

HOW TO INVOLVE MALES IN PREVENTING TEENAGE PREGNANCIES IN THE COMMUNITIES OF KAMULI.

CITIZEN PANELS: A CONSOLIDATED REPORT:

SEPTEMBER, 2022



This report was prepared by:

The Centre for Rapid Evidence Synthesis (ACRES)

Makerere University, College of Health Sciences,

Plot 24 Wampewo Close, off. Wampewo Ave.,

Kololo, Kampala

P.O.BOX, 110226, GPO, Kampala, Uganda.

To cite this report.

The Center for Rapid Evidence Synthesis (2022), 'How to involve males in the prevention of teenage pregnancies in the communities of Kamuli- Males perceptives': Citizen panels. A consolidated report, (www.acres.or.ug):.

September 2022

Title: How to involve males in preventing teenage pregnancies in the communities of Kamuli.

Citizen panels: A Consolidated Report:

Key messages

Integrating contextual-sensitive strategies to involve males in programs to prevent teenage pregnancies within the district is crucial.

Strategies that can be considered for males in and out of schools include:

- Using a popular sport activity, e.g., football, as a platform to talk about risk factors and consequences of teenage pregnancies
- Mentoring programs
- Regular and frequent sensitisation workshops
- Peer-to-peer approaches
- Engage parents in guidance and counselling
- Involve youths in community work
- Form youth groups and clubs
- Skill and empower youths
- Communicate sensitisation and youth-friendly services at health facilities
- Pass and enforce community laws against teenage pregnancies

Citizen panels

Citizen panels are a strategy of knowledge translation that uses community engagement approaches to generate contextual and culturally sensitive evidence that considers the lived experience of citizens.

A citizen is the final client of government, a development institution, and private sector investments in a given locality.

Summary

Background:

Despite several interventions to reduce the high rate of teenage pregnancies in the Kamuli district, these remain a significant challenge in the communities. Although males are a primary stakeholder in the increasing rate of teenage pregnancies, they are left out of most interventions. Understanding the environment and how males can be involved in interventions would probably reduce the rate of teenage pregnancies in Kamuli.

We organised citizen panels involving males in and out of school in Kamuli District on the 17th and 18th of August.

Objectives:

Citizen panels were organised to explore the citizens' views, opinions, knowledge, and experiences.

Findings

The findings of the panels are summarised below:

1. Engage society on issues including age, education, and teenage pregnancy to improve participation
2. Programs should make efforts to understand local context-sensitive factors related to increases in the rate of teenage pregnancies, such as:
 - Peer pressure
 - Misinformation about family planning
 - Substance abuse
 - Lack of necessities like menstrual pads
 - Rape
 - Religion and cultural beliefs
 - Early marriages
 - Role of older and married men
3. Strategies that could be implemented to involve males in and out of school include:
 - Using a popular sport activity, e.g., football, as a platform to talk about risk factors and consequences of teenage pregnancies
 - Mentoring programs
 - Regular and frequent sensitisation workshops
 - Peer-to-peer approaches
 - Engage parents in guidance and counselling

- Involve youths in community work
 - Form youth groups and clubs
 - Skill and empower youths
 - Communicate sensitisation and youth-friendly services at health facilities
 - Pass and enforce community laws against teenage pregnancies
4. However, consider the following to increase the participation of males in and out of school:
- Incorporate sensitisation in all programs and strategies
 - The strategies should be regular and frequent
 - Integrate mindset change approaches for the strategies
 - Carefully consider the timing of the strategies
 - Locally appropriate incentives should be added
 - Communicate clear information on the strategies
 - Engage trusted local and opinion leaders to ensure ownership and buy-in
 - Target high-risk communities, such as Namasagali and Nabirama
 - Leverage opportunities to talk to more males at any time
 - Plan for sustainability and long-term funding of the strategies

Conclusion

It is crucial that programs seeking to reduce and or prevent teenage pregnancies incorporate effective strategies to involve males. The citizen panels showed that the males feel left out and need to be involved. However, such strategies should consider contextual issues such as factors related to the increase in the rate of teenage pregnancies. Other considerations include timing of the strategy, whether in communities or schools, engaging leaders and model youths. The strategies should integrate training, empowerment, and mindset approaches. Lastly, it is crucial to consider sustainability and long-term funding because it takes a long time to observe any meaningful differences

BACKGROUND

The persistently high rates of teenage pregnancies in Kamuli district is a significant concern for the district health office. Teenage pregnancies are a significant risk for several social and health adverse outcomes, including adverse pregnancy outcomes for the mother and child, school dropouts, and poverty[1]. Kamuli district estimated that 22 of every 100 teenage girls got pregnant in 2021. These statistics were collaborated in the DHIS2, which reported an increase of more than 100% of teenage pregnancies from 2020 to 2021.

Aim of citizen panels

Citizen panels empower citizens to participate in policy process to improve implementation of policies and programs.

Process

Citizen panels are conducted in a participatory manner and in the native language of the citizens.

The causes of increasing rates of teenage pregnancies are multi-factorial. Several reports indicated that the rates of teenage pregnancies skyrocketed when schools were closed to control the spread of Covid-19 in communities [2, 3]. Other factors include gender-based violence, ignorance, poverty, cultural practices and norms, child marriages, and dropping out of school. However, most reports focus on why girls might get pregnant and either intentionally or not leave the males. Consequently, the majority of the programs focus on challenges faced by females. Unfortunately, leaving out the primary cause of teenage pregnancies, the males, who instead compete with the programs.

The Kamuli district health office, education department, and implementation partners requested evidence on *“How to involve males in reducing and preventing teenage pregnancy in the communities of Kamuli?”* The evidence included opinions, perceptions, knowledge, and programs primarily limited to adult males from contexts dissimilar to the Kamuli district. We organised citizen panels to explore the males’ lived experiences, views, and knowledge to ensure that the evidence was context-sensitive and specific to the males in Kamuli District. The males were organised into two groups, in and out of school, and we held two panels for each. The first panel explored males’ views, lived experiences and knowledge about teenage pregnancies. The second panel introduced the citizens to the evidence in a pictorial format. It sought to identify effective programs involving males in preventing teenage pregnancies and, thereby, the facilitators and barriers to the programs.

1. Summary of findings

Consequences of teenage pregnancy

The participants stressed that the issue of teenage pregnancy affects females and males.

- The participants highlighted that the issue of teenage pregnancies comes with a lot of stress and depression. Some youths run away from homes or do outrageous because of the fear of the responsibilities of the pregnancy.
- Death. During delivery, some girls lose their lives because of pregnancy and childbirth complications due to their young age. Upon finding out they are pregnant, some girls hide, abort using unprofessional procedures, and consequently die.
- Pregnancy-related complications include fistula due to their immature bodies.
- There are also negative social consequences, such as rejection by their partners or parents. Negative social consequences such as isolation, stigma and rejection from the community lead to anxiety, stress and depression.
- Drop out of school. Most pregnant girls drop out of school and are left with few options, such as getting married or sitting at home.

Strategies to effectively involve males in the prevention of teenage pregnancies.

The participants discussed various strategies and essential considerations (table 1 below) to improve the participation of males in the programs. Although the strategies can be considered within communities and schools, several principles for improving participation are similar.

Table 1: Strategies to males and strengthen participation in the prevention of teenage pregnancies

Strategy	How to improve participation of the males	
	Community	In school
Using a popular sports activity, e.g. football, as a platform to talk to males about risk factors and consequences of teenage pregnancies	Timing is essential to get attention: e.g. 30 minutes to start a game; before rather than after a game	Involve older boys in a sports team to set good examples
	Incentives after the game, e.g., free balls	Identify ways to interest boys beyond the sport to engage in talks
	Ensure that someone talks to the boys before they leave the game	
	Create a good relationship between the community-based organisations and boys	
	The facilitator should be trained on the content and delivery	

Mentoring involves talking to and guiding the boys through regular sessions in and or out of school	Responsibility of the mentee educates girls about the consequences of teenage pregnancies	Identify appropriate times other than during break or lunch.
	Identify an appropriate time to meet the mentees	Ensure sessions are regular and sustainable
		Put in place mechanisms to safeguard inappropriate relationships between male teachers and girls, e.g., reviewing teacher's code of conduct
	Provide clear information and acceptable materials to be used in the mentoring sessions	Involve student leaders to engage peers
	Engage religious leaders to mentor the youths about positive living in their communities	Empower school-going children to train others in the communities
Sensitisation workshops targeting the prevention of teenage pregnancies	Consider community influencers that are believed, trusted, and listened to, e.g., engaging the elders in the community.	Ensure there is the buy-in of the heads of schools of the materials and content
	Involve males to take ownership of the program	Add sex education to the training
	Combine education and entertainment by engaging musicians, or drama actors	
	Mobilisation through local leaders	
	Clear and specific communication of time and place	
	Add incentives to the program	
	Target high-risk communities, e.g. Namasagali and Nabirama	
	The trainer should be acceptable to the communities	
Use a peer-to-peer approach: empower males to reach out to peers in one-on-one or small groups	Leverage the education level to empower the male	
	Add incentives to the program	
	Leverage males to talk to peers in similar occupations	
	Youths can form male-led youth groups that engage peers and boys in the prevention of teenage pregnancies	
	Consider practical constraints, such as transport and food for potential peer trainers	
	Parents need to develop a special bond with children	

Engage parents to counsel and guide children on strategies to prevent teenage pregnancies	Parents cultivate a culture of openness with the children to talk about sex education	
	Programs to train parents and provide them with clear and accurate information	
Involve youths in community work to influence positive change in the community	Engage local leaders as owners of the program	Engage student leaders and teachers to engage peers in the community work
	A spirit of togetherness and interaction in the community	
	Sensitise and mobilise the community about the work, e.g., use drive-throughs, T-shirts	
	Ensure appropriate timing (consult on date and time) to engage youths	
	Add incentives or remuneration to the community work	
	Engage the community in activities that increase their interest in their environment	
Form youth clubs or groups, e.g., Rotaract	Incorporate entertainment and education within the activities of the groups	
	Engage trusted youth leaders at different levels in sub-counties	Engage student leaders and teachers to support peers and students in the activities
	Programs to train youths on how to deliver sensitive information to the communities	
Use mass media, e.g., Teen radio talk shows to sensitise youths	Leverage radio talk shows that have a broader reach in the communities	
	Engage parents to support children to access radio talk shows	
	Use community radios within specific localities	
	Ensure appropriate timing of the radio talk shows	
	Ensure dedicated talk time to the radio shows	
	Encourage programs that improve access to radios	
Skilling the youth to empower and increase their capacity and	Programs should incorporate mindset change	
	Align the skills to the available raw materials and opportunities	
Sensitise youths at health facilities and provide friendly services	The youth trainer at health facilities should easily be identified, e.g., with a labelled t-shirt	

	Make health facilities accessible to youths	
	Protect privacy and confidentiality of youths at health facilities	
	Communicate the days and time for training or youth-services	
	Use reminders about the training and youth services	
	Plan alternative options for communities without access to health facilities	
	Engage health workers to have a positive attitude toward youths	
Pass and or enforce community laws against teenage pregnancies	Engage advocates within communities to engage communities on the importance of preventing teenage pregnancies	Strengthen school policies that encourage engagement of students in activities, such as work or sports
	Strengthen existing by-laws against teenage pregnancies	
	Pass by-laws on community initiatives to engage youths, e.g., “bulungi bwansi.”	
	Consider practical punishments in the community against males, e.g., community work for an extended period	
	Ensure buy-in and ownership of the local leaders	
	Motivate the law-enforcers	

Additional considerations in the prevention of teenage pregnancies

Consider the following additions for the different strategies and programs involving males in preventing teenage pregnancies.

- Sensitisation should consider common social and cultural beliefs and practices about differences between males and females.
- Empowering males with accurate knowledge and skills should be integral for all programs.
- Engage sociologists and social workers in such programs. For example, participants noted that teenage pregnancies are common in families where the mother or father was once a teenage parent.
- All programs should integrate with mindset change strategies.
- It is hard to measure the short and intermediate-term impact of programs to reduce teenage pregnancies. It is essential to consider sustainability and long-term funding for the programs.

- Ensure adequate program funding and incentives for families, e.g., food and necessities for survival.

Conclusion

It is crucial that programs seeking to reduce and or prevent teenage pregnancies incorporate effective strategies to involve males. The citizen panels showed that the males feel left out and need to be involved. However, such strategies should consider contextual issues such as factors related to the increase in the rate of teenage pregnancies. Other considerations include timing of the strategy, whether in communities or schools, engaging leaders and model youths. The strategies should integrate training, empowerment, and mindset approaches. Lastly, it is crucial to consider sustainability and long-term funding because it takes a long time to observe any meaningful differences.

Annex 1:

Methods

We organised two citizen panels for each group of participants. The first group was held on Wednesday, 17th August 2022, including boys who dropped out of school. The second group included school-going boys on Thursday, 18th August 2022.

In this section, we summarise the following methods for organising and delivering the citizen panels:

- Preparations
- The participants
- Venue
- Mode of delivery
- Proceedings of the citizen panels

Preparations

- Following the delivery of the rapid response brief, we wrote a letter to the District Health Officer, describing the significance of engaging citizens and requesting his support for the process.
- We recruited a professional graphics designer to translate the rapid response into illustrations to improve access to the evidence. The illustrations focused on the key messages and their context within communities and schools.
- The illustrations were user-tested before the panels, and the corrections were made to improve the illustrations' messaging. We identified seven participants to test the illustrations.

The participants

- All the participants were residents of the Kamuli district.
- We invited only males.
- The participants were selected purposively from different sub-counties, jobs, and being in and out of school. The sub-counties included Namasagali, Kitayunjwa, Buwenge and at the municipality
- We had a total of 35 participants from the two panels. These included:

Table 2: Category and number of participants at Panel 1

Category	Number
Sugarcane plantations workers	1
Boda-boda rider	2
Barber	1
Chapatti makers	1
Builder	1
Welder	1
Pastor	1
Selling shoes and clothes	2
Social worker	3
Carpenter	1
Musician	1
Community teacher	1
Fisherman	1

Table 3: Category and number of participants at Panel 2

Category	Number
S.1	3
S.3	6
S.4	4
S.5	2
Diploma	1

- We engaged the district health office and our partners, including The Youth Advocacy and Development Network (YADNET), to support identifying and mobilising the participants.
- Invitations were made through phone calls and word of mouth from villages, adolescent Health clinics, and community-based organisations for school-going boys.

Venue

- The panels were held at Kyemba Sande Garden Hotel in Kamuli. The hotel was a convenient venue for the participants due to its central location in Kamuli town. This enabled participants from Kamuli town and nearby rural areas to access public transport easily.

- We ensured that there was spacious room for the discussions. The participants were free to choose where they wanted to sit as the discussion commenced.

Mode of delivery

- The panels were organised in a participatory manner to encourage all the participants to provide their opinions.
- We held the panels in Lusoga since it is the predominant language in the Kamuli district. This approach created an environment supporting active and adequate discussion participation and interaction.
- Since none of the ACRES staff could speak Lusoga fluently, we engaged the national youth chairperson to moderate the panels.
- The participants were informed of the objectives of the panels and the interest of the district health office.
- The participants were informed that the Chatham house rules guided the discussions and that no contribution would be attributed to anyone.
- The moderator requested the consent of the participants for recording to enable accurate reporting.
- The objectives of the two panels were:
 - i. Explore participants' lived experiences, views, opinions and knowledge about teenage pregnancies in the communities of Kamuli.
 - ii. Discuss the evidence and identify the contextual factors to improve the participation of males in programs involving males in preventing teenage pregnancies.

References

1. UNICEF, *Early childbearing and teenage pregnancy rates by country - UNICEF DATA*. 2021.
2. UNCHR, *Uganda_Interagency Gender Report_Nov20*. 2020.
3. UNFPA, *teenpregnancy_factsheet_3*. 2021.