

Thokoza Like Other Townships Struggling with Teenage Pregnancy

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There are many stories about teenage pregnancy in working class communities, Thokoza is not different in this regard. Some of these stories are unexpected or shocking. One of these stories in concern a 16-year-old interviewed by Karibu during a visit in the township.

The young girl whose name has been withheld told us that she was shocked when she found out that she was pregnant as she was not ready to be a mother. Her family was angry and disappointed at the humiliation she brought to the family.

The teenager says that her friends started turning against her, but one was very supportive as she understood how she was feeling.

Her supportive friend was happy for her becoming a mother, although noting that she was still only a teenager.

“I could not cope with my studies because my classmates would laugh at me and make jokes about the condition I was in, I began not to attend class because I knew I would be the joke of the class,” said the teen mom.

She was experimenting with sex for the first time giving in to peer pressure, her friend used to talk about sex all the time which made her interested in doing it herself, but when she did it, she fell pregnant.

“People in the community were gossiping about the state I am in, the [kind of] disgrace that I bring to the family because I am still [so] young, why do I associate myself with boys, they didn’t know the pressure I had been going through, looking at my family with my big tummy,” said the young mother.

Her older sister was supportive, she knew being a teen mother would not be easy. Being a mother is not easy, you must change some behaviours because you can’t do certain things [anymore], “you will have to sacrifice for the well-being of your baby. There are things that you will have to stop [doing] because you are a mother now.”

Teenage pregnancy can ruin a young girl’s future, on this, the girl teenage mom said, “You have to take a break from school so that you can nurse and nurture your child, and on the other side you have to deal with people judging you for getting pregnant at an early age.”

To anyone who finds themselves in the same position, a supportive community and family networks at school are some of the things they should have.

Young girls should be taught about ways to protect themselves from teenage pregnancy, warned about mental health consequences that can follow and told about the benefits of abstaining. Empowering teenage mothers can break the cycle of poverty and inequality, women and girls, no matter what their age is, need to have access to reproductive health services.

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