Southern Nigeria: EMERGING INSIGHTS for Design
The insights are majorly divided into three Categories:

- The Adolescents' World
- Sex and Pregnancy
- Barriers to Contraception

These categories reflect broadly the direction of the insights gotten from the respondents.
SOUTH TRAJECTORIES
In the south, adolescent girls strive to finish secondary school, learn a trade or attend higher education, gain financial independence, and get married and have kids.

In reality, few jobs, high poverty, and negative social influences mean adolescent girls have few opportunities after finishing secondary school and often have unplanned pregnancies.
The ideal trajectory

14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25

WORK HARD & FOCUS ON SCHOOL

LEARN A SKILL & WORK

ATTEND HIGHER EDUCATION / TRADE SCHOOL

BUILD CAREER & FINANCIAL STABILITY

GRADUATE SECONDARY SCHOOL

GRADUATE HIGHER ED / TRADE SCHOOL

GET MARRIED

HAVE A SMALL FAMILY & WORK
In reality, many girls get married in their late teens and continue working.
Pregnancy leads to many paths.
The Adolescent’s World
Adolescents have a clear vision for their futures, which is driven by bringing pride to themselves and their families.
“I’ll be the light of my generation.”

— UNMARRIED GIRL, EPE
Education is a top priority. It’s a way to get out of poverty and achieve a better future.

“The most important thing for me is to finish school with good grades so I can get a good job.”

— BOY, SURULERE

“I want to finish school because I want to become something greater in the future.”

— UNMARRIED GIRL, EPE

“I’ll be the light of my generation.”

— UNMARRIED GIRL, EPE

“By believing in education, we are eradicating poverty.”

— MOTHER, SURULERE
ON TECHNOLOGY:

Increased access to technology is empowering youth and connecting them to information.

“It’s good to use social media to get the latest news, to expose you to things going on around the world.”
— UNMARRIED GIRL, EPE

“We view technology as our own advantage; kids have a bright future if they can use technology and education.”
— BOY, SURULERE

“You can go around the world sitting in one place.”
— UNMARRIED GIRL, SURULERE

“I try to encourage my kids to download textbooks because we can’t afford the hard copy.”
— MOTHER, SURULERE
Girls value financial independence. They see developing a trade or profession as a way to gain agency and provide for their families.

“If you work you can have freedom, then you don’t have to rely on your husband.”
— UNMARRIED GIRL, SURULERE

“Jobs make you busy, you don’t need a handout and people won’t ask you where you get money from.”
— UNMARRIED GIRLS, SURULERE

“Only a senseless parent would separate between boys and girls for giving them the opportunity to succeed.”
— FATHER, SURULERE
Boys and girls believe that dating is a distraction that will derail their dreams.

“A girlfriend would distract me from my studies.”
— BOY, EPE

“My mom says a good child should always abstain from sex.”
— UNMARRIED GIRL, EPE

“Having a boyfriend can distract you as you will be thinking about him instead of reading.”
— UNMARRIED GIRL, EPE

“Girlfriends are an agent of destruction.”
— BOY, SURULERE
Boys and girls believe that marriage, sex, and children should come in their mid-twenties, after finishing education and getting a career on track.

“She is 19 years old, she is supposed to go to school. She is too young to get married.”
— MOTHER, EPE

“It’s not that I don’t want to get married, but I shouldn’t think about it now... education first.”
— UNMARRIED GIRL, SURULERE

“A graduation gown turns into a marriage gown which turns into pregnancy gown.”
— UNMARRIED GIRL, SURULERE

“I’m pursuing my dreams now, sex is still far away.”
— BOY, SURULERE
How might we help adolescents achieve their vision for their future?

BRAINSTORM CONSIDERATIONS

How might we:
- Reframe SRH as a way to help girls achieve their educational goals of university or trade school?
- Position SRH as a tool for financial planning and stability?
- Connect SRH to achieving financial independence and a career?
Economic and social pressures make adolescents’ dreams hard to achieve.
“Poverty can make you do what you don’t normally do.”

— BOY, SURULERE
After secondary school, there is no clear path to higher education or jobs. Even ambitious adolescents become bored, and seek alternative resources to meet their social, economic, and emotional needs.

“If we could organize other things for teens after school, then there would be less time for them to get into trouble.”

— COMMUNITY INFLUENCER, EPE

“The reason young kids are having sex is because they are idle and have nothing else to do.”

— COMMUNITY INFLUENCER, SURULERE

“Lack of financial power makes it impossible for boys and girls to reach their goals.”

— FATHER, SURULERE

“Most 19 year old girls have finished secondary school. They are at high risk of getting pregnant when waiting at home for admission into college.”

— FATHER, SURULERE
Without economic opportunities or support from their parents, girls often turn to men and sex for money and gifts.

“My parents give me N100 for breakfast, lunch, and dinner — it’s not enough. Not even enough for breakfast. So how do I eat? I need to take care of myself.”

— UNMARRIED GIRL, SURULERE

“Some parents make their children work at night. They get pregnant and drop out.”

— UNMARRIED GIRL, SURULERE

“Poverty can make you do what you don’t normally do.”

— BOY, SURULERE

“Sometimes, hunger leads girls to go from house to house seeking food. From there, things can start happening with girls.”

— FATHER, SURULERE
Communities recognize that girls begin maturing earlier, both biologically and socially, and adolescents are exposed to sex at a younger age.

“Kids are having more sex earlier because they are more free.”
— MALE PARTNER, EPE

“It’s hard to find a decent 15–16 year old girl in this community that hasn’t started having sex.”
— MALE PARTNER, SURULERE

“13 years is the new 18 years . . . they are already sexually active at 13.”
— FATHER, SURULERE

“The girls of this generation are very smart. 15 year old girls are thinking like 20 year olds . . . they know how to find their way.”
— FATHER, SURULERE
Girls and boys value what relationships and sex signal to their peers.

“60% of girls are wayward — they follow boys anywhere. They follow boys to be fashionable.”
— UNMARRIED GIRL, EPE

“[Sisters] see their older sister with a boyfriend who gives her money. The younger sister asks, ‘how’d you get that money?’ and then she’ll go and do the same.”
— BOY, EPE

“One of my friends said, ‘sex is one of the sweetest things I have ever tasted in my life.’”
— BOY, EPE

“Some people have a boyfriend just to belong to the clique.”
— UNMARRIED GIRL, SURULERE
How might we connect the potential realities and consequences of unsafe sex to their envisioned trajectories?

BRAINSTORM CONSIDERATIONS

How might we:
- Intervene during the gap following secondary school?
- Show teens a way to achieve their goals and date?
- Create financial opportunities for girls within SRH?
- Create meaningful ways for adolescents to engage and express themselves during “idle” time?
Adolescents have few people whom they trust.
“There is no one you can trust 100%.”

— UNMARRIED GIRL, EPE
A girl has few people in her life whom she can trust—and when she does have someone, it’s conditional.
Adolescents don’t trust their friends because friends can lead them astray.

“Your worst enemy might be your best friend.”
— UNMARRIED GIRL, EPE

“Girls get intimidated by friends to go to night parties, spend money lavishly, and buy the latest things.”
— UNMARRIED GIRL, EPE

“A friend can expose your secrets, put you into something bad in the community.”
— UNMARRIED GIRL, EPE

“Friends are dangerous; they can lead you astray.”
— BOY, SURULERE
It’s hard for boys and girls to establish trust with each other, even in their relationships.

“What will [a boyfriend] do for me — just waste my time and my emotions. If you don’t know better, he uses you and dumps you like a used orange.”

— UNMARRIED GIRL, EPE

“Boys don’t keep secrets among themselves.”

— UNMARRIED GIRL, SURULERE

“I don’t trust my boyfriend. I don’t trust men. Men are the worst!”

— UNMARRIED GIRL, EPE

“Females don’t know how to keep secrets.”

— BOY, EPE
Girls trust their moms, but they feel embarrassed talking to them about sex.

“If you talk to your parents about sex, they’ll think you already started.”
— UNMARRIED GIRL, SURULERE

“Has your father ever talked to you about sex?”
A: [LAUGHTER] “NO!”
— 4 BOYS, EPE

“My mom would understand, but she would scold me.”
— UNMARRIED GIRL, SURULERE

“I would talk to my mom about my period, but if I got pregnant, I would talk to my boyfriend, then my friend.”
— UNMARRIED GIRL, SURULERE
How might we facilitate trusted experiences and relationships to support adolescents?

BRAINSTORM CONSIDERATIONS

How might we:
- Design an SRH learning opportunity that is experienced individually?
- Initiate trusted and positive conversations about sex and dating through technology?
Power dynamics influence every sexual and romantic relationship—through money, gender, and social status.
“Nothing goes for nothing.”

— MALE PARTNER, SURULERE
Regardless of the type of relationship, there is always an expected exchange.

“When you collect money from a boy, one day he must collect something from you.”
— UNMARRIED GIRL, SURULERE

“Who thinks love from a boy to a girl would mean he foots the girl’s bill.”
— UNMARRIED GIRL, EPE

“Nothing goes for free. It is rare for a man to sleep with a girl without money.”
— UNMARRIED GIRL, EPE

“Nothing goes for nothing.”
— UNMARRIED GIRL, SURULERE
Men have disproportionate power when it comes to sex and contraception.

“If an older guy offers just a little money, she’ll have flesh-to-flesh.”
— COMMUNITY INFLUENCER, EPE

“Men pay a lot to have sex with adolescent girls without condoms.”
— PROVIDER, EPE

“Some men will threaten to leave their girlfriends if she won’t have sex with him.”
— UNMARRIED GIRL, SURULERE
Some adolescents are opportunistic about their relationships: they know how to use what they have to get what they want.

“I do not want to put all my eggs in one basket, so I have 3 boyfriends.”
— UNMARRIED GIRL, SURULERE

“Girls think once a guy is her boyfriend, he has a responsibility to provide money.”
— BOY, SURULERE

“When an adolescent girl gets a phone from her boyfriend, other girls who want to be like her are pulled into the trap.”
— MALE PARTNER, SURULERE

“When girls see money, they have seen their life.”
— BOY, EPE
How might we give girls the choice and power to choose contraception?

BRAINSTORM CONSIDERATIONS

How might we:
- Make contraception non-negotiable for every sexual encounter?
- Change what it means socially for a girl to use contraception?
- Present use of modern contraception by adolescents as “buzz” and “trendy?”
Girls feel powerless, vulnerable, and scared of the pervasive sexual violence in their community.
“My boyfriend invited me to his house to talk. He needed to ‘do something.’ We were alone in his house, and I was scared. He began kissing and touching me. I told him, ‘if you touch me, I’ll shout.’ I saw the door and ran home crying — I even left my purse there. I didn’t tell my mom, because I was afraid she would scold me. I did tell a sister at church who I know. But she doubted me, and then scolded me.”

— UNMARRIED GIRL, SURULERE
A girl’s perception of the spaces in her community
Girls live in constant fear of rape by strangers and by men they know.

“If a girl is sent to stay with relatives, they aren’t treated well. They may be raped or abused.”
— UNMARRIED GIRL, EPE

“Some young girls leave secondary school as virgins but get spoiled by their lecturers in university after much pressure.”
— FATHER, EPE

“When I’m with my boyfriend alone and he might want sex, I look for an excuse to leave.”
— UNMARRIED GIRL, SURULERE

“In our community, if they see a girl in a certain age range, they know she is a virgin, and they’ll get older brothers to rape her.”
— UNMARRIED GIRL, EPE
Moms talk to girls about rape and share ways to protect themselves.

“My mom said not to tell people I’m menstruating, because if you’re a virgin, they’ll rape you.”

— UNMARRIED GIRL, EPE

“Home is my hiding place. If people are chasing you, you can run to your house.”

— UNMARRIED GIRL, SURULERE

“Dress normal and cover your nakedness.”

— UNMARRIED GIRL, SURULERE

“Indecent clothes is not good for our health; it encourages the boys.”

— UNMARRIED GIRL, SURULERE
The community holds girls responsible for protecting themselves from rape, and if she is raped, the community blames her.

“Most girls don’t report rape because it would be an embarrassment to the community.”

— UNMARRIED GIRL, EPE

“I didn’t tell my mom, because I was afraid she would scold me. I did tell a sister at church who I know. But she doubted me, and then scolded me.”

— UNMARRIED GIRL, SURULERE

“Parents blame their children for being raped.”

— UNMARRIED GIRL, EPE

“A teacher cannot be trusted as they can use your experience to teach others.”

— UNMARRIED GIRL, EPE
How might we leverage the acceptability of talking about sexual violence as a pathway to discussing contraception?

BRAINSTORM CONSIDERATIONS

How might we:
- Normalize emergency contraception as part of the post-sexual violence protocol?
- Share stories of healthy and unhealthy sexual behavior and relationships?
The immediate benefits of having sex outweigh the potential risks of getting pregnant.
“Girls don’t use contraception, they abort.”

— MOTHER, EPE
Girls value being healthy, but don’t generally consider their sexual health.

“If I’m healthy, I’m able to do house chores. Mom and Dad will be proud and send me to school.”
— UNMARRIED GIRL, SURULERE

“Health is the most important because you can’t achieve anything else if you’re not healthy.”
— UNMARRIED GIRL, SURULERE

“Staying healthy is taking care of my body, protecting myself from boys’ advances, and no night parties.”
— UNMARRIED GIRL, EPE

“To be healthy, you eat good food, wear clean clothes, use good creams like shea butter, brush your teeth, and wear pads during your period.”
— UNMARRIED GIRL, SURULERE
If girls get pregnant, they believe their family or boyfriend will support them.

“If the pregnancy happens, it happens.”
— UNMARRIED GIRL, SURULERE

“Even if she gets pregnant before marriage, her family would still support her.”
— UNMARRIED GIRL, SURULERE

“Some girls aren’t worried about pregnancy because they believe the boy will care for them.”
— UNMARRIED GIRL, EPE
When a girl gives birth, she often drops out of school, doesn’t receive support from the baby’s father and his family, and may be kicked out by her parents.

“Girls who get pregnant should be beaten and punished and sent to the boy’s house to suffer.”
— MOTHER, EPE

“Boys don’t take care of girls that get pregnant. The girl goes back to the parents’ house to take care of the baby.”
— UNMARRIED GIRL, EPE

“Guys deceive girls. They pretend to have money, wear nice clothes, but they don’t have jobs. Then [if she gets pregnant], they run away.”
— MALE PARTNER, EPE

“When a girl gives birth, she often drops out of school, doesn’t receive support from the baby’s father and his family, and may be kicked out by her parents.”
— UNMARRIED GIRL, SURULERE

“Some girls end up getting pregnant and ending their goals.”
— UNMARRIED GIRL, SURULERE
“If a girl is sexually active and has had several abortions, she may not be able to get pregnant, or they’ll send her away.”
— UNMARRIED GIRL, EPE

“Teenage pregnancy is not too pronounced, because many of the girls abort and go to the chemist shops to use drugs.”
— FATHER, SURULERE

“Girls don’t use contraception, they abort.”
— MOTHER, EPE

“I used to perform 2-3 abortions every day.”
— PROVIDER, SURULERE
How might we help girls internalize the risks of unplanned pregnancy?

BRAINSTORM CONSIDERATIONS

How might we:
- Shift contraceptive use from reactive to proactive?
- Leverage post-abortion care as an entry point for new contraceptive users?
- Connect girls’ health goals to their sexual and reproductive health?
Barriers to Contraception
Adolescents have to piece together their own sexual education, so what they know is cloudy and misinformed.
“Nobody teaches us about sex.”

—BOY, SURULERE
Formal sex education is abstract, biological, and abstinence-focused.

“They taught us about HIV in school, and taught us to be careful with sharp objects and to abstain from sex.”
— BOY, SURULERE

“Schools don’t teach condoms, only abstinence.”
— BOY, SURULERE

“If a boy touches you, you will get pregnant. Be careful if you move close to boys—you’ll get pregnant.”
— UNMARRIED GIRL, SURULERE

“Nobody teaches us about sex.”
— BOY, SURULERE
ON TECHNOLOGY:

Technology has shifted how adolescents learn about sex.

“Girls see sex as something playful because of TV.”
— COMMUNITY INFLUENCER, SURULERE

“You learn about sex styles from watching sex videos.”
— BOY, EPE

“There is a difference between 15 and 19, but because of the way the world is now the difference is not so much. Everyone is exposed.”
— UNMARRIED GIRL, SURULERE

“Social media makes girls skip school and go to their boyfriend’s house.”
— UNMARRIED GIRL, EPE
Adolescents know little about contraceptive methods beyond condoms.

“After sex they have a medicine to not get pregnant. Girls buy it at the chemist. I don’t know what it is.”
— UNMARRIED GIRL, SURULERE

“I don’t know how you stop pregnancy. You can take drugs.”
— UNMARRIED GIRL, EPE
If adolescents have heard of modern contraceptive methods, they believe that the methods will damage their fertility and make them seem promiscuous.

“They say contraception is good, but for me, it’s not good. It will destroy your womb.”
— UNMARRIED GIRL, EPE

“Family planning is for women who are done giving birth and prostitutes who don’t want children.”
— UNMARRIED GIRL, SURULERE

“Girls that use contraception are promiscuous. They boast about it and talk about using protection.”
— UNMARRIED GIRL, EPE

“My mom says [contraception] can destroy your womb.”
— UNMARRIED GIRL, EPE
Traditional contraceptive methods are more acceptable than modern methods, even for adolescents.

“Boys will have girls drink a native drink after sex to not get pregnant.”
— BOYS, SURULERE

“I go around saying ‘If you don’t want to get pregnant, then come to me,’ not because of money but because I want a better future for them.”
— TBA, EPE

“Most people believe in traditional family planning.”
— PROVIDER, EPE

“The one contraceptive method that we do is through herbalists [use the ring].”
— FATHER, SURULERE
How might we increase knowledge of SRH in a way that resonates with adolescents?

BRAINSTORM CONSIDERATIONS

How might we:
- Connect with youth brands engaged in health education?
- Build on existing SRH programs in school?
Adults want young people to learn about sex, but are hesitant to teach anything beyond abstinence.
“I would scare my child [about] sex because my mother did that too.”

— COMMUNITY INFLUENCER, SURULERE
Adults believe that sex education is important and should be led by parents and schools.

“The government needs to do sex education just like Math and English.”
— FATHER, EPE

“When a child gets pregnant, it’s not a mistake. It’s the mother and teacher’s job to teach them.”
— PROVIDER, EPE

“Sex education should be a joint venture: family, schools, churches, peers.”
— COMMUNITY INFLUENCERS, EPE

“Teachers and moms should educate girls about sex and condoms, but girls should direct questions to nurses.”
— PROVIDER, SURULERE
When parents teach their children about sex, it’s either abstinence and fear, or reactive.

“I would scare my child [about] sex because my mother did that too.”
— COMMUNITY INFLUENCER, SURULERE

“Don’t tell the good ones about contraception, but it’s ok to tell girls who are already promiscuous.”
— MOTHER, SURULERE

“My parents tell me not to have sex.”
— BOY, SURULERE

“Mom talked about menses after menstruation started — then [it was] taught in school.”
— UNMARRIED GIRL, SURULERE
Adults believe teaching adolescents about contraception encourages promiscuity.

“Family planning will be a license to become bold in going out for sex.”
— MOTHER, SURULERE

“A lady using contraception is a prostitute; it is not our culture.”
— FATHER, SURULERE

“If you tell a girl about family planning, she’ll think you want her to have sex.”
— MOTHER, EPE

“Once we start teaching boys how to use condoms they act big and think they have power.”
— COMMUNITY INFLUENCER, EPE
Parents may want to guide their children, but feel powerless in this modern, technological world.

“Their eyes are wide open — even more than us, their parents. What they do is more than their age.”
— MOTHER, SURULERE

“Parents are really powerless to stop the adolescents from doing things, even with much monitoring.”
— FATHER, EPE

“The world has changed; civilization is here. The children of these days are exposed very early.”
— FATHER, SURULERE

“Adolescents won’t allow their parents to see what they’re doing on their phones.”
— COMMUNITY INFLUENCER, EPE
How might we design the right roles for adults to play in SRH education?

BRAINSTORM

CONSIDERATIONS

How might we:

• Use existing social structures to educate adolescents about SRH?

• Build a relationship between providers and a wider range of trusted adults to increase girls’ access to services?
Girls trust doctors and nurses, but that trust is not translating to uptake of contraception.
“If she can't stop having sex, then contraception.”

— PROVIDER, SURULERE
Doctors and nurses want to help adolescents, but their morals and limited training get in the way of providing services to unmarried girls.

“A shy girl with little knowledge gets the abstinence talk, then is sent away.”
— PROVIDER, SURULERE

“If she can’t stop having sex, then contraception.”
— PROVIDER, SURULERE

“Injection is for married women with kids.”
— PROVIDER, SURULERE
Healthcare is reactive: girls visit clinics when they have a problem, and providers only feel comfortable serving girls when they have already made a “mistake.”

“Many girls come for post pills. Many use it immediately after sex, some people use it for abortion, though that’s not what it is made for.”

— PROVIDER, EPE

“Educated parents will take pregnant daughters for abortions. Uneducated parents don’t know.”

— MALE PARTNER, SURULERE

“Moms bring girls in for pregnancy confirmation after seeing something is ‘wrong’ with them.”

— PROVIDER, SURULERE
Girls fear the stigma of being seen as promiscuous, so they seek privacy for their sexual healthcare and contraceptive needs.

“Some girls keep contraception a secret because they are scared of their parents.”
— UNMARRIED GIRL, EPE

“Adolescents and young mothers come to me secretly for family planning services after having a child because they want to go to school.”
— PROVIDER, EPE

“These adolescents stop using contraception if the community finds out; others don’t care.”
— PROVIDER, EPE

“Adolescent girls have code names for contraceptives. They use it when they come to buy [contraceptives] at the drugstore.”
— PROVIDER, EPE
How might we foster trustworthy, proactive, and supportive relationships between providers and girls?

**BRAINSTORM CONSIDERATIONS**

How might we:
- Make a girl’s experience private and confidential across the journey?
- De-stigmatize adolescents who go to the clinic?