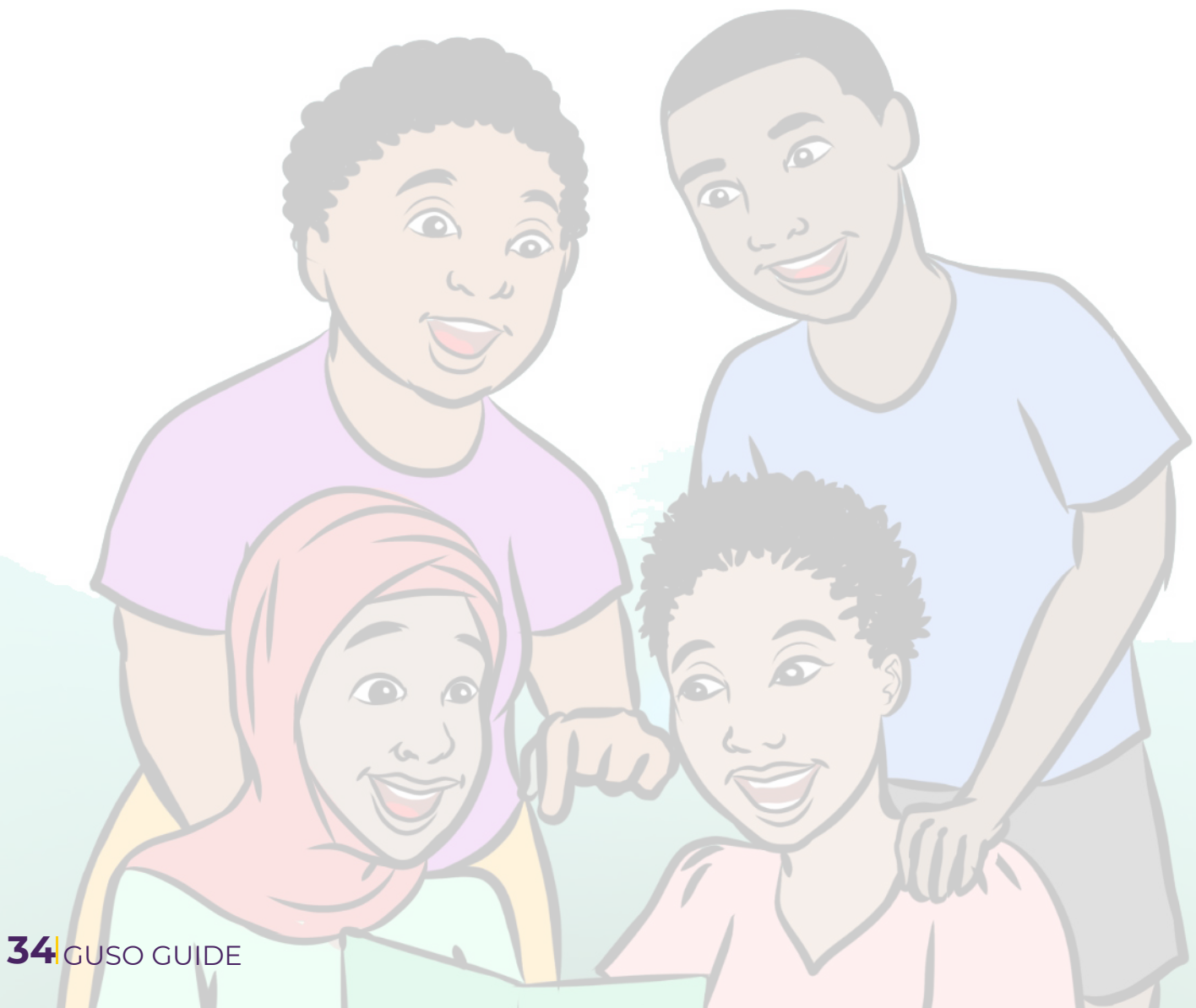
Voluntary medical male circumcision (VMMC) reduces HIV transmission from HIV–infected females to males by 60%. This is a key national prevention strategy in Malawi. It is not a guaranteed protection against HIV.

### 8. Get tested and treated for STIs

Insist that your partners are tested and treated too. Having an STI can increase your risk of becoming infected with HIV or spreading it to others.

### Something you need to know:

The earlier you know your HIV status and are put on treatment known as ART or ARVs, the better your health outcomes will be and the less chance you will have of passing on the virus to others! There is no cure for HIV. When you know your status early and start taking the treatment as soon as you know, making sure you do not stop taking the treatment, you can minimize the risk of



## RELATIONSHIPS

### a) Family relationships

Family (parents, guardians, or caregivers) plays an important role in teaching you how to care for yourself and they also teach you about norms values, and beliefs. As an adolescent, you need to be able to communicate with your family regarding love, pregnancy, and STIs.

#### Have you heard about parent–child communication?

Most parents, guardians, or caregivers are not comfortable talking to their children about puberty, dating, and relationships. Adolescents and young people generally rely on their friends and sources like the internet, movies, videos, and magazines for information about puberty and sexual relationships. But these information sources are often inaccurate, confusing, misleading, or false. Getting the basic facts about sex, pregnancy, and childbirth from parents, guardians, community, as well as teachers, will help you to make informed decisions that help to protect you from EUPs and STIs, including HIV. So encourage your parents, guardians, or caregivers to talk to you about these issues!

#### Why should I talk to my parents/guardians about pregnancy and STIs?

It is hard to talk to adults about pregnancy and STIs, especially your parents, guardians, or caregivers like your Aunties or Uncles! It can be uncomfortable, embarrassing, or even scary, but it is important to do so.

There are many good reasons to talk to your parents or guardians about pregnancy and STIs:

- Your parents or guardians are more likely to give you accurate, truthful information.
- They care about you and want the best for you – including making sure you stay safe.

When you have an open relationship with your parents and guardians you will have

- a deeper understanding of each other, making it easier to talk about other, more serious, issues and concerns.

## b) Peer relationships

When you become an adolescent, you start spending more time with your friends and enjoying it more than other activities. You confide more in your friends because you feel that your feelings are more understood and accepted by them. Less time is spent with parents and other family members.

For girls, your close friends help to explore identities and define one's sense of self. Conversations within these important friendships also assist adolescents in exploring their sexuality and how they feel about it.

The friendships of adolescent boys tend to be less intimate than those of girls. Boys are more prone to form an alliance with a group of friends who validate each other's worth through actions and deeds rather than interpersonal disclosure.

## c) Male–female relationships

Your behaviour and attitudes will tend to follow how others around you act, and how they would like you to behave. These influences and expectations are different for males and females and affect their sexual and love behaviors and partnerships. The important thing to remember is that relationships can either be healthy or unhealthy, and it is up to you to do the right thing!

### What is a healthy relationship?

- Healthy romantic relationships are characterized by open communication, high levels of trust, and partners who are relatively close in age.
- Healthy relationships help adolescents to improve their sense of identity and develop interactive skills, as well as providing emotional support.
- Partners respect each other, share true feelings of love, spend time getting to know each other, and know when to say NO (and listen when their partner says NO!)

### What is an unhealthy relationship?

Unhealthy relationships pose risks that may have a long-lasting impact. Young people are particularly vulnerable to becoming involved in relationships that include:

- **Abuse:** When someone you are seeing romantically harms you in some way, whether it is physically, sexually, emotionally, or all three. It can happen on a first date, or after some time.
- **Risky sexual activity:** Any sexual contact that puts you at risk of pregnancy and STIs, including HIV, such as sex with multiple partners or sex without a condom.

Some relationships, particularly with an older partner, make you vulnerable as you may not be able to negotiate for safe sex



### What should you do if you are in an unhealthy relationship?

If you find yourself in an unhealthy relationship and you cannot talk to your partner or trust him/her, get out of the relationship as soon as possible. The more you wait, the more difficult it is to leave!

You should also seek support from adults you trust or available support services, including:

- **In your school:** Guidance and counseling teachers.
- **In your community:** Village health workers, nongovernmental organizations, nearest police station.
- **In a clinic:** Nurses and doctors.
- **In your family:** A family member you trust and feel comfortable with.

### Something that you should know:

“Never be ashamed of any violence that happens to you! It is NOT your fault and must not stop you from asking for help. Asking for help is a sign of confidence, not weakness!”

### While these peer relationships are important always remember:

- Do not be pressured into doing something you are not yet ready for.
- If your friends pressure you to have sexual intercourse before you are ready, then you may need to change your friends!
- Surround yourself with friends that influence you to do good things.
- You do not have to prove anything to your friends. If they ask you to prove anything, then again, you may need to change them!

## Examples of peer pressure

Peer pressure can either be good or bad, can you think of any examples?

Let us look at them together

### GOOD PEER PRESSURE

Pushing a friend to study harder so they can get better grades

Going to college can be positive for your future Showing up at school on time helps you learn discipline

### BAD PEER PRESSURE

Experimenting with drugs can be deadly

Bullying or teasing others

Skipping school

## Questions about having sex

How can I tell my partner I am not ready for sex?

Adolescents should know that if a person says NO, their decision must be respected. Saying no to sex can be expressed in different ways:

**NO! Can be expressed in the following ways.**

"Stop"

Turn Away

"I don't want to"

"Leave me alone"

Am not ready

Pushing you away

"I don't feel like it"

Scream

Cries

"I don't want to do it anymore"

"I change my mind"

### Does sex help make my relationship better and make us closer?

No. Sex should not be the reason to bring two people closer or to make a relationship better. You should not feel pressured to have sex with your partner when you are not ready.

### What happens when I have sex with my partner?

It is important to note that having unprotected sex can lead to EUP and STIs, including HIV. EUP can lead to school dropout and poverty.

Here is an example of Chikumbutso: "When I fell pregnant, I was forced to drop out from school. My boyfriend refused to take responsibility for my child. My parents also refused to send me back to school after giving birth. They complained that I am wasting their resources, they will rather focus on educating my siblings who are still in school."

### Is sex a way to get someone to marry you?

NO. People do not get married to have sex. There are other responsibilities in a marriage that do not involve sex, such as caring for and supporting each other and building a common future. Sex also comes with responsibilities, which have nothing to do with marriage. For example, having sex in adolescence will expose you to unintended pregnancies, HIV and other STIs, and complications during childbirth because the body may not be mature enough to deliver a baby.

### Why do parents forbid us to have sex?

Parents generally care about their children and want the best for them. This includes guaranteeing that their children stay safe and healthy. They forbid adolescents to have sex to protect them from unintended pregnancies, HIV and other STIs, and unhealthy relationships. Abstinence is the best way to prevent both unintended pregnancies and HIV and other STIs.



## IN SUMMARY

**Growing up can be confusing...  
But it doesn't have to be this way!**

When you seek support and answers from the right person, whether it is your parents/guardians or a professional (such as school counselors, social workers, and health care workers), you will get the information you need to better know yourself and have healthy relationships. Of course, this booklet will also help you!

**Your health is very precious...  
You must take care of it!**

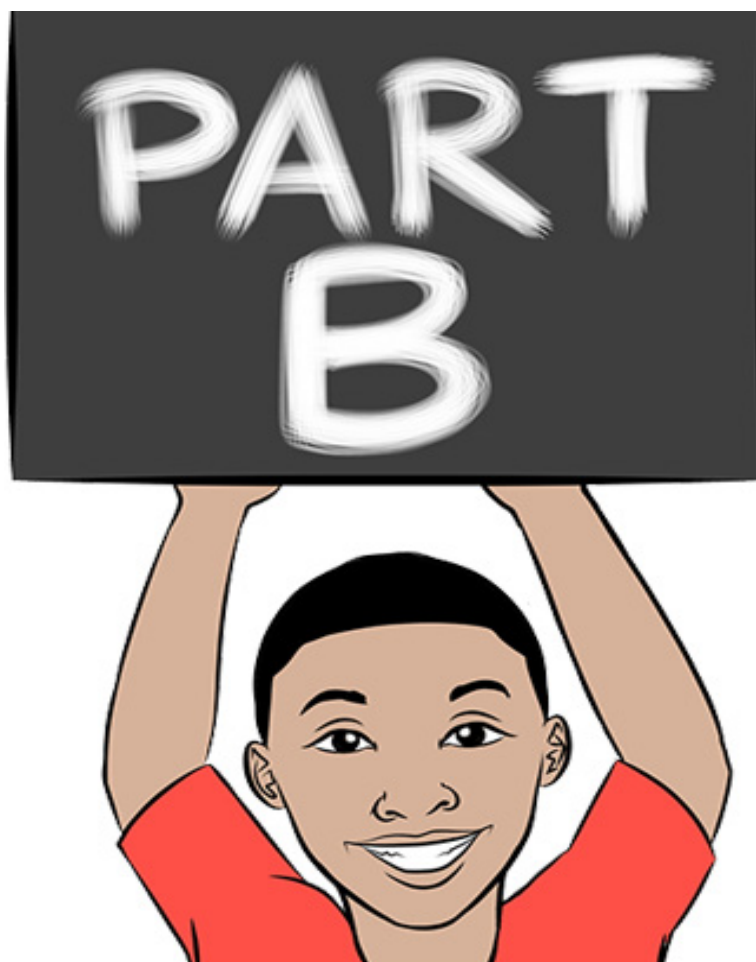
Taking care of your health is taking care of your future! This means you should avoid unhealthy relationships and behaviors, especially those leading to EUPs and STIs, including HIV.

**Your friends are important...  
But so is your family!**

It's normal to spend more time with your friends and to value your relationships with them, but your family is important too! They care very much about you and want you to stay healthy and safe – that is why they sometimes try to change your attitudes or forbid you from doing things that might put you in a dangerous situation.

**Children and adolescents have rights...  
And responsibilities too!**

Boys and girls have a right to access accurate information and adequate sexual and reproductive health services. Girls particularly must be provided with proper sanitation and sanitary products for their menstruation and be able to return to school after pregnancy. Growing up comes with increasing responsibilities too – you all have a responsibility to listen to and respect your parents, guardians, caregivers, and peers!



**Let us learn about:**

**The Readmission Policy and how to advocate for it**



## A) LEARNING ABOUT THE READMISSION POLICY

Now it's time to learn what our rights are, and how you can demand them, what to do in cases of EUP and how to get readmitted to school using the Readmission Policy.

### But first, what is a policy?

A policy is a set of rules set by the government or within organisations that is used as a basis for making decisions. Schools can also have their own school policies.

### Now that you know what a policy is, what is the school readmission policy?

This is a national government policy that ensures that more girls complete school by allowing teen mothers to return to school six months after giving birth. This policy is a guide to all stakeholders in your community, especially the teachers and head teachers. It is crucial for them to understand how to support learners and improve access, retention, and completion of school.

### What is the purpose of the readmission policy?

- It will promote equal education opportunities for both girls and boys
- Teen mothers should be supported to return to school so that they too can be educated and be productive citizens who will contribute positively towards national development and support their own household.
- The policy will:
  - Make the process easier for teen mothers to return to school
  - Provide guidance to communities and schools on how to manage cases when a girl gets pregnant and drops out of school
  - Reduce vulnerability of learners that drop out of school
  - Strengthen school systems in the provision of counselling to readmitted learners to stay in school.



Now that you know about the readmission policy, let's talk about GUSO! If you are a female school learner who was pregnant and wants to return to school or you know someone in that situation, this is how you can take action:

- 1) **Get up!** Prepare to take action by understanding: the stakeholders involved and your rights and responsibilities.
- 2) **Speak out!** Take action through approaching and getting support from the different stakeholders (teachers, mother groups, traditional and religious leaders.) and reaching out to other girls through organising an information meeting.

## B) GET UP!

Before taking any action, we need to learn about steps you can take to make sure you can or a friend you know can return back to school after having a child.

### Know the stakeholders

In order prepare for action, we must know who our stakeholders are. These are a group of people who can help you advocate for change. These are parents, teachers, boys, mother groups, traditional leaders, religious leaders, community-based organizations, as well as girls themselves.

### Know how to talk about the problem

When you identify who you want to approach, sometimes it may be difficult to explain to them the problem. It is important to learn how to communicate the problem, so they know how to help or address it.

Here are 3 problems adolescent girls face, and how you can talk about it.



## PROBLEM

## HOW TO TALK ABOUT IT

### PREGNANCY

AS I GROW UP, I FIND MYSELF WANTING TO BE OR IN A RELATIONSHIP. HOWEVER, WITH A LACK OF INFORMATION ON SEXUAL REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH, SEX MIGHT LEAD ME TO EUP. THEREFORE, I NEEDED TO TALK TO AN ADULT I CAN TRUST TO ACCESS THE RIGHT INFORMATION THAT MAY HELP AVOID UNINTENDED PREGNANCIES. INFORMATION MAY BE FOUND THROUGH THE YOUTH FRIENDLY HEALTH CORNERS IN THE HOSPITALS, MOTHER GROUPS, AND PARENTS IF THEY ARE OPEN TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT IT.

### GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

IF I AM FACED WITH VIOLENCE OF ANY FORM, FIRST OF ALL, I HAVE TO TALK ABOUT IT TO ANYONE CLOSE AT THAT TIME AND FOLLOW ALL THE REPORTING PROCESSES THEY SHARE. FOR EXAMPLE, IN CASE OF RAPE, I NOTIFY PARENTS AND MAKE SURE NOT TO TAKE BATH, REPORT TO THE POLICE WHO WILL REFER THE CASE TO THE HOSPITAL FOR EXAMINATION, TREATMENT IN CASE OF INFECTION AND PREGNANCY, AS WELL AS COUNSELING. THE CASE IS THEN PROCESSED FOR COURT. IF PREGNANCY HAPPENS IN CASE OF RAPE, IT IS OKAY TO FEEL SCARED BUT KNOW THAT YOU CAN GET HELP AND IT IS NOT YOUR FAULT. MAKE SURE TO TALK TO YOUR PARENTS AND CARE GIVERS TO FIND WAYS TO SUPPORT YOU DURING THIS TIME.

### EARLY MARRIAGE

IF I AM FACED WITH VIOLENCE OF ANY FORM, FIRST OF ALL, I HAVE TO TALK ABOUT IT TO ANYONE CLOSE AT THAT TIME AND FOLLOW ALL THE REPORTING PROCESSES THEY SHARE. FOR EXAMPLE, IN CASE OF RAPE, I NOTIFY PARENTS AND MAKE SURE NOT TO TAKE BATH, REPORT TO THE POLICE WHO WILL REFER THE CASE TO THE HOSPITAL FOR EXAMINATION, TREATMENT IN CASE OF INFECTION AND PREGNANCY, AS WELL AS COUNSELING. THE CASE IS THEN PROCESSED FOR COURT. IF PREGNANCY HAPPENS IN CASE OF RAPE, IT IS OKAY TO FEEL SCARED BUT KNOW THAT YOU CAN GET HELP AND IT IS NOT YOUR FAULT. MAKE SURE TO TALK TO YOUR PARENTS AND CARE GIVERS TO FIND WAYS TO SUPPORT YOU DURING THIS TIME.



## Rights and responsibilities

In order to take action, you must learn more about your rights and the responsibilities the school have.

### Our rights:

- Girls have a right to re-apply for admission and return to school 6 months after having their child. As mentioned before, this used to be one year you had to take off before applying to return to school. Now, with the revised readmission policy, a teen mother can re-apply to be admitted back to school after 6 months from having her child.
- All girls are entitled to equal access to education.
- Girls' rights to be free from violence and discrimination.
- A re-admitted learner should make sure that they are assigned a teacher for mentorship.

### Head Teacher and School responsibilities:

- In case of pregnancy, you can ask your school teachers for the school dropout & learner readmission forms to be filled by you or your guardian and the head teacher.
- Make sure that a female learner who falls pregnant returns to school after giving birth.
- All re-admitted learners must make sure they have access to counseling support, check with the School Management Committee to make sure they make this provision because the policy says this should be provided within schools.
- Report any form of bullying or violence a teen mother may experience when she returns to school at community structures such as victim support units, community police, child protection officer and mother groups.
- Make sure you are aware of the school's code of conduct for teachers and learners and that it is being followed.





## c) SPEAK OUT!

Girls and boys need to understand how to speak out about issues affecting them. Advocacy is speaking out about issues that are important, standing up for your own and others' rights, and pushing for positive change. Some ways to do this are:

- Speaking to stakeholders about girl's school dropout rates as a result of EUP and the need to reduce EUP rates
- Telling stakeholders about the re-admission policy
- Help change stakeholders' attitudes towards EUP to get their support to help girls complete their education in your community.
- Speaking to school teachers about their role and responsibilities

### Knowing your goals for speaking out

You need to know what you want to achieve as you speak out on EUP and readmission of teen mothers. Examples of what you want to achieve can be to;

- Improve the lives of re-admitted learners
- Help teen mothers complete education
- Help other community members such as parents, guardians, caretakers, traditional or religious leaders on the consequences of EUP and school dropout.

How can you approach the issue of EUP and school dropouts at school?

If your school does some have a code of conduct in place to on how school head teachers or teachers can address school dropout and help teen mothers return to school when she has had a child, this is what you can do:

1) **Get Up and Speak out—** approach the head teacher at your school to understand prevention mechanisms as well as what commonly is done in cases of EUP. If things are lacking, explore if the school has plans to address EUP and help teen mothers return to school. If that fails, you can write or go meet the District Education Officer of your school for assistance. You may also involve parents to take up the issue through the Parents and Teachers Committee or Mother Groups.

2) **Reach out to other students at your school—** you can reach out to others in different ways, at a school level, you should utilize the existing school clubs where more students meet in one place. You may start by talking to the school youth club leaders who can create time for discussions or present the issue.

You may also make use of the assembly sessions which gathers all the students and ask the head teacher to give you time during announcements or inform the school prefects such as the head girl to talk on your behalf.

Some schools have mentor mother groups which you can also approach on EUP issues for example, when you are pregnant and don't know how to talk to your parents you can approach these mother groups so that they can assist you in communicating with them, making follow ups and ensuring that the teen mothers return to school.

Most communities have out of school youth clubs, church youth groups and other social gatherings of young people which maybe be used to dissemination information and knowledge on the rights of girls and help teen mothers to return to school.

Make sure to get feedback after information is shared and based on the discussions map a way forward if there is need.

You can organize your own meetings, after school or at church with teachers, parents, students, chiefs or religious leaders and any other stakeholders.

When organizing the meeting, make sure you have set a date, time and venue in advance. You could also ask a school teacher, parent or community leaders to help organize the meeting. Invite stakeholders to the meeting at least 5 days before the meeting by providing the venue, date, time and a brief description of the meeting. Stakeholders may be invited through letters, going to meet them in person, posters and community mobilisation through chiefs and other structures.

#### During the meeting:

Make sure you prepare and set an agenda, that could look like this:

- Welcome the stakeholders that attend the meeting
- Present the issues
- Ask stakeholders to share solutions to addressing EUP and identify ways to help address EUP and help teen mothers return to school
- Next steps—what should be done to reduce EUP and keep teens mothers in school.

Now, you will just have to follow up with the solutions proposed and make sure the change you want to see happens!





## CONCLUSION

**Congratulations! You have learned so much about your body, sexual health, relationships and the school readmission policy. I hope you feel smarter and more prepared to face any challenge as you are growing up. We hope you feel ready to support yourself and your peers in the case of a teenage pregnancy. You have a bright future ahead of you and never fear to get up and speak out any problems you face at home, school or community.**



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