

**Workshop Title: *Pregnant teenage girls' education in Africa, and girls' access to education; plus school dropouts for girls and boys in secondary schools.***

**Convener's name :**

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**Main issues, questions discussed:**

- Important to include the community and parents, in order to ensure children, especially girls access education and are retained in school and complete their education cycles.
- Targeting different stakeholders: Plan had an intervention in Nepal where they engaged community structures.
- How to convince donors to include multiple stakeholders/ stakeholder interventions in programme budgets is still an area that needs to be worked upon.
- Holistic support system is imperative, as there are many issues coming together when pregnant girls and teenage mothers are accessing education. These include among others: accessing antenatal and postnatal health services, as pregnant women and mothers, as well as accessing health care for their children.
- In order to cater for the holistic needs, projects can be designed according to the funders' interests - e.g. a project could be framed as a livelihood development project, designed to support girls returning to school. Aligning with specific donor targets may help with finding a larger pool of potential donors, working within their specific areas of interest.
- In the Gambia, there is national policy in place which addresses drop-outs due to pregnancy. Within this policy framework, classes at home during pregnancy were introduced. Additionally, the policy allows for re-entry/ a second chance education for girls who dropped out due to pregnancy or other reasons.
- In Zambia there are positive policies with regard to re-entry of pregnant girls into school. For example, the 1997 re-entry Policy, which allows girls to re-enter school after they have delivered their babies. However, while these good policies exist, people are generally unaware of policies and their applications. Furthermore, in Zambia there is a policy that when a teenage girl was impregnated by a teenage boy, the boy is kicked out of school until the teenage mother comes back to school. The idea behind it is that the family of the teenage father is motivated to contribute financially to the mother and the baby, so that the teenage mother is reintegrated into school more quickly. The downside of this policy is that one teen pregnancy causes two teenagers to be out of school.
- Stigma and attitude prevents policies from being put into practice. Stigmatization arises owing to various factors such as the belief that girls who get pregnant and give birth are immoral and will thus teach other girls bad behaviors. The girls sometimes end up as victims of early marriages as a way of guarding the family honour. Relatedly, the family of the boy that dropout sometimes mistreat the girl, who is viewed as ruining the life of their son. Catering for the girls without needs addressing in project development making provision for the babies can also lead to stigma within the family, which has to take on the additional responsibility of looking after the baby. Stigma and attitude are therefore areas which need to be addressed at policy level, in programme design and at institutional, community and family level.

**Actions points:**

- **Gender-responsive budgeting:** Towards enabling governments to implement the policies, as well as stakeholders learning and working together in addressing stigmatization.
- **Advocacy:** Engage in policy advocacy aimed at reviewing, enforcing, disseminating and addressing other areas around policy and education for pregnant girls. Involve women's movements for advocacy.
- **Reframing language:** To create space for discussions on sensitive topics
- **A whole of society/ multi-stakeholder approach:** Include parents and other stakeholders to prevent civil society organizations from being called out as immoral feminist activists.