



A

# NASSARAWA

STORY



## **ABOUT NASARAWA**

**Nasarawa State is centrally located in the Middle Belt region of Nigeria. It shares a boundary with Kaduna state in the North, Plateau State in the East, Taraba and Benue states in the south while Kogi and the Federal Capital Territory in the West. Nasarawa State was initially called the Lower Benue Province in 1900, but in 1902, the name of the Province was changed to Nasarawa. The capital was also moved from Akpanaja to Nasarawa town. According to the 2006 population Census, Nasarawa State has a population of about 1,826,883. The state is made up of thirteen Local Government Areas, namely; Akwanga, Awe, Doma, Karu, Keana, Kokona, Lafia, Nasarawa, Nasarawa Eggon, Obi, Toto, Wamba and Keffi.**

## **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**

Habiba, a 15-year-old girl, is the second child in a family of 5. Her father is a farmer while her mother, Sadiya, looks after the children and provides support for her husband on the farm. They live in Andere Community. She is the Head girl of Government Secondary School, Tudun Amba, and has a dream of becoming a medical doctor.

Due to her performance and respectful behaviour, all the teachers and students loved her.



**It was one sunny day when Habiba and her father Rabiou were walking to Lafia East Primary and Secondary School for the Koro annual carnival. This carnival is an annual socio-cultural event that brings all the Andere youth and other neighboring tribes together.**

**During this carnival, a series of activities such as traditional wrestling, dancing competitions, and so many more are featured.**

**On their way, Habiba said, “Baba, I will prove to you how well I can dance when we get there.” “Really?! Let’s see how it goes.” Her father smiled and replied.**



**When they arrived, the whole atmosphere was charged, as people hailed her father. “Rabiu! Rabiu!! Rabiu!!!” This was not surprising: Rabiu is a well-known dancer in the community.**

**While Rabiu was receiving his praises, Habiba went to meet with her friend, Martha.**

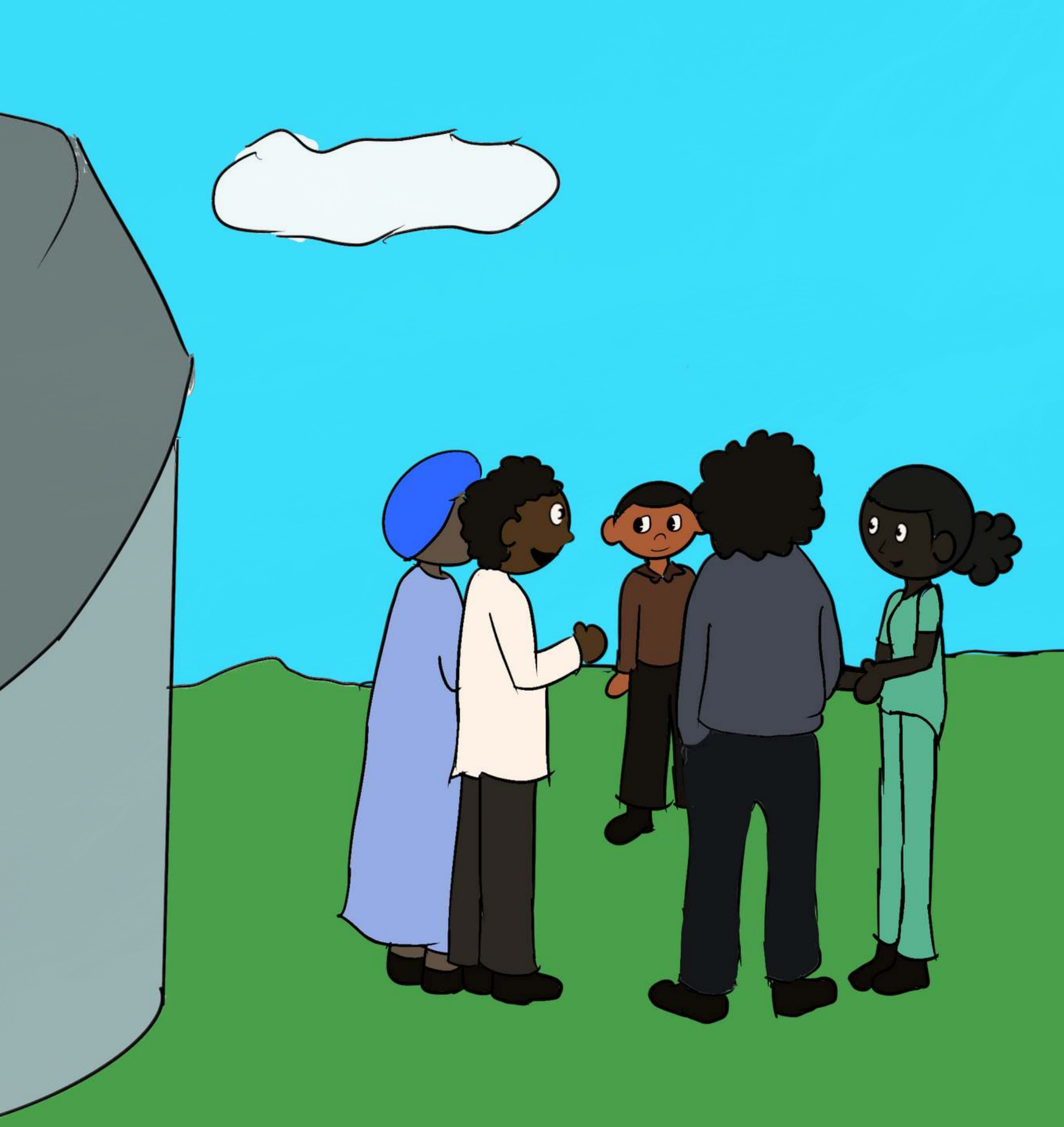




Habiba noticed some healthcare workers camped at a makeshift booth under the tree. They had a big poster and from this distance, Habiba could make out the words, '**End FGM**' on it. In Andere, female genital mutilation (FGM) is a norm which has resulted in numerous deaths in the community.

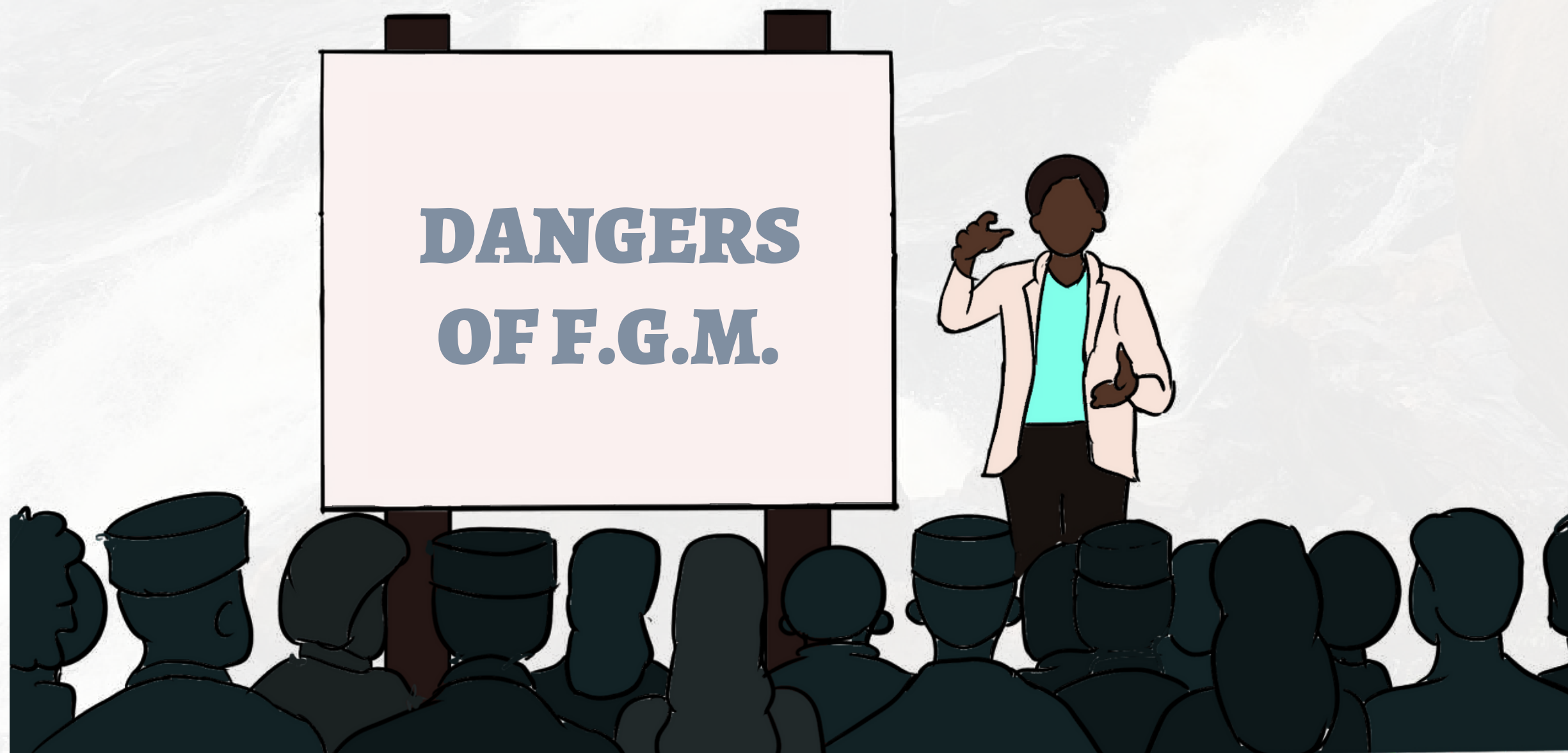
This practice has caught the attention of these health workers who occasionally visit the community during the Koro annual carnival.





**Since they first became aware of this practice, they have been sensitizing the people of the community on the effects of female genital mutilation, sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), child spacing etc.**

**After the dancing competition, the health workers were given an opportunity to sensitize the community on the dangers of FGM and SRHR and more. To educate the community, one of the health workers, Maimuna, narrated a story.**



**Belinda is a tall, dark and beautiful girl who drew attention from many people in her community. She is a brilliant student of the Government Secondary School, Aku, where she has won many academic awards.**



**She had dreams of becoming a model in the future and spoke to her father, Mr. Ahmed, about those aspirations. Her father paid no attention to her dreams. He had a negative perception of modeling and believed that a brilliant girl like her should aspire to be a medical doctor or a lawyer.**

One evening, her father returned from work and was welcomed by his children.

**All children:** “Welcome back Baba.” (they said in a chorus)

**Mr. Ahmed:** “Thank you, my children. Belinda, please bring my food. I’m very hungry.”

**Belinda:** “OK, Baba. Ehm! Baba... (as she walks towards the kitchen)...my school is organizing a beauty pageant and I want to contest.”

**Mr. Ahmed:** “Look, I have told you this before. You need to concentrate on your studies and forget about this modeling thing.”

Belinda leaves her father’s presence, feeling unhappy.



On the day of the Beauty Pageant, Belinda met with her friends, Esther and Awazi. Esther and Awazi were 15 and 18 respectively. Belinda always confided in them because she felt comfortable discussing her personal issues including her sexuality with them. Awazi is the oldest among the girls and usually informs them about the latest gist. Esther is the daughter of Mr. Abu, a health worker in Aku Primary Health Centre.

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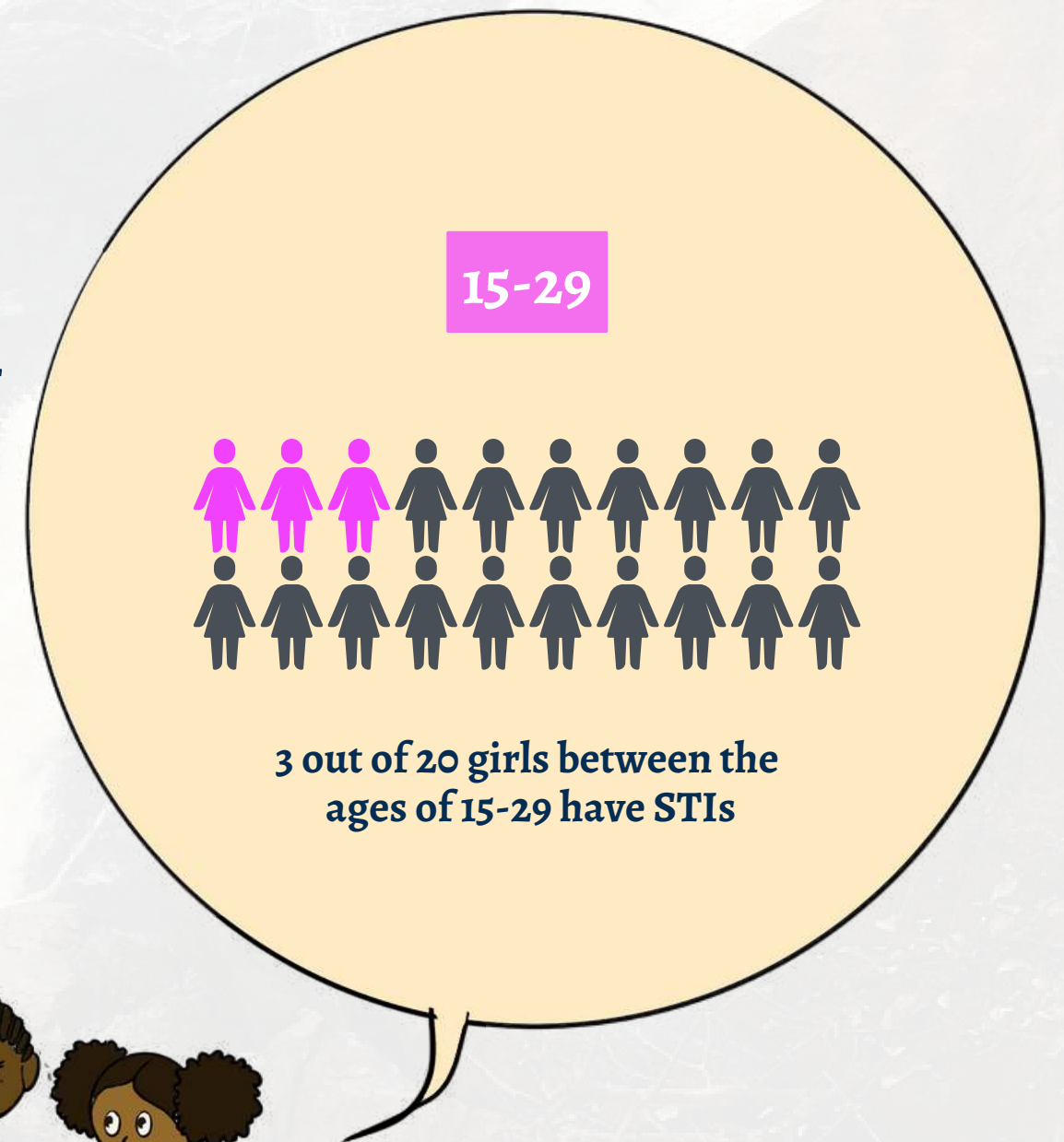
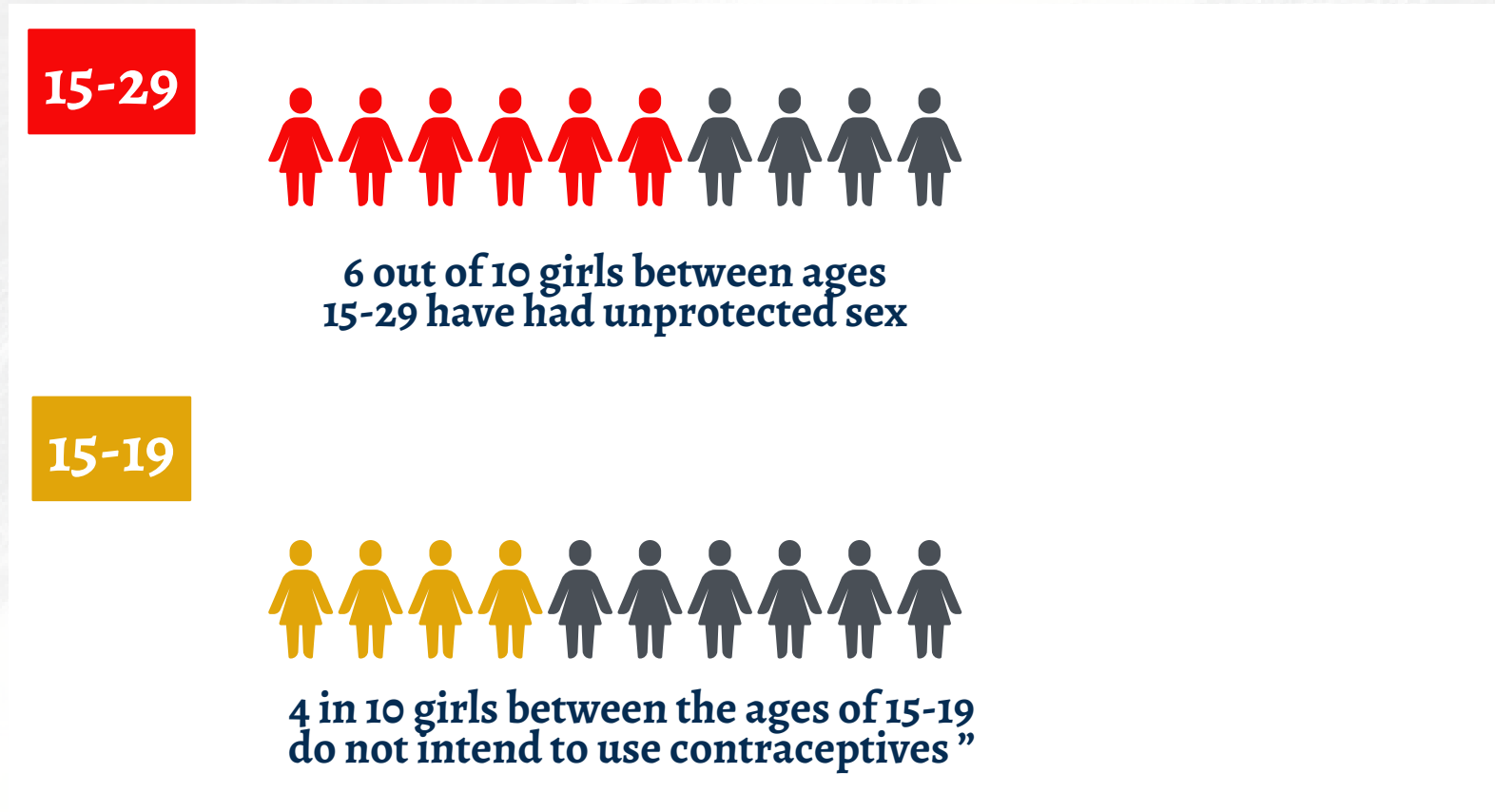
**Belinda:** “Awazi, is it true I can get pregnant if I have unprotected sex with a man?”

**Awazi:** “It’s a lie. I have had sex several times without protection, have I ever been pregnant? As a matter of fact I don’t intend to, it's sweeter like that.”

**Esther:** “You can get pregnant o! In fact, my dad told me that 6 out of 10 girls between ages 15-29 have had unprotected sex, which can lead to pregnancy and other health complications. Also, 4 in 10 girls between the ages of 15-19 do not intend to use contraceptives”

**Belinda:** “What about HIV?”

**Esther:** “My dad also said 3 out of 20 girls between the ages of 15-29 have STIs. HIV falls under this category.”



**Awazi:** “Belinda, why are you asking these questions? Do you finally want to have sex?”

**Belinda:** “No ! I am scared of it. I heard it’s a painful experience.”

**Awazi:** “I think you should try it. You will definitely enjoy it.”

Their conversation was cut short by an announcement for all students to convene at the school hall for the commencement of the pageant. The pageant was attended by many, including parents and talent promoters from different modeling organizations within the State. Belinda emerged as the winner of the pageant and received many praises from the audience. She also caught the attention of talent promoters,



of particular note was Mr. John Audu, who works for a talent agency called HK Models. After seeking the approval of the school authority, Mr. John approached Belinda.  
**Mr. John:** “Wow! Congratulations on your performance. You did great.”  
**Belinda:** “Thank you, Sir!” ( She said with a smile)

**John:** “I am Mr. John, I work for HK Models, a big modeling agency that scouts for young talented and aspiring models and help them to achieve their dreams of becoming supermodels in the future.”





**Belinda:** (Still smiling) “I have always dreamt of becoming a supermodel. However, my Dad feels modeling is for irresponsible people.”

**Mr. John:** (Laughs) “Do you believe that?”

**Belinda:** “At this point I don’t know what to believe, Sir.”

**Mr. John:** “You have talent, Belinda. We can work on your talent and help you become a model that even your father would be very proud of.”

**Belinda:** “I will have to discuss it with my Dad.”

**Mr. John:** “Well, you have to be fast about it. We have an upcoming show next month and we are already shortlisting candidates. I just want to help you. Not many people get this opportunity. Here is my phone number. You can call me and we will set something up.”

**Belinda:** “Okay, Sir.”

Later that day, Belinda visited Awazi and told her about the discussion with Mr. John. She mentioned that she hadn't discussed the opportunity with her dad and she had no intention of telling him because she knew he would disapprove of it. Awazi advised her to grab this rare opportunity with both hands. She also gave Belinda her phone to call Mr. John.



As Maimuna narrated the story, Thamar – one of the health workers, overheard Habiba and Martha having a conversation.

**Martha:** “Look over there. That dance instructor is here again.”

**Habiba:** “And so?”

**Martha:** “I can’t believe he has been coming for the past two years just to recruit you to his dance group. Are you not finally going to give him an answer?”

**Habiba:** “What if my father hears about it? He is going to kill me because I went to see a man. You know that he already agreed to my ambition of becoming a medical doctor.”

Thamar approaches them.

**Thamar:** “Hello. I hope you guys are enjoying the story? Don’t mind me, I overheard your conversation, and just want you to listen attentively before making any decision.” (Calling their attention back into the story).



**Belinda:** (collecting the phone from Awazi) “Hello, Sir!”

**Mr. John:** “Hello, whom am I speaking with?”

**Belinda:** “It is me, Belinda. The girl you met at GSS Aku.”

**Mr. John:** “Ohh, the beautiful Belinda. I’m glad you called. How are you?”

**Belinda:** “I am fine, Sir.”

**Mr. John:** “Are you ready for us now?”

**Belinda:** “Yes, Sir. So what are the requirements?”

**Mr. John:** “Well, you will pay for your form, costume and make up. Usually everything amounts to the sum of N100, 000. However, I can pay the remaining for you if you can come up with N70, 000.”

**Belinda:** “Sir, that is very expensive. I have never seen such an amount of money before. Where will I get it from? Like I told you before, my dad is not in support of this path I’m choosing. Even if he was, he can barely afford such.”

**Mr. John:** “Calm down. I really don’t want you to lose this opportunity. You are a beautiful girl and you deserve to be a model.”

**Belinda:** “I cannot come up with such an amount, Sir.”

**Mr. John:** “What are you willing to sacrifice for this ambition? Tell me.

**Belinda:** “I don’t understand, Sir.”

**Mr. John:** “Okay. I would like us to have a face to face discussion because I am willing to help you. Can you come and meet me in Karu tomorrow? I will send the address to you.”

**Belinda:** “Let me think about it.”





**Belinda again sought advice from her friends, Awazi and Esther). While Esther was a bit skeptical about Belinda's proposed plan to meet with Mr. John at Karu, Awazi encouraged her to pay him a visit and forget about what Esther was saying. After some consideration, Belinda agreed with Awazi.**

The following day, Belinda went to Karu. She thought she was going to meet with Mr. John in his office. However, when she arrived, she realized it was his residence. She was a bit confused but she knocked on the door regardless.

Mr. John answered.

**Mr. John:** (on seeing Belinda) “Finally! She arrives, the beautiful Belinda. Welcome to my humble abode.”



**Belinda:** “Thank you, Sir. I thought this meeting would be in your office.”

**Mr. John:** “Sorry about that. I didn’t think it would be a problem. Sit down and make yourself comfortable.”

**Belinda:** “Okay, Sir.”

**Mr. John:** “You can call me John. Remove the “Sir” please. We are friends. Stop making me feel old.”

(Belinda smiles shyly)

**Mr. John:** “So, let’s get to business. Hope you are here with the money?”





**Belinda:** “I already told you I can’t afford it. I made that clear before coming here.”

**Mr. John:** “But at least you have something else you can give me. Come and sit close to me. Let us have a heart-to-heart conversation.”

**Belinda:** “I think this is close enough, Sir.”

**Mr. John:** “Well, if you insist. No problem, I won’t force you. Let me go get you a drink. At least you will not refuse my drink too, will you?”

**Belinda:** “No, Sir.”

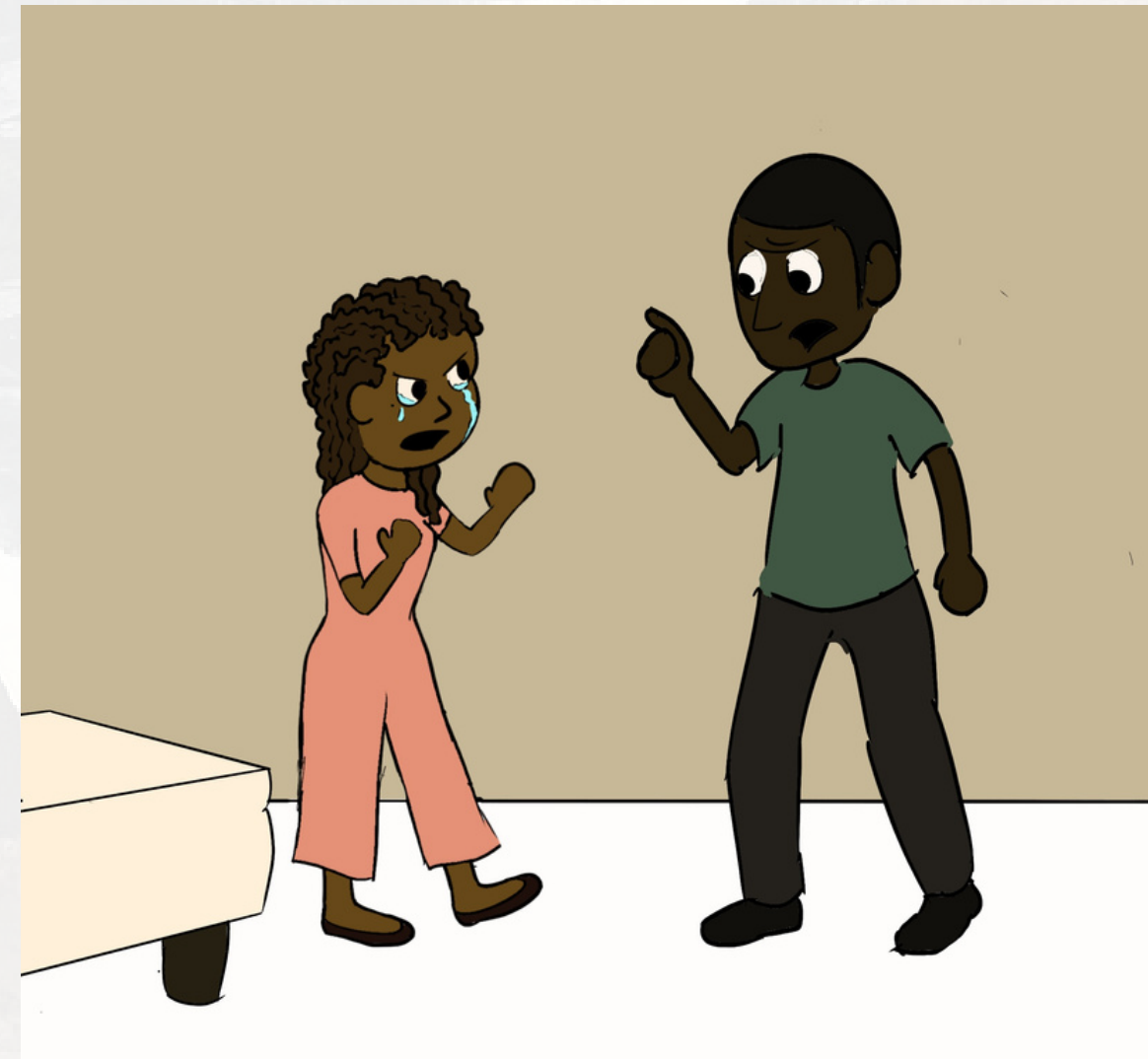
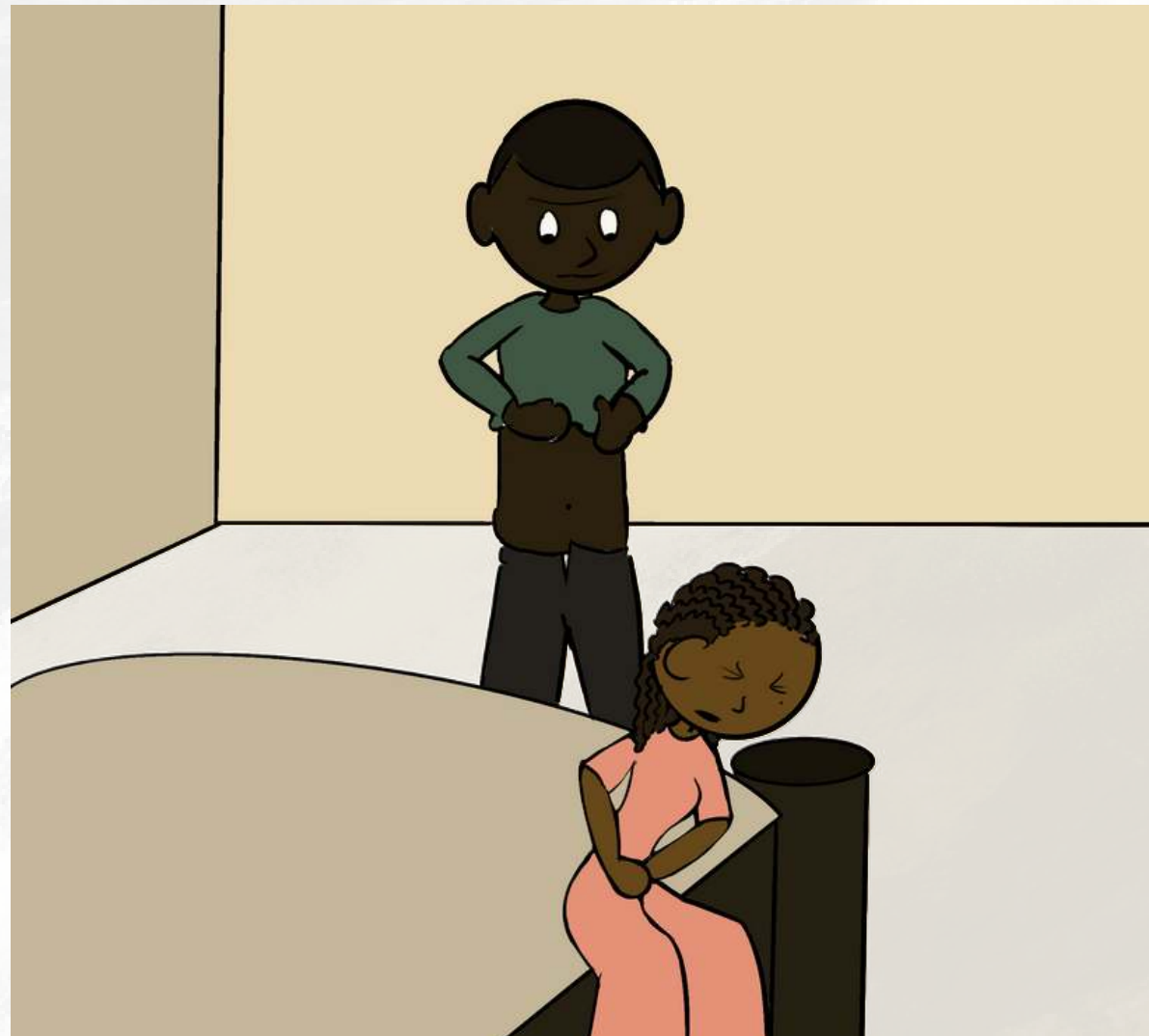
**Mr. John:** “Alright, I will be right back.”

**Mr. John got Belinda a drink. Unknown to her, he had spiked the drink with a sleeping pill which caused her to become weak and fall asleep after drinking it.**

**He proceeded to rape her. She later woke up feeling dizzy and having pains around her private parts. She demanded some explanation from him but he told her they had consensual sex and that they both enjoyed it.**



**She was outraged and cried bitterly. Belinda was devastated and disappointed. She couldn't believe what had happened to her. Eventually, she left Mr. John's house, went to the park and boarded a vehicle back to Aku. Sadly, 1 in 25 girls have experienced Gender Based Violence.**



**1 in 25 girls in Nasarawa State have experienced Gender Based Violence.**



**On getting to Aku, Belinda went straight to Awazi's house to narrate her ordeal at Mr. John's house. She also complained of the pains she was feeling in her genital area and fears that she might get pregnant. Awazi advised her to take 'kanwa' (potash, a traditional mixture that is erroneously believed to prevent pregnancy) to prevent her from getting pregnant. Belinda heeded Awazi's advice and drank the concoction.**



Few months later, when she missed her monthly menstrual flow, she got worried. Her worries were also compounded after she noticed certain abnormal changes to her body. Her participation and performance in school changed drastically as she was constantly fatigued and sick.

Mrs. Sarah, the school nurse, having received complaints from Belinda's teachers about her health, summoned her to the school clinic. She examined and referred her to the community Primary Health Centre (PHC) for further tests. Belinda obliged and went to the PHC where she was tested and to her shock and devastation, the test revealed that she was pregnant.



**The report of Belinda's test result was sent to the school and the school board decided to suspend her pending an investigation into the case. Belinda's friends stopped associating with her because their parents saw her as a bad influence.**

**Her Dad was also disappointed at the turn of events and sent her away to live with her grandmother. Belinda was saddened at the thought of having a child at such an early age, she wondered what would become of her life and her dreams.**



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**Habiba:** (echoes aloud) Belinda was raped! How could she have prevented getting pregnant?

**Thamar:** (Approaches them and whispers ) “Exactly! Want to know a secret?”

**Habiba:** “Okay...”

**Thamar:** “That was my story! I am Belinda.”

Habiba and Martha were shocked and asked Thamar more questions on her story and sexual and reproductive health issues.





15-19



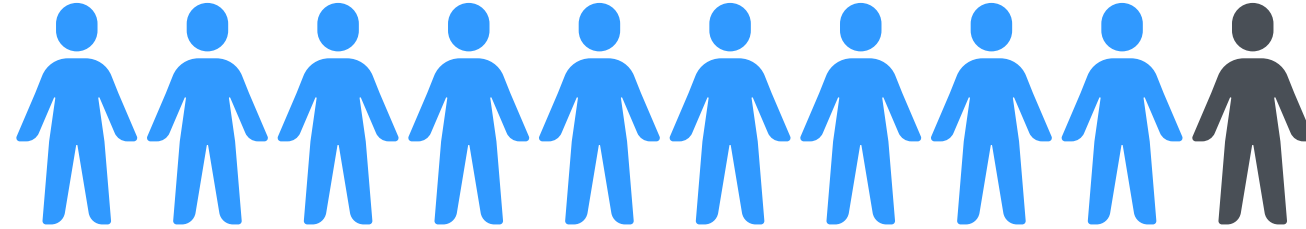
3 out of 10 girls between the ages of 15-19  
have no knowledge of any family  
planning method



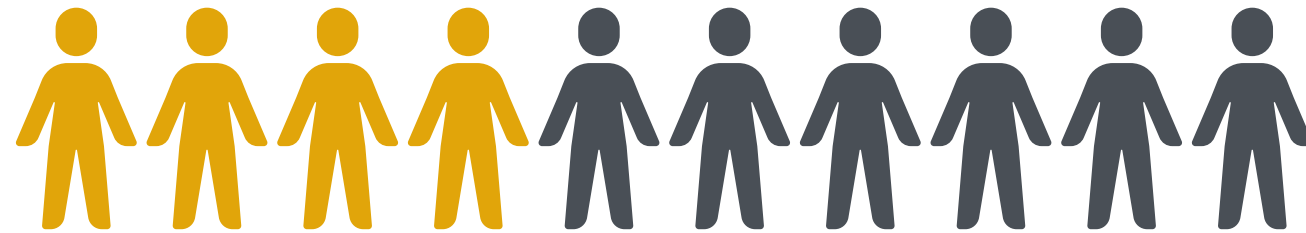
thamar said, '3 out of 10 girls between the ages of 15-19 have no knowledge of any family planning method'. She counseled them on menstrual hygiene, sexual abstinence and the importance of contraceptive use as 9 out of every 10 women of ages 15 to 29 are currently not using contraceptives.

Also, 4 out of 10 girls in Nasarawa state have experienced teenage pregnancy, exposing them to STIs and limited options to fulfill their dreams.

**15-29**



**9 out of every 10 women of ages 15 to 29 are currently not using contraceptives.**



**4 out of 10 girls in Nasarawa state have experienced teenage pregnancy**

**After receiving the knowledge from Thamar, Habiba and Martha resolved to abstain from all forms of premarital sex. They understood how important decisions concerning sexual and reproductive health could affect their wellbeing.**

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**According to World Health Organization (WHO), Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) has been shown to empower young people to delay sexual debut, increases knowledge on SRH, and reduces HIV infection and teenage pregnancy.**

**Discovering that 6 out of 10 girls between the ages of 15- 29 years in Nasarawa state have had sex, Habiba and Martha felt the urgency to organize a group discussion with fellow girls in their school.**

# **Glossary.**

**Female Genital Mutilation (FGM):** is the partial or total removal of external female genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons. (WHO)

**Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights :** a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing 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.

**Sexuality:** is your sexual feelings, thoughts, attractions and behaviours towards other people.

# Glossary.

**STI's (Sexually Transmitted Infections):** STIs are spread predominantly by sexual contact, including vaginal, anal and oral sex. Some STIs can also be transmitted from mother-to-child during pregnancy, childbirth and breastfeeding. (WHO)

**Gender Based Violence (GBV):** this refers to harmful acts directed at an individual based on their gender. Gender-based violence can include sexual, physical, mental and economic harm inflicted in public or in private.(UNHCR)

# **Glossary.**

**Rape:** unlawful sexual activity carried out forcibly or under threat of injury against a person's will or with a person who is beneath a certain age or incapable of valid consent because of mental illness, mental deficiency, intoxication, unconsciousness, or deception (Merriam Webster).

**Kanwa:** potash, a traditional mixture that is erroneously believed to prevent pregnancy.

**Contraception:** Ways to prevent pregnancy.

**Family Planning:** the ability of individuals and couples to anticipate and attain their desired number of children and the spacing and timing of their births by using safe and effective modern methods.

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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**

- Increase funding for AYSRH program.
- Increase Advocacy on AYSRH issues.
- Strengthen data transmission for AYSRH.
- Strengthen collaboration among relevant MDA's on data management for adolescent and young person's programs.
- Create budget line for AY program in Nasarawa state.

## **COMMITMENT MADE BY THE PRIMARY HEALTH CARE BOARD**

- Have 60 Adolescent health friendly centers (AHFC) integrated in 60 PHC by the end of 2022.
- Integrate Adolescent health friendly centers (AHFC) in 1 designated PHC in all the 147 wards by the end of 2023.

# **Key Messages**

- **Family planning information is not wrong for the teenage girl.**
- **An informed Adolescent is an empowered adolescent.**
- **Abstinence is 100% safe.**
- **Teenage pregnancy and STIs are barriers to achieving a young girl's aspiration.**
- **Being a victim of sexual abuse is not the end of your life.**
- **Take a stand against rape and other sexual violence.**
- **F.G.M is a violation of the basic human right.**
- **Stop stigmatization against victims of rape.**
- **Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights is our collective responsibility.**
- **Improved access to adolescent and youth SRH information and services is essential for supporting adolescent and young persons in making better health choices.**

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

**This storybook is supported by Grand Challenges Canada. Grand Challenges Canada is funded by the Government of Canada and is dedicated to supporting Bold Ideas with Big Impact<sup>®</sup>.**

**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.**



STAND WITH A GIRL  
**SWAG**  
INITIATIVE

*Motto: When the society invest in girls, everyone wins*

