

# Preventing early & unwanted pregnancy & pregnancy-related mortality & morbidity in adolescents

Training Course in Sexual and Reproductive Health Research  
Geneva 2012



**World Health  
Organization**

# Preventing early & unwanted pregnancy & pregnancy-related mortality & morbidity in adolescents

1. What is the magnitude of adolescent pregnancy ?
2. What are the consequences of adolescent pregnancy ?
3. What are the circumstances in which adolescent pregnancy occurs ?
4. What needs to be done to prevent early pregnancy and pregnancy-related mortality and morbidity in adolescents ?



**World Health  
Organization**

About 16 million girls aged 15-19 years give birth annually (11% of births worldwide).  
95% of these pregnancies occur in developing countries.



The characteristics of young mothers are common across the regions of the world:

- Little education,
- Rural dwelling,
- Poor.
- Marginalized.

Source: Growing up global: The Changing Transitions to Adulthood in Developing Countries (National Research Council, 2005).

# There are enormous regional differences

6/1000 women aged 15-19 in Eastern Asia – 122/1000 women aged 15-19 in sub Saharan Africa.

In most regions, adolescent pregnancy is declining. Sub Saharan Africa has seen the least level of decline.



# Preventing early & unwanted pregnancy & pregnancy-related mortality & morbidity in adolescents

1. What is the magnitude of adolescent pregnancy ?
2. What are the consequences of adolescent pregnancy ?
3. What are the circumstances in which adolescent pregnancy occurs ?
4. What needs to be done to prevent early and unwanted pregnancy and pregnancy-related mortality and morbidity in adolescents ?



**World Health  
Organization**

# Greater likelihood of maternal mortality



In low and middle income countries, complications of pregnancy and childbirth are the leading cause of death in women aged 15-19 years.

Early, unwanted pregnancies are associated with increased levels of induced abortion, which when carried out in unsafe conditions carries severe health risks, including death. In 2008, there were an estimated 3 million unsafe abortions in the world among 15-19 year olds per year.

# Babies born to adolescent mothers face higher risks

- The adverse effects of adolescent childbearing extend to the health of their infants. Perinatal deaths are 50% higher among babies born to mothers under 20 years of age than among those born to mothers aged 20-29 years. Babies of adolescent mothers are also more likely to have low birth weight which increases the risk of ill health during infancy.

*Source: WHO. Women and Health. Today's evidence. Tomorrow's agenda. WHO. 2010.*

# Potential risks to the adolescent mother's life prospects

- Pregnancy can bring status for a married adolescent in cultures where motherhood is the core aspect of a woman's identity.

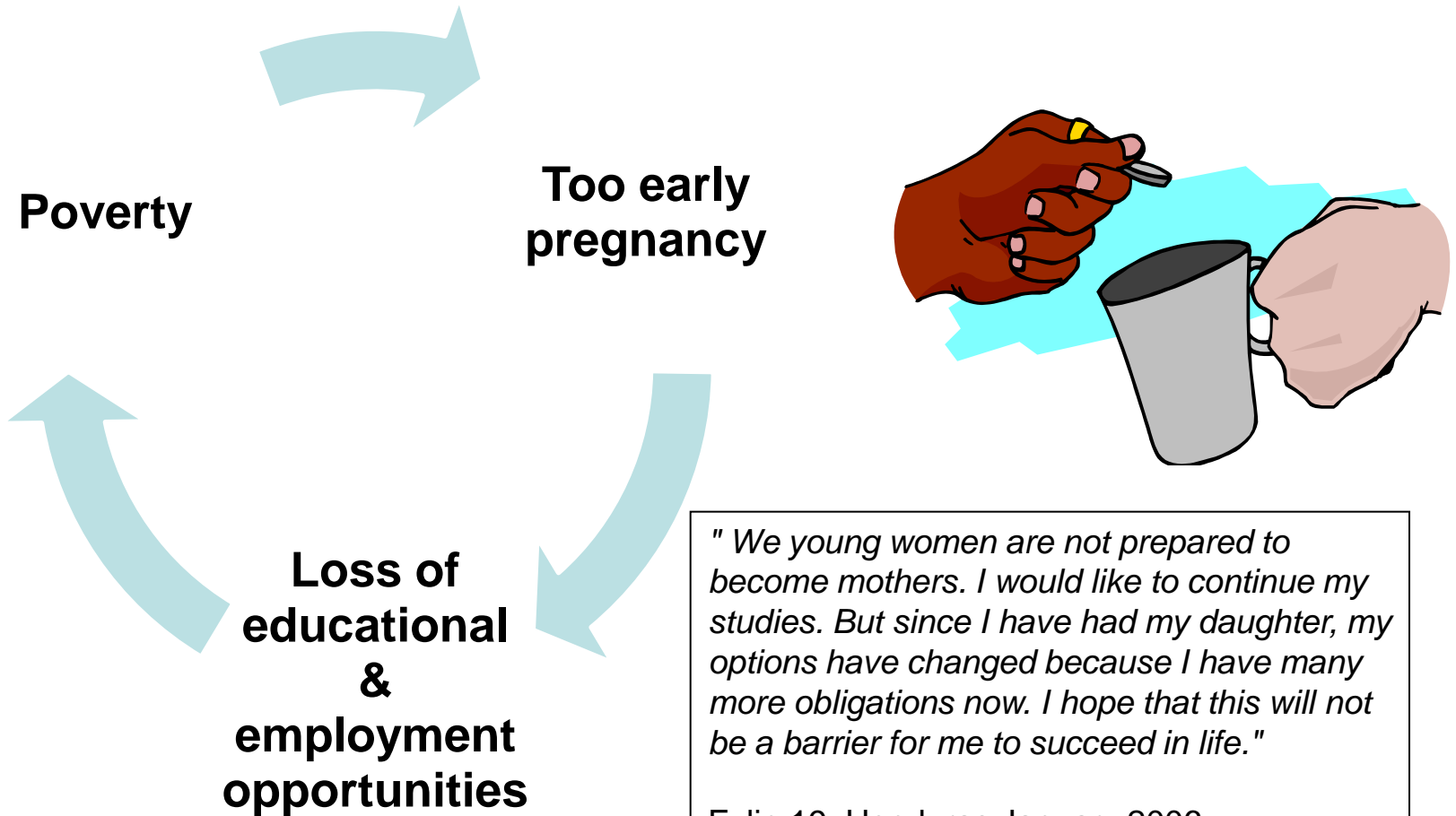


- On the other hand, an unmarried pregnant adolescent may be driven away by her family, or abandoned by her partner & be left with no means of support.



# Socio-economic deprivation:

both a cause & consequence of adolescent pregnancy



*" We young women are not prepared to become mothers. I would like to continue my studies. But since I have had my daughter, my options have changed because I have many more obligations now. I hope that this will not be a barrier for me to succeed in life."*

Eylin 19, Honduras January 2006.

Source: World Development Report 2006 (World Bank, 2006.)

# Preventing early & unwanted pregnancy & pregnancy-related mortality & morbidity in adolescents

1. What is the magnitude of adolescent pregnancy ?
2. What are the consequences of adolescent pregnancy ?
3. What are the circumstances in which adolescent pregnancy occurs ?
4. What needs to be done to prevent early and unwanted pregnancy and pregnancy-related mortality and morbidity in adolescents ?

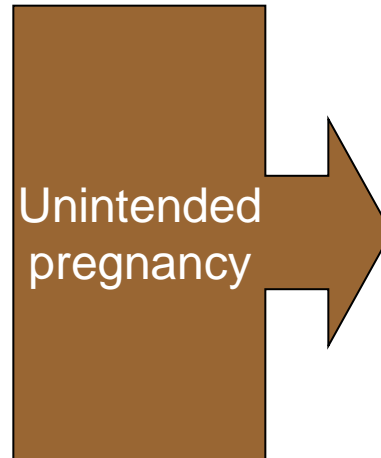
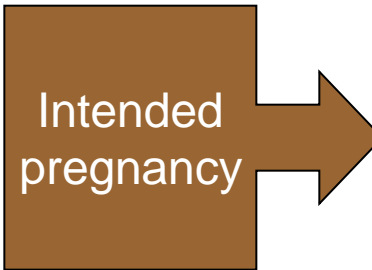


**World Health  
Organization**

# Circumstances in which adolescent pregnancy occurs

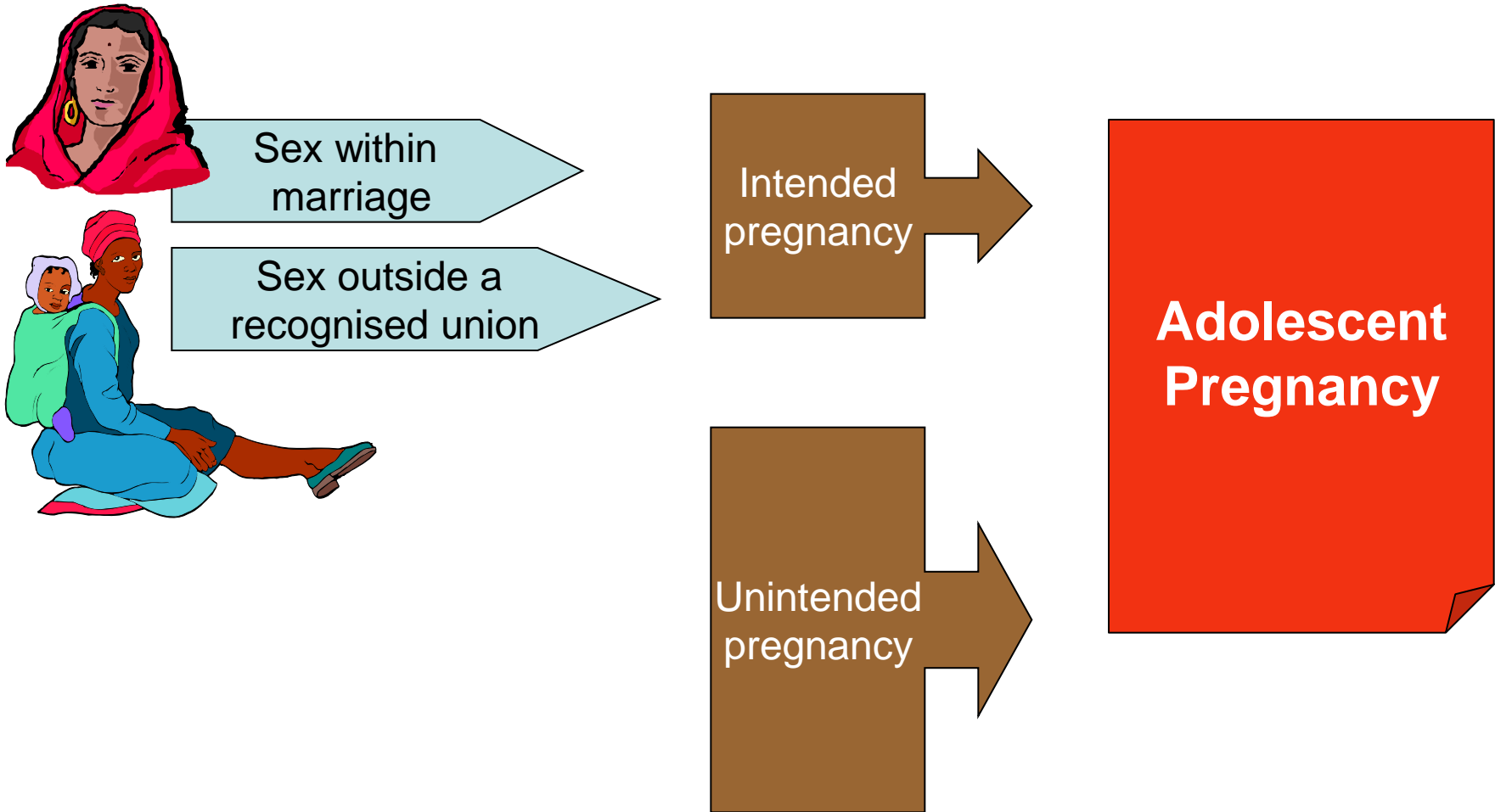


Sex within marriage



**Adolescent  
Pregnancy**

# Circumstances in which adolescent pregnancy occurs



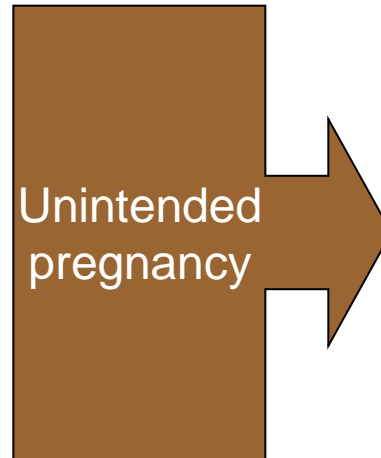
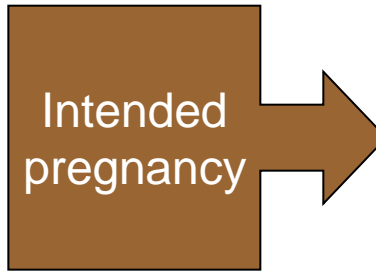
# Circumstances in which adolescent pregnancy occurs.



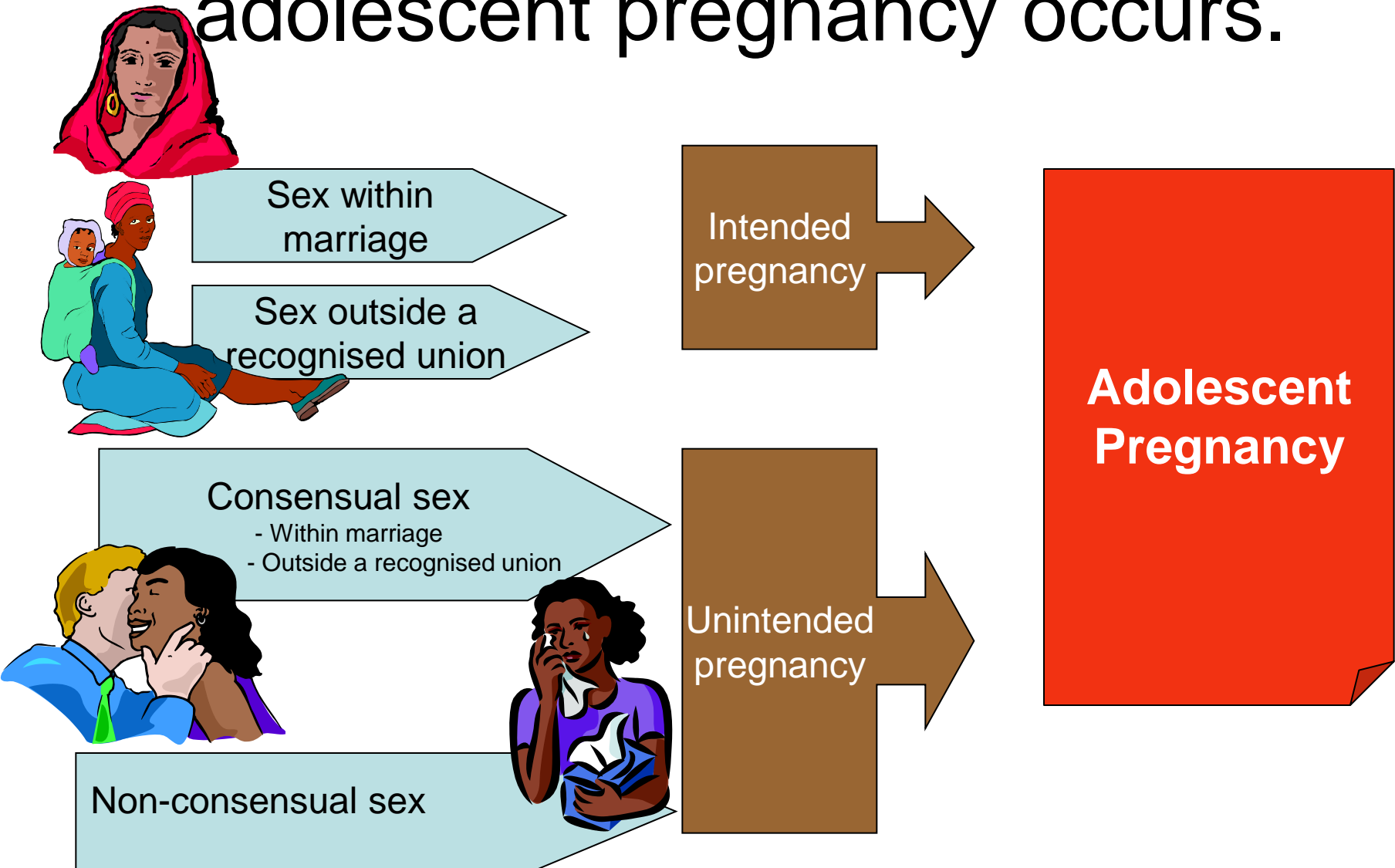
Sex within marriage

Sex outside marriage

Consensual sex  
- Within marriage  
- Outside a recognised union



# Circumstances in which adolescent pregnancy occurs.



# Preventing early & unwanted pregnancy & pregnancy-related mortality & morbidity in adolescents

1. What is the magnitude of adolescent pregnancy ?
2. What are the consequences of adolescent pregnancy ?
3. What are the circumstances in which adolescent pregnancy occurs ?
4. What needs to be done to prevent early and unwanted pregnancy and pregnancy-related mortality and morbidity in adolescents ?



**World Health  
Organization**

WHO Guidelines on

## Preventing Early Pregnancy and Poor Reproductive Outcomes

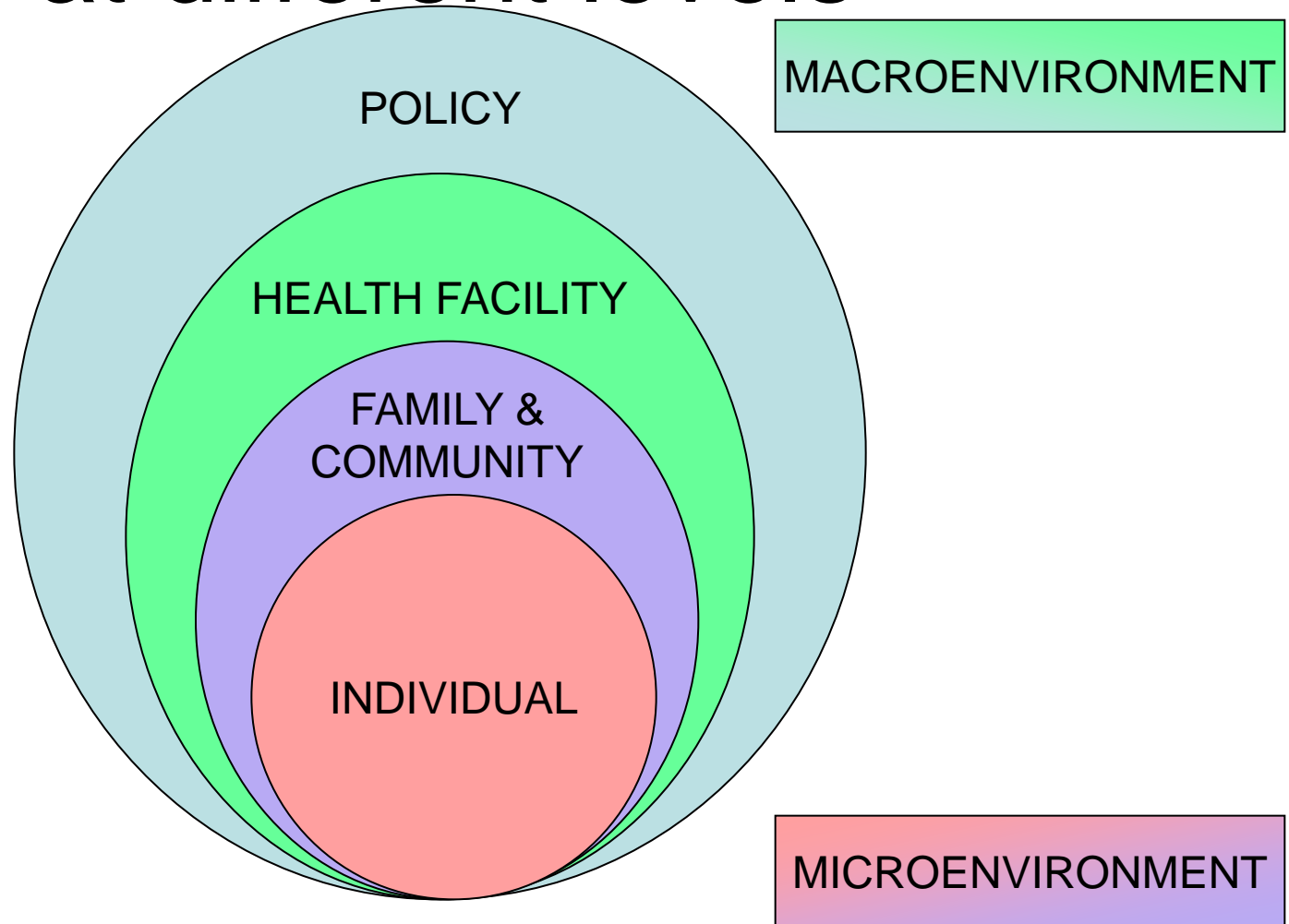
Among Adolescents in Developing Countries



World Health  
Organization



# Complementary actions needed at different levels



# The story of Zohra



# Preventing early marriage

## Policy-Level Actions:

- Prohibit early marriage

## Individual, Family & Community-Level Actions:

- Inform and empower girls
- Keep girls in school
- Influence cultural norms that support early marriage

# The story of Maha



# Preventing early pregnancy

## Policy-Level Actions:

- Support pregnancy prevention programmes among adolescents

## Individual, Family & Community-Level Actions:

- Educate girls and boys about sexuality
- Build community support for preventing early pregnancy

# The story of Galina



# Increasing the use of contraceptives

## Policy-Level Actions:

- Legislate access to contraceptive information and services
- Reduce the cost of contraceptives to adolescents (conditional recommendation)

## Individual, Family & Community-Level Actions:

- Educate adolescents about contraceptive use
- Build community support for contraceptive provision to adolescents
- Enable adolescents to obtain contraceptive services

# The story of Julie





# Preventing coerced sex

## Policy-Level Actions:

- Prohibit coerced sex

## Individual, Family & Community-Level Actions:

- Empower girls to resist coerced sex
- Influence social norms that condone coerced sex
- Engage men and boys to critically assess gender norms

# The story of Ayleen



# Preventing unsafe abortion

## Policy-Level Actions:

- Enable access to safe abortion and post-abortion services for adolescents

## Individual, Family & Community-Level Actions:

- Inform adolescents about dangers of unsafe abortion
- Inform adolescents about where they can obtain safe abortion services
- Increase community awareness of the dangers of unsafe abortion

## Health System-Level Actions:

- Identify and remove barriers to safe abortion services

# The story of Priya



# Increasing use of skilled antenatal, childbirth, and postpartum care

## Policy-Level Actions:

- Expand access to skilled antenatal, childbirth and postnatal care
- Expand access to Emergency Obstetric Care

## Individual, Family & Community-Level Actions:

- Inform adolescents and community members about the importance of skilled antenatal and childbirth care

## Health System-Level Actions:

- Ensure that adolescents, families and communities are well prepared for birth and birth-related emergencies
- Be sensitive and responsive to the needs of young mothers and mothers-to-be.

# Clinical Care for adolescents: What should be done differently ?

*Relatively little. But health workers should...*

- **Antenatal care:**

Provide adolescents with an early start to antenatal care

Assist them with preparing for birthing and birth-related emergencies

Treat them for anemia, which is likely to be more of a problem in pregnancy.

Give special attention to counseling and nutritional supplementation

Give them special attention in treatment and management of malaria in pregnancy and access to PMTCT services

Prioritize them for detection and management of violence.

- **Delivery care:**

Provide special attention during obstetric care to adolescents aged less than 16 years

- **Postnatal care:**

Give special attention to breastfeeding promotion throughout pregnancy and postpartum and to neonatal care more in general

Give special attention to preventing too-early second pregnancies



## Policy maker

Creates an environment that supports the health of pregnant women & new borns

## Community

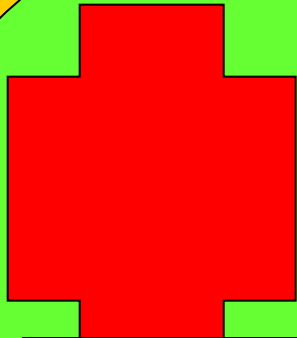
Advocates & facilitates preparedness & readiness actions

## Family

Support pregnant woman's plans during pregnancy, childbirth & the postpartum period.

## Woman

Prepares for birth, values & seeks skilled care during pregnancy, childbirth & the postpartum period

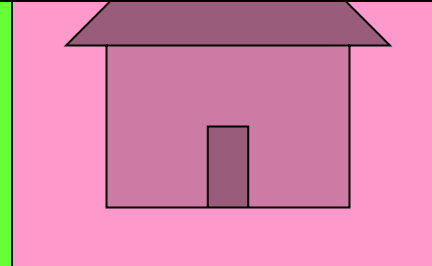


## Facility

is equipped, staffed & managed to provide skilled care for the pregnant woman & the new born

## Provider

provides skilled care for normal & complicated pregnancies, births & the postpartum period



**Ensuring that young pregnant women get the health care & social support they need**

*" For too long, when an adolescent becomes pregnant, we have pointed the finger at her. It is time that we pointed the finger at ourselves. If a girl gets pregnant that is because we have not provided her with the information, education, training and support she needs to prevent herself becoming pregnant."*

*Pramilla Senanayake,  
Former assistance Director  
International Planned Parenthood  
Federation.*

