

An

Edo

Story

About Edo State

Edo, state, southern Nigeria. It is bounded by the states of Kogi to the northeast and east, Anambra to the east, Delta to the southeast and south, and Ondo to the west and northwest; the Niger River flows along the state's eastern boundary. Benin City is the state capital and largest urban centre.

Edo state was formed in 1991 from the northern portion of Bendel state, the southern portion becoming Delta state. Prior to this, in 1963, the citizens of the territory had voted to separate from what was then the Western region, and the Mid-West region was created. This became Mid-Western state following the federal reorganization in 1967; from a second reorganization in 1976 until its division in 1991, it was named Bendel state.


About SWAG Initiative

Stand with a Girl (SWAG) Initiative is a registered youth-led organisation 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

The Data Made Simple for Adolescent and Youth Sexual and Reproductive Health emerged as a Global Knowledge Management (KM) Champion Innovation through a global competition to find game-changing ideas in Knowledge Management for Family Planning/ Reproductive Health programmes. The Data Made Simple for AYSRH Pitch was selected as one of the four (4) KM Innovations from sub-Saharan Africa and Asia. The project strengthened the capacity of Youth Data Advocates, Adolescent Health Desk Officers and Monitoring and Evaluation officers to interpret AYSRH data and simplify it objectively using creative tools to develop compelling AYSRH storybooks. These storybooks were then used to engage subnational policy makers, community gatekeepers, development partners and donors. The Project was implemented in 5 States in Nigeria namely; Niger, Ogun, Plateau, Taraba and Edo States.

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 

The International Youth Day is celebrated annually on August 12th to bring issues that affect the youths to the public and celebrate the potentials of the young people. In 2021, the Edo State Government organized multiple activities to promote Adolescents and Youth Health and Development. One of these activities was an experience-sharing exercise where three young girls were invited to tell their stories.

After goodwill messages and opening remarks, the first speaker received the microphone from the host and engaged the audience with her life experience.



My name is Onose, and I am 17years old, the only girl out of five children from a rural community in Edo State. The community where I come from believes that a girl's education ends in the kitchen. However, my parents believe that every child should go to school but my parents could only train me up to junior secondary school level due to financial constraints. I was not always allowed to play or mingle with male friends and my dad religiously monitored my movements. My dad often warned me strongly not to associate with any guy and that if I ever got pregnant, he would kill me.



One fateful day, on my way to the market to get soup ingredients, I met Umoru, Umoru happens to be my neighbor and has been crushing on me, but he didn't have any opportunity to express himself. During this unusual meeting, he expressed his feelings to me and told me he wanted both of us to be in a relationship. I felt shy, and before figuring out what was going on, my emotions took the better part of me. Umoru is only twenty-three years old, and I thought he was handsome, charming and seemed very caring. I also recalled that no one had ever asked me out and told me how beautiful I was the way Umoru wooed me. When I got home, I was deep in thought and started smiling remembering Umoru's proposal. I thought it would be nice to be in a relationship with him, but I remembered my father's warning.



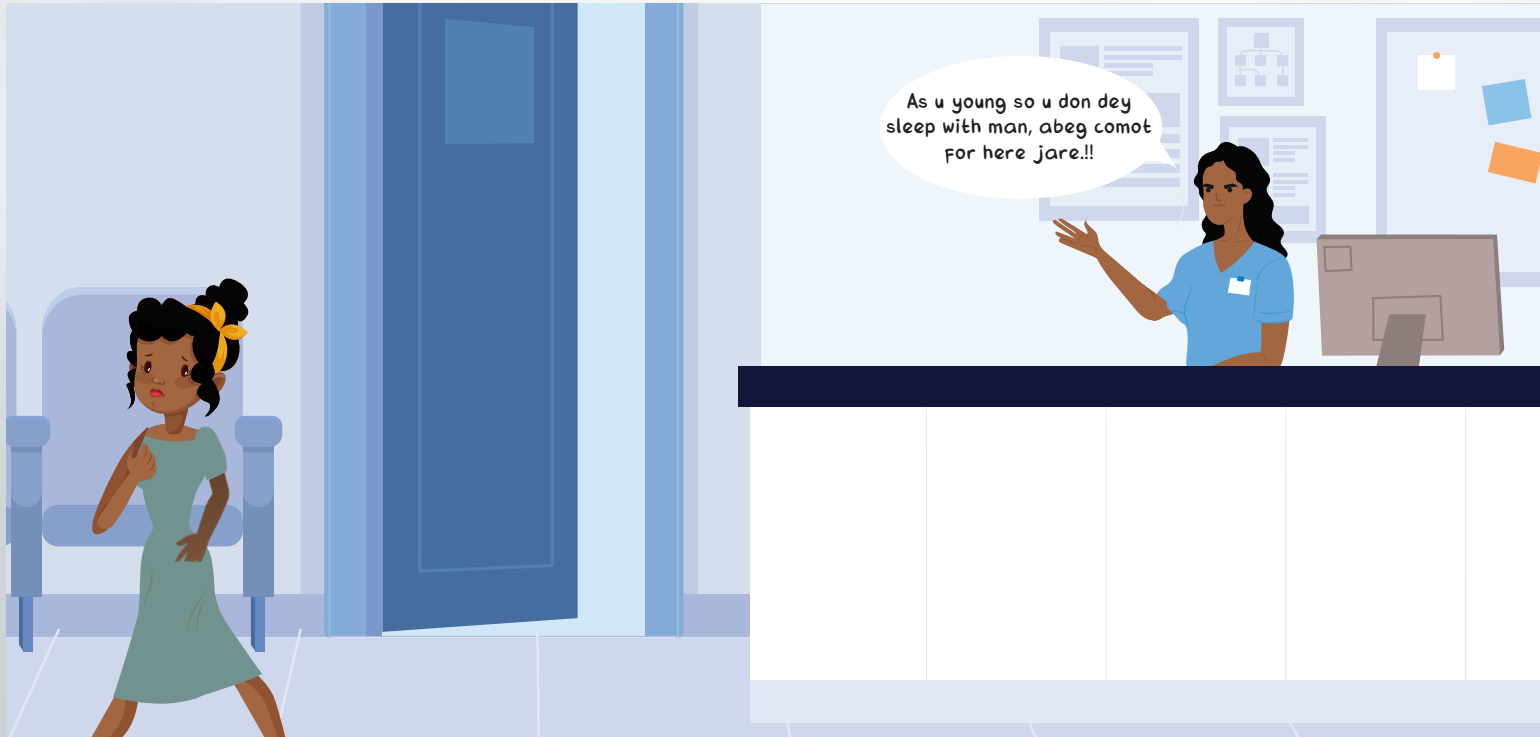
The next day, on my way to run an errand, I ran into Umoru and both of us were speechless and lost in emotions. Umoru broke the silence by asking me to respond to his proposal and I agreed without any hesitation. From that day Umoru and I started seeing each other secretly. Umoru began to request sex from me as a way to express his love for me in our subsequent meetings. I declined his sex advances due to my father's warning and this brought issues between us. When I met my friend Ometere, I told her about my relationship with Umoru, his request for sex and my refusal to indulge due to fear of getting pregnant. During our conversation, she shared her experience with me and advised me to use soda drink and lime to prevent getting pregnant. After our discussion, I was not convinced of the safety of using soda drink and lime.



Days later, while sitting in front of my mum's shop, I overheard two women discussing family planning methods. One of the women expressed her fear that she does not want to get pregnant anymore, the other encouraged her to use the family planning method which she has been using to prevent pregnancy over the years. The pregnancy prevention caught my attention and I decided to visit the Health Centre mentioned by the women the next day to get more information about the family planning method and possibly access the services.



On getting there, I met with the service provider to inquire about family planning methods. The moment she heard what I said, her countenance changed, and she replied, “As u young so u don dey sleep with man, abeg comot for here jare!!” I was so disappointed on hearing her comment. I finally returned home, and I decided to follow Ometere’s advice.



A few days later, I went to Umoru's house and told him I had accepted his demand to save my relationship with him because I loved him deeply. This decision made him so excited that he kissed me on my lips. At that moment, I was deeply lost in emotions, and before I knew it, we had unprotected sex. After the act, I used Ometere's method, believing it would prevent me from getting pregnant.



One month later, I noticed I had not seen my period, and I became very disturbed. While trying to get my father his food from the kitchen, I felt dizzy and fell. My dad quickly rushed me to the hospital for treatment.





The doctor took my medical history, performed a physical examination, and requested malaria and a pregnancy test. When my father heard about the pregnancy test, he was visibly angry and said, “My daughter can never be pregnant,” but the doctor further counseled on the need for the test, saying, “despite 9 out of 10 girls in Edo state know about family planning methods, only 1 is currently using. Thereby increasing the rate of unprotected sex among young people”.



Eventually, the test results came out, and I was confirmed pregnant. The doctor handed me a pamphlet and what caught my attention was the fact that 5 out of 10 girls like me have experienced unplanned pregnancy in my state. I could see how disappointed my father was. I wept and said within myself that if only the service provider listened to me and I had not given in to Ometere's advice or even abstained from sex, I would not have gotten pregnant.

Leaving the audience in deep thoughts, Osato took her turn to recount her teenage experience to the audience.



My name is Osato Efosa. It all started when I was 16 years old, living with my mother and siblings. My father, abandoned us immediately after my mother gave birth to the sixth girl child. I was the fourth child and in SS2 attending Akpaso Secondary School, a mixed government school in the city. I knew I was a brilliant girl who was willing to explore and learn new things. I had the desire to become a lawyer someday, and because of that, I had to put in more effort academically to ensure that my dream came to pass. Little did I know that I would face some challenges on the way.



I had five (5) friends in my school, Esohe, Amina, Precious, Omoye, and Ivie, who also happened to be in my class. I was the most beautiful, attractive, and youngest amongst them. Precious, who was 17 years old then, happened to be the most sexually exposed among us. She has the habit of wanting us to hang around male friends, while Omoye was always against Precious' ideas.



Because of Omoye and Precious's continuous arguments about sex, I became confused and had to seek clarification about their opinion on sexual intercourse. To my surprise, I discovered that I was the only one that had never had sex, making me want to have new sets of friends since Omoye who was always against the idea of hanging around male friends, was also having sex with married men.



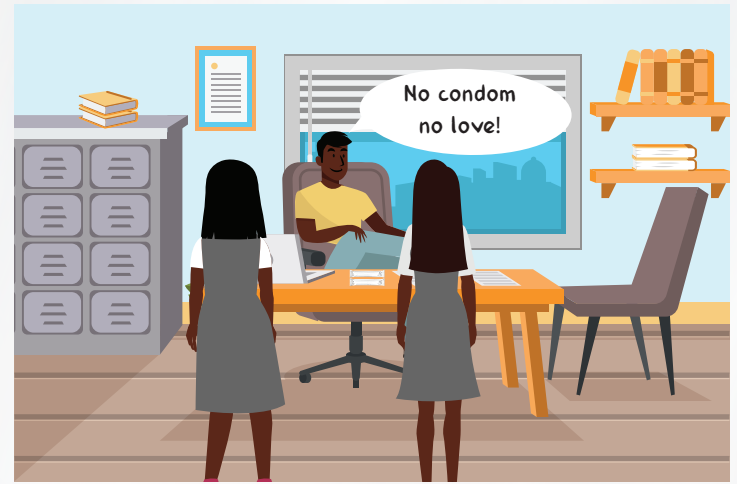




Some days later, I was checking for a pen in my elder sister's bag and found a beautiful pack that I thought was sweet; I quietly put it in my school bag to show it to my friends in school. At school, someone's school fee was said to be missing in my class, which was reported to the school Principal.

In the presence of other teachers, the Principal asked all of us to empty our bags on our desks. As one of the Teachers approached my desk, she shouted, and this caught the attention of others who thought the money had been found. To their greatest surprise, it was something else, and then the Teacher asked me what I was doing with a pack of condoms in my bag. I innocently responded.

My classmates started laughing and making jest of me for referring to the condoms as sweet. The Principal was amazed that my classmates knew about condoms, which led to my principal asking about other contraceptives. My classmates mentioned the different methods. I became more confused after realizing that I knew nothing about contraceptives.





During the break, my friends and I went to our usual spot behind the school Health Counselor's office, not knowing  had overheard my friends talking to me about the various contraceptives they knew but didn't use. Instead, they used other crude methods like salt and water to avoid pregnancy.  invited us to her office and counseled us more on abstinence, contraceptives, and their uses. She further told us that the various crude methods are ineffective and dangerous to our health .



Kelvin, a 19-year-old boy in my school who had been bugging me to be his girlfriend, approached me again. This time, I accepted his proposal to become his girlfriend after hearing from my friends that I could have sex without getting pregnant. One fateful day, I visited Kelvin when he was alone in his parent's house. While we were together lying on the bed, he started to move his hands around my waist, and he eventually kissed me, but I stopped him from going

further and told him that I did not want to have sex, and I left immediately. I later learned that after that incident, Kelvin went to discuss with his friends Ifeanyi and Kunle that I refused his sexual advances. The boys then urged him to apply more pressure on me, saying, "Girls just like to form," and that I would eventually agree.



The next time I visited Kelvin, he got me a nice pair of shoes and professed that he had never loved a girl like me all his life. At that moment, I fell for Kelvin's charms. He further begged me for sex, which I accepted, but I insisted we use a condom, remembering that the school health counselor advised: "no condom, no sex." He then stated that sex with a condom is not enjoyable. After much pressure from him, I agreed, and we had unprotected sex.





After a few weeks, I started feeling feverish with early morning vomiting. It was so bad that my mother was worried and took me to the health facility. Due to my condition, I was unable to sit for my promotional exam. At the health facility, the health provider performed several examinations, including a pregnancy test. Eventually, when the result came out, it was positive. My mother started to cry, hitting me severally, and screaming,



Not long after, words spread across the neighborhood that I was pregnant. My friends did not want to be associated with me, and mothers started using me as a bad example to their children. As a result, my dream of becoming a lawyer may not be realizable as I could not pursue my studies immediately. I regretted being influenced by my friends and not using a condom to prevent unplanned pregnancy. Hmm, “If ⁴⁹ say I know I for no do am at all. My story is a lesson that there is a need for abstinence or proper contraceptive use and increased awareness of sex education within and outside the home. Also, the need to establish school health clubs, train school healthcare counselors, and create new and strengthen existing youth-friendly services accessible within the Primary Healthcare centers. Osato and her friends are 3 out of every 10 girls in Edo State who have ever had sex and 9 out of every 10 girls in the state who have knowledge about contraceptives methods but do not use it.



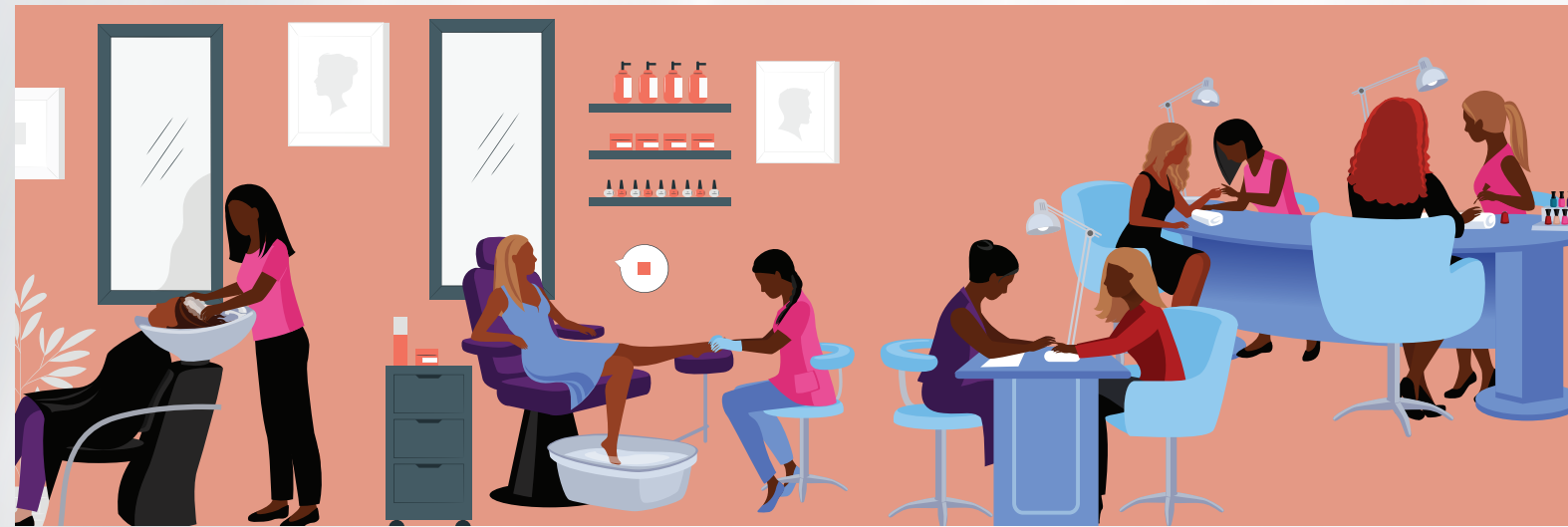
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Wrapping up the session, Ifueko in turn shared her life's journey as an adolescent.



My name is Ifueko Egui. I am the first daughter and the first out of four children in my family, and we reside in an urban slum community. My father is a poor farmer, and my mother is a petty trader selling at a market. I was a beautiful and naïve 16year-old girl. Since my parents were poor, I had to drop out of school as my parents could not continue paying my fees.





To support my family, I had to learn hair-dressing at a big salon in a popular market within my community. At the salon, there were more than 10 girls within my age range from different backgrounds. Five of these girls named Ilamosi, Enogie, Aisha, Bosede, and Efe later became my favourite friends. Efe and Bosede were “the runs babes” in the salon, and some handsome, rich “yahoo” boys were always coming to look for them during work hours. Sometimes, Efe and Bosede would sneak out of the salon while working to see their rich boyfriends, who usually park their cars beside the salon.



One day, Efe introduced me to one of the rich “yahoo” boys named Ikpomwonsa who was 20years old when he came to see her in the salon. He started ‘tripping’ for me. He introduced himself again to me and said I should call him “IK for short”.

After the introduction, I went into the salon. Not long after, Efe came in and told me how IK was just talking about me, professing how beautiful I looked. From that day, I started receiving gifts and money from IK through Efe.





Efe and Bosede encouraged me to go out with IK that since he was rich and generous, I was lucky to have him 'tripping' for me even if he had other girlfriends. They also told me that eventually, I could become the only one in his life. Moved by Efe and Bosede's advice, I started dating IK and even sneaked out of work to see him regularly. He requested we had sex, and we agreed to have sex on a particular day. Just the week before we had planned to have sex, health workers came to the market to talk about the

dangers of sex without using condoms and the various methods one can use to avoid pregnancy and infections. They also shared condoms as part of preventive measures. I collected some free condoms and showed them to IK on the day we agreed to have sex. I also told him we would need to use a condom when having sex. IK however, requested to have sex without a condom after he had assured me I was the only sexual partner he had.



At that point, so many thoughts ran through my mind; thoughts about being the first child of my parents, meeting the needs of my younger ones who look up to me, I also thought of the money IK was constantly giving me so I agreed. We went on to have consistent unprotected sex.. This eventually led to unplanned pregnancy, and I was confused on how to go about it. I only told Efe and Bosede about the pregnancy as I was afraid to tell my parents. They told me about a chemist with the nickname “doctor” who conducted abortion for them. I was scared to go, but they convinced me that it was “safe,” saying “na mumu dey carry belle.” I eventually went to the chemist, where he conducted the abortion on me. After some days, I started bleeding and fainted twice at home, and then my mother had to rush me to the health centre in the community. The Nurse counseled me, ran tests on me, and treated me.



The discussions from the counseling session with the Nurse and test results revealed that I have been engaging in unsafe sex, had an unsafe abortion, and tested positive for HIV.



The whole community got to hear about my HIV status, including my salon friends. They started keeping away from me, including Efe and Bosede. The salon owner had to stop me from coming to work. I became unfortunate and wished I had stood my ground saying ‘no condom, no sex,’ just like what the health workers had taught and recommended. My story shows the importance of life skills training for adolescents, use of condoms and other contraceptives to prevent unplanned pregnancy, HIV, and avoid unsafe abortion.



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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

Ministry of Education

- Revise school health/Family Life and HIV/AIDs curriculum and ensure effective implementation across the state.

Ministry of Health/ Ministry of Budget and Economic Planning

- Create a specific budget line for Adolescent and Youth Health and Development and ensure timely release of funds
- Ensure that all primary and secondary facilities are rendering Youth Friendly Health Services following the Minimum Package of Services and Standard.
- Strengthen State Technical Working Group on Adolescent & Youth Health and Development (STWGAYHD) to increase visibility and coordination of Adolescent and Youth Sexual Reproductive Health issues in the state.

Traditional and Religious Institutions

- Organize community sensitization on AYSRH among parents, traditional leaders, religious leaders, women leaders, youth leaders and others
- Select and inaugurate Adolescent and Youth Health and Development champions at the community level.

Media

- Increase awareness of Adolescent and Youth Sexual Reproductive Health (AYSRH) and dispel myths and misconceptions on family planning

Acknowledgement

This project was made possible by the support of the American People through the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) under the Knowledge SUCCESS (Strengthening Use, Capacity, Collaboration, Exchange, Synthesis, and Sharing) Project.

Knowledge SUCCESS is supported by USAID's Bureau for Global Health, Office of Population and Reproductive Health and led by the Johns Hopkins Center for Communication Programs (CCP) in partnership with Amref Health Africa, Busara Center for Behavioral Economics (Busara), and FHI 360.

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