

CHOICES

This is the fifth of a series of comic books produced by UNICEF in Eastern and Southern Africa on the adventures of Sara, an adolescent girl. Sara is becoming a heroine and a dynamic role model for girls' as well as boys' empowerment and development in sub-Saharan Africa. The story addresses the issues of teenage pregnancy and peer pressure. The main theme deals with the story of Sara's friend, Tamala, who is made pregnant by Sara's cousin, Jackson. Jackson believes that the only way to prove one's manhood is to have sex with girls. The sub-plot deals with Sara's own emotions towards Musa, an older boy, who is in love with her. Musa, is provoked by his peers and tries to force Sara into having sex with him. Though she likes him a lot, Sara is shocked and rejects Musa's advances. The story reaches its climax when Jackson, afraid to face his father, tries to run away and almost gets drowned. Sara and Musa, together, help him out of the river, and Jackson decides to return to his village and face the consequences. Sara's uncle agrees to pay a fine for the maintenance of Tamala and the baby. With her teacher's help, Tamala prepares herself to go back to school after the baby's birth.

Choices is packed with suspense and elements of fun but at its heart lie the real life problems faced by young people in modern Africa. The story addresses the need for young people to resist peer pressure and practice responsible behaviour by acquiring life skills, e.g. decision making, problem solving, critical and creative thinking, self awareness, etc.

The comic book is a part of a package of communication materials, including a users' guide (see back), an animated film/video and a poster.

Choices is the product of a large team of African artists, writers, researchers and UNICEF personnel who have worked together since 1994, evolving characters, settings and stories of the Sara series through in-depth discussions with hundreds of villagers and peri-urban dwellers in 12 countries in Eastern and Southern Africa, as well as in some countries in West Africa. Through this extensive research process, the respondents became partners in the creation of the stories.

Choices has been produced by the Communication Section, UNICEF-ESARO, with financial support from the Government of Norway and UNICEF Committees in the Netherlands, United Kingdom, United States, Canada and Germany, and in collaboration with UNICEF country offices in Eastern and Southern Africa and more recently Western and Central Africa.

Four other packages are currently available on the themes of:

- girls staying in school;
- HIV/AIDS and avoiding sexual abuse;
- female genital mutilation;
- sugar daddies, or sexual exploitation of young girls by older men.

Other communication packages on different themes are under development.

For further information contact: Communication Section UNICEF-ESARO P.O. Box 44145 Nairobi, Kenya Tel: 254-2-622220/622140

Fax: 254-2-622008/521913 E-mail: esaro.sara@unicef.org NOTE: No portion of this comic book may be reproduced without the written permission of UNICEF-ESARO/1999.



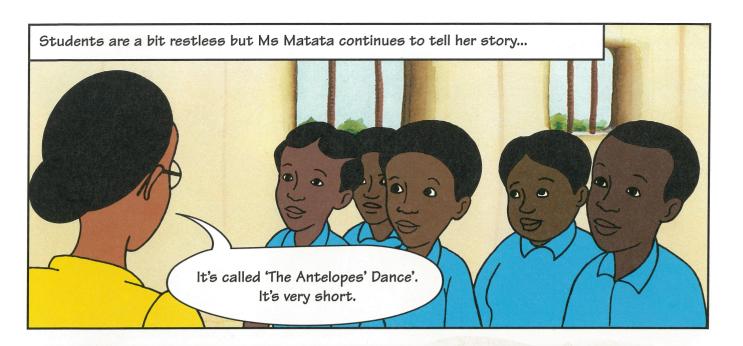




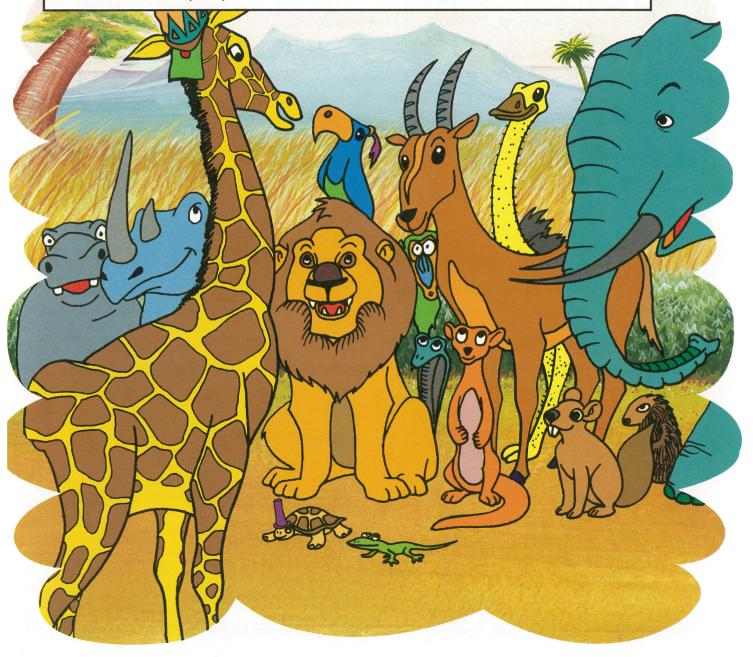




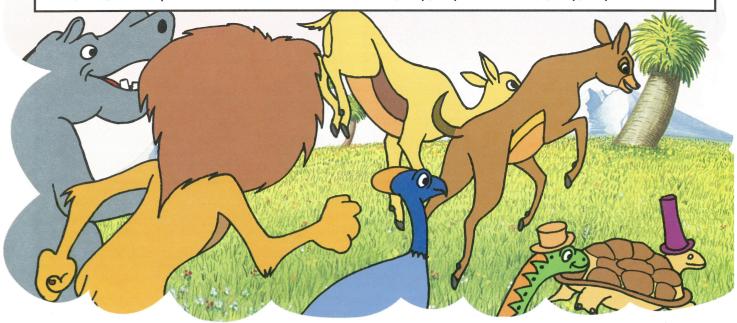




One day, Giraffe announced a big feast for all the animals. There would be dancing all night to the Jumpjump band of the gazelles. All the animals were very excited.



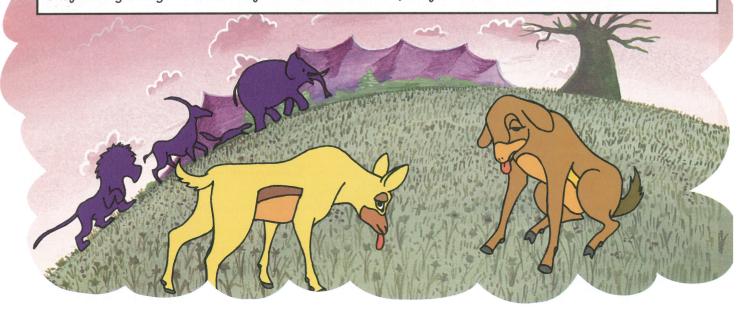
Two young antelopes were so excited that they were jumpjumping here and jumpjumping there.



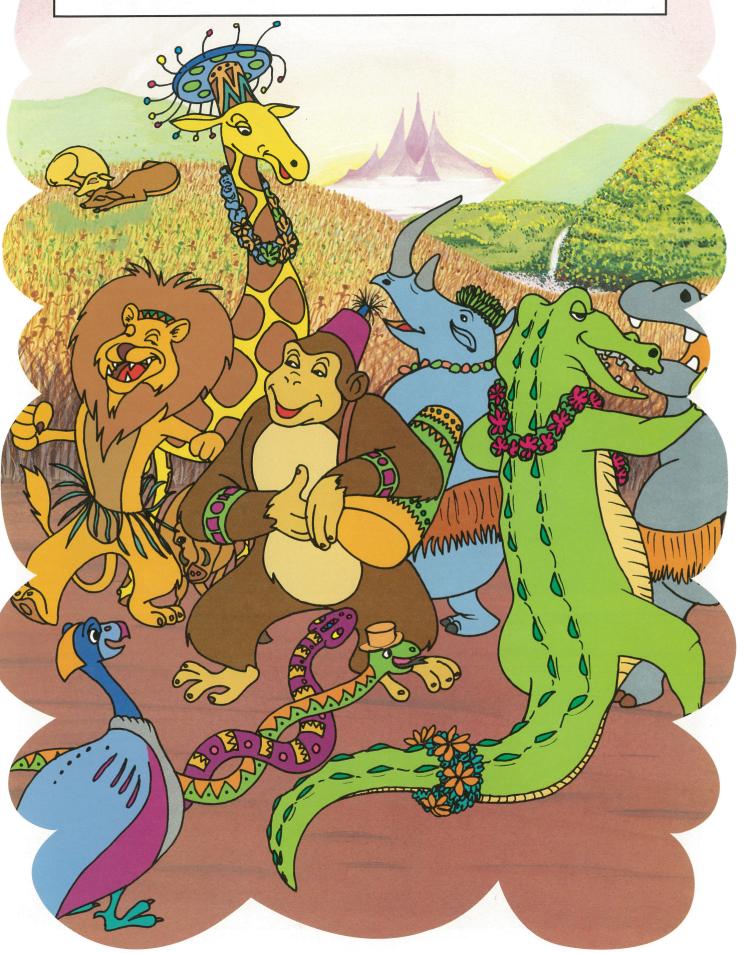
The other animals laughed and told the antelopes to calm down. The dance would last all night and there was no point in being exhausted even before they started. But the antelopes wouldn't listen.

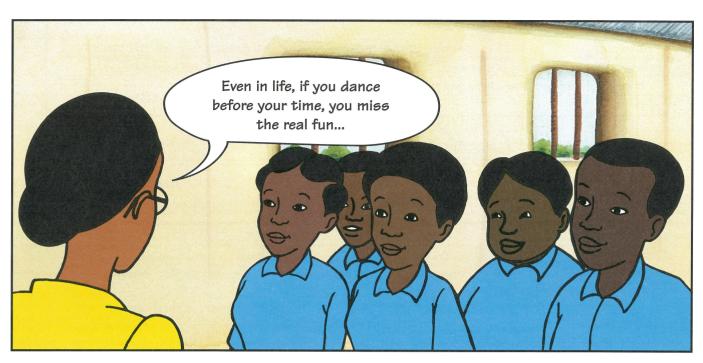


It was quite a long way to the feast. The young antelopes continued to dance but it was clear they were getting tired. As they climbed the final hill, they decided to sit down and have a rest.



It was a great feast. The animals jumpjumped all night. At dawn, they set off back home again. As they came over the hill, they found the antelopes fast asleep. They had missed the whole party.

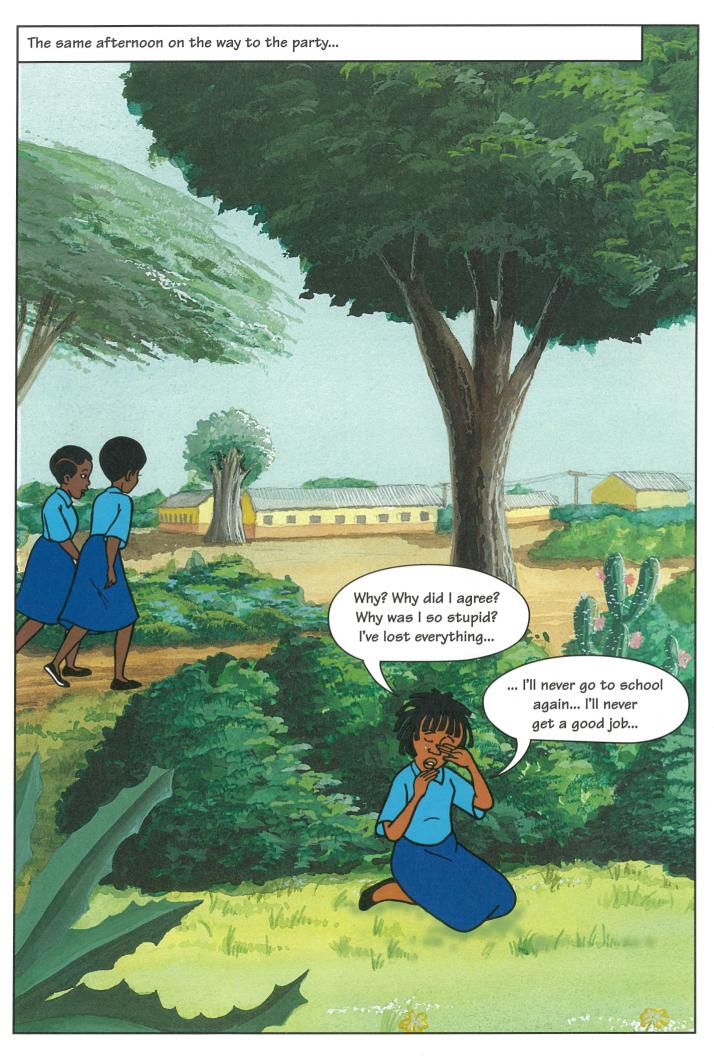


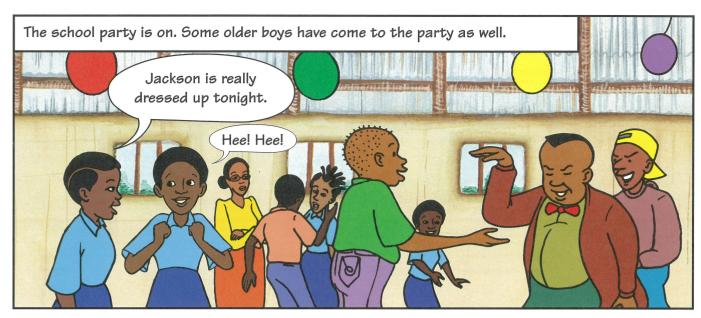






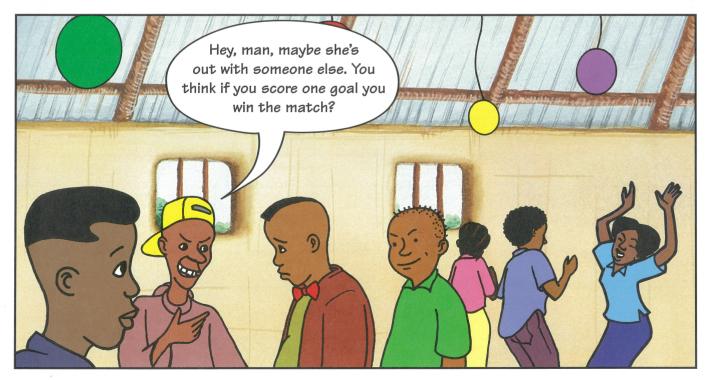


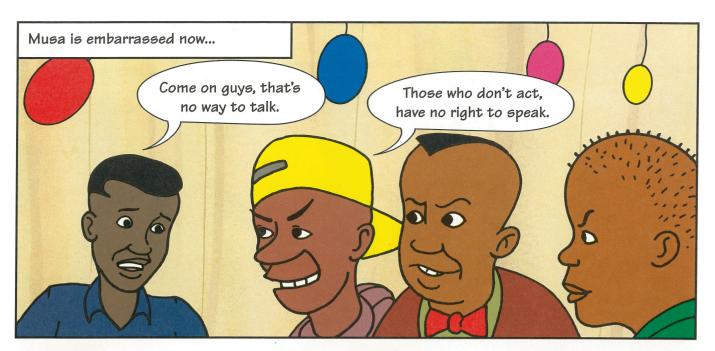


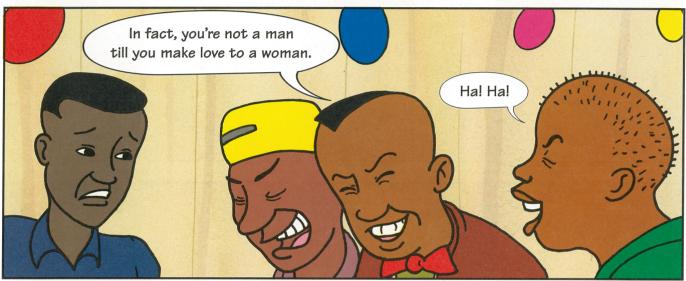


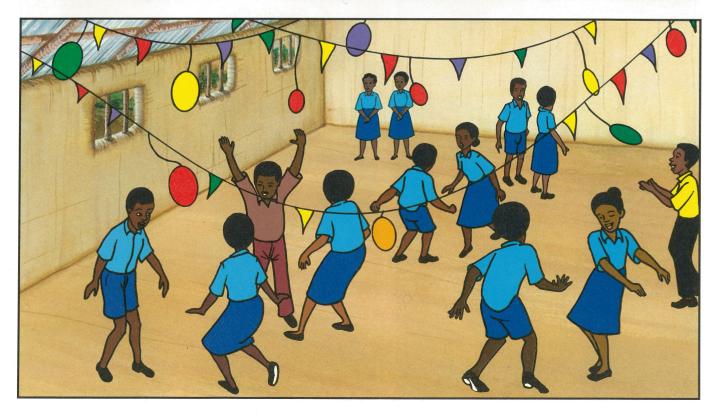








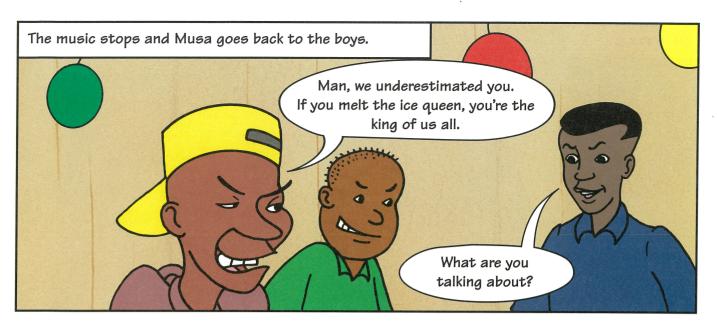
















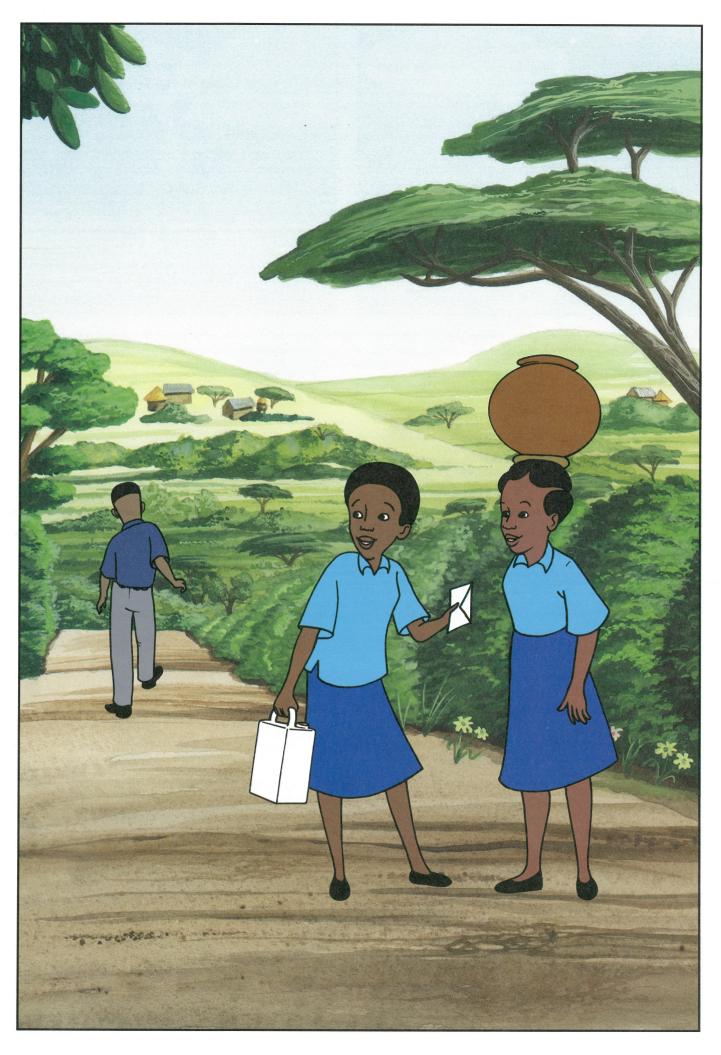






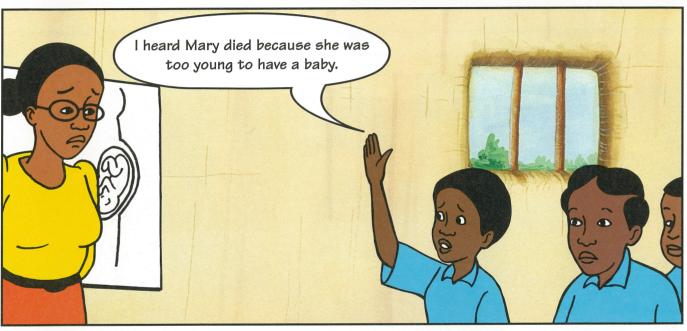
















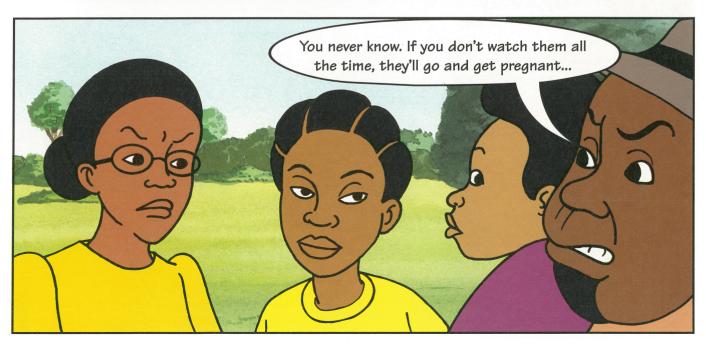




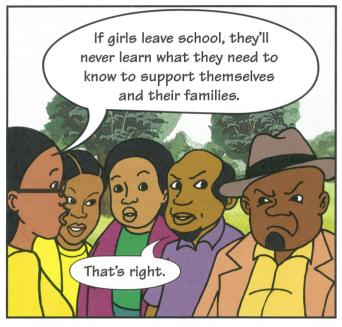




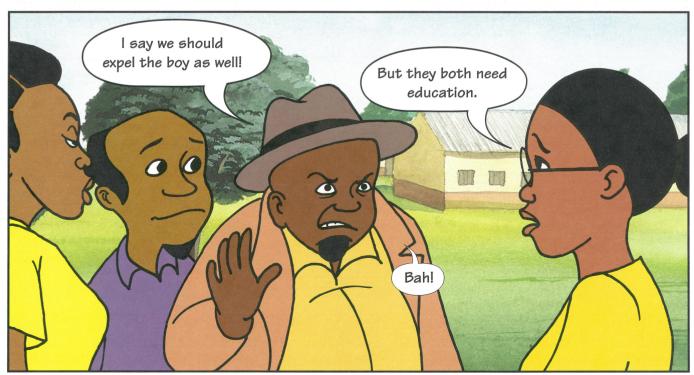


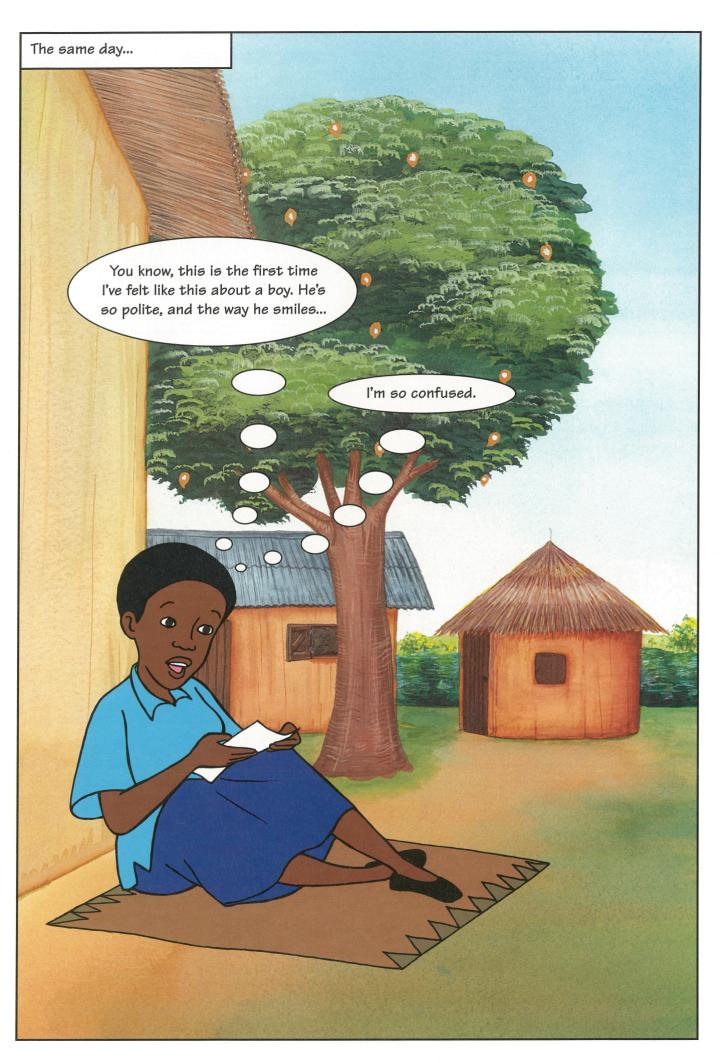








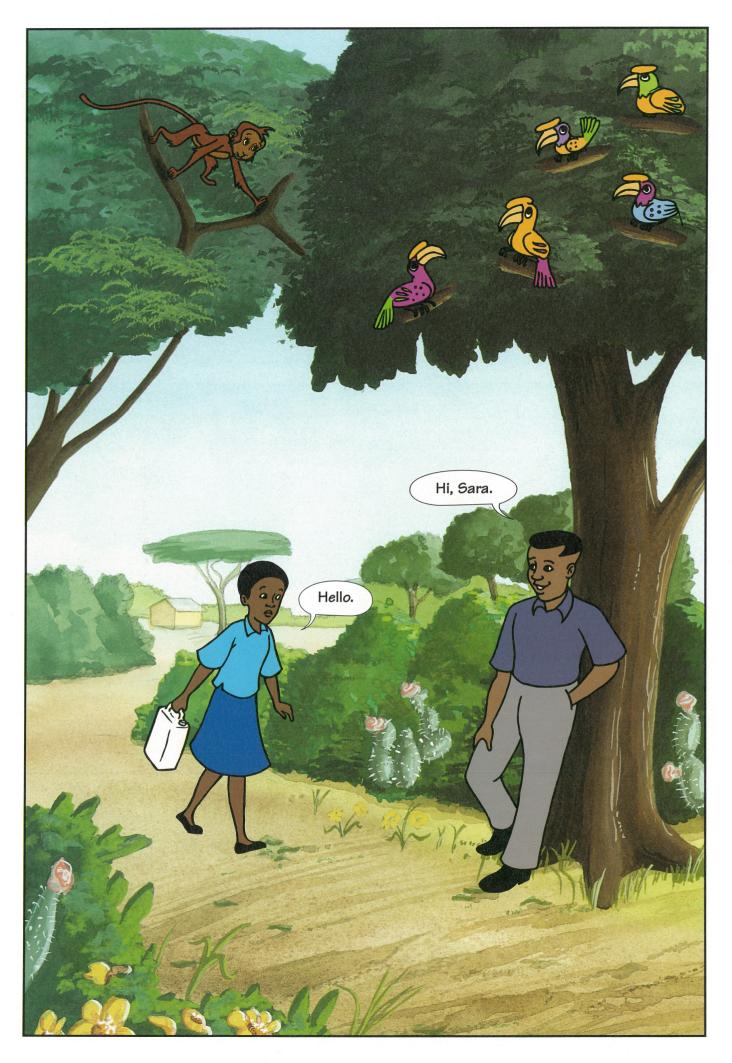




























































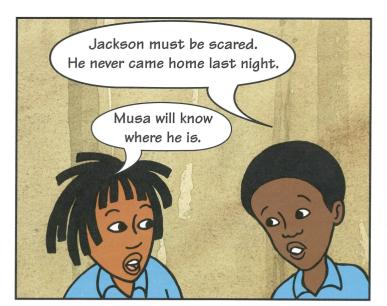










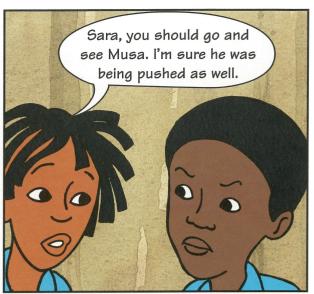




























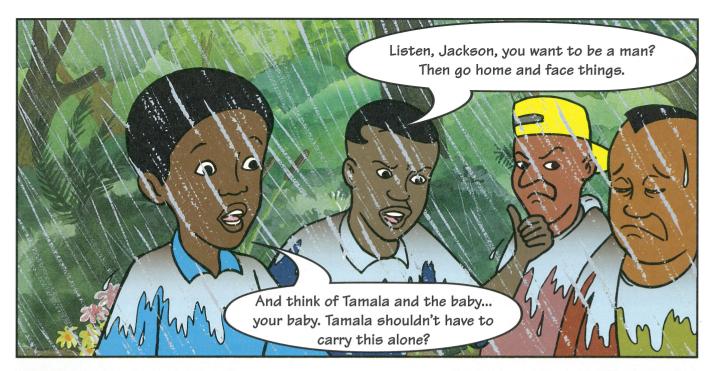




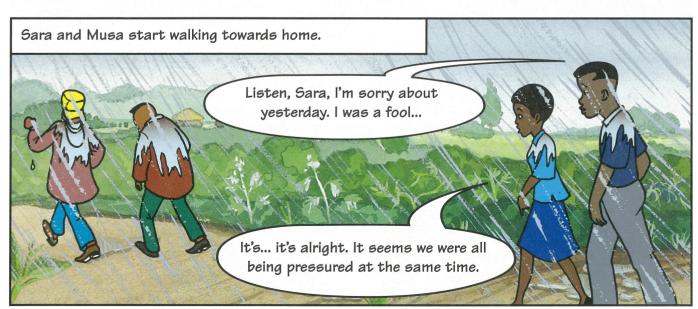




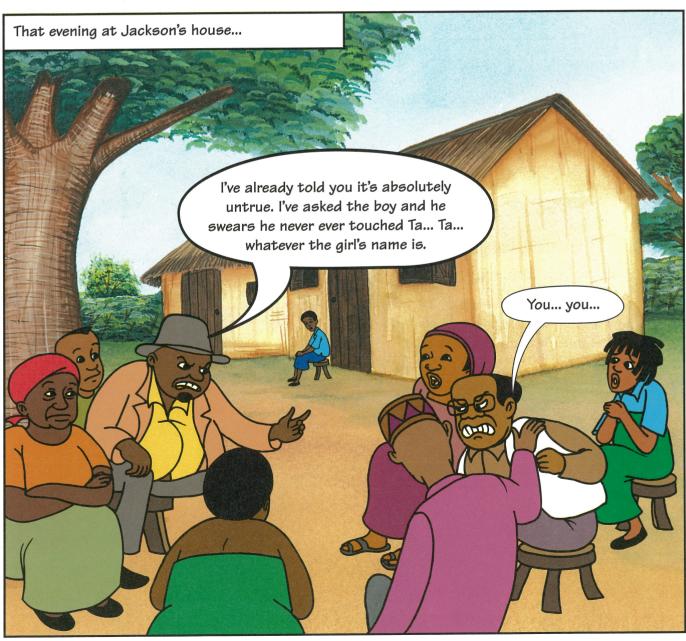


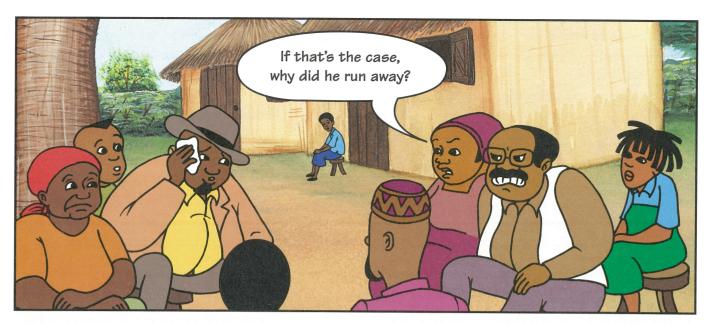




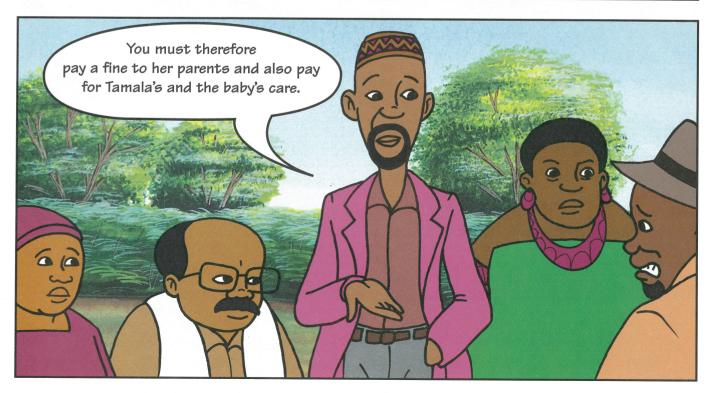


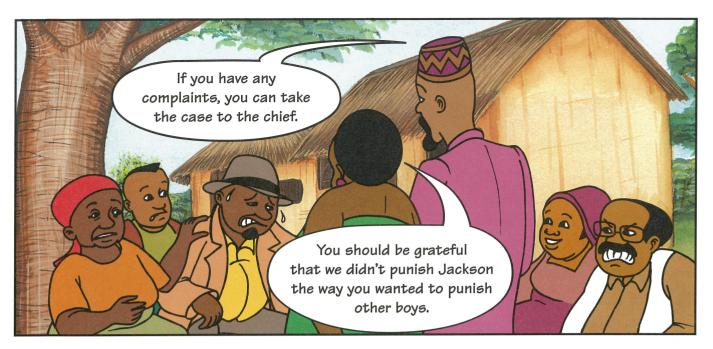




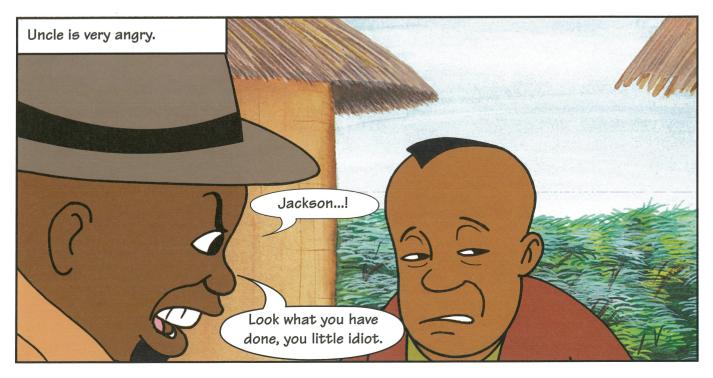




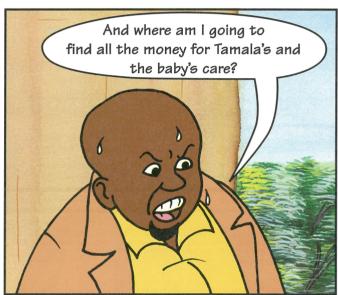


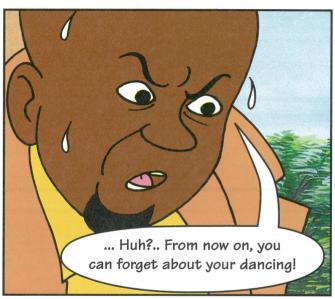


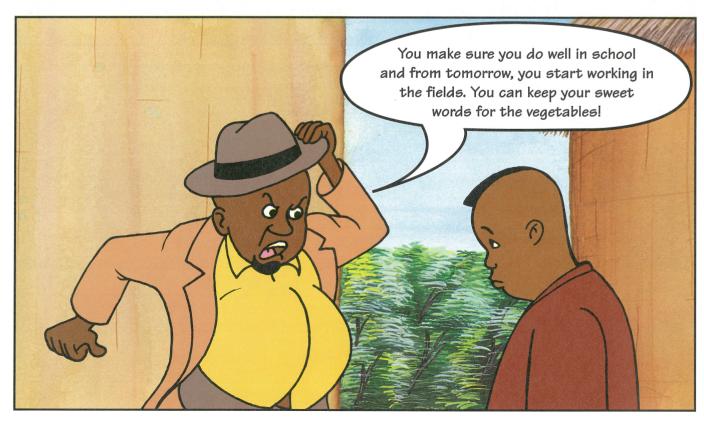


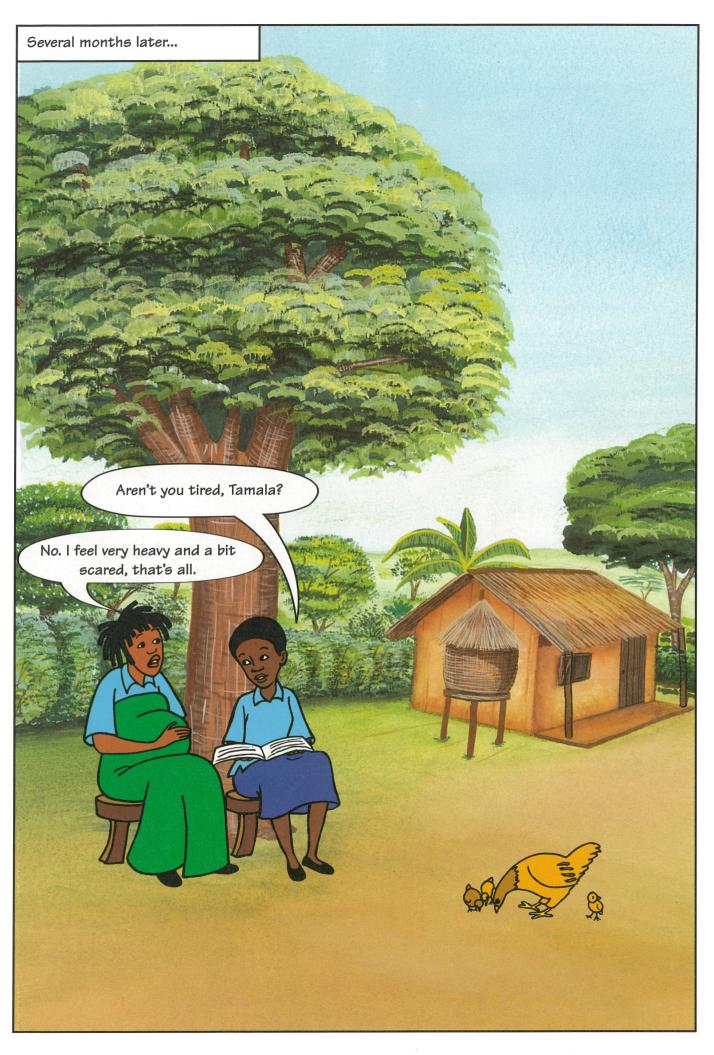






















USERS' GUIDE TO "CHOICES"

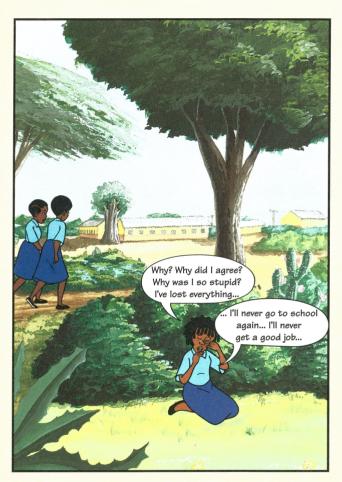
INTRODUCTION

Teenage pregnancy is an issue of great concern in this region. In sub-Saharan Africa, over 13% of girls 15-19 years of age become mothers, compared to about 5.5% in the rest of the developing world. Because of the great risks to teenage girls giving birth, this results in high death rates for both mothers and infants in this region.

Migration, displacement, changing value systems and worsening economic conditions are some factors that are directly or indirectly associated with the issue of teenage pregnancies. Inadequate life skills, peer pressure, misconceptions on reproductive issues, lack of proper parental guidance and sex education are all causes of the problem. Young people often do not think of their future and see themselves as invulnerable. They are not fully aware about the dangers of Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) including HIV/AIDS, that could result from engaging in unprotected sex and multiple sexual partnerships. According to research findings, 1 in 20 adolescents contacts a sexually transmitted disease worldwide, each year.

Girls are especially vulnerable because, proper parental and societal guidance and support are absent. As a result, they find themselves in sexual relationships with age mates as well as with older men which too often, result in unwanted pregnancies. Unmarried pregnant girls are sometimes thrown out from families or forced to drop out of schools. Research in some countries has shown that out-of-school girls are at much higher risk with regard to HIV/AIDS and other health risks. Some girls choose to go for abortions to untrained birth attendants under unhygienic conditions, risking death as well as possibilities of contacting HIV/AIDS. Many become social outcasts and live a life of misery, shame and uncertainty. The rights to a regular family life, to protection from sexual exploitation and to education are often denied to such girls.

Choices, produced by UNICEF-ESARO's Communication Section, is designed to promote children's rights. The CRC (Convention of the Rights of the Child) proclaims that all children have right to education, access to proper health care and to be protected from all kinds of sexual exploitation which may lead to STIs, HIV/AIDS and unwanted pregnancy. Choices aims at the realization of these rights through supporting existing programmes. It is a well-researched package that can be used as an educational tool or support material by organizations, programmers and service providers working in youth health and development programmes, in and out-of-school.

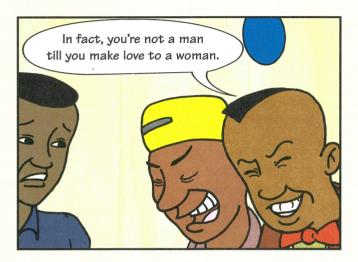


OBJECTIVES

The story has a personal appeal and contains substantial education-entertainment value to be used with different groups of people. Research has shown that it can be effectively used to:

- Initiate in-depth discussions among young people on: developing positive girl-boy relationships, the importance of life skills to be able to make right decisions on one's future, on sexual and reproductive health and other issues.
- Stimulate discussions among young people on teenage pregnancy and the importance of adopting responsible behaviour, both boys and girls.

- Initiate in-depth discussions in the community, especially among parents and teachers on the need for family life education for young people, both at home and in school, and on the role of parents and teachers to guide adolescents to adopt healthy and responsible life styles.
- Create awareness among adults on the need to support girls in case of unwanted pregnancies, including girls' right to continue education.
- Encourage young people to participate in problem solving and community development.



THE STORY IS AVAILABLE IN

- VHS video (all signal systems)
- U-Matic or Betacam (broadcast quality)
- 16 mm film version (on special order)
- · Comic book format

PREPARATIONS

It is best for facilitators using this story in video or film format, to consider the following:

- Why do you want to show the video?
- Who is your audience (gender, age, profession, etc.)?
- How should this issue be discussed: in mixed or separate groups of girls, boys, men and women?
- Where do you want to show the video (school, seminar, community, youth group HIV/AIDS clubs, etc.)?
- What facilities are available for showing the video (power supply, seating space, chairs, etc.)?

Note:

Make sure that you have the right video cassette for your playback system. Facilitators using generator power should ensure that the generator is placed at a reasonable distance from the group to minimize noise level. Ensure that there is enough cable wire for this.

BEFORE YOU START

Explain to the group that the story is about teenage pregnancy, the importance of resisting peer-pressure and adopting responsible behaviour. Inform them that there will be a discussion on the film afterwards. This will help them to remain focused on the story.

Ask a few general questions to start the group thinking about the issue: e.g. is teenage pregnancy a problem? Why? Who is responsible?

DISCUSSION

After showing the video or reading out the story, you may initiate discussion by asking general questions. These questions should be used only as guidelines for facilitating the group discussions. They are not meant and should not be used as a rigid questionnaire. Adjust the order of your questions based on the responses, to allow the discussions to flow as naturally and spontaneously as possible. Try to ensure maximum participation from everybody in the group.

BEGIN WITH QUESTIONS ON THE STORY

- Did you like the story?
- Can someone tell us what the story is about?
- Who are the characters in the story?
- Who do you think is the main character of the story? Why?
- Which characters did you like best in the story? Why?
- Which ones didn't you like? Why?

You may ask specific questions on the comprehension of the story:

- Why were the students decorating the class room?
- Can any of you, in your own words, tell us the story told by Ms Matata, *The Antelope's Dance*?
- Why do you think she told the story? What can young people learn from the story?
- What did the boys say to Musa regarding forming relationships with girls?
- What was Musa's reaction?
- What did Musa tell Sara while they were dancing?
- What was Sara's reply?
- What was the boys' reaction when they saw Musa and Sara dancing together?
- What happened between Sara and Musa when the birds scared her? What was Sara's reaction?
- Why was Tamala crying under the tree?

- What was Jackson's reaction when he heard about Tamala's pregnancy?
- What was Sara's reaction to Tamala's situation?
- How did Tamala's parents react to her pregnancy?
- How did Ms Matata help Tamala?
- Why did Jackson run away? What happened at the bridge/river?
- What did Musa say to Sara on their way back to the village after rescuing Jackson from the river? What was Sara's reaction?
- How did the village elders resolve Tamala's and Jackson's problem? What was Uncle's reaction?
- Do you think that Tamala re-established her relationship with Jackson?
- What will Tamala do after her baby is born?
- What happens at the end?



ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR SPECIFIC GROUPS:

GIRLS

- Do you know boys like Musa and Jackson? Please elaborate.
- What do you understand by the word "boyfriend"?
- Do you think it's common for girls to have boyfriends? (Probe: do girls look down on someone who doesn't have a boyfriend?)
- Is it common for boys to have girlfriends? Kindly elaborate.
- What do you think of Sara-Musa relationship? Is this common?
- Do you think Musa was Sara's boyfriend? Why/Why
- Do you think Sara's reaction to Musa's advances was okay (in the scene where birds scared her)? Why/why not?
- Are there girls who would behave the same way as Sara? Why/Why not?
- Do you think it's possible to have friendship with boys without having sex with them? Why/Why not?
- Why do you think teenage girls engage in sexual relationships with their age mates/older men?
- Do you think friends create pressures on one another to form sexual relationships? Is it true for both boys and girls?
- What can be the consequences of such sexual relationships?
- What do you know about HIV/AIDS and STIs?
- Can such sexual relationships spread HIV/AIDS and other STIs? How does your community treat girls who get infected with HIV/AIDS and other STIs?
- What do you think can be done to encourage girls to say "no" to sexual advances? Who can guide them?
- What can girls do to help themselves?
- How can girls and boys avoid unwanted pregnancy?
- What do you think of Tamala? Do you know girls like her?
- Can a girl get pregnant the first time she has sex?
- What happens when girls get pregnant? What options do such girls have?
- Do the families or the community support such girls? If yes, in what ways?
- What happens to a boy who makes a girl pregnant?

- Does the community take responsibility to put pressure on the boy's family as you see in this story?
- What could be parents' role in guiding girls in avoiding pregnancy? What could be their role when the girls become pregnant? What could be the teachers' role?



BOYS

- Do you like Sara? Why/Why not?
- Are there girls like Sara in your community? What do you think of such girls? Why?
- What do you think of Tamala? Do you know girls like her?
- Can one be friends with girls without having sex with them? Why/Why not?
- What could be the consequences of having sexual relationships?
- What do you know about HIV/AIDs and other STIs?
- Do you think such sexual relationships can spread HIV/AIDS and other STIs? How does your community treat girls who get infected with HIV/AIDS and other STIs?
- Is there any peer pressure among boys and girls to engage in sexual relationships? Can you explain?
- How can one avoid such peer pressures?
- What do you understand by the word "boyfriend" and "girlfriend"?
- Is it common for girls to have boyfriends? And boys to have girlfriends?
- What do you think of Musa? Are there boys like him?
- What do you think of Jackson? Are there boys like him?

- How can a girl avoid getting pregnant?
- Can a girl get pregnant the first time she has sex?
- What should a boy do when his girlfriend becomes pregnant?
- What should a girl do when she gets pregnant?
- Who should be held responsible when a girl gets pregnant? Give reasons.
- Do you think any action should be taken against the girl or the boy or both? Why/Why not?
- Do you think that the community can take action as in this story? Have you heard something like this happening before?
- Do you like the ending of the story? Give reasons.
- What other ending can you suggest?
- Did you learn anything from this story? Please elaborate.



PARENTS AND COMMUNITY

- Is teenage pregnancy a common problem in your community?
- Why do you think this happens?
- What happens when a girl becomes pregnant? What is her reaction? How do her parents react? How does the community react?

- Is the pregnant girl chased out of her home? Does it happen in your community? If so, what happens to the girl?
- How can families, schools and communities support pregnant girls?
- Does pregnancy affect the girl's future studies? Is there any resistance from the school/teachers/peers? Please elaborate.
- What should be the parents' role in guiding girls in avoiding pregnancy? What could be the teachers' role?
- What should be the parents' role in guiding boys on adopting responsible behaviour and avoiding premature or early sexual relationships?
- Do you think that girls and boys are aware of the consequences of such sexual relationships? Who could inform them? From where do young people get information? Where can they go?
- In cases of pregnancy, how does your community react to the involved girl and the boy? Are there different sets of rules for girls and boys?
- Who supports the girl through her pregnancy? Does the boy or his family take any part in supporting the girl during her pregnancy and after the birth of the baby?
- Is the ending of the story realistic? Does your community put pressure on the boy's family as we see in the case of Jackson? Why/Why not?
- Do you think girls should be allowed to continue with studies when pregnant and after the birth of the baby? Does it happen in your community? How can it be made possible?

FOLLOW UP ACTIVITIES

The following are suggestions for activities which will improve understanding of this story and how it relates to existing situations of young people in their own communities. The activities focus on developing young people's life skills, like critical thinking, decision making, assertiveness, coping with stress, peer pressure, negotiation skills, etc., and the role of the community to support such development.

Encourage the group members to participate fully in planning and carrying out these activities.

A. Group Discussions

Let the group discuss the story among themselves. One member can facilitate the discussion, allowing others to join in with their opinions. This can be done in groups of six to ten.

B. Drawings

The group members could draw pictures of their favourite section of the story and use it as a discussion point. They could elaborate on why they enjoyed that part, what lessons could be learnt from it, etc.

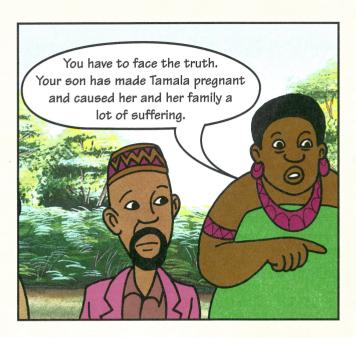
C. Survey

Ask the group to conduct an informal survey in their community to find out the numbers of teenage pregnancies prior to getting married. How are the families and the community reacting to it? Are pregnant girls forced to drop out of school or do they voluntarily leave school? Find out: are people aware of STIs and HIV/AIDS? What roles are boys playing when their girlfriends get pregnant? Does the community pressurize the boys to pay for the maintenance of the baby and the mother?



D. Drama

Create a drama or role play on some of the themes of how peer-pressure is responsible for forming sexual relationships, the role of boys when their girlfriends get pregnant, the roles of families and schools regarding pregnant girls, the psychological and social pressures that the pregnant girl goes through, etc. Show the role of parents in guiding girls to avoid sex before they are mature and responsible. Show how girls can build their self-esteem and reject sexual advances. Focus on how young people can resist peer-pressure and engage in healthy and responsible life styles. It can be interesting if boys and girls exchange roles in the drama.



Ask questions

How did you feel when you acted as a girl/boy/adult? How did you feel about the situation in which you found yourself in the play? Did it feel real? Ask other members to react to the play.

E. Brainstorming

Brainstorm on a list of actions:

- for parents and teachers to guide young people in making right choices for healthy life styles.
- for young people to encourage each other to adopt responsible behaviour, to accept the concept of positive, responsible girl-boy relationship building with no sex or safe sex.
- for adults and young people to share correct information and create awareness on HIV/AIDS and other STIs and prevent the spread of these infections.
- for adults, young people and the community to prevent unwanted teenage pregnancies and associated problems, and to create awareness on the need to support pregnant girls' and young mothers' education.

F. Community involvement

The group could share the ideas of Sara's story with their community through some of the following activities. The group can perform these in public, with friends, women's groups, churches and other religious and community venues:

- A drama or skit with alternative endings and discussions.
- Story telling with alternative endings and discussions.
- Debates on the issues in the stories.
- Puppet shows with Sara characters.
- Songs, dances, poems and games on the themes of the story.

Some of the activities can be undertaken on open stage so that more people can watch and participate in discussions. You can think of other activities to popularize the themes of the story and to create awareness among people.

In parents-teachers' meeting (PTA), mothers' group meetings or community meetings you could discuss the issue of how to provide guidance to young people to resist peer-pressure and avoid sexual relationships at an early age. Let the group decide on how to motivate young people on these issues so that they can adopt responsible and healthy life styles. Discuss how/advise the parents to bring this matter up with their daughters and sons.

You may want to form a club, committee or forum for girls and boys where they can discuss the importance of building positive girl-boy relationship without any sexual implications. Such fora can serve as a sort of resource center and a support system where young people can share experiences and correct information. In groups, the girls and boys should be able to discuss how they can acquire self-esteem and confidence to deal effectively with peer pressure and be able to say "no" to unwanted sexual relationships. School teachers and NGO workers who are involved in human rights and women's issues can be active members of such committees/fora. They can discuss with the community how to build a supportive environment for young people's development, specially for pregnant girls so that they get family support during pregnancy and can go back to school after the birth of their babies.

G. Discussing results

After a few weeks, the group can meet to discuss:

- What actions were taken at home and in the community?
- What were peoples' reactions?
- What activities were successful? What problems arose?
- What else can be done to disseminate correct information to young people on reproductive health and to support them in making correct decisions?

SCRIPT

Richard Mabala

in collaboration with the Sara creative team

ARTISTIC DEVELOPMENT

Creative Effects, Kenya

Joseph Kariuki Fred Omusula Ham Kakembo Tony Okuku

Francisca Odundo George Mogaka Patrick Gichuhi

Principal character artists

Joel Chikware Vic Kasinja Joseph Kariuki

Creative consultation and facilitation

Rachel Carnegie, UK

Electronic production and printing supervision

Radhika Madan

Sara Logo

Elizabeth MCKee

RESEARCH DIRECTOR

Dr. Mira Aghi, India

PRINCIPAL RESEARCHERS

Ethiopia:

Getachu Makuria Debebe Tegegne Ethio-Education Consultancy (ETEC) Kenya:

Judith Attyang

Justus Olielo

Uganda:

Violet Mugisa

Gertrude Ziwa

Tanzania:

Nazarina Boma Richard Mabala

Esther Kiondo

Malawi:

Pierson Ntata

Mabel Mangulama

Maureen Nsewa

Zimbabwe:

Tisa Chifunyise

Elizabeth Gwanza,

Media Arts Consultants

Namibia:

Pamela February Eveline January

Betsy Farmer

Mozambique: Bertina Oliveira

Jacinta Mussera Zuraida Khan

Zambia:

Tisa Chifunyise

Victor Chinyama

TECHNICAL CONSULTATION

Anna Obura, UNICEF-ESARO

Kimberly Gamble-Payne, UNICEF-ESARO

Kasa Pangu, UNICEF-ESARO

PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Neill McKee

Nuzhat Shahzadi

Justus Olielo

