NO MORE FAIRYTALES

EXPLODING MYTHS AND BUSTING STIGMA AROUND CONTRACEPTION
NO MORE FAIRY TALES

Once upon a time, there lived three young women, each brimming with potential and brimming with hopes and dreams for the future. From the mountains of Nepal to the bustling capital of Zambia, they courageously took their first steps on their chosen paths.

But they would soon discover the road ahead was lined with pitfalls and that handsome princes are not always all they’re cracked up to be. Faced with unintended pregnancies, their hopes for a fairy tale ending were shattered, but our three brave heroines decided to pick up the pieces and write their own stories to help others avoid the same fate.

They are not alone. All over the world, exceptional young people are defying society’s myths and misconceptions and championing the truth: that contraception transforms lives. Instead of passively assuming the role society expects of them, they are fighting for a world in which everyone has the chance to be the hero of their own tale. Now is the time to bid farewell to the fairy tales about contraception. It’s time to choose fact over fiction.

It’s time to get real.
This is Esther. At the age of 16, she was a high-flying student and talented hockey player, her heart set on competing around the world.

Yet despite being bright and educated, there was one subject she knew nothing about.

Family planning is for married people. Besides, it can give you cancer.

Come on Esther. You can't get pregnant from your first time.

Five months later, Esther sensed something was wrong. But when the test results came in, she couldn't believe her eyes.

She was pregnant.
Esther cried the whole day, not knowing what the future held.

How am I going to be able to go back to school? How am I going to continue playing hockey with a child on the way?

By the end of the term Esther’s grades plummeted.

Everyone was talking about her.

Esther’s not even in the Top 10!

Her dad confronted her.

Okay, so you’re pregnant. What’s your plan now?

I’m not ready for marriage. I want to continue school.
ESTHER GAVE BIRTH TO HER DAUGHTER AND SACRIFICED EVERYTHING TO TAKE CARE OF HER.

BUT SHE WASN'T ALONE.

ESTHER WAS LUCKY TO HAVE THE SUPPORT OF HER FAMILY. HER MUM EVEN WENT WITH HER TO HAVE AN IUD FITTED, PROTECTING HER FROM PREGNANCY FOR UP TO TEN YEARS.

OVER TIME SHE WAS ABLE TO RETURN TO SCHOOL AND REGAIN HER PLACE IN THE HOCKEY TEAM, BUT ESTHER KNEW NOT EVERYONE WAS AS FORTUNATE.

PASSIONATE ABOUT SHARING HER NEW-FOUND KNOWLEDGE WITH OTHER YOUNG PEOPLE, SHE IS NOW WORKING FOR MARIE STOPES ZAMBIA TO ENSURE OTHER YOUNG WOMEN CAN ALSO USE CONTRACEPTION TO ACHIEVE THEIR DREAMS.

FORCED TO LEAVE SCHOOL, HER DREAMS FADED INTO DARKNESS.
My name is Rita Thapa. I’m 23 years old and I live in the Khotang district of Nepal with my husband and son.

Girls in my community are not educated like boys, deprived of information, they are not let out of the house except to work in the fields.

Often they are married young and have children at an early age due to lack of access to contraception.

People believe many myths about contraception; I once heard that the IUD causes death by lightning.
My story begins like many others. Married at sixteen with no knowledge of family planning, I soon became pregnant.

Wanting change for myself and my community, I joined Marie Stopes Nepal.

At first my husband was not supportive. After many conversations, he came to learn the importance of my work.

I travel to schools and youth groups all over the district and talk to young people, teachers and parents about family planning.
I walk for days and days, over hills covered with leeches.

But my journey is easier than others...

I remember a teenage girl who got pregnant. When her parents found out, she was beaten and alienated by her community.

When I'm far from home, I ask for shelter from someone I know.

Filled with shame and guilt, she took her own life.

One life lost through ignorance is too many. That is why I keep going, rain or shine, to spread understanding to my community.
MOUSSOUBA & MALANG

SENEGAL
MOUSSOUBA FIRST MET LOCAL MUSICIAN MALANG AT A PARTY.

I LOVE THE WAY YOU DANCE.

THEIR FEELINGS FOR EACH OTHER DEEPENED AS TIME WENT ON...

DESPITE MOUSSOUBA’S FAMILY LOOKING DOWN ON THEIR RELATIONSHIP, THEIR LOVE ONLY GREW STRONGER.

MY MOTHER REFUSES TO TALK TO ME MALANG, BUT I LOVE ONLY YOU.

SOON INTO THEIR RELATIONSHIP, MOUSSOUBA FELT SOMETHING WAS DIFFERENT IN HER BODY.
When a nurse at the hospital told Moussouba that she was pregnant, she cried and cried.

Forced to leave school, all her dreams were destroyed, her world was crumbling around her.

As a young unmarried woman, she was marginalised and insulted by her community.

Malang couldn’t focus on his studies and dropped out of university in order to take care of her.
Moussouba packed her bags to escape the community’s judgement, but Malang convinced her to stay.

After Moussouba had given birth, she visited Marie Stopes Senegal, to protect herself from another unintended pregnancy.

The couple’s experience has made them passionate about teaching other young people about the benefits of contraception.

Malang has even written a song about contraception that they perform to young audiences.

I don’t want to get pregnant again. I want to get a job.

We are not ashamed to talk about these things. If we use contraception, we can have whatever we want in life.
Unspinning the fairy tale

Nearly two thirds of adolescents who want to use contraception are not able to access it. Let that sink in. That’s 23 million young people whose futures are hanging in the balance. The impact is devastating. Each year, 5,600 teenage girls –15 every day – die as a result of unintended pregnancy, childbirth, or in many cases, unsafe abortion.

For those who survive, life as a young mother can often mean an end to their education, a lifetime with fewer opportunities and significantly less control over their future. At the heart of the problem are the fairy tales that societies tell themselves about young people and sex. Too many politicians, parents and teachers wrongly believe that young people will delay sex until after they are married, and withhold the resources they need to prevent unintended pregnancies. Adolescents are told sex outside marriage is wrong, or pressured to have children soon after marrying, imposing additional costs on society through greater population growth and lower wages for women.

At Marie Stopes International, we know this situation has to change if we are to see a world in which girls have the opportunity to fulfil their potential. Young people like Esther, Rita, Moussouba and Malang are already bringing about this change: raising their voices, fighting stigma and courageously breaking down barriers, not just for themselves but to open the door and give other young people the chance they deserve. They need our support to dispel the myths about contraception and promote the right of women and girls around the world to make free and informed choices.

To find out more, and see how you can get involved, visit www.mariestopes.org/nomorefairytales.