

## **TEENAGE PREGNANCY AND YOUNG PARENTS**

Parenthood, some prepare for it and to others it comes as a surprise without notice, and it's now a road which we cannot turn back from.

In the world we now have a high number of teenage pregnancies and teen parents and not all are prepared for the challenges ahead. They face embarrassment and humiliation from their peers and this is because some did not have enough SRHR information given to them and did not have positive role models or the guidance they needed. This has become a problem we do not have solutions to up-to this day. Adolescents may marry early or begin sexual relationships due to peer pressure, poverty, pressure from families and find themselves unprepared for the risks involved. We have child-headed families due to the loss of both parents and children who no longer have guidance from adults or advice about relationships and preventing pregnancy.

I am an HIV-positive teen father and who was not ready for parenthood and when I saw my child being born I had so many concerns. I wondered if my child was going to be positive like me and the mother or would the **PMTCT** program work for them? I wondered if my child was going to face the stigma of having HIV positive parents? These were the kinds of questions running through my mind because I wouldn't want my child to live the kind of life I lived, where my best company of friends was my reflection in the mirror. I want my child to be a part of the global community which does not discriminate against others and which supports people despite their background or upbringing.

Some teen couples fear stigma when they realize that they have a baby on the way, they are judged for their actions. Yes we have made mistakes but all we need is support from everyone around us because a child born today is our future tomorrow. All I can say is that teen parents need all the support they can get, if only we could have teen clinics for those who are pregnant so that they don't have to feel judged but feel supported and loved by a community that is 100% stigma-free.

I would like to commend Zvandiri for their support in the young mom and young dad initiatives, which saw the creation of support tailored for these young families. They were being left behind and the projects have had such impact because young people have proven to be better in the parenting field when given the right support. It has helped young people have a personal and separate space for parenting support and be educated without having fear of adults always telling us what to do.

Learn more about Zvandiri's work with young parents [here](#)