

Module 4: Adolescent pregnancy - Adolescent health and development with a particular focus on sexual and reproductive health - Assignment

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## **Is adolescent pregnancy a public health priority in Afghanistan?**

The Afghan Ministry of Public Health (MOPH) with various governmental and nongovernmental organizations and donors partnership has newly developed the National Child and Adolescents health strategy and policy (2009-2013) to address early marriage of adolescents, provision of contraceptives for girls to delay pregnancy, antenatal care for pregnant women in health post and hospital levels, and targeting policy makers, family members and influential leaders to influence Sexual Risk-Taking Behavior change.

In addition, counseling and conveying preventative messages related to STIs and HIV prevalence also focusing on adolescents' access to health care services and education are also included in the Afghan National Child and Adolescents Health Strategy.

The MOPH addresses significant approaches to achieve Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 5. The facts that prioritized the adolescent pregnancy in Afghan settings are:

1. Adolescents early age marriage and unintended pregnancy contributes maternal mortality rate which reaches 1400/100,000 in 2010. Afghanistan still has the second highest proportion in the world (MOPH 2010). Indeed, early age marriage is part of Afghan tradition.
2. A vast majority of adolescents does not have knowledge about Sexual Risk-Taking behavior.
3. Women are the most vulnerable group in the Afghan society. Girls never have the autonomy to delay sexual intercourse, use contraceptive pills or negotiate condom use with their partner. Afghan women neither prevent pregnancy nor control their bodies from getting affected by STIs and HIV infection.
4. Socio-cultural barriers and miscommunications among parents and adolescents.
5. Pregnant adolescents have to drop out school due to socio-cultural constrains and take care of their baby. They might be forced by parents to abort the baby and face many socio- financial challenges.

## **Assignment story**

What are the three main factors that contributed to teen pregnancy?

1. Lack of adequate knowledge of sex and consequences of unsafe sex could lead to unintended pregnancy or STDs.

2. Peer influence can coerce them into sex and might end up with pregnancy, STIs or HIV infection.
3. Household environment.

What can be done by families and communities to prevent this happening to other girls?

- Family and community can support adolescents by providing genuine information about sexual life, protection and negative consequences of risky behavior.
- A mother is closer to a daughter. She can provide information about early age pregnancy and its consequences.
- Families can support pregnant young women to continue her education without losing faith.

What can the Ministry of Health do to re-orient the health care system to meet the needs of girls such as the one who story you have heard?

- MOPH can support adolescents by developing constructive strategies. The main goal of developed strategies should be provision of sexual health awareness and training to the most vulnerable groups.
- Communicate with adolescents, families and communities to draw their attention to the risk related to adolescent pregnancy and delay marriage until age of 18.
- Encourage community members to support and convey preventative approaches such as abstinence, condom use and risky behavior change.
- Increase sexual health awareness and preventative approaches.
- Provide reproductive health services free of charge and accessible.
- Train community health workers, mobilizers and health facility providers to convey reproductive health messages to vast majority of adolescents.
- Increase multisector collaboration and funds. In addition, involve mass media to convey reproductive health messages to target groups through various sources.
- Add reproductive health advocacy module into school and university curriculum.

## Assignment document

1. [Camacho AV, Chandra-Mouli V. Adolescent pregnancy: a global perspective. Paper presented at: Training Course in Sexual and Reproductive Health Research; 2010 Sep 18; Geneva.](#)