

# Duo determined to end teenage pregnancies

**ZEALOUS.** Collins Mbulakyalo and Nicholleta Aber preach to their peers about sex and health-related issues, writes **JOSEPH KATO.**

**R**emember when you murmured while your prefect was addressing a school assembly. Not because you disliked them but because they were younger than you. Your peers believed he or she was too young to speak, educate, or sensitise you.

Such is not different for Collins Mbulakyalo, 17, and Nicholleta Aber, 16, Bishop Cyprian Kihangire's teenagers teaching peers about the dangers of early sex, teenage pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections.

## Motivation

The duo were inspired by the knowledge they acquired at last year's Reach A Hand Uganda (RAHU) annual youth camp; a youth-led empowerment organisation. The Senior Six and Senior Four students say they were motivated by touching stories shared by teenagers on how they had fallen victim of preying men. Mbulakyalo believes many girls fall victim of early pregnancy because they do not know how to handle challenges that arise from body changes and financial predicaments.

"Some young girls and boys see sex as the solution to their tormenting problems. That is why they are lured into sex by men or boys find date sugar mummies," he says.



## Genesis

Mbulakyalo started out the journey of preaching against early sex singlehandedly but Aber later joined. He says he had been looking for someone to inspire him to pass on the knowledge to others. Aber feels "they can do something to end alarming figures of 25 per cent of teenage pregnancies and 500 girls contracting HIV/Aids every week as stated in 2016 Uganda Aids Commission report." She adds that many girls understand HIV/Aids, gonorrhoea and syphilis but forget that some diseases such as Hepatitis can be spread through kissing.

"Many girls lack information on STIs and how to deal with peer influence and friends of opposite sex. That is why we come in to encourage them to abstain or learn how to use protection such as condoms," Aber stresses.

Aber explains says they preach according to student age and class. For instance, the information for a

## OTHERS SAY...

Humphrey Nabimanya, Rahu team leader, says Aber and Mbulakyalo were among the best participants in last year's youth health camp.

"I'm excited when a teenager teaches peers issues of sexuality and reproductive health rights. Majority believe in them. We encourage a youth-for-a-youth information sharing strategy," Nabimanya elaborates.

He says the health camp focuses on group discussions on key topics such as menstrual hygiene, HIV/Aids, teenage pregnancy, child marriage, financial literacy, and body changes to empower and protect teenagers to achieve their dreams.

Senior Six student cannot be shared to the Senior One students. She outlines the drivers of early sex as peer influence, poverty, gaps in parents and teachers.

"It is easier a girl who is your age mate or even older than you to share her story to you than telling it to her parents. They usually say their parents are tough and beat around the

bush when they are sharing information," Aber explains.

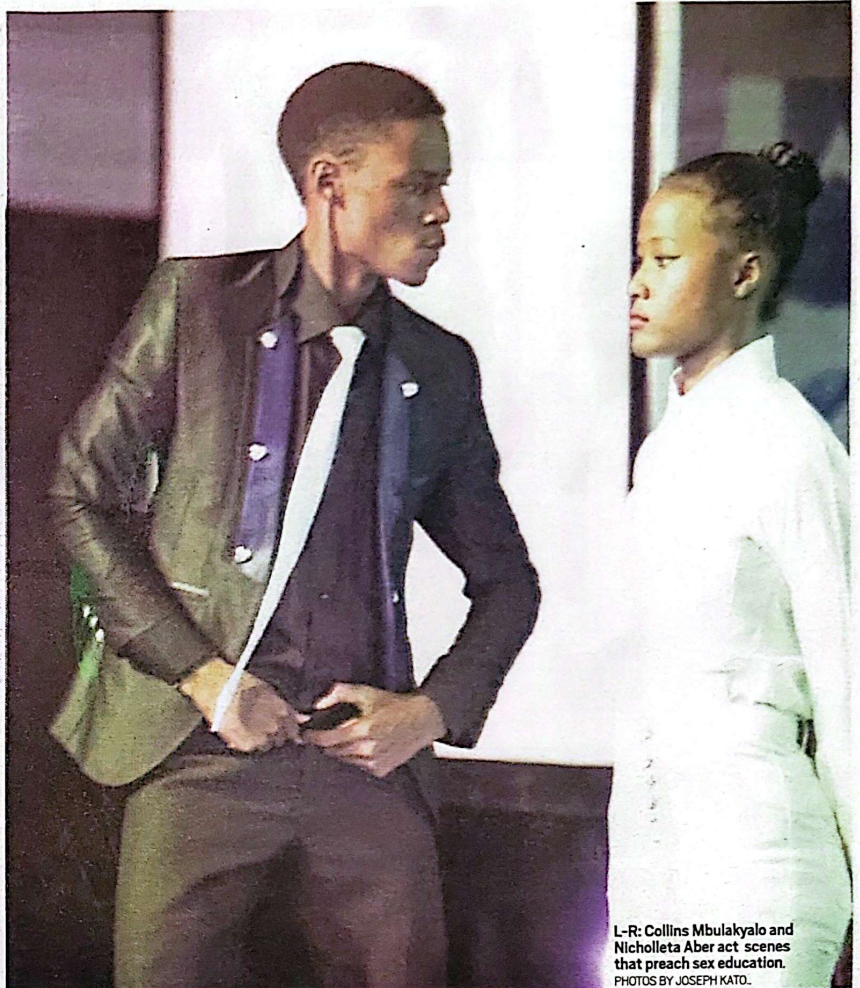
Mbulakyalo uses stories from newspapers or TV station to educate his colleagues. She also gets time to read those research statistics to show her peers that there is need to take care of their life.

Mbulakyalo tells students that when children are young, a girl is like milk while a boy is sugar. When the two are mixed, the milk would go bad. But as the children grow up, a boy becomes sugar while a girl remains milk and when they are mixed they make a good taste which can be short-lived. This means that both girls and boys should know having sex is tasty like milk and sugar but after pregnancy or an STI, that joy becomes soar.

"I also request parents to share right information with their children. It is better for them to know other than keeping them in the dark. An ignorant person is incapacitated," Mbulakyalo believes.

Aber and Mbulakyalo were recently hired as inspirational speakers at RAHU's annual youth health camp. The duo spoke confidently and gave knowledge to the more than 700 students from Uganda and her neighbouring countries.

The duo also ensure that their academic performance is good so that students do not ridicule them. Some students doubt them and ask irritating questions. "We read books that enable us control emotions when speaking to big headed students," Aber says.



L-R: Collins Mbulakyalo and Nicholleta Aber act scenes that preach sex education. PHOTOS BY JOSEPH KATO.