

## PREVENTING SEXUAL TRANSMISSION OF HIV

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Many African countries have adopted the ABC approach to talking about preventing the sexual transmission of HIV. **A**bstain, ideally until marriage; **B**e faithful to one uninfected lifetime partner; if you cannot do A and B, use a **C**ondom. In this approach the focus is first and foremost on abstinence, particularly in programming for youth who are not yet sexually active. For example, of the 11 school-based prevention programmes in Africa reviewed by Gallant and Maticka-Tyndale (in preparation), all addressed abstinence as the best way to prevent HIV transmission. Of the 7 that also addressed condom use, all reported difficulties in bringing the condom message into the schools. In fact, in Tanzania, though condoms were originally part of the planned programme, the Ministry of Education forbade teachers to address the issue.

Views on abstinence and condoms were explored in this project in interviews and focus groups. Topics included whether these were desirable and important messages to be taught, what form the messages should take, how they were being taught, and whether youth were taking up these messages in their behaviours.

### ABSTAINING FROM PLAYING SEX

Community leaders, teachers, and pupils were all asked their views on postponing or abstaining from playing sex. All agreed that, particularly in the face of AIDS, abstaining from playing sex until marriage was essential. This coincided with survey results where 91% of teachers agreed that *having sex outside marriage is wrong*, and 71% of students identified *avoid sex* as a way to prevent AIDS. However, with 53% of students in Standards 6 and 7 having stated that they had already played sex, and the median age of sexual debut before the 12<sup>th</sup> birthday for both girls and boys, it is clear that most upper primary school youth are not abstaining. Despite this comparatively high rate of sexual activity, the importance of virginity is seen in the 54% of youth who agreed with the statement, *I shall be a virgin when I complete secondary school*, regardless of whether they had played sex.

In surveys and interviews alike it was clear that adults endorsed abstinence as the primary method to prevent HIV transmission. However, they were also aware that, in their community, abstinence was very difficult for youth and that most youth would not abstain from playing sex until they married. The scripting of sexual activity and why abstinence is so difficult in this cultural setting is discussed in detail in the section on Sexual Scripts. What is most relevant here is that abstinence is what is promoted, but it is generally not practiced.

### USING CONDOMS

For those who are sexually active, consistent and correct use of condoms can substantially lower the risk of HIV transmission and also protect against many other STIs and pregnancy. Because of this, teaching about condoms has figured prominently in many HIV prevention programmes. Improvements in knowledge and attitudes related to condoms together with the intention to use them and actual use have been among the key indicators of programme success. However, teaching about and promoting condoms have posed problems in almost all school-based HIV

prevention programmes in Africa, with Ministries of Education in some countries even forbidding such teaching. A focal question for this research is where teachers and communities stand on the condom issue and what the level of knowledge, attitudes, intentions and use are among pupils.

In the report on survey results we noted that a small majority of youth understood the role of condoms in preventing HIV but only between 1/4 and 1/3 were actually using condoms.

- 62% agreed that using a condom was a way to prevent becoming infected;
- 57% agreed that one should use a condom if they play sex;
- 49% agreed that using a condom can prevent infection;
- 33% of boys and 25% of girls indicated they had used condoms.

In surveys, teachers were even more likely than students to agree that using a condom was a way to prevent becoming infected (81%); however, 76% agreed with the statement that *teaching young people that condoms give protection against HIV only encourages them to have sex*. This suggested that teachers had difficulty providing students with information on this important method of prevention.

We were perplexed by several inconsistencies in the quantitative results. For students there were very low correlations between answers on the first 3 knowledge/belief items (ranging from .24 to .32) and there was no association between condom use and answers to any of these items (correlations ranging from .005 to .06). Analysis of the qualitative data led us to look at the 'condom issue' and how students and teachers responded to these questions somewhat differently. From interviews it was apparent that students and teachers alike were struggling with contradiction and conflict around condom use.

### **Conflicting Messages**

From interviews and focus groups it was evident that the number of conflicting messages being delivered to both students and teachers left many unsure as to what kind of stance they should take on the issue. Interviews and focus groups enabled a better understanding of these struggles. The views that were expressed (at times several by the same person) included:

- the condom is the only preventive mechanism available when playing sex;
- better to use condoms if you are playing sex than to die;
- condoms are not 100% effective in preventing transmission of HIV;
- condoms may be far less than 100% effective – people have conducted experiments that suggest they cannot be trusted;
- it is most desirable for youth to abstain from sex – this is 100% effective and it coincides with religious and cultural teachings;
- youth are not abstaining and not likely to abstain;
- different authoritative sources are providing different and conflicting information about the effectiveness of condoms, the consequences of teaching about condoms, and what should be done in this area.

The struggles were evident in how teachers and community leaders shifted their perspectives over the course of an interview as is illustrated in the following excerpts, each of which combines all statements about condoms from a single interview.

*I don't expect us to start telling pupils that they should be using condoms...*

*If it is a must that they [young people] have to do it [play sex], condoms can be emphasised...*

*I don't think they are effective...*

*I think it is very necessary to talk to them about condoms because they are already active...*

*I think condoms are the most important things to wear and abstaining from sex (Teacher10\_F: 155-286).*

*That's a bad teaching [condoms] because it means you've allowed them to play sex...Condoms are bad I do not want people to know about them...*

*Condoms prevent but it's not good [to use them]...*

*If they can't wait, then they have to use condoms (Community18\_F: 591-812).*

*I don't think they should be taught to use condoms...They cannot give 100% protection...*

*They should be encouraged to use condoms to protect them from HIV...*

*They should know they are not all that safe...I have never covered a topic on condom use (Teacher9\_F: 692-905).*

*These condoms are not good...Some could tear...The boys and girls are supposed to be told that these condoms are good but not so good...*

*When they are the right age, they should just wear it to protect themselves (Community17\_F: 572-675).*

The struggles were also evident in the equivocation of youth in their endorsement of condom use to protect against HIV as seen in the following brief excerpts from focus group discussions.

*They protect a bit (Girls 5: 1391).*

*We are not sure that condoms can control AIDS (Girls10: 1337).*

*If one uses condom it can protect but through bad luck it may break and he will get infected (Boys15: 706-707).*

*It [condom] helps, but not much (Boys15: 714).*

Youth provided numerous explanations for their lack of trust of condoms. The most frequently mentioned were because they had *small holes* or could easily *burst* during sexual intercourse.

*Condoms are not very safe because we were taught that it has some holes, very small holes (Boys12: 970-971).*

But some felt that despite the holes, condoms were helpful:

*Some [condoms] are good but even the good ones...some have holes...sperms will not pass through to your partner if it is a good condom (Boys13: 991-997).*

Elaborate experiments and explanations were provided to justify mistrust of condoms

*One day we picked a condom, then hung it in the sun, then we saw some insects moving inside at the tip (Boys13: 955-956).*

*It [condom] can go to the girls stomach...and then the girl gets AIDS (Girls10: 1337-1339).*

*Even if you use a condom you can get it [AIDS] because if you put hot pepper on it and you put it on somebody, it is itchy (Girls9: 1294-1295).*

*You use three when you are playing sex because the friction [of playing sex causes] the hymen [to] squeeze the sperms out of the condom until they get into the vagina...[and] the girl will be infected (Boys8: 1185-1193).*

Even if condoms could be trusted, partners could not. This could be because they didn't know how to use condoms:

*Maybe they can use them badly, then they get AIDS (Girls 16:1929-1931).*

Most often, however, the theme of cheating or trickery, already seen in sexual scripts, was used to explain why partners could not be trusted.

*He cheats you that he has put it [condom on] and yet he hasn't (Girls9: 1289).*

*She might just go and buy a condom and maybe put a small hole there (Girls5: 1404-1407).*

Both community members and teachers were adamant that boys cheated girls by maliciously tampering with condoms.

*Some boys pierce the condom and cheat the girl (Community4\_F: 716-717).*

*The boy can cheat you and remove [the condom] when you think that he has worn it (Teacher11\_F: 1024).*

In explaining why some would cheat in this way, condoms were described as unnatural and thus, against both sexual and cultural norms. The natural course of sex required that sperm be ejaculated inside the female. To ensure this occurred, some boys deliberately made holes in condoms.

*Some see it [using condoms] as a waste of energy or manhood so he might make a hole in the condom [so] you may get the disease (Boys12: 1005-1006).*

### **From where are youth getting their information about condoms?**

When asked who was speaking to them about condoms, youth listed many people:

- *Doctors*
- *Guest Speakers*
- *Teachers*
- *Pastors*
- *Chiefs or Assistant Chiefs*
- *Parents*
- *Relatives [sisters, brother, and aunts]*
- *Football Players*

However, when asked where they learned about condoms, none of those listed above were mentioned. Instead young people said they learned about condoms from:

- *Older friends*
- *Older siblings*
- *Peers*
- *Videotapes, television, and radio*
- *Posters*
- *Advertisements*
- *Condom packets*
- *Overhearing others speak about condoms [older siblings, fishermen]*
- *Observation*

On only a few occasions did they mention hearing about condoms from:

- *Parents and grandparents*
- *Doctors and health workers*

### **Talking to Youth about Condoms: Community Leaders**

Many community leaders claimed they were talking to young people about condoms.

*Yes they are talked to daily (Community24\_M: 424).*

But, the messages they gave them either discouraged condom use,

*We are continuing to tell not to trust condoms (Community1\_421-422).*

*I have told them that condoms are just rubbers to cheat them...You go to a girl and you will not know whether it has holes...if he continues having sex with it [condom] it might*

*come out* (Community25\_F: 325-333). Can we cut this one?

*Even if you put on two, three or four, there are some small things I don't know if you call them cells, they must come out and finally get into your partner's body* (Community28\_F: 478-481). Can we cut this one?

*Once it [condom] has remained inside this girl must undergo operation* [refers to a condom coming off and remaining inside the girl] (Community12\_M: 560-561).

*You feel no sweetness* (Community27\_M: 414).

or were equivocal about the benefits of condom use,

*The boys are supposed to be told that these condoms are good but not so good* (Community17\_F: 621-622).

*Condom prevents at least. But its not a good idea* (Community18\_F: 752).

*Use it just as a prevention. But it is not a cure* (Community5\_F: 373).

and justified condom use only under certain circumstances.

*If you start moving around [having different partners], protect yourself with what the government has brought* (Community18\_F: 475-478).

*If you feel he/she cannot do without playing sex then they must use condoms* (Community20\_M: 388-391).

Community leaders often expressed a sense of feeling ‘trapped.’ They did not trust condoms, but AIDS killed and condoms offered the only semblance of safety.

*I think they are told to use condoms because there is AIDS, which can kill them* (Community31\_M: 380-381).

*They have to be told to use them for their own safety but it is not the solution* (Community5\_F: 353-354).

### **Discussion with students about condoms: Teachers**

Even though teachers had difficulty reconciling the diverse views on condoms and teaching about both condoms and abstinence, they expressed a need to teach young people about condoms for *their own protection* and because *they are aware of and using them anyway*.

*To me I used not to support it but at this stage now when people are dying...we must talk [about condoms]...If they can't do without abstinence then they must use condoms* (Teacher16\_M: 918-930).

*Well we shouldn't. In the first case we shouldn't. But we have to (Teacher19\_M: 748-752).*

Teachers were concerned, however, about discussing condoms for a variety of reasons:

- Young people may not use condoms consistently:

*Yes, the way the statement has said because if we do it, the children will see that they have an alternative. They tell us not to do this but there is an alternative, so they will turn to this alternative and they will use it. When they know someone has used it may be three to four times, he will leave the condom and say now let me try without a condom I am sure of this girl, let me do it without a condom. And if he tries and finds out that he is enjoying it more than with the condom, if he or she will realise it becomes sweeter when there is no condom, it will be difficult to abstain and there they will not use the condom at all (Teacher 24:759-771).*

- Students are simply too young and too immature to use condoms properly, particularly girls who can be easily deceived:

*I have told them exactly these boys who tell you they are using condoms perhaps they might cheat you and you conceive or you may have a disease (Teacher 27:499-502).*

- Accessibility and affordability are problematic in several areas:

*Me I think young boys and girls should not be encouraged to use condoms because it is expensive and not al of us can afford (Teacher 29:784-785).*

- They may use recycled or expired condoms:

*Because you know even with the condom handling. Some may even use expired ones and mishandle so it gets torn (Teacher 3:542-544).*

- Talking about condoms may over-ride the abstinence message:

*You know when we sit down to talk to them about the usage of condoms its like we are actually letting them free to use condoms because they can be told about the use of condoms, is that maybe you want them, you know that they play sex, But since we didn't expect them to play sex so we teach them not have sex immaturity, now coming to the usage of condoms we shall be letting them free to use it and we are defeated (Teacher 7:629-636).*

- Teachers don't want to be seen as endorsing condoms:

*People are having different views about condoms. To me there is no need talking about it, it will be very risky to talk about it, because once you talk about it, it means you are for it (Teacher 30:565-568).*

- Teachers are also concerned that their own lack of knowledge and comfort with condoms will make it harder to teach about them:

*First of all even using a condom is a problem, how to handle it. I hope the facilitators even the teachers now the condom should be exposed in the staff room even to the staff members. When they are teaching about sex they should use them and they should give them, illustrate how to use them properly. I hope That is the way only we can control HIV (Teacher 15:748-752).*

- Ultimately, many of the teachers who agreed to discuss condoms preferred to advocate for their use by adults, particularly in marriage (generally for family planning).

*We should tell them but not that they are to use the condoms. The condoms are there for adults (Teacher 5:289-290).*

*They should teach them on the use of condoms only if they have taught them on abstinence and the need for the same they should teach them that there is another protective measure they have to take. They should take if they can't wait. We can also demonstrate, I think the nurses demonstrate the use of condoms to family planning mothers and fathers. They should be taught on how to use it and why it should be used (Teacher 1:482-488).*

Despite their claims that students needed to learn to use condoms if they could not abstain, the most common messages that teachers spoke of were ones that discouraged condom use.

*I have been telling them , “yes, the condoms have come. You are being told that it can save you, but young people, it is not going to save you” (Teacher11\_F: 976-978) .*

*Although condoms can be used to prevent AIDS, it is not 100% (Teacher8\_F: 600-601).*

*Those things never work (Teacher19\_M: 638).*

Although the occasional teacher did speak more positively.

*I have even told them if you feel you should play it use, tell your partner to use a condom (Teacher15\_M: 739-742).*

### **What messages about condoms are youth hearing?**

When asked what teachers and community leaders had taught them about condoms, youth provided a wide range of responses. In some cases, they seemed to have been told to use them if they could not abstain:

*They [teachers] advise them to use condoms if they can't abstain (Boys11: 1007).*

*[Teachers say] You should use a condom when playing sex to protect yourself...[but] that we are still young and should wait (Boys13: 1199-1203).*

*He [pastor] told us that those who are not yet married should not play sex , and if it's a must you play sex you should use a condom (Girls1: 807-809)*

In other cases, when youth were asked what they had been told or taught about condoms they provided contradictory statements.

*They tell young people how to use condoms, but they caution them against using them (Boys2: 939-940)*

*When you use it you will not get a disease. But some they were saying that if you use one [where the] expiry date has reached, it will burst and you will get a disease (Girls3: 1017-1020).*

*[Condoms are bad] because of the drawings on that packet...But it is always written on the signboards that people should use condoms when they are playing sex (Boys16: 1836-1838).*

These left youth uncertain about what they should do:

*Some of them say it helps prevent. Others say they have holes. So you do not know which is which (Boys8: 1554-1555).*

*In most cases some encourage us. Others discourage about condoms. Now we don't know who to follow. We are still looking for the right answer (Girls5: 1755-1757).*

Young people's views of what they should be taught were as diverse as those of their community leaders and teachers:

*I think they should be taught because of AIDS. We should know how to protect ourselves (Girls5: 1821-1823).*

*They should not be taught because that encourages them to play sex (Boys8: 1587-1588).*

*If you have been taught how to use those condoms you must go and try first (Boys12: 1340-1341).*

### **Are boys using condoms?**

On the self-completion survey 33% of boys indicated that they had used condoms. Community leaders, however, were doubtful that boys were using condoms.

*To me I think it is not that much, not much (Community27\_M: 417).*

*Well I don't think they are using (Community5\_F: 321).*

And teachers were certain that boys did not use condoms, providing several explanations for why boys did not use condoms:

- *Condoms decrease pleasure*
- *Lack of access*
- *Lack money to purchase condoms*
- *They have not been educated about them*
- *Shame attached to using them*
- *Fear of the being teased for using condoms*
- *Lack condom self-efficacy*
- *Exposed to and believe myths about condoms (i.e. have holes)*
- *Peers discourage condom use*
- *Fear of negative reaction from girl*

In focus group discussions, boys and girls provided similar reasons for failing to use condoms:

- *Reduces pleasure*
- *Embarrassed to purchase condoms*
- *Lack knowledge of and confidence in the use of condoms*
- *Fear of condom remaining inside of the female*
- *Do not perceive themselves to be at risk*
- *Condoms are too big for young people*
- *Girls do not request them to use condoms*
- *Need to wash your hands before using a condom*

Consistent across interviews and focus groups, the only reasons given for using condoms was that they

*... have discovered the importance of using it (Teacher22\_F: 588-591).*

### **Are girls using condoms?**

As with sexual encounters in general, girls were considered to have little input into or control over whether condoms were used.

*Girls in this area, I have never heard any report that they tell their partners to use condoms when they play sex (Community11\_F: 320-321).*

*These local girls...they are not even supposed to know what is going on. So, they cannot even look at the boy to see whether the boy has already used that condom (Community12\_M: 510-514).*

*They cannot, because girls are so weak (Community5\_F: 341).*

*They cannot tell the man what to do (Community6\_M: 408).*

Despite this lack of control, community leaders and teachers ascribed reasons for not using condoms to girls:

*These girls just want to die (Community18\_F: 741).*

*You're embarrassed to tell him to use one (Community14\_M: 430).*

*I told you it is guilt (Community13\_M: 373).*

Some boys felt that

*Nowadays girls walk with condoms (Boys12: 1163).*

However, it was generally acknowledged that introducing condoms into a relationship could be problematic.

*The boyfriend will think that the girl doesn't trust him and that she thinks he has a venereal disease (Boys11: 925-926).*

*He will think the girl is sick (Girls14: 1116).*

Both boys and girls provided ideas about how girls could get their boyfriends to use condoms.

*A girl should explain to the boy the uses of a condom and tell him how it contributes in the spread of AIDS (Girls5: 1659-1660).*

*She will talk to him into using it and if possible give him a condom to use (Boys2: 772-773)*

They also provided suggestions for dealing with a boyfriend's refusal to use a condom.

*She will take the condom and when they are going to play sex, she forces the boy to wear the condom (Boys8: 1463-1465).*

*The girl will just leave the boy and say, until you agree to use the condom that is when I will [play sex]. But if you don't want to use a condom I will leave you.(Girls5: 1659-1663).*

*Tell him I have my monthly periods so that the boy can decide to use it [so he doesn't] become dirty (Girls10: 1492-1494).*

A few community leaders also spoke of how girls could influence condom use by their partners. These girls were described as 'clever' or having discovered a way!

*They are doing it because they have discovered a way to be on the safe side is to use condoms (Community18\_F: 730-732).*

*Those ones who are clever they say that you have to use a condom in order to finish my feelings [sexual urge] (Community10\_F: 558-561).*

And one teacher offered an example of a girl who had been successful in getting her partner to use a condom.

*There was a case where a girl gave a letter to a boyfriend which told him come for a date prepared with a condom (Teacher23\_M: 622-625).*

Both boys and girls clearly thought that girls should refuse sex to boys who did not agree to use a condom. This was even more so if the boyfriend was older.

*You leave him (Girls1: 778).*

*Refuse to play sex or terminate their friendship (Boys11: 975).*

When asked whether girls actually refused to play sex without a condom however, young people were uncertain.

*Some will not refuse. They just agree (Girls8: 1222).*

*Here they do [refuse to play sex without a condom] (Boys11: 989).*

When it came to older boyfriends, young people had more mixed feelings about whether girls could get them to use a condom. Older men were seen as harder to negotiate with, but more able to access condoms.

*If the boyfriend is old, she'll be afraid. But if he is young, it is okay (Girls4: 913).*

*The older man has a lot of money and he can buy a condom (Girls3: 1140).*

Some girls realized the importance of overcoming shyness and the consequences of not doing so when it came to condom use negotiation.

*The girl must not feel shy to tell the boy to use a condom because if she feels shy, she is also feeling shy for AIDS and AIDS won't see for her mercy (Girls5: 1608-1611).*

## **A Second Look At Survey Results**

The struggles around developing single, coherent messages about condoms led us to reconsider our analysis of survey result to take into account the presence of conflict and contradiction. We grouped the 3 knowledge/attitude questions together and scored each student as either providing consistent 'yes/agree' responses to all 3 questions, consistent 'no/disagree' responses, consistent

‘don’t know/not sure’ responses, or inconsistent responses (i.e. some yes, some no, some don’t know). In accordance with the weak correlations among these questions, we found that 72% of students provided inconsistent responses (i.e. responses are correlated very weakly with each other). Of those who were consistent in their responses, 21% consistently endorsed (yes/agree) condom use for protection, 5% consistently rejected (no/disagree) condom use for protection and 2.5% were consistently unsure whether condoms provided protection or should be used. Inconsistency in responses was greater for those who were more likely to have reported:

- they had not heard of HIV or they believed that it wasn’t possible to protect against HIV
- they had not had lessons on sex in school
- they had not learned about AIDS on the radio or in magazines
- they had learned about or had lessons about AIDS in church

Those who consistently endorsed condom use were more likely to:

- be boys, Luo, older (mean age 14.8 years), and in standard 7 (compared to girls, Kisii, younger than 14.8 years, and standard 6)
- have had lessons on sex in school
- have learned about AIDS on the radio, through films/videos, or in school.

## **Summary**

Abstinence is the preferred, and at times the only, prevention message for youth. However, it is recognized that youth do not abstain. Adults are generally unable to find a way to integrate a harm reduction approach based on condom use into teaching about AIDS prevention. Consequently, they provide conflicting messages and misinformation to youth. Youth recognize these conflicts but cannot, themselves, develop a consistent view of condoms. Theoretically, some youth propose ways to integrate condoms into their sexual scripts – primarily by girls insisting on their use. In reality, given the dominance of force in these scripts and the absence of support from most adults, it is unlikely that condom use is more than occasional and haphazard.



## VOICE OF RELIGION

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It was determined early in the analysis that religion played a significant role in the communities targeted for this project. Unfortunately, the only consistent questions raised in the qualitative interviews that had to do specifically with religious affiliation were asked in the community interviews – “What religion are you?”, “How often do you attend religious services?” and “Do you have any special role in your church?” Out of the responses to these questions, it was evident that there are a number of Christian faiths present in Nyanza. Those specifically mentioned in the community interviews included Catholic, Seventh Day Adventist (SDA), African Inland Church (AIC), Peoples Assembly of God (PAG), Church in the Province of Kenya (CPK), Church of Christ in Africa (CCA) and Legio Maria.

At the same time, even though association with religion was not specifically solicited in the teacher and focus group interviews, there were some questions in the quantitative surveys which provided insight into the importance of faith for many of the respondents. Thus, we know that 99.1% of the teachers surveyed identified an affiliation with one of the faiths listed in the survey (namely Catholic, Protestant or Muslim). Furthermore, 35.9% of the teachers also indicated that they were Church/Sunday school teachers, and 10.2% stated they were Church Leaders. In the student surveys a total of 70.6% of the respondents agreed to some extent with the statement “I think that God plays a big role in my life”. Clearly, these suggest there is some commitment to faith among the teachers and students surveyed. This reality is further substantiated by the unsolicited information about their own affiliation with religion volunteered during interviews. Youth, for example, responded to a question asking what they liked to do on weekends by including references to attending church.

*Me I like going to church (Girls9:38).*

*Reading, playing and going to church (Boys2:23).*

*...on Saturdays I usually go to church (Boys13:32).*

In fact, just under half of the students in the focus groups identified going to church as one of their regular weekend activities. Furthermore, the dialogue from one of the focus groups suggested that attending church on the weekend should be naturally assumed:

*All of us go on Saturday.*

*You come to school on Saturday?*

*No, we go to church on Saturday. (Girls14:31-33).*

As well, teachers responded to a variety of questions by referencing religion.

*Because around here the majority of us are Catholics... (Teacher6\_M:317).*

*Because we are a Christian family we are a Christian school  
(Teacher12\_M:500-501).*

*...since I am a Christian (Teacher28\_M:398).*

In some cases, these responses also provided information about the sponsorship of the school.

*We do because this is a PAG sponsored school... (Teacher12\_M:420).*

*Our school here is ... basically, it's a catholic sponsored school... (Teacher19\_M:98-100).*

In this regard it is also important to note that, according to the quantitative surveys, 87.5% of the teachers identified a religious sponsorship for their schools. However, further exploration suggests that sponsorship is not always consistent with the religious affiliation of the teachers within their respective schools. For example, only 41.3% of teachers in Catholic schools stated that they were Catholic, while 57.4% stated that they were Protestant. Although this suggests some diversity within the belief systems of the teachers, it is difficult to determine the extent of that diversity because the category "Protestant" simply covers too wide a range of religious beliefs in this particular region.

Essentially, taken together, the qualitative and quantitative interviews do suggest some willingness by the participants to state an affiliation with a particular faith and/or religious practice. However, this is only a small element of the identifiable associations with religion and faith displayed within the content of the qualitative interviews. In fact, despite the reality that faith and religion did not play a significant role in the questioning process, a variety of faith-based language was used by the subjects throughout the interviews. For example:

- God/Jesus/Lord was used a total of 137 times;
- the Bible was mentioned 34 times;
- the word Christian was mentioned 77 times;
- pastor or priest was mentioned 50 times;
- and the word church was raised a total of 700 times.

There was no noticeable difference in the use of these words between Catholics and Protestants. Furthermore, at least one of these words was used in close to 90% of the interviews. Given that the vast majority of these occurrences were unsolicited, this would suggest that faith and religion play an important role in the lives of those interviewed. This in turn, may significantly impact their understanding of the issues discussed.

### **Church Involvement in HIV/AIDS**

Because of the strong ties between communities and religion, many of those interviewed called for the church to play a role in teaching young people and playing a significant part in community HIV/AIDS prevention.

*And the church should involve itself so that it can teach these children, the youths (Community2\_M:120-121).*

*The pastors can also have a session with these people to discuss HIV/AIDS. (Community3\_M:549-550).*

*The Christian pastors should be given the kind of duty to attend courses given, handouts which may be used to teach the youth., in their churches who will go outside to train other youths outside [of school] to know dangers of AIDS (Teacher12\_M:899-893).*

*...you can also use someone from the church to teach along the biblical line (Teacher19\_M:854-856).*

*The church can do much in this (Teacher2\_M:403).*

*It should be done through the church, because very many people around here attend church services (Teacher3\_M:627-628).*

At the same time, in some interviews it was claimed that HIV/AIDS education was already being done in and through the churches.

*Now what do when we got to the church, the preacher preaches and sings to them about AIDS all the time (Community10\_F:376-378).*

*It is something that is taught even in the church because death is on the increase (Community14\_F:817-818).*

*Churches we have like SDA they have a youth department they also teach about AIDS and they are very active about AIDS (Community16\_M:680-682).*

*...first of all we have a group in the church from the diocese and I am the treasurer. We were taken there to study a bit about it. Then we have this project of walking around in our villages talking to mothers we tell them to sit with their children at the table and tell them about AIDS and the way it has spread (Community28\_F:58-63).*

*There are others you find they go to churches they are told not to play sex that this disease has come (Girls9:109-110).*

*The churches do not have programs but during their teachings their normal teachings, they include this in their teachings (Teacher9\_F:936-939).*

Several faith-based organizations were identified which either had been or were currently active in HIV/AIDS education.

*That one, in the church when I talk about in the church we also encourage them to wait, like in our church we have an organisation that is called 'true love waits'*

*it is an organisation within our church. (Community3\_M:103-105).*

*Do you know of any programs connected to AIDS?*

*Only a cinema, they were shown AIDS movie.*

*Who brought the cinema?*

*An old man from Nairobi sent by Anglican Church. It brought it as a project (Community4\_F:888-894).*

*Yes we have been having some even in our churches. We have been getting different people who are concerned coming to our churches (Community20\_M:474-475).*

*Like there is a Mission school here. In fact the Bishop has been organizing those people. They go round the school showing the young people the videos. They have been seeing the dangers of AIDS (Teacher2\_M-244-247).*

*Here we had NGO's like CARE and PLAN (Teacher22\_F:481).*

Those interviewed also recognized that the churches did not and should not act alone when it came to HIV/AIDS. This suggested that people recognized the need for churches to cooperate with other groups to deliver appropriate prevention messages.

*If the three say this, a good child will know my parents told me, in church I was told and how I'm being told at school he will know this thing is bad (Community1\_M:262-267).*

*Obviously we should have barazas where both male and female youngsters are invited and maybe we encourage our schools, churches and other bodies to develop such meetings to advise them the dangers of the disease (Community23\_M:387-390).*

*There should be openness in schools, churches and in chief baraza's the openness should be there (Teacher1\_F:552-553).*

*Okay this is collectively, teachers, the community, the pastors, the local Chiefs and the assistant chiefs and everybody at least, even the peer groups. Once, somebody who is informed can do the job and inform the others (Teacher15\_M:825-829).*

*In fact they should be taught in mass especially by the church leaders, by the community leaders, by their parents (Teacher17\_F:926-927).*

*Just a combined approach of the teachers, parents, the churches, the administration and use any forum they have (Teacher18\_M:806-808).*

*It is everybody's responsibility. Whether a parent, teacher or church leaders, it is time for everyone to teach the young ones (Teacher22\_F:738-740).*

*I think all the stakeholders concerned e.g. schools, chiefs and their assistants in their barazas, pastors should also do the same. So I think all the stakeholders who may be able to meet any person should talk to him about the effects of AIDS (Teacher25\_M:486-489).*

Given that the quantitative surveys identified 42.3% of teachers who also function as Church Leaders and/or Church/Sunday School Teachers, there is the potential, in some communities, for a more unified message between, at least, the church and the school. Based on the data from the quantitative surveys, this reality could prove either helpful or problematic, depending upon a variety of factors, including the specific issue (attitudes around HIV/AIDS, condoms, or abstinence), as well as the gender, age and/or faith affiliation of the teacher. As a result, it becomes important to pay attention to the voice of faith, particularly as it is expressed by those holding multiple positions of responsibility within the community.

### **Church Involvement in Sex Education**

Of course, the involvement of the churches in the educational process is not limited to HIV/AIDS. In fact, the role churches can and do play in sex education in general was recognized in many of the interviews.

*...maybe in churches because we have some churches like SDA (Seventh Day Adventist) they take some time or some lessons which they preserve to teach the two sexes separately especially the youth about sex (Community23\_M:264-267).*

*...some of these things are talked about in church (Teacher1\_F:185-186).*

*For example in church these days everything is taught whether saved or anything, family life everything is touched (Teacher11\_F:120-122).*

*Yes it is the same and it is vigorously taught in the church. Even women organizations teach even chiefs in the barazas teach about sex (Teacher2\_M:720-721).*

Yet, as with AIDS, those interviewed also recognized that this type of education should come from a variety of sources.

*Therefore it is a joint responsibility between the teachers, parents, the church and the government (Community2\_M:256-258).*

*Young people can be taught by their parents, they can be taught in school, they can be taught in church maybe these three factors are the major sources where they can be taught from (Community23\_M:179-181).*

*One through teachers. And two, some parents have come out openly and said that they are telling their children at home and three through the churches,*

*especially the catholic church and mostly Christians here are Catholics. They have good lessons pertaining to the same (Teacher19\_M:491-496).*

It would seem that it is this cooperation that helps to educate youth about and reinforce community norms around sexuality.

*The chief and the church, the government has a big role, which we have been given as Assistant chiefs to emphasise our expectations about the future of our children (Community2\_M:235-238).*

*The level (of relationships) has not gone up because teachers have tried to caution us, even in church they also preach to us, even parents that is why the level has not gone up so much (Boys6:78-80).*

*I have said that majority in this community are Christians so I don't think they encourage early sex. Their opinion I know is that their children wait until they are adults to play sex (Teacher6\_M:253-255).*

The role of the church in regards to sex education seems to permeate the ways that sexuality becomes presented in the classroom. Thus, among the messages that young people are given about sexuality is that it is a holy, sacred, gift from God.

*...the importance of sex, how it was given by God freely (Teacher12\_M:122).*

*tell them what God has said about marriage and about sex and this things tend to see that God respects marriage and it is given for those who have reached the age of marriage and sex is apart of life to married people and not to differ what God said (Teacher12\_M:495-499).*

*As I have said, sex is holy according to the Bible (Teacher19\_M:363-364).*

## **Abstinence**

For most Christian faiths, sexuality is associated with a sense of sacredness and giftedness. This translates directly into the need for sex to remain within the context of a marriage. It is this message that was echoed by the nearly 88% of teachers in the quantitative surveys who agreed strongly with the statement that “Having sex with someone out of marriage is wrong”. This includes 95.6% of the Church Leaders who are also teachers, demonstrating that those who are most involved as leaders in their churches are most likely to espouse their church’s teachings. In particular, the abstinence message seems to be echoed in many interviews in relation to the ways in which local churches discuss sexuality for young people.

*The church teaches that young people should not play sex (Community14\_F:589-590).*

*As I hear the advertisements, in our church you are told, you should just be*

*friends and not play sex until the day you decide to get married, then you go for the test and can be married (Community18\_F:778-781).*

*Even in church we tell them that playing sex before marriage is breaking Gods law (Community25\_F:160-161).*

*Yes. Like when we go to churches, the churches teach that never play sex until marriage so the expectation is to have sex after marriage (Teacher2\_M:279-280).*

*Let me take an example of my church, in my church the young people In fact are taught to abstain themselves from sex until they get married (Teacher11\_F:844-847).*

Indeed, there is some suggestion that those interviewed believe that in and through the church is the best place to educate for abstinence.

*The best-placed people to deliver this information are the church. We need to create awareness outside and in the church. So if one can wait to play sex until marriage that is good (Community13\_M:51-54).*

*But I think the church, the pastors, those ones who are concerned with the bible, those ones who are handling the Christians should now conduct seminars in there areas and tell them the goodness of being unmarried until that stage Biblically, spiritually (Teacher15\_M:436-441).*

Furthermore, based on the attitudes presented by many of the subjects, this message has been heard by the communities and has become part of the language used to describe the ideal relationship for young people.

*...to help convince them that sex is there but they have to remain virgins until the last days (Community5\_F:112-114).*

*They are taught, mostly about problems of having sex before marriage because if they are Christians may be that community, they are Christians. They have to follow Christianity, so they have to tell their children not to do sex before marriage because that is wrong and against Christianity (Girls5:1940-1945).*

*It is good because it is written even in the bible...That you must wait and not play sex until you find your rib then have only that one (Boys13:325-329).*

*The majority of people in this community are Christians and as Christians they have seminars on the same, on moral values, on how their children should grow up morally. They are not against it when we tell them to abstain and wait until they are married. So they expect children to be told on that line I think (Teacher1\_F:343-347).*

*...your partner is waiting for you because it is God who created you, God knows your partner so please wait for your partner to come (Teacher11\_F:1089-1092).*

Of course, those interviewed also maintained that, even education on abstinence should not be simply the domain of the churches.

*I think the first person is the pastor to come in then the parents, then the teachers (Teacher15\_M:441-444).*

They also recognized that abstinence was only one part of a greater challenge to live a moral life – something else that appears to be stressed through the churches.

*They are taught in the church how a person can live, other times they are taught on studying the Bible, how they can protect themselves, how they can stay with his/her husband in a holy manner (Community18\_F:538-541).*

*Like the Adventist church there are seminars organised by pastors who talk to youths and how they are supposed to live in the community and in their Christian live (Community2\_M:488-491).*

*The majority of people in this community are Christians and as Christians they have seminars on the same, on moral values, on how their children should grow up morally (Teacher1\_F:343-345).*

## **Issues of Morality**

Some of the teachers recognized the constraints of introducing sex education within a faith-based morality framework. Teaching outside such a framework was often seen as leading young people down a path of immorality. Consequently, teachers spoke of opposition to teaching about sex outside of the church.

*...some of the churches don't want that around here...especially these new churches. They say introducing or teaching sex to a child is teaching the child to do the very thing (Teacher2\_M:151-153).*

*There are some staunch Christian families; those ones do not even want to hear about that (Teacher8\_F:86-87).*

*Children from some families don't even see and don't listen to music that is not Christian music. Those are the difficult ones. So you just have to talk to them and tell them these are things which are normal (Teacher8\_F:213-216).*

*People are divided. We have Christians and non Christians. So far the Christians, some of them, may oppose teaching their kids this sex (Teacher13\_M:472-474).*

*I think that one [parents opposing sex education] is more common in the Catholic sponsored schools where the church feels we shouldn't introduce sex in school or in the syllabus (Teacher20\_M:213-216).*

While teachers and community leaders ascribed to the beliefs and values that were associated with a moral life in their religion, they recognized that not everyone practiced these. Because of this, some teachers questioned the suitability of their fellow teachers for educating children about sexuality. In fact, teachers in 7 of the 16 communities raised the issue of inappropriate relationships between teachers and students

*...some parents do not want teachers to talk about sex to their children because they believe that when a teacher starts talking about sex to the child it is as if this teacher has some immoral motive with the child (Teacher4\_F:207-210).*

*The ones who are uncomfortable what makes them uncomfortable is that some of them are immoral, the teachers themselves are immoral so they can feel shy they may be misbehaving with some of the students so they cannot be free enough to talk against what they actually practise (Teacher7\_F:80-84).*

*At times these teachers are involved also with playing sex carelessly, so (laughter) ones they are going to talk and some of us you know I can't say am very clean here, some of us might be involved in doing immorality with these students so it becomes a problem to talk in front of them again "to stop playing sex" (Teacher15\_M:100-106).*

*...we have learnt of a case where female teachers lure male pupils (Teacher19\_M:800-801).*

This raised the dilemma of who should be teaching youth about these matters. It was clear that teachers felt being and living a “morally upright” life was necessary. Living such a life made it possible to be a “positive role model” for students. It was also thought that those who lived such a life were likely to be more comfortable in teaching and discussing issues of sexuality within the context of their faith’s teachings since they could speak from their own experience.

*...he is supposed to be very morally upright so that from what he is explaining he is seen in it. I think this will make him more comfortable, becomes a role model (Teacher25\_M:137-140).*

*So one the teacher should play role model . While they are telling the pupils to wait the teachers should be majority role models, and two these students should be taught (Teacher19\_M:425-429).*

*The teacher should actually in the first place be a role model to pupils. In the sense that the way he has been conducting himself or herself will actually make the pupils understand what he's telling them (Teacher26\_M:90-93).*

*You know the teacher should be morally upright (Teacher17\_F:174-175).*

## **Difference of Faith**

There was a common belief that faith influenced the choices made by young people. Teachers, community members and students all voiced the conviction that individuals with strong faith beliefs were more likely to abstain.

*Those who wait, most of them are those who normally frequent our churches. But those who don't attend churches, it is very difficult to get them waiting (Community3\_M:202-204).*

*What may enable them to wait is the word of God. Truly speaking, it is only by the word of God that can protect one from indulging in sinful issues (Community13\_M:111-113).*

*So somebody saved, whether a boy or a girl, he or she knows what to do... (Community16\_M:182-184).*

*The one, who really goes to church and believes that she is a person of God, can do that (Community17\_F:198-199).*

*Those who get/understand and those who come to church know very well that a Godly person shouldn't sin (Community18\_F:259-260).*

*When God unites all of us, and is with the child then he or she waits until they are married (Community22\_F:207-208).*

*Yes that is what I said earlier that most of them are the ones who have received advise and it is that advise of the church, those are the ones who can wait. But the others who do not know the Word of God are the ones who get lost and play sex before marriage (Community26\_M:328-332).*

*Those who go to church they follow that rule [abstain] (Boys7:354).*

*Not all of them, those who know God are the ones who wait (Girls10:857-858).*

*Those who come from Christian families they prefer waiting than doing it before marriage because it is against Christianity (Girls5:917-919).*

*...they will become ones the child has gone to church and he is filling that he is a church member then that child will follow the rules not to commit adultery or such (Teacher31\_F:397-401).*

In fact, several of the students in the focus group interviews used faith affiliation and beliefs as one way to negotiate getting out of playing sex.

*If that girl is in school she tells him let me finish school and again I am a person of God I want to do a wedding. I want to finish my education then I do a wedding. He will give her respect (Girls10:800-803).*

*Or he can cheat her that he doesn't do those things he wants to be a Priest (Girls9:1047-1048).*

*They will just explain the effects of playing sex before marriage and that it is against Christianity. Then the boy will have to change his mind (Girls5:861-864).*

Ultimately, there was a basic suggestion that people of faith simply behaved differently and had a different sense of morality.

*...if a child has Christianity in him/her, he/she is a different person (Community5\_F:444-445)*

*On the side of the church you can find it is different, that is why I told you earlier that there is a difference in attitude between those who are saved and those who are not (Community14\_F:417-420).*

*Those who don't follow take alcohol but those who go to church or school understand and listen to their parents (Community18\_F:372-373).*

*Even here in school there are many but anyone who knows God cannot do that (Girls10:171-172).*

As a result, people of faith were seen as positive role models so that some of those interviewed suggested that association with people of faith helped young people make better decisions around sexuality.

*It depends with the girls they hang out with because sometimes when she hangs around girls who are not interested with sex and maybe those girls are into Gods word so these are the ones she will join and those girls will convince her to forget about those things and she will be able to control herself (Boys12:571-576).*

*Given that the community is mixture of saved and unsaved youth in these groups, so the saved ones impose upon the others. When one of them wants to get married it is done in a clean way and the church must mobilise the youth and counsel them (Community13\_M:208-212).*

Consequently, one community leader even suggested that teachers should be more than simply morally upright, they should be saved.

*There should be more teachers teaching Gods ways. Most teachers should be saved only then will pupils take them seriously (Community13\_M:430-432).*

Of course, many of the adults interviewed recognized that they could not completely control the associations, behaviours and/or activities of young people. As a result, prayer became an alternative connection to faith.

*It is just prayers that can help (Community4\_F:101).*

*...its very hard but we will pray to God (Community7\_F:581-582).*

*That even we were told in the church, if your daughter or son reaches the adolescence stage kneel down and pray to your God to help you so that this child does not get spoilt (Community10\_F:360-363).*

At the same time, prayer was also seen as another tool available to adults and youth in their effort to remain within their moral ideal and avoid AIDS.

*Something else that should be added is something that they should always pray / worship God (Community14\_F:791-792).*

*But I am praying to God to protect me [from AIDS] (Community8\_F:207).*

*If you pray to God nicely and you praise him and say my God take care of me, I pray you take care of me, stand for me I don't have the energy, am a small thing in front of you, but take care of me I don't sleep with a boy. You can't sleep with a boy (Community32\_F:299-303).*

And prayer was offered as a way to cope with being forced to have sex.

*If this girl likes to go to church and she knows God, that time he is forcing her to sleep with him inside her the girl should continue to pray God to help her he doesn't spoil her badly (Girls10:1055-1058).*

Ultimately, it was the combination of these factors that seemed to lead some to suggest that people of faith would behave in such a way that they would be protected from AIDS.

*And some families for those ones who are literate and maybe those ones who are Christians are the ones whom I can say are very serious to see that their children have followed good ways of maybe avoiding to be infected by HIV/AIDS (Community23\_M:216-220).*

*By taking the girls to school, restrain them from early marriage and early sex involvement. They should also attend church and be well mannered. If they do this girls will have no opportunity to get AIDS (Teacher22\_F:749-752).*

Or that they had, by virtue of their faith, a special protection against AIDS.

*I told you madam, those who are faithful, those God has spoken to and they will*

*get saved again, they will not get that disease (Community10\_F:348-351).*

The quantitative data however, fall short of substantiating the overall belief that people of faith will behave in a way that reduces their risk of HIV. In fact, 51% of the students who responded “Definitely Yes” to the statement “I think that God plays a big role in my life” also stated that they had already played sex. This compares to the 49% who responded “Definitely No” who had already played sex. Some insight into the divergence between the convictions evidenced in interviews that religious youth refrained from playing sex and the survey responses is provided by responses to survey questions about peers. Specifically, those who responded “Definitely Yes” to the God question (37%) were also more likely to be unsure about the sexual activity of their three best friends than those who had responded “Definitely No” to the God question (28.2%). This may imply that the more religious individuals are simply less likely to discuss sexual behaviours within their groups, thus, fostering the belief that they and their friends are more chaste. Such a silence about sex among the religious may foster the view that they lead a more “moral life,” while the reality may be that their actions differ little from those who are not religious.

### **Churches and Condoms**

It did appear that both churches and the beliefs they inspired had a powerful influence on attitudes, if not behaviour. It also appeared that the churches could be a powerful source of HIV/AIDS related information, including information about prevention. Concomitantly, many of the subjects from the qualitative interviews recognized that the churches could also become a barrier when the issue of condoms is brought forward.

*Our church doesn't allow the use of condoms (Community1\_M:412).*

*Condoms no. That is bad, that is to teach them death, first and foremost the way I am I have never known a condom, I just here, that's a bad thing to teach young people that is breaking the 6<sup>th</sup> commandment mostly to Christians (Community32\_F:541-544).*

*As a churchgoers / leader I am opposed to it, we should tell them to protect themselves. They should not use condoms (Community4\_F:757-758).*

*Secondly I told you I'm a Catholic and we do not believe in the use of condoms we do not believe in the condoms at all, so condoms is not the right way about this (Community6\_M:394-397).*

*But in church they refuse those condoms (Boys6:1347).*

*Because around here the majority of us are Catholics. We discourage the use of condoms, or even the mention of the word condom (Teacher6\_M:317-319).*

This becomes particularly problematic in Catholic sponsored schools given that it is well known that the Catholic church’s teachings prohibit the use of condoms and any other artificial contraceptives. Of course, given the diversity of religious affiliations within the staff of many of

the Catholic schools, this position is not necessarily universally shared among the teachers.

*You know this is a Catholic school and if you bring such an issue, Catholics are very much against the use of condoms (Teacher13\_M:600-602).*

*Yeah! This is a Catholic school. And Catholics they do not want to hear about it, they talk of abstinence only so in our area we try technically to avoid. Because the school is Catholic sponsored (Teacher18\_M:766-769).*

However, concerns about condoms were raised not only by Catholics. Several questions about condoms were raised by church leaders from various denominations. Those raised included the concern that the condom message would over-ride the abstinence message. Several of the interviews suggested that this message was being delivered by the local churches as well.

*Condoms religiously are not encouraged, one is supposed to just abstain (Community30\_F:468-469).*

*I've never heard those using condoms because we teach them that it is not true. We hear advertisements over the radio but it is not good it gives them the freedom of having sex. Christianity doesn't allow that (Community18\_F:604-607).*

*There are some as I told you earlier who have been taught religiously the teachings of the church, you know if they start using these condoms it is like spoiling their bodies, they have started playing sex before marriage...So it means if one is using a condom it means that he is not taking in the church teachings (Community26\_M:664-273).*

*So they know there is something you put and then you go and do bad things, now if you are a Christian you go to tell a kid that is that true isn't that teaching him prostitution? (Community32\_F:186-188).*

*Because people argue that even the church that when you teach them about condoms you are accepting that they should discourage them to play sex before marriage so there is a conflict (Teacher2\_M:335-338).*

Another concern raised by church leaders was that, at least to some extent, condoms were unsafe. Again, interviewees also recognized the voice of the local churches in delivering this message.

*We advise them that even if they use, like there is a day when the local parish priests come to a funeral here and he found us talking to them because even in funerals, we talk. Now, he said he had also done an experiment. He had put a little warm water into a condom and he hang it somewhere. When he woke up in the morning he found all the water had spilled on the floor (Community11\_300-305).*

*Those who discourage us tell us that even if you use a condom these some like there while can pass AIDS for example one Sunday school teacher told s if you take a condom you take your finger this you cut your finger put paper you wait. Still hear the sour paper there because the sources he bitter passes though the condom (Girls5:1764-1769).*

*No except when we go to parish even the priest came here and in detail talked against the use of condoms the only safe thing is to avoid sex completely until marriage (Teacher6\_M:352-354).*

Interview subjects also recognized that these messages could contribute to confusion for the general population since they were different than messages about condoms from other sources.

*Most of them are churchgoers and the church is against condoms and the government for it, so you don't know who is telling the truth (Community4\_F:753-754).*

*In most cases some encourage us others discourages about condoms now we don't know who to follow we are still looking for the right answer (Girls5:1755-1757).*

Essentially, it is clear from the interviews that condoms have been discussed in the local churches. Unfortunately, what is not clear is the nature of these condom messages.

*I've talked to them about condoms, but I have not talked to all of them. I have only talked to those who come to church (Community18\_F:784-786).*

*Yes I have spoken to boys, it is shameful in our community to tell girls to make sure that their partners use condoms when they are playing sex. But through our churches we have tried to tell them so that they can know (Community2\_M:423-427).*

*Okay, so who else should teach them about condoms?  
Pastor because they will teach it like God's word to be heard properly (Boys13:1317-1320).*

*Some churches they do teach and tell you [about condoms] (Girls5:1750).*

At the same time, it is important to mention that some of the denominations particular to this area – including one of the most prominent, the Seventh Day Adventist church – do have a more liberal approach to condoms. Consequently, there is the possibility that the message delivered by some local churches may be more flexible. One of the focus groups suggested that this was the case for their local pastor.

*Pastor Samuel ... He told us that those who are not yet married should not play sex, and if it's a must you play sex you should use a condom (Girls1:798-809).*

In further examining the association between faith and behaviour using the quantitative data it is evident that faith does not have a significant impact on whether males choose to use condoms. In fact, even though only 29.8% of male students who responded “Definitely Yes” to the God question stated that they used a condom during their last sexual intercourse, virtually the same number of male students (28%) who responded “Definitely No” to the God question also stated they had used a condom. The numbers for female students using condoms are also essentially the same for those who answered ‘Yes’ (24.7%) and those who answered ‘No’ (25.4%) to the God question. Consequently, prevailing attitudes about condoms from the church may not present a strong barrier to condom usage. However, these attitudes may influence the views that youth hold on condoms. It is noted in the section on Condom Use that those who reported, on surveys, that they had heard about or learned about HIV/AIDS in church were the most likely to produce inconsistent answers to the three knowledge/attitude questions related to condom use. This compared to those who were most likely to have heard about HIV/AIDS on the radio, in magazines or in school and were more likely to consistently endorse condoms as a means of protection when one engages in sexual intercourse. These results suggest that some youth are torn between different messages related to condoms and churches may be playing a role in providing messages that contradict those from other sources.

## Summary

There is great trust and strong belief in the relevance of one’s faith to one’s day-to-day life and to providing guidance in dealing with difficult dilemmas of life, such as the dilemma of how to respond to AIDS. This is accompanied by the belief that being religious provides protection against AIDS – either because religious people act differently and keep out of harms way, or because their faith will protect them even when they are faced with harm. As a result, community leaders and teachers alike want churches to play a role in AIDS prevention, and, in fact, many churches are playing such a role.

It *is*, however, recognized that people do not necessarily always act in accordance with the teachings of their faith, i.e., that they do not necessarily act in a morally upright way. Examples of this are provided in interviews, and in survey data where contradictions between beliefs and actions are evident. Recognizing this characteristic of humanity, most of those who were interviewed stressed the need to insure that it was those who *did* behave in a morally upright manner who took the lead in teaching about AIDS and prevention since they were the ones who could lead by example and speak from experience.

Despite the recognition of “human frailty” – i.e., that people do not necessarily act according to their beliefs – most community members struggled with the idea of providing youth with a safety net such as information and endorsement of condom use should they not following the church teachings on abstinence until marriage.

The strength of churches and their teachings and the trust that community members placed in their churches suggests that these teachings and institutions will have a strong influence on what happens in the area of AIDS prevention in these communities.