

Reaching adolescents through their peers

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Key statement 1

Peer relationships are one of the defining features of adolescence.

Early adolescence (10-13 years) – affiliation

Middle adolescence (14-16 years) identification

Older adolescence (17-19 years) peer relationships recede in favour of individual friendships

Key statement 2

Peer relationships are very important to adolescents.

Being popular with their peers triggers a stronger positive response in adolescents than in adults.



Key statement 3

Peer relationships contribute to emotional and social development in adolescents.

They shape who they are and who they want to be

They help adolescents to:

- Learn how to interact with others**
- Observe how others deal with their challenges and problems**
- Give and get support**

Key statement 4

Peer relationships contribute to healthy and pro-social behaviours, and to unhealthy and anti-social ones.

Key statement 5

All of us – children, adolescents and adults – face peer pressure.

The more important it is for an adolescent to belong to a peer group, the more susceptible he/she is to peer pressure.

Key statement 6

Adults should help adolescents understand and deal with peer pressure.

Key statement 7

Through peer-led education – information, attitudes and values, and behaviours can be taught and shared.

Key statement 8

Peer education is a popular alternative or complement to adult-led health education approaches.

It enables:

- **Information exchange and open discussion between adolescents of similar age and social status**
- **Opportunities for repeated contact in a friendly context**
- **Access to those who are hard to reach through traditional adult-led health-education approaches**

Key statement 9

The effectiveness of peer-education in increasing safe behaviours/reducing risky behaviours is limited.

Key statement 10

Adult-led education programmes can provide accurate information, answer questions and clarify misconceptions.

Peer-led education programmes could complement this through discussion and interpretations in the context of adolescents' lives.

Key statement 11

Y-PEER – the UNFPA-led youth education network provides a useful forum for information exchange among organization doing/supporting peer-led education programmes.

It also provides a four-part tool kit for managers and trainers of peer-education programmes.

Key statement 12

Peer-education programmes encounter many practical challenges in:

- Recruiting the right persons to be peer-educators**
- Retaining them**
- Replacing them (when they leave)**
- Training them to educate their peers effectively**
- Monitoring their work and supporting them, especially when they face challenges in their work**

The Geracao Biz (Busy Generation) programme in Mozambique is facing and dealing with these challenges. It provides useful lessons.