

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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World Bank. World Development Report 2007. Development and the next generation. Washington: World Bank; 2007.

The Report starts by briefing about three youths who have three main things in common, though from different angles. Each youth has some challenges, opportunities and focus. Georgia, 15, did not allow her challenges of being a street kid, to pull her down. She managed to identify her talent as an actress and grabbed the opportunity. On the other side, 23-year-old Simeon did not allow the torture and torment he went through during war to shatter his hopes and dreams. He still believes he can prosper in life. Van, 21, is blessed to have a good backbone of support, her parents. She uses the opportunity wisely and intends to further her education. Her challenge, different from others, is to get her parents' approval to do dangerous things like cruising the busy streets on a scooter with her boyfriend. There are many young people like these three. Each meets risks and opportunity for oneself, families, societies and one's economy. The future of youths as workers, parents, leaders, and the future of the community or nation's economy is determined by their experience in life. Youth develop through five transitions in life, which include continuing to learn, starting to work, develop a healthful lifestyle, beginning a family and exercising citizenship. Their decisions during this period impact how human capital is kept safe, developed and deployed. To cater for different societies, the report takes the range 12 to 24 years as the relevant range to cover the transitions from puberty to economic independence, and the information was obtained from both developed and developing countries.

Policies and institutions affect the risks, opportunities and outcomes of a society. Young people's opportunities need to be broadened, their capabilities developed by allowing and encouraging them to make informed decisions, and second chances given to mend their lives. They need to be provided with basic education and healthcare to build their foundation. Increase in skills may boost demand even further by inducing faster skill-intensive technological change. The fertility transition will lead to a larger working age group and fewer children and elderly to support, leading to an opportunity to spend on other things like building human capital. If decisions about these transitions are made well, development will occur. If they are made badly, the consequences can leave permanent scars. Skills are nurtured very early in life by parents, then at preschools, primary and secondary schools. After that, youths decide about their carrier and vocation, and whether to go on to higher education. Governments ought to support this transition for development but some are failing. Poor children are usually disadvantaged and governments should protect them, especially from exploitation. Usually during teenage life is when youths start experimenting with their lives, behaviourwise, which usually determines their future health and the nation's economy. Young people rarely seek family planning or maternal health services, which is everyone's right to access them. Without productive opportunities, their behavior can lead to economic and social instability. Nations should therefore focus on the quality of opportunities they offer and rate their learning system. They should provide capital and network businesses for youths. The internet is playing a big role in informing youths. Flexibility should

be there in a country so that early mistakes do not turn into permanent liabilities. Most migrants are young people, increasing opportunities for both sending and receiving countries.

[UNFPA. UNFPA framework for action on adolescents and youth. Opening doors with 4 keys. New York: UNFPA; 2007.](#)

There is quite a number of youths in the world today. Millions do not attend school and lots of girls become teenage mothers. Among these mothers, infant mortality rate is higher than among older mothers. In addition, the rate of young females infected with HIV every day is higher than that of young males, and these rates are especially high in Sub-Saharan Africa and Asia. To improve young people's lives, education, livelihoods and citizenship must be put into consideration. As part of poverty reduction, a Framework for Action is needed to guide the Fund's support in the area of adolescents and youth, and an organisational guideline is also needed. This document is based on the Fund's commitment to invest in adolescents and youths to gain opportunities since social investment in these people can help to achieve a healthy socio-economically productive and poverty-free society. It intends to translate the Fund's commitment to Action. UNFPA focuses on promoting and protecting youths' rights, promoting their gender equality and letting them be heard. It encourages young people's participation in Policy, Population and Poverty, Sexual and reproductive health services, and Gender sensitive Life-skills- based Sexual and Reproductive health education. Safe forums will be developed for the young and the old to meet and discuss young people's concerns without any fear or harassment, protecting the vulnerable and the youths' rights.

[WHO. Strengthening the health sector response to adolescent health & development. Geneva: WHO; 2009.](#)

Adolescence is a period where an individual goes through major physical, psychological, social and relation changes in life. Opportunity and risk are great during this period. By promoting and supporting adolescents' health, it helps prevent many deaths, accidents, diseases and unwanted behaviors. Adolescents take up one fifth of the world's population. The poor usually do not have resources and are more likely to remain poor, hence the need for all countries to protect the vulnerable ones, including children's rights. The health sector has a major role to play by providing all the necessary services required, including prevention and treatment of sexual and reproductive health problems, and prevention of HIV. Accurate and up-to-date data on adolescents' health is usually rare to find. Ministries of health should be responsible for seeking such information, based on age and sex of adolescents, for the purposes of policymaking. Non-governmental organisations usually provide intended health services by adolescents, and are usually friendly to them though the programs sometimes do not last. Ministries of health should therefore expand coverage and improve quality of health services for adolescents.