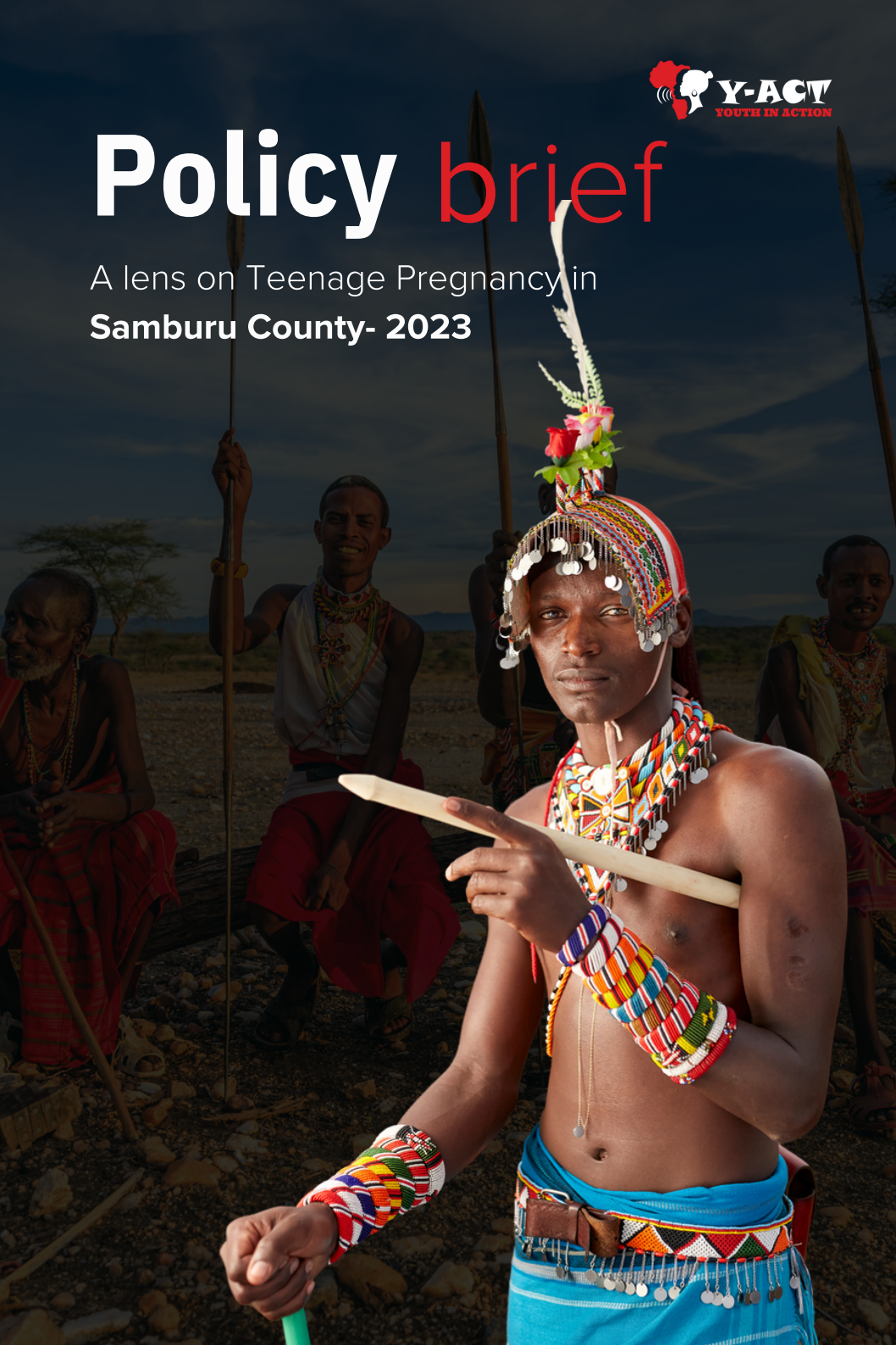


Policy brief

A lens on Teenage Pregnancy in
Samburu County- 2023



Introduction

Teenage pregnancy is a significant societal challenge in Kenya, posing serious implications for the well-being of young girls and the overall development of the nation. Factors such as limited access to education, poverty, and inadequate reproductive health information contribute to the high prevalence of teenage pregnancies. In Samburu, the situation is particularly pronounced and the high rate of teenage pregnancy reflects a complex interplay of cultural norms, economic hardships, and insufficient healthcare services.

Currently, Samburu County is leading in teenage pregnancies among adolescents 15-19 years old at 50% which is above the national average of 15% (KDHS 2022)¹. The county is the 10th largest in Kenya and lies within the arid and semi-arid northern region with three main livelihood zones pastoral (57%), agro-pastoral (37%), and casual waged labor (6%). It is the third poorest county with a poverty index of 71.3%¹ and among the highest in child poverty incidence at 78% indicating high child vulnerability. Young people aged 35 years and below make up 51% of the population of Samburu County with adolescents aged 10-19 at 26%¹.

It is estimated that 85% of youth live in disadvantaged rural settings that bear several challenges including poor access to good health care including sexual reproductive health services.



Statement about the issue and justification of its importance for your specific audience

Samburu County has a rich heritage of cultural norms and practices, some of which are positive while others are inhibitive predisposing Adolescent Youth to various health challenges, which include Female Genital mutilation, early sexual debut, child marriages, girl beading, night dances, parental negligence, and reliance on indigenous herbs resulting in poor health-seeking behaviours. There is male dominance in most community matters and decision-making, meaning the girls and women play subservient roles and have less decision-making power relating to their sexual reproductive health rights. The government policy on 100% transition in education has resulted in the emergence of various day schools and the subsequent increase of teenage pregnancies in the county.



Remedies

To comprehensively tackle the challenge of teenage pregnancies in Samburu County, a multifaceted approach is imperative. Strengthening parental care, bolstering guidance and counselling systems in schools, and enhancing the provision and utilization of Youth-Friendly Services (YFS) are pivotal pillars in addressing teenage pregnancy. Concurrently, engaging civil society organisations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to spearhead impactful campaigns aimed at ending teenage pregnancies will contribute significantly. Additionally, leveraging moonlight campaigns for wider outreach and harnessing the influential reach of local vernacular radio stations will be instrumental in disseminating awareness and education. Through the strategic integration of these solutions, we can create a robust framework that not only addresses the immediate concerns but also fosters a supportive environment for the holistic well-being of teenagers in Samburu County.

Enage pregnancy remains a critical concern that transcends mere statistics, evolving into a crisis that reverberates across health, social, and economic realms, and Samburu County, grapples with alarmingly high rates. The community faces the profound impact of this issue, prompting urgent attention to address it.



Recommendations

Implementation:

Samburu County customized guidelines for the Provision of Youth Friendly Services Samburu county customized Iguidelines⁴. This should be backed with Health and comprehensive sexual education in and out of schools.

School Mentorship and Male Engagement:

Tailored to ensure the retention and transition of girls to higher levels of education, and to engage and train male youths as champions to end teenage pregnancies.

Economic strengthening :

Programs for teen mothers should also be initiated.

Formulation of a policy :

To provide legal frameworks for apprehension of teenage pregnancy perpetrators and any sexual and gender-based violence against young girls.

Integrated Multi-sector and Cultural Sensitization approach :

To end retrogressive practices that aggravate teenage pregnancies through engaging council of elders, age sets guardians and using sacred places i.e. Naapo.; as well as other stakeholders and community members to underscore the rights of girls.

Call to action

The Samburu Y-ACT coalition extends an urgent call to action, urging the active participation of policymakers, educators, healthcare providers, parents, and the broader community to collaboratively engage in a comprehensive and detailed effort aimed at addressing the multifaceted challenges posed by teenage pregnancies. The coalition advocates for the thorough and thoughtful implementation of the nuanced policy recommendations outlined in this brief which are in line with both regional and international agreements and conventions. The success and efficacy of these recommendations will be assessed not solely through statistical metrics but also through a nuanced evaluation of the tangible improvements in the overall well-being of young individuals in Samburu. This includes considerations of mental and emotional health, educational attainment, and access to necessary support systems, encapsulating a holistic approach towards fostering a thriving environment for the youth in the region.

By fostering a united sense of purpose and commitment, Samburu County can strategically alleviate the profound and intricate impacts of teenage pregnancy, with a primary objective of empowering its young population to not only comprehend but also make well-informed decisions concerning their sexual and reproductive health.

References:

1. Kenya Demographic Health Survey, 2022.
2. Maputo Protocol of 2003 promotes women rights in Africa.
3. UN Convention on the rights of the child
4. Samburu County Customized Guidelines for Provision of Adolescent and Youth Friendly Services.