

Parents & Peer Mentors in Kenya Discuss Sex Education

AMPATH's trained health reporters asked parents and peer mentors in the Eldoret area about sexual health education. Read, watch, and listen to people's experiences with sex education in our series: **Are People Happy with Sex Education in Kenya?**

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED 13 October, 2017

UPDATED 26 October, 2017



Sexuality education programs that exclusively promote abstinence do not adequately prepare Kenyan adolescents to lead healthy sexual and reproductive lives.

Yet three-fourths of sampled students aged 15-17 were told to avoid sex before marriage and that sex is dangerous for young people.



gu.tt/KenyaSexEd

PHOTO: JONATHAN TORGOVNIK ©2017

Read parts 2 & 3 of our series about sex education in Western Kenya. Follow AMPATH at @AmpathKenya on Facebook and @ampathkenya via Twitter to learn about people's experiences with sex education in Kenya and how they think it can be improved.

*Please note that the opinions and views expressed in this story are not the opinions and views of AMPATH.

Question: What do parents think about sexual health education in Kenya?

Health reporter, Brenda, interviewed Peter from Uasin Gishu. Peter is a parent of two teenagers. He believes that adolescents who have reached puberty should be taught sex education in order to guide them to build and practice healthy sexual behaviour. Peter believes that quality sex education is important because it can

promote good behaviour, enhance healthy and meaningful interactions, and enable youth to learn about the negative effects of sex, such as early pregnancy, contracting STIs, or cervical cancer.

Peter emphasizes the importance of sexual health education being taught by health professionals, " *Despite being beneficial to teenagers, sex education can at times ruin a teenager in many ways by making them curious and forcing them to practice what they are taught.*" Peter often finds it challenging to speak with his children about sex because he thinks that they feel ashamed and embarrassed of the topic. He believes that they are nervous to ask their father questions about sex. Peter believes that girls should be taught about sex separately from boys. In his house, he wants his wife to teach their daughter while he takes up the responsibility of guiding his son on this.

REPORT FROM 23RD JULY, 2017 TAKEN AT 0.48325043, 35.26344667

SEX EDUCATION

An interview with Peter, a 35 year old father of two teenagers from Langas. According to Peter, sex education is the information and knowledge given to children who have reached puberty stage to guide them on their sex life. He said this education should be given to those who have attained 13 years of age and above. He highlighted some importance of provision of sex education, like promoting good behavior among teenagers of both sexes in order to delay early initiation of sex as well as promoting healthy and meaningful interactions between opposite sex. Mr. Peter also said that sex education equips children with the knowledge of the effects of having early unprotected sexual activities such as unplanned pregnancy, contracting Sexually Transmitted Infections and getting cervical cancer for girls especially if they have multiple partners and initiate sexual activities while very young. He feels that by learning these, they will abstain from engaging in sex. "Despite providing important knowledge to teenagers, sex education can at times ruin a teenager in many ways," he lamented. "The education provided can make the children curious and have them practice what they are taught, as they would wish to prove for themselves, for them to believe" Mr. Peter added that sex education should be provided by a professional mentor well-versed in this topic. He admits to facing challenges when talking to his children on this topic. He realizes that his children feel ashamed of the topic and don't have the courage to ask him any questions concerning sex issues. Peter explains that the girl child should be taught sex education separately from the boy child. As a father, he believes it is his role to teach their son and the wife to teach their daughter. He added that TV, Radio and social media has replaced the roles of parents and schools on giving children guidelines on sex education. Children get educated through TV programs and interactions with their peers on social media where they are freer to share. He agreed that most public schools do not teach children about sex education. This he attributes to the growing population of children and limited resources (e.g. flip charts for teaching). Additionally, children in public schools come from cultures that do not allow sex education to be introduced to them, as it is termed as taboo. Peter concluded by saying that it is the role of both teachers and parents to give children sex education, and that this role should not be left to only teachers or parents. Download full report [here](https://her.timby.org/download/?id=571) (https://her.timby.org/download/?id=571)

Peter mentions that TV, Radio, and social media have largely replaced the roles of parents and schools in providing children with guidelines on sex education. However, Peter believes that it is the role of both teachers at school and parents at home to give children sex education.

Question : What do peer mentors think about sexual health education in Kenya?

Health reporter, Sadaam, interviewed Gitonga - a youth mentor from Nakuru. Gitonga believes that youth should be taught about sex and it's risks in school. According to Gitonga, the biggest challenge among youth is that some are afraid and are not confident in discussing sex, whereas others are assertive and want to know more information. The best advice according to Gitonga is to "*be smart, play safe and look after the person you are with*".

REPORT FROM 31ST JULY, 2017 TAKEN AT 0.5095801, 35.2813636

A youth mentor giving his views on Sex Education

Mr Gitonga, a youth mentor, giving his views on sex education. He believes the youths should be taught about sex education and the risks with regard to their sexual activities. He is of the opinion that sex education should be introduced in learning institutions. Some of the challenges he has noticed as a mentor is that most of the youths he talks to are not confident enough, they are afraid and don't trust themselves. He is also limited in what in what he can tell them. Some are assertive and want to know more information. He quotes "Be smart, play safe and look after the person you are with"

Download full report [here](https://her.timby.org/download/?id=655) (https://her.timby.org/download/?id=655)

Health reporter, Amos, got a chance to interview a teacher Brian, from Busia. Brian doesn't believe that all age groups should learn about sex. He believes that secondary school is the appropriate time to be taught, as this could affect adolescents' interactions with adults. As a Christian, Brian believes, that sex before marriage is sin. However, he acknowledges "*because of the situation in the world, sex outside of marriage is common,*" and that it's difficult to limit sex among adolescents. His parting shot was "*much of it really lies within the youth themselves and what they think about life.*"

REPORT FROM 31ST JULY, 2017 TAKEN AT 0.5178338, 35.2787338

SEX EDUCATION

Sex is a topic shied upon by many. I got a chance to interview a teacher who had a great input especially from experience and interaction with teens and youth in classroom. The relationship between peer pressure and sex: When you talk sex its about boys and girls are affected. Peer pressure affects youth. He understood sex to mean boys and girls at first. An example from Brian who is a teacher by profession. He has seen students relating to older ladies in university who were engaging in other activities. He actually approached the teenagers parents and informed them about the behavior after which they acted accordingly. Young teenagers relate with older people and can adopt behaviors that may affect the way they relate. They can copy what others are doing. Do you think it is important for sex to be taught in school? I don't think every age suits. It will affect a certain age group more than the other. When they get to secondary education it would be the right season for them to be taught. A: Which category is the most sexually active. Very young people know about it most adolescents about about 10-12 are sexually active. 10 years and above is a perfect place to start sex education then gt in depth when they get to 18 A: What is the impact of making condoms and contraceptives easily available to teenagers? "As I Christian I believe sex before marriage is illegal" But because of the situation in the world you cannot say sex is a criminal offense, you cannot limit the adolescents from having sex. In order to limit spread of HIV and other diseases it is important to have contraceptives. It is ok for contraceptives to be available for the ones especially who do not believe in God. Contraceptives encourage promiscuity. if the government puts in measures then it would reduce promiscuity. Important for them to have it. Much of it lies within the youth themselves and what they think about life. Would you say there is the impact of sex education? Socially if i am taught about sex and given conditions as to what happens if you have sex, then I would be scared to engage in it. It brings dignity because a lot of ladies and boys have lost their dignity among parents and elders because of sex. It is a sensitive topic in the community and sex education will change perspectives of many people. Would you say there are a lot of teenagers getting pregnant before marriage? There is a change over the years because a lot of people are getting pregnant mostly due to lack of knowledge on contraception. The world has changes and a lot of girls are getting pregnant. Many ladies because of psychological distress settle for those who can comfort them and end up getting pregnant as a result. It is important for people to be taught on sexual education? IT is important because when something is going wrong it is important for people to be educated. Sex education is a wide topic and in brief I must say I talk to youth and tell them it about psychological and spiritual principles. When these principles are taken seriously then we can avoid a lot of issues.

Download full report [here](https://her.timby.org/download/?id=649) (https://her.timby.org/download/?id=649)

What do YOU think about sex education in Kenya? Join the conversation by sharing, commenting, and liking this story. Tag @AmpathKenya on Facebook and @ampathkenya on Twitter so that we can see your comments and we can all learn from you as well!