

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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Assignment documents

- World Bank. World Development Report 2007. Development and the next generation. Washington: World Bank; 2007.
- UNFPA. UNFPA framework for action on adolescents and youth. Opening doors with 4 keys. New York: UNFPA; 2007.
- WHO. Strengthening the health sector response to adolescent health & development. Geneva: WHO; 2009.

Adolescence is a period of many critical transitions including physical, psychological, economic, social interaction and relationship and also pressures to become responsibility as adults. In this period, the most important need is to shape an identity and develop a personality. It also presents a window of opportunity to set the stage of healthy and productive adulthood and to reduce the problems, at the same time; it is a period of risk.

Adolescents are defined as the age of between 10 to 19 years old. More than 100 million adolescents do not attend school. Fifteen million adolescent girls (mostly under 20) become mothers every year, six thousand young people are infected with HIV everyday; most of them are girls in Sub-Saharan Africa and Asia, females are more risky than male and ratio is 8:1 in South Africa. The ability of young people to safely and successfully navigate their transition to adulthood is diversified by age, sex, marital status, schooling levels, residence, living arrangements, migration and socio-economic status. However, increased poverty, social inequalities, low quality education, gender discrimination, widespread unemployment, weakened health systems and rapid globalization are the realities within which young people grow. Moreover, there is strong cultural silence around issues of SRH among parents and adults in the community, also cultural constraints for the recognition of reproductive rights of young people to education and gender-sensitive, life skills-based SRH education. Furthermore, married adolescents, very young adolescents, young people living in rural and hard-to-reach areas, internally displaced young people and refugee, out-of-school adolescents, young people not working, and HIV/AIDS affected adolescents and risks to younger girls are included in groups needing special attention.

For these **needs and problems mentioned above**, investigating the health of adolescents could prevent the estimated 1.4 million deaths that occur globally every year due to road traffic injuries, violence, suicide, HIV, pregnancy- related causes, prematurity and low birth weight born to very young mothers. Moreover, adolescents represent one fifth of the global population, thus healthy, competent adolescents who enter the work force can raise the economic productivity of a country. The *UN convention on the Right of the Child*, clearly states that 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 World Health Organization (WHO) contributes the 4-S framework to strengthen the health sector response to adolescent health and development: HIV prevention, care and support of those with HIV; and preventing early pregnancy and pregnancy-related mortality and morbidity.

National SRH and HIV programmes should incorporate key elements of the 4-S framework by-

- gathering and using strategic information;
- developing supportive, evidence-informed policies;
- scaling up the provision and utilization of health services and commodities; and
- strengthening action and linkages with other government sectors.

The WHO 4-S framework has been developed on four levels: Community level, District health management level, National level, and WHO country offices level.

UNFPA has straightforward vision on girls and boys who 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. Thus, UNFPA supports the funds with the aims of- to empower adolescents and youth, to provide access to health information and services, to connect young people to livelihood and employment programmes, to uphold the rights of young people, to encourage young people to participate fully in development plans and to recognize the rights of young people to a fair share of education, skills and services.