

A WISE CHOICE



ABOUT ANAMBRA

Anambra State is located in the southeastern region of Nigeria. The state was formed in 1976 from the former East Central State. Anambra State is bordered by Kogi on the north, Enugu on the east, Abia on the southeast, Imo and Rivers on the south, and Delta on the west. Awka is the state capital. The indigenous ethnic group in Anambra state are the Igbos and a small population of Igala, who are found in the north-western part of the state.

According to the 2006 census, there are over 4.1 million people in the state. Anambra is rich in natural gas, crude oil, bauxite, and ceramic. It has many other resources in terms of agro-based activities such as fisheries and farming, as well as land cultivated for pasturing and animal husbandry. Anambra State is not only an agrarian state, but it is also known for its vast commercial activities.

About SWAG Initiative

Stand with A Girl (SWAG) Initiative is a registered youth-led organization dedicated to ensuring that every girl in Nigeria is empowered to fulfill her maximum potential no matter where she is born or found.

About the DMS Project

GOAL:

To ensure increased access to quality sexual and reproductive health information and services among young people in Nigeria.

OBJECTIVE:

- Promote meaningful youth participation in data for decision making.
- Strengthen the capacity of State Actors on data use for informed decision making and programming.
- Interpret the AYSRH data in a simple, friendly, catchy, and responsive format for decision-making.
- Promote AYSRH storybooks to improve delivery of comprehensive contraception care and education.

DISCLAIMER

This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, business, events and incidents are the products of the author's imagination. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, or actual events is purely coincidental.

STORY

It was a bright, beautiful morning in Umuasili village, Dimkpa town. Dumebi woke up from a beautiful sleep, as the sound of her mother's voice resounded in her ears.

Dumebi, tired and sleepy, said to herself, "Ohhh, it's morning already?". She remembered that today was the great Eke market day and she was supposed to fetch firewood before joining mama at the market. Eke market day, the special day in Umuasili where everyone and people from neighbouring villages come to buy and sell their farm produce like Akwu, Okro, Ukpaka and so on.



With her chewing stick in her mouth, she hurriedly did her house chores and rushed off to the farm.



On getting to the farm, she met her uncle, Mr. Ikem, and greeted him, “Maazi ututu oma”, “Dumebi kedu?” He retorted. She answered, “Odinma”. Her Uncle asked her to help him pick some Okro, but



Dumebi explained that she was on an errand to fetch firewood for cooking and promised to do that later. Mr. Ikem persuaded her and she reluctantly agreed to quickly pick the Okro. He led her to a lonely part of the farm, where he grabbed her from behind and raped her.

She screamed for help but no one heard her because they were all at the market. Mr. Ikem threatened to kill her if she told anyone. Dumebi was scared to die but then, her mum was her confidante so she decided to tell her. Her mum was enraged!



Summoning courage, she reported to her husband who is the Chief Priest of their village. After narrating the story, her husband believed her, on the misconception that his daughter could not be 'promiscuous' having had Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) performed on her when she was eight years old.



(3 out of 100 girls between the ages 15-29 have experienced Female Genital Mutilation).

Filled with anger, he went in search of his brother but unfortunately, Mr. Ikem had fled to an unknown place.



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3 out of 100 girls between the ages 15-29 have experienced Female Genital Mutilation in Anambra State

It then dawned on him that a sacrilege had befallen his family and he had to act quickly. Because of fear of stigma, Dumebi's parents agreed to take her to Awka where she would live with her mother's sister, Mrs. Ekemma, who Dumebi fondly called 'Aunt Mma'.





Dumebi felt depressed, abandoned and contemplated suicide several times. Aunt Mma was busy with her teaching career, and all she was concerned with was how to get Dumebi back to school. However, no school was willing to enrol her in the middle of an academic session.

One day, while Dumebi was washing her clothes outside, a young girl of about 18 years' old who lived next door came to wash her clothes as well. She introduced herself as Nneka, but preferred to be called "Nekky-Diamond". She was eager to engage in conversations but Dumebi was reluctant to mingle, and didn't contribute much to the conversation.

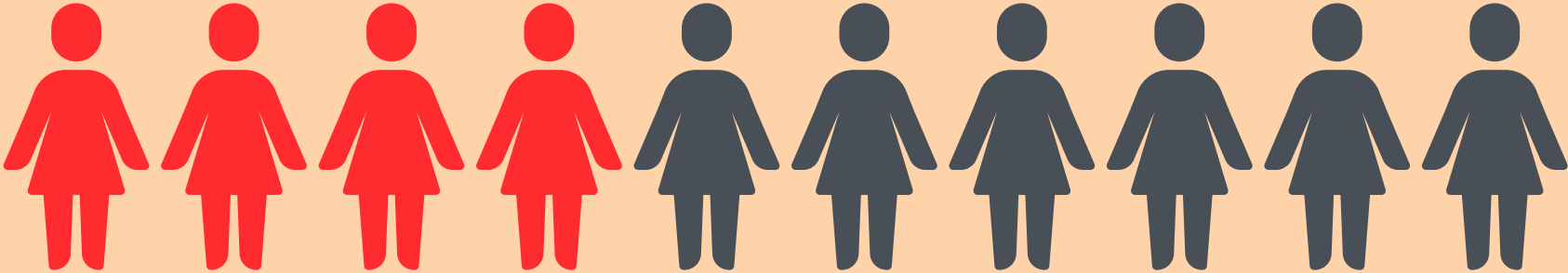


Nekky, who was popular in the neighbourhood, tried to get close to Dumebi who was the only female within her age group in the compound. She always accompanied her to the market and on other errands. Dumebi loosened up with time and Nekky gradually introduced her to smoking and engage in casual sex: a term she called “swagger”.



One of Dumebi's numerous sex partners usually offered her huge amounts of money just to have unprotected sex with her. (Dumebi is one out of 4 in every 10 girls aged 15-29 in Anambra state who engages in unprotected sex).

15-29



4 in every 10 girls aged 15-29 in Anambra state engage in unprotected sex).

At the commencement of a new academic session, Aunt Mma enrolled Dumebi in one of the prestigious Government Secondary Schools in Awka. Dumebi was displeased as she no longer saw the need for education. However, the sight of the school was more welcoming than she had thought. Her aunty took her to the Principal's office to complete her documentation after which she was referred to the Guidance and Counselling Unit

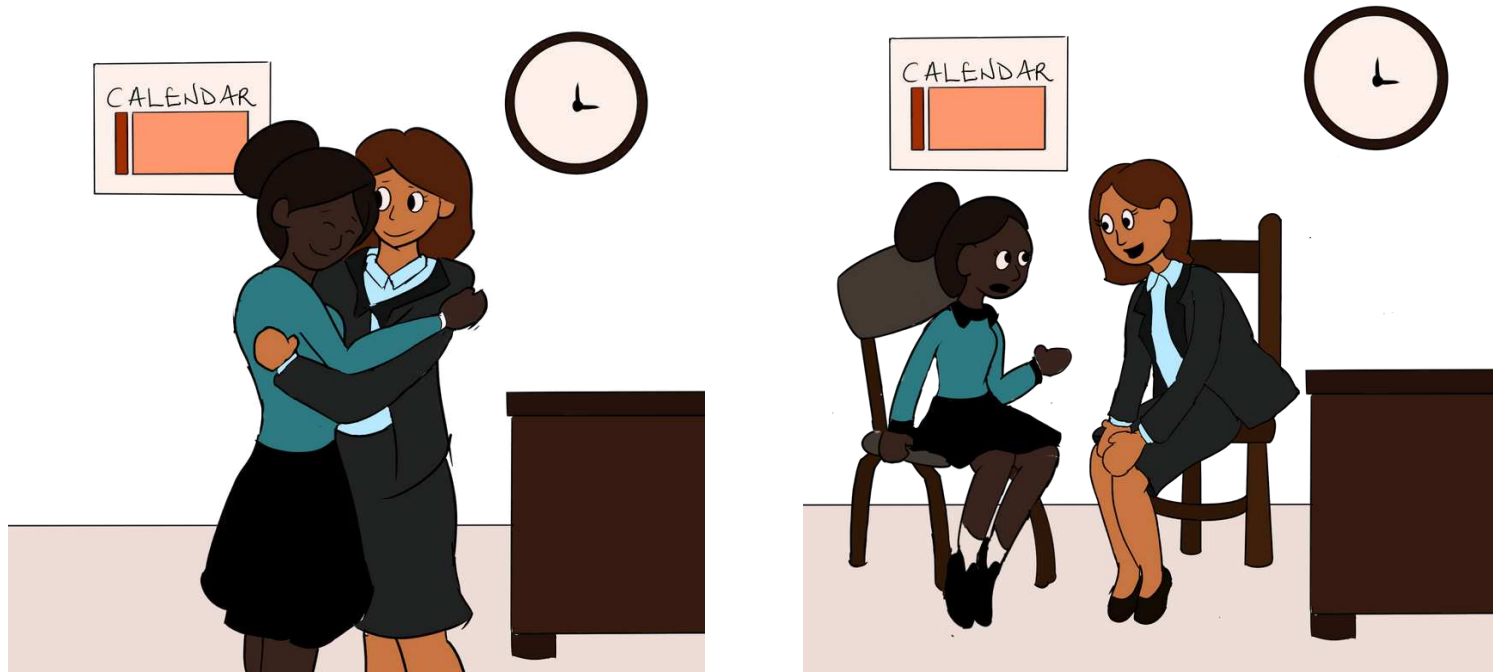


At the Guidance and Counselling office, she met the counsellor who welcomed her warmly with a hug. Dumebi was amazed by her embrace and the warmth she saw in her eyes so she proceeded to sit quietly.

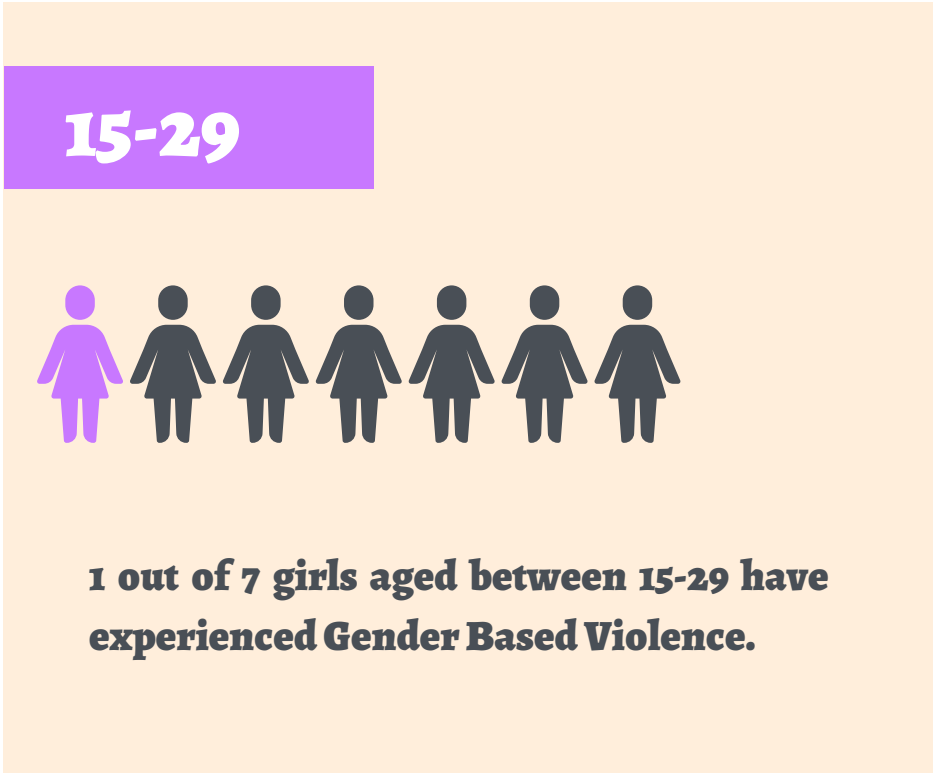
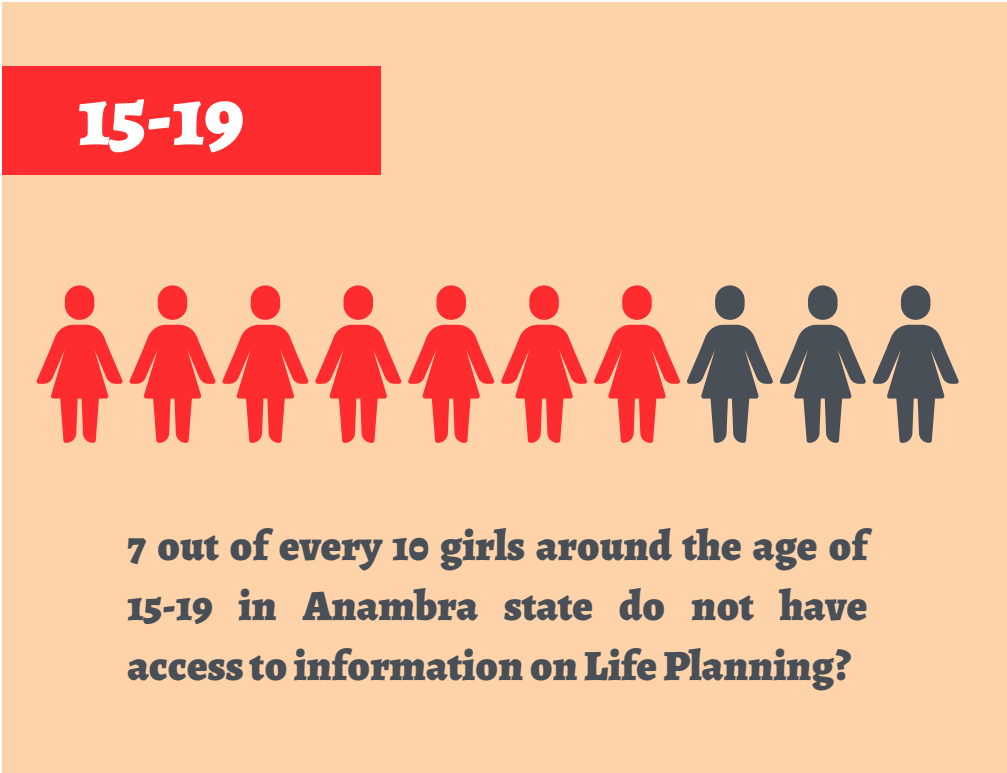
Counsellor: What is your name and how old are you?

Dumebi: I am Dumebi Chike and I am 16 years old.

The counsellor discussed her career choices and also sensitised her on Life Planning and its benefits.



Counsellor: Dumebi do you know that 7 out of every 10 girls around the age of 15-19 in Anambra state do not have access to information on Life Planning? Also, 1 out of 7 girls aged between 15-29 have experienced Gender Based Violence.



Keenly observing Dumebi's body language, she quizzed.

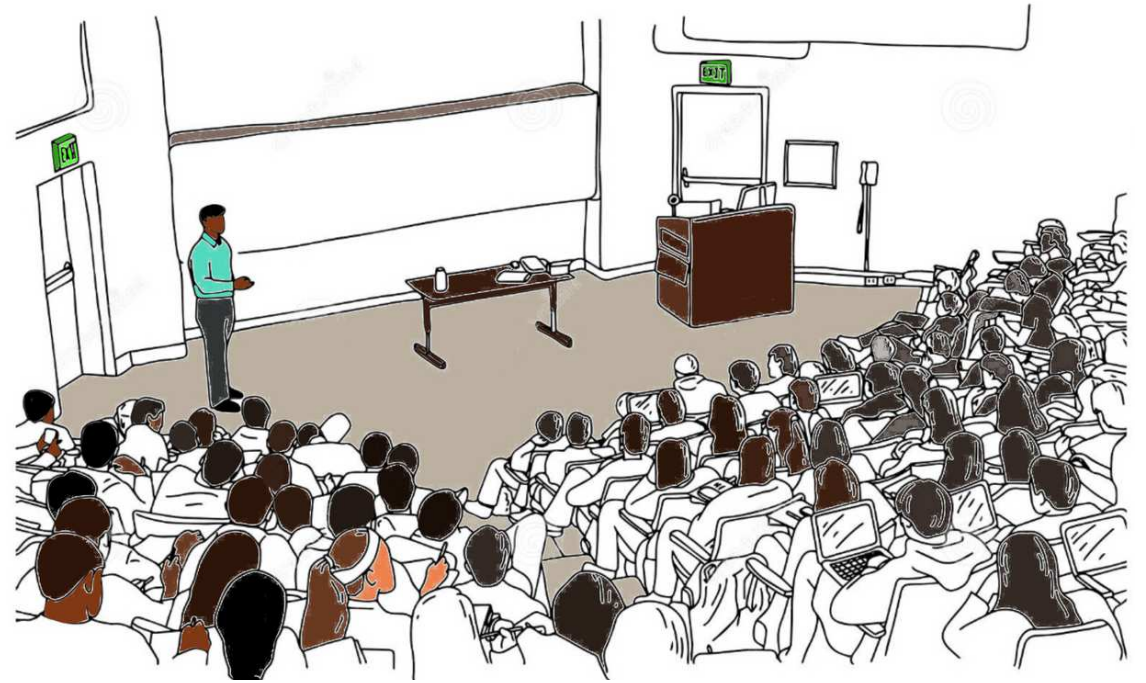
Counsellor: You look a bit troubled. What is bothering you my dear?

Dumebi: (With a sombre face) I have made so many mistakes.

With that, she began to narrate all that had happened to her right from the ugly incident back in the village and her new lifestyle with Nneka. The counsellor, moved by compassion said, "Let me tell you a story..."



Chioma, an 18 year old girl from Etiti-ukwu in Mgbaji LGA, came from a conservative background and had strict parents, who never talked about anything related to sex at home. She was a young, inquisitive Christian who was still a virgin, though she had gotten information on sex education from health workers who came to sensitize her secondary school. (The median age at sexual debut is 18years for girls between ages 15-29).



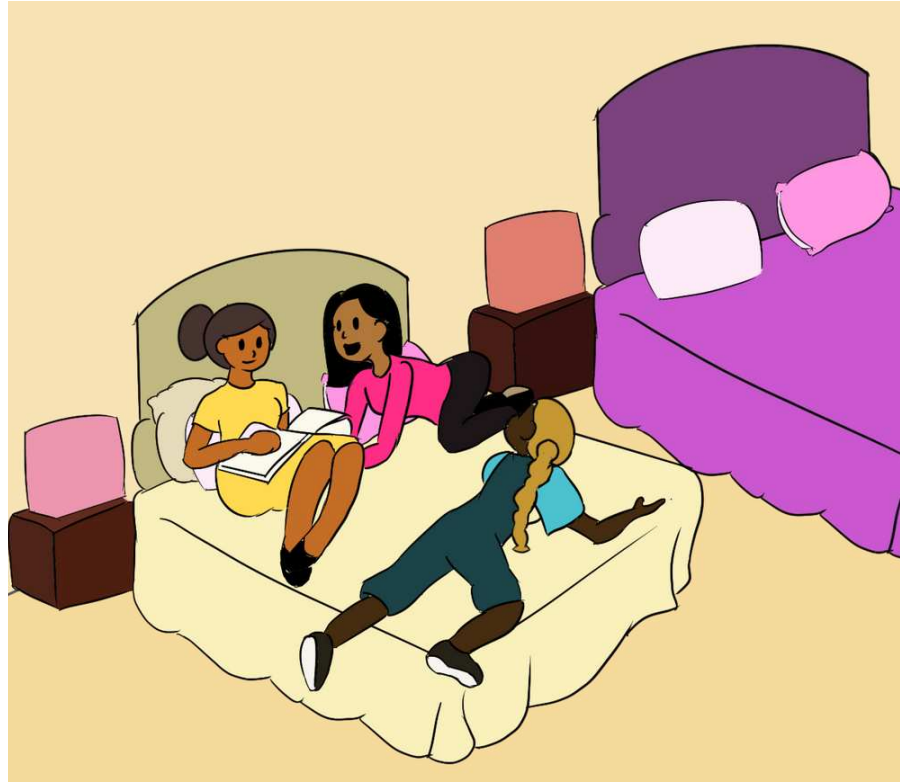
Immediately after she finished secondary school, Chioma got admission into the University. During the orientation for new students, they were sensitised on the dangers of substance use and abuse, cultism and most importantly, life planning for adolescents and youths. At the same orientation, Emeka, a 300 level student and his friends were distributing fliers for his mathematics tutorial.



Chioma, knowing her weakness in mathematics, was interested in the tutorials. Chioma started the mathematics tutorials with her friends, Ada and Chinwe. During the tutorials, Emeka started to make advances at Chioma, something she did not entertain at first.



However, her friends persuaded her to accept his dating proposal. They made her see reasons because he was handsome, intelligent and charismatic. Chioma still declined.



The following week, she went to the bank to pay her school fees before the payment deadline. On getting there, she discovered her purse was missing: someone had stolen her purse in the bus she boarded. On her way back to the school hostel, Emeka saw her crying and inquired about why his crush was crying.



Emeka: 'Asam', why are you crying?

Chioma: My...my... school fees was stolen from me. My mum would kill me. She wouldn't believe my story.

Emeka: Is that why you're crying? You know I am ready to do anything for you. C'mon wipe your tears. I will give you the money.

Chioma: Ah! Just like that?



Thereafter, Emeka took Chioma to the bank and paid her school fees. That act of kindness drew Chioma closer to Emeka and the bond between them grew stronger.





One day, Chioma visited Emeka at his lodge, where he made sexual advances at her. She vehemently refused and told Emeka she was not ready to have sex before marriage. She had this discussion with her friends who advised her to allow Emeka have his way since he has been so nice and supportive to her.

Despite the pressure from her friends, she held on to her beliefs and abstained from premarital sex.



Thankfully, Emeka decided to wait until he completed his studies because he loved her so much. They got married while Chioma was in her final year and she considered taking up a family planning method to enable her complete her education.

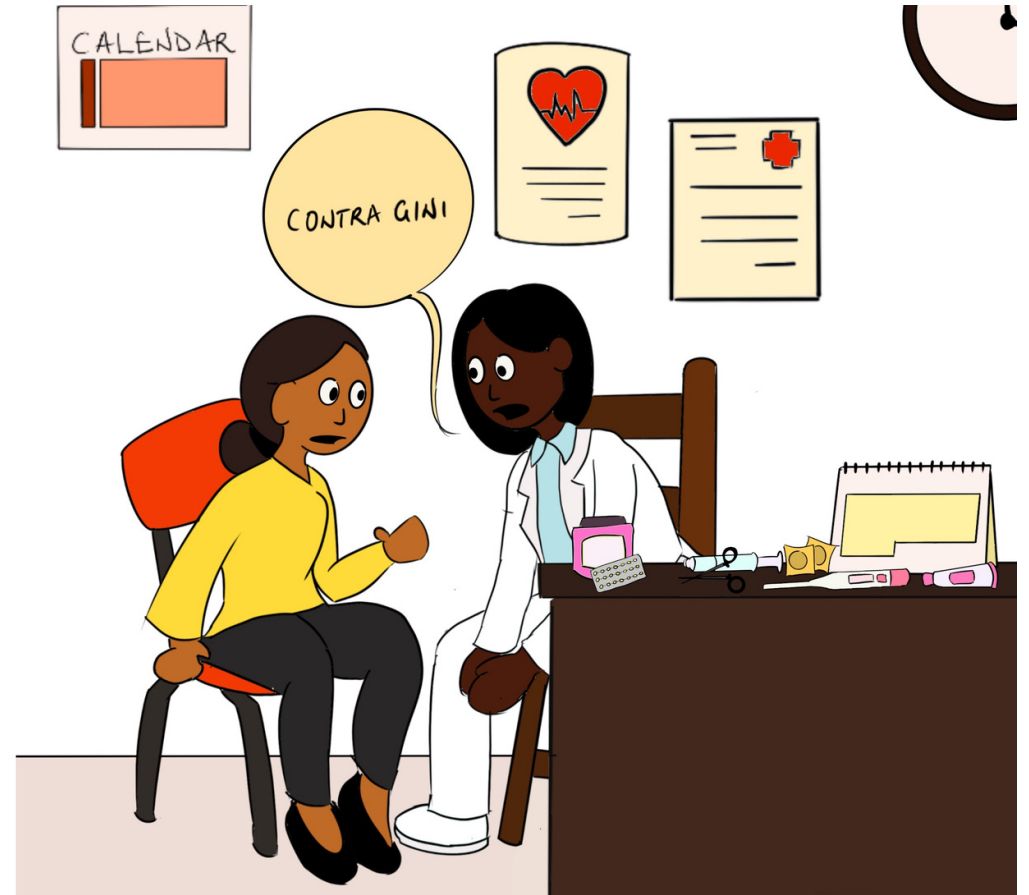


At the health facility, Chioma met a nurse called Nkechi and proceeded to inquire about contraceptives. While taking her history, the nurse realised that Chioma was newly married and did not have a child yet. Nurse Nkechi exclaimed;

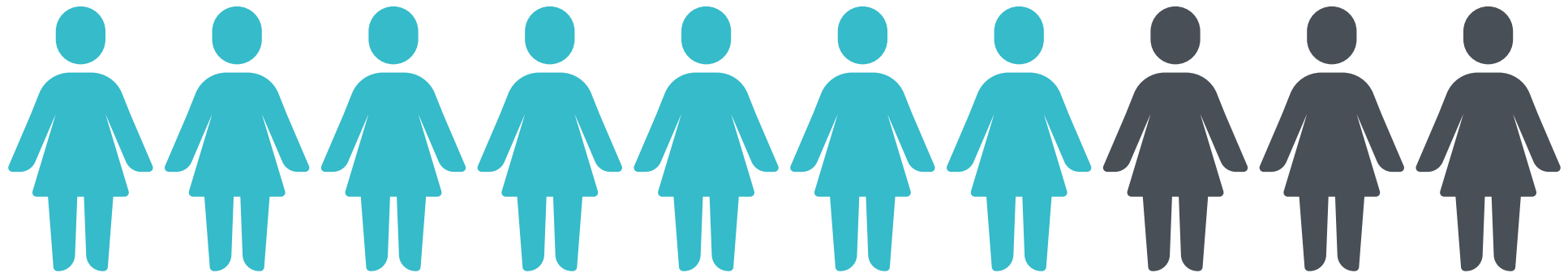
Nurse Nkechi: 'Contra gini'? You never even born any pikin?

Chioma: Yes, but I desire to complete my education. You know, raising a child is a huge responsibility and a sacred one too. God wants us to plan so we can take care of these treasures when ready.

Nurse Nkechi: Really! 'Children of nowadays'...but I think you have a point sha . Thankfully you are no longer 7 out of 10 girls aged 15-29 not currently using contraceptives.



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7 out of 10 girls aged 15-29 in Anambra State are not currently using contraceptives.

Reluctantly, she counselled Chioma on family planning methods. Chioma chose to use injectables until she completed her education.

Afterwards, Emeka and Chioma welcomed a set of twins. They decided as a couple to space their children and Chioma switched to an implant method, which she would remove when she was ready to have another baby.

Chioma and Emeka had a happy marriage without any form of domestic abuse and they trained their children, teaching them the importance of life planning.



Dumebi became emotional and asked.

Dumebi: Is there still hope for me given my past?

Counsellor: Of course. Your future is bright irrespective of what happened to you and what you've done. Ensure that like Chioma, you protect your health and go after your dreams. Everything good will come.



Dumebi felt relieved and resolved to make changes in her life. She decided to abstain from sex and counselled her friends on Life Planning



GLOSSARY

- 1) **Gender Based Violence:** is a harmful act directed or carried out on an individual based on their gender. It is rooted in gender inequality, abuse of power and harmful norms.

- 2) **Female Genital Mutilation (FGM):** is the partial or total removal or injury to the female genital organ for non-medical reasons.

- 3) **Life planning for adolescents and youths:** a state of complete physical, mental and social well being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity, in all matters relating to the reproductive system of people between the ages of 10 and 19.

- 4) **Premarital sex:** this is sexual activity practiced by before marriage

- 5) **Family planning method:** encompasses the variety of options available for individuals and couples to anticipate and attain their desired number of children and spacing the timing of their birth.

GLOSSARY

6) **Contraceptives:** ways to prevent pregnancy

7) **Injectable:** a chemical substance injected underneath the skin or muscle through a needle to prevent pregnancy.

8) **Implant Method:** are devices that go under a woman's skin that releases hormones that prevent pregnancy.

9) **Maazi ututu oma:** Mazi, good morning

10) **Dumebi kedu? :** Dumebi, how are you ?

11) **Odinma:** it is good/well

12) **Asa m:** My beautiful

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REFERENCE

All data used in the creation of this storybook was sourced from the Nigeria Demographic Health Survey 2018'

CALL TO ACTION

- 1. State ministries of health and education to domesticate and integrate Life Planning for Adolescents and Youths (LPAY) into Senior Secondary school curriculum by January 2023.**
- 2. Community and religious leaders and Heads of ministries (Health, Education, Women Affairs and Youth to promote sensitization on specific LPAY content by January 2023.**
- 3. Ministries of health, education and information to produce and distribute SBCC materials on LPAY in native language/local dialect by January 2023.**

KEY MESSAGES

- 1. Engage your child/ward in Life Planning discussions**
- 2. Female Genital Mutilation does not prevent promiscuity**
- 3. FGM increases the risk of contracting STIs and leads to childbirth related complications**
- 4. Childbirth and care is a huge responsibility that should be prepared for**
- 5. Life Planning enhances the chances of achieving your life goals**
- 6. Rape is a violation against Human Rights and its punishable by law**
- 7. Rape has numerous consequences (psychological, social, medical, economical, and may lead to death)**
- 8. Life Planning can prevent unplanned pregnancy and unsafe abortion**

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The information provided in this storybook is the sole responsibility of Stand with a Girl Initiative (SWAG) and does not necessarily reflect the views of Grand Challenges Canada or the Government of Canada.



Motto: When the society invest in girls, everyone wins

