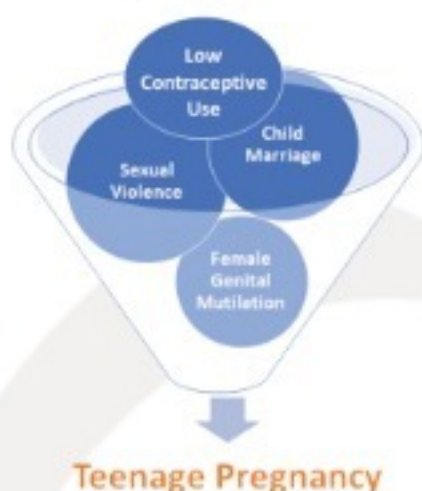


# Teenage Pregnancy in Sierra Leone: A Policy Gap Analysis

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## THE PROBLEM



Sierra Leone has one of the highest rates of teenage pregnancy in the world. 21% of adolescent girls in Sierra Leone are pregnant or have given birth before the age of 19.

## FINDINGS

The Registration of Customary Marriage and Divorce Act (2009) contains a critical loophole that permits marriage of 16-year-olds with parental consent.

Girls are considered ripe for marriage and pregnancy once they undergo FGM and initiation. There is a lack of political will to deal with FGM.

Community awareness and ownership of teenage pregnancy programmes is largely invisible.

One stop centres and Family Support Units are under-resourced, and there are few medical doctors providing medical examination and expert testimony.

Unmet need for contraception among adolescents remains high.

Adolescent Youth Friendly Services are yet to be fully scaled up across districts.

There is fragmentation of the policy and funding landscape.



Source: National Secretariat on the Reduction of Teenage Pregnancy, Sierra Leone

## WHAT DID WE DO?

Identified gaps in legislation, policies and plans focused on preventing and responding to teenage pregnancy

Desk review	• 22 International and national documents
Interviews	• Ministries/agencies, NGOs, FBOs and advocacy coalitions
Focus Groups	• Opinion leaders • Western Area Rural and Urban Districts

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1) Harmonise the age of consent for both formal and customary law so that the Sexual Offences Act, the Child Rights Act, and customary laws all consider 18 years as the age of consent.
- 2) Support review of the National Strategy for the Reduction of FGM (2016 to 2020), and implement the revised strategy.
- 3) Train opinion shapers at community-level as champions for creating awareness and conducting outreach activities related to reduction of teenage pregnancy and child marriage.
- 4) Address structural barriers that girls face in accessing sexual and reproductive health services.
- 5) Coordinate efforts to ensure that the various groups are not working in silos.



Source: National Secretariat on the Reduction of Teenage Pregnancy, Sierra Leone

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