

THE VICTIM OF A HARSH REALITY

Like many children in Zambia, Misozi is a victim of some of the many problems that our society is facing today.

This is her story.

Muti was six months pregnant when she got ill. She had constant diarrhoea, rashes and a terrible cough. Being strong traditionalists, her parents assumed that she had been bewitched. When she was taken to a witch finder, they were told that her uncle was responsible for her suffering. According to the traditional laws of their village, anyone found guilty of practicing witchcraft was to be stoned. As it was, her uncle was stoned to death.

Everyone thought that Muti would get well after her uncle's death, but she got worse. Nyanyiwe, Muti's aunt who had come from Lusaka to attend her brother's funeral decided to take her niece Muti to the clinic. Muti was tested for HIV and was diagnosed with full blown AIDS. In this traditional society, though they had not had a close encounter with someone who was infected, they already considered it as a sign of promiscuity, bad luck, impurity and a curse. Muti therefore became a reject; a misfit in society.

When she was eight months pregnant, due to ill health, Muti gave birth to Misozi, an HIV positive premature baby. Like her mother, Misozi was rejected. Nyanyiwe, her aunt, tried to explain and share the little knowledge that she had about AIDS, but was not heard. She had no proof of what she was saying and besides, she was a woman. She then decided to take Misozi to Lusaka.

When she told her husband about Misozi's HIV status, he told her to choose between their marriage and the cursed child. Nyanyiwe did not want to lose her marriage but she knew that Misozi needed her more than she needed her childless marriage. She moved out of her husband's mansion and moved into a small house in a Misisi compound.

Life was hard; Nyanyiwe had to make sure Misozi was well fed and in good health. She could not afford all this with her tomato selling business. She could not become a prostitute because she feared ending up like her niece. She decided to ask the Ministry of Youth, Sports and Child Development for help. She was told her situation was not serious, and besides, she had no money to bribe the officers in-charge.

With no one else to turn to, prostitution was welcome. Misozi was the only blessing she had, she was going to do all she could to see to it that Misozi was well.

Misozi's mother was 16 years when she died. She had never been to school because she was a girl. She had never had a chance to learn how to protect herself from HIV/AIDS. She had never known how to protect her unborn child from the disease until it was too late. She had lived her life in accordance with her parents' will and wishes.

PROSTITUTION

The girl in the photo is an example of a girl I once knew whose name was Mary. Mary is a symbol of many other girls. That is the main reason why I took this photo. The following paragraphs narrate Mary's story.

Everybody in the Kaloko Street thought that Mary was a prostitute. In my case, I did not; I considered her an angel. Mary was not very tall, quite plump, had a dark complexion, and wore a diamond ring on her finger. Mary never worked, but she was never idle. She loved visiting beer halls for a game of pool with a few of her male friends and wouldn't retire home until quite late in the evening.

I was heading to school one day when I met Mary on her way to one of the beer places. She greeted me with a smile, saying "Good morning Gideon?" and despite the fact that she could see that I was in my school uniform, she went ahead to ask if I could join her for a game of pool. My heart went out to her invitation, but I couldn't join her without complications with my school. So I turned her down saying "Sorry baby, I have school to attend but I am going to schedule some good time out for you later." I gave her a little peck on her cheek, and before she could protest I was on my way.

The rest of my journey to school was filled with thoughts about how so many guys spoke well about her, how most of her male friends lived on 'Chamber', a Zambian drug that is common among young people, and how people felt she was a professional entertainer (only they knew what that meant). I must admit, Mary was very important to me and I really cared for her. I needed her in my life as my girl.

When my day was over, I decided to pay her a visit at her home. I was sure it was going to be a pure surprise to her, after all, I had promised I would schedule some time for a visit but I bet she would not have suspected it would be so soon. I was totally shocked when I entered her little cabin. Like a hyper-electric shock, I was taken aback by the depressing exhibition presented before me.

Mary, my angel prior to this immoral event, was lying on her bed and a sugar daddy old enough to be her father was lying next her under the sheets. On the floor I could see a used condom, a few more unopened packs lay on the side table next to a huge sum of money, which I supposed had been given to her by the old man for the 'entertainment' she was offering.

If only this had been a horrible nightmare! Unfortunately people don't always turn out to be what we expect. The girl I thought would be mine was living on transactional sex at a very young age. She was cheapening her value and destroying her chances of getting a good education and a bright, secure future.

OBSESSION

Curiosity about your own body and others' is surely unavoidable, especially for young boys during puberty.

Trang was a beautiful student in a university. Every morning whenever I went to the balcony to do exercise, I could see her body revealed beneath her light sleeping dress. It was so difficult for me to control myself; her image was always in my mind and I wished to have sex with her.

One day, she asked me to repair her lamp and I agreed because I am an old hand at electricity. While repairing the lamp, I accidentally touched her breast; that feeling startled me and made me drop my tool. She bent down to pick up it for me and at that time her short dress seemed to be shortened and intentionally revealed her beautiful legs. And Trang and I had sex. However, during the rest of the day I felt anxious, confused and guilty. I decided to share my thoughts with Trang.

You should not behave like me because of lack of knowledge.

LOVE IN ANOTHER COUNTRY

Her name is Damaris. She left her house because of many problems. She went to live in the streets when she was desperate and not didn't know what else to do.

Very quickly a man appeared and Damaris said that she would stay the night with him. She had a great need for money so she accepted a key to the closest hotel. Everything happened there. When it was over Damaris felt dirty because of what had happened.

Now she thought that no one was going to want her because she was no longer a virgin and that is what she had been taught since she was a little girl. They told her that when someone was no longer a virgin, she could not get married. Damaris dreamed of getting married one day but she felt like she didn't deserve to be married so it would be better if she prostituted herself. One day she felt very ill and went to the doctor. The doctor told her that she had a sexually transmitted infection but they were going to control it with medicine.

One day unexpectedly, Damaris ran into a boy. They became friends, then boyfriend/girlfriend. Now they have plans to get married. She says that it's good they are in another country and no one can give you bad looks because they don't know what happened. Damaris says that all women have the right to get married even though they are no longer virgins. What is most important is love.

I AM A PERSON WITH A DESIRE TO KNOW MORE

Poverty to me means ignorance. My family was never educated. My parents worked day and night and never had time to talk with us. This way I can say that I grew up in the streets, where everything happens. You meet people who influence you and teach you bad things. I grew up with drug addicts, prostitutes, thieves and with information that made me fall 10 times deeper and harder.

I now have AIDS, an incurable disease, a depressing disease, but worst of all now no one wants to be my friend. No one touches me or talks to me. I am now dedicated to spending my life thinking about poverty and ignorance.

BETTER TO BE SAFE THAN SORRY

They were lovers.

About three weeks ago they met each other in the government centre in San Cristóbal de las Casas, Mexico. He works there in the area of social work and she is studying. When they saw each other for the first time they couldn't take their eyes off of one another. Afterwards they became closer and closer and one Friday they went a party. At the party they danced and drank. Afterwards she went to her room and he accompanied her. They started to kiss at the door and then they both went inside. On the floor, what you imagine happened and the two of them were drunk, so neither one took the initiative to protect themselves.

After a month passed the girl realised that she was pregnant and she was scared to tell the guy. In the end she cheered up and told him. The guy told her to get an abortion but she said she wasn't going to abort the baby. The girl started to think and think about how a human is capable of rejecting a woman when she is pregnant.

Now the girl has her baby and her life has completely changed but she knows that the baby wouldn't have existed if it wasn't for that night. Nowadays she shares her story with the rest of the girls and women so that they don't make the same mistakes she did.

As the saying goes, 'It is better to be safe than sorry'.

GROWING UP OF ALAMIN

This is a scene from the Haor area of Bangladesh. Here you will find green fields in the dry season and water roaring around in the rainy season with the isolated houses floating like islands. The migratory birds chirp and plunge in the water here in winter.

But this beauty is not in harmony with the inhabitants of this area. This locality is far away from every facility of civilization. The only means of transportation is boat and you have to walk when the land is dry. There is no electricity, no health facilities. The birth rate is the highest here of all the areas of Bangladesh; no government or even NGOs wish to work in these localities. Many Haor dwellers have never even visited a doctor in their lives!

An adolescent of this locality, Alamin, is sleeping on the boat. He is tired after catching fish all night with his father. He is now crossing the bridge between boyhood and manhood.

He was very frightened after his first wet dream. He had heard from a quack in the bazaar that it is very bad for your health. If this continues to happen he will lose his health along with all sexual capability. He has also learned from the quack that a drop of semen is produced from 80 drops of blood!

Alamin begins to feel unusual and he is losing his appetite. The day goes on and the words of the quack seem to be true to him. What should he do now? However, the elders are not ready to talk with him about this.

There is no special health centre to deal with such adolescent issues nearby. Finding no way out, he buys a bottle of unknown medicine from the quack which claims to be a magic cure of hundreds of sexual problems. He keeps the bottle hidden in his home and begins to take the medicine. But all is in vain and he gets no remedy of his problem.

Mentally disturbed, Alamin is distracted at work and gets scolded harshly by his father. He has nobody who will tell him like a friend that this is a natural occurrence during adolescence.

EARLY MARRIAGE

There was a village called Durgapur in the Netrokona district. The women collect charcoal from the river and men collect firewood from the forest over the hill. Hasina was a tomboy in that beautiful place. She used to roam almost everywhere all the time. She didn't like to see the women collecting charcoals beneath the scorching heat and would shout, "Aunty what will you do with so much money; go home and have some rest!". The women usually had pale smiles, which was quite incomprehensible to Hasina.

When she was 14, her uncle went to her father with a marriage proposal. "But brother, she is too young and anyway, I don't have enough money for her dowry," her father remarked. "Look," her uncle replied, "girls are a burden. Be quick to transfer her and a dowry will be managed. And you talk about her age! Can you remember your wife's age when she was married to you?"

The marriage was thus settled. Her poor peasant father somehow managed to provide 10,000 taka and some gold ornaments as dowry. The bridegroom then seemed to be content. But just over a month after the wedding, she found her husband was an alcoholic. He began to beat her saying, "Go, get money from your old fool father!" Unable to bear the incessant torture, she compelled her father to arrange 5,000 taka more. But that was only a drop in the water given her husband's burning fire for alcohol and gambling. The situation turned worse. One day Hasina could not take any more and said, "My father will not provide any more money for your gambling!" And then there was a shower of beating, and the inevitable came close.

The divorced Hasina returned to her only refuge. But just after two months her father died preparing the house for Hasina's coming baby. Her ex-husband got a new wife. What a twist of fate; Hasina has to now come down to the river bed to collect charcoal like the women she used to mock. Her livelihood now depends on the little pieces of charcoal that come down from the hills, along with the storm and thunder. From dawn to dusk Hasina toils hard to separate the sand from the tiniest charcoal for a better price.

Days go on. Now she is 18 with a daughter who is four. Hasina notices the changes in her body; she hears teasing and indecent proposals while at work from the brutes disguised in human skin. But her hands are stronger now, like the burned charcoals, she is not going to be defeated in this cruel game of life.

THE POSTERS

Every day on the way to college I can see the posters hanging on the walls in the street. Female figures are over exposed there. I had come to know that these movies are a bad influence. But to be honest, I could not deny my interest in these films.

One day, one of my classmates whispered in my ear, "Mate, like to go to the cinema hall? Yes, *that* movie."

At first I said no. But my interest in the forbidden triumphed at last. After watching the movie, I felt something very uncanny inside my flesh.

After coming back home, I could not concentrate on my studies. In the night the half naked women filled my dreams. After that, it was a regular occurrence that I would dream of the porno films and feel sexual temptation. My will for doing the same was becoming irresistible.

Finally one day I had my first sexual experience, paying only 50 taka. I enjoyed it very much. From then I could not stop myself going to the brothel again and again. But something was wrong with me and one day I discovered that I had become a victim of sexual disease.

Now I am living alone with the curse. If I had been lucky enough to have had somebody to tell me at the beginning that my desire for sex and my sexual feelings were natural, I could now be married. But you see I wasn't safe and I have paid the price. I pray no other adolescent might suffer like me.

VIRGIN

I don't know why my body is changing so quickly. My breasts are so big, unlike those of the other girls in my class. I have developed big hips like those of some married women. My classmates tease me and say that my breasts are like pumpkins. Boys in my class say that my hips have grown big because I have had a lot of sex. The truth is that I have never slept with any men and I am still a virgin. I don't want to go to school again. I hate being teased everyday.

RUBBISH

My name is Allison. I always look good on the outside but on the inside I feel like rubbish. When I'm on campus, I want it all; the clothes, the cars, jewellery, everything. I turned to my friend Fiona who introduced me to prostitution - "NIGHT LIFE". Yes I am financially healthy, but after about two abortions and contracting many sexually transmitted infections, I wish I could turn back the hands of time so that I could live my life differently.

ABORTION

Anna is in tears. She has been staying with her elder sister. Anna is now five months pregnant. Anna was chased from school after the school administration found out that she was pregnant. Her sister says she should go and stay with the man who is responsible for her pregnancy. Anna is so confused and does not know what to do because the man responsible is her sister's husband. He raped her one day when her sister went to look after a hospitalized kid. Abortion is illegal in this country and could easily cost her her life.

SEX EXCHANGE

Mary is 16 years and for sometime she has been going out with boys. One of the boys with whom she had sex in exchange for a mobile phone, has just called to say that his HIV test turned out to be positive. Mary does not know what to do and is thinking of taking her life with poison which she has already added to the juice in the glass.

SUGAR MUMMY

John is 16 and a high school student in one of the schools in the city. He comes from a poor family; he has to do car-washing after school and on the weekend to raise money for upkeep and school fees. For one week now he has not attended school because he was refused entry for not paying his fees. Worse still, he has come down with a fever and has no food to eat. John is thinking of looking for a Sugar Mummy who is well off and can support him financially.

LIVE MORE KNOWLEDGEABLY!

'Love cannot be synchronized with sex' is the message I want to send to the young. When I became aware of this, it was too late. Because of my uncontrolled thoughts and lack of knowledge, my girlfriend left me. I thought that she would belong to me forever if we had sex. That night, on my 16th birthday, I forced her to have sex with me. As a result, it was a terrible night. I do not know how to maintain a pure and healthy love. At this time, our sweet memories are in my mind: every thing we did, this bench, this row of trees and also the green lake over there. But now, I am standing alone, lonely and feeling guilty. If only I had had deeper knowledge about pure love!

STEPS

In the first steps of her life, she was indulged and looked after. Her small but chubby feet were taken care of with love; protected for the last 17 years. At the age of 17, she felt mature enough to look after herself. However, from her very first step, she made mistakes. In her life, there were many ways to turn but she lost her way in love, giving her chastity to her boyfriend. Then, as a baby in her womb grew, her boyfriend left her. She is now living in anxiety and worry. If only she was not in such a rush to view life and people; if only she had realised she had a beautiful life before moving out on her own. She should never forget that her family always stands by her...

A HAPPY COUPLE?

This picture isn't what it looks like. They are not the completely happy couple that they appear. They face huge social pressure. People don't accept them. Now they live far away from home, fighting against the whole world and wanting to get ahead. This picture only captures one moment in time. One moment of thought and reflection, which defines a feeling of struggle or of exhaustion, trying to understand the anguish that seems to be the tip of the iceberg. Discrimination kills, it kills dreams and goals...more than anything it kills the conscience that should be heard. The conscience should have a voice and a vote.

PROTECTION

I call these two men in the picture my handsome brothers who have both had sexual experiences. This picture shows that they are consulting the seller of a sex product store about information about condoms. The seller is telling them that using top quality condoms can help avoid infection from sexually transmitted diseases. They finally bought two boxes of condoms from the seller - not only for protecting themselves, but also for protecting their girlfriends from getting pregnant.

HIV AND DRUGS

My hometown is in Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, which is facing a serious drug problem. You can see these types of bills everywhere in this autonomous region. Many of the drug takers are young people, some of them are even still children who have only just left school. I know they can pass HIV through drug injection. We should therefore learn to protect ourselves and should reject drugs.

PANTS

These are my pants hanging in the balcony. I do not let mum wash them for me any more, because I feel that I am already a grown man. People say that this feeling is a sexual characteristic.

A LITTLE MISTAKE

Love has nothing to do with work but our families cannot understand this. I really love this pretty girl, Rekha, and she loves me too but our families oppose our marriage. They are of the view that without any source of income, how we can take the huge responsibility of marriage? They might be of the right opinion, but they don't know that Rekha and I have had pre-marital sexual relations which caused her pregnancy. We want to get married before this truth is revealed to our families to avoid any trouble and stigma. We are facing this problem only because we didn't have any information about safe sex methods.

PROTECTION AND PROFESSION

My name is Reema and being a commercial sex worker, it's quite difficult to live a respectable life in the society but I still enjoy it. Me and my two Eunuch colleagues live in this cottage and also use this place for our sex work. We do not charge our clients much money but we do ask them to use condoms because we know how to protect ourselves. I personally think that all commercial sex workers can reduce their vulnerability to sexually transmitted infections by using preventative measures.

BE PATIENT

People take their time watering this tree, doing everything they can for it to have better quality fruit. The problem is they start eating the fruit before it ripens because they don't have patience. Youths can't wait for the right time. Who can wait for the right time? They start having sex at a tender age which leads them to serious problems, such as HIV/AIDS and unwanted pregnancy.

PLEASE WAIT, THE TIME SHALL COME.

UNPLANNED PREGNANCIES

Of the two evils, choose the less.

She had two choices: to have a backstreet abortion or to leave the baby in the hands of her/his father as soon as she gave birth. Eventually she chose not to abort because she was afraid of death, which can be caused by abortion.

Before she was in danger she was brilliant and intelligent, but afterwards she failed to be self-reliant and bowed to peer pressure.

Now she is suffering the consequences of peer pressure.

MY BODY

This body is mine,
I've got the power,
To say NO
So don't touch me, and take
Me places,
I don't wanna go,
So, respect what I say –
I'm doing it my way.

My body is important
And it's not safe for me to
Share it with everyone.
So don't force me into bad
Situations so that you can
Touch me

A BEAUTIFUL HOUSE?

Look at this gate and house - beautiful, aren't they? Well not so much for Edna. This was her worst place. Actually, she would have preferred prison. Behind that nice gate and inside that nice house, not nice things happened. Edna was molested and raped by her own Dad and at times she wished him dead. The worst part of it is that her mother did not believe her and said that if it is true then it is her fault.

AN ABANDONED CHILD

This child of two years has been abandoned by her 15 year old mother Susan after the child's father refused to take responsibility for the child. He said that at the young age of 16, he was unable to look after an infant. Susan hopes a good Samaritan may take care of the child.

JANE

I am Jane and I am 14 years old. I have not been able to go to school for two days now due to abdominal pain and a headache. I am bleeding from my private parts. Maybe someone raped me when I was sleeping. When I complained to my mother about my state, she just told me all women go through it. Can someone explain what is happening to me and how long it is going to be like this?

URIEL

Uriel, is originally from the city Puebla. He is a young, sociable, university student. He is free like a bird in his thoughts and he has no limits and because of this his intimate relationships are the same. He does whatever he wants and every weekend he goes to bars or clubs to find another new adventure.

Unfortunately he doesn't take adequate measures in his adventures. He doesn't take care of himself or the girl, but for him each seed he leaves behind is of no consequence. For example, if the girl becomes pregnant it doesn't matter because he changes his name with every girl he seduces. In this way she loses track of him and doesn't know where to look for him. This is how he avoids problems.

But like they say, your day will come, and his came. Today this kid who flew free with a coquettish smile, lies in hospital because one of his adventures left him with a souvenir, a souvenir that he will never be able to delete or cure. He was left with AIDS.

Now he is sad that he never took adequate measures to look after himself. He thought that using a condom only prevented pregnancies. Too late he realized that it was a benefit that put his health and life at risk. Now he is going to pass his last days in a hospital regretting that he did not value this liberty, for not choosing well and not exercising his sexuality with more responsibility for himself and everyone else.

There are more than a few people who think and act in the same way as Uriel. There are many people who don't take the necessary steps to protect themselves. That is why this virus has come to Mexico and many other countries. Don't let this happen to you. You can avoid it by using condoms because they are life insurance for you and those who surround you. When someone acquires this virus, there is no turning back. We can learn something from Uriel's life. We learn that AIDS exists and that you stop existing when this awful virus infects you. USE A CONDOM. DON'T FORGET THAT AIDS IS ALSO IN CHIAPAS, MEXICO.

CARLOS THE JOKER

This is a boy called Carlos who used to be good at telling jokes. One day he was invited to a party and when he arrived he was surprised because there were lots of kids there. He was surprised because he usually only tells jokes to his friends or to a few people. But he said, "Oh well, what can I do?" So he started and then he realised that one girl had been watching him. Carlos, like all other boys, felt attraction and when he finished everything went over to her and invited her out. She said yes. After he discovered that this girl was different from the rest because of the tone of her voice, the way she walked and dressed. Carlos realized that she was homosexual and he couldn't believe it. Since that day, he has hated all homosexuals after what happened to him.

MY COUSIN JUAN

The guy on the bike is my cousin Juan.

He is a calm and good person. Because they are lower class, he is hard-working and helps his mom and dad.

When Juan was 14 years old, he met a girl named Ana. They had a good time together. They went out, had fun and they were very happy. One day Ana told Juan that she didn't feel well, that she was dizzy and nauseous. Juan started to think that Ana was pregnant.

They were worried because they didn't have work or anything to support the baby and besides that they didn't have any money. Juan told his parents and they told him it was better if Juan and Ana went to the doctor.

Juan and Ana went to a health centre and there they were told that Ana could still take a pill and then they could continue their lives without any effects.

And like that, Ana took the pill and was able think about what she needed before doing it.

ADULT MOVIES

Youth is the age of imagination. Young people are greatly attracted to the opposite sex and always create different images in their minds. They always try to find opportunities to satisfy their sexual needs and the most common practice is watching blue movies. My elder brother and his friends used to see these movies every weekend. I always wondered whether they only got sexual satisfaction from the movies or if they acquired information and knowledge about sexual health and preventive measures as well.

A CHILD PRODUCING MACHINE

My name is Zulekha and I live in a village adjacent to Quetta. I am a housewife and my husband is a fruit seller. We have had many quarrels with each other on the issue of family planning over the last five years. I have already given birth to six children and doctors said to me that having more children could kill me. I have tried to talk to my husband many times on family planning methods but he not only refuses to use condoms but doesn't allow me to use any contraceptives. If I insist or debate with him, he not only beats me badly but also threatens me with divorce. He does not consider me a wife but a child producing machine. Despite having no resources or facilities for the six children, I have to give birth to another one.

PLAY SAFE

In my childhood, I used to play with balloons. This is a really safe game which doesn't harm or danger anyone. Although I am now a youth I still enjoy the use of balloons – condoms, to protect me from HIV and sexually transmitted infections, and keep me happy and healthy.

THE TREE

This picture can be considered as only one tree or there may be several different trees because they grow up from different roots. Surprisingly, however, they live together in peace. Can we treat people around us the same way? Please unite, love and support each other and give HIV-infected people a hand. As the old saying goes: when a horse is ill the others in the stable refuse to eat the grass. I am sure that all of us can do that.

BLOOD CONTACT WITH HIV/AIDS

Thanh was an intelligent and funny boy. He often played football with friends after school. One day, a ball was kicked into some bushes and Thanh went to pick it up. Unfortunately he stepped on a needle. His foot was bleeding, but he did not care much about it and continued to play.

Tragically that needle had just been thrown away by a drug-addict who was also an HIV-infected person. A year after, when donating blood in a hospital he was told he had been infected with HIV. That shocking result devastated him. All his dreams and future plans would never come true.

Thanh is only one of many people who accidentally contract HIV. If only there were no drug-addicts or such unconscious deeds, Thanh would not be infected with this dangerous disease. We should protect our society from drug problems in order not to have pitiful cases like Thanh.

LITTLE FEET

After serving customers, I tiredly fell down on the couch...I also heard that my lady had received two more good looking girls. Glancing at the old and bad bed, I was surprised to see the small feet of those girls poking out of the blanket. Probably they were the new goods... By their feet, I guessed they were about 16 or 17 only...What a pity! They seemed to be the same as me five years ago, cheated to come here and forced to serve guests five or six times per day and treated like animals. They reminded me of my life. Why are the destinies of women like us so miserable?

THE BICYCLE

Through the image of this bicycle, I would like to tell you about a girl in a small village in the suburb of Hanoi. She passed happy days with her parents and relatives. One day, due to a thoughtless action, she fell into the hands of human smugglers. Her miserable life in different brothels started. She was sold from one man to another and was forced to have sex with many men like this bicycle was used by many different people. Day after day, her youth and health were ruined in these brothels. Finally, she managed to escape from that hell and returned to Vietnam, gaunt in appearance.

Thanks to help from local authorities, she can put herself in touch with people who can help her. However, like this broken bicycle, even after being carefully repaired and replaced by new parts, it is impossible to be as good as it was before. Therefore, to help young girls with this fortune, we should prevent human smuggling.

PIGEONS

I have seen and admired a flock of white pigeons fed on paddy grain and praised for their beauty. But it is not only a flock of white pigeons, as there is also a black one hiding in a corner. It appears to be spurned and driven out of its flock. This makes me think about HIV-infected people who are also spurned, discriminated and shunned, even seriously insulted, because in many people's opinion, HIV only infects people with promiscuous lifestyles. However, HIV-infected people really do not know what to do, except to stand alone to view the outside world with regret for one careless mistake.

THE VOICE THAT WAS NEVER HEARD

The girl in this photo is Mary and she earns her living by plaiting people's hair. She doesn't go to school but stays home and plaits people's hair. There are times when she doesn't have customers and all she does is allow her mind to wonder. This idleness leads her to have immoral thoughts. She begins to feel lonely and usually thinks of marriage.

In the afternoon her aunt gets home and sends her to the market to buy some groceries. Mary starts off for the market and on her way meets a guy who introduces himself as Peter and offers to escort her to the market and back. As they are walking, Peter proposes love to Mary. Mary immediately agrees, considering her loneliness. The two agree to meet at Mary's place everyday when everybody is not around.

Peter comes in on a Friday and asks Mary if she loves him and Mary says she does. Peter tells Mary that he loves her and wants to marry her. At the mention of marriage, Mary is excited and believes she has finally found her Mr. Right. Peter then asks Mary for sex. Mary tries to refuse but Peter assures her that he is going to marry her. She gives in on one condition, which is that they use a condom. Peter does not like the sound of this and tells her that there is no point in having sex with a condom when they are getting married and Mary agrees.

A month later Mary discovers she is pregnant. She tells Peter and Peter denies responsibility calling her a whore. She thinks of the consequences of telling her aunt about the pregnancy. The aunt that has never talked to her about sexual matters because it is a taboo. She concludes that she will not tell her aunt but tell her friend Annie who will help her abort the pregnancy.

She goes to Annie and tells her of the situation. Annie gives Mary some medicine. Mary takes the medicine and suddenly feels weak and blacks out...

Nobody can understand how such a good girl could abort a baby and die in the process. It is so sad to have lost Mary; if only someone had talked to her about her sexuality maybe this wouldn't have happened.

A SECOND CHANCE TO LIVE

Misozi and her siblings lived in harsh conditions. When the rainy season came, the ceiling leaked. The water in the house would be knee high by morning. When the summer came they would suffer from colds and nose bleeds, because the door had to be kept closed and the small hole in the wall that served as a window was covered with plastic to prevent mosquitoes and irritating flies from entering. In winter they kept themselves warm by lighting a fire with the firewood they would collect during the day.

At the age of twelve, Misozi was forced to become a young adult, fending for herself and her siblings due to the unfair circumstances of life. Her father was long dead, but Misozi cherished every second they had spent together, even though he rarely spent time at home due to prolonged working hours and the boy's nights out. He had been a great father, but he had spent the last days of his life bedridden. All that was left of him was skin and bones. He looked extremely hopeless during his last days and had a ring of plague on his lips. He was dying of AIDS.

The day after he was put to rest, his relatives grabbed all the property, leaving Misozi, her two sisters Gill (six) and Hope (two) and their mother homeless. Her mother used the little money she had secretly stashed away to buy a house in an overpopulated shanty compound. She also managed to get a job as a house cleaner. Misozi knew her mother was hypertensive, but it seemed her father's death had had such a huge impact on her mother that she suffered a stroke and died three months after her father had died. "Promise me that you will work hard at school and always be there for your sisters?" she would say as though she knew her end was near.

Now orphaned, Misozi had to do everything in her capacity to fulfill her mother's dying wish. She loved school and appreciated the fact that primary basic school education was free, but she and her sisters needed food and money to survive. After school, Misozi would go home to house, doing people's laundry, cleaning their houses and even mowing their lawns in exchange for food, money, clothes or anything that served as suitable payment. At the end of the day, she would share her earnings with her sisters. Misozi cried herself to sleep each night, hoping to wake up the next day from a bad nightmare.

One morning on her way to school, Misozi read from an eye-catching poster 'Zambia AIDS law promoting organisation'. Below the title she read that it was an organisation that promoted the well-being of children orphaned by HIV/AIDS and gave AIDS-affected children access to HIV/AIDS-related treatment. Misozi headed to the organisation without hesitation, hoping desperately for a solution.

INTOXICATION AND HIV/AIDS IN OUR SOCIETIES

Dancing is a rhythmic bodily movement usually accompanied by music, ranging anywhere from a slow tempo to a violent frenzy. It is an outward expression of one's emotions and attitudes, often those of joy, ecstasy and sometimes sexual. Intoxication is the state of being drunk due to excessive intake of alcoholic beverages.

However, in recent decades, people have tended to aggravate their lives with these acts. In relation to the picture, it can be seen that youths of today involve themselves in these acts to attract one another into sexual activities. When one is intoxicated, their principles are so lost that he or she can do what they cannot normally do when sober. He/she can even have sex unknowingly or without protection and may find it difficult to say no when they are under the influence of alcohol. Hence, they might catch and spread HIV/ AIDS without knowing.

Erotic dances are indirect proposals for sex. Biological studies show that young males are easily aroused and are desperate to satisfy their sexual desire. One man who is suffering from HIV after leading a careless life said, "The only thing that attracted me to have sex with prostitutes was their erotic dances. I didn't care about my life; all I wanted was to have that erotic girl in bed with me."

It is also unfortunate to learn about how these older female prostitutes affect younger ones. Because of their bad portrayal, younger girls are misled, thinking that it is the most enjoyable life. What happens to their education? It is dropped.

Fortunately we can conquer these acts, but how? If the government implements age and working hour restrictions as well as supervising the services offered by these night clubs. And by supporting the AIDS programmes.

Parents and teachers play an extremely crucial part in this fight. Some youths involve themselves in intoxication and erotic dances because of a lack of knowledge. Parents and teachers must tell us about the dangers of HIV/AIDS as well as providing us with enough challenging materials which can help us abstain.

PHULMOTI

She is Phulmoti and she is 18. She lives in the city, in the slum close to the dam. She was married to an alcoholic at the age of 14. This early marriage with a gambler and alcoholic closed the chapter of her education along with all her dreams. Every day her husband would return home drunk after gambling and another terrible night would begin. One day she could not bear the torture anymore and went back to her father's house with signs of physical torture all over her body.

But her room in her father's house was already filled. She then went to her old friend Salma who had a similar story. Phulmoti began to work in a garments factory with Salma and began to live in the Slum of Taju. However small the income might have been, at least she was earning for herself and for her life.

And then nature turned cruel just like the humans in her life had. The whole slum is now under flood water. Phulmoti is again searching for a new home. But now it is a different Phulmoti, who knows that she can win.

BIRD WITHOUT THE WINGS

I am Jainab, a day labourer working in the Shyampur dock yard. My life was like a flying bird in the wide blue sky. Now I am 32 years old and my fate has led me here. I lived my early life with my five brothers and sisters. That life was like a dream.

When I was 16, elders from my neighbourhood advised my father that I should get married. They said that girls don't need to be educated, that if I am not married I will become a burden on my family. My parents were convinced and stopped my education. Proposals were coming from all around for marriage. I opposed strongly and told them that I wanted to study more and wanted to be established in my life. But it was all in vain and I was married forcefully to Motaleb who works in the town. It was like falling into deep water with binding on your hands and legs.

Are girls just burdens to society? However, I gave birth to a daughter. How charming she was! But my husband's family was disappointed. They were expecting a male child who would bear the name of the family. They were generous enough with the second child, counting my first daughter as a mishap. But fate played a cruel game with me. I gave birth to four daughters, one after another.

My life in the family turned to hell. One day I found myself divorced and there was another girl in my place as my husbands' wife with the hope of producing male children. My only sin is that I am a mother of four daughters.

Now I am alone. Where shall I go? To my parent's house where I was considered a burden and where I spoiled my life? No, I will search for a life by myself, on my own feet. Society has judged my four daughters as a burden, but for me they are a fortune.

THE DAYS AND NIGHTS OF SIDDIQ

Now it is 10 am. Boys and girls are going to school. And just at that moment Siddiq is replacing the wheel of this 16 ton heavy vehicle. His father's income is too small to bear the expense of the family. Even worse, that tiny income stopped when his father became seriously ill. Now Siddiq is working in this workshop at the age of 12 for 30-40 taka a day. He gives his money to his father and he could not control his tears. Siddiq is determined he will educate his younger sisters and brothers.

Is not this hard labor making obstacles for the proper growth of an adolescent Siddiq? Recently he has started watching adult movies with some of his fellow workers. He feels overwhelming curiosity about the physical relationship between men and women, which he has seen in the movies. He is spending his extra money watching such movies, which he previously used to spend on buying toys for his younger sister. He does not feel the attachment as before for his sick father. The reality is shadowed by the new experience and the unknown changes in his body.

This is the story of millions of Siddiqs of Bangladesh. They are toiling hard for life at this tender age and on the other hand, the physical and mental changes of the adolescent period leads them to an unusual and unhealthy life. Our adolescents should have proper information about their changes, along with economic security. But who will take this responsibility?

THE BOY WHO WAITS

Classes are over. The boy is waiting at the entrance of the school to see the girl he likes. He does this every day silently without having the guts to get close to her. He already feels content by stealing a look at her in this secret way.

THE DIARY

When I was a child, I always told my mother everything on my mind, but now I only wish to write everything down in my diary. It is my story, my secret.

A REAL MAN WAITS

Virginity is like an egg, if you break it you can't mend it. Abstinence is the key to a happy marriage.

SEX IS NOT ALL

Sex is not the only way to show how much you love each other.

MY VEGETABLE SHOP

I am a 20 year old girl called Dora. What you see is my life. Without that shop, I would be nowhere. My father gave me to an old man to be his third wife and it turned out that he was HIV positive so my two children and I are too. I have lost my husband. My co-wives kicked me out. My parents want nothing to do with an AIDS victim so I survive by selling vegetables.

PATRICIA'S STORY

Patricia is 17 years old. She used to escape from school and go to night clubs with her boyfriend John. Today, she came to visit John to inform him that she had missed her period for two months now. John denied being responsible for her pregnancy and locked her out of the house.

She is now worried about how is she going to tell her parents, and what is going to happen to her education. Schools expel any girl they find pregnant.

WAITING FOR A MAN

Jane has just started university but her single mother can't provide her with tuition or other basic necessities. Her friends advised her to get a working man who could support her with tuition and fancy clothes.

A married man is interested in her. She is waiting for him in the garden for fear of being spotted by his wife.

FIGHTING FOR A GIRL

“The girl is mine!” charges Tom.

“We will see who the real man is. You dog!” replies John.

Tom and John live in the same neighbourhood. They are fighting over the same girl, who they each claim to love and to have spent money on.

JANE'S "WORK"

Jane is 15 years old and her siblings are five and seven years old. They lost both their parents to HIV/AIDS. They dropped out of school due to lack of financial support from relatives. Jane, being the eldest, has to take care of the upkeep of their home. Prostitution is what she does to get money.

It is 8:30 pm and Jane has to drop her siblings off at a neighbour's place in order to go and 'work'. In order to get enough for the next day, she has to sleep with a number of men in one night. Life has been a living hell ever since their parents passed away two years ago.

TOUCHING A CACTUS

Driven by curiosity, we all wish to try novel things. But when you try things without sufficient knowledge about the advantages and disadvantages of taking these actions, it is like you are touching a cactus – if you don't take enough care, you will get hurt. 'Sex' is the same.

LOVE

Love - we are all longing for love! Many people say that we are too young and can not understand what it is. However, I think every one has their own understanding of love, and people of every age have their own needs.

KNOWLEDGE ABOUT PUBERTY AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

I really do not have enough knowledge about puberty and reproductive health. But my sister has explained and given me many books related to these issues so I know more. Why doesn't my mum do so? One day, I opened a book but it was so difficult to understand. I decided to ask her when she was hanging clothes. She explained for a long time and with such a loud voice. I could not catch a word, but felt really shameful: Why does she speak so loudly? I was very ashamed because I was afraid the neighbours would notice.

AN EXCELLENT STUDENT

Thang was an excellent student and would soon graduate from his university. Owing to his ability, he was granted a scholarship to Australia. At his celebration party, Thang got drunk and had sex with a waitress named Tuyet. Thang was sorry about what he had done and tried to forget it.

To complete the application for the scholarship, Thang had to go for a check-up. Holding the HIV positive paper, he only felt dizzy and anxious. His future plans were all ruined. He was afraid of being spurned by his friends and family, so he kept his disease a secret, which made him obsessed and depressed. Thang left his family and committed suicide.

His death is a warning for young people, that one moment of fun and enjoyment could cost you your future. Please understand, don't avoid AIDS-infected people but open your arms to them.

MARIA AND JULIO

This is a young woman called Maria. When Maria was an adolescent she was very friendly and got along with everyone and she wanted to have a sexual life at a young age. Unfortunately she didn't know all of the birth control methods or all of the topics of sexual and reproductive health.

Then, she found out that she was pregnant and was filled with fear. She didn't know what to do. Desperate and scared, she talked to her friends about what she could do, but her friends, trying to help her, actually scared her even more. In the end they started telling her lies and giving her stupid ideas. They told her that no one would want her and that her family didn't want her. So Maria went to the city to live her life alone.

When she went to look for a job no one wanted to give her one because she was pregnant. Then a guy named Julio saw her. He became interested in Maria. Julio took Maria to his house but his parents didn't want her to live there, especially because she was pregnant. They told him that if he wanted to live in the house to forget about Maria but if he didn't then he would have to leave the house and live with her. Since that day they have disappeared.

FRANCISCO'S STORY

Hi, my name is Francisco. I am going to tell you a story about what happened to me when I was 15 years old and very shy. My friends were always showing things off to me, especially the fact that they had girlfriends. They told me that I needed to have one to know what a kiss was, or how it felt to be caressed and to caress a woman. I was afraid. I didn't know about these things. Then my friends asked me if I had had sexual relations. I had to ask them what that was. I started doubting what sexuality was and I was afraid to talk with my parents. So I looked for a friend that I could talk with about my doubts.

My friend told me that he was going to help me. The next day he called and told me that he was going to come to my house to take me to a place where I could learn about sexuality. When we arrived at the place, I started to tremble with fear. I couldn't even talk. I knocked at the door and a beautiful girl came out. She took my hand and guided me inside. Once we were inside, she started caressing me, kissing me and touching me. I felt wonderful and we had sexual relations. When I left this place my friend told that it was a brothel but he didn't tell me that I had to take care of myself by using a condom.

Two days later, I started to feel discomfort in my penis. I didn't say anything to my parents because I was scared. I asked my uncle to help me and he took me to the doctor. I was diagnosed with gonorrhoea. I was traumatized. I had to go to therapy to help me get over the problem because I was scared that it was going to happen again. I am now 18 years old and I now know how to take care of myself thanks to the assistance of youth centres. There I met Karla, who is now my girlfriend and we are very happy.

NASEEMA'S STORY

My name is Naseema and I live near Multan, the city of saints. I am in class six and I participate in extra curricular activities, particularly running. I have won many prizes in different running competitions.

My family and teachers always encouraged me but I don't know what happened to them last week when I got my period for the first time in my life, during the exams. My teachers sent me back home without finishing the exam and my mother did not allow me to play with my neighbouring friends or even to do any work at home. She locked me in my room for three days. When I asked my mother, sisters and even my teacher about periods, they did not respond and said that periods are a bad thing and our religion, culture, family etc. don't allow us to discuss them openly. I am very curious to learn more about periods and the different changes taking place in my body, but there is no one to ask.

TOKEN LOVE

As these young children return home from school, they are accompanied by strangers - young men - who pressurise the girls into having a love affair in return for small gifts and money.

The young boys are used as gobetweens and bribed with small tokens.

LET'S THINK

HIV/AIDS, family planning and reproductive health are a western agenda and no one, particularly the youth, should have to worry about them. This is the general perception regarding very crucial issues in Pakistan. But I appeal to young people to think about these critical issues and take positive steps to acquire complete and correct information.

SOLD!

Some girls provide their parents with profit through arranged marriages. This photo I took is one example of the many girls who have been the victims of this.

Because of the high poverty levels in the country, most parents feel they help can lift themselves out of the poverty cycle by giving their daughters to men (no matter how old they are) to marry in exchange for money. The girl in the photo has been given to somebody a lot older than her by her parents.

Mulenga was deep in thought, lamenting the current events in her life. Mr Phiri had five wives and wanted Mulenga as his sixth. Mulenga's father Mr Moonze had accepted the proposal, but Mulenga was very saddened by the news and had refused outright. Her mother, having been the victim of an arranged marriage herself, sided with Mulenga but had little say in the matter. Mr Moonze had tried to convince his 11 year old daughter to marry the man who was old enough to be her grandfather, and when things did not work out, he packed her belongings and forcibly handed her over to Mr Phiri.

Unfortunately the old man was not going to let her go. She cried, "Help! Help!" But all she could hear were the birds chirping and she wished she was in the safety of her own bedroom. He lifted her skirt and raped her shamelessly. "You think refusing to marry me was a good idea, huh?" he shouted. When he was done with her, he zipped up his trousers and was on his way, locking the door behind him.

The man she was married to is now her rightful owner and Mulenga can't escape.

TRADITIONAL INITIATION CEREMONIES

First and foremost, I would like to thank God who keeps us alive and may he continue to guide us in our daily lives. I am very proud to be associated with this organization that helps young people discover their talents and helps them to improve their lives. I am very happy that this organization has catered for schools in Zambia and the youth who are the main wheels of change and development. You have improved many peoples' lives, may you continue to do good work.

Initiation ceremonies have been practiced by most tribes in Zambia for many years, and they have both advantages and disadvantages. They may violate the sexual and reproductive health rights of the one who is being initiated. It is really sad and discouraging to learn about the horrors some youths go through in the initiation house; one might be beaten and their freedom of movement restricted for a week or more. Although a girl might have been taught a lot of good morals, it is mostly at the wrong age. For example, a 15 year old who is taken into an initiation house will be taught how to look after a husband and the marital house when she is not mature enough to understand this.

A 15 year old girl, withdrawn from school in the seventh grade in order to be put into the initiation house, was taught how to keep a husband and other adult things. After the initiation ceremony period was over, I had the opportunity to chat with her. I asked her what went on in the initiation house and what she had learnt. I had a hard time convincing her to disclose this information because she was forbidden to talk about what she had been taught. At last I managed to get her talking and she told me everything that happened in the initiation house and how she was taught how to behave like a woman. She was taught some sexual dances, how to keep her vagina dry and how to make sexual advances.

I was surprised and puzzled by the information the girl had been given at such a young age. She concluded by saying that she couldn't wait to have sex. I was speechless. I later heard that after classes, the girl and her friends, instead of going home, would remain behind to teach each other sexual dances, as education was not their priority. Only four months after we had spoken, I heard that she had conceived at the tender age of 15.

After being a spectator of this situation, I concluded that traditional initiation ceremonies should be converted into educative business, but for grown ups. Initiation ceremonies are not bad as part of culture, but it is worrying because certain teachings expose our youth to greater risks of contracting HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases. There is a need for youth projects to conduct reproductive health education and stronger parent-child communication to give necessary information to parents on how to treat and handle their children and encourage them to put education first.

EARLY PREGNANCY PHENOMENON

Years ago, pregnancies in young girls were just part of our culture and seen as a normal thing. As soon as a girl came of age, she would be married off to a man - something which was seen as right and unquestionable until the late 20th century when the white man came with his new theories of life.

The causes of youth pregnancies are numerous and can be summed up as both a wanted and unwanted responsibility. Youth pregnancies are the order of day in this era. Girls as young as 12 years old fall pregnant and in most cases become school drop outs. They fall pregnant due to many internal and external factors. Internal factors includes things like family issues, sexual desire, etc. while external factors refer to things like tradition, peer pressure, witchcraft etc.

Many girls are forced into early marriages which in turn result in pregnancy. Youth pregnancies have maintained high population figures because the total fertility rate has increased. From the photo we can tell that although this person is a child according to the United Nations rights, she is considered a young mother.

Youth pregnancies have a direct impact on the mother and also her environment. Sometimes she can be mentally disturbed to the point of isolation. This in itself is a step back from national development.

In conclusion, I suggest that the issue of youth pregnancies should be adequately addressed and measures put forward to stop girls getting pregnant so young.

OUR CULTURAL HERITAGE

Zambia as a country has an abundance of cultural characteristics. With more than 70 tribes, she is not devoid of rich traditions. Time has shown us, however, that some traditional practices are abusive and inhuman.

Young girls have been the object of exploitation for years. As the weaker of the two genders (or so it seems), females have been subjected to sexual, verbal and even physical abuse all in the name of tradition. Our traditions were meant to inspire good but all they achieve now is the spreading of fear, repulsion and disgust in the minds of those who see them for what they are - a nightmare.

The nightmare for a girl child begins when she is born into a family and she is either laughed at or scolded because she lacks male genitalia and is what her brothers are not - a female. Tradition dictates her dress, everyday speech, manners and temperament. She realises too late that tradition abuses her and names her male siblings and the entire male population of her tribe "princes". So much for being female.

As the years go on, the young girl's life becomes even more difficult. Puberty, which is supposed to be the peak of youthful life, a time full of joyous anxiety and sweet anticipation, proves to be the horror of all horrors. As soon as a girl comes of age she must be circumcised and without reason or emotion, the very people she looks to for guidance and instruction turn into monsters overnight, and wickedly carry out their duties to tradition.

Female circumcision is cruel and unreasonable. It not only damages proper reproductive health, but also leaves emotional scars never to be erased in the minds of innocent, unknowing young females.

The initiation ceremony focuses on teaching a young girl about womanhood and the duties of a woman. The purpose it really serves is that of putting the woman under such rigid restrictions that her life becomes so unbearable and the way of least resistance is that of unquestioning obedience to a series of dictators (her father, brothers, uncles, husband and sons). The cycle is unending and gets trickier to handle with the advancement of years.

STRANGE FRIENDSHIP

After finishing 10th grade, I finished my studies and joined my father's shop. I am a shy person and do not like gatherings. I have neither friends nor any hobbies. I spend most of my time at the shop and my remaining time on this roof. My parents want to arrange my marriage with a cousin but I feel that I might not be able to marry because I don't have any feelings for girls or sexual behaviour. I don't even know the purpose of my life but I do know that this loneliness is the only counterpart and friend in my life.

TAJO

I am a gynaecologist by profession and handle many patients with different complications daily. One day Tajo, a 15 year old girl, came to me with a 50 year old man and I was very surprised when I came to know that she is 3 months pregnant and wanted to abort the child. I was stunned to hear that the old man was her boy friend and this was his child. I didn't have any answers for them but I would like to educate all young girls on how to protect themselves.

THE QUACK

“Syphilis, gonorrhoea, impotency... can not satisfy your wife in bed.... Brother, you will say I am talking like the men in cinema. But I swear, try my magic amulet just for a week. If you do not feel like a titan in the bed with your wife, you will get your money back. And the price? Only 10 taka.”

You will find such vociferous quacks all over in Bangladesh, from the capital city to the most remote village. People unaware of their reproductive health are ruining it by putting their trust in them. Adolescents are their primary victims. For the majority, these street side quacks offer them their first opportunity to talk about reproductive health, but these men's promises do not even have a morsel of truth to them and they have to bear the consequences for the rest of their lives.

I don't know whether these quacks exist in the developed countries. If they do, do they deceive adolescents like us? I pray they might not suffer as we do.

SHABAN'S NEW DRESS

"Be quick dear Shabana, it will take the whole day at this pace" my mother told me while crushing stone chips. We live beside the river; my father died long ago when I was just a year old. I can earn 60 taka by crushing chips for a whole day. I give the money to my mother. She saves the money.

The Eid festival is just two months away. During the last Eid, I cried bitterly because my mother could not provide me with a new dress. My mother also cried. Now I am 10 years old and work with my mother the whole day. Despite that, she often sighs, "Shabana if only you were a boy!"

Before my chip crushing job, my mother used to leave me alone in our slum. But some people began to annoy me. They would tempt me with cookies and try to touch my body which I did not like. I was afraid and told my mother. From then on she brought me here to work with her. I understand that there is something wrong in being a girl, there must be as even my mother sighs for a boy.

I hope I will get a new dress at this Eid. But I often think - if only I were a boy, my mother might not have to work this hard!

AND THUS WE LIVE

I am Eti and this is my friend Tania. I am 14 and she is 15. We were students at the same school. After the death of my father I was compelled to abandon my studies and began to work in a garments factory. Our fate was bound together. Just a year later, Tania's father got married again and she joined me in the garments factory and now we each earn 1200 taka a month.

We have to pass some ruffians bullying us on the way to work. They are the local musclemen, everybody fears them.

On a holiday, we were out beside the lake. Suddenly we found two of the hooligans coming towards us. We were trembling with fear. One of them said that he loved Tania and wanted to marry her. He threatened that he was going to throw some acid at her if anything went against his will. Tania was close to fainting with fear. I whispered to her, "Don't worry, I am here."

Now, we are closed in our shabby room even during our holidays. I think growing up is a curse in itself for girls. We will be bullied; we will be paid lower wages and all of this because we are girls. Is there any end to these dark days?

CATCH THEM YOUNG

Train a dog whilst it is young. It's better to build a child than to repair a man.

Adolescent sexual reproductive health is taken for granted by adults.

TEENAGE PREGNANCY

Avoid teen pregnancy
When you are still a teenager

When you fall pregnant: Who will take care of you and the child?
Will the owner of the pregnancy accept?

Will you still go to school and plan your future?
Will you know if you do not have HIV?

Resist sex.
Protect yourself and think of the future

INVINCIBLE

I am 'Oparajita', it means one who could not be defeated. When I was born nobody rejoiced over my birth. Who knows, I might have been the result of illegitimate relations. These are not my words but that what the neighbors say.

I was born in the floor of a government hospital. But after only a day, my mother left the hospital leaving me inside alone. In the nearest bed, another woman gave birth to a dead child. Luckily, she took me to her bosom and she is now my mother.

Now I am studying in Class 10. I was happy with my family. One day, one of classmates whispered to another, "Did you know, she is an illegitimate child?" The world becomes grey and lifeless to me. I started to question myself – who is my father and who is my mother?

My foster mother has a nephew. His name is Chonchol. My parents like him very much. They want me to marry him. But I know how perverted he is. He has tried several times to abuse me. He tries to touch me indecently whenever he finds me alone. I hate this fellow. What's more, he has also started harassing me about my parents' identity.

I often thought of going somewhere, where nobody will question me about my birth. But I know this world is full of people like Chonchol and a girl of my age is safe nowhere. These men like beasts are everywhere and are ready to abuse us. I know my foster parents like me very much, but they simply don't care what I think or what I really want. In my own solitude I dream some day I will find a world which will make my name meaningful.

MY LIFE AND MY DREAMS

You will not find anything as it should be in this slum. Poverty, filth surrounds us here everywhere.

I am Faruq, I live in this slum. When I was just a kid, mother sent me to Dhaka with Uncle Rahim. We were poor and my parents could not afford to look after me. I was only 14 then. Nobody wanted to give me a job. They said, "Look he is just growing up, you can not rely on him. He will steal something and will vanish." However, I managed to get work crushing brick chips. My days were so bad then. Fortunately I then got a job working as a novice on a public vehicle. When I was 20, I became the driver of that vehicle.

I married Rahima when I was 24 and she 20. I have heard it in on the radio that early marriage can cause harm to girls in their pregnancy. That's the reason why I married her long after I had known her.

We have adopted the family planning method. I have passed difficult times in my early life and do not want the same for my children. We have two children and want to rear them for a completely different and healthy life.

THE WISH

I know smoking is bad for my health, but I can not resist, because of my tension. I am an indigenous woman of the Mandi community living in the Mymensingh district of Bangladesh. Bengalis call us tribe people.

We are a women-headed society. My two daughters are studying in the Mymensingh Girls College. I am laboring hard to maintain the cost of their study. I dream they will reach an honorable position in society. I know how much distress an indigenous girl has to face. As they are growing up, people from the so called main stream society began to tease them in their way to school. When my elder daughter was 14, one day she came home crying. Some Bengalis stopped her on the way to school and placed forth indecent proposal. We are nothing more than an instrument of enjoyment to them.

The elders of our community said, "Why are you sending them to school? The more we ethnic people go out, the more trouble mounts up."

But I do not agree with them. I don't think staying in is the solution of the problem. Getting a strong foothold in the society is the solution. We indigenous girls have to face very undesirable situations during our adolescence period. We honour girls in our society. The Bengalis should learn about that from us.

WOMEN TRAFFICKING

“Montu boy, please draw the cart for a while, I am tired.” Montu began to draw the cart slowly. He is the youngest of six brothers and sisters. His elder two sisters are married and the third one... well, nobody knows how she is or where she is.

It happened like this. Montu was six then. One day an unknown and very warm hearted woman came to his mother and said, “Sister, your family seems to be suffering with poverty. Why don’t you give Shahana to me? I will organise a good job for her in the garments industry - 5000 taka a month at least. She will live and dine with me. Whenever you want to come and see her, you are always welcome in my house.” Montu’s father took the opportunity and let Shahana go.

After few months, Montu’s elder sister went to Dhaka and found the address the woman provided was false and there was no trace of Shahana. She seemed to have vanished into thin air. Returning to the village, they talked with the local chairman and went to the police. The police officer said that they had a few other similar cases. That woman actually was a member of a gang related with women trafficking. They trade women abroad as sex workers. The younger the girl, the better the price.

Montu’s father walks along the road as his son draws the cart. A deep sigh comes from his heart for Shahana, his long lost little girl.

WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT

“Whatever great or good that are in this world
Half of of that was by woman the rest by man”

National poet of Bangladesh, Kazi Nazrul Islam, wrote these lines a long time ago. Today women are working as much as men. They have come a long way. I am also a working women and my name is Rahela.

I have seen many changes in my life of 18 years. Just a few years ago women were secluded and suffered alone with their own problems. I can recall my own adolescent period. What suffering it was to become a woman from a girl! There was nobody beside me to explain what was happening to my body and mind. My mother suddenly forbade my playing in the compound. I have gone through this all alone. But I am conscious about my younger sister.

I have many women and girls as customers. They talk about their needs without hesitation with me, which is not possible with a male shopkeeper.

There are other girls in the shopping complex working like me. We have faced the teasing from our male colleagues boldly. Now they are friendly with us. Girls are equal to men in skill and in work; we are evidence of that.

DOOR TO SEX

On the other side of the door is 'sex'. We long to know about it but we cannot because the teacher has locked the door firmly and the parents have also put another lock on it.

PROTECT YOURSELF

The girl's wallet contains a picture of her boyfriend and a condom. She is showing her wallet to her friends. You may love somebody, but you also need to learn how to protect yourself.

SHOES

There are a pair of white shoes and a pair of adult-style high-heeled shoes in the picture. Both of these two girls are my friends. The one in white shoes is still a schoolgirl, but the one in high-heeled shoes is already out of school. The reason for the girl being out of school is that she had unprotected sex with her boyfriend and got pregnant. She was thus dismissed by her school.

ALEX AND ME

Like every other day, Alex arrives to walk to school with me. He is my boyfriend and we have been together for a year. I spend most of my free time with him. We always go to the movies, the theatre and parties.

One day we were out and ran into our friend, Liz. She had become pregnant by her boyfriend because they didn't use protection. Seeing that this had happened to our friend, we started worrying about what could happen to us and so we started looking for information about how to protect ourselves against unwanted pregnancies. But many people we tried talking to ignored us and said that we were too young and not mature enough to talk about these topics.

Even so, Alex and I have decided to try and find information as we know that we aren't ready for the responsibilities that a baby would bring at this stage in our lives. We believe that we should continue with our studies, grow up more and enjoy every part of our relationship.

IGNORANCE

This is the story of an indigenous family who lived in a remote community in the highlands of Chiapas, Mexico.

One day the oldest son arrived home. He was very nervous and announced that he was HIV positive. Since they weren't very educated, the family thought they could become infected through contact with him or by using the same bathroom, table, seats, etc. As such his family kept away from him and soon the whole community started to discriminate against him. They washed their hands after touching him or when he went into a restaurant or any public place people quickly told him to leave. One day his family decided they no longer wanted him to live in the house. He was sad but went to the city to see if he could find a job.

He walked and walked until he arrived in Tuxtla City. He went to a restaurant but he didn't get the job because he didn't have any experience. Then he went to a place to offer himself as a trailer driver but they said the same, that he didn't have any experience. So he went to a sexual health information centre which was looking for someone to do promotional work in communities. He said that he could be a promoter of sexual health in his community and they accepted him. When he returned he taught his family that he couldn't give them HIV/AIDS and he did this work until he died.

MERCEDES

Once there was a beautiful young girl called Mercedes who worked very hard. She was an only child and her parents were farmers and very dedicated to God. Mercedes grew up surrounded by love but obliged to do what God told her to do. Her family was very poor and one day her parents woke her up and said that she had to pack her things because they were moving to another area. Mercedes was very sad and afraid of not knowing what was going to happen. Soon a foreign 'family' arrived and Mercedes was sold to them for very little money. The 'family' was actually a group of traffickers who sexually exploited women.

Mercedes always maintained her internal and external beauty even with her dirty, enforced work. Even though she never saw her parents again, Mercedes decided to inform women about their rights and tell them not to be treated as objects. She explained that they are like flowers that bloom and give light and life in any place and that dignity comes before anything else.

THE MURAL

Every time I pass this mural, I can't stop thinking that I am a lot like him. A part of me lives in fantasy and the other part in reality. A lot of the time I feel like a kid and sometimes like an adult, worried about everything that is happening, such as social injustice and the helplessness of the poor who have to suffer the arrogance of many powerful people.

Often I want to rebel and run away and not be myself. Other times I prefer to lose myself in my world of elves and fantasies. I believe that this happens to me because I am still an adolescent and many parts of me aren't comfortable.

THE COUPLE

In my town I learned about sexual and reproductive health through workshops. I will tell you a story about Aymer Samuel, a cool guy who was just beginning to learn about love and passion.

One morning, his best friend Pepe told him: "Hey Samuel. An amazing girl just came to school. I have never seen a girl like her before." And they arrived at school talking about the girl. Then she came and thanks to luck or destiny, she sat right next to Samuel. He started talking to her. That day they went to the park and had fun. Afterwards Samuel accompanied Karina to her house. The next morning he picked her up. Samuel was so in love that he didn't think about anything else except for her.

After the graduation party, Samuel and Karina looked for darkness so that they could share their intimacy. In this darkness something happened that was going to happen, but it was a pity because neither one of them had brought protection.

Three months later, Karina realised she was pregnant. She told Samuel who didn't make any excuses and took full responsibility of becoming a father. He told his parents and they were mad, but Samuel didn't care. He went to Karina's house but just about died when he saw what she was doing with her stepfather. He left running, crying. He didn't leave his house for the next few weeks because he of what he had seen that night.

He started to feel ill and went to the Health Centre. They gave him a check-up and told him they had to do an analysis. A week later Samuel learnt he had HIV/AIDS. They told him not to worry because they could control it with medication but that he had to take care of himself.

One day he bumped into Karina who told him that two days after he had seen her with her stepfather; she escaped because she couldn't take any more abuse. She told him that the baby had died at birth. He forgave her and they got married. They couldn't have children because Samuel always had to use protection, but they adopted one.

TWO FRIENDS

Two guys... two friends... poor because they don't work. They want an easy life.

One of them left with a foreigner. He never thought that he could get a sexually transmitted infection. He thought that only women got them. Too late. He was already a carrier of something that he didn't know anything about. He didn't care and kept sleeping with people.

One day he understood and then he was no longer here in this world.

A QUESTION FROM ME

Youth is the age of imagination. Young people are greatly attracted to the opposite sex and always create different images in their minds. They try to find opportunities to satisfy their sexual needs and the most common practice is watching blue movies. My elder brother and his friends watch these movies every weekend. I wonder whether they only get sexual satisfaction from the movies or if they actually acquire information and knowledge about sexual health and contraceptive measures.

ATTENTION PLEASE

Shanti was the youngest among three sisters, living in a village of Sindh. She was very charming and naughty. All the family, particularly her elder sisters, loved her very much but they could not do anything when her father arranged her marriage with her cousin. She was only 13 years old and did not know even the meaning of marriage, how to adjust in a new family, how to handle her relations particularly with her husband - but she had to fulfil all the responsibilities of married life.

She gave birth to a baby boy but she was too young and unfortunately died without touching her child. Here you can see the unfortunate baby who has not only lost his mother but the love and care he needs to be healthy. He sits on the doorstep seeking attention and representing an appeal for the abolishment of early age marriage customs.

RED RELATIONS

A red rose is the symbol of love and a red light is the symbol of danger. The colour red has many more interpretations for human beings, but it has a particularly close relationship with females. A female can give birth to a child when the process of menstruation has started with red bleeding and a bride wears a red dress on her marriage day. Both of these are very crucial moments in her life but if she does not have the correct and complete information, she might face trouble and complications. I hope to get more information about sexual and reproductive health to avoid these complications.

THE DREAM

My name is Faqero and I work in a factory on daily wages. I never attended school due to financial constraints. I am also deprived of many other things such as nutritious food, a good health service and access to sport and entertainment. I have never cared about these, however, but like many other young men, I also have a great desire for girlfriends and sex. Whenever I see couples enjoying themselves in parks, restaurants and cinema halls, I feel a real inferiority complex. I cannot do anything but daydream. I invent girlfriends in my dreams and also have sex with them. These dreams bring joy to my life.

BROTHERS

Mark and Tom are brothers spending a holiday at their grandmother's home in the village. Tom wants to finish his chores in order to have time for his books. Mark, on the other hand, is unsettled and thinks about meeting his girlfriend Cissy, so he stays behind in the thicket as Tom goes ahead. Mark needs to think twice because life is not a bed of roses. The crucial question is, does he know about condoms?

JACKIE'S STORY

Jackie is a second year student in one of the universities in Uganda. She has been sick and very weak for two weeks now.

JOYCE AND JOHN

Joyce is 16 and has been staying with John her boyfriend for five months after running away from her parents' home. John and Joyce have just had a bitter quarrel after John found out that Joyce was going out with his friend and cheating on him. John has told her to leave and is throwing her property at her. Joyce is hesitant to go back to her parents' home now that she is also pregnant.

REST IN PEACE

Beautiful and healthy as she was, she died of HIV/AIDS because she had multiple sex partners, one of whom infected her. Due to a lack of information about the disease, she did not treat herself in time and this led to her death. She would not have been infected if they had used condoms.

May her soul rest in eternal peace.

DIFFICULT QUESTIONS

Minh is a 14 year-old girl who lives in a poor village. Her parents were too busy to care of their children. As the first born child, Minh was responsible for taking care of her younger siblings.

Recently Minh became anxious about some strange physical changes. Sometimes, there was blood in her vagina. She clearly felt herself growing up and recognised that she was not a small child any more. She became embarrassed. Then she decided to share this problem with me and asked me some difficult questions.

I think puberty is a vital milestone and it causes important physical and psychological changes. However, many girls and boys are not equipped with the knowledge to confront it, especially in rural areas. Minh's situation is not rare in our society because gender education in Vietnam is considered a sensitive issue and is often ignored. It is time to ring the bell of gender education because insufficient awareness of puberty can have bad consequences for later life.

ELECTRIC BOX

At first sight, this is just a normal electric box which can be found in every street in Hanoi. In fact, it is very dangerous because the metal is seriously rusty and is endangering the lives of the people around.

This box can be compared with young couples. Nowadays, having sexual relations before marriage is unavoidable. However, the important thing is whether these sexual relations are safe or not. Through this photo, I would like to send a message: 'Have safe sex!'

EVERYTHING IS STRANGE

Long is infected with HIV, shunned by his friends and treated differently by his teachers. He feels he has disgraced himself. In fact, Long doesn't have a chance of putting himself in tune with people even though it is not his fault. He considers himself like an old-fashioned bicycle amongst new ones. Although he can go to school, everything is strange to him. He feels as if he is being held tightly and everything weighs heavily upon his heart. Friends' jokes and discrimination make him sad.

Why don't people sympathise with Long? Long wishes he could be the same as his friends and have a pleasant life. Most people know HIV cannot be transmitted through face to face communication, so why do they not communicate normally with him? Long's only desire is to have friends to share his thoughts with and to talk naturally to. How simple it is but how difficult!

HOMOSEXUALITY

Homosexuals in my country are often considered immoral, different and are even ignored by their parents just for revealing their sexual inclination. However, as far as I know, homosexuality has existed for a long time; love or sexual relationships with people of the same sex is just one sexual tendency. Therefore, they should be sympathised with and respected.

THE LIVES OF HOMOSEXUALS

Why do we spurn them?

Why do we not come closer?

Why do they do things with people of the same sex?

They are homosexuals.

T is a homosexual. His father works as a fortune teller and often goes into trance and his mother is a make-up artist. In sixth grade, he began to show different sexual knowledge from the other children of the same age. However, that was not enough for me to consider him homosexual. My opinion changed in 12th Grade. One day, I skipped class and wandered into the flower garden on campus and saw T crazily kissing another boy. How terrible! What I had heard before was true, but I could not believe my eyes.

Surely, people need more time to understand homosexuals. I will try my best, or else, I cannot be T's friend.

LIGHT IN DARKNESS

Do you think I am an unhappy girl? When I was five years old, my father left me forever when he died of pneumonia. My family lost a bread-winner, but the worst thing for me was losing my father's love. After some time; my mother remarried and forced me to call this man 'daddy'. In the presence of my mother, he was very kind to me but sometimes he looked at me very strangely.

One day, my mum went back to her hometown and my stepfather and I stayed at home. He asked me to bring the dry clothes into his room. Suddenly, he closed the door and ran to me, and tore at my clothes crazily. I fainted in mental and physical pain. He took nude photos of me and threatened to post them onto the Internet if I revealed his actions.

After that terrible day, I fell into a depression, and was worried and ashamed whenever I went out. I was forced to have sex many more times for the same reason. Finally I decided to report him to the police. To get even with me he threw all my nude photos in front of my school. Because of my humiliation, I ran into a car to kill myself. Unfortunately, I lived but was paralyzed on one side of my body.

Eventually he received his due punishment. However strict the punishment was, it cannot make up for my loss. I hope that friends of my age will be equipped with more knowledge and life skills to protect themselves. I also hope people who mistreat children will be severely punished.

AFRAID TO LOOK INTO THE FUTURE

In this photo a boy can be seen on a building site. His clothes are not only dirty but torn. His body is covered in dust. This boy, like so many boys of his age across the country, has to work for his survival.

As a result of his tiring work, he is unable to concentrate at school and it becomes impossible for him to understand what he is studying. The end result is that he starts failing his exams or getting marks he does not deserve, which results in his family being angry with him and society considering him as a failure and good for nothing.

He needs help but he is ashamed to ask for it. He lowers his head in despair as he imagines the life he is going to lead if no one comes to his aid. As a result of his low self esteem, he ends up sleeping with prostitutes and contracts HIV. Due to a lack of knowledge he continues spreading the disease.

Many youth are in this situation, they hold their heads down, afraid to look into the future. They have dreams and visions which they cannot achieve on their own. They did not choose to be born into poverty but they have to overcome it with the help of society.

EFFECTS OF CULTURAL TRADITION

The issue of reproduction and sex has existed since the beginning of mankind. Man has developed different tribal and religious cultures and beliefs and hence he looks at this issue from these different aspects.

One such aspect is cultural tradition - African tradition in particular. From way back up to the modern day, traditional Africa has had some of the strictest rules on reproductive health and sex. Yet in this photo girls are dancing in a way that could be quite provocative to the men who are watching. In some instances, programmes of traditional ceremonies on national television have shown women and even teenage girls dancing half naked with their breasts exposed. This can have a negative effect in the sense that it promotes promiscuity among men and the indecent dressing of women.

If you were to look at the history of initiation ceremonies in Africa you would be quite disappointed with some of the things that boys are being taught, which can have a negative effect on how women are treated when these boys become men. Just recently in South Africa a boy aged 10 defiled a four year old girl. When he was asked why he had done it, he said he was following orders from his initiation school teacher. The boy further disclosed that at the initiation ceremony he and the other boys were made to watch elderly men catch, rape and murder in cold blood a very young girl. Afterwards the girl's body was cut into pieces and burnt. The boy said he and his friends were told to do the same if they wanted to become real men and get married. They were also warned that if they ever told anyone what had transpired they would die instantly.

This all comes back to what is in the photo - indecent exposure. It causes wrong ideas in youths' minds and hence causes a negative effect on reproductive and sexual health.

I'M BEING ABUSED

I was only about seven years old when my uncle took me into his home after my parents' strange death. At first I thought he was only trying to be generous but I never knew that his generosity would cost me my childhood. I came to his house innocently and thought that everything would finally be alright after my parents' death but I never realised that everything was about to change for the worse.

My misery started when he first came into my room early in the morning without a shirt. He unfastened his belt and zip and slipped under my sheets. I tried to scream but it was too late. Something very hard hit my lower jaw and I fell down unconscious. I woke up later and my private parts were bleeding heavily. I kept what happened that day to myself because where I come from it's taboo to tell anyone about such happenings.

The following day, he came home earlier than usual. He told me to go to his bedroom. I tried to refuse, but he held my neck so fast and firm then said, "If you refuse, or tell anyone about this, I will make sure you die in the same strange way your parents did."

One day he brought four of his friends to do the same thing to me. My aunt does not know about what is happening. I don't know if she cares and I don't know if she has noticed that the way I walk has changed. I walk much more slowly, especially when sent to draw water, because my private parts are in pain and very swollen.

THE CRY OF A CONCERNED YOUTH

At the tender age of 15, a girl is given in marriage to a man who could possibly be in his late forties; a man who might have been married before and is divorced; worse still, a widower who might have HIV/AIDS. Girls are often subjected to older men because of poverty and needing someone to provide for their needs.

At the age of 15, a girl is expected to do all the heavy household chores and play a wife's role, while other children her age are in school paving the way to a bright future. Above all, she has to take care of her baby.

As if that is not enough, she has to endure violence from her abusive husband when he comes home at ungodly hours and beats her up for no reason. When he is done with the beating, he forces himself on her. She may be his wife, but at her age, this is an assault and defilement. He deserves to be behind bars.

When she cannot take anymore of this treatment, she packs her few belongings and carries her baby with her out of his house. She has nowhere to go and is destined for nothing but disaster. Still, she has to move on.

She finds herself on the street with no shelter and no food to eat. Being raped by passer-bys and fellow street kids becomes a daily routine and she falls pregnant. With no money for medical attention, she has her second baby on the streets.

Prostitution is what she resorts to in order to earn a living for her and her children. Things seem better for a while, until she gets pregnant for the third time and acquires HIV. She is back on the street with no one to take care of her and her children.

This girl has been deprived of the right to shelter, good health, education, freedom of choice and most of all she has been sexually abused. She has had children at a very tender age and has contracted the deadly HIV virus.

This is the daily cry of many Zambian youth who have been exploited by selfish men and have been denied the chance of a prosperous future. Are we all going to sit back and listen to the press talk about youth?

FACE TO FACE WITH STIGMA

My name is Alfred. This photo was taken when I was having psychological problems.

I was born in a well to do family. Whatever I wanted I got. I lacked nothing. Every weekend we had visitors. My relatives would visit us often and I thought my parents were well loved.

I was in my room studying when I heard my mother talking to someone on the phone. She was talking to our family doctor and it was about my dad. Shortly after that she came into my room and told me dad was in hospital. I asked her what was wrong and she just looked away with tears in her eyes she said he had malaria.

My dad never got better. He was in and out of hospital and my relatives stopped being as sweet as they used to be. They stopped visiting and whenever they did they would inspect the house and would blame my mother for my father's sickness. At the time I didn't understand but later I did. The relatives who I thought loved us abandoned us and wanted nothing to do with us. My mother and I nursed my dad on our own until my dad died.

A month after my father's death my mother started getting sick. It was at this point that she told me that both she and my father had been suffering from HIV/AIDS for five years and that they had told no one not even their relatives. Their relatives only found out when my dad started getting sick. At this point I understood why our relatives had abandoned us. Six months later, my mother died.

After my mother's death, my relatives came and took over our house. We started living together but they separated my plates from theirs saying that I shouldn't mix with them because I may transfer the HIV virus to them...a virus that I didn't have. I ate with the dogs which meant I would eat my relatives' left-overs. This was too much for me to take and I ended up getting depressed and later became crazy. I started roaming the streets until I was picked up one day and admitted to Chainama institution.

After I had recovered and was released from Chainama, I heard that my uncle and auntie had died of HIV/AIDS.

KNOWLEDGE IS POWER: THE PLIGHT OF AN ILLITERATE GIRL

Vivian's father died when she had just passed her exams for Junior Secondary School. Her mother, a drunkard, remarried and moved to her new husband's house. Vivian's step-father was not supportive towards her education. Eventually, she dropped out of school.

Vivian grew up to be an attractive young woman and her step-brother developed a keen interest in her. Due to her mother's negligence, Vivian had little knowledge about sexual and reproductive health and HIV/AIDS. Her step-brother took advantage of the situation and lured her into having unprotected sex. Unfortunately she fell pregnant and at the same time unknowingly contracted HIV. She decided to keep the baby with the hope that her child would be a source of the love and affection she had missed out on as a child.

Her mother constantly tried to find out who was responsible for the pregnancy and for fear of any trouble, Vivian decided to run away from home. She sought shelter with an organisation that helped the homeless. Whilst at this institution, she gave birth to a baby boy, but her the baby had contracted the HIV virus through her. She decided to share the news with the people that she had come to consider her family. Vivian was not prepared for what happened after she revealed her status. People started to talk about her, others even refused to sit next to her at meal time.

She decided it was better to go back on the street but life on the streets was hard, she was faced with more dangers. She was raped and fell pregnant for the second time. She eventually ended up in prostitution in order to survive.

Vivian is not different from many Zambian girls out there. Due to poverty, a lack of care, support and love most girls are lured into all sorts of vices. Parents must love their children as this can prevent them from seeking love in the wrong places. It is very important to educate people on sexual and reproductive health so that they can make informed decisions and also have families that they can fend for.

CHILD PROSTITUTION

Their smiles look decent but their brains are corrupted. These girls are waiting at a pickup point so that they can get their daily customers. But why are African girls doing this? For most of them, it is the result of a need to earn a living and these children have no one to assist them.

DESTITUTE

At the age of 15, she is living away from her parents. But why? It's all because of an unwanted pregnancy. She was chased off by her parents to fend for herself. What a sad case of child abuse in Africa.

DISCOVERIES

I never thought it would be difficult to be a mother. I believe now, that mistakes are doorways to discoveries. I am going to learn more about reproductive health and assist my peers.

HIV ORPHAN

My parents died of AIDS. I am now the father of the family. I have to look for food, clothes and take care of my sister. This is our home. Our relatives neglected us saying we are also HIV positive. I am still young and without education. My future is not bright. I have to search for food from bins and if I'm lucky, from those who are kind.

SAY NO TO SEX

Boy: If you insist that you love me then why can't we do it? If we cannot have sex then it means you don't love me.

Girl: Although I love you, sex is not the right way for me to show you how much I love you.

UNWANTED PREGNANCY

I am 15 years old and pregnant. In this picture it's me and my boyfriend arguing. He is denying responsibility for the child as he is saying he is too young to be a father. We have both been expelled from school. My father has disowned me because of the pregnancy. I have nowhere to go and I fear I might have also contracted an infection or even HIV.