



Accelerating progress for Universal Access to Sexual, Reproductive Health and Rights of the Young People to end Teenage Pregnancies

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Background: Who Are Young People

- Adolescence – 10 to 19 year period of life
- Youth – 15 – 24 years
- One in every five people in the world is an adolescent
- Developing countries are a home to 85% of world adolescents



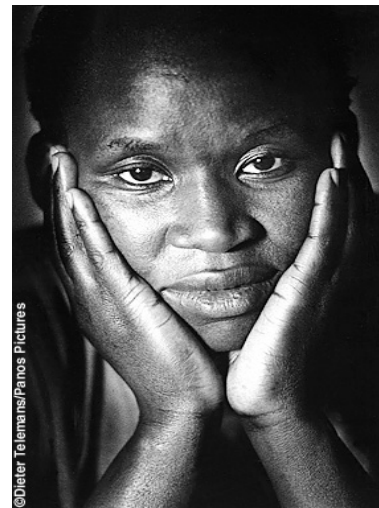
Adolescence and Youth: Transition Period to Adulthood

- The transition is never easy
- Nearly 70% of premature deaths in adults are a result of risk exposure during adolescence
- About 35% of the total disease burden in adults are also associated with risk exposure in adolescence
- Examples of risk exposures that begin in adolescence:
 - tobacco use
 - unprotected sex
 - lack of physical activity
 - exposure to violence.

Why We Must Act to End Adolescent Pregnancies

- 16 million girls aged 15 to 19 years and 2.5 million girls under 15 years give birth each year in developing countries
- Complications during pregnancy and childbirth are the leading cause of death for 15 to 19 year-old girls globally

But Africa has a way of normalizing tragedy

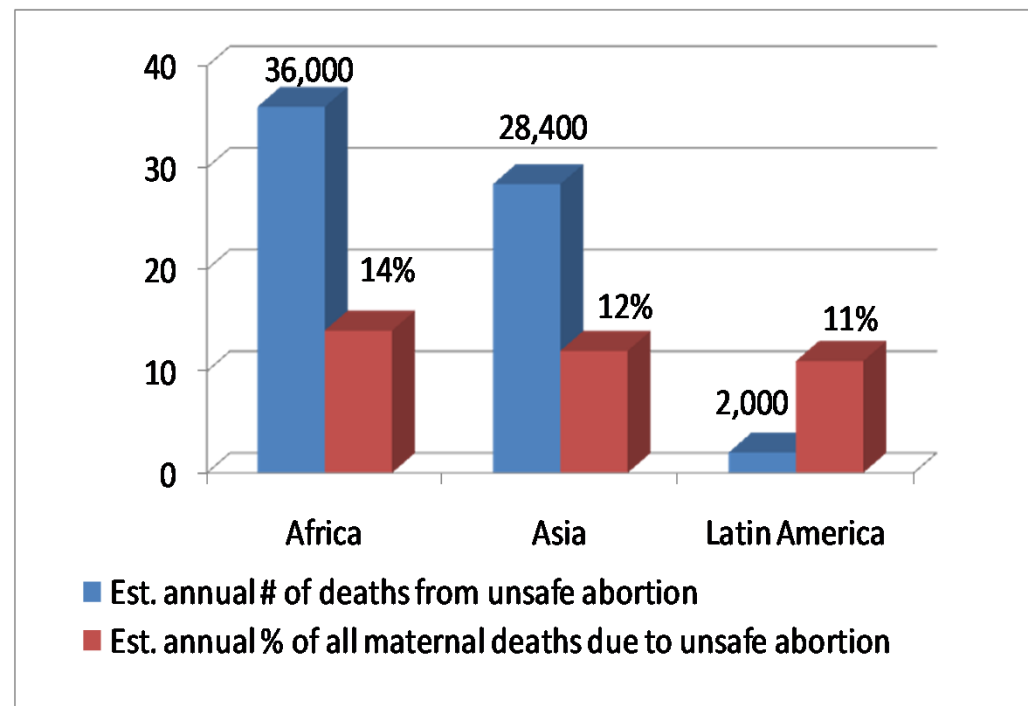


“--Every pregnant woman has one foot in the grave--”

African Proverb

Why We Must Act to End Adolescent Pregnancies

- Every year, 3.9 million girls aged 15 to 19 years undergo unsafe abortions
- Unsafe abortions lead to severe morbidity and mortality



Why We Must Act to End Adolescent Pregnancies

- Number of adolescent pregnancies bound to increase globally by 2030 with the greatest increases in Sub-Saharan Africa if we do not act



Adolescent Pregnancies: What We Must Do Now

- Decriminalize adolescence – adolescents are labeled as bad people, trouble makers ab initio
- If they get pregnant we blame them
- They think out of the box so they are labeled trouble makers right from their families
- Most legal systems and country policies perpetuate this, poor political will
- **Urgent need to free young people from this bondage, legislators can do it!**



Adolescent Pregnancies: What We Must Do Now

- Favorable policy exist at global and regional and national level to end pregnancies in young people e.g.:
 - SDGs
 - AU roadmap for achieving demographic dividend
 - ESA commitments – Comprehensive Sexuality Education
 - Maputo Plan of Action
- Monitor implementation – accountability for results
- Create legislative and policy frameworks to implement regional and global commitments
- Ensure sustainable financing for adolescent health programs

Adolescent Pregnancies: What We Must Do Now

- Girls face social pressure to marry and to have children early in life
- Each year 15 million children are married off before the age of 18 years
- In fact 90% of births to adolescents occur among married adolescents
- Implement laws to abolish child marriage
- Resist tendency to lower age of marriage to below 18 years

Adolescent Pregnancies: What We Must Do Now

- Adolescent pregnancies are driven by poverty, unemployment and lack of education opportunities
- It is a developmental issue
- Ensure affirmative action to retain girls in school and to transition them to post-secondary education
- Gender equity in employment



Adolescent Pregnancies: What We Must Do Now

- Many adolescents face sexual violence
- It is estimated that 20% of girls globally have experienced sexual abuse as children or as adolescents
- Enforce laws that prohibit SGBV
- Abolish cultural tendencies to pay ransom and marry off rape survivors
- Outlaw socially sanctioned SGBV such as FGM

200 million women and girls living with FGM; 3 million girls at risk annually

Adolescent Pregnancies: What We Must Do Now

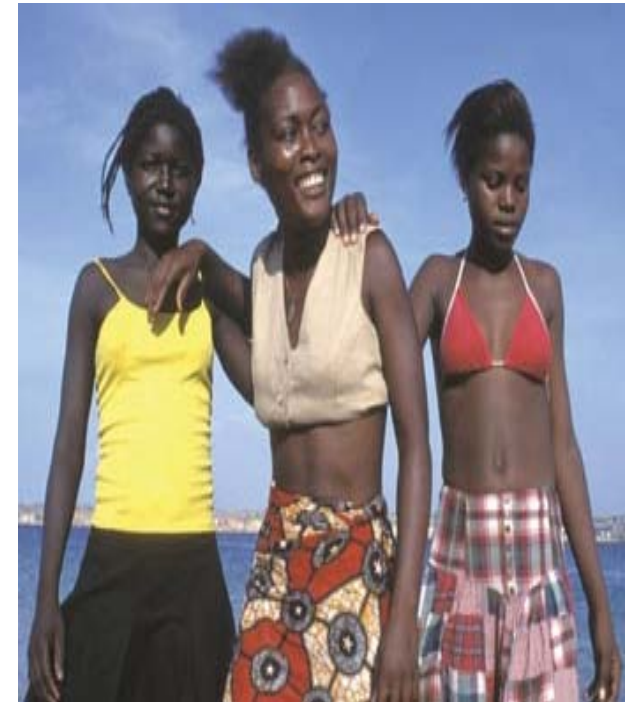
- Adolescents face legal/policy barriers to accessing contraceptive services
- Restrictions may be based on age or marital status
- Health workers may be biased
- Adolescents lack knowledge, transportation, and financial means to access FP and healthcare



- **Have/enforce policies and laws that allow sexually active adolescents to access FP**

Adolescent Pregnancies: What We Must Do Now

- Re-write UHC core principles to incorporate young people's access to SRH
 - Leaving no one behind: **including young people**
 - Transparency and accountability for results **including for young people's SRH**
 - Evidence based national health strategies and leadership **including youth SRH friendly services**
 - Making health systems everybody's business **with young people in mind**: communities, CSO and private sector
 - International cooperation, mutual learning across countries **including to improve young people's SRH**
- **You can be the ambassadors for UHC that includes young people's SRH!**



Adolescent Pregnancies: What We Must Do Now

Finance SRH services for young people using UHC health financing goals

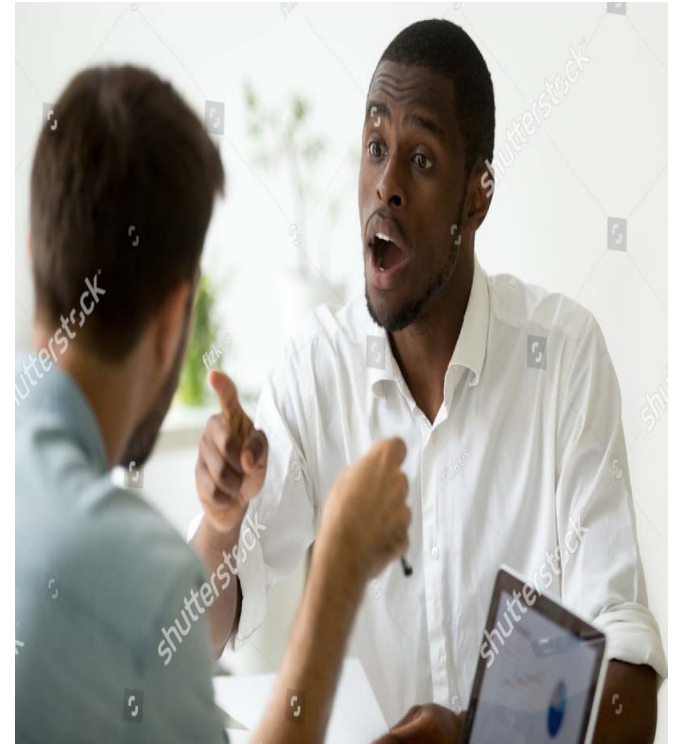
- No young person should be asked to pay money out of pocket for SRH services
- Mobilize resources through taxation, prioritize health financing through macroeconomic framework
- Expand pooling to improve financial protection
- Strategic purchasing to increase efficiency of health spending with a focus on public goods and public health – pay for FP commodities



Adolescent Pregnancies: What We Must Do Now

Apply UHC governance goals to adolescent SRH services

- Foster engagement platforms and citizen's voices – **listen to adolescents!**
- Freedom of information and use of data - **CSE**
- Favorable legal frameworks for access to quality health services – **youth SRH**
- Policy dialogue platforms, multi-sectoral action
- Promoting regional and global mechanisms
- Research, development, technology transfer



THANK YOU FOR LISTENING

