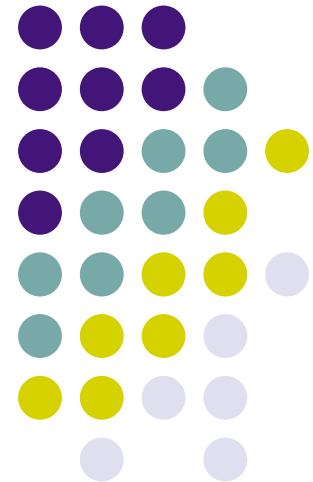


Empowerment of girls in sub-Saharan Africa

*A discussion of different pathways, and their
implication for girls ability to protect their
sexual and reproductive health to avoid
harmful practices*

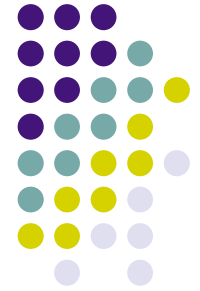




Presentation outline

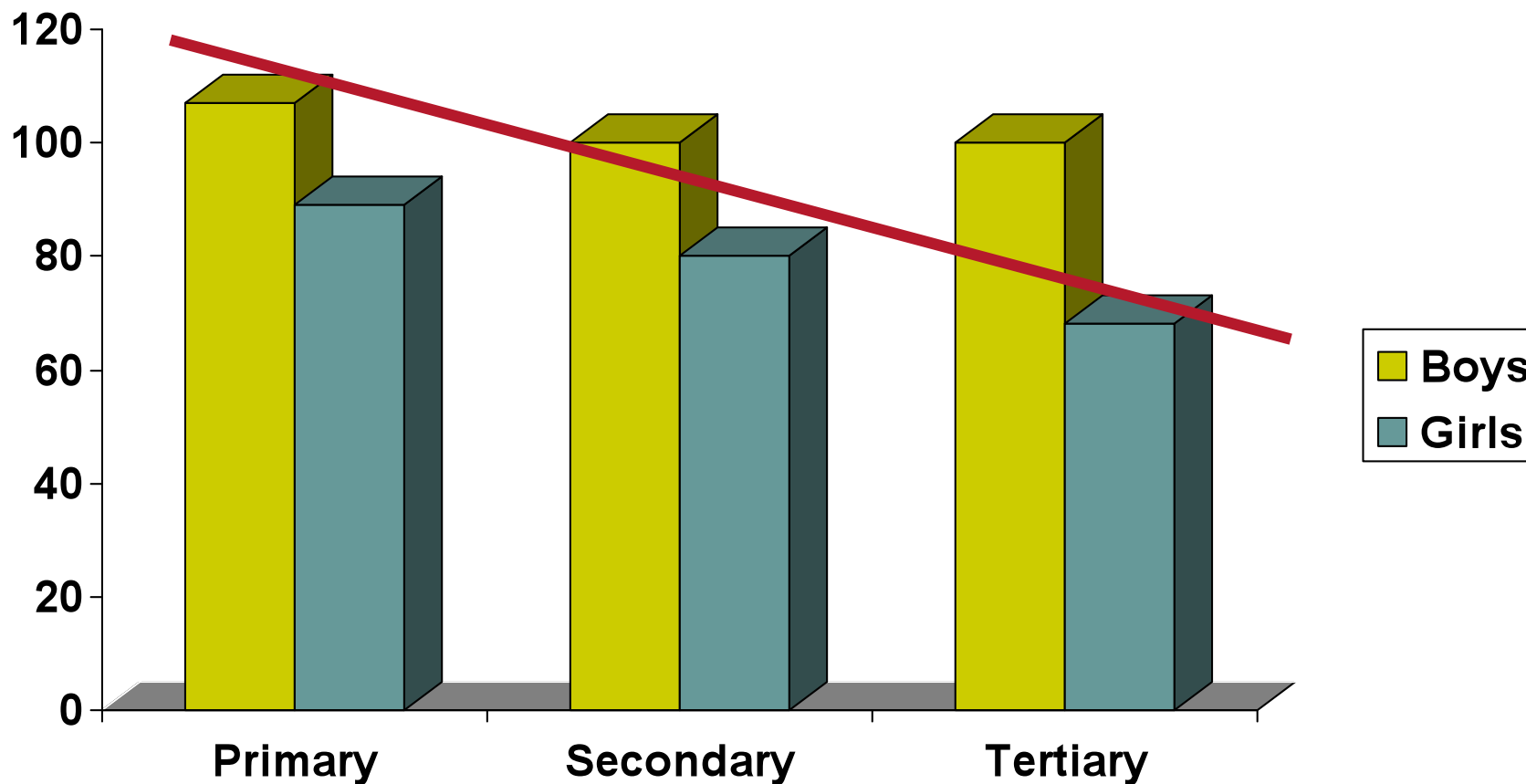
1. Introduction
2. Empowerment
3. Areas of focus for girls empowerment with implication for girls ability to protect their reproductive health and avoid HPs
 1. Education
 2. Policy and legislation
 3. Men engagement
4. Girls Education (Primary and secondary)
5. Policy and legislation
6. Men engagement
7. Conclusion

Background: situation of girls in sub-Saharan Africa



- Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) is home for 13% of the world's population
- Half of the population lives under the poverty line (MDG 2008)
- Net primary school enrolment in the region was 71% (UNESCO 2008)
- 59% of girls aged 15-24 are illiterates (UNESCO 2008)

Gross girls school enrolment in sub-Saharan Africa per 100 boys

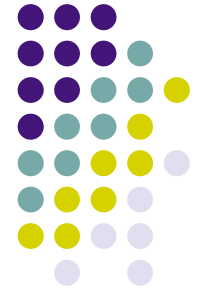


Girls in sub-Saharan Africa cont...



- SSA is the region that harbours 67% of people living with HIV
- 57% of people living with HIV are women
- 75% of youth 15-24 living with HIV are girls aged (UNAIDS 2008)
- Girls in Africa suffer the consequences harmful practices (HPs).

Definition harmful practices (HPs)



‘All behaviour, attitude and/or practices which negatively affect the fundamental rights of women and girls such as their right to life, health, dignity, education and physical integrity’ (Protocol on the right of women in Africa 2006)

Common harmful practices in SSA



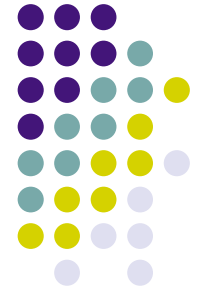
- Early marriage (under 18 years)
- FGM (Female genital mutilation)
- Marriage by abduction
- Violence and harassment
- Exchange/betroth for marriage of brothers or fathers
- Given off to marry their sister's widower

Why do girls face all this?



1. Socially expected roles related to gender
2. The social structure and patriarchy

Socially expected roles related to gender



- Prescribes action, speech, mobility, intellectual possibilities

‘This is enough for a girl’

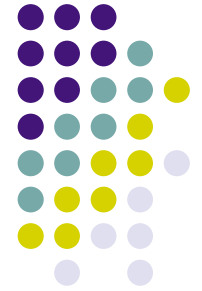
- Perception of women’s beauty and sexuality in relation to economic advances
- Partial treatment of girls in the family

The social structure and patriarchy



- Men take primary responsibility and authority over the family
- Gatekeepers of the community welfare as a whole
- Are representatives of public institutions
- Which give girls and women lower status than men

Why do girls comply with controlling norms



1. Internalization and translation of norms into practices
2. Parents and guardians as part of the oppression
3. Fear of retribution and rejection

Internalization and translation of norms into practices



- Suffering, pain and crying is considered part of being a woman and should be carried with pride
- Accept their subordinate position as nature given
- They become implementers HPs
- Discriminate and ostracize other women who are against HPs (FGM and early marriage)

Parents and guardians as part of the oppression



- The family, is the basis for the patriarchal practices in Africa (Kambarmi M, 2006)
- Socialize the young to accept sexually differentiated role
- Encourage or ignore harmful practices

Fear of retribution and rejection if the fail to comply



- Girls who do not comply may be rejected and marginalized
 - May not be marriageable



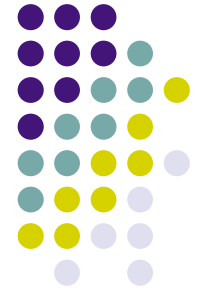
Empowerment

Empowerment



- Power is ability to make choices
- To be disempowered implies to be denied of choices (N. Kabeer,1999).
- Empowerment is for those who have been denied the ability to make choices
- People who are powerful are not empowered as they have never been disempowered.

Empowerment



Two components:

- Resources
- Agency

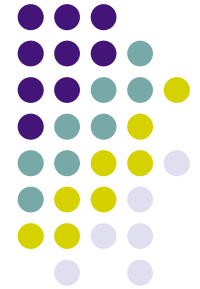


Resources

- Capabilities (including health, nutrition and education)
- Access to opportunities (including access to assets and political opportunity)
- Security (safety from violence and conflict) N.

Kabeer,1999

Agency



- The ability to make strategic choices, to have control and ability to decide on those resources
- Generating agency requires a process that stimulates the subjects to be a change agent in their own lives

Girls empowerment



- A core component in:
 - The International Conference on Population and Development in 1994 (ICPD 1994)
 - Beijing Platform, 1995

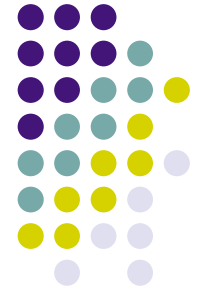
Girls' empowerment



Differs from the empowerment of other disadvantage groups (Malhotra and Schuler 2005):

1. Girls are not just one sub division but a cross cutting category (minorities, poor, etc.)
3. Girls' disempowerment is reinforced through household and family
3. Empowering girls requires a focused transformation of:
 - Norms
 - Institutions that support the patriarchal structures

Areas of focus for girls empowerment with implication for reproductive health



1. Girls' education
 - Universal primary and above

2. Policy and legislation
 - For reproductive health rights and services

3. Male engagement
 - Boys and men in the family
 - Religious and community leaders

Girls education



- Literacy optimizes girls potentials at individual, collective and national levels
- Educated women are:
 - Less likely to be oppressed or exploited
 - More likely to participate in political process
 - Have smaller families
 - Have healthier, better-educated children
 - Less likely to die from AIDS (Educate girls, 2008)

Universal Primary Education



- Improving health outcomes such as:
 - Reducing fertility
 - Decreasing infant mortality
- Girls need to have control over their mobility and other resources in order to use the benefit of primary education

Universal Primary Education



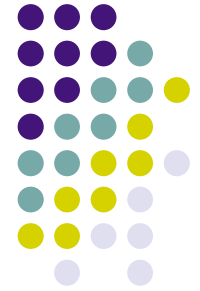
- In developing countries girls lack this freedom of mobility or resources to improve their health
- In such situations primary education alone is not enough
- Girls can get the tool and knowledge to overcome obstacles when they get higher education

Secondary education or higher education



- Female secondary education is associated with:
 - Increased age at marriage
 - Low fertility and mortality
 - Good maternal care and
 - Reduced vulnerabilities to HIV/AIDS (Grown C, et al. 2005)

Secondary education and health outcomes



- There is a link between education and control of girl's reproduction
- The higher the level of female education the lower is the desired family size (Schultz 1993)
- Each year of additional education is found to reduce infant mortality by 5-10 percent

Secondary education and service use



- Doubling the proportion of girls in secondary education is estimated to bring about:
 - Decreasing fertility by half
 - Infant mortality by more than half (Subbarao K, Rainey I.)
 - Secondary schools have a positive effect on women's use of prenatal, delivery services and postnatal services (Elo I et al, 1992)

Secondary education and FGM



- Level of education also affects attitude towards FGM
- It is indicated that female with secondary education were 4 times more likely to oppose
 - FGM in general
 - For their daughters and grand daughters than those who completed primary education (El-Gibaly O, et al.)

Secondary education and HIV



- Girls education lowers their risk of HIV
- Increases the understanding of risky behaviour (Grown C, et al.)
- Decreases the prevalence of risky sexual behaviour
- Increase their ability to discuss HIV with partner and, ask for condom use, or negotiate sex with spouse (Fylkesness K, et al. 2001; Gregson S et al 2002)

Secondary or above education and violence



- Violence increases the risk of HIV in girls and women
- Violence is associated to pelvic inflammatory (Maman S, et al. 2000)
- Education can not completely prevent violence secondary education can decrease:
 - The rate of violence and can enhance women's ability to leave abusive relationships (Elsberg MC, et al. 2001, Visaria I 1999)

How can we help girls to stay school?

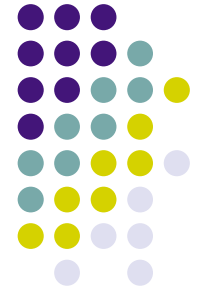


- Making schools more affordable/free
- Building secondary schools in the rural villages
- Making schools girls friendly
 - Separate toilets with sanitary facilities
 - Provision of sanitary pads
 - Curriculum reform to make education marketable
 - Teacher training in transformation of attitudes, beliefs and norms



A school girl on her way home from school is approached by an older man. During the pre-test many pupils identified the man as a teacher – the first report of this problem.
Figure 2: HIV prevention materials developed by TANESA, Mwanza, based on a narrative approach (Ng'weshemi et al., 1997: 212)

How can we help girls to stay school?



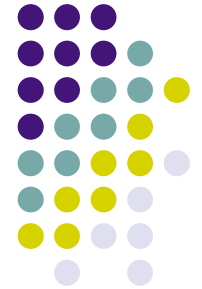
- School in Kisumu, Kenya providing lunch for all
- Sanitary facilities
- Providing scholarships





Policies and legislations

Girls rights are human rights



Girls rights:

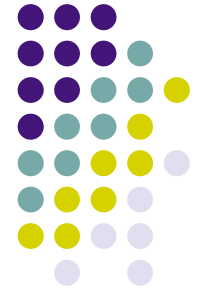
- To life, health, mobility, security, living in dignity, access to services, right to freedom from inhuman or degrading treatment
- To decide on their sexuality and reproduction:
 - When
 - With whom,
 - How to have children
 - How many
- Are parts of human rights and should be respected (UN, 1995)

Girls rights are human rights



- SSA countries have ratified these universal conventions
- The latest protocol on the rights of women in Africa emphasises on governments obligations with regard to women's rights .

Enforcing sexual and reproductive rights



- The right to protection from child marriage:
 - Guarantee girls right to consent
 - Set the minimum age of marriage at 18 years
 - Many countries have adopted criminal legislation

Enforcing sexual and reproductive rights



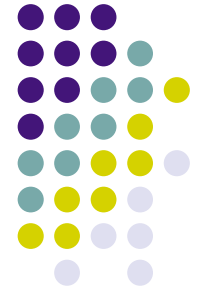
- The right to non-discrimination (free from rape and abduction)
 - Rape and abduction are violation of human rights
 - The African charter has a provision that affirm prohibiting all forms of violence

Enforcing sexual and reproductive rights



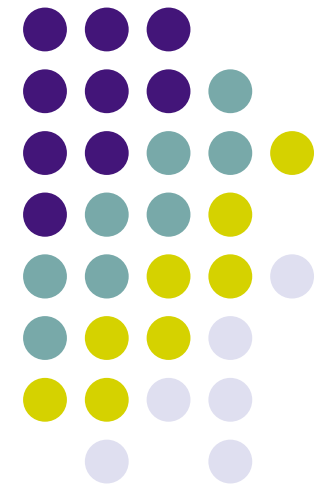
- End female genital mutilation/cutting
 - Fifteen African countries and 11 nations receiving refugees adopted criminal legislation (UNFPA 2007)
 - The African charter requires states to stop practices that discriminate against women
 - Prohibition through legislation measures backed by sanctions
 - Promoting public awareness about the threat
 - Care for girls who face complication of FGM
 - Protection for those who are at risk

The right for access to sexual and reproductive rights



- The right to health (reproductive health services)
 - Quality family planning including safe abortion to reduce
 - High risk pregnancies
 - Unwanted pregnancies
 - STI and HIV interventions
 - Female–controlled method of prevention of STIs should be accessible and affordable (Grown C, et al.)
 - Integrating STI/HIV counselling, prevention and treatment services

Engaging men in reproductive health



Why engage men?



- The strategies undertaken by the world to date to empower girls:
 - Girls enrolment in education
 - Prohibiting early marriage
 - Prohibiting FGM
 - Economic empowerment
 - Legislation against rape and abduction

Why engage men



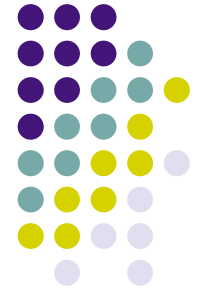
- 50% of girls aged 10-18 reported their first sex was coerced (UN Millennium project, 2005)
- In Guinea FGM has been a criminal offence since 1965, data from 2003 indicated the prevalence of FGM as 62% (Reproductive Rights Law Reform)

Why engage men?



- Law alone cannot change deeply held attitudes towards HPs
- Girls can not achieve gender equality and SRH alone
- Sustained social change can be obtained through holistic approach to women empowerment

Why engage men?



- Recognition of men's influential role in SRH is very important
- Male involvement helps to bring socio-cultural change towards RH (Maureen K. 2006)
- Policy makers should consider how to engage men in sexual and reproductive health



Programmatic examples

- Men as gate keepers in Bangladesh (RIHYA) has improved use of SRH services (UNFPA, 2007)
- Religious leaders involvement improved access to HCT services in Kenya and Ethiopia (Frontiers in RH 2008)
- Religious leaders in Kenya involved in stopping FGM (Abdi M, 2008)
- Community leaders, help girls to stay in school by making them land owners which will be denied if the dropout (PPT, Sheraton Addis, Oct, 2008)

Conclusion



- Empowering girls through education and gender equality is the basis for sustained change and development
- Legal protection and involving men hastens the gender role transformation
- Girls education, policy commitment, legal protection and involvement of men as gatekeepers should go in tandem to help girls control over their own reproductive health

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Thanks