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Sexuality education in Uganda

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According to my aunt Ineke, this research topic was destined to be because in Primary school I wrote my assignment about Siamese cats and went an extra mile to provide a detailed description of their mating process. I don't know whether it was destiny but I do know that, at age eighteen, I was determined to study Demography. Once enrolled in Population Studies, I was particularly moved by the consequences of the HIV epidemic in sub-Saharan Africa. I reasoned that sexuality education was an important strategy in the response to AIDS, and this was when Inge, my supervisor, contacted Henk, who worked at World Population Foundation. In that moment, the story of my PhD research started. Inge and Henk, I am very grateful for all the opportunities you have given me. You make a great team!

Inge, I admire your work, vision, intelligence, work ethics and achievements. I am always very proud to tell others that you are my supervisor. Whenever I would be in doubt about research ethics, I would always be guided by the 'What would Inge do'-principle, knowing the answer would lead me into the right direction. During our meetings, your difficult -very, very open...- questions could rack my brain, especially those question marks in the side-lines of my papers... You would return the question mark on my face with a smile but never with the answer. This is a great teaching skill, which I still need to acquire for supervising my students. I have learned a lot from you, and, on top of that, our meetings were always a source of inspiration and motivation which had me happily hop back to my desk to continue my research.

Henk, I think you are one of the sweetest managers anyone could have. You created a work environment where I felt at home, and where I felt comfortable -and was encouraged- to speak my mind. I think this is very special and rare, thank you for making that happen. Jo and Sanderijn, you two have taught me everything there is to know about SRHR and in specific

about sexuality education. I regard you as my mentors, especially Sanderijn, whom I was able to join on teacher trainings in Uganda and with whom I could endlessly discuss the findings from my research. Sanderijn, you are an important role model in my life, you have shown me that there is much to aim for and that you can take time to do one thing after the other, rather than wanting to achieve everything at once. Jo, you have taught me not to fear and the real meaning and importance of a rights-based approach. Linette, Rachel, Thilly, Anny and Teun, thank you for all your wisdom, hospitality and support throughout the years. Ciel, thank you for helping me back on track and for your motivational words that 'even when you are tired, there is always something you can do'. Charles, thank you for always being there for me and for offering your house of peace and silence in the Dutch dunes to finalise my thesis. Joanne, Liesbeth and Ellen, thank you for making me part of the WSWM team. Suzy, Yuri, Noor, and all other Rutgers colleagues, thank you for being such welcoming and inspirational colleagues!

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This PhD research has literally been a journey. Not only because of the distance between Uganda and the Netherlands but also because I was commuting to Groningen. While living in Utrecht, and later in Amsterdam, I first stayed with Marjolein in Groningen two nights a week. Not much later, I stayed with Marjolein and Ingmar, which soon expanded to Marjolein, Ingmar and two cats: Nero and Loki. It was only when baby Lars was making his entrance, that I moved to a new place. I was warmly invited into IJsbrand's bed. We were co-sharing his room: he would live there during the weekends and I would be there during the week. A very interesting living arrangement, including many enjoyable talks with house mate Wietske, which ended after a few months when IJsbrand returned to live in Groningen full-time. Petra and Arjan then invited me to live with them with the stipulation that I could only stay for a few months because baby Jort was on his way. Then, Ori told me I could stay with him if I was willing to eat his humus, an offer I couldn't refuse. Only now, it was my turn to get pregnant. My trips to Groningen became less frequent and I would incidentally stay with Lous, Marieke, Marjolein, Jessica, Monique, Jochem and Nynke to work on my dissertation. I want to thank you all, and the other friends I have not mentioned by name, for your hospitality and gezelligheid, I have appreciated this a lot: not only because I enjoyed all our time spent together but also because you have enabled me to write and finish my dissertation.

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