



# GIRLS' SUCCESS

1

MENTORING GUIDE FOR

# Life Skills

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Girls' Success:



MENTORING GUIDE FOR

# Life Skills

2009



Center for Gender Equity



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Volume One of the series of mentoring guides—*Girls' Success: Mentoring Guide for Life Skills*—involved a collaborative process with AED staff who worked on several USAID- and foundation-funded projects, such as Strategies for Advancing Girls Education (SAGE), the Ambassadors Girls Scholarship Program (AGSP), and the Four Pillars project. My sincere thanks go out to all those who helped inform the content of the guide. Special thanks go to those who gave AED feedback when the guide was tested in the field. This guide also drew from reports on training, workshops on mentoring, observations from discussions between a woman role model and young and adolescent girls, and from the vast experiences of girls' education practitioners working in the field with mentors, teachers, principals, parents, and, of course, students.

Present and past staff of the AED Center for Gender Equity were the co-authors of this guide. I thank the primary author, Lisa Kays, and all the other contributors—Michele Akpo, Aissatou Baldé, Jenny Barker, Judy Benjamin, Andrea Bertone, Boubacar Cissé, Melissa Crutchfield, Ahlam Ghadry, Cory Heyman, Melissa Hunter, Renu Jain, Eugene Katzin, Bridget Lombardo, Stephanie Psaki, Barbara Reese, and Alexandra Zekas. I also thank Kaaren Christopherson for her work on editing this guide, and Anne Quito for the attractive and user-friendly design.

Finally, this guide was inspired by the girls of Africa who strive to improve their lives and the lives of their families and communities by pursuing education and seeking guidance. This guide is for mentors in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East who dedicate themselves to enhancing the lives of the girls and boys in their countries. Advancing girls' success worldwide is what drives the authors and contributors of this series of guides.

## *Note to our Readers:*

This guide is a work in progress. It is an organic document that will change and improve through field tests and feedback from mentors and girls and boys. We welcome your comments and suggestions.



May Rihani  
Senior Vice President  
Director of the Global Learning Group





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## ABOUT THIS GUIDE

*Thank you for choosing to be a mentor!* You have a unique opportunity to help girls achieve success in their lives by supporting and guiding them. This is one of the best ways that a woman can help the girls in her community. You are joining other women in your country and around the world who believe that girls can be just as successful in life as boys.

The work of a mentor may be life changing for certain girls. Growing up can be hard for anyone. In many places, growing up is even harder for a girl. You were asked to be a mentor because you yourself know this well. Through life's lessons, you have learned wisdom and gained inner strength. The girls you mentor will need guidance, love, support, and kindness in their journey to becoming women. They will need wisdom like yours.

Mentoring girls is a challenge. Girls will come to you with hard questions and great hope. Sometimes you will be able to help make their lives better; other times you will feel that you have not done very much. In times when you are feeling down, think that success is not about one mentoring session or one talk with a girl. Mentoring is about building trust over a long period of time. If you care about the girls and follow through with the promises that you make to them, you will be successful in helping them to improve their lives.



Think about mentoring as a journey. This series of *Girls' Success Mentoring Guides* is a tool to help you in your journey. These *Guides* serve as road maps for mentors. They provide ideas for helping girls as they go through school and become young adults. The *Guides* are not meant to be read from start to finish. Instead, they are meant to be read between mentoring sessions to help your planning. They are meant to give you basic information to share with girls, but just as importantly, to give you ideas about how to talk with girls about issues that are important to them. Girls will learn a lot from their mentors as well as from each other. You might be surprised about how much you also will learn from the girls in the process.

The first section of each *Guide* talks about being a mentor and how to prepare for mentoring activities. Later sections talk about issues that are important to girls. This *Guide* describes 'life skills'. These are the basic skills to help girls make good decisions as they become adults and plan for their futures. It discusses issues such as inner strength, good choices, health, and wellness. The *Guide* gives information about these topics and others, questions about each topic that mentors may want to discuss with girls, and ideas for fun learning activities that can be done in mentoring sessions or when girls are in school or with their families.

Remember that a guide is only meant to give ideas. It is up to mentors and their girls to make the sessions meaningful for everyone. Instead of reading facts from the *Guide* or asking the *Guide's* questions directly, it is better to use the *Guide* just to start your thinking. Ask girls to find out more about topics from the *Guide*—or ask them to find information about other topics that are just as important to them. Think about different activities you can do to help girls understand the main points.

Best wishes to you and to the girls whose lives you will touch.

## I.

# MENTORING FOR GIRLS' SUCCESS

**A mentor is a woman role model from the community. A 'role model' is someone whom girls can admire and look up to because she leads a good life. A mentor encourages girls to stay in school and have aspirations for themselves beyond school. A mentor spends time with girls individually or in a group to make sure that they do well in school, are healthy and happy, and are helpful to their families and communities.**

A mentor can be almost anyone—mother, young woman, religious leader, community leader, or professional woman in any field. A mentor may have been to university or may only have primary schooling. A mentor has a real concern for the young women in the community. She builds trust. She speaks wisely and listens closely. She plans mentoring sessions and activities. A mentor is willing to do what she can to help girls succeed.

Mentoring gives girls the chance to spend time with a trusted adult who accepts them for who they are. A mentor praises girls when they do well in their studies. A mentor inspires girls to do their best and helps them to succeed. Girls who know about mentoring may be eager to have a mentor themselves. They may have questions about issues that they would not be able to ask anyone else, such as health and sex, boyfriends, school, work, and future goals and aspirations.

Here are some things that mentors do:

- A mentor is a 'role model' because she is successful and lives her life in a positive way. Mentors were once girls themselves—very much like the girls whom they now mentor—and have made good decisions that have led to success in life. Girls learn from hearing about mentors' experiences.
- A mentor helps girls develop the skills to make good choices. This includes helping girls to see different options or different ways of solving challenges and then making the best decisions possible. Mentors raise questions and help girls think about important issues, about making good decisions, and about succeeding in life.
- Although a mentor is not necessarily a teacher or tutor, a mentor encourages good study habits and skills. She keeps track of how well girls perform in school. She reminds girls to attend school every day and finish their homework. A mentor also talks with girls when she sees they are having problems with their studies. She makes sure the girls have the support they need so that they will not drop out of school.

### *What is Success?*

Success can mean many things. It can mean completing school, getting a good job, being a good wife and mother, or helping the community.

### **Who participates in mentoring?**

All kinds of girls participate in mentoring. Some girls are poorer than others. Some do better in school than others. Some come from loving homes; others may be orphans and have no fixed home at all. Some have good inner strength; others may feel badly about themselves. One thing will be common to all girls: They need a trusted woman to support and guide them as they grow.

## Why is mentoring important for girls?

Girls begin to mature into young women when they are in upper primary and secondary school. They go through many changes and need support. During this time, girls benefit from information that they may not hear from their parents or teachers. When girls receive information that will help them make good decisions about all aspects of their life, they are more likely to stay in school, take care of themselves, and be successful in future activities, whether that is raising a family, being a community leader, or having a job. With correct information, they can protect themselves from being hurt by others or doing things that will hurt themselves.

Here are some of the ways that girls gain from mentoring.

- Learning to listen better and speak well
- Learning to respect themselves and develop confidence
- Learning about reproductive health issues and sexually transmitted diseases, including AIDS
- Learning life skills, such as health and hygiene, goal-setting, and making good choices
- Learning study skills and improving in school

## How do mentoring programs for girls help everyone?

In addition to helping girls, mentoring also helps families and communities.

Mentoring even has benefits for mentors themselves.

- Mentoring helps mentors learn new information and skills by playing an important part in girls' development.
- Mentoring helps parents to raise daughters who are more informed about their families' needs and can better support their families' health and well-being.
- Mentoring helps girls reflect on what the community expects and values most.
- Mentoring teaches how girls can help their communities fight poverty, violence and abuse, and prevent HIV.



## 1. Mentoring for Success

The goal of mentoring is for a respected woman from a community to meet regularly with girls to discuss important issues that girls might not discuss with others. Mentoring takes place most often in group sessions, but mentors can also meet individually with girls to discuss more specific subjects. Mentoring sessions are times to share new information, talk about issues, and work together to complete group activities. Most importantly, mentoring sessions allow girls to ask questions freely of mentors and each other, talk openly about their thoughts and feelings, and develop closer ties with their friends and sisters.

Mentors should not try to be teachers or parents. Instead, mentors should play the role of a trusted older friend who can raise issues to think about, answer questions based on knowledge and life experience, and encourage girls with softer voices to join the conversation. By the time a group of girls completes its time with a mentor, girls should feel strong in themselves, more confident in guiding their own futures, and comfortable continuing to reach out to the mentor and each other when they have issues to talk about in the future.

## What makes mentoring programs work well?

Mentoring programs work well when mentors consider the following:

- Include topics that may not be covered in school or that may need extra time or effort, such as reproductive health, work and careers, study skills, and goal-setting.
- Have the support of parents, teachers, and community members who understand mentoring and promote planned activities.
- Build on the strengths of the mentors and girls.
- Encourage girls to help plan activities.
- Develop ways to measure how well mentoring activities are helping girls to learn and grow.

## What makes mentors successful?

It is not difficult to be a good mentor if one follows a few important guidelines:

- ***Listen!*** A good mentor is a good listener. She listens and helps girls feel comfortable enough to talk openly. A good listener does not interrupt or judge what girls are saying. She values girls' feelings and ideas, and this helps to build trust. A mentor asks questions to encourage girls to speak out. Careful questioning helps mentors learn what girls are thinking.
- ***Share!*** A good mentor also shares stories about her experiences. These stories should not only be about successes but also about hardship and challenges. By being open and honest with girls, mentors gain girls' trust and respect. Girls learn more from mentors when they understand that even role models have highs and lows like everyone else.
- ***Do not judge or pick favorites!*** By not judging girls, a mentor helps girls feel safe to share new ideas without fear of mistakes. A mentor does not show favor to any one girl over another but shows all girls that they are valued and important.
- ***Build Trust!*** It is very important that mentors do not share private information from girls with others. Keeping private information to oneself helps



build trust between a mentor and the girls. However, sometimes a mentor might feel that a girl is in danger or might be abused. This is the time when the mentor can share private information with another trusted adult to remove the girl from danger. In one of the first meetings with girls, the mentor should inform girls that if she believes the girl is in danger, she might share information with another person.

- ***Do not expect gifts!*** Mentors should never ask for money or gifts from girls, girls' families, or anyone else in the community. This sends a very bad message.
- ***Be dependable!*** A mentor is faithful in carrying out her mentoring duties. Girls should be able to rely on mentors to keep their word. This includes commitments to hold regular meetings, arrive at meetings on time, and follow through on what mentors promise to do.
- ***Give wise counsel!*** A good mentor gives clear guidance to girls. She does not make choices for girls or tell them what to do. By her advice, a mentor can help girls make better choices for themselves. A mentor does not have to know all the answers. She has the wisdom, though, to know when to seek more information from others.
- ***Have fun!*** A good mentor enjoys mentoring and spending time with girls. The girls will know by her speech and actions that their mentor is happy to spend time with them.


## What makes mentoring sessions successful?

Mentoring sessions work well when mentors plan the following:

- ***A mentor has regular meetings.*** A mentor has meetings with girls as often as she can. Meetings should not be held during school hours. Rather, these should be held after class, on weekends, or during school breaks. A mentor should be well prepared for each meeting and plan different activities to keep the sessions interesting. The mentor should ask parents' support for girls to attend mentoring sessions. A mentor should plan meeting times so that girls return home safely before dark.

Mentors should plan mentoring sessions for places that every girl can reach easily so that travel will not keep girls from taking part in activities. If possible, mentors should use classrooms or libraries after school, community centers or religious houses, a family home, or outdoors in good weather. In all cases, mentors should ask the person in charge for permission to use the space. Most importantly, meeting places should be safe.

- ***A mentor knows her girls.*** A mentor must get to know the girls whom she mentors. Mentors should also know about the girls' families (where they live, if both parents are still at home, and so on). They should know about any special interests or concerns girls may have.



### *Getting to know the girls*

To get to know girls better, a mentor can:

- \* **Meet with each girl and her family or guardians** as early in the mentoring experience as possible. The mentor can tell the family about mentoring and answer questions. This discussion helps the whole family feel good about mentoring. Meeting with families also help girls gain a better understanding about why mentoring is important.
- \* **Write good notes** for each girl that show what the mentor has learned about her. These notes can help the mentor plan activities that will interest the girls.

- ***A mentor keeps a good registry.***

A mentor collects good information about each girl including her full name, contact information, age, school, grade level, and special details. Each time a mentor holds a session, she asks girls to sign their names so that she knows who has attended each mentoring session. A mentor also keeps information about the topics she has covered during each mentoring session so that she does not repeat topics too often.

- ***A mentor keeps track and follows up.*** A mentor follows up with girls about important events and challenges, such as class work, exams, or family situations. A mentor keeps track of girls' attendance and follows up with girls' teachers and families when she begins to arrive late to school or not at all or if the girl begins to perform badly in school.

## 2. Planning Mentoring Sessions and Activities

When a mentor is just starting out, she should first meet with as many girls and their families as possible. Meetings are chances to learn what girls expect from mentoring and topics that might interest the girls. That information will help the mentor plan for her first few mentoring sessions. In addition, mentors should try to think about the following questions:

- When are the best times for girls to attend?
- Where can meetings be held so girls can participate easily? Is the meeting place big enough for the number of girls in the mentoring group? Is it safe? Is it a good idea to hold meetings in different places over time?
- Which topics or activities are best for the whole group? Do some girls have special needs or topics they do not want to talk about in front of the group? Is there a chance to meet with each girl alone from time to time?
- Mentoring can include many topics, such as health and sex, HIV and AIDS, self-esteem, and future goals. Which topics are good to cover first, and which can wait?
- What are good rules that everyone in the group should follow, such as respecting what others think and feel (their 'opinions')?
- What activities give girls the chance to think about issues that are important to them? Since girls learn differently, what are different ways of sharing the same information? Can activities that are fun be used to help girls learn the main points of the session?

### Planning a mentoring session

After answering these questions, it is time to plan the topic for the first mentoring session. Here is one way to plan:

1. Write in a few words about what the topic will be.
2. Write what the girls should learn. List the information, skills, or ideas that the girls should know once the meeting is over. Keep the list to just a few items, and make sure the items are clear and to the point.

3. Note the amount of time needed for the activity, such as 15 minutes or one hour. Be sure there is enough time to cover the list of ideas to be discussed and learned.
4. Make a list of everything that needs to be done before the meeting. For example, draw pictures to illustrate a topic, contact a guest speaker, or arrange a meeting place.
5. Think about how the topic will be presented and what activities will be used to help teach the main points. Use storytelling, a picture, a poem, or other way to get girls interested. Make sure the facts presented are correct, and think about the best ways to share this information. Think about using some of the suggested activities in this guide for the topic, or come up with a different activity.
6. Remember that it is not necessary to finish a topic in one session. It may be easier to work through an issue over time instead of rushing through it in one meeting. Some topics take time to understand. It may be helpful to go back to the same topics more than once and in different sessions.

This is only one way of preparing for a mentoring session. A mentor should prepare in a way that works best for her. She should think about a plan for each session before a session begins but also be ready to adapt the activity to the needs of the girls. Mentors should listen to the girls at every session and develop new activities to best support girls' needs.

After the first few mentoring sessions, planning will become much easier and mentors will be on the road to building trust with girls that will help the girls grow.

## Planning activities

Using many kinds of activities during the year makes mentoring sessions more interesting for everyone. Using different activities also helps each girl to respond well to at least one way of learning new information. Girls respond better to someone they can trust and count on to be both serious and fun.

Girls can learn in different ways.

***Make mentoring sessions interesting by:***

- Organizing a field trip to a different place in the community.
- Using painting, drawing, writing poetry, singing, or acting (role play) to express ideas.
- Inviting guest speakers to the mentoring sessions to share special knowledge about an important topic. These people, especially if they are women, can be role models for the girls.

***Encourage different ways of learning by:***

- Having girls take turns choosing the topics for the sessions. The girl who chooses the topic can also lead the session to build leadership.
- Using the 'Discovery Approach'. After learning about a topic in a mentoring session, girls can go into the community and 'discover' more about it by asking questions and talking to others. Girls can also read more about the topic and collect objects that relate to the topic. At the next mentoring session, girls can present what they have discovered.
- Divide girls into small groups and have each group become an 'expert' about different sides of a topic. The groups can then debate the topic and learn more about different points of view.

Other ideas for activities are given throughout this Guide.

**Who else can be involved in mentoring?**

Many others in the community can support girls' mentoring. In fact, the goals set by a mentor for her girls are more easily met if others in the community understand and support the goals as well. A mentor can ask members of the community to be guest speakers at mentoring meetings. There are three groups in the community who should support mentoring sessions.

The first group is parents and guardians. It is very important that mothers, fathers, and guardians understand the important role that mentoring will play in the lives of girls. If parents and guardians are supportive, they will encourage their daughters to attend the meetings. The parents and guardians can ask the girls to talk about what they learned in the mentoring sessions so that the whole family can learn from the girl, including the younger brothers and sisters. Involving parents also

helps mothers and fathers learn about issues that they may have missed growing up if they themselves did not have the benefit of an adult mentor.

The second group is teachers and school leaders. Involving teachers and school leaders helps mentors support girls' learning. When teachers and school leaders are

involved, mentors come to know what girls are studying and what they are finding difficult in school. Teachers learn that mentors can be a good communication bridge to parents and families when girls need more help.

The third group is men and boys. In many places, men are the main decision makers in the community, and they make a difference in how the community thinks about girls' education. Community leaders who are men can make sure that mentors have the resources they need to run the mentoring sessions. They can also encourage the school head masters who are often men to support educating girls through mentoring sessions. During the year, it is important to hold some mentoring sessions for boys alone so that they do not feel left out. It is an opportunity at the mentoring sessions for boys to discuss why it is important that girls receive mentoring sessions







## II.

# HEALTHY LIVING

Learning how to live a healthy and happy life is one of the most important ways to increase one's well-being. The word health is used when talking about the body. The word wellness is used when talking about the mind and spirit. This part of the Guide will talk about common health and wellness topics that affect girls' lives and improve their well-being. These include the general health of the body, nutrition, hygiene, clean water, and prevention of common diseases.

Physical health refers to the general health of our bodies and includes ways that girls can learn to avoid illness. Physical health is different from mental health, which concerns the well-being of the mind and spirit. Paying close attention to what we eat, how we keep ourselves clean, and how we exercise is part of keeping the body healthy.

Healthy ways of living mean more than just preventing illnesses such as malaria and dysentery. Being healthy also includes good nutrition and regular sleep and exercise, such as walking, or playing sports. Smoking, drinking alcohol, and taking drugs harm the body and weaken its ability to fight illnesses.

***Here are examples of healthy living:***

- Getting plenty of sleep every night, eight hours if possible
- Exercising at least three times a week (playing sports, walking to and from school)
- Eating a balanced diet, including fruits and vegetables
- Sleeping under an insecticide-treated mosquito net
- Not smoking, taking drugs, or drinking alcohol
- Drinking treated water

A person who gets enough sleep (six to eight hours), exercises regularly, eats well, protects herself from malaria, and avoids drugs and alcohol has more energy to carry out responsibilities at home, school, or work. These healthy ways of living also help prevent disease.







# 1. Eating Well

It is important for girls to understand that having a balanced diet is an important part of keeping a healthy body and mind. This means eating different kinds of foods each day that have the nutrients to help girls grow:

- ***Foods that protect.*** Many foods help protect people from getting sick and help bodies heal quickly. Girls should try to eat as much of these foods as possible. Examples include vegetables (carrots, tomatoes, okra), leafy vegetables (sweet potato leaves, spinach, other leaves used in cooking), fruits (mangos, papaya, bananas, limes), and palm oil.
- ***Foods that build.*** Other foods help bones and muscles grow strong and stay healthy. These include meat, fish, legumes (beans, peanuts), cashews, eggs, milk, and yogurt. Girls should try to eat some of these foods twice a day.
- ***Foods that give energy.*** Still other foods give energy needed to walk, run, and think. These include rice, grains (millet, sorghum, tef), corn, yams, cassava (manioc), potatoes, plantains, pasta, and bread.
- ***Foods very low in nutrition.*** While the foods listed above are good for girls' growth and well-being, other foods are very low in nutrition. These include fats, sugars, salt, and oils. It is best to not eat very much of these foods—once per day is enough—except for palm oil, which is another food that protects.

A balanced diet includes some foods that protect, give energy, and help girls grow, eaten at each meal every day. Eating a balanced diet protects a person from becoming sick or malnourished. To be malnourished means that the body becomes weak from lack of a proper diet.

Women who are pregnant or breastfeeding need to eat more food than they would eat normally, since they also need to feed the baby! Pregnant women should eat

plenty of eggs, leafy, green vegetables, cashew nuts, meat, beans, and limes. These foods are very good for developing a healthy baby. Some people believe that pregnant women need to eat less, or the baby will get too fat. This is not true. Plenty of food with good nutrition makes a healthy baby and mother!

## Malnutrition

Malnutrition is what happens when a person is not eating a balanced diet or not eating enough food. It means that the body does not get the vitamins or protein it needs to stay healthy. Malnourished people can have many problems. They can have poor attention in work or school, infections or illness, stunted growth, and broken bones. Malnutrition can even lead to death under the worst situations.

These are some common signs of malnutrition.

- Underweight
- Bloating belly (especially seen in young children)
- Tiredness, weakness, and low energy
- Difficulty in paying attention
- Weak muscles
- Stunted growth (shorter and smaller body than normal)
- Brittle and dry hair
- Brittle teeth, fingernails, and bones that break easily
- Dry or scaly skin
- Greater chance for illness, infections, and death
- Deep sadness
- Quick anger
- Red color to hair

## *Preparing food to be healthy*

All fresh fruits and vegetables should be washed with clean water before eating. If cooked, vegetables should be boiled for 10 minutes with a small amount of salt or steamed to keep their nutrients.

Meats and fish must be fresh when purchased and cooked thoroughly to kill any germs that may be present. If grilling meat, it is important to cook it all the way through so that there is no more pink color. For fish, the cooked color should be solid and not shiny or transparent. To boil meat and fish, they should be placed in cool water with salt, then water should be boiled for 30-45 minutes. This helps cook the meat or fish all the way through and also makes a healthy soup or broth.

Properly cleaning and preparing food before eating helps keep all of the nutrients and kills any germs that can cause illness. Again, cooking food in boiling water will kill germs.

If a pregnant woman is malnourished, her child may have low weight at birth and may die. Girls who are malnourished often have trouble paying attention and performing well in school. Malnutrition is a serious problem that can be avoided by eating well and having a balanced diet.

## QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES



### **Discussion questions**

1. What is malnutrition? What are some symptoms of malnutrition?
2. Name some foods that protect. Name some foods that build.
3. Name a common meal your family eats that makes a balanced diet (include foods that protect, foods that build, and foods that give energy).
4. What are some good foods to feed a younger brother or sister who often gets sick?



### **Activity for mentoring session: FINDING GOOD FOODS**

Ask the girls to make a list of food items commonly eaten in the community (not prepared food, but individual items used to prepare food or eaten on their own). Once mentors receive a list, they should have the girls decide which items they would like to draw. Make sure that all food items are drawn and that each girl has something to draw. Use crayons or markers if available; otherwise, a pencil is fine. Write on the board, 'Foods that Build', 'Foods that Protect', and 'Foods that give Energy'. Have each girl place her drawing under one of these topics. To make this more fun, divide the girls into two teams, and keep score by giving teams points for every correct answer.



### **Longer activity: FOOD JOURNAL**

Ask girls to keep a food journal for one month and share it with other girls in the group. In the journal, girls can write down what they eat every day. At the end of the month, girls can share their journals with others and they can advise each other about how to improve the nutrition in their diets.



## 2. Keeping Good Hygiene

Hygiene is keeping one's body, home, and surrounding area clean and free from dirt and disease. Practicing personal hygiene helps keep germs away from the body and plays an important role in healthy living. Mentors can teach girls about the many measures that lead to good personal hygiene.

Here are examples of good personal hygiene:

- Bathing once per day with soap and clean water
- Washing hands regularly with soap and clean water, especially after using the latrine, and before and after eating
- Brushing or cleaning teeth after every meal, at least twice per day
- Keeping hair clean, brushed, or braided
- Keeping ears and nose clean
- Trimming fingernails and toenails regularly, and keeping nails clean
- Washing clothes regularly
- Wearing clean clothes daily, particularly underwear
- Keeping the house clean by sweeping and washing floors, tables, and bedding
- Washing the bathroom and kitchen regularly with soap and water to prevent the spread of germs
- Boiling water for drinking or cooking to clean it and make it free of germs

For girls, personal hygiene is especially important while menstruating. During this time, it is even more important for them to wash and keep themselves clean.

### *Germ*s

Germ

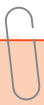
s are very small bacteria or viruses that can cause disease. These can be spread in several ways:

1. Through the air by sneezing or coughing
2. Direct contact with people (including hand-shaking)
3. Direct contact with objects or surfaces that have germs on them
4. Eating foods with germs
5. Touching animals

*Hand washing is the best way to prevent germs from causing infections and sickness.*

## Poor hygiene

People who do not wash or bathe regularly, wear dirty clothes, or live in dirty houses have poor personal hygiene. They have a greater chance of becoming ill or passing on germs to others. This is bad for everyone.



*Tip for good teeth cleaning*

Make sure to brush all surfaces of teeth and in between teeth.

## QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES



### Discussion questions

1. What is good hygiene? How is good hygiene different from poor hygiene?
2. List examples of ways in which you can practice good hygiene. Try to give at least five examples.
3. How can girls help younger brothers and sisters to be clean and understand the importance of good hygiene?



### Activity for mentoring session:

#### HANDS AND HYGIENE

This activity is for primary school girls. To change this activity for secondary girls, tell the girls that they are going to participate in this activity as if they were primary school students. Then, ask the girls to remember the steps in the activity and go home and teach it to their younger brothers and sisters.

This activity teaches girls useful steps in washing hands thoroughly and explains again the importance of clean hygiene by sharing good practices. This activity requires a bucket with clean water, soap, a cup (for scooping water), and, if available, a clean towel.



Have the girls line up in pairs (groups of two) behind the bucket. Allow each person in the pair to help the other wash their hands using the following steps:

1. The first girl scoops a cup of clean water out of the bucket and pours it on the other girls' hands. Tell the first girl in the pair to place the cup on a clean plate or in the bucket so that the cup is kept clean.
2. The other girl rinses her hand and lathers her hands with soap. The girl scrubs her hands for 10-15 seconds, cleaning between the fingers and under the nails.
3. The first girl fills the cup with water and pours it over the first girls' hands until all the soap is rinsed off. She then places the cup back on the plate or in the bucket.
4. The second girl rinses all the soap off her hands. If there is remaining soap, the first girl pours a second cup of rinsing water over the second girls' hands.
5. After the hands are rinsed, the girl shakes off the excess water and dries her hands with a clean towel. If a clean towel is not available, hold the hands in the air until they have dried.
6. Have the girls switch roles and repeat the exercise.
7. Continue until all girls have completed the activity. If time is short, mentors can also use two girls to do the activity to show the entire group and ask the other girls to practice at home.





### 3. Accessing Clean Water

When using water to drink and cook food, it is important that the water be clean. Even if water is a clear color, it does not always mean that it is germ free. Drinking and cooking with water that has germs can be dangerous to a person's health.

Unclean water can cause serious illness or death. Some diseases from drinking unclean water can include cholera, dysentery, parasites, or hepatitis.



Mentors can tell girls that there are two good ways to make water clean. Both are effective against diseases, such as bacteria, viruses, and fungi:

1. Boil for three minutes (a three-minute boil is enough at any height above sea level, even with very dirty water).
2. Filter using a very small filter followed by treatment with iodine or chlorine.
  - Chlorine bleach (*two drops per liter; let stand for 15 minutes*) or
  - Iodine 2% (*five drops per liter; let stand for 15 minutes*) or
  - Iodine tablets (*one half of a tablet per liter; let stand for 15 minutes*)

Filtering removes some germs that cause diseases such as malaria. Iodine or chlorine can then be used at lower doses to kill all remaining germs.<sup>1</sup>



#### *Ways to keep water purified*

1. Boil for at least three minutes.
2. Filter and then treat with chlorine or iodine.

Mentors can contact local health officials to ask them how to keep water clean. More information about preventing diseases is discussed in the next section.

<sup>1</sup> United States Peace Corps Office of Medical Services  
<http://www.peacecorps.gov>.

## QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES



### **Discussion questions**

1. What is water used for in your community? Name at least five uses and name the sources of this water.
2. What does it mean for water to be clean? Why is this important?
3. Where can girls find clean water in their community, and how can they know if water is clean? How can they protect the water sources and keep water clean?
4. If water is not clean, describe how to purify water.



### **Activity for mentoring session: CLEAN WATER**

The following activity about clean water is more effective if a local health worker can join the session:

1. Bring in a bucket of clear water from a local source (river, pump, tap), but do not tell the girls where it is from.
2. Ask girls to look at the water, and then ask if they think the water is clean and safe to drink. Discuss their responses. How do they know if it is safe? What sources would be safe or unsafe for drinking water? Remember that even if water appears to be clean, it may still cause serious illness if a girl drinks it.



### **Longer Activity: ENVIRONMENTAL WALK<sup>2</sup>**

Go for an environmental walk. Ask the girls to give a tour of the community as if the mentor is new to the area. It is a good idea to do it at dawn or dusk as you will see more hygiene behavior then. Ask to see the water sources and the places where rubbish is thrown. Speak with mothers and fathers about their children, their challenges, and how they keep their households and their children clean. Note how communities manage water supplies and latrines and how they dispose of waste.

<sup>2</sup> Adapted from United States Peace Corps Office of Medical Services Health training modules (<http://www.peacecorps.gov>)



## 4. Preventing Disease

This section describes ways that mentors can help girls to prevent disease.

'Prevention' means to keep something from happening. The best way to fight disease is to prevent it, that is, to avoid getting it in the first place. If it has not been possible to prevent an illness, symptoms may begin to appear. A 'symptom' is an outward sign of illness. Fever, chills, and rashes are symptoms—outward signs that the body may be ill.

Here are some common diseases, ways to prevent them, and symptoms of the diseases to help girls know what might be happening to their bodies if they become ill with a disease.

*Malaria is transmitted  
by mosquito bites*



### Malaria

Malaria is a serious infectious disease and one of the most common causes of illness and death worldwide. Most deaths from malaria happen in young children. In Africa, a child dies from malaria every 30 seconds.

Malaria is transmitted by certain kinds of mosquito bites. Mosquitoes are common in warm, tropical areas, and around pools of still water. Most mosquitoes that spread malaria bite at dusk and after dark. If not treated quickly, malaria can lead to death, especially in younger children.

Though there are some treatments for malaria, prevention is best and easy to do. The main way to prevent malaria is to avoid being bitten by mosquitoes. Girls and boys can lessen the chances of getting malaria by taking these simple steps:

- Avoid being outside at dusk or at night.
- Wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants at night.
- Sleep under a bed net, especially a bed net treated with insect repellent.

- Wear insect repellent, if available.
- Burn mosquito coils to keep mosquitoes away from the home.
- Avoid puddles and pools of still water.

Even though prevention is best, it is still possible to get malaria. Some symptoms of malaria are fever, chills, headache, sweats, tiredness, upset stomach, and vomiting. If a girl or boy shows any of the symptoms of malaria, she or he should go to a clinic or doctor as soon as possible to get medicine.

## QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES



### ***Discussion questions***

1. How can a person get malaria?
2. What people are most at risk of dying of malaria?
3. List the symptoms of malaria.
4. List at least three ways girls and boys can prevent malaria.



### ***Activity for mentoring session: TRUE OR FALSE ABOUT MALARIA***

Hang the pieces of paper with the words 'True' and 'False' on the wall with tape. If paper is not available, or if the mentoring session is outside, draw a 'T' and an 'F' with a stick in the dirt. Make sure that there is a large distance between the two posters or letters. Ask the girls to gather in the center of the open areas between the two signs. Read one of the comments on the list below. Then ask the girls if they think that the statement is true. If they think it is true, have them go to the 'True' side. If girls believe that the statement is not true, have them go to the 'False' side. If they do not know, they should make their best guess.

Once the girls have taken sides, ask them why they believe that the statement is true or false. Before providing the correct answer, allow the girls to discuss if they have different opinions. If girls change their minds during the discussion, let them know that they can change sides. Once each girl has chosen a final position, read the correct answer. Before going to the next question, ask the girls to come back to the center again.





Following are some true/false questions about malaria to review with girls:

1. Malaria is a treatable illness. (True. Malaria is curable if treated in time.)
2. Malaria is transmitted by bites from small poisonous flies. (False. Malaria is transmitted by infected mosquitoes.)
3. Children are most at risk of dying from malaria. (True. Children are more at risk of dying from malaria than adults.)
4. Eating healthy foods can help prevent malaria. (False. Not even healthy eating can prevent malaria if a person is bitten by an infected mosquito.)
5. Spots on the face and neck are a sign of malaria. (False. Spots are not a sign of malaria.)
6. If a girl sleeps under a treated mosquito net, she will not get malaria. (False. Treated mosquito nets give excellent protection, but there is no way to protect someone completely.)
7. A person is more likely to get bitten by an infected mosquito if visiting or playing near standing water. (True. Mosquitoes are commonly found near standing water.)
8. If a girl has a fever and a headache that will not go away, she should go to a clinic to be checked for malaria. (True. Long headaches can be a sign of malaria.)



### Longer activity:

#### COMMUNITY MAPPING MALARIA

Ask the girls to list all the areas in their community that may be risky for coming into contact with infected mosquitoes. These areas could include a pond, pools of water near a river where water stands still, an uncovered water well, or a water faucet where water spills on the ground and stands for a long time. Next, ask the girls to draw a map of their community. The map should include places such as the school, church, mosque, store, homes, the market, the river, and water wells. The map should have all the important structures, gathering places, paths and roads, and natural sites, such as hills and rivers in the community. Once the girls draw the map, ask them to mark in red pen all the areas that could be risky for coming in contact with mosquitoes. After the map is completed, ask them to discuss the map with their family, friends, and neighbors. If others identify new areas where malaria could be contracted, ask the girls to add this information on the map. Once the maps are complete, try to display them in public areas such as a school, church, or mosque where other people can also learn from them.



#### *Ways to keep water purified*

- \* dry mouth
- \* dizziness
- \* exhaustion
- \* tingling of hands and feet
- \* thirst
- \* weakness
- \* fainting
- \* very yellow or dark urine

## Diarrhea

Diarrhea is a symptom of many illnesses, including dysentery. Diarrhea and dysentery are common in many countries. They can even lead to death if not prevented or treated quickly. Particularly in small children, diarrhea causes death more than malaria and AIDS. Diarrhea and dysentery cause a very loose and liquid stool. Water and nutrients from food are lost from the body and the person loses strength. If not prevented or treated quickly, diarrhea can cause a person to dehydrate (meaning to lose water from the body), which can lead to many health problems, including death.

Drinking water or eating food that was prepared by someone who did not wash dirty hands or was not properly prepared can give a person diarrhea, even if the food or water looks clean.

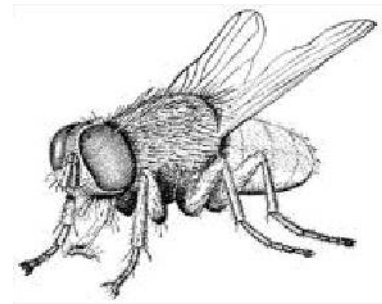
If any of the following occurs along with diarrhea, seek immediate medical help:

- Fever
- Blood or mucous in stool
- Diarrhea lasting more than 3 days

Dehydration is the most common complication of diarrhea.

Diarrhea is 'treatable' in that dehydration can be prevented by giving the body fluids and nutrients. Oral Rehydration Therapy, which replaces fluid, salt, and sugar, is important to start early and continue throughout diarrheal illness. 'Oral' means by mouth. 'Oral rehydration' means to put water back into the body by drinking.

*Keep food and water covered to prevent flies from transmitting disease*



To prepare an oral rehydration solution, combine the following in a clean glass or bottle:

- a pinch of salt
- ½ teaspoon of sugar
- ¼ liter of boiled water (an equal amount would be a nearly filled glass bottle of cola)

Mix or stir the contents, and then a dehydrated person can drink the entire bottle of liquid. She or he should also continue eating food, such as rice or bananas, to keep up her or his strength.

## Preventing Diarrhea

Again, prevention is the best way to avoid illness. Here are some simple ways that girls and boys can avoid getting diarrhea:

- Boil or purify water before drinking to kill germs.
- Always wash hands with soap and water, especially after using the latrine, before eating or preparing food, or after shaking hands with someone.
- Always clean food before cooking or eating. Boiling foods such as beans, potatoes, cassava, or rice makes them safe to eat.

- Only eat meat that has been very well cooked.
- Keep prepared food covered until it is time to eat to prevent flies from touching it.
- Make sure that areas where food is prepared and eaten are clean.

Following these simple steps will keep food and water clean and will reduce girls' risk of getting diarrhea.

## QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES



### **Discussion questions**

1. What is diarrhea? Why is it dangerous?
2. What are the causes of diarrhea, and how can it be prevented?
3. How is diarrhea best treated? When should a girl or boy with diarrhea seek medical help?
4. What can be done in communities to reduce diarrhea?



### **Activity for mentoring session: RESPONDING TO DIARRHEA**

Ask the girls what they or their family members have done when one of them gets diarrhea. Have the girls explain what happens to their bodies when they are sick with diarrhea and why this can be even more dangerous for young children and babies. Work with the girls to prepare a sample Oral Rehydration Therapy solution using the recipe listed above. Before preparing the solution, ask the girls what steps they should take, such as washing their hands and washing the utensils, to make the solution as effective as possible. Ask the girls what ingredients are needed and in what amounts. Finish the session by having the girls pledge to teach at least three others in their community about the dangers of diarrhea and how to prepare rehydration solution.



### **Longer activity: DIARRHEA INFORMATION CAMPAIGN**

Ask the girls to talk to members of their community to learn how often diarrhea occurs. Try to learn what has caused the diarrhea, and find out what can be done to prevent diarrhea from occurring. Once the main causes have been identified, girls can organize meetings and messages in their school about protecting themselves and others from diarrhea illnesses. As part of this process, the girls can inform the school community how to treat diarrhea and how to prepare rehydration solutions to prevent dehydration when people are sick with diarrhea.

# 5. Avoiding Alcohol, Tobacco, and Drugs

Using alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs can have harmful effects on the body and mind, particularly for growing girls and boys. They can reduce the ability to think clearly and to control the body. They may also have harmful effects on views and actions. These harmful effects can take place immediately after one drinks alcohol, smokes tobacco, or takes other drugs. But the harmful effects can also last much longer. In some cases, the harmful effects can last an entire lifetime.

DRUG	SOURCE	HOW IT IS USED	CLASSIFICATION
Caffeine	Coffee, tea, cola	By mouth	Stimulant
Alcohol	Beer, wine, hard liquor	By mouth	Depressant
Nicotine	Tobacco (cigarettes)	Smoked	Stimulant
Khat, Qat	Plant leaf	Chewed	Stimulant
Marijuana	Cannabis plant	Smoked	Depressant
Cocaine	Coca plant	Inhaled, smoked, or injected	Stimulant
Inhalants	Petrol, paint, glue (many household products can be abused by intentionally breathing the fumes)	Inhaled	Various (inhalants cause intoxication by starving the brain of oxygen)
Amphetamines (sometimes called 'speed')	Pills	By mouth	Stimulant
Heroin, Morphine	Opium poppy plant	Injected or inhaled	Depressant

A drug is any chemical that affects the way a body works. Some drugs are taken as medicine to fight diseases and to keep people healthy. Other drugs, known as stimulants, speed up the heart, breathing, mind, and body function in ways that are not natural and may cause problems later. Still other drugs, known as depressants, can slow down body functions to an unnatural level, also with harmful long-term effects. All drugs and alcohol change how the body operates and can be dangerous or even deadly if abused or not used properly.

Alcohol and drugs are especially dangerous for pregnant women and can cause serious harm to unborn babies as they develop. There are no 'safe levels' of drug, alcohol, or tobacco use while pregnant.

Behavioral effects can include:<sup>3</sup>

- Quickness to anger
- Moodiness
- Anxiety
- Loss of judgment
- Violent behavior
- Bad decision making

Physical effects can include

- Confusion and shaking
- Liver damage
- Not being able to have sexual relations or babies
- Heart disease
- Stomach pain and ulcers
- Malnutrition
- Cancer
- Poisoning or death

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<sup>3</sup> Adapted from United States Peace Corps Office of Medical Services Health training modules (<http://www.peacecorps.gov>)

## Avoiding drugs and alcohol

People may use drugs or alcohol for a number of reasons. Some take drugs out of curiosity to see what they feel like or because their friends are using them. Others take drugs to avoid painful feelings and situations. Still others use drugs because they believe in myths that a drug can make someone more confident, get more work done, feel less sad, improve their sex life, and have more fun. The biggest myth of all is that occasional drug use is harmless.<sup>4</sup> All drugs, alcohol, and tobacco have the potential to cause serious harm. Once people begin to use alcohol or drugs, they may become addicted and cannot stop: The danger is that the drug becomes more important than family, friends, or school.

Alcohol slows down a body's reaction time and ability to make good decisions. In many countries, alcoholic drinks are legal and therefore alcohol is common and easy to get. Alcohol, when drunk by healthy adults in *small amounts* and on special occasions (for example, at social gatherings, celebrations, and religious ceremonies), may not be very harmful. However, the chance for abuse of alcohol is great, and if taken regularly, it can become very difficult to stop. It is important that girls and boys who begin to drink alcohol realize that they are at risk for alcohol abuse and harming their growing bodies.

Tobacco (often in the form of cigarettes) is another common drug that girls and boys are likely to see in their communities. It is important to talk with girls and boys at an early age to help them understand the serious health risks from smoking. The younger children start to smoke, the more likely they will remain smokers during adulthood. Research has shown that avoiding tobacco use as a young person lessens the chance for smoking in the future.

The World Health Organization (WHO) has named tobacco one of the greatest public health threats today. Tobacco kills 5.4 million people a year—an average of one person every six seconds—and accounts for one in 10 adult deaths worldwide.

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<sup>4</sup> Pace University Counseling Services [http://www.pace.edu/page.cfm?doc\\_id=5117](http://www.pace.edu/page.cfm?doc_id=5117)



Over time, tobacco kills up to half of all users. Seventy percent of these deaths are in developing countries where the number of smokers is growing, particularly among women.<sup>5</sup>

Cigarettes and other forms of tobacco contain the drug nicotine, which is highly addictive. This means that many people who begin smoking find it very difficult to stop, despite the harmful health effects.

Cigarette smoking causes serious health problems, including<sup>6</sup>:

- Lung disease and breathing problems
- Decreased physical fitness
- Higher risk for heart disease
- Higher risk of cancer

## Why girls are at risk

People often use too much alcohol or too many drugs when they feel stress. A girl may begin or increase drinking alcohol or using drugs after a loss, disappointment, change in her life, or because of loneliness or pressure from peers.

## Drugs and alcohol can lead to risky behavior

Taking drugs or drinking alcohol is not only bad for the body, but it can make a person do things that she would not normally do and would regret later. They can reduce girls' ability to say 'no' to sex, or 'no' to using a condom with a boyfriend. Drugs and alcohol can reduce a person's ability to make good decisions. Many young girls have sex for the first time after drinking alcohol, often without a condom. This increases the chances of getting pregnant, HIV, or another sexually transmitted infection. Even if a girl has a boyfriend, she should make the decision to have sex or not to have sex with a clear mind and not because of the effects of drugs or alcohol.

<sup>5</sup> World Health Organization <http://www.who.org>.

<sup>6</sup> Children's Cancer Research Fund <http://www.childrenscancer.org>.

Mentors should inform girls about counseling and treatment resources in their community. In small communities, mentors sometimes play this role of counselor for the girls. Where other counseling resources are not available, mentors can invite girls to meet with them individually if they have questions or need help in talking about alcohol or drug use.

## QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES



### **Discussion questions**

1. What is a drug, and what does it do to your body and mind?
2. Name drugs that are present in your community, and describe the effects of each drug.
3. When a girl is under the influence of alcohol or drugs, she can be a danger to herself and others. What do you think about this statement? Have you ever known anyone to get hurt, or to hurt someone else, while taking alcohol or drugs? What are some of the effects of taking drugs?
4. Why are girls especially at risk when using drugs or alcohol?
5. Have you ever known someone who was using drugs? What happened to this person?



### **Activity for mentoring session: ROLE PLAY ABOUT DRUGS AND ALCOHOL**

Split the girls into small groups of three or four, and ask them to construct role plays of real life situations in which girls are exposed to drugs or alcohol in their community. Explain that the stories need to show the risks and effects of drug-taking or drinking alcohol. The girls present their dramas to the group and the rest of the group discusses the performance using questions such as:

- Is the story realistic?
- Was the information about the drugs or alcohol and the risks of taking them accurate?
- What other information about the drugs or alcohol could have been discussed?
- What are some physical, social, or emotional risks of drinking or drug use?
- Could any other risks or effects have been shown in the performance? What would the girls do if they were one of the characters in the drama?



### ***Activity for mentoring session:***

#### **TRUE AND FALSE ABOUT DRUGS AND ALCOHOL**

Hang the pieces of paper with the words 'True' and 'False' on the wall with tape. If paper is not available, or if the mentoring session is outside, draw a 'T' and an 'F' with a stick in the dirt. Make sure that there is a large distance between the two posters or letters. Ask the girls to gather in the center of the open areas between the two signs. Read one of the comments on the list below. Then ask the girls if they think that the statement is true. If they think it is true, have them go to the 'True' side. If girls believe that the statement is not true, have them go to the 'False' side. If they do not know, they should make their best guess.

Once the girls have divided on the sides, ask them why they believe that the statement is true or false. Before providing the correct answer, allow the girls to discuss if they have different opinions. If girls change their minds during the discussion, let them know that they can switch sides. Once each girl has chosen a final position, read the correct answer. Before going to the next question, ask the girls to come back to the center again.

Following are some possible true/false questions about drugs and alcohol to review with girls<sup>7</sup>:

1. Alcohol is a drug. (True. Alcohol is a drug that affects one's mental and physical state.)
2. Everyone reacts the same way to the same amount of alcohol. (False. People can react very differently.)
3. A person can die of alcohol poisoning. (True. A person can die if she or he drinks much more than a body can handle.)
4. Alcoholism is a disease. (True. WHO recognizes alcoholism as a disease.)
5. People who cannot control their drinking of alcohol can be helped. (True. Treatment can help people to overcome the disease and improve their lives.)
6. Beer drinkers never develop alcoholism. (False. Alcohol in any form can be an addictive drug and can lead to alcoholism.)

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<sup>7</sup> True/False questions adapted from Substance and Alcohol Intervention Services for the Deaf (SAISD)  
[http://www.rit.edu/ntid/saisd/quiz\\_challenge/index.html](http://www.rit.edu/ntid/saisd/quiz_challenge/index.html).

7. Alcohol is a stimulant. (False. Alcohol is a depressant.)
8. The drug in tobacco is called nicotine. (True.)
9. Nicotine is as addictive as heroin. (True. The Royal College of Physicians in Britain has said that nicotine is as addictive as heroin or cocaine and smoking should be seen as a serious drug dependence.)
10. Marijuana contains more cancer-producing elements than tobacco cigarettes. (True. One marijuana cigarette can be as damaging to the lungs as four tobacco cigarettes.)
11. Marijuana does not affect driving performance. (False. Marijuana affects physical skills for four to six hours after smoking.)
12. Cocaine is a stimulant. (True. Cocaine increases the heart rate and at the same time increases blood pressure. This can result in seizures, heart attack, or stroke.)



**Longer activity:**  
**LEARNING FROM A  
 PROFESSIONAL**

Invite a health professional or drug counselor from the community to come and talk to the girls about the health and what can happen from using alcohol and drugs.







# INNER STRENGTH AND GOOD CHOICES

Building inner strength and making good choices are two of the most important ways a mentor can help a girl to learn. Often, inner strength is called ‘self-esteem’. To esteem means to value and respect. When a girl has good self-esteem—good inner strength—it means she has respect for her own thoughts, her own feelings, and her own body. She is better able to listen to the voice inside her that tells her what is right and what is wrong. She can form good habits in all areas of her life and is less likely to let others take advantage of her. When she has good self-esteem, she can set goals and make choices that honor not only herself, but also her family and her community.

Another important part of building inner strength is ‘empowerment’. To be empowered means that a girl decides what happens to her. A girl who is empowered plays an active role in her own life, family, school and community, and chooses wise actions that can make her life better. A girl may look at her life and feel that she has no power at all. Her family’s condition may be very hard. She may be treated harshly or she may be poor. She may have experienced war or violence or have lost a loved one to sickness. A wise mentor can help a girl learn to be empowered, even after difficult experiences. Like self-esteem, empowerment does not happen in one moment. It happens over time by giving girls the chance to talk about and act out important choices without fear of making mistakes.

Empowerment and good self-esteem go hand in hand. A girl shows that she is empowered and has good self-esteem by the way she acts. Her inner strength helps her to show respect to herself and others, to be honest, and to take responsibility for the choices she makes and what she does. She is proud yet humble in the things she does well and receives praise with grace. She is willing to try new things. She listens when others correct her, knowing this will help her grow and learn. Her inner strength helps her to forgive herself if she has done something she knows is not right and not to take to heart what is hurtful. She loves herself and others. Her inner strength helps her always to recover if things go wrong.

Low self-esteem also becomes visible in a girl's life and actions. She may be mean and disrespectful. She may blame others for her own mistakes or she may lie. She may not give herself credit for a job well done. She may not listen. She may make poor choices about what to try. She may not be able to give love or receive it from others.

A girl's inner strength has much to do with the way she has been treated. If she has been praised and encouraged for good work in school or at home, she can build good inner strength. If she has a family and friends who support her, she can build good inner strength. If a girl has been mistreated at home or has no friends, but only people who make her think she is not loved or valued, she will have little or no inner strength. A girl's good inner strength—her self-esteem—helps her have clear ideas about who she is and how she should think and act.

Mentors already know many ways that girls are treated, or ways they treat each other, that do not support good self-esteem and growth. It is wise to think again about some of these ways so that mentors can create sessions to help girls value themselves and learn what to do when they face problems. This part of the Mentoring Guide is meant to help mentors talk with girls about these important issues through topics such as communication, decision making, peer pressure, emotions, risky behavior, and violence.





# 1. Communicating Well

Communication is the exchange of ideas or a message between two or more people. Communication is someone giving a message and one or more people receiving a message. Communication is only good if the giver of information expresses herself well and if the receiver understands the message. In the best cases, two people act as both the giver and receiver in the same discussion, sharing ideas back and forth. Good communication is very important for relationships with friends, family, and adults. When communication fails, confusion and problems can occur.

People communicate in many ways, such as with words, actions, facial expressions, and the body. For example, if someone turns her head away while someone is talking, she is communicating that she is not interested in what the person is saying. If a girl turns her body toward the person who is talking,

she is communicating that she is listening to the person. These are ways of communicating with the body. Messages communicated through body language are often different from one culture to another. Mentors can help girls communicate better in their own cultures and be more understanding of other cultures.



## *Words of Wisdom*

If we were supposed to talk more than  
we listen, we would have two mouths  
and one ear.

- Mark Twain, American author

## Expressing ideas well

It is important to know how to communicate clearly so that a message is understood in the way it is intended. Below are ideas for helping girls to express ideas well:

- **Think before speaking and choose words carefully.** Make the message clear and understandable.
- **Think about who is being spoken to.** Girls speak differently with friends than they do with adults.
- **Do not be too negative.** If girls say harsh things or criticize, the listener may get upset and may not listen carefully to what is being said.

- **Ask the listener if he or she understands.** Listen to his or her questions and answer them clearly. Remember that communication is only good if the receiver understands the message.

## Listening well

Listening is just as important as talking. Poor listening will result in not understanding the message. Below are ideas to help girls with good listening:

- **Pay attention.** Focus on what the speaker is saying.
- **Have an open mind and be an active listener,** which means think about what is being said and do not judge before listening to the speaker's full idea.
- **Use good body language.** A person shows that she is listening by positioning her body toward the speaker and not doing anything else at the same time.
- **Encourage the speaker to complete an idea,** even if it takes time to do so.
- **Ask questions** if something is not understood.

## Talking to parents or guardians

When children disagree with the choices that their parents or guardians make for them, they often do not know how to show their disagreement in a way that is respectful but clear. Some parents or guardians may put pressure on their children to work outside the home, leave school early, or get married at an early age.

Although mentors should encourage children to respect their parents or guardians, girls should also be able to share their feelings even about difficult topics. Mentors may want to use role play activities to make girls more comfortable to discuss communication issues between girls and their parents.

Below are some ideas to share with girls for talking with their parents:

1. **Find a good time to talk to parents** (for example, when parents are not working or busy with something else).
2. **Use the same ideas as above for communicating.** Be respectful, choose words carefully, and be clear.
3. **Be willing to compromise.** For example, if a girl would like more time to do homework, she might offer to do house chores after she completes her homework.
4. **Consider bringing another adult,** such as a mentor or an aunt, into the conversation.

## QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES



### **Discussion questions**

1. What is communication? Give examples of communicating with actions and the body.
2. Name three ways to be a good 'giver' of information. Name three ways to be a good listener.
3. How have girls tried to talk to parents about something difficult? How might they try to talk differently in the future?
4. Why do girls think there are sometimes misunderstandings between people? How can these be avoided?



### **Activity for mentoring session:** Role playing good and bad communication

The purpose of this activity is to show ways that people communicate well, as well as communicate poorly. Mentors should ask for two volunteers to act in a role play. Decide who will be the players and what they will discuss. Some examples are:

1. Mother and daughter discuss the daughter leaving school to get married.
2. Two friends discuss something one friend did to upset the other friend
3. A teacher and student discuss how the student is often tardy to school.

Mentors and girls can also think of other topics. Take one of the volunteers aside and instruct her to be a bad listener, such as not looking at the 'giver' and interrupting. Once the role play is complete, ask everyone to discuss what happened. Ask two more volunteers to act out a 'good communication' role play.



## 2. Making Good Decisions

As young adults, girls face difficult and sometimes life changing situations. Sometimes it is difficult to know what to do. Does a girl please her parents, her friends, her teachers, or herself? What if others want different things from her? Making good decisions helps girls avoid risky behaviors and empowers them to get what they want in life. A good choice is when a girl makes important people happy including herself and does not hurt others in the process.

Below are steps for mentors to help girls make important decisions:

1. Think of all the good things and bad things that could result from each possible decision.
2. Think about what a girl's family and friends want her to do.
3. Think about what she wants and why.
4. Consider all of these views, then make the best choice.
5. Be able to share with others the good reasons for the decision.

Sometimes a girl may be in a situation in which she needs to make a decision 'in the moment'. It may be a choice such as whether or not to have sex with her boyfriend, whether or not to drink alcohol with her friends, or whether or not to cheat on an exam. This is why it is important to think about decisions beforehand. When does she want to have sex? How will she protect herself? What will she do if someone offers her drugs or alcohol? Taking the time to think about who she is as a person and what will result from the decisions she makes will help her make the best possible choices.

Everyone makes a bad decision sometimes; no one is perfect. When a girl makes a bad decision, she should not think less of herself but she should think about why she made those choices. Did she think before acting? Did her friends or family pressure her to choose? How would she choose differently next time? Are there barriers that keep her from making the right decision? Thinking about good and bad decisions after the results are known gives girls better information for thinking about future decisions. This is how girls learn from experiences.

## QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES



### **Discussion questions**

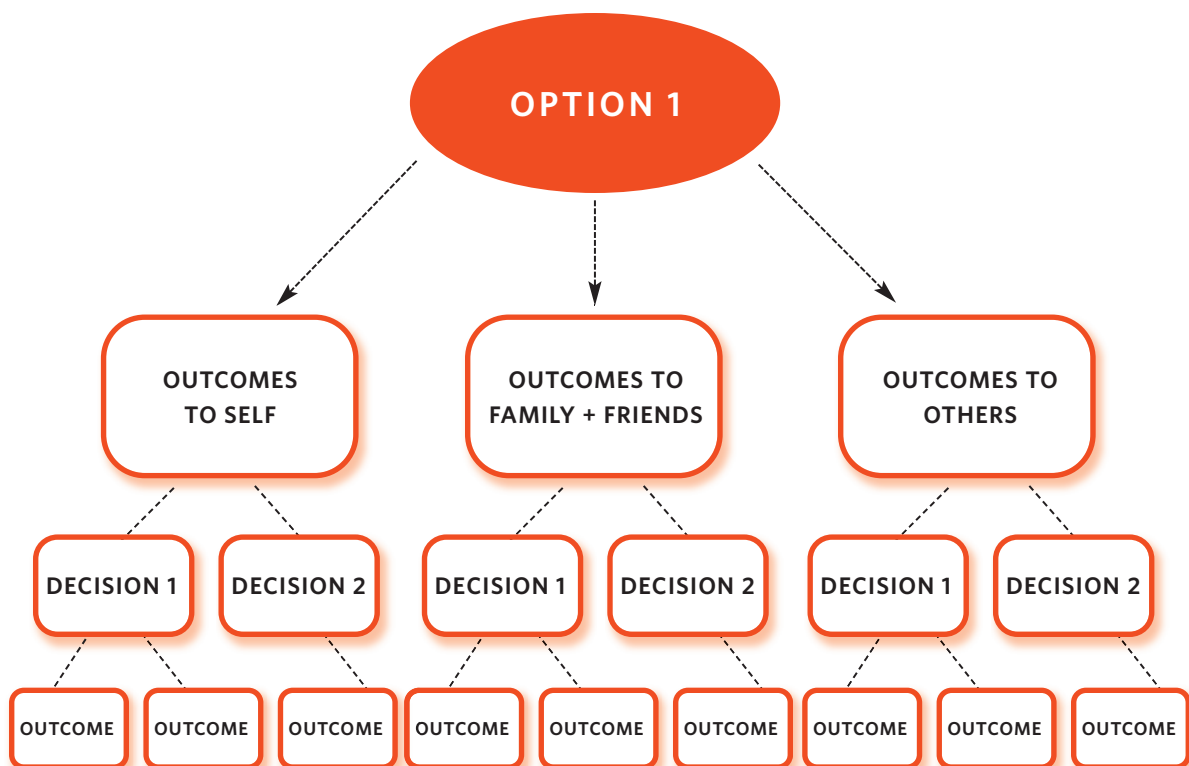
1. What are some steps in making important decisions?
2. Sometimes it might seem safer not to make any decision at all in a difficult situation. Can girls give examples in which this might lead to worse problems than making a clear decision?
3. Ask the girls to discuss the last time they had to make a difficult decision. What did they decide? How did they make the decision?
4. Ask the girls to discuss a situation in which they observed a friend who made a decision that they knew was harmful to her. How did that make the girls feel? What did they say to her?



### **Activity for mentoring session: ACTIONS AND OUTCOMES**

This activity can help girls think more deeply about difficult decisions. The goal should be for girls to see that difficult decisions do not have easy answers and that there are outcomes for every decision that is made or not made. Start with a difficult situation (for example, an offer by a boyfriend to drink alcohol or go to a private room). Propose two different options for the girls to consider (for example, deciding to go to a private room or not). Discuss the possible outcomes of choosing one way or another. Then take each of the outcomes from the first decision as the starting point for the next decisions and outcomes. Explore how the decisions affect them as well as other people. Do the same with the other option. At each step of the process, draw branches of a decision tree on a large piece of paper or the blackboard to help girls understand 'actions and outcomes', like the example shown below. After a good conversation, review what has been learned.





### **Longer activity: ROLE PLAYING DECISIONS WITH DIFFERENT ENDINGS**



After a good discussion about decisions and decision trees, such as the one above, think about turning the discussion into a role play that could be performed for other children. Girls could act out the first part of the situation and then pose decision options to the audience. The next part of the play would then be based on the audience's decision at that point in the process. Different decisions could be acted out one after the other to help the actors and audience remember actions and outcomes. The actors and audience could all join in a larger discussion after the play.



### 3. Promoting Good Peer Pressure

'Peers' are one's friends or other people of one's own age. Girls feel peer pressure when their peers try to get them to do a certain thing, wear certain clothes, or act in a certain way. Peer pressure can push a girl to make poor choices because she wants to please her peers or be like them. Peer pressure can also be good if a girl's peers help her to make better choices and help her stay away from those who might cause her harm.

Here are some examples of good (positive) peer pressure.

- A boy is pressuring his girlfriend to have sex, saying that he will leave her if she will not have sex. Her friends tell her to refuse, reminding her that she risks becoming pregnant and having to leave school. They remind her that if he really cared for her, he would not mind and that her focus right now should be on her school work. Her friends use gentle, positive pressure to convince her to leave her boyfriend.
- A girl is showing off the new shoes and skirt she received from an older man. Instead of admiring them, her friends tell her that spending time with a man and taking gifts from him can be dangerous because he may come to expect things from her. They tell her that she will have time when she is older to have beautiful things but that now is the time for their school uniforms and studies. The girl's friends are trying to use good pressure to convince the girl to not have a 'sugar daddy'.

Here are examples of harmful (negative) peer pressure.

- A group of girls is discussing boys and kissing. It becomes clear that one girl has never had a boyfriend. The group starts to tease her and tells her that she is still a baby, that she will never be a real woman, and that she is not pretty. As the days go by, they try to find her a boyfriend even though she says she would rather work on her studies. The group is trying to pressure the girl to get a boyfriend.
- A girl is showing a friend her new shoes and earrings, saying that she is very mature and beautiful now that she has left school to get married. She tells her friend that she does not know why she stays in school because if she leaves to

get married, she will have many beautiful things and not have to work at classes anymore. She tells her friends they should do the same. The married friend is trying to pressure her unmarried friend to leave school and get married.

When girls learn how peer pressure can be either harmful or good, they are empowered to make wise choices about their lives and whom they choose as friends. Girls can choose to say “no” to harmful pressures about having sex, using drugs or alcohol, or dropping out of school. A girl can choose to find new friends if her friends are always pressuring her in bad ways. Girls can choose to follow good peer pressure by studying together, staying away from dangerous peers or adults, and choosing friends who support good choices.

## QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES



### ***Discussion questions***

1. What are the different kinds of peer pressure?
2. Why do people give in to peer pressure?
3. What feelings can result from being pressured?
4. What do girls need to avoid giving in to negative peer pressure?



### ***Activity for mentoring session: ROLE PLAY ABOUT PEER PRESSURE***

Peer pressure can be both positive and negative. The goal of this activity is to teach girls that peer pressure can make girls feel good about themselves or bad about themselves. At the end of the activity, girls will be able to recognize when peer pressure is positive and when it is negative. In this activity, girls act out different stories by using role play. One of the stories shows an example of positive peer pressure while other stories are examples of negative peer pressure.

Divide the girls into small groups of four or five. Allow the groups enough time to practice their stories. Call the groups up one at a time for their role plays. The following are four possible stories that can be given to each of the groups. Each group should be told about its story, but the other groups should not know. As girls prepare the role plays, they should remember to involve everyone in their group and treat each member respectfully. Do not use a real situation that might embarrass someone.



**STORY 1:** A girl named Anna who just moved to the community is standing by the road. Two other girls who have lived in the community for a long time walk by her. The community girls do not like the strange clothes that Anna is wearing. They make comments that her clothes are ugly and that she is not one of them. What should Anna do?

**STORY 2:** A girl named Aissa is a good student and does not have a boyfriend. Aissa's parents tell her that she is lucky to be able to go to school, she should study hard so that she can succeed, and she is not allowed to have a boyfriend. Aissa's friends all have boyfriends. They tell her how wonderful it is to have a boyfriend, but her friends are not good students. Aissa thinks that she would like a boyfriend. Aissa's friends offer to find her a boyfriend. What should Aissa do?

**STORY 3:** Julie wants to do well in school but she does not understand the teacher's lessons. Julie is not doing well on the tests that the teacher gives. Many of Julie's friends tell her how important it is to ask questions when she does not understand an idea in school. They agree that they will also ask more questions to help Julie feel better about her questions. What should Julie do?

**STORY 4:** Fatou's father gave her money to go to the market and buy eggs for her family. On the way, Fatou meets some girls who have new earrings. They tell Fatou that their fathers gave them money to buy these earrings. Fatou thinks that she should have nice earrings, too, but she knows that her father would get very angry if she did not buy the eggs for her family. What should Fatou do?

You can make your own stories.

After each role play story, ask the rest of the girls what the girl in the story should do. When the group agrees about what the girl should do, the girls in the group can continue acting out the end of the story. At the end of the session, ask all the girls which stories were negative and which were positive. Ask them how they felt when a girl faced negative peer pressure and when a girl faced positive peer pressure.

## 4. Understanding Emotions

Feeling well and happy is important for everyone. When girls feel well and happy they can perform well in school, set goals, make good choices, and look forward to what the future may bring. If a girl grows up in a loving family and is encouraged to learn, eat well, and plan for the future, that girl feels good about her life. Even if a girl is generally happy, it is normal to also feel sad from time to time.

Feeling deep sadness, often called 'depression', over a long time, however, can negatively affect a young girl's future. If a girl goes through many hardships, such as harsh treatment, poverty, or the loss of a parent or other family member to illness, she may feel very alone and deeply sad about her life. This sadness can cause her to lose interest in school. She can lose interest in playing games with friends. She may feel that she has no hope for a better life. She may feel that she does not matter or that she has no power to change her life. She may feel tired and not want to eat. If she carries this deep sadness inside her for a long time, she may turn to drugs or alcohol, or engage in risky behavior.



## Helping a girl who feels deep sadness

Deep sadness can sometimes be treated by talking with the girl. A mentor can start by making a safe space where the girl can talk about her feelings. If the girl can talk about what is bothering her, her mentor can also discuss ways that can help to make her life better. A girl may be helped by drawing pictures about what she has been through or writing about her feelings in a journal. Encouraging a sad girl to spend time talking, playing, and studying with other children and adults may also help her feel better about herself and feel important. If she begins to feel like she is valued by someone else, she may feel happier. A mentor can be a great support to a girl by listening and showing that she cares.

Feeling sad may be only a small part of a bigger problem. If a mentor thinks that a girl may be feeling very sad for a long time, it is important to try and find the cause of this sadness. For example, some girls experience abuse or neglect at home or have lived through a terrible event. Sometimes deep sadness can be caused by a medical problem or illness and a doctor may be able to help with medicine. Remember that feeling sad over a long time can be serious. If you feel that a girl is at risk of being so unhappy that she may hurt herself, it is important to ask for help from parents, religious leaders, trained counselors, psychologists, or doctors. Some people may not believe that deep sadness is a problem, but it is a serious problem, and a girl who feels unhappy over time should be helped.

## Helping girls who experience traumatic events

'Traumatic events' are events that are especially harsh and can cause great pain and suffering. Girls may have experienced traumatic events in their lifetime, such as war, floods, fires, violent crimes such as kidnapping, rape, or loss of family members, or sexual or physical abuse. Even a long time after traumatic events, girls may not be able to stop thinking about what they have experienced and may have trouble dealing with their pain. When someone has not worked through her feelings due to experiencing a traumatic event, she may have deep sadness, fear of being alone, or difficulty sleeping. She may even avoid talking with people much of the time. It is very important for mentors to recognize these signs, and ask for help from parents, religious leaders, trained counselors, psychologists, or doctors.

## QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES



### **Discussion questions**

1. What are the signs that a girl may be experiencing deep sadness?
2. Ask girls to think about a time when they were very sad. What did they need at the time to feel better?
3. Ask girls to think about a time when a family member or friend has been very sad. What did the girls do to help make that person feel better? How did it work?



### **Activity for mentoring session: DEALING WITH SADNESS**

Explain to the girls that life can be difficult and everyone feels sad sometimes. Ask the girls to remember a time when they were very sad, and what they did to feel better. If the girls do not want to discuss what made them sad in a group, do not pressure them to do so. The activity should focus on what they did to make themselves feel better and why it made them feel better. When girls hear about ways in which their peers deal with sadness, it may help them to deal better with their own feelings.

Here are some examples of healthy ways in which girls may deal with their sadness:

1. Talk to someone (friend, mentor, teacher, parent, role model, community leader, or religious leader)
2. Write in a journal
3. Cry
4. Exercise
5. Draw, paint, be creative in some way
6. Write a poem
7. Think of people you love
8. Think of something happy



Be sure to discuss things people do when they are sad that are not healthy, such as taking drugs or alcohol, yelling at people, hurting themselves or others, not eating, or staying alone all of the time. Explain that these behaviors are very harmful.

### *When to Talk to a Professional*

Girls may tell you that they know someone who is using drugs or alcohol or harming herself in some way.

Whenever there is a situation that you do not know how to handle, speak to a professional (counselor, psychologist, doctor, religious leader).







## IV

# REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND SEXUALITY

This part of the *Mentoring Guide* is about reproductive health and sexuality—an important topic for growing girls and boys. Puberty and maturity, sexually transmitted infections (STIs), HIV and AIDS, pregnancy, birth control, and sexual health are topics that often are not spoken about openly. As a result, false information is spread. When young people believe this false information, they may act in ways that are harmful to themselves and others.

Mentors play a very important role in sharing truthful information about these topics. Because of the trust between mentors and girls, mentors are better able to talk about topics girls may not feel comfortable discussing with anyone else. Mentors can support and encourage girls in their growth so that as young women they can make good choices, especially about sexuality. The Guide presents information to help mentors discuss these important topics.

# 1. Understanding Puberty and Sexuality

Discussing puberty is very important to help growing girls and boys understand at least part of why they think and feel as they do. During puberty, bodies change, emotions and feelings change, and children begin to grow and mature in body, mind, and spirit. As they grow physically, they gain more responsibility.

Puberty is the stage in life in which the body undergoes important changes. Children become adolescents, and adolescents become adults. This stage of growth has two parts: physical maturity and emotional maturity. To 'mature' means to develop physically and emotionally. 'Emotional maturity' means leaving behind the way children think and act and start thinking and acting like an adult. 'Physical maturity' for a girl means that her body develops into the body of a woman and becomes ready for bearing children. Physical maturity happens naturally. Emotional maturity must be learned. Girls should be aware of the changes in their bodies and the responsibilities and privileges that these changes bring.

## *What is Responsibility?*

- \* Responsibility is the ability to carry out a task to a successful completion
- \* Responsibility is the ability to answer for one's actions
- \* Responsibility is the ability to choose for oneself between right and wrong

## Changes in girls' bodies, thoughts, and feelings

Menstruation is one important change that happens to a girl's body during puberty. Other changes can include growing taller, developing breasts and fully defined hips, and growing hair in the pubic area and under the arms. The body changes because hormone levels in the body are changing. 'Hormones' are natural chemicals in the body that have many important functions. The role that hormones play in puberty includes helping a girl's body develop the ability to have children, such as being

able to menstruate and feed babies with breast milk. There are different hormones for boys and girls.

Hormones also create changes in emotions. Girls may feel happy one moment and sad the next. This is a normal change and is the beginning of emotional maturity, which means understanding the emotions and feelings and making good decisions. When girls know about this natural change in their emotions they are more likely to understand and accept it. At this time of physical and emotional change, girls may feel pressure from their friends or their changing emotions to become sexually active. Girls' interest in sex can become much stronger. Girls should know about these changes and accept their new feelings as part of growing up.

What families and communities expect of girls may also change as girls pass through puberty. Some communities have ceremonies to mark this important move from being a child to becoming a responsible adult. Most girls and boys who pass through puberty have more household and family responsibilities. Families may expect a girl to leave school she can take a job or get married. When girls face leaving school, it may be a good time to help the family and community learn how important it is to educate girls. However, it is important that girls—and boys—also accept the new responsibilities at this stage of life.

### Social expectations of sexual maturity in girls

Sexual maturity comes with a great deal of responsibility. Some communities expect that with menstruation, girls are ready for marriage and ready to begin having children. Menstruation can mark the time that some families remove their girls from school and arrange for their marriage.

Even when a marriage has not been arranged, some girls may become sexually active, either by choice or unfortunately by force. Girls must know that they have the right to say no to sex, even if they have a boyfriend. Girls can choose abstinence. 'Abstinence' is choosing not to have sex and is the only sure and safe way to avoid becoming pregnant or getting a sexually transmitted infection. A girl should feel ready to have sex, not just when her body is ready and mature, but only after her mind and spirit are ready and mature as well. She should be ready to choose if and when she will have sex, and with whom.



Mentors should encourage all girls to go to school even when they have their menstrual periods. Equip the girls with the knowledge of how to live with their periods. Mentors should help the community, parents, and schools understand that girls should be in school, even while they are menstruating. Girls who do not go to school during the time of month when they are menstruating tend to fall behind boys because they are not able to keep up with their studies. This puts girls at risk for not doing well on their exams and prevents girls from continuing with school.

## Responsibilities of sexual maturity

In addition to the physical and emotional changes that sexual maturity brings about to a young girl's life, many expectations lie ahead. With this sexual maturity of the body and mind comes responsibility. A girl may feel internal pressure from her own thoughts, feelings, and body to behave in a certain way. She may feel the same pressure from her friends who may challenge her to act or do things that make her feel uncomfortable.

Girls should be empowered to use good judgment before making a choice. Mature girls may feel family pressure to get married or leave school and find work. They may be asked to stay home and help their mothers with house chores. Mentors should encourage girls to stay in school and get an education. This means that girls will gain the knowledge they need to stay healthy, learn about STIs, and how to avoid getting infected, become more responsible about their choice to have sex or abstain from it, and ask for advice when faced with a difficult situation. Staying in school strengthens a girl's self esteem and belief in her own ability to take responsibility for her actions. Mentors can also explain to girls about the importance of hygiene especially during menstruation and encourage girls to be creative about ways to keep themselves clean and protected (for example, keeping extra tissue paper in their pockets, or making their own sanitary pads).

## Changes in boys' bodies, thoughts, and feelings

Boys also have changes in their bodies, thoughts, and feelings during puberty. Mentors should help girls learn about these changes so girls can make better choices in the ways they act with boys during this time.

Boys' hormones during puberty create physical changes, too. They grow taller. They grow hair on their pubic area, under the arms, and often on their faces. Their muscles develop. Their bodies mature so they can father children. Their voices become deeper. Boys' emotions also shift. They may feel pressure from friends or their own hormones to become sexually active. Boys' interest in sex becomes much stronger. Boys may try to pressure girls into having sex. Their hormones may make them act more forcefully. Just because boys become more aggressive when their hormones are strong, girls do not have to have sex with them.

### Social expectations of sexual maturity in boys

Boys may also be expected to take on more responsibilities as men of the household. They may feel pressure from the family or the community to begin to plan to support their family now and in the future. Boys should also think about family planning and learn to make good choices for their lives.

For both boys and girls, puberty is a time of much change and responsibility. Boys may not have someone who can help them learn about the changes in their bodies, minds, and spirits, or to help them learn to make good choices. Mentors can help girls learn about changes that are happening to them and to boys so that girls can make good choices for their own future and the future of their families.

### Responsibilities of sexual maturity

As their bodies mature, boys may feel the pressure to act like grown-ups. They begin to look like adults. They sound like men. They are expected to behave in a certain way, and take more responsibilities. They may even be expected to support the family with an income. With sexual maturity boys feel pressured from their own bodies, their hormones, and their feelings to engage in sex.

Male mentors and wise men in the community can guide boys into making good choices. By making good choices, boys can stay healthy and safe. They can stay away from getting girls pregnant by planning ahead to use condoms or by making sure that their partner is using a good method correctly. Because they are still young and not ready to take responsibility of a family, boys should also be taught to use good judgment.

## QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES



### **Discussion questions**

1. What does the word 'puberty' mean?
2. Name three changes that happen to a girl's body and three changes that happen to a boy's body during puberty.
3. What does it mean to be responsible and to have responsibility?
4. Talk about some of the emotional changes that happen during puberty.
5. What are hormones? Explain the relationship between 'hormones' and 'puberty'. Talk about how these two are related to preparing a girl's body to have babies.



### **Activity for mentoring session: TRUE OR FALSE ABOUT PUBERTY**

Hang two pieces of paper with the words 'True' and 'False' on opposite sides of the wall with tape. If paper is not available, or if the mentoring session is outside, draw a 'T' and an 'F' with a stick in the dirt. Make sure that there is a large distance between the two papers or letters. Ask girls to gather in the center of the open areas between the two signs. Read one of the comments on the list below. Then, ask the girls if they think that the statement is true to go to the 'True' side. If girls believe that the statement is not true, go to the 'False' side. If they do not know, they should make their best guess.

Once the girls have divided on the sides, ask them why they believe that the statement is true or false. Before providing the correct answer, allow the girls to discuss if they have different opinions. If girls change their minds during the discussion, let them know that they can switch sides. Before going to the next question, ask students to come back to the center again.

Following are some true/false questions about puberty to discuss with girls:

1. Puberty happens to girls only. (False. Both girls and boys experience puberty but in somewhat different ways.)
2. Some girls grow shorter during puberty. (False. Girls grow taller during puberty.)
3. During puberty, girls and boys begin to develop into more responsible adults. (True. Puberty is a time when girls and boys start to become adults in their bodies and minds.)



4. Girls' and boys' bodies produce hormones naturally. (True. Everyone produces hormones naturally.)
5. Girls and boys bodies produce the same kind of hormones (False. Girls and boys produce different hormones and at different rates.)
6. Hormones are responsible for some physical and emotional changes. (True. Hormones affect changes in girls' and boys' bodies and minds.)
7. During puberty, hormones help a girl's body to become ready for having children. (True. Part of becoming an adult is physical changes that prepare girls for having children.)
8. Emotional and physical changes are the same for boys and girls. (False. Girls and boys experience changes differently.)
9. Puberty means that girls are emotionally and physically ready to have babies. (False. Even if a girl's body is ready to have babies, she may still have a lot of growing to do in her mind before she would be a good mother.)
10. When it comes to making choices about having sex, a girl should be able to choose for herself instead of having someone else decide for her. (True. Girls are responsible for their own bodies and should only have sex if they are ready.)



## 2. Learning about Menstruation

One of the biggest changes for girls during puberty is menstruation. For most girls, menstruation begins between the ages of 9 and 12, but it can start later. The most visible sign of menstruation is bleeding from the vagina. If a woman's egg is not fertilized during sexual intercourse, the body gets rid of the lining of the uterus. This shedding of the lining is the bleeding that occurs during menstruation. Other normal signs can be sore or painful breasts, cramps in the lower stomach area, and feeling tired. Menstruation usually lasts three to seven days and comes about every 28 days.

While menstruation is a sign of a girl's physical and sexual maturity, it can bring new discomfort and be troublesome. A mentor can guide girls about ways to deal with menstrual pain, taking care of her body, and keeping it clean through regular washing of the vaginal area with soap and water. Mentors can show girls how to make their own sanitary pads. (See the activity on making reusable sanitary pads). Mentors can also give advice about the importance of changing pads often to avoid embarrassment.

### *Facts about Menstruation*

Mentors should encourage girls to take special care with personal hygiene while they are menstruating. Keeping clean, bathing regularly, and changing menstrual pads when needed are very important.

As a girl learns about how to live with menstruation, she will feel strong and confident about herself. She will feel strong about not missing any school days during menstruation as she has control over her needs during those days. Discussing with a mentor and friends how to live with menstruation will increase her chances of staying in school without interrupting her education.

## QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES



### **Discussion questions**

1. For most girls, at what ages does menstruation usually begin (give the age range)?
2. What happens to the body when a girl begins menstruating?
3. List some of the symptoms that come with menstruation.
4. What steps can girls take to make sure that they remain clean and do not miss school when they are menstruating?



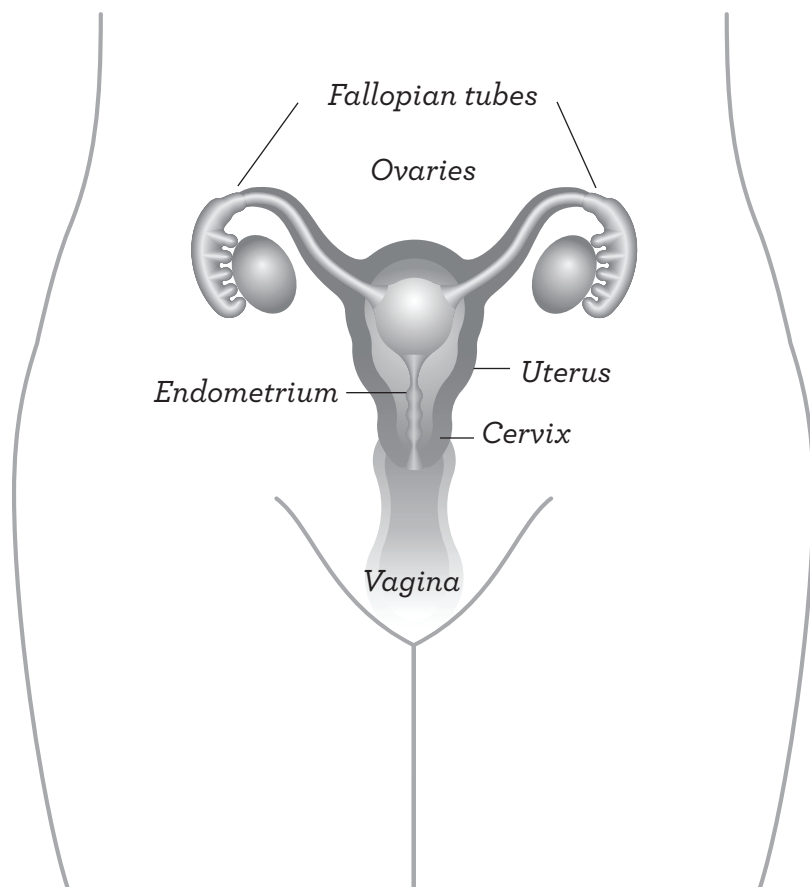
### **Activity for mentoring session: LEARNING ABOUT REPRODUCTION**

This activity is best for girls in upper primary or secondary school. Review the diagram below. Explain to the girls that the diagram is a drawing of their reproductive system—the parts of their bodies that make it possible to have children.

The woman's internal sex organs are made up of two ovaries that contain the eggs that are the start of life. During each period, one egg matures and travels through the fallopian tubes to the uterus. As an egg travels down the fallopian tubes, the body knows whether or not the egg has been fertilized by a man's sperm. During this period, the uterus builds up extra tissue so that if the egg is fertilized, it can be fixed in the uterus. If the egg is not fertilized, the extra tissue, which is the lining of the uterus, and the unfertilized eggs are passed from the body through the cervix, down the vagina, and out the body. This happens during menstruation.

For this activity, ask the girls to do two things:

1. Identify on the diagram the following items: fallopian tubes, ovaries, uterus, cervix, and vagina.
2. Draw a picture of the menstruation cycle as the egg is created in the ovaries and travels out the vagina.



The Female Reproductive System



### **Longer activity: MAKING REUSABLE SANITARY PADS**

Reusable, cloth sanitary pads are safe and easy to make. Girls can choose to use them instead of disposable sanitary pads if the girls cannot afford disposable pads. Women from the beginning of time have used reusable sanitary pads. Today, these kinds of pads are seen as both environmentally friendly and a good practice to save money.

For girls to make their own sanitary napkins, they need the following supplies:

- A needle and thread
- Heavy cloth material (old material from blankets and cotton jackets are okay).  
Be sure to wash all material before using it for sanitary pads.
- Scissors

### **MAKING AN OUTER COVER WITH WINGS FOR THE PAD**

The outer cover makes a pocket that holds a thick inner pad. The wings of the cover can be folded over the sides of the underpants and pinned in place with safety pins.

1. Cut two pieces of material using the pattern in Image 1. Each piece should be about 22 centimeters long and about 14 centimeters wide at the widest part with the wings.
2. Fold one of the pieces in half so that the wings are touching each other. Cut a slit into the folded side of the piece so that it goes from the fold until three centimeters from the edge of the wing. This should look like Image 2. When the piece is unfolded, it should look like Image 3.
3. Sew around the edges of the slit to make the material stronger. Place the first piece on top of the second piece of material and sew them around the whole outer edge. When this is done, there should be a pocket.
4. Girls will want to make at least two outer covers.

### **MAKING INNER PADS**

1. With a large piece of clean material, fold several times until the material is several centimeters thick.
2. After the material is folded to a good thickness, cut all the layers into the shape of Image 4. This should be about 20 centimeters long and about 12 centimeters wide.

3. Sew along the edge of the material so that all the layers form one single pad.
4. For the inner pad, girls will want to make at least four or five (repeat steps one to three).

### WEARING THE PADS

1. Inserting the inner pad into the outer cover, girls then place the pad in their underpants and safety pin the wings in place. They should put the side with the opening next to their underpants and the smooth side with the big single piece next to their skin.
2. Girls should change the inner pad after several hours of wearing it. Store used pads in a plastic bag or basket away from other objects.

### WASHING AND MAINTAINING PADS

1. In the evening, wash the used outer covers and pads in soap and hot water.
2. Allow the outer covers and pads to dry overnight before using them again.







### 3. Becoming Pregnant at the Right Time

Girls must learn that they can become pregnant as soon as they begin puberty and begin to menstruate, if they have sexual intercourse. This can even happen the first time a girl has intercourse. Sexual intercourse is when the male sex organ enters a female vagina.

Girls and women's bodies produce eggs in the ovaries. During the fertile part of the month when the woman is most likely to become pregnant, ovulation happens. This means a woman's egg is mature and ready to pass from the ovaries to the uterus through the fallopian tubes. There are physical signs a girl or woman can see that will tell her if she is ovulating (meaning that her body is ready for her to release one egg). The fluid that comes from her vagina will be thinner and clearer during her ovulation time than during other times of the month. A girl or woman will see this thin and clear fluid during the time that her body is most ready to get pregnant. This happens around the 14th day after the first day of a 28-day menstrual cycle. Allowing for differences among females, pregnancy can happen if sexual intercourse takes place between days 10 and 17 of this cycle. (See the diagram about a woman's monthly cycle on page 64 of this Guide.)



*How many eggs does a woman actually have?*

A human female typically has about 400,000 possible eggs all formed before birth. Only several hundred (about 480) of these eggs will ever be released during her productive years. Normally in humans, after puberty, and because of female hormones, one egg matures in every menstrual cycle and is released from its ovary. One month the left ovary will release one egg. The next month the right ovary will release one egg.

[http://www.drstandley.com/bodysystems\\_femalerepro.shtml](http://www.drstandley.com/bodysystems_femalerepro.shtml)

When a man and woman have sexual intercourse during this period, a man releases a liquid into the woman's vagina. This liquid is called semen and contains sperm. If a man's sperm reaches a woman's egg, the sperm can fertilize it and make the woman pregnant. The sperm and egg join to form a cell that is called a zygote. After about two weeks, the zygote divides into many cells and becomes an embryo. At this time, the embryo fixes itself in the uterus and develops into a baby. Pregnancy lasts about nine months from the time of the last menstrual cycle to childbirth.

Teaching girls about how pregnancy happens and how to avoid pregnancy is extremely important. Girls' education has proven to delay child bearing until girls are emotionally and physically more mature and ready to take on the responsibilities of becoming a mother and taking care of babies. The next section on birth control explains ways to prevent pregnancies.

## QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES



### **Discussion questions**

1. Is it important for girls to learn about how pregnancy happens? Explain why or why not.
2. Describe in detail the process that makes a girl pregnant.
3. What is a zygote?
4. Why is it important for a girl to finish her education before starting to have babies? How does education change the life of a mother and her child?



### **Activity for mentoring session: TRUE OR FALSE QUIZ ABOUT PREGNANCY**

Each statement from the list below will help girls understand the facts and myths about pregnancy. Write each statement on a piece of paper and fold it. Put all the folded papers in a pile.

Explain the rules. The mentor calls on one girl to pick one piece of paper. Before reading the written statement, the girl starts with the words, 'You cannot get pregnant if...', and continues reading aloud to the group. Those who think the answer is 'True' raise their hands first. The mentor then picks one girl to explain.

Those who think the answer is 'False' raise their hands next. The mentor picks one girl to explain. Girls are allowed to discuss the different answers by taking turns.

Following are some possible true/false answers about pregnancy.

A girl CANNOT get pregnant if:

1. She has not begun her period yet. (False. Eggs can be fertile before a girl's period begins.)
2. She has irregular periods. (False. When periods begin they often are irregular and eggs can travel to the uterus at anytime.)
3. She has sex standing up. (False. A girl can become pregnant in any position.)
4. She urinates immediately after having sex. (False. Urine passes through the urethra, which is separate from the vaginal area, so while urinating urine does not wash out or touch the sperm in the vagina.)
5. She washes her vagina immediately after having sex. (False. Sperm get into the uterus very quickly. They swim very fast, so it is not possible to wash them out of the vagina.)
6. She is younger than 12 years old. (False. Eggs can be produced in someone as young as 9 years old.)
7. Her partner pulls out his penis before ejaculating. (False. Sperm can come out even before ejaculation and cause pregnancy.)
8. If she is having sex for the first time. (False. A girl can become pregnant even if she is having sex for the first time.)
9. The man she is having sex with promises that she will not get pregnant. (False. There is always the risk of getting pregnant. A promise does not keep a girl safe from getting pregnant.)
10. She is correctly using a method to protect herself. (True. Using birth control or 'contraceptive' correctly can prevent pregnancy.)

## 4. Knowing about Birth Control

### Family planning

By having sexual intercourse, girls and boys are making an important decision. This includes the possibility of becoming pregnant, starting a family, getting a disease, and developing stronger emotional feelings for another person. It is much better to think about these decisions carefully beforehand. Family planning is making the decision about when a person wants to start a family and how many children he or she wants to have.

A girl should think carefully about these issues.

- When do I want to get married? To whom?
- Do I want to have children? When? How many?
- How do I become pregnant?
- Do I want to become sexually active before marriage?
- How can I protect myself from getting pregnant before I am ready?
- How can I protect myself from getting a sexually transmitted disease (STI) or HIV?

If a girl thinks about these questions, she may be able to make better choices as she goes through puberty and grows into an adult. If a girl does choose to become sexually active, she should think about using birth control to help avoid getting pregnant before she wants to have children. Some forms of birth control, such as condoms, also help prevent the spread of STIs such as HIV.

Some people think of 'birth control' as family planning or child spacing because it gives women and men more choice about when children are born. Others think of birth control only as a way of preventing pregnancy. Either way, birth control is making choices that can help prevent unplanned pregnancies. Girls should learn, however, that no birth control choice (except abstinence) works all the time. Each birth control choice has different risks. Girls should also learn that it may be wise to choose more than one type of birth control to use at the same time to prevent both unwanted pregnancy and STIs.


## Forms of birth control

There are many different methods of birth control. This section talks about many of them, how well each works, and the related risks:

**ABSTINENCE.** Abstinence means not having sexual intercourse. Abstinence from sexual intercourse is the only form of birth control that works all the time. To ‘abstain’ means to not do something. Abstaining often means avoiding something that can be harmful, like smoking or drinking alcohol. When a young person abstains from having sexual intercourse, it means simply that he or she is not having sex. A girl may abstain by delaying the first time she has sex. A person who has already had sex may also decide to abstain—to stop having sex for a period of time.

Abstinence not only prevents pregnancy, but it also prevents infections that are spread through sex, including HIV. Mentors should encourage girls to wait to have sex for the first time and should teach girls that abstinence is an important choice. Mentoring activities can teach girls about abstinence and the skills girls can use to make this choice work for them. Mentors should also plan sessions to talk about other topics in reproductive and sexual health, including other types of birth control. Even girls who choose to wait need information about birth control and condoms. Girls will need this information later when they choose to become sexually active. Studies have shown that talking about birth control does not make young people want to try sex sooner.

**(MALE) CONDOM.** Often simply called a ‘condom’, the male condom is a tube-like bag, closed at one end that is fitted over the erect penis before the penis comes close to a woman’s vagina. When the man ejaculates—when he discharges his



### *For school girls, abstinence is best*

Mentors should encourage girls to wait until they are older and have completed school before they have sexual intercourse. But if they choose to be sexually active, girls should be urged to have their male partners use a condom. Condoms are the easiest to find and the least costly choice for birth control. A sexually active female who does not use birth control has a 90 percent chance of getting pregnant within one year.

semen—the semen collects inside the condom, keeping sperm from fertilizing an egg. The condom is then removed carefully to avoid spilling the semen. Condoms may also protect against STIs. They are widely available in most countries and are low in cost. The main problem is that a woman or girl may not be able to convince a partner to use a condom. In addition, if the condom breaks or is used incorrectly, pregnancy and STIs may not be prevented.

**DIAPHRAGM.** A diaphragm is a thin rubber cup with a soft and flexible edge that is placed in the vagina and completely covers the cervix. It is held in place by the vaginal muscles. Diaphragms come in different sizes, so a doctor or health care worker must determine the right size for a woman's body. The diaphragm must be the right size and must be placed correctly or it does not work. It holds spermicide that kills the man's sperm. Spermicide is purchased separately and comes in different forms such as jelly, cream, and foam. It must be inserted into the diaphragm within half an hour before intercourse. Diaphragms should be left in the vagina for six to eight hours after intercourse to make sure the sperm is no longer able to reach the egg. Diaphragms do not protect against unwanted pregnancy unless the spermicide is used with it. Weight gain or loss or changes in the vagina can cause the diaphragm to no longer fit properly. This requires another visit to the clinic for refitting. A diaphragm must be kept clean and free from tears or rips. It cannot be used during menstruation and does not protect against STIs. A diaphragm and the visit to the doctor may be costly.

**FEMALE CONDOM.** The female condom is a plastic pouch with rings on each end. At the closed end of this pouch, the flexible ring is placed into the vagina so that it covers the cervix. At the other open end, the ring stays outside of the vaginal opening. The sheath between the two rings makes a pouch to line the entire vaginal area and prevent sperm from entering the uterus. Female condoms may protect against STIs. However, there is the possibility that the female condom may not work. It may break. It is easy to wear incorrectly. Both cases can lead to unwanted pregnancy or STIs. While a prescription is not needed to get a female condom, it can be costly and a shop may not have them. It is also recommended that the female condom be used only once.

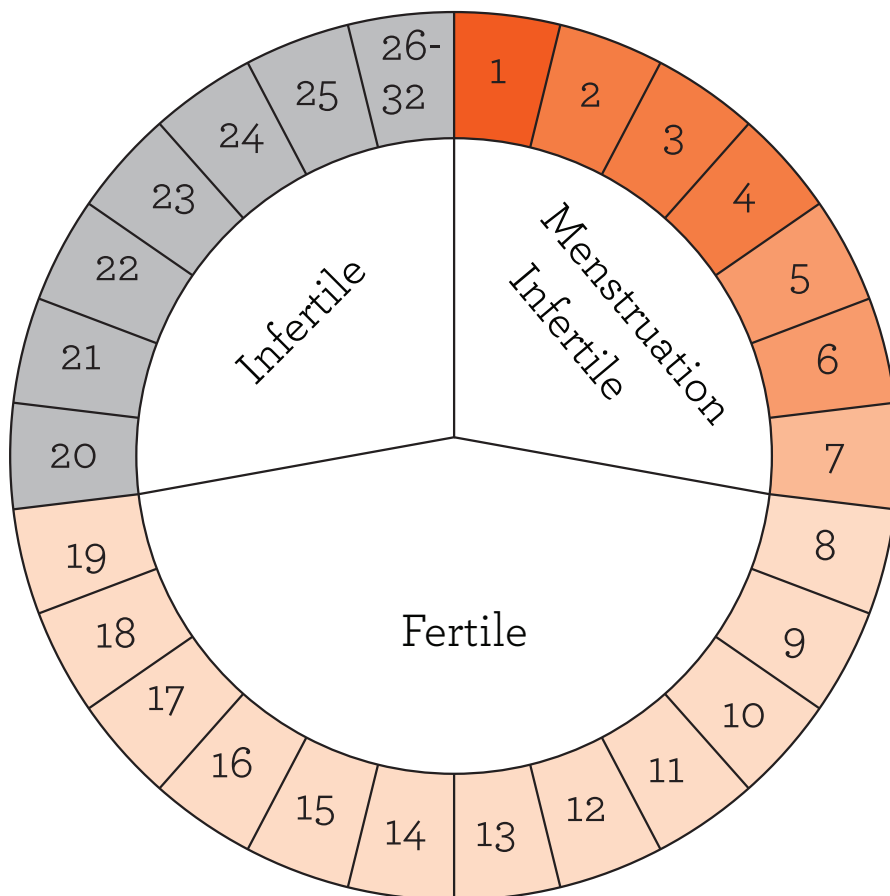


**BIRTH CONTROL PILLS.** Birth control pills are usually available with a prescription and may be costly. Birth control pills are taken once every day all month long. When taken correctly and regularly, each pill has a hormone that keeps the body from becoming pregnant. Birth control pills alone do not protect against STIs, including HIV. It is easy to forget to take the pill. The pill does not work if it is not taken every day.

**INTER-UTERINE DEVICE (IUD).** An IUD is a small implant put into the cervix through the vagina. This implant helps to control the flow of eggs and sperm to prevent fertilization and pregnancy. IUDs are only available through clinics or hospitals. Implanting them is minor surgery that must be followed by regular visits to make sure there are no problems. IUDs are costly. IUDs alone do not protect against STIs, including HIV.

**INJECTIONS.** Hormones can be injected several times a year to prevent pregnancy. The injections mean regular visits to a clinic. They can be costly. They do not protect against STIs, including HIV.

**STANDARD DAYS METHOD.** Some people believe that it is possible to count the days in a woman's menstrual cycle each month and know when it is less likely that an egg is ready to be fertilized. This is called the Standard Days Method. This is a riskier way of preventing pregnancy and does not protect against STIs, including HIV. It is hard for young girls to figure out their fertile days because their reproductive systems have not fully matured and often their menstrual cycles are irregular. This method is even risky for older women who have more regular cycles. The Standard Days Method may only be used by women whose cycles are always between 26 and 32 days long. In this system, days 1-7 of a woman's menstrual cycle are considered infertile. Days 8-19 are considered fertile. Infertility is considered to resume beginning on day 20. When used to avoid pregnancy, the Standard Days Method has a failure rate of 5 percent per year. It is possible for mature girls to learn their cycles well and pay close attention to their cycle during the month. It is important to know that a girl or woman can get pregnant if she has sexual intercourse before the ovulation period begins because a man's sperm can stay alive in a female's body for up to 36 hours.



### Standard Days Method

([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rhythm\\_method](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rhythm_method))

#### A WOMAN'S MONTHLY CYCLE

Above is a picture of a 26-32 day menstrual cycle. All girls and women have slightly different monthly cycles. Some women menstruate regularly, and other women have irregular cycles. It is important for a girl to be aware of her cycle so that she can anticipate when she is fertile.

## Unprotected sex

Although it is best to advise girls to remain abstinent, some girls may already be sexually active or may be planning to be sexually active soon. Girls must understand that unprotected sex may lead to STIs, HIV, or unplanned pregnancies. Mentors should encourage girls to get tested for HIV and to encourage their sexual partner to get tested as well. Mentors should also talk to girls about properly using condoms. If the mentor does not feel comfortable discussing condoms, she can ask a health professional to come to the mentoring session. Although discussing sex with young girls may be difficult, it is very important. Girls may not have anyone else with whom they can talk to about sex.

## QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES



### **Discussion questions**

1. Why do girls and boys need to learn about birth control?
2. Name five birth control methods. Which is the only method that works all the time?
3. What are some of the risks related to most birth control methods?
4. How can a girl explain to her younger sister the importance of birth control?



### **Activity for mentoring session: PICK A QUESTION FROM THE BASKET**

Cut ten pieces of paper, and write one question on each piece. Fold each piece of paper and put them in a hat or basket that is located in the middle of the classroom.

Divide the girls into two groups, and ask each group to choose a name for itself. Mentors can suggest examples such as, 'The Birth Controllers and The Alerts', 'The Eagles and The Cougars', or 'The Sisters and The Guardians'.

One member from the first group and one member from the second group should pick a question from the hat or basket that will be discussed quietly for a couple of minutes within their groups. A girl from the first group will pose the first group's question to the second group, and both groups can discuss the answers. Then the second group can pose its question to the first group. This keeps going until all the questions are answered and discussed.



### **Activity Question**

1. Why is birth control important?
2. Are male condoms completely effective? What happens if a condom breaks?
3. What can a girl do to protect herself against STIs?
4. Does staying in school and getting a good education help a girl make better decisions about when to have sex and when to start a family?
5. How can girls protect themselves against unwanted pregnancies?
6. Which method of birth control is completely effective? Why?
7. Name the different methods of birth control? Name the risks of each one.
8. Can a girl decide what birth control method she or her partner should use to avoid unwanted pregnancies? Why is this important?
9. Do girls feel pressured to have sex? If yes, what arguments can a girl use to convince others to respect her choices?
10. Explain how education about birth control can help girls plan a healthy life and a better future.



### **Longer activity: MENSTRUAL CYCLE JOURNAL**

Ask girls to keep a journal every day for three months. The first day of the journal should be the first day of a girl's menstrual cycle. The girl should keep careful notes about the way her body feels every day and what is happening to her body. For example, she might write about the heaviness or lightness of the flow of her menstruation. She might write about the other changes that she feels throughout the month, such as sore breasts or cramps in her lower stomach area.

## 5. Avoiding Sexually Transmitted Infections

Sexually transmitted infections (STIs) are infections that are passed from one person to another through sexual acts. STIs can be transmitted through vaginal intercourse, anal sex (between men or man-and-woman), oral sex, sexual abuse of children, and mother-to-baby infection during childbirth. Some STIs have symptoms such as open sores in the genital area, burning, itching, discharge, pain when urinating, and pain in the pelvis. Other STIs have no outward symptoms. Having an STI makes it easier to become infected with HIV when a person has sex with an HIV-infected person.

### Stigma of STIs

‘Stigma’ is like having a bad mark against a person. Stigma keeps a person from talking about something important—like STIs—for fear that others will not like them, will make fun of them, or not want to be around them. The stigma of STI often keeps people from talking about it and from seeking treatment when they are infected. Teens have high rates of STIs—they have the highest rate in many countries. Among males, teens have STI rates second only to males 20 to 24 years old.

Young women and girls can get STIs more easily than men and boys. Some of the ways that increase a person’s chances of getting an STI are

- **Sexual activity at a young age.** The younger a person starts having sex, the greater her chances of getting an STI.
- **Multiple sex partners.** People who have sexual contact—not just intercourse, but any form of sexual activity—with different partners are at very great risk of an STI.
- **Unprotected sex.** Unprotected sex means when someone does not use a form of birth control such as a condom. Condoms are the only form of birth control, other than abstinence, that reduces a girl’s risk of getting an STI. Spermicides, diaphragms, and other birth control methods may help prevent pregnancy, but they do not protect a person against STIs.

STIs are more likely to stay hidden in women's bodies than in men's bodies. If girls and women do not know they have an STI, they will not know to visit a health worker. If they are not treated, STIs can lead to diseases such as pelvic inflammatory disease and cervical cancer. STIs such as HIV can also be passed from mother to child in the womb.

## Seeking treatment for STIs

If a girl tells a mentor that she thinks she has an STI, the mentor should encourage her to see a health care worker. Having an STI makes it easier to get HIV. The girl should visit a health clinic for the following:

- STI testing and treatment
- HIV counseling and testing
- Pregnancy testing
- Family planning help
- Sexual abuse or rape
- Any other troubling or on-going health issue

## Why girls do not seek help for STIs

Young people often stay away from health clinics because they are afraid health workers will judge them or that others will find out. But everyone has the right to health care, and mentors should encourage girls to seek care for health problems. The problems that can occur from not going to a clinic can be much worse than embarrassment or judgment.

When girls and women cannot reach a clinic or health worker, they cannot get the care they need to prevent STIs, avoid passing them on, and get treatment. Young people who do not have the benefit of caring mentors may not know about STIs or how to try to prevent them. If they are very poor, they may feel that hunger and homelessness are more pressing needs. They may trade sex for food, shelter, or money. They may suffer sexual and physical abuse.



## QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES



### **Discussion questions**

1. What is an STI? How is it passed from one person to another?
2. Name two birth control methods that might protect against STI.
3. Why is it difficult for a person with STI to ask for help?
4. How can a girl help her brother or sister if she thinks they have an STI?



### **Activity for mentoring session: LET'S TALK ABOUT STIs**

This activity is meant to test the girls' knowledge about STIs and their ability to make good choices. The goal is to avoid getting an STI or to deal with it in a proper way in case they or someone they know needs help.

Cut out several pieces of paper. On each piece write one word that is related to STIs. Ask each girl to pick one paper. She will read the one word or definition and try to explain it to the group. Volunteers from the group can add more information. Some possible words are STI, HIV, health care, stigma, sexual abuse, unprotected sex, genital sores, infection, multiple sexual partners, and symptoms.



## 6. Staying away from Sugar Daddies

In some communities, girls may start having sex with older men for some sort of gain. These men, often called 'sugar daddies', offer money and gifts to the girls in exchange for sex. Although this is a common practice in many countries, it is not an acceptable one. It may seem like a good option to the girls, but it is very dangerous to the health of their bodies and minds.

### Why girls become involved with sugar daddies

Girls may become involved with sugar daddies for many reasons. Here are some examples:

- Girls want money to give to their families.
- Girls want money to help pay school fees or other school costs.
- Girls may be approached by their teachers and offered extra study time or better grades.
- Girls want gifts and attention.
- Girls want to feel attractive and appreciated by someone older.
- A girl wants an older man to take care of her over time, rather than a boy her own age who cannot take care of her.
- Girls may be pressured by their family if the family needs money.
- Girls may be pressured by friends who have sugar daddies.

### Having a sugar daddy is risky

Although girls may think that having a sugar daddy can bring them rewards, it is risky and can be very dangerous. Why would an adult man choose to be in a sexual relationship with a young girl other than to use his power to control the girls? It is hard to believe that the older men really care for what happens to the girls.

Here are some common problems with sugar daddies that put girls at great risk:

- Having sex for money is prostitution. Even having just one sugar daddy is prostitution and can lead a girl to have sex with other men for money, increasing her risk for pregnancy, STIs, and negative social stigma.

- Sugar daddies often have more than one sex partner and sometimes a wife. This also puts a girl at great risk for HIV and other infections caused by having sex.
- Having sex with anyone can lead to unwanted pregnancy.
- Sugar daddies promise to take care of the girls over a long period of time but rarely do.
- It is not likely that a sugar daddy will love a girl or marry her because he may have other women and may have a wife.
- Sugar daddies often abuse girls if the girls begin to refuse sex or make requests of the man. Differences in age and physical strength may make sugar daddies feel they have the right to abuse a girl in this way.
- Even if a girl wants the sugar daddy's money to pay school fees, she is more likely to drop out of school because she has a sugar daddy. This does not help girls finish their schooling, which would make them able to earn their own money without a sugar daddy. When the sugar daddy later leaves a girl, she is even less able to support herself.

## Saying 'no' to sugar daddies

Girls, their families, and the community must know that having sugar daddies does not solve problems. The risks of having a sugar daddy are far greater than any gain. Girls must work with their families and the community to develop ways for girls to stay away from sugar daddies. Mentors can play a big part in helping girls think through problems about sugar daddies and make wise choices.

Here are some ways that mentors can help girls say 'no' to sugar daddies:

- Mentors can explain to girls the risks and dangers of having sugar daddies.
- With greater inner strength through schooling and mentoring, girls are able to stay away from those who would abuse or control them. Girls are able to make better choices about their friends and boyfriends.
- Families and communities must also be told about the risks of sugar daddies and should work together to stop them. Mentors can tell parents and the community about these risks.
- Everyone must understand that AIDS cannot be cured by having sex with a virgin. This wrong information has caused many men to seek out sex with young girls. Not only does this not cure AIDS, it puts even more people at risk.

When a young girl has sex with an older man, this does not take away a family's or community's poverty. In fact, having a sugar daddy may only make things worse for the girl and her family. This is a very serious problem and should be treated with great importance and care.

## QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES



### **Discussion questions**

1. What is a sugar daddy?
2. Why might a girl choose to have a sugar daddy?
3. Why does having a sugar daddy not solve poverty or family problems?
4. What can girls do to resist a sugar daddy who approaches them?



### **Activity for mentoring session: HOW WOULD YOU RESPOND?**

The purpose of this activity is to prepare girls to resist pressure to have sex, either with their boyfriends or with sugar daddies. Below are some words that boys or men (sugar daddies) might use to convince a girl to have sex or do something that she does not want to do. Write these down on the blackboard, a large notepad, a note card, or small pieces of paper. Have the girls get together in groups of three or four. Each group should take two to three phrases and think about how to respond. After everyone has had some time to discuss responses, talk about them as a large group. Maybe even give a small prize for the best response!

What boys or men might say to persuade a girl to have sex:

*'You are just afraid'.*

*'You owe me'.*

*'Why not? Everyone is doing it!'*

*'What do you think can happen?'*

*'You know that I love you'.*

*'Do it or goodbye'.*

*'I will find someone else who will do it'.*

*'I can hurt you if you do not do it'.*

*'Nothing will go wrong'.*

*'I will buy you nice clothes if you do'.*

*'I will take care of everything'.*

*'Are you not grown up enough to?*  
*'You cannot get pregnant if you just do this'.  
'You cannot get pregnant the first time'.  
'But we are getting married anyway'.  
'You are old enough now'.  
'You are beautiful'.  
'I think I love you'.  
'I like you when you are angry'.*



*Illustration by AGSP scholar Kayemba Shadiah*

## 7. Stopping Violence against Girls and Women

*“Violence against women” means any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivations of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life’.*

—1993 UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women

Violence against girls and women is sometimes called ‘gender-based violence’. It is violence that happens because of the genders of the people involved. It can be men against men or women against women, but it is most often violent acts that men do to women because men believe women to be weaker or lower in status. Gender-based violence usually comes from accepted cultural beliefs and practices. Every act of violence because of gender makes it harder to reach the goal of equality. Such violence worsens women’s status in society and gives permission to men to use force against girls and women again in the future.

Violence against girls and women happens in every country in the world. It happens to rich people and to poor people. It is difficult to know exactly how many girls and women have experienced violence. Women and girls often do not tell others about violence they have been through because of the shame and stigma attached to it and because many people think that it is a ‘private’ or ‘family affair’.

### Standards around the world

Violence against girls and women causes harm and suffering. It can happen in the home or outside the home. It can be sexual abuse of female children. It can be rape of a wife by her husband. It can be female genital cutting and other traditions harmful to women. It can be sexual harassment at school or work. It can be trafficking of women, including forced prostitution or sexual slavery. Threats of violence or the use of force to make a girl or woman do something against her will is thought of as violence.



## Traditional practices

Men and boys learn to become violent against girls and women by seeing it themselves in the family or in the community. When the community does not respond to men and boys who use violence to control women and girls, violence becomes an acceptable behavior. Women and girls who are refugees, in conflict situations, migrant workers, or elderly may be at an even higher risk to experience violence.

## Examples of violence

Following are examples of violence that are often caused because of the genders of people involved.

### **ABUSE AND BULLYING**

Violence takes many forms such as abuse and bullying. Although men and boys can be victims of abuse, women and girls are more often the victims. Abuse can happen in many ways. It can include

- Physical abuse—hitting, pushing, using force to hurt or hold someone, or using a weapon such as a rock, stick, knife, or gun
- Emotional abuse—yelling or shouting, saying hurtful things, or calling someone worthless or stupid
- Sexual abuse—forcing a girl or woman to have sex or to perform sexual acts against her will, making negative comments about a girl's appearance, or making sexual comments

Understanding and recognizing that these actions are forms of abuse is the first step to doing something about them. By knowing what abuse is and having inner strength to make good choices, girls may be able to prevent many abusive actions before they start. Here are some ideas mentors can help girls to remember about abuse:

- No form of abuse happens by accident.
- Abuse is not the fault of the girl or woman being abused.
- One of the reasons one person abuses another is to control them.

- Some abusers use their physical strength to force a woman to perform sexual acts. If the woman was stronger, then a man would probably not be able to force her to do anything against her will.
- Abuse can happen once or many times by the same abuser. Often abuse is a pattern repeated over time.

### **SEXUAL ABUSE**

One of the most serious forms of abuse is sexual abuse. A girl is sexually abused when a boy or man forces her to take part in sexual acts without her agreement. Rape is forced sex. Any sexual action that makes a girl feel bad or uncomfortable can be thought of as sexual abuse. For example, if a man or boy kisses or touches a girl in a private place without her consent, this is abuse. If a man or boy forces the girl to kiss or touch him, or pressures her to do a sexual act, this is also abuse. Any sexual act, from touching to kissing to intercourse, can be thought of as abuse if it is forced or done against the will of the girl or woman.

### **ABUSE WITH WORDS**

Verbal abuse is saying bad or hurtful things. For example, if a husband yells at his wife for not making dinner on time or calls her bad names, this is verbal abuse. If a father calls a child stupid, this is verbal abuse. If a classmate at school calls a fellow classmate ugly or slow, this is verbal abuse. Any word that is hurtful to someone who hears them is verbal abuse.

### **ABUSE OF THE BODY**

Physical abuse typically involves slapping, hitting, kicking, pushing, pinching, or using some other force to hurt someone's body. In addition, acts such as keeping food or water or medical care away are also forms of physical abuse, because the person is causing physical harm or discomfort to the other on purpose.

Physically hurting a child as a form of discipline is also abuse and can result in physical pain, shame, and low self-esteem. This is a commonly used way of controlling students in school and should not be acceptable in any country or community.

## Abuse of thoughts and feelings

All acts or words that hurt a person's feelings or make someone feel bad about herself are types of emotional abuse. For example, if a boyfriend tells his girlfriend that she is ugly he is hurting her feelings and making her feel ugly and unattractive. This is emotional abuse. If a father hits a child and tells her that she deserved the beating for behaving badly, this is physical and emotional abuse. The child is made to feel guilty.

Bullying is also emotional abuse. It can be teasing, harmful peer pressure, verbal abuse, threats, stealing or destroying someone's property, or simply acting mean. An example of bullying could be older girls at school teasing a younger girl about her dress until the younger girl cries and feels bad about herself. Another example could be one student threatening to harm another student unless she gives her money or school supplies.



It is very important to remember that abuse is not the fault of the girl or woman who is abused. If a girl is abused, she should not feel that she caused it to happen. She should not feel ashamed to ask for help or support to recover from the abuse. The community should support her recovery and make clear to the abuser in one way or another that abuse is not acceptable.

When a girl is empowered to understand abuse, she can make better choices to help her avoid being abused. She can say 'no' to harmful peer pressure. She can choose her friends and boyfriends carefully. She can rely on her inner strength to stay away from people whose words and actions might encourage abuse. She can say 'no' to actions that make her uncomfortable. Because abusers often seek victims who they think are weak, a girl's inner strength and her ability to choose wisely can help her avoid abuse.

## Effects of violence

Some of the physical outcomes of gender-based violence are injuries, internal bleeding, STIs, mutilated genitals, unwanted pregnancies, miscarriage/low birth weight, permanent disabilities, damage to the eyes, constant stomach problems, and death. Some of the psychological outcomes are fear, guilt, shame, depression, anxiety, helplessness, eating and sleeping problems, drug and alcohol abuse, poor self-esteem, poor self-confidence, unsafe sexual behavior, long-term stress, and the desire to hurt oneself.

Here are some ways mentors can help girls to lessen the chances of becoming victims of violence.

- Talk with girls about any violence they may know about.
- Encourage girls to stay in school. A girl who finishes her schooling can get a job or have a career and make her own money. A girl who can make her own money is more able to marry because she wants to and not because she has to. She is also less likely to put herself in dangerous situations that can lead to violence.
- Teach girls to report acts of violence to people who can take actions such as school directors, mentors, teachers, parents, community leaders, and law officers.

- Talk with girls about safe places where girls and women can stay to avoid violence.
- Suggest that school officials choose female teachers or counselors to talk with girls who have known violence or sexual abuse in school or at home.

QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES



**Discussion questions**

1. What is violence against women? Give examples of the different forms of violence.
2. Why do boys commit violence against girls?
3. Think about how bullying affects girls’ self-esteem and feelings of empowerment.
4. Describe the effects of violence on girls and women.



**Activity for mentoring session:**

**ROLE PLAY ABOUT BULLYING AND HARASSMENT**

Ask girls to role play about how bullying and harassment about the clothes a girl wears or a girl’s weight affects girls. Discuss ways of helping them respond to bullying. Ask girls to model how to help a friend who is a victim of abuse.



**Longer activity: PARENTS’ COUNCILS**

Mentors can help form mothers’ councils, fathers’ councils, or parents’ councils that will respond to violence against women and girls in their communities. Invite a doctor to council meetings to talk about the effects of violence against women. Mentors can also help identify male champions from their communities who speak about the importance of reducing violence against girls and women. Mentors can encourage girls to organize school and community events to raise awareness about violence against girls and women.







## V

# RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE CHILD

*There is no trust more sacred than the one the world holds with children.  
There is no duty more important than ensuring that their rights are  
respected, that their welfare is protected, and their lives are free from  
fear and want and that they grow up in peace. –KOFI ANNAN*

All children have basic rights as well as responsibilities to themselves, their families, their communities, their countries, and the environment. In addition, adults have many important responsibilities to children. Knowing these rights and responsibilities will help empower girls not only to protect themselves but to contribute to their communities.

# 1. Upholding the Rights of the Child

In 1959, the United Nations made the Declaration of the Rights of the Child that nearly all the countries of the world have signed. This Declaration lists some of the most basic rights of all children. These basic rights include

- The right to have a name and nationality
- The right to proper nutrition, water, housing, and medical services
- The right to have love and understanding
- The right to play
- The right to education
- The right to protection against all forms of neglect, cruelty, discrimination, and exploitation
- The right to avoid work that is dangerous to the child's development, health, or education
- The right to have the chance to develop physically, mentally, morally, spiritually, and socially in a healthy and normal manner and in conditions of freedom and dignity

It is the responsibility of each child to know her rights and the responsibility of the community to support and protect the rights of every child. Mentors can help girls understand these issues.

Responsibilities of parents or guardians, family, and community to the child  
Parents, guardians, brothers, sisters, and other family members have important responsibilities to children—including girls. It is the responsibility of parents and guardians in particular to make sure that these rights are honored. Families have a responsibility to protect, love, and nurture girls. Families should prevent abuse and neglect, and make sure that each child—including girls—is respected and given his or her basic rights.


Parents have a responsibility to send girls to school. Parents have a responsibility to bring a girl to the health care clinic if she is sick and to seek treatment if possible. Parents have a responsibility to seek justice for their children whose rights have been violated. For example, if a teacher makes a girl pregnant, the parent has a

responsibility to use the legal system to seek justice. The teacher should be made to answer for his wrongs. This not only sends a message to other teachers that having sex with girls is wrong, but it helps to prevent the teacher from doing it again at another school.

### Prevention of child trafficking and severe forms of child labor

Families have a responsibility to help protect the children in their household—especially girls—from any situation that is harmful or takes advantage of them, such as child trafficking. ‘Child trafficking’ means to transfer, trade, sell, buy, recruit, carry away, receive children, or keep them so they cannot escape. When a child is trafficked, she might be sexually misused or abused or forced to become a prostitute. She might be forced to perform heavy labor both inside and outside of the home. Or she might be forced to get married to someone against her will.

Some families believe that sending girls to live with someone else either in their own country or another country is a good idea. They may do this because they think that the girls will have better opportunities and have a better life. Often the family is told that the girl will be able to go to school while she is working in someone else’s home. However, it is hard to know if the girl is really going to school if she is in someone’s house and away from her family. For a girl to be safe and protected while living with another family, even if the family members are relatives, it is very important that everyone involved knows the girl’s rights and responsibilities. The girl must be able to stay in contact with her family regularly. She must be able to return home easily. She must not be forced to do any work or engage in any practices that may be harmful to her mentally, physically, or emotionally. Child trafficking and taking harmful advantage of a girl can happen when it is not expected. Respecting a girl’s rights will help her stay healthy, have a good education, and



#### *Responding to girls’ trafficking or abuse*

If a mentor believes that a girl may be a victim of child trafficking or is at risk of being trafficked or any other form of abuse or exploitation, it is very important to tell another trusted adult and find a way to have the girl removed from the situation or prevent the abuse!

learn good life skills. Families and communities should know that protecting girls while honoring their responsibilities is important.

## Responsibility of the girl child to herself

Mentors can help girls learn their rights and responsibilities. For example, girls are responsible for studying hard to succeed in school. A girl can be empowered to talk about her concerns to another trusted adult—her mentor, for example—if she feels that her rights are not being respected or that she is being abused.

If a girl has a higher level of education and has an official birth certificate, she is less likely to be trafficked or abused.

## QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES



### **Discussion questions**

1. What are some of the children's rights named by the United Nations?
2. Who in the community are responsible for protecting the rights of girls?
3. When members of the community protect the rights of girls, what are the positive outcomes?
4. What are some ways that girls can protect themselves from child trafficking?



### **Activity for mentoring session:**

#### **ROLE PLAY ABOUT THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD**

The purpose of this activity is to strengthen girls' understanding of the word 'rights', what their rights are, and how they can use the knowledge about their rights to improve their lives. Start by talking about the rights that protect all children and girls from harm or limit their ability to pursue happy, healthy, and productive lives. Girls can then be divided to work in teams of two or three. Write the following list of rights on a piece of paper, and ask each team to pick one right:

- The right to have a name and nationality
- The right to proper nutrition, water, housing, and medical services
- The right to have love and understanding
- The right to play
- The right to education



- The right to protection against all forms of neglect, cruelty, discrimination, and exploitation
- The right to avoid work that is dangerous to the child's development, health, or education
- The right to have the chance to develop physically, mentally, morally, spiritually, and socially in a healthy and normal manner and in conditions of freedom and dignity

Each team can then develop a short play around the right it has discussed. For example,

Sarah and Kadiatou (and perhaps Sinohn) are a team that has picked 'the right to education'. Sarah can explain that right and use good arguments about the many ways education can improve a girl's life, not only for herself but also for her children, family, and community. She may use as an example the female leaders in her community. Kadiatou and Sinohn can then play the role of girls who do not know about this right and can ask Sarah questions to increase their knowledge.



**Longer activity: THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD'S CLUB**

One way of supporting girls is to encourage them to start a 'Rights of the Child' Club in school. The purpose would be to raise awareness about these rights and invite other students to discuss their rights together.



## 2. Reducing Early Marriage

Although many countries have laws to protect children against early marriage, early marriage is still common in many parts of the world. Early marriage happens because of poverty, tradition, and culture. In some cases, men offer a dowry (money or gifts) to a girl's family to marry her. In the case when a girl enters a bad or abusive relationship, she may be forced to stay with her husband because the family cannot pay back the dowry.

Early marriage can have bad physical and mental effects on young girls. Young girls' bodies have not developed enough for them to become wives and mothers. Physical problems caused from early marriage are deaths from childbirth, getting sexually transmitted infections, and problems that can lead to physical disabilities when young mothers give birth. In fact, young women aged 15–19 are twice as likely to die from childbearing and pregnancy-related causes than women in their 20s (Population Reference Bureau 2000). Emotional health can suffer, too. Girls and women can feel distress from forced sexual relations, weariness from house work as a new wife, and depression from being away from friends and family. Because a girl has not had a chance to mature emotionally or physically, she may be hurt even more than a grown woman might be if there is physical and mental abuse or violence in her marriage.

### *Getting to know the girls*

- \* Unstable marriage
- \* Poor health of sexual organs
- \* Fistula (a hole developed between either the rectum and vagina or the bladder and the vagina after a difficult child birth)
- \* Early pregnancy and more children than the family can support
- \* School dropout and less education
- \* Impact on well-being of children
- \* Domestic violence
- \* Women's inequality

Most girls who marry early also drop out of school. Some girls drop out of school because they feel that they need to take care of their houses and have children. Others drop out because they are told that they can no longer attend school.





Whenever possible, the community should discourage early marriage. Mentors can work with community members, religious leaders, teachers, and other women to discourage parents from giving their daughters up for marriage too early or before they have finished school.

At what age is it appropriate to marry? There is no easy answer. Many countries have laws that girls have to be at least 16 or 18 years old. However, getting married at 16 still may be too young if a girl feels that she is not emotionally or physically ready.

Mentors should think about encouraging the idea that girls should not be married at least until they complete their education. Having an education prepares girls to become better community leaders, workers, mothers, and wives. Mentors should also encourage girls to get married after they feel mature enough to enter into a lifelong relationship.

## QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES



### **Discussion questions**

1. Why do girls get married early?
2. What are the possible negative outcomes of early marriage for the girl?
3. Who is responsible for preventing early marriage?
4. What are some ways that early marriage can be prevented?



### **Activity for mentoring session: ROLE PLAY ABOUT EARLY MARRIAGE**

The purpose of this activity is to help girls understand why early marriage can prevent girls from staying in school and getting a good education. Mentors can begin by setting up the following situation:

Two girlfriends meet. One young girl is married, carrying in her arms one baby who is sick while another baby is crying. Another young girl is still in school and carrying her books. They are having a conversation about their lives and presenting facts about early marriage (both good and bad) and the benefits of staying in school.

Ask pairs of girls from the group to play the different roles in front of the other girls and talk about the differences between the lives of young mothers and young students.



### **Longer activity: A PLAY ABOUT EARLY MARRIAGE**

The role play about early marriage can also be presented as a play for families. Girls can prepare for the play by getting facts that may help parents understand the importance of allowing their girls enough time to grow up and mature, finish their education, and get married later when they are physically and emotionally ready for this responsibility.



### 3. Helping to Support the Family

Girls in many communities are expected to help support the family or add to the family income. For example, girls often work at home, in family fields, or in stalls at the market. However, girls have the right not to work in a way that may be dangerous to their health, harmful to their well-being, or keeps them from going to school. Here are some ways to help balance household chores and school work:

- A girl and her family can agree on a weekly schedule so that there is time to finish all household chores, as well as time to attend class and do school work.
- The family can agree that both boys and girls should work together to finish household chores normally done by girls only. They will both finish more quickly, leaving more time for study.
- A girl, her family, and the community can work together with teachers and school leaders to talk about community and family schedules and duties. In this way, school calendars for the year can be planned so that girls can finish both her household and community responsibilities. For example, school days can be shorter or homework can be more flexible during the harvest season when girls are needed to work extra time in the fields or at the market. Girls may not have as much time to attend class or do school work.

Mentors can help girls, families, and communities to understand that some types of work are harmful for girls, especially younger girls. Mentors can help parents find chores and other work that fit girls' ages and strength. Girls, especially younger girls, should avoid dangerous work including:

- Lifting or carrying very heavy loads
- Working with sharp or dangerous tools until old enough to properly handle such tools (including knives, machetes, and so on)
- Working long hours that limit sleeping, eating meals, or finishing homework;
- Working in activities that are illegal or unacceptable to the family or community, such as sexual activities, or sale of dangerous items such as guns, weapons, knives, or drugs
- Mining
- Breaking rocks

- Inhaling dangerous fumes or chemicals, such as pesticides
- Any other type of work that can harm a girl's physical, moral, or emotional development

Besides chores, many children have a responsibility to help take care of the family. Taking care of the family may mean caring for young children or elders and preparing food. Girls also have the responsibility to treat their parents and community elders with respect and to help out when asked. Therefore, a girl, her family, and the community should have an understanding to balance a girl's responsibilities with her rights to have love, good nutrition, and time for school and play.

## QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES



### **Discussion questions**

1. What are "rights"? Do girls have rights? Name a few.
2. How can a girl support her family and stay in school at the same time?
3. Name some chores that might be harmful to a girl's well-being.
4. How can the school, community, and girls' families work together to protect girls' rights to an education?



### **Activity for mentoring session:**

#### **HELPFUL OR HARMFUL CHORES, RIGHTS, AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

The purpose of this activity is to help girls understand the differences between 'Helpful' and 'Harmful' chores, rights, and responsibilities. Mentors can begin by working with girls to create a long list of as many chores, rights, and responsibilities as possible. Here are some examples, but mentors and girls should feel free to add their own ideas:

1. Girls lift and carry very heavy loads.
2. Girls work long hours and get very little sleep.
3. Only girls help with household chores.
4. Parents agree on a schedule for chores and studies.
5. The school calendar is planned to help girls balance work with studies.
6. Boys and girls share household chores.
7. Types of work fit girls' ages and strength.
8. Young girls use sharp knives.



9. Schools allow extra time for girls to work in the field.
10. Girls work in activities unacceptable to the family such as sexual activities.
11. Girls work in illegal activities such as using drugs or weapons.
12. Girls help their family by taking care of their younger siblings.
13. Girls' right for good nutrition must be respected.

The mentor then reads each statement, and the girls answer in loud voices whether the chore, right, or responsibility is helpful or harmful. When girls have different opinions, they can explain why.



## 4. Fulfilling Responsibilities to the Community and the Environment

Communities expect their members—including girls—to behave in acceptable ways. For example, communities expect that girls show respect for others, for their traditions, for their cultures, and for the community environment. Mentors can help girls understand how to fulfill these expectations and follow through with their responsibilities.

### Respect of other people and other people's property

Mentors can help girls remember to treat others with respect by taking care of property that belongs to other people such as host families or community members. Here are some responsibilities that girls have to others in the community:

- If living with a host family, girls should treat the host family with great respect, be well-behaved, and follow the rules of the host family.
- Girls should respect other people's property and should take special care to not break or damage anything that belongs to someone else.
- Girls should show their respect for local community leaders, such as religious leaders, government leaders, and school leaders and teachers.
- Girls should always be respectful in attitude and behavior in the community, following the community's traditions and values.

### Honoring community traditions

Girls have the privilege as well as the responsibility to respect community ceremonies and traditions and join in when appropriate. Honoring these traditions tells the community that the girl is happy to be part of the community and will grow up to represent the community well to others. The community should return this respect and value when the girls join in these traditions.



However, sometimes community traditions can be physically or emotionally harmful to girls. It is important for mentors to help girls and families point out harmful traditions, such as early marriage, and to encourage a discussion in the community about possibly changing these traditions.

### Responsibilities to the environment

One of the biggest challenges all people face today is protecting the earth. People rely on the natural resources, such as water, land, air, trees, plants, and animals for food and protection. Together these natural resources are called the 'environment'. People must protect and respect the environment so the earth can continue to provide for people and protect them.



All people, including girls, should protect the environment—the earth for farming; the trees for shade, fruit, and firewood; the water to drink and use for cleaning; the air to breathe. Protecting the earth and its nature is protecting the future of all people. Mentors can help girls think about the question, Where and how would we live if there were no more crops to grow food, no water, no trees, and no clean air to breathe?

If the environment is not protected, there will be nowhere safe to live. There are some simple points, though, that mentors can discuss with girls that can help them protect the environment:

### ***Protect the trees!***

- Every time a tree is cut down, plant a new one! Trees give shade. Trees give off oxygen to breathe. Trees protect soil. Some trees grow fruit. It is always better to have plenty of trees.
- Instead of cutting down a whole tree for firewood, cut off only a few branches. Cut only what is needed. The tree will keep growing new branches for future firewood.

### ***Protect the water!***

- Do not throw trash into any water source (river, lake, stream, sea, or ocean).
- Do not wash or bathe in a water source, especially with soap. When washing clothes or dishes or bathing, take water in buckets away from the source of the water to wash. Soap can be harmful to the fish in the water. This will keep the water source clean for future use.
- Never use a water source as a toilet. Always stand far away from the water to avoid polluting the water. Latrines should also be built far away from the water.
- Do not allow animals to bathe in or use water sources as a latrine.

### ***Protect the land!***

- Do not throw trash on the ground or bury it near crops. Trash can spoil the land. Trash should be thrown away in a central place far from water sources and land used for crops or gardens.



- Planting trees helps prevent the land from washing or blowing away—from ‘eroding’. Eroded land is land that has lost soil and may be mostly sand or rock. Eroded land does not easily retain water or support growth of new plants and trees.

To protect the environment, always try to use only what is needed (water, wood, land), and replace what is used when possible (trees and plants). When each of us knows the importance of taking care of the environment, the future will be brighter for all.

## QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES



### **Discussion questions**

1. What does the word responsibility mean? Name some of your responsibilities to your family.
2. Explain how you show your responsibilities to your community.
3. What are traditions? Why is important to honor traditions?
4. What can you and your friends do to protect the trees, the water, and the land where you live?



### **Activity for mentoring session: PREPARING FOR A GUEST**

Have girls pretend that an important guest is coming to visit your school. Maybe it is the president or prime minister of the country. Would the girls be proud to show the president their school? Are there things the girls and boys would do to clean up the school area?

### **Activity for mentoring session: I AM RESPONSIBLE SONG**

Mentors can work with girls to write and sing a song called “I Am Responsible”.

The song can be written with “I Am Responsible” as the main line that all girls repeat after each girl sings her line of a specific responsibility. For example, the song can begin as follows:

*The group can sing aloud and in one voice, 'I Am Responsible'.  
One single girl can proudly sing, 'for respecting my family'.  
The group can then sing aloud again and in one voice,  
'I Am Responsible'.  
Another girl can proudly sing, 'for respecting my community'.  
And the song continues.*

Girls can think about the responsibilities that are most important to them.  
These can include

- Honoring traditions
- Respecting people's property
- Respecting teachers
- Respecting leaders
- Protecting the earth
- Protecting the environment
- Protecting the trees
- Protecting the water

This song can be used as a presentation to visitors or for the community during celebrations or ceremonies.



### **Longer activity: ENVIRONMENT CLUB**

Encourage girls to start an Environment Club. The mentor, a teacher, or a community member can help carry out activities. Ask the girls to organize the club. Activities can include

- **Community cleanup.** Girls can begin a cleanup of trash in school and challenge the boys to do the same for other parts of the community.
- **Tree nursery.** Girls can work with local forestry departments and others to get seeds or seedlings. The girls can start and maintain the nursery.
- **Tree planting day.** Girls can lead the community in planting trees for a day.





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