

Trainers Guide to Child Marriage & Early Pregnancy

By the end of this session participants will be aware that
At the end of this session participants will understand that:

1. Child marriage has deep cultural roots and is a very sensitive subject which if mishandled can bring further harm to children.
2. Children as young as 10 are married off without understanding what is happening to them, manipulated by their family for bride price.
3. Because talking freely about sex is taboo, many teenagers know nothing about sex or how babies are conceived, and are traumatised.
4. They are married off because of resources at home for a bride price, therefore they are used as a commodity.
5. For their husband's family they are free labour and abused sexually at the will of the husband, who is often their father's age.
5. There is a high risk of such early pregnancy as they may be permanently damaged in child birth, with damaged bladder, 'fistula', which makes them incontinent for the rest of their lives, with pain every time they urinate.
6. They are often returned to their family in this condition and are stigmatised as 'fistula' is seen as an act of 'God's punishment.'
7. They never complete their schooling and have no chance of breaking away from dependency
8. Child marriage is against the law in most countries but conflicts with traditional laws and religions, therefore it is condoned by many societies, which practice it secretly. Children do not know their rights to prevent it.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Is child marriage legal in your country?
2. Is abortion legal in your country?
3. Does child marriage occur in your country. If so to what extent?
4. Does abortion occur in your area, and if so how?
3. Do you have any first hand experience of children who have been married / pregnant as teenagers?
4. How does early marriage / pregnancy impact on their lives?
5. How can we break the vicious cycle of mothers replicating their own experience in their daughter's life?
6. How can a Community Health Club help support children to understand about sex to avoid early pregnancy.
7. What will you undertake to do in your Community Health Club to avoid pregnancy through ignorance.

Facts:

Internationally, child marriage is highest in sub-Saharan Africa, where 35 % of women are married before age 18.

12 million girls aged 15–19 years and at least 777,000 girls under 15 years give birth each year in developing regions.

Pregnancy and childbirth complications are the leading cause of death among girls aged 15–19 years globally.

3.9 million unsafe abortions among girls aged 15–19 years occur each year, contributing to maternal mortality, morbidity and lasting health problems.

How to use the card set in a participatory way:

Making a Story

1. Give out the pictures to the group and ask them to make a drama using the pictures. This will enable you to know more about certain cultural aspects of the community and give them the chance to show some of the issues surrounding gender equity and gender equality.
2. It is critical that this is followed by a good discussion about that practices are common in the area, and explore the questions below.
3. If you think women will be inhibited to talk in front of men, split the group into male and female group and discuss these points separately.
4. Ask each to summarise their discussion when they come together as one group afterwards.
5. Make sure to complete the session with some clear plans agreed by the group as a whole, as to how the Community Health Club can do something to help end this practice and support vulnerable women in the area.

Some practical ways to act together to address Gender Inequality in Community Health Clubs:

1. Identify one person in the CHC who can be an 'Agony Auntie' - known to be wise, discreet and informed and who is prepared to talk to young girls seeking advice in case of pregnancy.
2. Set up a support group for expectant mums to include / support teenagers who are pregnant.
3. Speak to the village leaders and ask what can be done about certain individuals who are known to have made a child pregnant.
4. Establish a hot line with Health Center (perhaps in another area far from the village) where girls can report privately.
5. Make sure everyone in the CHC is aware of their basic rights to good health and education.