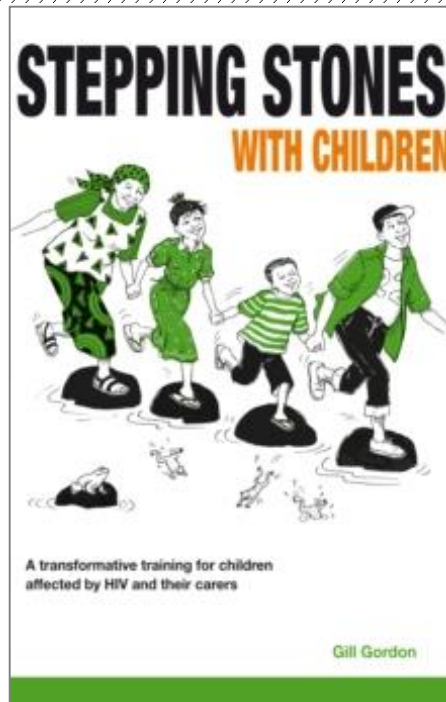


Handouts for *Stepping Stones with Children*



This *Handout for Stepping Stones with Children* is to be used with the *Stepping Stones with Children* training manual published by Practical Action Publishing, 2016.

You can download this handout for free for use with this training manual from the www.stepsstonesfeedback.org website.

On this website there are also many other resources to support you with this training manual and the original *Stepping Stones* training manual.

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WHEN WE ARE GROWING UP

Puberty is the gradual process by which our bodies change from those of children to those of adults. There is no need to feel shy about talking about our bodies and these changes. They are a natural part of our lives for all of us. Use the words that you agreed in the workshop to talk about them.

1. Menstruation

- Menstruation is a normal monthly bleeding from the vagina that happens to all females from puberty to menopause (at about 50 years old).
- 'Ovulation' happens once a month: it is when one egg travels to the womb. The womb wall becomes thick like a nest, ready to house a baby.
- If the egg is not fertilized, the lining of the womb breaks down and leaves the body through the vagina as menstrual blood, known as a 'period'. This happens about 14 days after ovulation.
- Menstrual bleeding usually lasts for 4 - 6 days. If it lasts more than 8 days, or is very heavy with thick blood, the girl should go to a clinic.
- Periods do not come regularly at first, but they usually settle down to a regular pattern.
- If a girl or woman has sexual intercourse and a sperm fertilises the egg it settles into the wall of the womb and begins to grow into a baby.
- A girl can get pregnant before she starts her periods, because her first ovulation is before her first period.
- If a girl has not started her periods by 16 years, she should see a doctor.
- Some girls have pain during menstruation, as the muscles of the womb push out blood. This is normal. Exercises, resting, and pain killers can reduce or stop the pain.
- It is normal for some girls to feel moody and down just before their periods begin.
- Girls need to use something to catch blood during their period, and to replace this when needed. They should also wash between their legs once, or ideally twice, a day.
- During their period girls should eat foods like such as dark green leafy vegetables and meat, which contain a lot of iron, to replace the iron lost in blood.

Challenges of menstruation

Challenges	Supports
Shortage of materials to absorb menstrual blood.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• make reusable pads from scrap material;• prioritize purchase of pads or tampons;• ask school to supply pads and tampons
How to wash and dry pads at home and at school privately.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• create more openness in the household so that privacy is less important.• make a private place at home and school.

How to dispose of pads and tampons privately.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • put them in a pit latrine; • if it's a flushing toilet, provide a bin beside it; empty this regularly and bury the contents; • make sure toilet is lit to use safely at night.
Not knowing when period might come, and getting blood on clothes outside home.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understand fertility cycle; • carry pads or towels just in case; • carry a waterproof bag for used, reusable pads; • ask school to keep a stock of sanitary pads and some spare clothes; • be open with friends, in order to borrow or lend as needed.
Not being able to wash regularly.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • find ways to access soap and water.
No toilets at school.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • organize community to build school toilets.
Teasing or bullying by other students or teachers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • educate to change attitudes; • use courage to challenge bullying behaviour; • show empathy and support if a girl gets blood on her clothes.
Getting grumpy before a period starts, and having pain during the period.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be understanding and supportive; • don't blame yourself or others, it's due to hormone changes; • carry or provide pain killers.

2. Wet dreams

- When a boy is about 12, the testes start producing sperm.
- A 'wet dream' is when he ejaculates in his sleep. He finds sticky wetness in his bed. This is natural and healthy, and not a sin.
- Some boys may have wet dreams regularly and others hardly ever have them. Both are normal. Wet dreams can continue into adulthood.
- Wet dreams do not mean that a boy should start to have sexual intercourse.
- Ejaculation means that a boy is capable of making a girl pregnant. It does not mean that he is ready to become a father.
- Girls can also find they get wet between their legs. This wetness is good and normal – it is made in the vagina and protects it during sex.

3. Male circumcision

Male circumcision is cutting the foreskin off the penis, leaving the glans at the head of the penis exposed. Governments now ask men to get circumcised as it reduces the likelihood of the man getting HIV (and other sexually transmitted infections) during sex by about 60%.

However, circumcision is not as effective as using a condom, which reduces the likelihood of passing HIV to both male and female by around 90%.

Circumcision does not prevent pregnancy, does not mean males are 'protected' or 'cured' from HIV, or make it safe for them to have more sexual partners.

Circumcision needs to be done by trained staff using sterile equipment. If done outside of a health facility the knife or razor must be sterilized between each use to avoid sharing HIV. The wound must be kept clean. Boys should be involved in decision making about whether or not they are circumcised.

4. Female genital cutting (FGC)

We believe that FGC is a practice that violates a female's rights to life; her protection from harmful practices; her health; safe child bearing; and her sexual pleasure. We believe that we have a duty to protect girls from this practice, and support survivors.

A woman's story of being cut

I was circumcised when I was 10 years old at my initiation ceremony. Even now, if I think of the pain, tears come into my eyes. I remember bleeding for three days until I was certain I was dying – all my blood had drained away. I heard my mother calling for the spirits to save me. Well, I lived to marry when I was 20 years old. My husband was a good man, but we could not enjoy our sexual life because it caused me such pain. I have never had the blessing of sexual happiness throughout my whole marriage. I have lost my 'pleasure button', as those fortunate enough to have a clitoris call it. I wish there was a shop where I could buy one. Eventually I became pregnant. The delivery nearly killed me. I had to be cut again and re-sewn. I shall never have another child. Now my daughter is nine years old. I shall never allow her to be cut. I keep her with me in town. I never visit my family in the village with her, in case she is snatched away and cut. If I travel anywhere without her, my sister cares for her.

A cutter's story

I used to be a circumciser, but I always feared cutting too deep, and every year one or two mother's daughters would not return home. I shut my ears to their pain, because I convinced myself that cutting was good. After all, it was had been done to me. Now I think it's right to call it mutilation. I was robbed of my birth right: to have pleasure in sex. Now, I still teach the girls in the initiation ceremony, it is still a private, special time just for them, but I teach them new things about health and love as well as the best of our traditions. I don't do any cutting, but I teach them to treat sex with respect and caution – it is not a game. They behave well and receive the respect they used to get from cutting. And I still have my power and rewards in the community.

Perceived benefits of FGC – things people may believe, but which may not be true

- The genitals look more beautiful and the girls make good marriages.
- Girls who are cut together remain close friends throughout their lives.
- Girls who are brave are celebrated and gain confidence in bearing pain.
- Females are more chaste without a clitoris, because they feel less sexy.
- Females become more womanly without a 'male' part (the clitoris).
- During initiation, girls learn how to be good women and good wives.

Harmful effects of FGC

Genital cutting can:

- cause severe bleeding and shock from pain which can cause death;
- cause severe infection (including HIV) when it is done with shared tools;
- reduce enjoyment of sexual relations and create fear of sex; this weakens marital bonds and may make it more difficult to stay with one partner;
- make it difficult to pass urine and menstrual blood, causing infection and pain;
- cause obstructed labour, and death of the mother and child;
- cause mental ill health when undergoing the cutting and as a result of its effects later.

In many communities people are stopping the harm caused by genital FGC and adapting their rituals. The new methods allow former cutters to keep their status and still teach the educational aspects of initiation ceremonies. The new generation of girls are free from the fear of cutting and the health problems that it causes. When they grow up, their sexual relationships are happier, and childbirth is safer.