CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

There is considerable evidence from this research that the sexual behaviour of the Akamba adolescents has undergone tremendous change over time. Indeed, the contemporary Akamba adolescents exhibit sexual behaviour characteristics absolutely at variance with their counterparts (those around their age) in the traditional periods.

The study notes that modern Akamba adolescents engage in actual sexual experimentation at relatively tender age, and in an indiscriminate manner. The community and parental supervision, guidance and counselling on sexual matters has become quite minuscule, while the society has to contend with the entrance of ill-advised and ignorant peers who misadvise each other on sexuality matters. Ignorance has become the adolescents’ Achilles Heel upon which their sexual behaviour can be explained. The community likewise encounters a sexualized mass media purveyed in music and dance, advertisements, pornographic movies, soap operas, magazines, amongst others. Failing economic conditions in some parts of the district and their impact on social life including sexual behaviour cannot be overlooked. It is noteworthy that these factors predispose the adolescents to indulge in indiscriminate and risky sexual encounters.

Overtime and gradually, the Government of Kenya in conjunction with other stakeholders (NGOs, schools, church and parents) are coming to realise the enormity of adolescent sexual behaviour owing to the intense clinical, physical and social consequences associated with early and irresponsible sex during adolescence. As a result, strategies have been enacted to address the emerging adolescent sexual behaviours and their implications, but fruits appear to be quite subtle.
For instance, in the last two years, media campaigns and messages have been quite abundant admonishing adolescents on pre-marital sex, the “V-shape” effort of sexual abstinence, condom media adverts for safe sex including use of Kenyan youth celebrities as well as call-in shows at FM radio stations to communicate pertinent issues to the young ones. But all these do not appear to bear any positive notch as per the emerging research evidence. Indeed, this study found out that advertisement on safe sex have not made any impact on the ground, while the call-in radio FM talk shows are presided over by non-qualified counsellors, or presenters who may actually continue or aggravate the problem of adolescent indiscriminate sexual involvement. Some of the adverts and radio call-in shows are quite ridiculous, confusing and gender biased. The EA S, December 4th, 2006, points out that from the “nime chill” to “A real lady waits”, the media bombards the citizenry with adverts preaching abstinence but promoting promiscuity. In the latter advert, a mother advises her daughter not to indulge in illicit sex until marriage, but then goes on to tell her that if she cannot abstain, she could use condom whenever she has sex. Other adverts are openly glorifying male sex chauvinism. One advert depicts a woman whom when packing clothes for her husband who is to go on a business trip, she places for him a pack of condoms alongside clothes. The male is depicted as innately unfaithful and the female “accepts”. Further, the use of celebrities in advertising condoms creates confusion. To many young people, the celebrities are not only mentors but also role models. When they see a celebrity with a girlfriend and a condom that they flaunt openly, some will certainly follow suit because they think that is the secret behind their success! Call in talk shows as evidenced in Kenya are on the other hand presented by people whose qualification is good voice and
the ability to “entertain”, but they do not seem to be guided by any professional ethics. They are not experts in adolescence or in sexuality issues.

The Kenyan Government enacted the Sexual Offences Act (2006), which stipulates for stiffer penalties for sexual offences. This is the first time such a law has been passed in Kenya since Independence, which means in the past, culprits of sexual offences acted with impunity. Section 29, Part One, of the Act states that a person found guilty of incest is liable to a sentence of not less than 10 years, while Section 8, Part 2 provides that a person who defiles an eleven (11) year old child or younger is liable upon conviction to life imprisonment. Any other form of rape and sexual offences are to bear heavy sentences. The enactment of this law was presupposed to be a deterrent to all forms of sexual offences. Fascinatingly, Kenyan media is still replete with sexual offences despite the bill and further, the society is witnessing a travesty to the implementation of the sexual offences bill. The EAS, 27th November, 2006, reported about a Nyahururu Court in Kenya, where the court jailed to four years a man, 64, who raped his eight year old daughter repeatedly, before confessing the crime to his pastor!

There is also enough evidence in Machakos district as well as other parts of the country that sexual offenders bribe their way out police custody (in cahoots with court functionaries and police), while some abused victims, their parents or guardians also fall prey to bribery in order to withdraw charges. Those who are convicted and charges proffered against them are set free as some of the sexual offences are termed bailable. Moreover, sex offence cases are deliberately prolonged, and the harrowing experience of an abused person meeting the abuser quite often in Court, always narrating in detail how the rape episode happened or answering sexually explicit questions can be quite
disheartening and frustrating to the aggrieved party. Consequently, most abused persons throw in the towel before a case is even decided, allowing the villain freedom. The reason as to why sex offences are quite endemic in the Kenyan society is because of the leniency expended to the culprits by the law enforcers and laxity of the community to pursue a case of sexual abuse to logical conclusion.

Likewise, the Kenyan parliament has in the past witnessed the introduction of various bills meant to protect girls and by extension women against sexual violence, abuse and molestation. One classic example of such a bill was the Affiliation Bill (1967), which was meant to protect women against male predators who abscond from taking responsibilities of a child they have sired. This Affiliation Act was abolished in 1967 by the Second Parliament at the instigation of male parliamentarians. According to the Act, a man who fathered a child out of wedlock was to be compelled to take care of the child until he/she was 18 years. It went further to stipulate that in case a man had an income and was in dispute about the child’s paternity, the case would be determined and if attributed to the man, a percentage of his salary would be attached to cater for his offspring. The other pending Bills have been the Family Protection Bill and the Children’s Protection Act (2001). While the children’s bill was passed in 2007, the Family Protection Bill lapsed in 2000, and none of the members of Parliament or Government side has bothered to reintroduce the Bill for discussion. This is despite the Government’s much vaunted commitment to improving the lot of marginalized and abused (women and children) in the Kenyan society.

The other strategy employed by the Kenyan Government in the past has been the institutionalization of guidance and counselling departments to all schools, under the
stewardship of a school teacher. According to this study, this office was reported to be quite unpopular with students. Students associate the office with disciplining. Moreover, the occupier of the office (sometimes senior teacher in school) is not thoroughly grounded on counselling principles and techniques. This confounds adolescent sexuality and other adolescent crisis, further.

Supplementary effort to address adolescent matters has been to entrench peer clubs in schools where young people discuss topical issues affecting their lives. The idea of peer clubs in schools is quite nascent, and thus has not penetrated to all schools in Kenya. Moreover, the fact that the clubs are within school operationalisation, under the patronage of a schoolteacher, means that students find themselves constrained to discuss issues in an illuminating and confidential manner.

Other strategies include the invitation of external counsellors, who offer outreach services to schools. It is assumed that most in this cadre are trained counsellors, thus, with the know-how to appeal to students. Indeed, these programs were reported to be immensely popular with adolescents but sometimes some of the said external counsellors may not be well trained as counsellors as noted in Machakos district. This also complicates the problem of adolescent sexuality since it reinforces ignorance and arouses curiosity among the adolescents.

The church in Kenya augments other institutions in offering moral education to the youth. But, their position on sexuality matters is certainly paradoxical. While the effort of the church (religious leaders) cannot be overemphasized, it is the church’s opposition to introduction of sex education to schools, which arouses concern. For instance, the Catholic church and the Parents Association of Kenya were in the year 2005
involved in a campaign – Keep Sex Out of Schools. As reported in the East African Standard, 13th December 2006, one of the main issues the two petitioned the Government on was the alleged inclusion of books containing “indecent language” in the curriculum. Among the books they wanted banned were Chinua Achebe’s “A Man of the People”, Said Ahmed’s “Kitumbua Kimeingia Mchanga” and Mohamed Said Mohamed’s “Kiu”. They petitioned various education authorities including the President of Kenya. Though the books have not been banned, the lingering question has been; why deny adolescents their health and reproductive rights of knowing about sexuality matters? Furthermore, the language utilized in these texts has been found not to be vulgar at all, but the common typical reproduction and sexuality academic concepts.

Lastly, Kenya has a law, which is supposed to regulate the production and distribution of pornographic materials. The law bans pornography and applies to both minors and adults. Under this law, the minister concerned has the power (under the penal code) to ban a publication, which, in his/her opinion, is not in the interest of public morals. The Penal Code says: “Any person who, for the purpose or by way of trade or for the purpose of distribution or public exhibition, makes, produces or has in his/her possession one or more obscene writings, drawings, prints, paintings, printed matter, pictures, posters, emblems, photographs, cinematography films or any other obscene objects tending to corrupt morals, is guilty of a misdemeanour and is liable to imprisonment for two years, or to a fine of Kenyan Shillings 7000 (seven thousand).”

But as per observation in Machakos district and Kenya at large, the authorities hardly apply the law. In deed, one can barely recall a person being taken to court for a long time. Pornography is being sold and displayed all over in Kenyan urban streets
(Machakos town and its environs included) and in electronic media. Ironically, when Kenyan Law enforcers raid newsstands, publishing firms and vendors, they confiscate publications that are politically damaging to those in power.

STUDY RECOMMENDATIONS

In view of above strategy shortcomings as well as study findings, the following recommendations are suggested:

1) The foremost critical onus in addressing adolescent sexual behaviour rests on the Kenyan Government. All the three key Government organs (Legislature, Executive and Judiciary) must be seen complementing each other as key players in addressing to adolescent sexuality in the following manner:

   a) The long pending youth policy ought to be deliberated upon and enacted. The youth policy should be enriched with ideas from other cultures, which have had a comprehensive and successful youth policies. Countries in Western Europe and partly US are documented to have successful and well-entrenched youth policies, which ultimately help to address to their problems. For instance, in the United States, the Government as well as Civil Societies are trying to employ a Positive Youth Development (PYD) approach in addressing problem – oriented youth behaviour (Amodeo and Collins, 2007). This approach has been found quite effective in addressing youth problems including Drugs and substance abuse, utilized in foster care youth homes, and other forms of delinquencies. When using the PYD approach, workers focus on youth assets rather than deficits, collaborate with youth in planning for
their future, build youth competencies rather than doing tasks for the youth, adopt a holistic perspective of healthy personal growth, and engage in long-range planning rather than short-term solutions. The National Collaboration for Youth Member (1998) states that PYD is a process which prepares young people to meet the challenges of adolescence and adulthood through a coordinated, progressive series of activities and experiences which help them to become socially, morally, emotionally, physically, and cognitively competent. Thus, this approach, which can be extrapolated to the Kenyan situation gives regard to involving the youth in planning, and thorough involvement and participation in shaping their destiny in collaboration with others.

The other strategy as recommended by scholars in dealing with high-risk youth behaviour is the Strengths – Based Case Management (Arnold, et. al., 2007). This method has in the past been used successfully among adults with chronic mental illness as well as adults with substance abuse problems, and can equally be used to address high-risk youth behaviour. Based on the principles of strengths theory, SBCM aims to assist individuals in identifying and achieving personal goals, with an emphasis on the case manager-client relationship and client self determination. Rapp (1986b) observes that the Strengths Model Case Management (SBCM) is predicated on the theory of strengths, which aims to identify the factors that are impacting an individual’s life and how they can be changed. In relation to the Kenyan situation, the Government only requires to stipulate in the youth policies the need to
identify youths with problems (prostitutes, abused children, school dropouts, etc) and address to their needs uniquely and systematically for a while, with the desire to reform that person. This method (SBCM) has been found quite effective, especially in the US.

b) Establish or strengthen existing Government censorship body to vet publication and distribution of pornographic or sexually explicit material. Power to prosecute should be strengthened.

c) The judiciary must advocate for authentic and strict application of the Sexual Offences Act (2006) and the Children's Act (2007) to the letter. If need be, lawyers, law enforcers and judges should be updated and familiarized with the Sexual Offences Act (2006) and the Children's Act (2007). The successful implementation of both acts require the law enforcers be trained on their provisions including prompt, thorough and impartial investigations being conducted into allegations of sexual offences and child abuse. It is prudent to borrow a leaf from other cultures including India and UK where medical and forensic medicine is incorporated in handling sexual offences, and abuse. Forensic medicine ensures the prompt examination by specialist medico-legal practitioners of all women and children who allege to have been sexually assaulted. This should be coupled with training police officers and legal officers on how to treat victims of sexual offences as well as setting up of special desks in police stations and the provisions of hot lines.
2) The study found out that adolescents in Machakos district are quite bereft of sexuality knowledge and this incapacitates them from making informed and responsible sexuality decisions. Owing to the fact that adolescents and the young ones spent almost over three quarters of their time in school, educational institutions (pre-primary to secondary) come in handy to offer sexuality education. In conjunction with the Government, the education systems in Kenya must vigorously incorporate in their curriculum, facilitate and implement Comprehensive Sexuality education. All school going children and adolescents require a responsible, holistic and medically accurate sexuality education. The eventual success of such education will require:

a) Gender sensitive and age appropriate contents.

b) The education must be mandatory to all school going pupils.

c) Train all teachers and empower them in counselling skills, principles and knowledge. This will make each and every teacher in school a counsellor, and capable of handling sexuality matters, in spite of their speciality. The advantage of training all teachers on counselling including on sexuality matters is that, it will ensure that invariably there is a person who can offer regular dialogue or discourse on sexuality with the young person and earn their confidence. This system has worked in Sweden, France and Canada (Santrock, 2005).

d) Feasible learning processes, wholly compatible with each age category. Such learning processes palatable to the young ones would include use of visual materials, art and drama, charts, group discussions, practicality and factual information and organizing visitations to institutions dealing in topical issues affecting young people.
e) Youth peer groups should be entrenched into the schools club organizations. It is a fact that a well-informed youth will consequently offer value-laden advice to the other. Young people can be used as entry points to working with their peers on sexuality matters.

It is noteworthy that one country which has had a successful sex education programme is Sweden in Europe, and the attempts for a proposed sex education program in Kenya can be designed alongside the Swedish model. Santrock (2005) points out that Sweden has set up an independent-commission which handles sex education. Through the Swedish State Commission on Sex Education, it has been recommended that students gain knowledge to help them to experience sexual life as a source of happiness, and fellowship with others. It has been observed that Swedish adolescents are sexually active at an earlier age than are American adolescents and they are exposed to even more explicit sex on television. However, the Swedish National Board of Education has developed a curriculum to give every child, beginning at age 7 a thorough grounding in reproductive biology, and by the age 10 or 12, information about various forms of contraception (Santrock, 2005). Teachers handle the subject of sex whenever it becomes relevant, regardless of the subject they are teaching. The idea is to de-dramatize and demystify sex so that familiarity will make students less vulnerable to unwanted pregnancy and STI. Despite a relatively early onset of sexual activity, the adolescent pregnancy and STIs rate in Sweden is one of the lowest in the world (Santrock, 2005). Indeed, children are quite conscious of their own sexuality early enough and make informed choices and decisions about their sexual life.
On the other hand, though the United States has institutionalized sex education in schools, their model has failed and provides a disastrous situation. It is in total contrast to other Western nations, well illustrated through Sweden. United States sexuality education typically has focused on the hazards of sex and the need to protect adolescent females from male predators (Fine, 1988). The media entice adolescents with stories of romantic love and portrayal of sex. Parents encourage boy-girl contact but are often reluctant to discuss sex openly; are unwilling to make contraceptives, including condoms, available to the adolescents; and fail to offer alternatives other than abstinence (Crockett, et al., 2003). Consequently, it experiences one of the highest teenage pregnancies and STIs in the world (AGI 2003a and Crockett, et al., 2003).

All in all, the Swedish model of sex education is reinforced by concomitant sexuality climate conducive for the proper upbringing of children who are conscious of their sexual needs, thus, the most ideal.

3) A growing body of research indicates that parents and their values are a potent influencing factor to young one’s decision about whether or not to have sex. According to AGI (1999), parents can best keep their young ones from indiscriminate and early sexual activity by:

a) Showing interest in what the children are doing as well as correct, supervise and monitor their activities appropriately.

b) Maintaining a warm and loving relationship with their children.

c) Discussing with them facts about sex and its expectations including the desire to abstain until they are cognitively, physically and emotionally mature.
d) Transmitting proper religious and moral values (avoid spousal conflict and indecency in front of young ones).

This Study found out that parents and siblings are in a position to be effective communicators to young ones on sexuality matters. Indeed, sexuality discourse should not be made a taboo subject any more. Parents in Machakos district and without must open up, be available and stimulate healthy sex discussions within the home environment. To realize this, they must also be well equipped with factual sexuality knowledge.

4) The church, civil organizations and social workers have an obligation to reinforce the schools, parents and the Government in educating the young ones on sexuality matters. A collaborative network between these social institutions should aim at helping the adolescents develop the values, attitudes and other necessary adaptive dispositions for their future healthy sexual behaviours. Moreover, they should also target the community they serve with dignity, integrity and knowledge awareness to empower them such that the society becomes less tolerant to all forms of sexual impropriety, harassment and abuse.

5) The study findings indicated a significant influence of the mass media to the adolescent sexual behaviour in Machakos district. This calls for a need to legislate and monitor the growing number of commercial video shows in Machakos district market centres with a view to outlaw pornographic movies. Moreover, mass media messages targeting the youth (advertisements for goods and services) require checking and thorough vetting by interested parties so as to enable the right positive information to
reach the adolescents. Subsequently, sexually explicit soap operas, movies, music, etc, on
the television ought to be rescheduled to be aired at later hours of the night.

Lastly, this study has identified various research areas appropriate for the further
understanding of adolescent sexual behaviour: -

i) The role of the adult community in adolescent sexual behaviour.

ii) The type of school and religious affiliation as well as teachers' roles in
    influencing adolescents' sexual behaviour.

iii) An exploration on forms of sexual behaviours during adolescence.

iv) Sexuality crisis in adolescence.

v) Incest and adolescent sexual behaviour.

vi) An evaluation into the effectiveness of Family Life Education Programs in
    Kenya.

vii) Effective information, education and communication strategies to the
    adolescents.

viii) Effects of early and irresponsible sexual experience on physical, social and
    psychological maturation of the adolescents.

In conclusion, it is critical to point out that the sexual behaviour of the adolescents among
the Akamba people of Machakos district, Kenya, pose a real problem. Consequently, this
exposes not only the life of the Akamba adolescents to jeopardy, but also the survival of
the Akamba people's civilisation, and the nation at large. As a counter to this threat,
pragmatic policies and strategies are required, compatible to the socio-cultural change
being experienced in the Akamba community and the entire nation, Kenya.