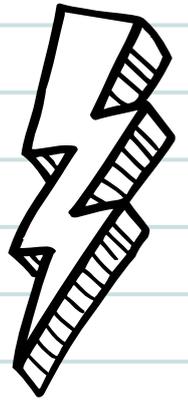


The Views of Girls on  
*Stopping Teenage  
Pregnancy in our  
Community*



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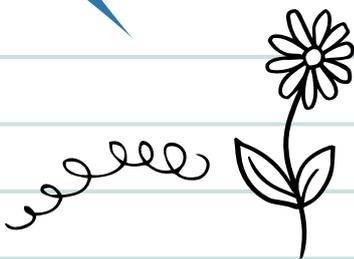
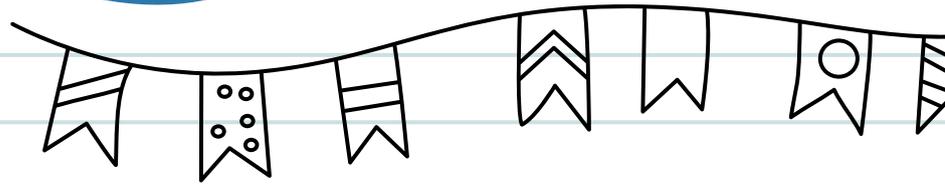
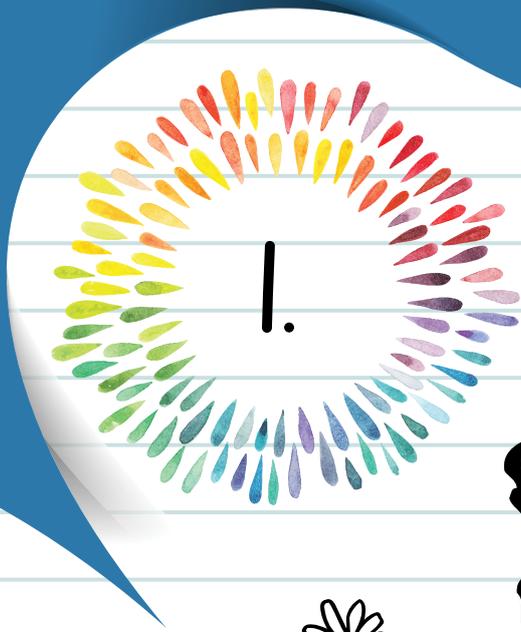


# Acknowledgements:

Our work would have not be completed without the contribution of our adult facilitators: Aunty Carla Lewis, Uncle Rashid Kanneh, Aunty Sallay Koker, Mr Mohamed U Jalloh, Uncle Patricio Cuevas-Parra. We appreciate the girls who provided the information for us during our data collection. Thanks to World Vision UK for providing us with this opportunity. Many greetings from us, the child researchers.

The team of child researchers were supported by World Vision UK, World Vision International and World Vision Sierra Leone.





economic activities of people in this community are farming, petty trading, stone and diamond mining. Commercial motorcycle riding is common among the youth of our town.

Most of the women in our community are petty traders. Many of our colleagues are always involved in child labour especially on lumah day (weekly market day). There is free range of goat/sheep rearing in the town. The free range of goat/sheep destroys our parent's crops. We, the child researchers, are all school-going children.



## Introduction

We live and conducted our research in a town of Jaiama Chiefdom within Bo District, Southern province of Sierra Leone. The town is divided into four sections. There are four primary and three secondary schools in our town. None of the schools have running water or a water well. Most of our schools do not have major textbooks. We are also happy to tell our report readers that there is no science faculty in all of the secondary schools in our town. As a result of poor medical facilities and other related issues, there is a high death rate among children in the town. Some of the

Fourteen of us conducted the research that is, seven girls and seven boys. Eleven of us have just sat to Basic Education Certificate Examination in 2018 and three of us are now in Junior Secondary School three. Because of lack of parental care, poverty and limited medical facilities teenage pregnancy has been a common problem in our town.

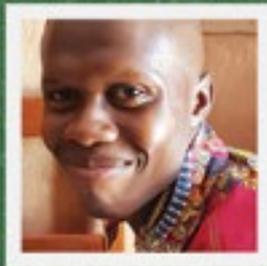


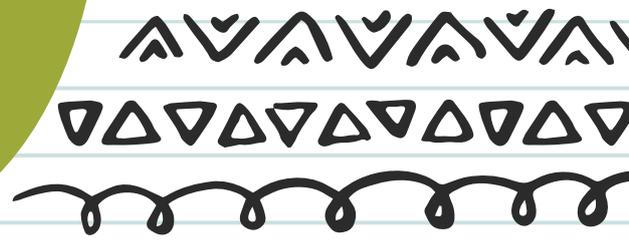
# We are the child researchers



We are fourteen child researchers, seven girls and seven boys, from 12 to 17 years old.

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2.

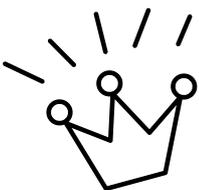
## Our Methodology



We were voluntarily selected by World Vision community volunteers to be part of this research work. The first day we met, we were all not familiar to each other. On the first day, our adult facilitators (World Vision Sierra Leone and UK staff) taught us about child-led research. The second day we selected the research topic (teenage pregnancy) and designed the research questions. We pre-tested the questions on the third day.



To collect the data, we were divided into seven pairs. Thereafter we agreed to collect the research data in three days. We used pen and paper to record the information from the eighteen pregnant children and one child who had recently given birth, that we interviewed.

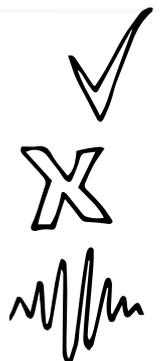


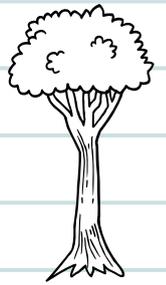
During the data collection, before we interviewed any teenager we read the consent form to them for their understanding, and then asked them to sign the consent form to confirm if they are willing to give us information for our research. If they were not willing to give us information they were allowed to leave, and we went to another pregnant teenage girl. This continued until we interviewed all of the nineteen teenagers.

2.

# Data analysis

To analyse our research data we drew a circle and divided it into the three major themes (health, poverty and lack of parental care) that we heard about most when we conducted the interviews. These categories were further divided into subtopics. Each group was asked to stand in front of all to read their notes from the interviews. As each group read aloud, we wrote all ideas on a sticky note related to each major topic. All yellow sticky notes were ideas related to lack of parental care and blue sticky notes related to poverty while pink notes related to health.



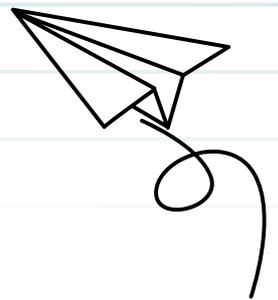


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## Our Findings



Below are the key findings of our research that was conducted in Jaiama Chiefdom, southern Sierra Leone. Our findings are divided into the three main themes – i.e. lack of parental care, health and poverty.



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## Lack of parental care

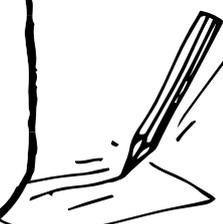
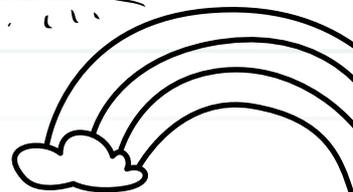
From our discussions with the eighteen pregnant girls and one girl who had recently given birth in our town, many of them said their caregivers such as aunts, uncles and other relatives they stayed with could not provide for their basic needs, including adequate food to eat, paying school fees, giving them lunch or transport when going to school, learning materials, decent clothes and a place to sleep.

Therefore, they decided to fall in love with men who can afford some of those basic needs, which their caregivers cannot afford. According to six of the children interviewed, monies sent to their caregivers by other family members for their maintenance were not spent on them. Most of the children who narrated these stories have either lost one or both parents and were staying with step-parents or other relatives.



★ According to one of the teenage girls, her aunt used starvation as a weapon of punishment whenever she did something that made her aunt angry:

With no other relative around to feed me, I was forced to find a boyfriend to provide food for me so that I do not starve to death. The way my aunt treated me could be attributed to my present status (i.e. pregnancy)

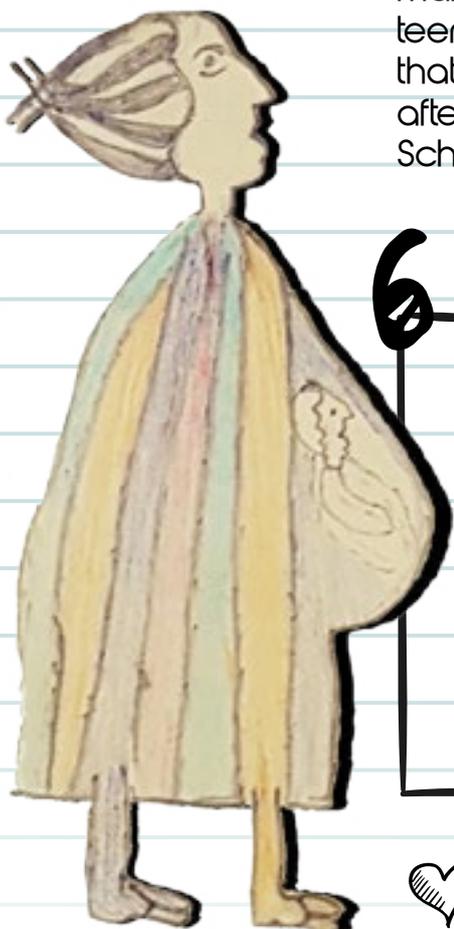


3.



## Lack of parental care

Mariama, one of the pregnant teenage girl we interviewed said that her parents abandoned her after repeating Junior Secondary School - two (JSS-2) twice:

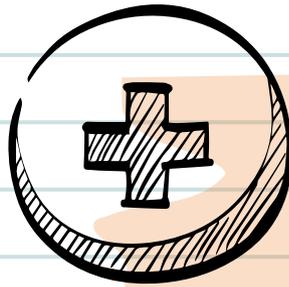


My parents said that they do not have money for my education and therefore I struggle for myself to find money and take care of my schooling. The only option I had was to find a boyfriend who could support me to continue my education. As the boyfriend support my schooling, he always asked me to sleep with him. Sleeping with my boyfriend caused my early pregnancy.

Some of the teenage girls we interviewed told us that their parents/caregivers could not afford to provide the basic needs for them at home.

Lack of control and supervision by those parents was another issue responsible for teenage pregnancy. According to the teenage girls we interviewed, nine of them said their parents/caretakers never monitored their movements or the friends they have: "As young and inexperienced girls with no proper guidance from the parents/relatives, we just followed our colleagues wherever they asked us to go and do whatever they asked us to do", said one of the girls we interviewed. They thought they were enjoying their lives not knowing that they were destroying their future. Today most of the girls have regretted their actions because their boyfriends abandoned them after impregnating them.

3.



# HEALTH

★ Data collected for this research tells us that teenage pregnancy in our town is also as a result of poor medical facilities. This is because most of the community health centres have limited or no medicine and untrained health personnel to manage some centres. Contraceptive services for pregnancy prevention are not always available at the community health center.

When contraceptive services are available, they are most of the time done poorly, which would result in negative side effects.

One teenage girls said:

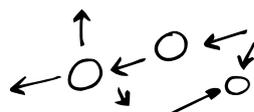
““

when I go to the health centre the doctor/ nurse will tell me that there is not enough medicine in the hospital. In addition, when I tell my parents to give me money to go and take the family planning both of them will refuse

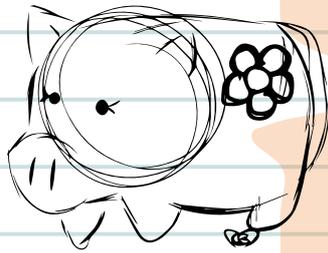
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Again, most of the teenagers we interviewed said they are not willing to take contraceptives, mainly because they fear the bad side effects of the treatment. As we talked to the nineteen children, five out of nineteen children interviewed said that they were not aware of contraceptive services before their pregnancies and 14 out of 19 children were aware of various methods of contraceptives. These children said they could not access contraceptive services because of limited availability of the services at the community health centre. ●●●●●●●●●●



3.



# POVERTY



As we talked to the nineteen children, poverty stands out as the major factor for teenage pregnancy in our town. Most of the children interviewed said that their parents could not afford to provide basic household necessities for them. For instance, some families cannot afford to provide adequate food for their children per day. Because of hunger, children are forced to engage in risky behaviors (i.e. sleeping with their boyfriend and doing work for money) just to survive. Five of those children interviewed said some households would not cook for two or three days because of lack of money/food. Hence some of the factors that lead girl children in this community to early pregnancy.

In addition, 12 of the teenagers interviewed said the majority of parents in our town could not afford breakfast, transport, lunch at school, schoolbooks, uniform and school shoes for children at school. In addition, parents do not have money to pay medical bills and buy new clothes for their children. In a bid to satisfy some of these basic needs, teenage girls encourage boyfriends who can fully or partially satisfy their demands. In the process of satisfying the boyfriend, they got pregnant. One teenage girl noted:



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Every morning I go to school without money to buy food at school and I always saw my colleagues buying food and eating during lunch. Therefore, I heard no option but to find a boyfriend who can give me some money to buy food at school during lunch. Visiting my boyfriend everyday to give me money to buy food at school resulted to my pregnancy

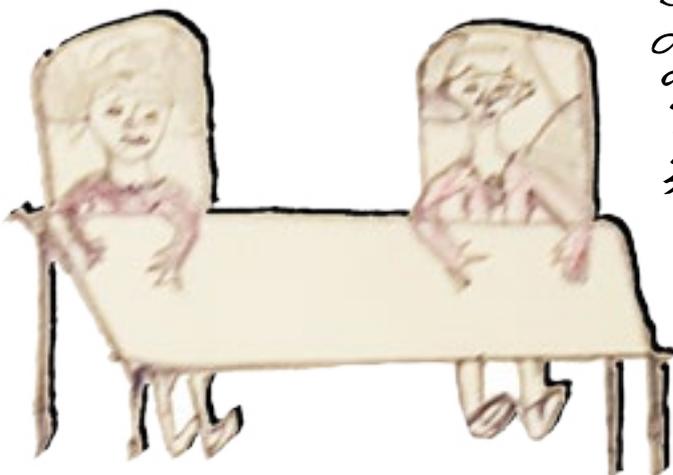
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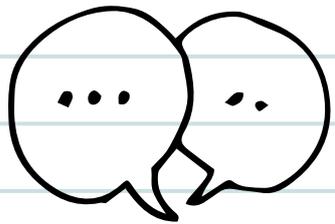
## Effect of teenage pregnancy in our town

Those children we interviewed were also happy to speak about some of the effects of teenage pregnancy. Thirteen pregnant teenagers we interviewed said that they are socially isolated by family and friends for instance their parents do not treat them good because they are pregnant. They said as they got pregnant their parents/caregivers do not give them enough food, good clothes, drove them from the family house, sang bad songs for them like "before I marry Okada man (commercial bike rider) let me marry Teacher". Out of those we interviewed sixteen reported that their health status is not good as they do experienced body pain, headache, vomiting and loss of appetite. Seventeen of those teenagers interviewed said they thought teenage pregnancy was a problem. They saw teenage pregnancy as a problem because it let them drop out of school, exposed them to surgical operations and made them unhappy or ashamed in their community. Out of those girls interviewed, 14 said they are not married while five said they are married.



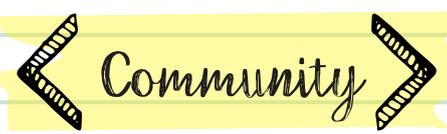


4.



## Recommendations

For teenage pregnancy to reduce in our community we want community people, World Vision and the Government of Sierra Leone to do the following:



### Community

1. Community people, especially the parents, should always advise girl children
2. Community people need to encourage their children by providing basic needs for girl children
3. Community people should properly care for their girl children by encouraging them to use contraceptives and preventives
4. Development of a child should be the responsibility of the entire community
5. Community people should be trained on the importance of girl children
6. Chiefs/local authorities in community should formulate and enforce by-laws to reduce teenage pregnancy



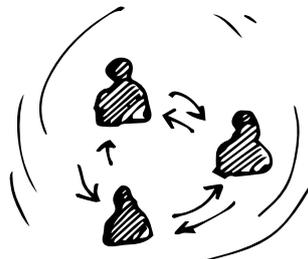
### World Vision

1. World Vision need to support girls with school materials like books, uniform, school shoes and other learning materials
2. They need to support teenage girls with food, shelter and clothes
3. World Vision need to help girls prevent pregnancy through training on the use of contraceptive
4. World vision should conduct trainings in schools and in community on the prevention of teenage pregnancy



### Government

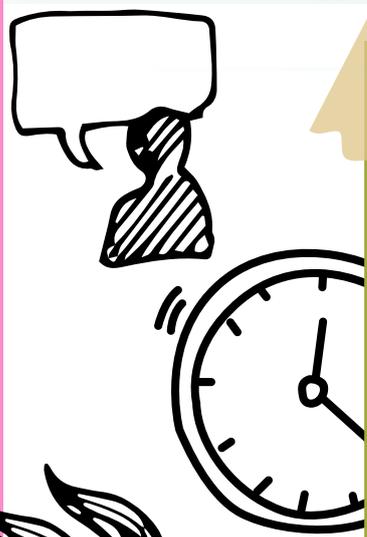
1. Teenage pregnancy must be prevented by government health sector
2. The government and the community people need to solve teenage pregnancy in our town by enforcing community bye-laws
3. Government should give greater attention to girl children
4. Government should provide free affordable medicines / contraceptives services for all girls
5. Trained and qualified nurses should be motivated to deliver quality service for young girls.





From the data we collected and analyzed in our town from nineteen teenagers, we concluded that, teenage pregnancy is destroying our community as it leads to high teenage death, increase health issues and community poverty.

It was also clear that teenage pregnancy could reduce respect and increase school dropout rate among teenage girls. For girl children to attain their full potential, we conclude that it is always important to give more support to girl children and neither to discriminate or isolate them for boys.





**World Vision**

NO CHILD WITHOUT A FUTURE

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