

Module 1: Introduction to adolescence and to adolescent health - Adolescent health and development with a particular focus on sexual and reproductive health - Assignment

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Adolescence (the second decade of life) represents a time of rapid physical, psychological growth and development. It represents as well a time for opportunities and risks.

For adolescents to grow and develop well and in good health, the followings are essential:

- Provision of support and opportunity to acquire accurate health information.
- Help them to build their life skills.
- Provide counseling and education with confidentiality especially during crises.
- Access to health services including sexual and reproductive health (SRH).
- Help them to live in a safe & supportive environment

One of the most important commitments a country can make for its future economic, social, political progress and stability is to address the health and development needs of its adolescents.

Some Global facts about adolescents and young people:

- 1.5 billion people in the world today are between 10-25 years old.
- More than 100million adolescents do not attend school.
- There are about 2.6 million deaths among 10-24 years age group worldwide every year.
- Fifteen million adolescent girls become mother every day.
- Six thousand young people are infected with HIV every day.

World Bank. World Development Report 2007. Development and the next generation. Washington: World Bank; 2007.

Policy makers know that Young People will greatly influence the future of their nations so this World Development Report provides a framework and examples of policies and programs to address the issue of youth transition.

Youth transition by this framework seen mainly through three lenses:

First lens: Opportunities which means broadening the opportunities provided for adolescents by expanding access to and improving the quality of education, by facilitating the start of a working life with basic skills for further practical living and by giving young people a voice to articulate the kind of assistance they want and a chance to participate in delivering it.

Second lens: Capabilities by helping young people to develop capabilities to choose well among these opportunities so they can make good decisions by making sure that their decisions are well informed by accurate information about human capital needs and constraints.

Other policy goal in acquiring capabilities is to ensure that young people have command over resources that effect human capital decisions and to support decision making by recognizing

identity (e.g. including students in school decision making) and giving incentives to shift behavior (cigarette taxes to discourage young people from smoking).

Third lens: Second chance by offering young people a second chance to recover from bad decisions and choices which require an effective system to allow young people to regain access to services that safeguard and develop human capital and even by giving hope to those who have committed crimes or who were involved in armed conflicts by embracing them in rehabilitation programs.

[UNFPA. UNFPA framework for action on adolescents and youth. Opening doors with 4 keys. New York: UNFPA; 2007.](#)

This framework for action on adolescent and youth outlines a strategic directions for the critical area of fund and is based on the funds commitment to invest in adolescent and youth and its focusing on translating the funds into actions.

The framework include 4 key elements which represent a special approach, one of them focuses on using population structure analysis and implication of poverty dynamics for social investment in young people.

The second key is related to education and implies that fund will facilitate the provision of comprehensive and gender sensitive sexual and reproductive education, these educational interventions will be delivered in schools and other community settings and will provide boys and girls with abilities to face challenges and turn knowledge into practice.

The third key states that the fund will promote provision of package of health services including SRH services, HIV prevention and Maternal Health services. The fund will support provision of these services within the national program and not as an isolated project and will integrate facility based services with other routes involved in adolescent health activities.

The forth key which is related to participation of young people in adolescent health program is placed at the core of policy keys and emphasizes on paying attention to work with young people through youth- adult partnership as it will promote for e.g. peer educators as a polyvalent agent for transmitting safe SRH messages.

[WHO. Strengthening the health sector response to adolescent health & development. Geneva: WHO; 2009.](#)

The health sector has a major role to play in addressing and improving adolescent health and development, this could be achieved through governmental organizations, non governmental organizations and the private sector.

The 4-s framework uses currently two programmatic entry points to strengthen the health sector response to adolescent health and development:

1. HIV prevention, care and support of those with HIV.
2. Preventing early pregnancy and pregnancy related mortality and morbidity.

So National sexual and Reproductive health (SRH) and HIV programs should incorporate key elements of the 4-S framework for strengthening the health sector response to adolescent health by:

S-1 Gathering and using strategic information

Data on adolescent health in many countries are not routinely available for policy and program development. Ministries of health should facilitate the systemic collection, analysis and dissemination of data on various aspects of adolescent health so these data would be available for policy makers and program development.

S-2 Developing supportive evidence – informed policies which implies that National SRH and HIV programs should include a guiding policy which is based on sound evidence about actions need to be carried out and how should be implemented to address the specific needs of adolescents in these programs.

S-3 Scaling up the provision of health services and commodities.

There are certain barriers which hinder the use of available health services by adolescents; health services require upgrading to be more friendly and responsive to the needs of adolescents and young people.

MOH should improve the available services provided to adolescents in national SRH and HIV programs currently as a start.

S-4 Strengthening and supporting other sectors involved in adolescents' health and development. Ministry of health should integrate its work with other ministries and sectors related to young people (e.g. ministry of youth) to ensure their active contribution in addressing SRH and HIV problems, as well as to the health and development of adolescents in general.