



Khanyisa Ngemfundo
BE THE LIGHT THROUGH EDUCATION

The role of civil society organisations in the prevention and management of learner pregnancy in schools

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Background

- Approximately 16 million young women aged 15–19 years give birth around the world. Over 50% of these births are unplanned and take place in sub-Saharan Africa.
- Early and unplanned pregnancy expose young women to higher risk of contracting HIV and other negative health and social consequences that could result in school dropout and difficulties during pregnancy.
- Civil society organisations (CSOs) – in partnership with schools – are well placed to respond to the support needs of pregnant adolescents and adolescent mothers and have an important role to play in supporting positive health and educational outcomes for this group.

Methods

- Khanyisa Ngemfundo (Be the Light Through Education) is an ongoing multi-stage, mixed methods study based in the Eastern Cape province of South Africa
- One of the aims of the study is to understand support structures and wider community-based infrastructures that exist in supporting pregnant adolescents and adolescent mothers,
- To this end, we engaged with stakeholders from four youth empowerment CSOs to gauge a) how they support school return of pregnant adolescents and adolescent mothers, b) what sexual reproductive health services they provide, and c) the partnerships they forge in delivering services.
- We developed a semi-structured interview guide to facilitate an in-depth engagement with the CSOs.
- Data were analysed using an adaptation of Carrard et al.'s (2009) analytic framework for exploring facilitation of service delivery, community education, awareness-raising, and building and promoting partnerships and networking.

Conclusions

- **CSOs can play an influential role implementing by working with SBSTs and households on inclusive education to manage pregnant and learner mother dropout. These can be remote and catch-up learning methods that can prevent the pregnant learner or learner mother from falling behind on schoolwork.**
- **The Department of Education could work with CSOs to avail tools that support pregnant learners in schools, such as school uniform, study desks and support groups for pregnant learners etc.**
- **CSOs can establish partnerships and referral mechanisms so that the SBST can refer onwards if the learner needs for childcare support with mentor moms and local professional childcare.**

Findings

CSOs provide support to pregnant and learner mothers to stay and return to school by achieving the following:



Facilitation of service delivery

- CSOs play intermediary/broker role between the communities and the services providers. They mainly focus their interventions in schools because that is where learners spend most of their time, are easy to reach. These are school in townships and rural areas.
- CSOs deploy mentors in the form of peer educators at schools to:
 - Provide sexual reproductive health (SRH) education to learners in primary and high school level;
 - Use referral systems to health care provision for the learners; and
 - Assist families of pregnant and mother learners to get documents to access support grant.



Community education, awareness raising

- CSOs help manage school drop out by assisting the school to keep pregnant learners at school and return to school after birth. This done by ensuring that the learner mom gets psychosocial support and healthcare services when they need to. The mentors also ensure that the learner mom catches up with school when she cannot attend.
- Mentors raise awareness on the pregnant learners rights to be at school. They educate learners on the importance of SRH and on gender-based violence.
- Community members are trained as mentor moms and to provide childcare services.
- CSOs avail psychosocial services to learners and families of the learners involved in GBV and had trouble during pregnancy.



Building partnerships and promoting networking

- CSOs partner with the government department of education to identify and access schools.
- CSOs partner with the school-based support team (SBST) to provide SRH education and services in schools.
- They work with the community in which schools are located to recruit mentors and peer educators.
- Mentors deployed in schools by CSOs create good working relationships with local healthcare facilities to refer and accompany learners to get SRH services.



Capacity building

- Mentors at school are trained by CSO social workers on basic psychosocial support skills and SRH education.
- CSO social workers train the school's life orientation teacher and learner support agent on SRH education.



Engaging in policy dialogue

- CSOs provide awareness campaigns for learners on SRH for both male and female learners.
- CSOs also focus on raising awareness in school and households on pregnant and learner mother's right to schooling.
- CSOs also conducted gender-based violence campaigns to learners and in the community.

Reference:

N. Carrard, D. Pedit, J. Willetts, B. Powell; Non-government organisation engagement in the sanitation sector: opportunities to maximise benefits. *Water Sci Technol* 1 December 2009; 60 (12): 3109–3119.
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