Rose (not real name), got married in 2013. She was 14 years in P7. “My husband was our neighbour. When he made me pregnant, my mother told me to go to his home so that he could take care of me.

Life in marriage was hell. Everything was left to me. Digging, taking care of the goats, cooking, fetching water, collecting firewood and looking for food. I used to look for vegetables like Dodo everyday. Sometimes I could go to Lake Bisinia to get fish for a family of 11 people.

It is not like home where your sisters or brothers help you with work. I got tired and decided to go back home to ask for forgiveness from my mother. This year, she allowed to take care of my baby so I could come back to school. I want to be a nurse.”

Alice Ilepus a teacher in Kamenu PS says: “Last term, four girls in P4 and three girls in P6 got married.” She adds that some girls are forced to get married by their parents. Others run away from home and get married without the Knowledge of their parents.”

Child marriage affects both boys and girls, but affects girls the most. Imagine every year, 15,000,000 girls are forced to get married in the whole world.

Ocakara Joseph, 16, Fr Hilders PS Soroti says: “A PS boy made a girl from a rich family pregnant. Her parents asked the boys parents to pay five cows but they could not afford. The girl’s parents burnt the boy’s hut and took back their daughter.”

Mariam Akiror who works at Uganda Child Rights NGO Network says: “Focus on education, marriage can wait. If you get married early, you will not be successful like other people. Each child has a dream and those dreams can be achieved through education.

Report people who force you to get married. You can report to your teachers, a trusted relative, Sauti, LCS, Child and Family Protection Unit or any adult who can be of help.

No one should force you to get married because your family is poor. Girls are not property.

Child marriage has a number of effects such as death, poverty, disease and illiteracy. Delay sex. Have good friends with good manners. Find good role models who can guide you to become successful people.”
The troubles of EARLY MARRIAGE

Earlier in the year, Young Talk visited Katakwi and Soroti districts to get stories on early marriage. Read on!

Old Man

G Akurut, 15, Fr Hilders PS Soroti says: “My mother forced my sister to get married to an old rich man who was working in Kumi. My sister cried but still, she ended up with the old man.”

Ameco Glades, 15, P5, Asuret PS, Soroti said says: “I have a friend whose father forced her to get married at 13 years. The man infected her with HIV. She is suffering. Sometimes, they sleep without eating anything.”

Beaten

Olupot Joseph, 15, P7, Osudio PS Katakwi says: A certain girl got married when she was in P4. There is a day she lied to her husband that she was sick because she did not want to go to the garden. Her husband beat her and broke her leg. ”

Infected with HIV

Ikiror Mary Margaret, Senior Nursing Officer at Toroma Health Centre IV says: “Majority of the mothers who come to deliver here are young girls. Some of them are just 13 years old. Most of them are operated on because their pelvic bones are not mature and therefore, they can not push the baby. They get prolonged labour and difficult deliveries. These girls are mainly brought to hospital by their parents. Some men who make them pregnant fear to be arrested for marrying young girls. Others make these girls pregnant and ran away, leaving them to suffer alone.”

Marriage is not the answer

Sometimes, children get married when their parents fail to pay their school fees, buy books, pads, knickers and vaseline.

Each of us has a role in stopping Child Marriage

Each one of us can do something to end child marriages. Let’s look at what we each can do:

Parents: Do not accept bride price for your young daughters. Leave them in school.

Girls: Support yourselves through good peer groups.

Men and boys: Choose not to marry young girls and speak up against the practice.

Police: Check ages of the people getting married to ensure they are of legal age.

Okwangor James, the Officer in charge of the Child and Family Protection Unit at Katakwi Police station says: “Child marriage is a crime. When it happens, report to police. Last year, two girls reported their parents who were planning to marry them off. We went to their homes when traditional marriage ceremonies were taking place. We arrested the parents and the men who were going to marry them.

Acon Anna Grace, 16, P6, Akurao PS said: “I sold my hen and got capital which I used to start my business. Every Saturday, I buy and sell second hand clothes in Otoroma Market. I use the money to buy pens, pads, and clothes. There was a man who used to disturb me that I should leave school because he was going to give me the money I need. He gave me Shs 1000 the first time he met me. The next day, he asked me for sex. I refused.”

Maureen, 14, a pupil of Omasia PS is married. She says: “I got married because my parents had failed to buy me books. My husband buys me books, pens and whatever I need.”

Oluka William, Deputy Head teacher Ongatunyo PS says: Most parents look at the girls as a source of income. There is a girl whose father forced her to get married so that he could get cows to marry another wife. We intervened and the girl came back to school. If you know of a child who is married in your school, work with the Family Protection Unit Probation Office to get them out of that marriage.

Other places to report include:

• FIDA Uganda
• Hope after Rape
• Raising Voices
• Centre for Domestic Violence Prevention
• Plan International
• Uganda Network of Child Rights
• NGOs
• ANPPCAN
• Wakisa Ministries
Say no to bad touches

Have you ever been touched in a way that made you feel unhappy? That was a bad touch. Wintro Rachel, Koboko Assistant DHO says: A bad touch is when someone touches you in a way that may (make you want to have sex). Someone may touch your vagina, penis, buttocks, breast or tickle your waist or your palm. Young Talkers shared their experience of bad touch. Read on!

**Private parts**

Acero Priscovia, 15, P5, Father Holders PS. Soroti says: “Boys like touching my friend’s private parts.”

Ejobu Joseph, 14, P7, Atoroma PS, Kalakwi says: “My brother touched the vagina of a certain girl and had sex with her.”

**Buttocks**

Besta Rejja, 15, Koboko PS says: “Boys believe if girls allow them to touch their buttocks, it is a sign of love. However, touching buttocks makes them to pain.”

Akol Mauut, 12, P5, Koboko PS, says: “Some boys in my class like touching the girls’ buttocks. There is a boy who touched me and I reported him to the teacher. He was punished.”

**Breasts**

Girl 14, P6, Soroti says: “My cousin told me to go to his hut to pick biscuits and sweets. When I went, he started squeezing my breasts. I shouted and my mother came to help me. My mother chased him away from our home.”

No one should touch your private parts or any part of your body unless it is for health reasons. If it happens to you or your friend, report to your teacher, parents, guardians or an adult who can help you. Godfrey Walakira, Straight Talk Foundation.

**Science Corner**

What are the signs of Chancroid?

Chancroid is a bacterial infection that causes painful open sores on or around the private parts of men, boys, women and girls. You can get Chancroid when you have unprotected sex with someone who has it. The sores may bleed or produce a fluid that can spread bacteria during sex. Chancroid may also spread from skin-to-skin contact with an infected person.

Symptoms

In males, Chancroid may cause a small, red bump on the private parts that may change to an open sore within a day or two. The sore may form on any area of the genitals, including the penis and scrotum.

Women and girls who have chancroid may develop red bumps on the labia, between the labia and anus, or on the thighs. The labia are the folds of skin that cover the vagina.

Dr Nabwire Mariam, Mulago Hospital

**HIV Basics**

HIV is the virus that causes AIDS. HIV is mainly transmitted through unprotected sex with someone who has the virus. It can also be through unsafe blood transfusion or sharing sharp instruments contaminated with HIV infected blood. A mother who is infected with HIV can transmit it to her baby when she is still pregnant, while giving birth or breastfeeding the baby. Abstaining from sex reduces your risk of getting HIV/STDs.

Dr Stephen Watiti, Watiti Foundation.

**QUIZ**

Who is the person you admire and why?

Write to us and then send your letter to Straight Talk Foundation. PO Box 22366, K’la or E-mail: info@straighttalkfoundation.org

**Winterland PS shine at the RED CARD convention**

Pupils of Winterland PS recite a poem during the Red Card campaign to end underage drinking of alcohol held at Nsambya Sharing hall, Kampala. Winterland PS received an award of recognition for their good performance. The convention was organised by Straight Talk Foundation.

Pupils of Omasia PS, Katakwi say: Young Talk helps us to behave well and stay in school
At what age is someone supposed to start menstruation? Anyail Emily Agatha, Mbuya Church of Uganda PS Kampala

The first menstruation usually comes between 12-14 years but can begin as early as 9 years in some people because people are different and grow at a different speed.

My uncle is blind. Can the hospital treat him? Nakaima Gloria, Budaka Integrated Primary School.

Some blindness e.g like that caused by cataracts can be treated. Advise your uncle to go to hospital and see an eye specialist for examination and advice.

What causes bad smell during adolescence? Friday Mukombozi, P6, Itojo PS Nloroko.

It usually starts with poor hygiene. Bathe regularly using soap and wear clean clothes especially the underwear. Shave your armpits and private parts.

Why is it important to hang reusable pads under direct sunlight? Kagoya Sharifa, Waluwere PS, Bugiri.

Direct sunlight kills germs and hanging in open-air hanging helps make them fresh and ready for re-use.

If my mother has HIV and gets pregnant, does the baby get it too? John, P7, Kitante Primary School, Kampala.

Yes, mothers can transmit HIV to their babies while they are still in the womb, during labor and through breast-feeding but the risk is greatly reduced when the mother is on ARVs and the baby too is put on ARVs soon after birth.

Can you get pregnant the first time you have sex? Muruzira Evali, 16, P6, Adjumani Central PS.

Yes, if you have sex for the first time during or around the time of your ovulation, you can get pregnant. Abstain from sex to avoid pregnancy or STD related worries.

Counselors: Nabiyikwi Uniah and Dr Stephen Watiti, Wattli Foundation and Dr Nabwire Mariam, Mulago Hospital.

Pupils of Nakruba PS, Kampala meet the Executive Director of Kampala City Council Authority, Jenifer Musuli and the Irish Ambassador Donald Cranin during the launch of a computer lab at the school.

Pupils of Koboko PS say: Love yourself and protect your bodies from bad touches

ADVICE TO NN

In Young Talk February April, NN from Namirembe PS said, “I feel uncomfortable when a teacher sends me to his home. What can I do? Many of you advised her.

Thanks for participating. Musubira Aaron, Seeta Parents PS, Mukono says: “I advise you to stop going to the teacher’s home because something bad may happen to you like getting raped. You may be sacrificed or killed so NN, stop going to the teacher’s home.”

Nyamweli Mercy, P6, Sr Miriam Duggan PS, Kampala says: “Dear NN. If that teacher sends you again, tell him that you want to go with your friend. If he refuses, just know that he could rape you one time at his home. Tell one of your female teachers about it. If she does not help, do the following:

Tell the director of your school, mother or father to help you about it. Inform your big sister to help when you are at school. Ask the teacher why he sends you every time. My good friend, do the above if you want to rescue your life.”