

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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## **Abstract**

Adolescence is a critical age in a person's life and it may be described as the second decade of life in which an individual undergoes changes which are not only physical but also psychological. Social interactions and relationships are also affected. Adolescence is a transition to adulthood and many opportunities as well as risks may arise. The opportunities may set a platform for a healthy productive adulthood whilst the risks may result to future economic and health problems. Young people are entering an age fraught with risks and laden with opportunities not only for them but for their families, societies and economies. Their experience will determine the quality of the next generation of workers, parents and leaders. Decisions during five youth transitions have the biggest long-term impacts on how human capital is kept safe, developed and deployed. This report takes 12-24 years as the relevant range to cover the transitions from puberty to economic independence. Policies developed look at opportunities, capabilities and second chances for the youth. Due to the changing times and competitive economy, the youth must be equipped with relevant skills and information for their survival as well as the economy's.

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

Young people are entering an age fraught with risks and laden with opportunities not only for them but for their families, societies and economies. Their experiences will determine the quality of the next generation of workers, parents and leaders. Policy makers bear in mind that these young people are key to the future of their nations and must therefore develop policies favourable enough to try and solve problems facing the youth. This document provides examples of policies and programs to address young people's issues. The greatest long-term impacts on how human capital is kept safe, developed and deployed are formed during five youth transitions. The transition range is 12-24 years of age where one transits from puberty to economic independence. Policies target 3 main areas in youth development:

### **1. Opportunities**

This may be realized by:

- Investing in young people by:
  - Building a stronger base of human capital
  - Seizing the opportunities from a "youth bulge" in the population

### **2. Capabilities**

This includes:

- Investments during youth's five life transitions by:
  - Learning after primary school age
  - Starting a productive work life
  - Adopting a healthful lifestyle
  - Forming a family
  - Exercising citizenship

### 3. Second Chances

At this point, policies should not only focus on the youth's opportunities but also their capabilities and second chances.

Policies to broaden opportunities

- Improving basic skills-intervene earlier in the life cycle and focus on quality
- Meeting the demand for higher order skills - improve the relevance of upper secondary and tertiary education
- Accumulating skills on the job-eases barriers to start work and facilitate mobility
- Participating in civic life-enhance youth voice in policy and service delivery

Policies that enhance capabilities: Youth as decision makers

- Informing youth
- Helping young people command resources
- Enhancing the capacity to decide well

Policies to offer second chances

- Targeting programs finely
- Integrating second chances with mainstream programs
- Rehabilitation with accountability

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

More than half of all youth-about 525 million people- survive on less than \$2 a day. This document is focuses on the holistic development of young people and the Fund's commitment to invest in adolescents and youth and help them gain access to opportunities. "A world fit for adolescents and youth is one in which their right are promoted and protected. It is a world in which girls and boys have optimal opportunities to develop their full potential, to freely express themselves and have their views respected and to live free of poverty, discrimination and violence." With this as the Fund's vision, they will help governments and other organizations to:

- Empower adolescents and youth with skills to achieve their dreams, think critically, negotiate risky situations and express themselves freely.
- Provide access to health i.e. information, education, commodities and services.

- Connect young people to livelihood and employment programmes.
- Uphold the rights of young people especially girls and marginalized groups, to grow up healthy and safe.
- Encourage young people to participate fully in development plans.
- Recognize the rights of young people to a fair share of education, skills and services with a special focus on economically disadvantaged socially marginalized and vulnerable groups.

To fulfill this vision, the four key areas to be developed will be:

1. Supportive policy making that applies the lens of population structure and poverty dynamics analyses.
2. Gender-Sensitive, Life-Skills-Based Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) Education.
3. Sexual & Reproductive Health Services.
4. Young People's Leadership and Participation.

The principles that the Fund will follow to achieve the four keys are:

1. Achieving social equity by paying special attention to vulnerable and excluded groups.
2. Protecting the rights of young people, particularly to health, education and civic participation.
3. Maintaining cultural sensitivity by advocating for SRH in sensitive and engaging ways.
4. Affirming a gender perspective which, while recognizing boys' needs, preserves spaces for girls, especially the poor and vulnerable.

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

Adolescence, the second decade of life, is a period in which an individual undergoes major physical and psychological changes<sup>3</sup>. During this time of development, social interaction and relationships are also affected. At this time, opportunities which may result to healthy and productive adult life may arise. Risks that could also have adverse effects on health or cause future problems may also arise. Investing in the health of adolescents helps prevent the estimated 1.4 million deaths that occur globally due to various causes<sup>3</sup>. Adolescents have the right to obtain the health information and services they need to survive and to grow and develop to their full individual potential. The main problems being addressed are:

1. Many national Sexual and Reproductive Health and HIV programmes highlight adolescents as requiring specific attention. Their needs are however not addressed in a systematic or concerted manner by such programmes.
2. Other sectors and civic society organizations also actively promote and support adolescent health. In the health sector, the health information and services provided by governments, NGOs, private sector providers and others are often ad hoc.

WHO uses the "4-S framework" for strengthening the health sector responses to adolescent health and development. It uses two programmatic "entry points":

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

The 4-S framework is:

1S 1. Gathering and using Strategic information

2S 2. Developing Supportive evidence-informed policies

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

4S 4. Strengthening the sectors

## **Conclusions**

In conclusion, these documents emphasize on adolescent health and implementation of policies to ensure they access proper health services. The choices and decisions made by the youth will affect the future generation either positively or negatively. In order to safe guard our future, nations have to equip the young people with relevant skills and information to enable them make right choices.