

# **You, Your Life, Your Dreams: A Book for Adolescents**

**Written by  
Catharine Watson and Ellen Brazier**

**Family Care International  
Straight Talk Foundation**

## Acknowledgements

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*You, Your Life, Your Dreams: A Book for Adolescents* was developed by Family Care International (FCI) and Straight Talk Foundation in collaboration with the German Foundation for World Population (Deutsche Stiftung Weltbevölkerung—DSW). The text was written by Catharine Watson, Editorial Director, Straight Talk Foundation and Ellen Brazier, Programme Officer, FCI.

FCI and Straight Talk Foundation would like to thank the following illustrators and artists whose work appears in this book: Regina C. Faul-Doyle, Timothy Kiwala, Mashet Ndhlovu, ODIA, and Philip Odida. The following people contributed to sections of this book: Eva Agutti, Straight Talk Foundation (stress); Grace Canada, The New Vision (nutrition); Claire Mcminn, Lincoln School, Kampala (life skills); Edith Mukisa, Naguru Teenage Health Centre, (worries); Dr. Sarah Naikoba, Kiswa Health Centre (STIs and coping with stress); and Joy Oguttu, Mildmay Centre, (life skills, emotional health, child-parent relationships, crushes and falling in love). We would also like to thank Anne Akia Fiedler and Teopista Aguttu of Straight Talk and Ann Starrs, Annie Thairu, Ellen Themmen and Rikka Trangsrud of FCI, whose comments and advice were invaluable throughout the development of this book. Finally, thanks to Mirja Rothschädl, FCI intern, who compiled the glossary.

FCI and Straight Talk would like to extend a special thanks to the following individuals for reviewing the text and illustrations:

- Dr. A. Ananie Arkutu, FRCOG, Ghana
- Regina Goergen, GTZ, Tanzania
- Muriithi Kinyua, Family Planning Private Sector, Kenya
- Dr. Margaret Makumi, Ministry of Health, Kenya
- Dr. Elizabeth Odera, Malezi Preparatory School, Kenya
- Rehema L. Mwateba, Independent Consultant, Tanzania
- Mary Waithaka, Nairobi Primary School, Kenya

FCI colleagues Pamela Bolton, Cynthia Eyakuze, Martha Murdock, Marilyn Piels and Jill Sheffield also gave graciously of their time and expertise to review the text and illustrations.

Assistance in pre-testing the text and illustrations with young people was provided by:

- Mercy Abbey, Ministry of Health, Ghana
  - Molly Anyango, and Lillian Khakasa, Family Planning Association of Kenya
  - Ben Adu Nyinaku, Dennis Bruce, Phyllis Adwoa Kudolo, Gideon Leckson and Gladys Yeboah, Planned Parenthood Association of Ghana
  - Alexandra Anterkyi, Esther Owusu, Young Christian Women's Association, Ghana
- The text and illustrations were also pre-tested in Tanzania and Uganda by FCI staff.

A large number of young people contributed their thoughts and advice about adolescence. In some instances, names and locations have been changed to protect our contributors' anonymity, however, the quotes themselves were not changed. The following individuals and organisations provided assistance in collecting quotes from adolescents:

- Mary Mboche, Family Planning Association of Kenya
- John Kennedy Alumasa, Straight Talk, Kenya Association of Professional Counsellors
- Speciosa Kasori, Kuleana Centre for Child Rights, Tanzania
- Salim Mohammed, Mathare Youth Sports Association (MYSA), Kenya

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- John Riber, Media Trust for Development, Zimbabwe
- Defron Amono, Naguru Teenage Health Centre, Uganda
- Betty Kagoro, The New Vision, Uganda
- Hilda Dhliwayo, Trendsetters Newspaper, Zambia

FCI staff also worked with youth in Ghana and Kenya to gather additional quotes for this book.

The following organisations kindly gave permission to use their artwork: Adolescent Reproductive Health Education Project (a project of the Training and Research Support Centre), Zimbabwe (pages 81, 84, 86, 89, 113, 149 and 153); CEDPA, Washington D.C. (page 94); The Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE), Nairobi, Kenya (page 136); and The Hesperian Foundation, Berkeley, California (page 147).

This book was made possible through the generous support of The European Commission, The Ford Foundation, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation and the Blanchette Hooker Rockefeller Charitable Fund.

Cover images (top to bottom): UNICEF/86-029/Botswana/Yann Gamblin; United Nations/Kenya/Y. Nagata; United Nations/158705/M. Grant; United Nations/154324; UNICEF/91-0113/Jorgen Schytte; United Nations/153445; United Nations/159795/M. Grant

Cover design by Russell Design Associates, Inc.

Interior design, layout and production by Claire McConaughy

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Straight Talk Foundation is a Ugandan NGO, which works to “keep adolescents safe” through teen newspapers, radio shows and a school visits programme. For information on Straight Talk Foundation, please contact:

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## Foreword

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Adolescence—the period of life when you change from a child into an adult—is an exciting time, but it can also be a confusing time. You experience many physical and emotional changes during adolescence, and you may have many questions about your body, your relationships with other people and your future.

*You, Your Life, Your Dreams* was written for adolescents, aged 14 to 19, to help you cope with some of the many challenges and decisions you face as you move from childhood to adulthood. This book offers factual information about the changes that occur during this time of life, and about a range of other issues, such as: how to stay physically and emotionally healthy, how to avoid sexually transmitted infections and unwanted pregnancy, how to handle pressure to have sex, and how to avoid drug and alcohol abuse. The book also offers advice on getting along with your parents and friends, handling romantic relationships, setting goals, doing well in school and out, and coping with setbacks that you may encounter along the road to adulthood.

This book contains a lot of information, but you do not have to read it cover-to-cover or front-to-back. You can look at the **Table of Contents** and find the topics that interest you most. When you have read these sections, look back at the **Table of Contents** and find something else that you want to know about. You can also flip through the book, looking at the cartoons, illustrations and the quotes from other adolescents. Or, you can look through the book and read all the **“DID YOU KNOW”** boxes, which contain factual information.

Although this book was written primarily for unmarried adolescents, aged 14 to 19, parts of the book may be of interest to older and younger youth, as well as to married adolescents. Share this book with your friends, your brothers and sisters, and your parents. Talk to them about it, and find out what they think about the topics that are discussed.

Enjoy this book and stay safe!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "M. Anyango." The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

*Molly Anyango*  
*Peer Counsellor*  
*Family Planning Association of Kenya*

## A Note to Parents, Teachers and Other Adults

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Many adults think that adolescents face few of the problems and worries that confront adults. However, for many young people, adolescence is a confusing and stressful time. It is a time of questions and anxieties about the physical and emotional changes that are taking place, as well as about education, employment and relationships with parents and friends. Adolescence is a time of peer pressure, ups and downs and worries for the future.

But adolescence is also an exciting and wonderful stage of life. It is a time when young people grow emotionally and mentally, take on new challenges and new responsibilities and identify their dreams for the future. They learn to make more and more decisions for themselves—decisions that may affect their lives today, tomorrow and for years to come.

As they negotiate the challenges of adolescence, young people need factual information and skills to be able to make sound decisions and safe choices. Many parents, teachers and other adults worry that adolescents lack the maturity and judgement needed to make good decisions about issues such as relationships, sexual activity, drugs and alcohol, or planning their futures. However, research shows that young people can make safe, responsible decisions if they are armed with accurate information and a range of skills, such as decisions-making, communication and negotiation skills, and if they are guided by caring adults.

*You, Your Life, Your Dreams* examines some of the key issues that young people in Africa face as they are growing up. The contents of this book were determined in consultation with adolescents in a variety of countries. It focuses on issues that adolescents themselves identified as important: the changes of puberty, staying healthy, coping with stress and depression, getting along with parents, handling friendships and romantic relationships, healthy sexuality, pregnancy, abortion, coping with drugs and alcohol, education and employment.

There are good reasons to ensure that our youth are well-informed about these issues. At home, in the streets, in schools and through the media, young people today are increasingly exposed to a variety of challenges and risks. Young people today are at great risk for a variety of health problems, such as sexually transmitted infections, HIV/AIDS, unwanted pregnancy and unsafe abortion. About 60% of all new HIV infections in Africa are occurring among young people aged 10 to 24. This means that young people are getting infected with HIV faster than any other age group.

The most at-risk adolescent is the young person who lacks correct information. He or she will rely on friends, videos and popular music as sources of information, and in so doing, will get considerable *misinformation*. Therefore, this book was written to help ensure that adolescents have access to factual information and can build the skills they need to handle peer pressure and relationships, and, most importantly, to make safe and responsible decisions.

I encourage parents, teachers and other adults to look through this book and to share it with the young people you know. Talk with them about the information and advice given. Help them stay safe as they travel the road to adulthood so that they will be able to reach their dreams.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. Ananie Arkutu', with a long horizontal line extending from the left side of the signature.

Dr. A. Ananie Arkutu  
FRCOG

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