

BRIDE PRICE AND FIGHT AGAINST HIV/AIDS

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INTRODUCTION:

Dowry payment is still upheld by most tribes in Uganda including some parts of Busoga e.g. in Busiki and Bulamogi Counties and some sections of Bugiri District. Dowry subjects girls to early marriages as parents wish to get wealth and this expose men and women to the risk of getting infected with HIV.

Definitions:

Bride price. This money or property, which is given to a woman's family by the man before marriage.

REPERCUSSION OF BRIDE PRICE IN RELATION TO HIV/AIDS

Early Marriages:

In most of the societies, parents believe that the girl child is a source of wealth therefore, the girls are given away to rich men who can afford to pay bride price despite the presence of the HIV/AIDS scourge.

Because of the dowry, which has been paid, the girl cannot decide on her own, she has to abide by the culture and this forces her to marry without considering their sero-status. This is one of the major obstacles in fighting the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

Early marriage means early involvement in sexual intercourse. The vaginal lining in a young girl is still thin and therefore prone to trauma during sex which makes the young girl more prone to HIV.

Lack of decision making powers:

Because dowry has been paid, the girl is considered as man's property therefore she cannot make decisions on her own. This keeps her under constant fear and tied to a martial home despite knowing her husband's sexual malpractices such as having extra marital relationships which exposes her to HIV infection.

Inheritance:

Because of the bride price which was paid, when the husband dies, one of the brothers takes over the widow so that she does not marry outside the family. This is in most cases done without considering the cause of death hence may lead to any of the two getting infected with HIV.

In case the woman dies, another girl from the deceased's family or clan is demanded in replacement for her sister or relative, this also poses a danger of HIV infection.

EDUCATION AND BRIDE PRICE

Because parents want bride price, they terminate the girls' education as the girls are married off to get the wealth as a result most women cannot read and personalise the message about HIV/AIDS hence the vulnerability of women to HIV infection.

In some societies, it is believed that the payment of bride price in marriage prevents a woman from having extra marital relationships and divorcing as such it prevents spread of HIV infection.

Basing on the above, unless the tradition of paying bride price is earnestly analysed and revised the fight against HIV in the societies with that practice will bear little fruit.

Bride price and the improvement of sexual and reproductive health and rights.

Definitions:

Reproductive Health: This is the state of complete physical, mental and social well being of an individual and not merely absence of disease or infirmity in relation to the reproductive system, its functions and processes (By World Health Organisation). It includes sexual health, enhancement of life and personal relations and care related to reproduction and sexually transmitted diseases.

Bride price and sexual rights:

Because a woman is seen as property, which has been bought, she has no right to decide when to have sex but has to satisfy her husband at all costs.

Bride Price and Number of children:

The woman's place in a home is secured by the number of children she produces as decided by the husband because of the bride price he paid to her parents. This puts the woman in danger of carrying risky pregnancy.

Bride price and resource in a home:

Because the woman was bought she does not own resources in a home and she may not be able to access reproductive health services. She therefore, has to wait for the husband to facilitate her for example in terms of transport.