VIII RESPONSIBILITY: PREGNANCY AND CONDOMS

You find that families are poor, do not have better ways of life. That is when girls take a step of getting involved in sex.
You find that a girl does not have all needs, that is why they reach this level, you find that the parents of this girl normally do not fully support her, that is when she decides to use this method hoping to get what she wants.
Once she has decided to do this, now she has to overcome the following
(a) Getting pregnant
(b) Contracting sexually transmitted infections
Once she gets pregnant she will get kicked from the home, even losing her chances of getting education and she will be isolated from the community. The community does not want anything to do with it and you will give birth to a baby in struggle, the first reason is
(a) A baby will need needs of a father and a mother
(b) It will have no decent needs like, soap, clothes, baby powder, food and care.
[Essay by an anonymous student of the Primary School in Magu town]

Responsibility for pregnancy

Fear for unwanted pregnancy was a topic of great concern, especially for the Tanzanian girls. According to the girls we spoke with, if a girl becomes pregnant, there is a great chance that the boy who made her pregnant will ‘refuse’ the pregnancy thus denying his responsibility. In the eyes of the informants this is a disastrous event because without a father for the baby the girl would be a burden to her own family. Furthermore, the community would see the girl’s illegitimate child, which brings shame upon her family. In this case, her damaged reputation is likely to decrease a girl’s chance of getting married. Pregnant girls have to leave school and rarely return because they have to take care of their baby. One option for these girls is to be sent ‘out of town’ to live with her grandparents. This is the scenario girls have in mind when they say that a boy ‘only wants to spoil her life’ when a boy approaches a girl. The consequences of pregnancy are obvious for girls in Tanzania. Girls in school see what happens with their classmates who become pregnant. In the schools where we did our research, cases of pregnancy and subsequent dropout occurred every year.

Hope, a young woman (21 years old) whom we met while walking through one of the villages near Nyahali, got pregnant in school and had to drop out. A friend of Hope’s mother had brought us to her house to introduce us to Hope’s mother whom she thought we could interview. Hope’s mother is a widow who sells tomatoes at the market and shares her small
mud hut with her five adult children and Alfonso, Hope’s 5-year-old son. Hope’s mother was absent when we arrived and we found Hope sitting in front of the little house wearing only a kanga (wrap). We explained our presence to her, which she understood as she spoke a bit of English. She had learned English in secondary school before she dropped out when she became pregnant.

The case of Hope

When I was in secondary school, I met a man, a businessman, and I fell in love with him. He was nice to me and he supported me and we had a relationship. He promised to marry me after I would finish secondary school. But when I was in form 2 [at age 15] I became pregnant and I had to drop out of school. And then he told me that he could not marry me because according to Sukuma custom [local tribe] he had to marry someone from his own tribe [Hope is Mchinga]. I felt heartbroken. Then I delivered Alfonso. Because my family is very poor and food is hard to come by, I tried to get a job. To get a job I wanted to follow a course in computer technology, but they did not allow me without proper secondary school papers. So I saved up money for two years and then I went back to secondary school. But life was so hard for me and for my family without money and food that I constantly worried about my son and his well-being. So I could not concentrate and did not perform very well in school and again I dropped out. Now the main problems that I am facing are the care of my child, finding food to eat and clothes to wear. My mother is a simple tomato saleswoman in the market and cannot take care of all the people in the household. But I find it very hard to find work without schooling. It is very hard to find a man who wants to take care of me and my baby. People in the village see me as a prostitute, because I got a child out of wedlock. So nobody wants me anymore, except maybe for some older men who are desperate to marry and can’t get anyone else. In this village there are many girls like me. The problem is men, they don’t take responsibility. They don’t care. Girls should be warned about this and both [boys and girls] need to be told about the consequences. Boys should learn to take responsibility and that will only happen if leaders will start talking about this problem. But they don’t. It’s taboo. And men are being misinformed about condoms, so they do not trust them. They rather take the risk of getting infected.

Girls blame the problem of pregnancy and its’ consequences on boys, but boys too have a fear of unwanted pregnancies. If it becomes known which boy is responsible for a pregnancy he will be forced to marry the girl. If he has no house of his own, the girl would move in with him and his parents. The boy risks being ostracized by the community if he or his family is unable to support the girl and the baby or refuses to take the girl in. If the pregnant girl is a schoolgirl, the boy might face charges, “you can end up in prison.” If he is in school, he will be expelled. If his parents are strict, they might “chase him from the house”.
Sometimes parents, they will tell you ‘Now, we don’t have anything to do with this matter, it is your problem. Because we only wanted you and that is the end of it.’ But you, you can’t take care of her. So you refuse [to admit that the pregnancy is yours]. But the moment it becomes known that the girl is pregnant from you, you would have to leave the area. In fact, you could even have to leave the country.

[FGD with boys in Magu town]

After the pupils from Standard 7 of Nyahali primary school performed their play for us, we showed them the videotape and discussed certain themes from the play. One theme was ‘responsibility for what happened to Penny and Asha’. The boys opined that the girls themselves were to blame for what happened to them and denied any responsibility on the part of the boys in the play. “They knew what the consequences of such behavior could be.” I asked if they would not feel sorry if a girl was kicked out of school because they made that girl pregnant. They said: “You don't feel sorry, the girl knows what risk she's taking. Especially if the girl approaches the boy because she wants to have sex, then you would give it to her, but you wouldn't feel sorry if there were consequences, she should have been wiser.” One of the boys added: “Also girls know that boys are depending on their parents as well, that they won’t be able to support her and a child if she gets pregnant.” I asked: “But isn’t it true that you tell her, when you want to seduce her, that you will give her anything she needs?” The girls of the class cheered supportively, when I asked this, keen to hear the response of the boys. The boys answered: “Yeah, but the girl can know I don't have a lot of money, I'd give her only 1000 or 500 and she knows I don't have a job.” Then the girls and boys started a fierce, but chaotic discussion that resulted in the proposition to organize a debate. And so it happened that a week later the class was split in two, the boys on the left and the girls on the right side of the classroom. The theme written on the blackboard said ‘Responsibility for Pregnancy’ and both groups took 15 minutes to prepare their viewpoints and select a spokesperson.

Nyahali debate on pregnancy

First the representative for the girls, Jeni, came forward accompanied by the loud applause of her female classmates. When she stood in front of the class, she started:

Our group, we have discussed these issues. First we want to ask a question: Why does a boy not take the responsibility of raising a baby? Us, we have seen that a boy has the responsibility of raising a baby because they both wanted to go and have sex, they agreed together. And raising the baby that has born, this act concerns all. Because they worked together to do that act [sex], a boy has the responsibility of raising that baby because a baby needs care of a father and a mother. If a boy refuses that pregnancy, a girl will take the responsibility of removing it [abortion], and then
she can see herself not being able to produce for life [become infertile]. We mean that act was done by both, that act involved both. Lastly we advise boys to stop involving themselves with girls and lying to them and we warn girls not to be deceived by those things.

The girls in the class give her a big applause again and then Salim comes forward for the boys:

It is that we have discussed as follows: The boy has the responsibility of raising a baby? He doesn’t! Because we cannot know her period when they do that act [whether she has had her menarche and can conceive and/or is in her ‘safe days’ of the cycle]. The period the girl was seduced, she knew if she would get pregnant. For that she was supposed to tell the boy that, this child that we are going to have [might get], should be raised by who? She didn’t say, (the boys give applause to support Salim). First a child is supposed to be raised by its mother because the father, he doesn’t have breasts to raise it. If you give him that child that you have given birth to, and then you take it to its father, how is he is going to breastfeed it? Another point follows that that pregnancy was on purpose. She says ‘somebody has a child, I don’t and I, I am going to find one’. For that she is supposed to find a boy to get her pregnant (the girls start booing and yelling). There are some girls they want it for themselves, by seducing a boy, some like money, her she knows. Okay, like me here okay? (Pointing to himself) Me I have money, like if I get her pregnant she knows she is a survivor on me [depend on me]. Some get pregnant because of being disturbed by menstruation [have become fertile]. I don’t know if that pregnancy is mine, I did it once, now, I did once. If she did it with another, how will I know that it is mine? (Meanwhile the boys and girls in the group are starting to respond to Salim and each other). Somewhere she herself wanted to get pregnant, while they were doing that act, they did not agree to whom the pregnancy will belong, or the child who will be born will be whose. This girl and that boy, they did not agree on whom the baby will belong to, because there when they are doing it, they don’t know if there is an objective that will happen, a boy doesn’t know, I don’t know today I will get a girl pregnant, or the girl won’t say that today she is on her period.

One of the girls from the group stands up and fires at Salim:
How can you get a girl pregnant and then, you refuse to raise a child, while you know... Why don’t you agree with her that we will raise the child, why you get her pregnant and then leave her struggling, why? That pregnancy is for both; you contributed both until that girl got pregnant.

A boy from the group stands up and says to the girl:
Now wait; let me tell you, there, when you do that act, there must be an objective. Now you, your objective was not a baby, your objective was pleasure, you, you wanted pleasure, you didn’t know there was a baby...

The girl: If he knew he didn’t want to raise the child, he should have used protection. Because he is supposed to raise that child, because it is his blood!

The boy: Why did she not advise him? If you had advised him ‘you there, you, wear a condom’ (both girls and boys start to laugh). Even you, you could have worn [referring to female condom], you were only carried away.
Then another girl stands up: You are saying that they did not arrange to whom the child belongs. So a father and a mother, when they are doing that, do they arrange [beforehand] for each other that the one we are going to give birth to is for the mother, and the one we give birth to tomorrow is the father's?

Then Juma stands up: They [a father and mother] will already have agreed that ‘We want what? We want a child.’ Now you, you have only taken each other. You are not like a father and a mother, for that, when a baby is born, it is not like it was planned. A father and a mother have given birth by agreement, for that we say you; you have not given birth by agreement. Therefore it will be hard to accept that pregnancy.

The girl: A father is not there when you tie a knot [marriage]; he is there when you have given birth, when you have gotten a child, that is when you are called a father [a man is called a father not when he marries, but when he becomes a father by producing a child]

Juma: How has he given birth?

Girl: Hasn’t he given birth with that girl?

Juma: Being called a father that is not a problem, but the problem comes when raising a child, because to raise a child, is it like a father’s responsibility? Have we married one another? We all have sins you see? [Referring to lust or sex before marriage] The responsibility has to be yours, what do you want me to do?

Girl: You are only supposed to give, because the girl might need food, okay. Now that food, is she not the one who needs it, it will be the creature inside that needs that food [the unborn baby, the foetus], because she will be protecting that creature.

Juma: There, the boy and the girl, they did not know that a baby might come, they only wanted to get pleasure, okay? Pleasure, you, the girl, you can’t ask me to take responsibility because for example me, I live with my parents, I depend on my parents, now where will I get that money to bring you and use?

Another girl from the group rushes in to respond to Juma: Haaha, how about that money that you gave to her, where did you get it from?

Juma: Are they going to seduce you by money, you?

Girl: Didn’t you say you are getting pleasure, now when you are getting that pleasure aren’t you giving her money? Where are you getting that money if you are not given it by your parents?

Juma: For that, that day, were you looking for money or…?

The girl is getting upset by Juma’s personal attack. He is trying to trick her by making it seem like she, as a representative for girls who get involved with boys for money, is a mhuni:

Girl: … Some women have the greed for money, okay? Now I … they are there, they have the greed for money. Those that you said have the greed for money, they go with the intentions of finding money, they don’t know if they will get that pregnancy.
For when she has gotten pregnant, you are supposed to work together to raise that baby, and a child you raise it?

**Juma:** It means you are doing business? Or...

The boys in the class start to laugh and the girls are getting upset, shouting at the boys. Then Salim asks them to calm down.

**Salim:** You, Neema, don’t you understand Swahili? Shut up!

The class decides to get organized again. Salim sits down and a new girl, Aneti, comes forward to the front of the class and turns her body to face the boys:

When you say that, I don’t have the breast to feed that baby, is it fed by breasts only?

**Boys:** Yes!

**Aneti:** No, there are many ways of raising a child and besides breasts, there are many ways in which a child can go through and grow. It is not a must, to breastfeed using breasts. Children whose parents are patients of HIV, how about those? It is not that the child needs breastfeeding only; there are important needs that s/he needs, from the father.

**Boys:** What needs?

**Aneti:** Taken care of; clothes… [To Salim:] For you, what needs do you need from your father?

**Salim:** You are saying taken care of, a father, can he truly bathe that child?

**Aneti:** You, you there, what does your father normally give you?

**Salim:** My father? He never gives me anything. (*During a personal interview Salim had told us that his father had left home a while ago, so his mother is the one that takes care of him.*)

**Another girl:** And those clothes you are wearing, who buys them for you?

**Salim:** These ones? My mother.

**Another girl:** Where is your mother getting that money without being given by your father?

**Salim:** Oy, now those aren’t married. Oy! One at a time now [girls are shouting]

**Juma:** [responds to the turmoil] You, stop arguing. You, when you say that, it’s because you don’t know the rules of marriage.

**Neema:** Mention them if you know them.
Juma: I can’t mention… If you want to make sure, go and get the book, a book of rules.

From this debate and other similar debates, it becomes clear that boys not only deny responsibility for pregnancy out of fear of the consequences but also because they do not feel responsible. Since most relationships are short-term the boys argue they cannot know if the girl has had additional sexual relationships around the same time. Therefore there is no proof that he is the father. The boys further argue that it is the girl who is responsible for the pregnancy because the girl knows if she is menstruating or not and therefore if she is fertile. Due to the age that boys and girls get involved in sexual relationships in Tanzania some girls might not have experienced menarche. Therefore the boy’s claim of not knowing whether the girl they are having sex with can become pregnant is legitimate. It is the boys’ opinion that a girl should mention their menstrual status to them. The boys may have referred to what they called ‘the safe days’. The boys assume that a girl knows when she can conceive by counting the days of her cycle. Indeed a group of boys from the same school who were interviewed a year later told us that girls are responsible for pregnancy because they know whether or not they can get pregnant as well as when they can get pregnant. “Normally the girls turn to us when they know they are safe, when they know they can’t get pregnant because they check their cycle.” It is possible that the significance of agreeing to a place and time for sex during courtship is not only related to privacy issues but also to a girl’s assumed awareness of her chances for conception. Like Salim, the boys of this group interviewed later argued that a girl might purposely hide her menstrual status from them in order to become pregnant. Salim’s introduction appeared to indicate that he thought girls conceal their menstrual status in order to trap a boy into a long-term relationship. A long-term relationship would allow her to ‘survive on him’ which means he would have to support her financially. More than once the boys raised the point that pregnancy was not part of the ‘agreement’, that it was not the ‘objective’ for having sex. The purpose of the sexual encounter was pleasure, not to have a child. They pointed to the kind of relationship in which ‘the act’ took place. The sexual act between the boy and girl was not like a marriage in which sex takes place to produce a child. They emphasized the short-term character of their relationships with girls and that these relationships are about pleasure and without commitment. The boys elaborated on this argument by implying that women are biologically responsible for raising a baby because they have breasts to feed the child. The boys beliefs of conventional gender tasks are illustrated by remarks such as, ‘can a father truly bathe a child?’ So in the boys’ eyes girls
have a natural commitment to a baby while boys do not. The girls tried to point out that a baby needs more than breast milk to grow and that the boy has the responsibility to support the girl by providing money, which traditionally is the task of the husband. But the boys parried this argument by saying that they were depending on their parents, implying that they did not have the money to support a girl and a child. They also stated that the girls should and could know this. We sensed that the girls were cornered in the debate and the only argument left for them was to remind the boys that if a boy wanted to have sex he should be aware of the potential consequences. If a boy was not ready to face the consequences of sexual activity he should at least use a condom.

**Nyahali debate – continued:**

The boys start to repeat their argument that they cannot know if a pregnancy is theirs, because they do not know if the girl has slept with more men.

Girl from the group: If you do not know if it is you only, why did you not use protection? So that all of that wouldn’t get you [so that you wouldn’t have to worry about pregnancy or diseases]?

Juma: Are there for boys only? There are for girls too [he is referring to female condoms]

Girl: You could have bought and taken them to her, aren’t you the one who wanted [to have sex]?

Juma: Couldn’t she have advised me to use?

Girl: So you don’t know? [Cynical, as if he doesn’t have knowledge about condoms]

Juma: (becomes agitated) You, don’t you have a brain?

Although the girls have a point, Juma again emphasized the responsibility of the girl. If a girl knows she can get pregnant she should advise the boy to use a condom, or better, use a female condom. The girl suggested that the boy should have brought a condom. From other women we learned it is inappropriate for girls to bring a condom because it implies too much readiness for and experience with sex. It is interesting that in this debate the boys seemed open-minded towards the discussion of the use of condoms. At least they had not discarded the option of using a condom. This was remarkable because from other interviews and discussions we learned that boys have a negative opinion about the use of condoms and therefore girls find it hard to negotiate using them.
Attitudes towards condom use

Condoms spoil sex!
[Boys during many FGD’s and interviews]

The attitude of our male informants towards the use of condoms was outspokenly negative. First, all but a few of them were of the opinion that condoms reduce pleasure. We suspect that some of our informants who said this were not speaking from experience. Therefore this opinion might reflect a peer-influenced norm for condoms. Boys further based their reluctance to use condoms on arguments that condoms have side effects; they can cause cancer, infertility and even HIV. Some had moral obligations for using a condom while others mentioned that they personally were literally “too small to use condoms”. These boys said that condoms did not fit them: “I am a little bit young, so no way the condom would have fitted”, said one of the boys in Magu town during a group discussion with boys.

It is impossible for me to agree to use a condom: First: condoms cause cancer. Second: it spoils the fertility rate of the man. Third: it is like abortion; maybe you spoil the existence of a baby who could become the next president of Tanzania. (Other boy adds) The bad quality of condoms; often they are expired so there is no longer lubricant and friction will cause wounds in the skin of the genitals.
[FGD with Nyahali boys]

Some of the arguments that boys and men posited to reject the use of condoms were based on misconceptions. For example: “Virgins cannot fall pregnant so no need to use with them” and “Condoms are carrying the HIV virus”. These boys said that Europeans or Americans put the virus in the condoms as a way to counter African population growth. Some boys believed they were too young to cause pregnancy: “You can only get a girl pregnant if you are 18 years or older”. Although the boys we interviewed were quite knowledgeable about HIV and AIDS, the men we interviewed in Nyahali village (who were in their 20’s) said they could see if someone had HIV: “After 2 or 3 months you can stop using because then you can see if she is showing symptoms of HIV infection, like fever, diarrhea, bleeding, skin disease.” The most frequently heard misconception was that condoms had little invisible holes that allowed the virus to go through. The entire class of Standard 7 in Nyahali primary school believed this was true, “because the science teacher has said it” (more on this in the next chapter). Furthermore, one group of boys said, “the people in the movies [porn] never use condoms either”.

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Since pregnancy is seen as the responsibility of the girl the reason for boys to use condoms is not as much for contraception as for disease prevention. However, it was claimed that if you trust a girl or if you had done thorough investigations this reduced the need for condoms: “Using a condom is out of order, because it means you don’t trust the girlfriend and if you don’t trust her, why would you have sex with her in the first place?” The boys in Magu town argued that “if you assume that the girl is infected, then you use a condom.”

Some boys indicated that they did not mind using a condom but had unsafe sex because they were ‘too excited to use’ one or couldn’t afford to buy a condom. After Iddy had told his friend Mathias about how he fell in love with a girl (see previous chapter), the boys swapped places and Iddy asked about Mathias’ first time:

_Iddy: How was it man? Start the story._

Mathias: We were studying together in the house. There was music and we started to dance and test one another. Then we left the house and we passed a mini shop. I bought some sweets, she ate them. Then I bought her a soda, she was drinking that soda. After finishing that soda she followed me. I, myself, I prepared myself and we started dancing again and I felt bad [excited]. After feeling bad I touched her and she refused. After refusing she said that we will be caught. We left, to the house. She went to the bedroom and for me, I saw this one has accepted. Also me I went and we did what? We laid and covered ourselves and started things involving sex. But after that... A person might not do...do what? Care if you don’t have.... you ca... you can’t think like ‘I have a condom’ ... Once you rise [get an erection] you just go for it, nothing can stop you.

Tumaini, the 15-year-old boy with two girlfriends and a wish for more, mentioned “I had unsafe sex last Saturday; I didn’t have money to buy a condom, so I did it without.” We asked him if he considered himself to be at risk for HIV:

_There will be a risk. Sometimes I use a condom, sometimes I don’t. If I have a condom I’ll use it, but if I don’t have one, if I don’t have money, then I don’t use. I am afraid but it is a result you can get or not. I don’t have money to use condoms. I am not convinced to use. The desire takes away the rationality. It is hard to be convinced to wait with sex until I have enough money to buy a condom. Because of the desire._

_Me: Are you not afraid she might have become pregnant?_

_No, I’m not afraid of that, because the girl was a virgin. So she can’t get pregnant. Also, pregnancy is like an accident. I felt hungry [for sex], so I had sex without a condom. I’m taking the chance._
Girls, on the other hand, said they want to use condoms but cannot convince boys to use them. Other girls told us that they are offered more money if they are willing to have unsafe sex. I asked Shani, one of my female informants in Nyahali, if she thought a girl could tell a boy that she insists on using a condom:

He will listen, but then refuse. Then she will just go on and have sex with him. Because the girl believes that they love each other, so she has to believe everything the boy is saying.

Two groups of girls, from Magu town and Nyahali, independently told us stories about boys agreeing to use a condom, but then cutting or tearing it on purpose:

*Girls in Magu:*
Sometimes, you find that girl is scared to get pregnant. Now, she will tell that boy ‘for me I am scared to do what, to get pregnant’. That boy, he might deceive her to drink tablets or he uses a condom. But even if he uses a condom, there are some boys, they are smart. When he wears a condom, he breaks it in front. For that, a pregnancy, you can just get it. And even if you drink those tablets to stop pregnancy, you might get diseases like cancer, or even STD's. If he has, he can infect you.

*Girls in Nyahali:*
There are some men who say ‘let's use a condom so that you don't get pregnant’, but when he wears it, he tears it. It has something to do with the way it feels like, the taste [feeling]. Some men, the feeling of the condom is not enough, it is not satisfying enough. They want to have skin contact with the girl, in order to enjoy the sexual act. So they use a blade, to cut off the tip, so when he's wearing it, it's not right.

Because many men reject condoms, some adult women opt for contraceptive alternatives like injections and pills. We were also told that if a girl becomes pregnant “*she can always go and have an abortion*”. The following is part of the interview with the four young women in their 20’s in Nyahali:

*Me:* Who is responsible if you become pregnant?
The girl is the one responsible for preventing the pregnancy. So most girls like to use the condom.

*Me:* Can you bring it yourself?
*(They laugh)* No, the boys bring.

*Me:* And the boys don’t mind using?
Many boys they cannot agree to use a condom. So that’s why we use injection or if you get pregnant you go for an abortion.

The school children interviewed in this research did not mention any contraceptives other than condoms as an option to prevent pregnancy. They considered contraceptive pills and injections to be risky if you are young and when you have no children. Girls told us that some
girls would have an abortion if they could get enough money. However, they added that these girls run the risk of becoming infertile or dying.

*Boy:* There is nothing you can do to prevent a girl from getting pregnant, sperm goes right through a condom, it won't prevent. Injections and pills are only for grown-ups, because when you grow up it limits the chances of you getting pregnant or giving birth.

*Girl:* I have a friend who got ill because of pills and injections and now she's infertile!

[Class discussion with boys and girls in Nyahali]

According to the boys and girls we interviewed a lack of knowledge is another reason why condoms are not used. Charlie said that condoms are used in towns but not in villages, e.g. where he lives, because “in the villages people are not exposed to the use of condoms and they don't know how to use it either.” Blessed from Magu town thought that: “Children from Standards 5, 6, 7 don't even know the meaning of a condom.” The four young women in Nyahali also mention exposure and knowledge as a problem:

Many men are not educated, they do not agree if you ask them to use. But we girls have to go to the clinic with the little ones and there they teach women how to use a condom and what AIDS is and that we should tell our men to use. But at home, men refuse. They need to be educated too, they need to discuss.

*Me:* How about radio, magazines, AIDS campaigns, schools?

Most people have no radio; there are no NGO’s that come here. At school they only teach this topic one day per month, that is not enough. We need to discuss more to make them able to agree.

**Concluding remarks**

While long-term relationships are based on commitment in Tanzania, according to boys the objective of relationships with temporary partners is for pleasure only. This perception of short-term relationships without commitment influences boys’ ideas about their responsibility for pregnancy and consequently for contraceptives. According to boys, it is only girls who are responsible if they become pregnant. The girl is the one who should calculate the risk of getting pregnant. She is the one who knows, or should know, if she can become pregnant. If she decides to have sex and becomes pregnant, it is her responsibility. Boys argue they do not have the means to support a child and that girls are the natural caretakers. Because short-term relationships can exist simultaneously or in quick succession, boys can claim that no one is sure who the father is. Since relationships take place in secret it is hard for a girl to prove that a particular boy is the father of her baby or that there was no one else. Because boys do not
feel responsible for pregnancy they are less inclined to use a condom for the purpose of contraception. They think condoms reduce pleasure and many believe that condoms have negative side effects or are ineffective. Furthermore, condoms cost money, which is in short supply, and some boys find it hard to think about using a condom when they are excited. Some boys do consider the use of condoms as effective to prevent sexually transmitted diseases including HIV. But most consider their risk for contracting HIV to be low or consider that they have reduced this risk if they have investigated the behavior of the girl including her sexual history. Girls, on the other hand, expressed a strong wish for the use of condoms especially for the prevention of pregnancy. Unfortunately, it is hard for girls to negotiate the use of condoms because boys oppose their use so strongly and sometimes offer more money if the girl is willing to have unsafe sex. Due to local gender norms girls have to depend on boys to provide a condom and this is less likely to happen if the boys are reluctant to use one. Finally, it is not unimaginable that purchasing or being in possession of condoms could be risky for boys or girls considering how their parents, caretakers or teacher’s would interpret this action if they were discovered.

One of the explanations given for not using condoms is a lack of knowledge. But the majority of school children who were our informants had a comprehensive knowledge of HIV and AIDS. This was because the Guardian Programme, which included a sexual education aspect, targeted the three schools. Misconceptions that existed and led to reluctance to use condoms were based on inadequate knowledge or wrong ideas about the condoms themselves or what exactly causes pregnancy or conception. The following chapter examines the role of sex education and taboo in the formation of knowledge and attitudes towards risks and condoms. It will also consider the particular problem of sexual harassment and abuse of students by schoolteachers.