

**BRIEF REPORT OF THE BREAKFAST MEETING HELD AT 7:30
POLICY FORUM BREAKFAST DEBATES – January 30th 2015**

VENUE: New Africa Hotel



policy forum

Sub Theme: Should Pregnant Girls Return to School after Giving Birth?

For almost eight years now different actors including the PAMOJA TUNAWEZA alliance comprised of five organizations namely: Amref Health Africa, Restless Development, Health Actions Promotion Association (HAPA), NIMR Mwanza centre and Medicos Del Mundo, have been advocating for the government to operationalize the National Education and Training Policy (ETP) which allows pregnant girls to return to school after they have given birth and also recommending that sexual and reproductive education be given to young girls and young mothers.

The government has currently approved the policy but has clearly stipulated that the policy should not operate until it has been launched, the launch was to take place late last year but it has not taken place up to date.

This is why Policy Forum in collaboration with Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights (SRHR) Alliance has dedicated its January 2015 debate on the topic titled: **Should Pregnant Girls Return to School after Giving Birth?**

Main Objective of breakfast meeting

To facilitate a dialogue between stakeholders and policy makers on the National Education and Training Policy with specific focus on re-entry to school for pregnant girls and young mothers: Where are we?

Specific Objectives:

- 1) To share the findings of situation analysis on re-entry to school conducted in UFR districts and at higher national level
- 2) To identify existing efforts and gaps at global, regional and national level in addressing teenage pregnancy and CSE; focusing on strategy in Tanzania
- 3) To come up with recommendations from various stakeholders (citizens, program implementers and policy makers) on re-entry to school and areas that need support

The debate had two presentations and three discussants. The presenters of the debate were: Dr Rebecca Balira; National Institute for Medical Research (NIMR) for Sexual and Reproductive Health, Rights (SRHR) Alliance "Pamoja Tunaweza" and Dr. Majaliwa Marwa, a Representative from UNFPA

The discussants were; Chimpaye Marango from the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training (MOEVT), and from the Ministry of Health and Social welfare (MOHSW) there were Dr Georgina Msemu and Dr Elizabeth Mapella.

The debate was facilitated by Alex Ruchyahinduru from Policy Forum Secretariat.

Rebecca Balira, the first presenter of the event presented on a situational analysis conducted by PAMOJA TUNAWWEZA Alliance on the re-entry policy for school girls who become pregnant in Tanzania, she identified the four areas where the survey was conducted as being; Kilindi, Mkalama , Iringa rural and Same.

Rebecca said that, 55,000 girls were expelled from school between 2003 and 2011 out of which a huge number was students from secondary schools and 0.9 per cent was from primary schools.

Another survey she mentioned was that conducted by Restless Development which showed that 90% of 101 girls who dropped out of school were refused re-entry

Data also indicates that, truancy is also the major reason for student's dropouts in secondary schools, she said

She said, the findings from the survey at the district level show that, most of the stakeholders who were interviewed were in support of the re-entry policy however some of them were skeptical about ethical implications of the policy.

In some schools the findings showed that re-entry of these girls was being done informally or underground, she added

She continued by mentioning some of the key milestones achieved in implementing the re-entry policy at national level as being; The ETP has already been translated into swahili (in 2010) to ensure smooth implementation at all levels of society, the MoEVT has already prepared draft guidelines (in 2009) for the implementation of the re-entry policy once the approval of the ETP is completed and some of the NGOs at the grassroots (at district and ward levels) have already engaged some stake holders on the issue and are ready for large scale implementation once the NRETP is approved.

She concluded her presentation by calling upon all stakeholders to prepare for the implementation of the re-entry policy by pushing for the revision and finalization of the draft policy guideline on re-entry.

After Rebecca's presentation, participants watched a five minutes documentary that was recorded in Njombe region which showed the challenges that young mothers face after being expelled from school, the girl in the documentary said that after being pregnant and expelled

from school she was given a severe beating from the father and was denied re-entry in the school she was in.

The second presenter of the debate, Dr. Majaliwa Marwa presented on “Teenage Pregnancies and Comprehensive Sexual Education (CSE) provision among young people in schools and out of schools – What is the known”

Dr. Marwa started his presentation by highlighting that, 47% of the Tanzanian population (44.9 million) is comprised of the young generation, the birth rate caused by these young people is very high.

He said that, millions of these young people have poor access to information, education and services especially with respect to sexual and reproductive health.

Dr. Marwa said that, data shows that about 23% of young women age 15–19 have already begun childbearing whereby fifteen percent of them started having sex at the age of 15.

He said that, The International Professional Practices Framework (IPPF), 2010 has defined Comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) as a rights-based approach to sexual education that seeks to equip young people with the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values they need to determine and enjoy their sexuality.

Comprehensive sexuality education coupled with appropriate access to SRH services has the potential to transform young people’s lives positively and make them better and productive citizens for the future of African nations. He also talked about the ESA commitment which is a

response to the challenges confronting young people and the threat that these challenges pose to the fate and future of ESA countries

He suggested some of the key steps that need to be taken as being; reviewing and amending the existing laws and policies on age of consent, child protection and teacher codes of conduct and initiating and scaling up age, gender and culturally-appropriate CSE during primary school education by including it in the teaching curriculum.

The discussant from the MOEVT admitted that, the NETP has been approved and its guidelines are currently being reviewed and they shall start to operate soon after the launch of the policy.

She said, after the policy was made, about 80 people were tasked to go around to stakeholders to get their views on the re-entry policy, she said she was surprised to see from the presentation that there were some people in schools who were not aware of the policy.

Another discussant, from the ministry of health pointed out that the views of the parents were not taken from the survey so the evidence on this is still challenging.

It is important that the views of all gatekeepers such as the boys who impregnated these young girls in school, are collected so that we can be well informed and push the government to operationalise the policy

She assured the crowd that, the government including the president himself is committed to operationalise the policy, the only issue is

guideline on how the policy can become operational.

Questions and Comments from Participants

- It is not true that the views of the parents was not taken because this study was conducted in 8 zones and involved all stakeholders including parents. To say that we need to go back and collect the views of the parents and other gatekeepers means you want to take us back to 2006.
- If the policy has been reviewed, approved what are we waiting for? We have been waiting for this since 2006, what are really the obstacles for implementation of the policy?
- Why does the draft Education Act not say anything about re-entry? Can we work and act so that these girls go back to school.
- It is not that we are waiting for the guidelines to be reviewed because the guidelines have already been reviewed and are in place, was waiting for approval of the policy.
- At what age do these young girls become pregnant and is there a study that looked at the sexual behaviors of these girls?
- How do we know that after being launched this policy/law will really be applicable in the schools?
- The system itself is contributing to exclusion of girls. How can we really be assured that after the launch the policy will become operational?
- How will all this be applicable if the health centers have few health workers, do we have the counselor teachers to counsel these young boys and girls at school.
- We have very good stories in our country of people who were impregnated at a young age and now are successful we need to look into this perspective; these too can have the same story.
- Yes the baby has rights but the girls also have the right to education. We need to look at other factors such as the social, cultural and economic factors for instance the policy may start to operate but the parents might refuse to allow the young mothers

to go back to school, so sensitization to parents and community at large .

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Response from Presenters/Discussants

- The ministry of health is now working on advocating for the sexuality education to be provided to these young girls so that they continue with school and don't become pregnant, as early pregnancy is a major contributor to maternal mortality rate in Tanzania.
- It might be true that the views of the parents were taken but they were not clearly articulated in the presentations.
- As we are about to move this agenda both ministries need to share, communicate the data and all information related to this so as to move forward.
- Advocacy on this should not stop considering the evolving issues emerging such as the ESA commitments.
- Currently the students in school are learning about the sexual and reproductive health in a specific subject such as science, biology, civics, Personality Development and Sports and Social Studies.
- The government is in the process of implementing the policy but is waiting for its launching.
- We need to find out by another survey on how girls and boys get into this truancy?
- The age of those getting pregnant is that of those going to school at that age. The study did look specifically look at their sexual behaviour.
- The ministry of education has data and we have a responsible person who deals with this data.
- From this meeting, it seems everyone is committed with re-entry to school, which is a very good move. Let us continue to push this agenda forward to operationalise this NET policy

- Let us join hands with the ministry of health in achieving their goals in this.

Key recommendations

- Regardless of the figures these girls have the right to go back to school.
- We need to find a milestone on how all this can be achieved. As stakeholders we need to reflect on these numbers although they look small but advocate for the right to education.
- We should really emphasize the provision of CSE at different education levels.
- The stakeholders should also put more emphasis on curbing the rate of young girls becoming pregnant and not concentrate the focus on re-entry only.
- The implementation of the policy should also consider cultural context. From the psychological perspective, some of these issues are contributed with the cultural factors of our communities. We need to look into the ways which will allow these young girls to be supported and accepted back in school after giving birth.
- It seems like the statistical data presented by the two ministries are not in conformity. Both ministries need to sit and work together as well as agree on the data.
- It is also important that schools have teachers who are trained in CSE so that they can be able to confidently teach and counsel these students.
- The government should not handle this matter of re-entry politically.
- We need to go back to the root cause and see why these children get pregnancy in the first place

- We need to see how we as parents are nurturing our students.
- Awareness campaigns on re-entry at all levels are needed.
- There is need for education to young people on the use of contraceptives.
- These laws should go hand in hand with the child care policy where the fines of culprits (those impregnating these young girls) are very low, so need to revise.
- Constructive legal framework and infrastructures is needed that will support these girls to go back to school.
- The NET policy should be out as soon as possible, otherwise it will be outdated, so please let it be launched.

Closure:

Mr. Alex the moderator thanked all participants for their contributions and closed the discussion. He finally welcomed again participants to the next 7:30 Breakfast Debate which he said shall be communicated to them.



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