

Youth

KENYAN PARENTS RANKED LAST AS SEXUAL HEALTH EDUCATORS FOR THEIR ADOLESCENTS

Source: International Dateline, A Population and Development News and Information Service, March 1995.

According to a peer-to-peer youth sexuality survey conducted in Kenya in early 1994, most young people between the ages of 13 and 19-half in school and half get information about sex from their friends or peers. The next most common sources were books, magazines and movies. Parents were mentioned the least number of times in the survey as being sources of information about sex. Nearly all the young people interviewed said that their peers were sexually active, noting that the average age for girls to start is 12, while boys begin at age 13. But both sexes said that the ideal time to begin sexual activity is not until age 20. When asked about sexually-transmitted diseases, including HIV and AIDS, the teens said that they got most of their information from radio and television, followed by schools and school teachers. Again, parents were mentioned the least number of times. When asked what parents, teachers and the older generation were currently telling them about sex, the most common response from the teens was "nothing." If anything was said, according to the survey, it was usually to tell the teenagers not to have sex or that sex was only for marriage. The teens surveyed said that the biggest changes they had witnessed in their lifetimes were the beginnings of multi-party system and drastic inflation in Kenya. They said that AIDS is the biggest threat facing both them and their country.

TEEN MOTHERS' BODIES CAUSE RISK OF PREEMIES

Source: TODAY (NYT-Washington) May 8, 1995.

Teenage girls who become pregnant have long been known to face a higher risk of having premature babies and other complications, and a new study says biological factors may be an important reason.

Researchers at the University of Utah said that a study of more than 130,000 pregnancies indicated that teenagers faced higher risks than older women even when such risk factors as low income, poor education, bad health habits, e.g. smoking, and inadequate access to health care are taken into account.

They say the results suggest biological problems associated with immature bodies of the youngest mothers may contribute to prematurity and their babies' low birth weights. They speculated that young mothers might compete with their fetuses for certain nutrients or that their wombs might not be sufficiently developed.

The study, published in *The New England Journal of Medicine*, challenges the belief that pregnancy problems associated with young mothers are mostly related to their poor socio-economic status, including the fact that many are poor, undereducated, come from racial minorities and get poor prenatal care.

The researchers found even that even white, middle-class teenagers who get good health care are almost twice as likely as older women to deliver premature babies. The study "challenges the contention that teenage mothers who receive adequate prenatal care will have reproductive outcomes as good as, or better than, those of older mothers," said the researchers.

Abortion

PRESIDENTIAL VETO GOES AHEAD IN POLISH ABORTION

Source: Pro-Choice News-Writer, 1995.

Poland's lower house of Parliament (Sejm) has failed to overturn a presidential veto on amending the 1993 law which forbids abortion on the grounds of economic or social hardship. As soon as the law came into effect at the beginning of 1993, pressure began for an amendment to allow abortion for social reasons. President Walesa, a traditional and loyal Catholic, invoked his powers as president to veto the resolution.

The Sejm then referred the issue to three of its standing committees. At the end of August 1994, they reported that the Sejm should try to overrule the veto -- and criticized Poland's exclusively Catholic stance at the Cairo conference saying that it should instead reflect the diversity of views in Poland. Accordingly, the Sejm once again voted on the proposed amendment but did not get the two-thirds majority necessary to overturn the presidential veto.

Meanwhile, according to an article in *Studies in Family Planning*, Polish women, especially those in rural areas, have experienced fear, anxiety and humiliation since the March 1993 law severely restricted access to abortion.

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