

# Policy brief

Addressing Teenage Pregnancy in  
**Kilifi County - 2023**



# Introduction

Adolescent pregnancies are a global phenomenon, but they disproportionately affect poorer and marginalised communities. In these communities, girls often face immense pressure to marry early and become mothers while still children themselves. Denying girls, the right to make informed decisions about their sexual and reproductive health and well-being is a significant factor contributing to the prevalence of teenage pregnancy[1].

In Kilifi County, one of the five coastal counties in Kenya, the scenario is no different, as it is grappling with alarmingly high rates of teenage pregnancy. The latest Kenya Demographic and Health Survey (KDHS) of 2022 reveals that 15% of women aged 15–19 in the county have experienced pregnancy. This includes 12% who have had live births, 1% who have experienced pregnancy loss, and 3% who are currently pregnant. The Kenya Demographic Health Survey (2022) Key Indicators Report reflects that the lack of knowledge about sexual health and family planning pervades Kilifi County's conservative culture. The silence in the conversation has led to Kilifi County having one of the highest teen pregnancy rates in Kenya, at 22 percent, compared to the national average of 15 percent, according to the Kenya Demographic and Health Survey.[2]

Furthermore, education plays a pivotal role in this issue. Approximately 4 in 10 women aged 15–19 with no formal education in Kilifi County have experienced pregnancy, compared to only 5% of women with more than a secondary education. These statistics highlight the urgent need to address the root causes of teenage pregnancy in Kilifi County[3].

Adolescent pregnancy is a pressing global issue, and Kilifi County, Kenya, is not immune to its devastating consequences. In Kilifi County, teenage pregnancy is not just a statistic; it is a crisis with far-reaching health, social, and economic implications.



## Root Causes of Teenage Pregnancy

**Lack of Comprehensive Education:** Many adolescents in Kilifi County lack access to comprehensive sexual and reproductive health information. This knowledge gap leaves them vulnerable to early and unintended pregnancies.

**Inadequate Access to Services:** Insufficient access to youth-friendly sexual and reproductive health services leaves adolescents without the necessary resources and support to make informed choices.

**Social Pressure to Marry Early:** Societal norms and expectations often pressure young girls into early marriages and motherhood.

**Sexual Violence:** Incidences of sexual violence contribute to teenage pregnancies, with survivors often facing a lack of support and justice.

### References:

1. Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2022
2. Kenya Demographic Health Survey (2022) Key Indicators Report
3. Kenya National Reproductive Health policy 2022-2032
4. National Guidelines for School Re-entry in Early Learning and the Basic Education Act (amendment 2020)
5. Kenya National Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights Policy.



## Recommendations

### Domestic National Policies :

Kilifi County should fully adopt and implement the Kenya National Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights Policy[1], National Guidelines for School Re-entry in Early Learning, and the Basic Education Act (amendment 2020)[2]. The policy development should embody a meaningful youth inclusive and participatory model.

### Remove Parental Consent for Contraceptives :

Establish an exception in Kilifi County's legal documents and guidelines allowing adolescent girls to access contraceptives without parental consent. Ensure coherence between related documents.

### Allocate Resources :

Dedicate resources to activities and interventions targeting teenage pregnancy prevention.

### Referral and Linkage :

Strengthen referral systems for sexual gender-based violence and psychosocial support. Collaborate with local organisations and health centres.

### Innovative Solutions :

Leverage technology and innovation to address menstrual health issues among young girls and women, including reusable pads and USSD services.

### Multisectoral Approach :

To address teenage pregnancy in Kilifi should extend beyond governmental and civil society boundaries to create holistic programs that promote gender equality and economic empowerment for young women thereby addressing the root causes of the issue.

## Call to action

The Kilifi Y-ACT youth advocates urge policymakers, educators, healthcare providers, parents, and the community to unite in a collective endeavour. We implore everyone to passionately implement these policy recommendations. Through this unified effort, Kilifi County can lessen the severe impacts of teenage pregnancy and enable its young population to confidently navigate their sexual and reproductive health decisions. There's no better moment to take action than now, and the efficacy of these recommendations will be gauged not just through numbers but by the enhanced welfare and promising futures of Kilifi County's youth

### References:

[1] Kenya's National Reproductive Health policy 2022-2032

[2] Kenya Demographic Health Survey (2022), Key Indicators Report

[3] Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2022

[4] Kenya National Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights Policy

[4] National Guidelines for School Re-entry in Early Learning, and the Basic Education Act (amendment 2020)

Reporting & referral systems to address sexual harassment in public transport spaces require adequate resource allocation.

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