



A Plateau Story

About Plateau State

Plateau state is a north-central state in Nigeria created in 1976 out of the northern half of former Benue-Plateau state. It derives its name from the Jos Plateaux, the capital due to its boundaries of elevated hill surroundings and the state is popularly celebrated as a tourist centre given its unique geographical features. Plateau state has an estimated population of 4.7 million people, with over 1.2 million constituting adolescents and young people.

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

Our Data Made Simple for Adolescent and Youth Sexual and Reproductive Health project emerged as a Global Knowledge Management (KM) Champion Innovation through The Pitch, a global competition to find game-changing ideas in Knowledge Management for Family Planning/ Reproductive Health programmes by Knowledge SUCCESS. Our 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

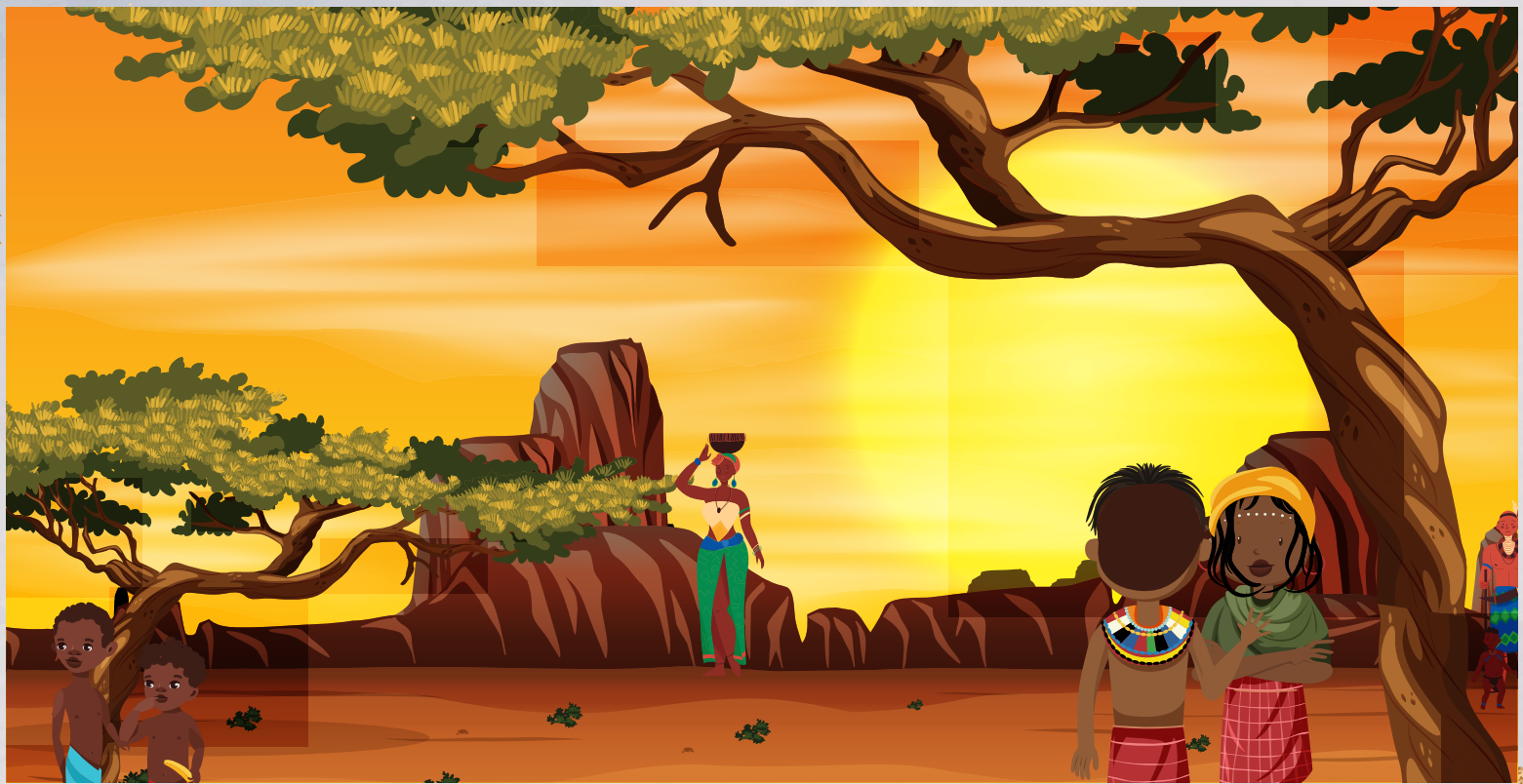
On a cold morning at Azi Nyako youth centre, Dadin Kowa, Jos, the preparation is in top gear to celebrate the world youth day, organized by the Ministry for Youth and Sports. This event brings together adolescents and youth from all nooks and crannies of Plateau state. The theme of the day is 'My life and my health.'

After a presentation by the NYSC cultural troupe, the Adolescent Desk Officer, popularly known as "Mama Adolescent," was called upon to facilitate a session. As part of the session, she played a video of two girls telling their true-life stories. The first story is of Noro, and she begins to share;



“My name is Noro. I was a 15 -year-old SS1 student at Government Secondary School situated in the Wase Local Government Area of Plateau State. During the holidays, I met Ajang, a 16-year old family friend who had been an admirer. One day, he came over to the house and suggested we go to the village square where different cultural events were taking place.





Because there was such a massive crowd in the square and we could barely hear each other, Ajang suggested we get a quiet place to make up our minds on which cultural events we would be participating in. During this quiet moment, he expressed his interest in me and said he was a good dancer.

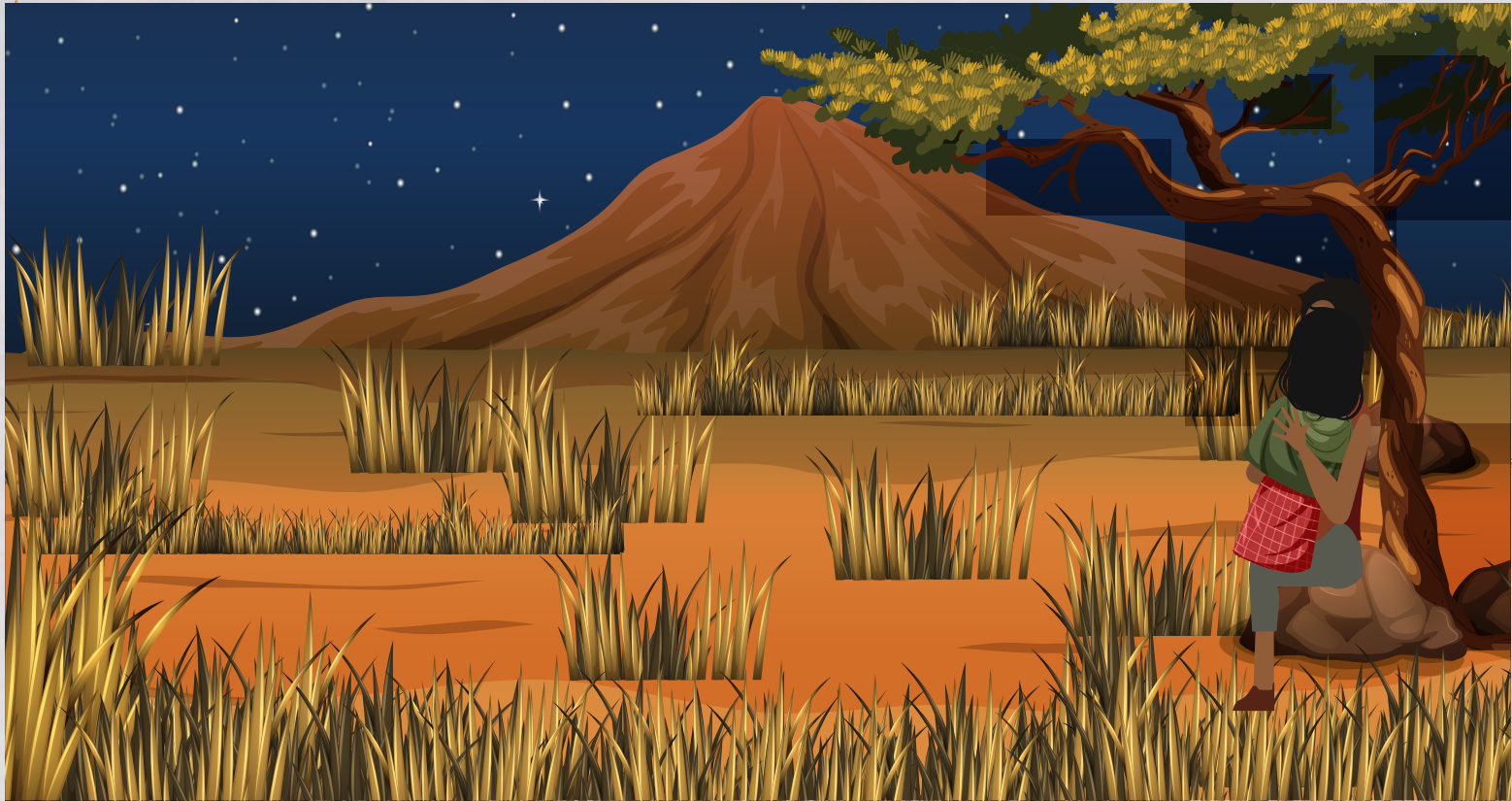
He danced around to the sound of music, which caught my fancy. His dancing skills brought the admiration of other young ladies passing by, who praised him for it.



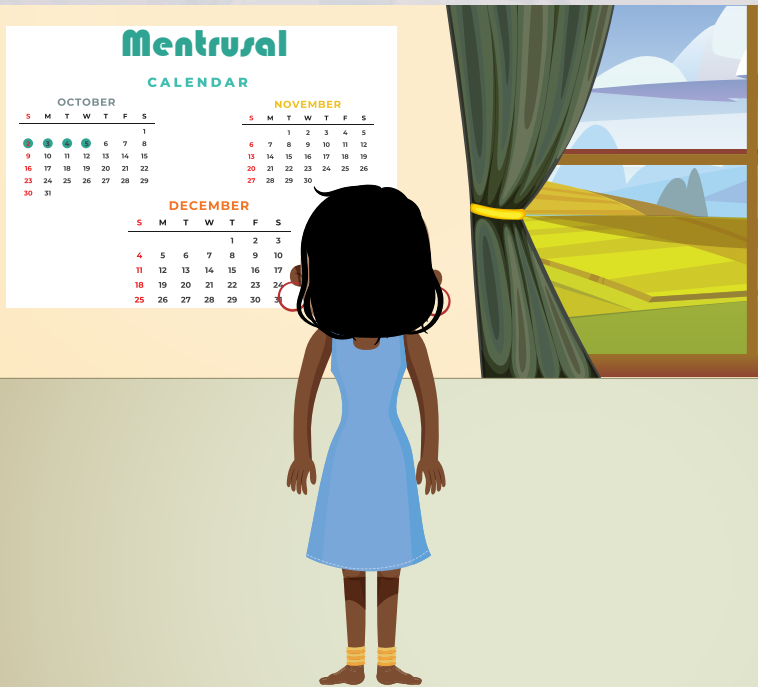


Ajang suggested that a little bit of romance would make the evening better. Being a novice at anything sexually related and having no prior knowledge of sex education, I expressed my fear of having no experience. He promised to guide me slowly as I followed his lead.

The attention from the other ladies got me jealous, and it made me realise that I also liked him, so I suggested we move away from his new crowd of admirers. It was during this quiet moment that we noticed a group of lovers romancing.

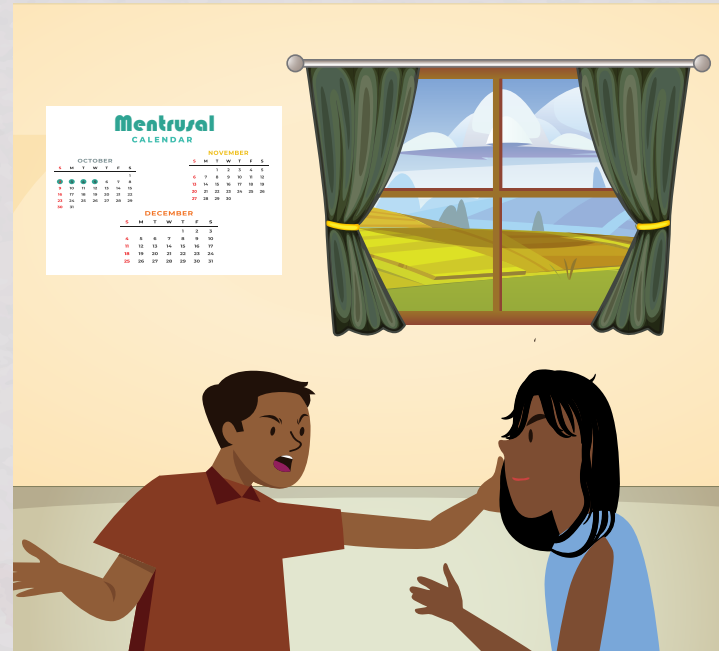
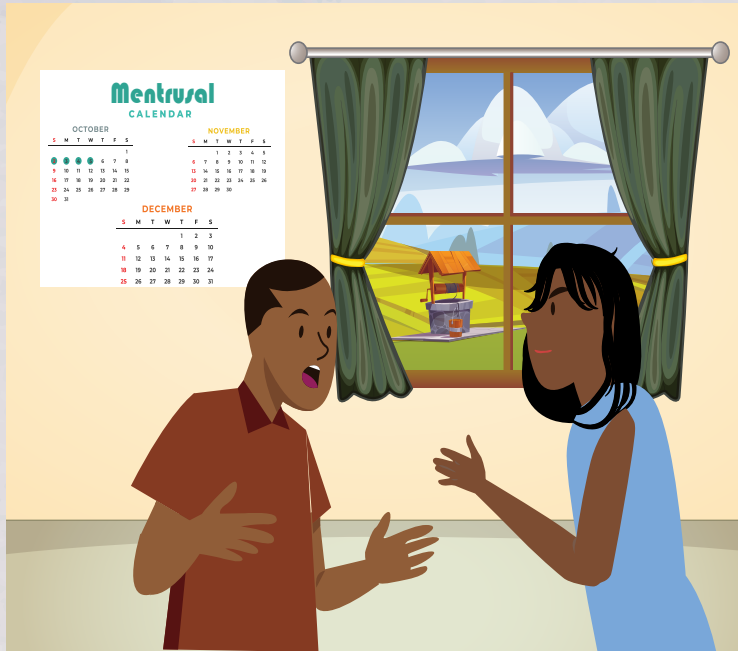


This led to both of us having unprotected sex. Ajang and I, not being knowledgeable on contraceptives, did not use any method, which led to me getting pregnant. I only started suspecting that I was pregnant when I missed my monthly cycle for two consecutive months.



My suspicion led me to seek medical help from the Primary Health Care Centre within Wase LGA, where I found out I was pregnant.

Not knowing what to do about my pregnancy and knowing that it would break my mother's heart, I called the attention of Ajang, but he rejected the pregnancy, claiming that we had sex only once and it wasn't enough to bring about pregnancy. This led to a confrontation where Ajang physically assaulted me, leading to hostility between both families and us.



Sadly, I was sent out of school, my home, and my community. Life wasn't easy for me during the pregnancy and being sent out of school, I had to spend most of the time at a local bar selling locally made gin to make ends meet.



The video was paused, and Mama Adolescent came on stage and said, “This is what happens when teens in Plateau state do not have access to media and are not knowledgeable about any contraceptive method”.



9 in 10 girls between the age of 15-19 are currently not using any contraceptives.

On hearing this, some people in the crowd started murmuring in disbelief. A young boy from the crowd shouted, “How can this be?” Before Mama Adolescent could respond, a Life Planning for Adolescent and Youth (LPAY) ambassador stood up and said, “E dey happen. I know a 17-year old girl called Simi, from Jos south. She comes from a family with the firm belief that forbids discussion on anything relating to sex because they feel that access to such information would endanger their children and lead to promiscuity. Let me tell you Simi’s story.”



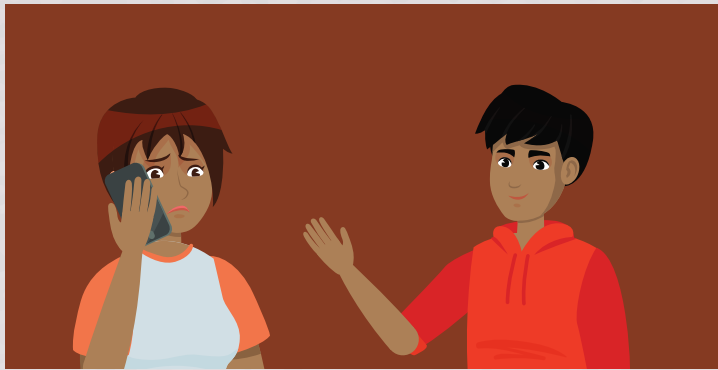
Simi's Story

Simi had just gained admission to the University Jos to study Mass Communication. During her registration, she met Fwangmun, aka 'Swagz', a 300 level student who was also the director of socials. He helped with her registration, after which they exchanged contacts and kept communicating. Fwangmun invited her for the fresher's welcome party at the Varlaine club. She obliged after much pressure from her roommate Nerat, a social butterfly who is conversant with the school environment and all social gatherings.





On the day of the party, Fwangmun and his friends picked them up at the hostel, and after having a few drinks and dancing at the party, Simi looked up at the clock and realized it was past midnight and immediately wanted to leave, but Nerat was not in sight. After trying her line multiple times unsuccessfully, she felt scared, stranded, and frustrated, but Fwangmun offered to take her back home, assuring her that Nerat would be there.





She agreed on the condition that he uses a condom to prevent pregnancy, having little knowledge about contraceptives from her friends through those 'girly gists.' Fwangmun refused and said that a condom would only reduce the pleasure and that he would get her a post pill in the morning so she wouldn't get pregnant. They went on to have unprotected sex.

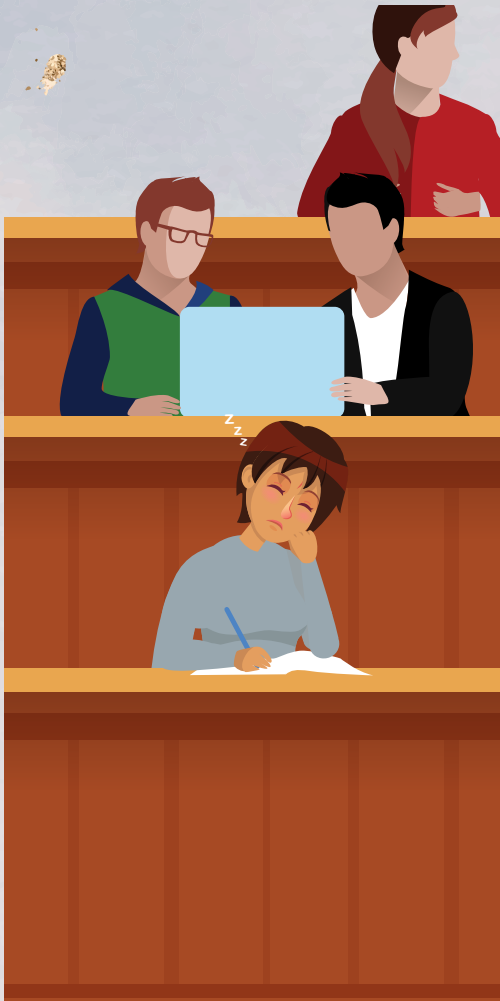
On getting to the apartment, Nerat was not home and Fwangmun, seeing how distraught she was, offered to stay back until Nerat returned. After a while, he started making sexual advances at her, and she kept declining. Eventually, he convinced her by telling her that girls in the university are sexually active, and it's a trend.



In the morning, he gave her some money to get the pill at a pharmacy. Being overwhelmed by having sex for the first time and having cold feet about going to a pharmacy, she decided to wait for Nerat, whom she felt was more knowledgeable about this. Nerat returned in the afternoon and explained she had followed her boyfriend for a sleepover. Simi narrated the events of the night and begged her to accompany her to get the pill. Still, Nerat discouraged her saying, “post pill and all contraceptives have negative effects and could make her infertile in the future, so she should rather use salt water solution instead because that’s what all the ‘sabi girls’ are using.” Simi took the salt water solution and somehow felt a bit of relief, thinking her ordeal was over and there was no fear of unplanned pregnancy.

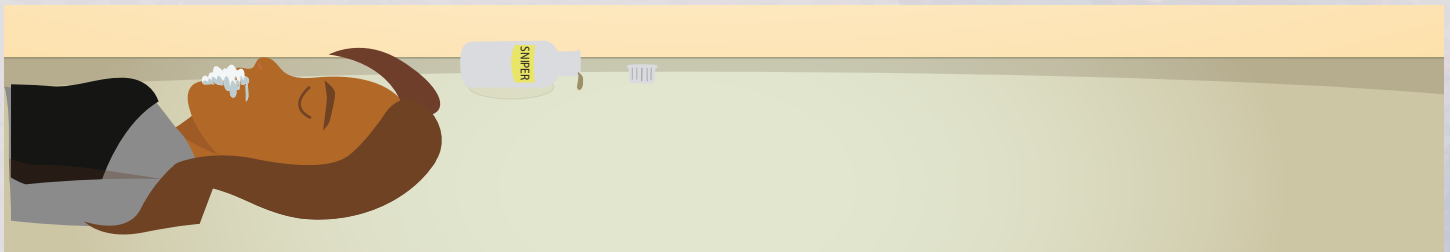


A few weeks later, she constantly felt fatigued, nauseous, and slept through lectures. It persisted for days, and she decided to visit the school clinic. After consultation with the doctor, tests were carried out, and it was discovered that she was pregnant.





Simi could not cope with the stress of school and pregnancy, so she tried to abort the pregnancy. As a result, she suffered excessive bleeding, and she was rushed to the hospital. Her parents were informed that her condition was a result of abortion, and this left them heartbroken and angry, they decided to cut her off. Due to everything Simi had experienced, she became depressed and attempted to take her life.



“So guy, you see, Mama Adolescent is right; like Noro, Simi is 3 in 10 girls in Plateau state aged 15-19 years who are having unprotected sex but have never used any contraceptive. Also, 6 out of 10 young people aged 15-19 years know about contraceptives but have no intention to use them, just like Fwangmun and Nerat.”



Simi is 3 in 10 girls in Plateau state aged 15-19 years who are having unprotected sex but have never used any contraceptive.

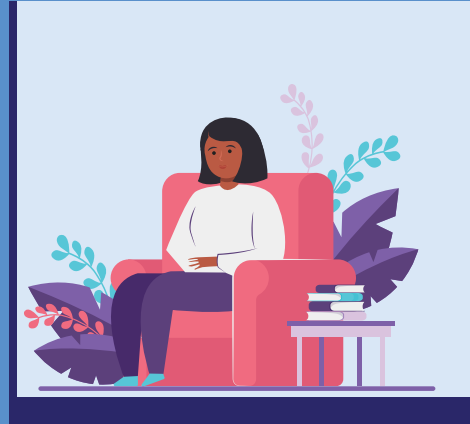


6 out of 10 young people aged 15-19 years know about contraceptives but have no intention to use them

Mama Adolescent is right!



Let's watch the last video



Mama Adolescent added, “You are right, from this story, you can see that this could be based on the perceived fears and rumors regarding the use of modern contraceptives.”

She resumed the video, and another girl begins to share her story.

“My name is Rinret, and I was a 16-year old girl with dreams of becoming a Medical Doctor. I loved sports and was the best student in my class and the best Goalkeeper for the female football team in the community secondary school.

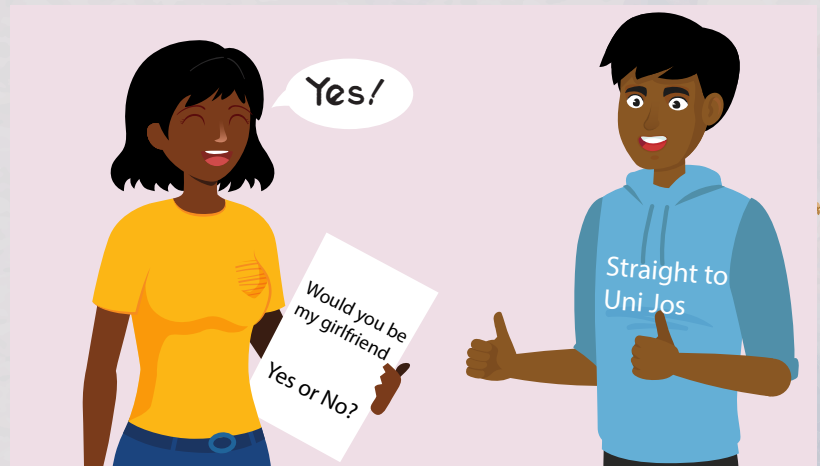
Rinret Story





During the holiday, I met Manji at the market, and it was love at first sight. At age 18, Manji was already seen as the most promising young man in the community. He just got admission to study medicine and surgery at the University of Jos.

All the young girls in the village admired this tall, dark, and handsome teenager. Parents also saw him as a fellow with many potential and hoped their children would emulate his strides. I admired his intelligence and didn't hesitate to be His girlfriend when he asked.





As time went on, we became sexually active without protection. We were convinced that having sex was the way to express genuine love for each other. We indulged in unprotected sex, and for us, this was the best holiday ever, as everyone admired our love.





The holiday was over, and Manji left for University, and I couldn't resume school because I had fallen ill. My mother took me to the Primary Healthcare Center in the community and complained to the Nurse that I had lower abdominal pain, smelly vaginal discharge, and itching. After running some tests, the Nurse informed my mother and I that I was pregnant and had contracted a Sexually Transmitted Infection.



Sadly, Manji denied the pregnancy, so I was left alone and heartbroken with an unplanned pregnancy. I had to drop out of school for a while and live with my maternal grandmother because of the shame and the fact that my mother couldn't continue to bear the responsibility of my child and I.



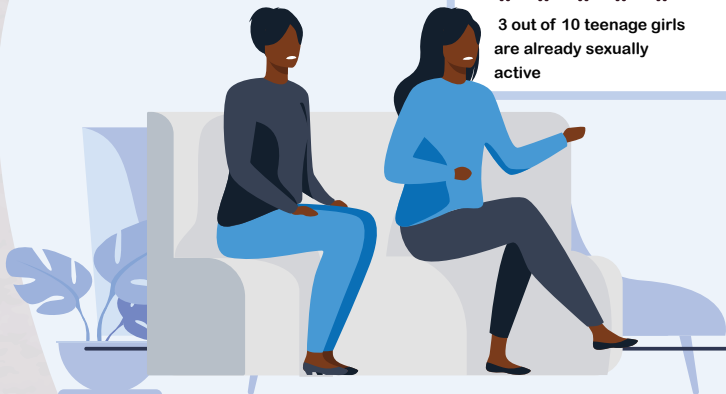
1 in 4 teenage girls in the state has an unplanned pregnancy



3 out of 10 teenage girls are already sexually active



9 in 10 sexually active girls are currently not using contraceptives in the state



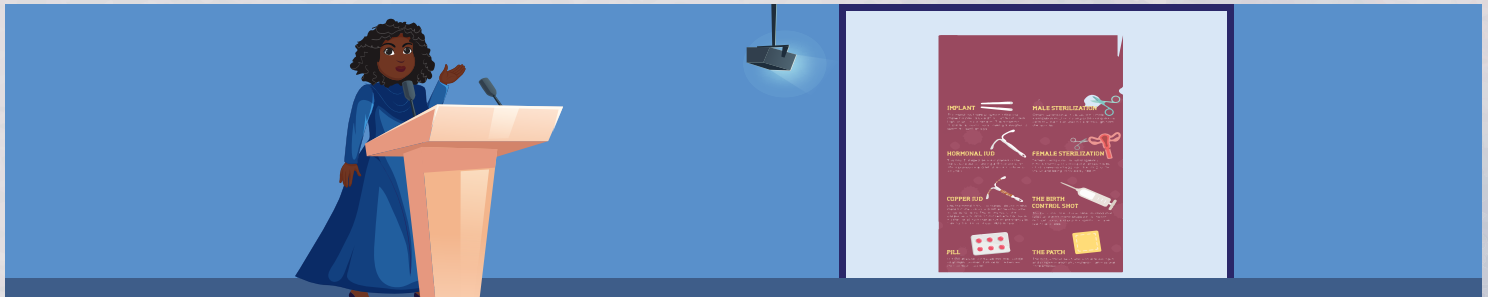


"My dream of becoming a medical doctor is now shattered."



With tears in her eyes, Rinret went on to say, “My dream of becoming a medical doctor is now suspended, and my mind is constantly filled with thoughts of catering for my baby and no longer on how to afford the shoes I use to play football in the female football team. My future honestly seems very bleak, owing to nothing but the uninformed choices I made.”

As the video came to an end, there was absolute silence in the hall. Mama Adolescent walked up to the stage, sighed, and said, **“Young people in Plateau (15-29 years) constitute 54.3% of the total population.** Based on the stories we have heard, the majority of adolescents and young persons aren’t equipped with the correct information on contraceptives that would help them make informed decisions. **Informing Adolescents and youths on comprehensive sexuality education would increase contraceptive use uptake by young people who are sexually active, delay sexual debut and reduce the rate of unprotected sex, resulting in unplanned pregnancies.** In the long run, these will have a ripple effect on the state; we will have young people who will complete their education, reach their goals and contribute meaningfully to Plateau state.”



After the session ended, the Commissioner for Youths and Sports came forward to appreciate Mama Adolescent and her team for their efforts to inform young persons on why their sexual and reproductive health is a crucial aspect of their life.



As the crowds trooped out of Azi Nyako hall, the young man who had previously disagreed with Mama Adolescent quickly rushed to meet the LPAY ambassador saying....

I'm so sorry, I didn't know, but now I know better. I would like to give this information to adolescents and young persons like myself. Can you show me how?



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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 Health

- Domesticate the revised National Adolescent Health Policy in Plateau state by October 2022.
- Incorporate Adolescent & Youth Sexual and Reproductive Health (AYSRH) services into 50 more Primary HealthCare Centres (PHCs) and build the capacity of service providers on AYSRH services by April 2022.
- Create a dedicated budget line for AYSRH services by October 2022.

Traditional & Religious Leaders

- Incorporate AYSRH messages in sermons and during religious meetings.
- Increase dissemination of Life planning messages to community leaders/village heads in every community.

Media

- Integrate Life Planning messaging during programs, especially on high point days (Cultural Day, World Population Day, International Youth Day, Children's Day, World Contraception Day, etc.) to dispel myths and misconceptions.
- Include AYSRH information in already existing segments on family planning

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