

## USING INTERACTIVE RADIO TO UNDERSTAND THE OBSTACLES TO GIRLS COMPLETING SECONDARY SCHOOL IN KENYA

In 2015, about 1.5 million Kenyans were living with HIV/AIDS, with the disease estimated to cause 29% of adult deaths. Adolescent girls and young women (15-24 years old), are especially at risk, accounting for 21% of new infections. One factor that can dramatically reduce young women's vulnerability to HIV infection is to keep girls in secondary school. Consequences of not completing secondary school include low educational attainment and poor awareness and knowledge of HIV/AIDS, health issues, teenage pregnancy, and contraception. Girls who have dropped out of school, and do not return to complete their studies, are at increased risk of HIV infection and lifelong impoverishment.

In collaboration with Trôcaire, Girl Child Network, LVCT Health, and Grow and Know, Africa's Voices Foundation are delivering a two-year DREAMS project to support adolescent girls and young women in Kenya to complete their secondary school education - which can dramatically reduce vulnerability to HIV infection. The intervention focuses on the rural area of Siaya County and in two urban informal settlements in Nairobi - Mukuru and Kangemi - which have high HIV prevalence rates.

As partner in the DREAMS project, Africa's Voices is delivering two seasons of interactive radio shows designed to:

1. effectively reach and engage the target population (adolescent girls and their communities), so as to gather digital data on their opinions, priorities and shared beliefs related to topics of interest (education, HIV/AIDS).
2. inform and inspire Trôcaire and the DREAMS project partners through rich insights, helping to shape their initiatives to be more impactful, and in the long-term, to recognise the importance of listening intelligently to citizens.

### AVF CURATE ENGAGING AND INCLUSIVE PUBLIC DISCUSSIONS ...



The radio shows featured a fictional scenario of a young girl facing challenges related to education:

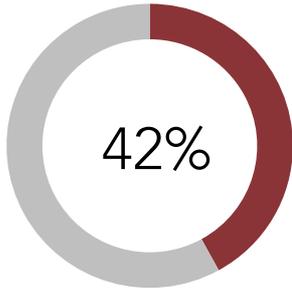


**Show 1 Scenario:** a young girl completed her primary school education and performed well, but she did not continue to secondary school and did not give her reason.

**Radio Question:** What do you think were the reasons she dropped out of school?

**Show 2 Scenario:** a young girl in secondary school has been having trouble attending school when she is on her period due to strong pains and fear of soiling her uniform.

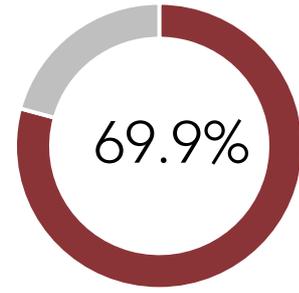
**Radio Question:** Do you think she should go to school during her period? Yes/No? Why?



Of respondents were between 15-29 years old

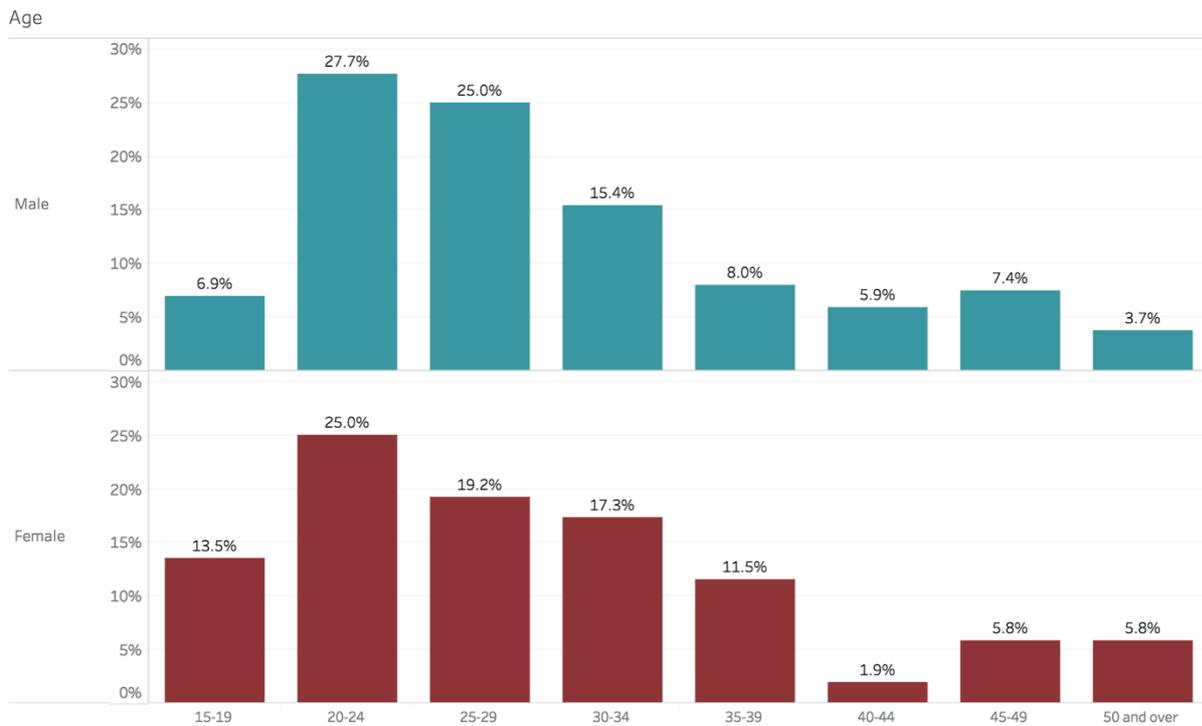


■ Siaya: Radio Ramogi  
■ Nairobi: Ghetto Radio



Of respondents were female

### GENDER DISTRIBUTION OF PARTICIPANTS BY AGE



### AVF ANALYSE AUDIENCE FEEDBACK TO PRODUCE ROBUST AND CREDIBLE EVIDENCE FOR MORE ACCOUNTABLE AND ADAPTIVE PROGRAMMING...

#### 1. Using manual and automated tools we:

- organise the beliefs expressed in audience SMS responses into themes
- Identify associations between these beliefs and practices
- Analyse how collective beliefs and associations vary between different social groups

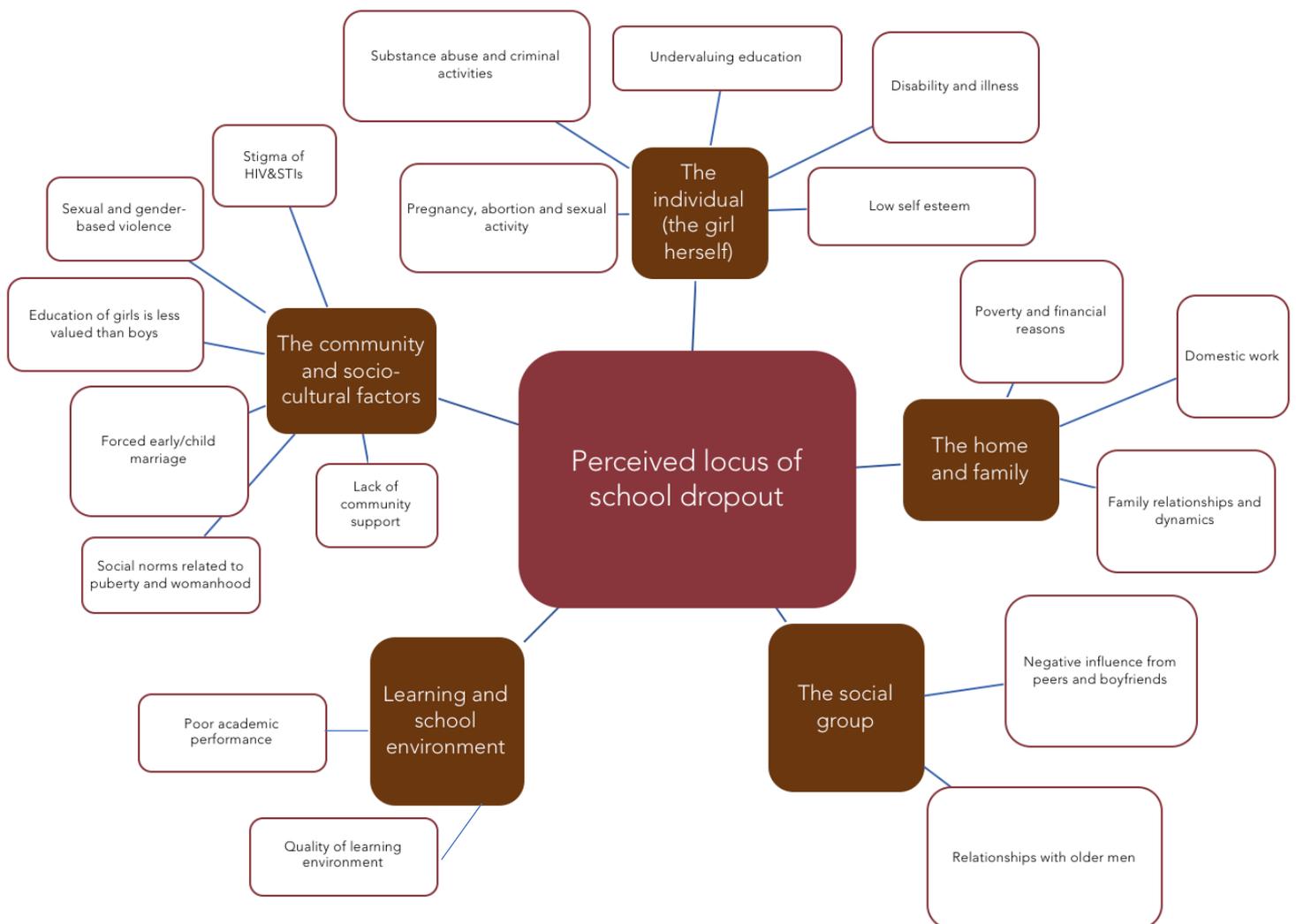
## 2. Findings

Our research reaffirmed that school dropout is caused by a complex web of social factors and beliefs. The findings support a framework that recognises **five key agents** that play a role in a girl completing secondary school: The individual (the girl herself), the home and family, the social group (peers, relationships), the community and socio-cultural factors, and the learning and school environment.

AVF found that **home and family matters emerged as an important factor**, currently underserved by the DREAM project design. Within this, **poverty and financial reasons were frequently cited**, as well as family relationships, such as a **lack of parental support**, family break-up or **not valuing girl child education**. Factors relating to the individual girl, such as her behaviours, attitudes, and dispositions, was another factor recognised as contributing to school dropout.

This network graph represents an exploration of participants' opinions on the reasons why girls in Kenya dropout of school.

### THEMATIC NETWORK OF REASONS FOR SCHOOL DROPOUT



### 3. How DREAMS IC partners adapted their programming due to AVF's Insights

#### 1. THE INDIVIDUAL

This organising theme refers to audience beliefs that school dropout is caused by factors relating to the girl herself, and to her dispositional characteristics, abilities, or lifestyle.

"The girl must have been deceived by some guy and got her pregnant and now she is feeling ashamed to mingle with her friends." Male, Tassia.

##### Programmatic response:

Girl Child Network introduced individual counselling and a mentorship plan at Bridge Centres to build the confidence of girls out of school and empower them to overcome individual challenges that lead to dropping out of school.

#### 2. THE HOME AND FAMILY

Audience members explained that a family's attitudes towards a girl's education, and therefore the support they give, or lack of support, will have an impact on the likelihood of a girl continuing education.

"It is lack of proper support from parents, there should be proper support" 17 years, Kisumu.

Others mentioned that the family's domestic situation also plays a role: whether she is with her nuclear family or with relatives, whether there has been a family break-up, the income level of the household, as well as household duties such as caregiving and housekeeping.

"May be she knew there was not enough money for her to go to secondary school. That is why she left school in class eight." Female, 19 years, Usonga.

##### Programmatic response:

Girl Child Network invited the parents of girls in their education programs at Bridge Centres to enhance the support provided in the home and disseminate information and project findings at the household level.

#### 3. THE SOCIAL GROUP

The social group describes those people who closely surround the girl, outside of her direct family, and would have the ability to influence her life decisions. Audience feedback mentioned that the girl may be in a sexual relationship with an older man, or 'sponsor', who offers her financial support.

"Maybe she stopped going to school because her boyfriend convinced her to stay with him and live with him like his wife" Male.

"It might be due to peer influence from 'sponsors' the way they call it." 26 years, Homabay.

Negative influence from peers and boyfriends was the most prevalent sub-theme within this category.

#### Programmatic response:

Several partners contributed to road shows to sensitize the wider community to try and include men and boys who had consistently not attended community conversations.

## 4. THE COMMUNITY AND SOCIO-CULTURAL FACTORS

287 messages included beliefs about school dropout that are related to influences from neighbours, religious institutions, the wider society, the local government and administration, and other duty bearers. The cultural norms and beliefs held by the members of the community play a role here, including collective beliefs about girl child education.

"Perhaps, she was discouraged by her parents' reluctance to pay her fees because they don't treasure educating female kids." Female, 16 years.

Fear of shame and stigma in the case of HIV and STIs, as well as in the case of the physical changes happening in the body during puberty were given as factors that may affect the girl's schooling.

"Some girls are HIV positive and may be afraid of stigmatization" Male, 18 years, Machakos.

Forced or early marriage was the most prevalent sub-theme within this category among listeners of Ramogi FM in Siaya while stigma of HIV & STIs was the most prevalent sub-theme within this category among listeners of Ghetto FM in Nairobi

#### Programmatic response:

LVCT Health developed communication materials for sensitizing girls and the community at large on community and socio-cultural practices that lead to girls dropping out of school, addressing differing concerns, particularly between urban Nairobi and rural Siaya.

## 5. THE LEARNING AND SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

This topic concerns all the actors within the school environment such as the teachers, the school administration, and fellow students. Disruptive school environments, bullying and punitive academic measures such as repeating classes were also cited by the radio audience as playing a role.

"Atieno could have dropped out of school due to torture from classmates/peers." Female, , 25 years, Siaya.

Quality of learning environment was the most prevalent sub-theme within this category.

#### Programmatic response:

Stakeholders such as school boards and government officials were engaged by DREAMS project partners on how learning and school environment affects retention of girls in schools, to facilitate a more conducive learning environment for all students that will lead to keeping girls in school

### The way forward ...

AVF has now launched a second series of radio shows on vulnerability to HIV/AIDS, the stigma associated with STIs, pregnancy and cross-generational relationships. We proactively test and improve our radio show content to ensure that they are inclusive and valued by audiences as a space for learning and discussing beliefs and practices in an accessible and engaging way.

The DREAMS project continues to demonstrate the value and importance of inclusive spaces for public dialogue that allow for the collective exploration and reflection on beliefs and social norms. AVF's innovative use of interactive radio serves as a powerful space for understanding social reality and promoting healthy behaviours.