

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?

Adolescent pregnancy is the root and base of lots of social, economical and health problems. Reducing maternal mortality is priority of MoPH (Ministry of Public Health) of Afghanistan, and lots of national and international efforts and supports are gathered to help the MoPH to achieve this goal. But the term, adolescent pregnancy, is not used as a contributing factor to high maternal mortality.

Maternal mortality ratio is very high in Afghanistan, 1600 per 100000 live births.

PPH, preeclampsia/eclampsia, obstructed labor, and sepsis are the main causes of maternal death in Afghanistan. So adolescent pregnancy directly contributes to these causes of death. According to the culture of most part of the Afghanistan girls, they should marry before 20, otherwise she is considered old for marriage and her chances to have a suitable husband is decreasing as she is getting older and older. There are still old virgin girls who have never married and stayed with their parents, or are enforced to marry a married man because she has no other choices any more. So the parents try to engage their daughters as soon as possible. Even it sometimes happens that a baby girl is engaged to a man while she is in her first years of life, and she should go to her husband's house as she enters 11-13. In Afghanistan 70% of the people (UNICEF 2003-2007) are illiterate and only a small percentage of women are literate, so they are not willing or interested to get information about the risks and impacts of adolescent pregnancy on the development of the society. These facts cause Afghan community to make adolescent pregnancy a dangerous custom.

Assignment story - Teenage pregnancies cause many health, social problems

What are the three main factors that contributed to this?

1. She had no adequate information about the sexuality and contraceptive use and the consequences of early marriage.
2. She was not well educated.
3. She knew that it is shame for her and therefore doesn't want to go to the same school again, but she had not the ability of decision making to avoid this event. Maybe there was no sexual and reproductive health education provided in her school.

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

- The health education batches in health facilities should address this issue and the scenarios that will happen for a girl after early marriage and adolescent pregnancy should be demonstrated as tangible problems and its consequences on the welfare and economy of the society must be cleared. The media, families and schools can play an important and critical roll. Health education should be provided in this regard for all peoples of the community. The community leaders and religious leader involvement facilitates this process. For such young mothers a supporting system must be established according to the situation and culture of each society.

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

- The ministry of health should revise its health system and change the health system to include adolescents' friendly health facilities to provide services such as counseling, prevention and treatment for all young people with main focus on counseling and health education.
- The health care quality should be improved and assured.
- Efforts for the improvement of health care provider's attitude must be seriously taken into account.
- The ministry should set programs to build the trust of the young people and advocate for the adolescents' friendly health facilities.

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.](#)