



Adolescent Sexual ^{and} Reproductive Health Toolkit ^{for} Humanitarian Settings

A Companion to the Inter-Agency Field Manual
on Reproductive Health in Humanitarian Settings



Save the Children



UNFPA

Acknowledgements

This publication has benefited from the contributions, efforts and energy of many people. The development of the Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health Toolkit for Humanitarian Settings has been a joint effort by Save the Children and UNFPA, led by Brad Kerner (Save the Children), Cecile Mazzacurati (UNFPA) and Jennifer Kim (UNFPA). The main author of this curriculum was Katy Mitchell, an independent consultant with many years experience in Reproductive Health in Emergencies, who translated the vision and early drafts into this comprehensive toolkit.

The authors also acknowledge the efforts of a Technical Advisory Group with over 20 members, including Ribka Amsalu (Save the Children), John Santelli (Columbia University), Meriwether Beatty (John Snow, Inc.), Susan Purdin (International Rescue Committee) Takashi Izutsu (UNFPA), Vinit Sharma (UNFPA), Josephine Sauvarin (UNFPA), Mary Otieno (UNFPA), Edith Cheung (UNICEF), Marian Schilperoord (UNHCR), Ouahiba Sakani (UNHCR), Mihoko Tanabe (Women's Refugee Commission), Sandra Krause (Women's Refugee Commission), Imane Khachani (Independent advisor), Cate Lane (Pathfinder/ Extending Service Delivery), Sonia Navani (RAISE). The authors would also like to acknowledge the guidance of the Sexual and Reproductive Health Branch and the Adolescent and Youth Cluster at UNFPA, specifically Laura Laski, Ziad Mikati, Dennia Gayle, and Prateek Awasthi.



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Editor: Stephanie Borise

Graphic Designer: Green Communication Design inc.

This publication was made possible through financial support provided by UNFPA's Humanitarian Response Branch. The views and opinions expressed in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of UNFPA, United Nations Population Fund, or Save the Children.

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September 2009

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ACRONYMS

- AIDS:** Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
- ART:** Anti-Retroviral Therapy
- ARV:** Anti-Retroviral
- ASRH:** Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health
- CAAFAG:** Children Associated with Armed Forces and Armed Groups
- CBD:** Community-Based Distribution
- COC:** Combined Oral Contraceptive Pill
- CRC:** United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
- DDR:** Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration
- EC:** Emergency Contraception
- ECP:** Emergency Contraceptive Pill
- FP:** Family Planning
- GBV:** Gender-Based Violence
- HCT:** HIV Counseling and Testing
- HIV:** Human Immunodeficiency Virus
- IAFM:** Inter-Agency Field Manual on Reproductive Health in Humanitarian Settings
- IASC:** Inter-Agency Standing Committee
- IDP:** Internally Displaced Person
- MARA:** Most-At-Risk-Adolescents (refers to HIV/AIDS)
- MISP:** Minimum Initial Service Package for Reproductive Health in Crisis Situations
- MSM:** Men who have Sex with Men
- NGO:** Non-Governmental Organization
- OCP:** Oral Contraceptive Pill
- PEP:** Post-Exposure Prophylaxis for HIV
- PLHIV:** Persons Living with HIV
- PMTCT:** Prevention of Mother-to-Child Transmission of HIV
- POP:** Progestin-Only Pill
- RH:** Reproductive Health
- SEA:** Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
- SRH:** Sexual and Reproductive Health
- STI:** Sexually-Transmitted Infection
- UNFPA:** United Nations Population Fund
- UNHCR:** United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
- UNICEF:** United Nations Children's Fund
- WHO:** World Health Organization



Introduction

What is adolescence? Adolescence is defined as the period between 10 and 19 years of age. It is a continuum of physical, cognitive, behavioral and psychosocial change that is characterized by increasing levels of individual autonomy, a growing sense of identity and self-esteem and progressive independence from adults.

Adolescents are learning to think abstractly, which allows them to plan their futures. Experimentation and risk-taking are normal during adolescence and are part of the process of developing decision-making skills; adolescents are both positively and negatively influenced by their peers, whom they respect and admire. Adults play an important role in this regard and can help adolescents weigh the consequences of their behaviors (particularly risky behaviors) and help them to identify options. The influence of at least one positive adult and a nurturing family are protective factors during this period of development and can help adolescents cope with stress and develop resilience.

At one end of the continuum are *very young adolescents* (10 to 14 years of age), who may be physically, cognitively, emotionally and behaviorally closer to children than adults. Very young adolescents are just beginning to form their identities, which are shaped by internal and external influences. Signs of physical maturation begin to appear during this period: pubic and axillary hair appear; girls develop breast buds and may begin to menstruate; in boys, the penis and testicles grow, facial hair develops and the voice deepens. As young adolescents become aware of their sexuality, they may begin to experiment with sex. They also may experiment with substances such as alcohol, tobacco or drugs. Adolescent sexual and reproductive health (ASRH) programs should develop strategies that specifically target very young adolescents, tailoring interventions that are appropriate to their level of maturity, experience and development.

Adolescence is one of life's fascinating and perhaps most complex stages, a time when young people take on new responsibilities and experiment with independence. They search for identity, learn to apply values acquired in early childhood and develop skills that will help them become caring and responsible adults. When adolescents are supported and encouraged by caring adults, they thrive in unimaginable ways, becoming resourceful and contributing members of families and communities. Bursting with energy, curiosity and spirit that are not easily extinguished, young people have the potential to change negative societal patterns of behaviour and break cycles of violence and discrimination that pass from one generation to the next. With their creativity, energy and enthusiasm, young people can change the world in astonishing ways, making it a better place not only for themselves, but for everyone.

From UNICEF: *Adolescence: A Time That Matters*. 2002.

During *middle adolescence* (15-16 years of age), adolescents begin to develop ideals and select role models. Peers are very important to adolescents in this age group and they are strongly influenced by them. Sexual orientation develops progressively and non-heterosexual individuals may begin to experience internal conflict, particularly during middle adolescence.

At the other end of the spectrum are *older adolescents* (17 to 19 years of age), who may look and act like adults, but who have still not reached cognitive, behavioral and emotional maturity. While older adolescents may make decisions independently — they may be employed, their sexual identities are solidified and they may even marry and start families — they still benefit from the influence of adult role models as well as family and social structures to help them complete the transition into adulthood.

Children, adolescents, youth and young people

"Young people" comprise adolescents between 10 and 24. These two terms reflect the continued development and maturation of individuals during the period after 18 years of age, prior to entering adulthood.

Table 1

Term	Age Range	Source
Children	0-18 years	Convention on the Rights of the Child
Adolescent	10-19 years	UNFPA, WHO, UNICEF
Very young adolescent	10-14 years	UNFPA, UNICEF
Youth	15-24 years	UNFPA, WHO, UNICEF
Young people	10-24 years	UNFPA, WHO, UNICEF

Why focus on adolescent sexual and reproductive health?

Although adolescents make up a large proportion of the population in the developing world, where most humanitarian emergencies occur, their sexual and

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