



## GLOBAL HEALTH ADOLESCENT SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

Adolescence represents a critical window of opportunity when young people learn to make independent decisions and form their own attitudes and beliefs. Adolescent sexual and reproductive health and rights (ASRHR) programs take advantage of this window of opportunity to improve health and well-being for adolescents now and in their future adult lives. Through a rights-based approach, we work to ensure that adolescents have access to comprehensive information and a full range of sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services.

### AGE AND LIFE STAGE-SPECIFIC SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS (SRHR) NEEDS

#### Very Young Adolescents

Save the Children is a global leader in the health and well-being of very young adolescents (VYAs; ages 10-14), a group often neglected in global health programs. Our VYA program strategies fill a critical information and service gap, foster the development of positive social and gender norms, build linkages to health systems, and equip young adolescents with the ability to navigate the challenges and opportunities during their transition through puberty.

#### First-Time and Young Parents

While delaying pregnancy is a key goal for ASRHR programs and adolescent pregnancy rates have dropped since 1990, millions of adolescent girls still become pregnant each year. Working with first-time and young parents, and their families and communities, we build skills for healthy decision-making, foster supportive gender and social norms, and increase access to reproductive, maternal and newborn health services.

### KEY FACTS

- 21 million adolescent girls, aged 15-19, get pregnant annually (WHO).
- 49% of pregnancies among adolescents are unintended (Guttmacher).
- Pregnancy and birth-related complications are a leading cause of death among girls ages 15-19 (WHO).
- 777,000 very young adolescents, aged 10-14, gave birth in 2016 (Guttmacher).

### OUR REACH

Save the Children implements ASRHR activities through nearly 40 programs in more than 31 countries across Sub-Saharan Africa, Asia, the Middle East, and Latin America and the Caribbean.

*Save the Children believes every child deserves a future. In the United States and around the world, we give children a healthy start in life, the opportunity to learn and protection from harm. We do whatever it takes for children - every day and in times of crisis - transforming their lives and the future we share.*

## EQUITABLE SOCIAL AND GENDER NORMS AND HEALTHY BEHAVIORS

Save the Children leads the way in developing innovative social and behavior change methodologies for adolescents, families and communities. These creative activities engage adolescents and their parents, partners and communities to inspire reflection and dialogue on gender and SRHR, and catalyze changes in SRH behaviors and social norms, such as equitably distributing household chores and **creating an environment where girls' education is valued more than early marriage.**

## ACCESS TO ADOLESCENT-RESPONSIVE SRH SERVICES

Adolescents face a range of barriers to accessing SRH services, including providers who are unwilling or uncomfortable providing services, fear of being seen or mistreated, and distance to and cost of services. Our programs address these barriers through clinic- and community-based strategies to increase access to adolescent-responsive SRH services, including a full range of contraceptive methods. We endorsed the *Global Consensus Statement for Expanding Contraceptive Choice for Adolescents and Youth to Include Long-Acting Reversible Contraception*, and we seek to advance the rights of youth to full method choice, including a variety of short- and long-acting methods.

## RESPONDING TO ASRHR NEEDS IN HUMANITARIAN SETTINGS

Humanitarian emergencies are a chaotic and critical time when young people's vulnerability increases: their protective family, community and institutional structures are fragile; there is a breakdown of social norms; and they face a disruption in education, health and recreational services, and potentially a loss of livelihood. Save the Children, CARE, and the Inter-Agency Working Group on Reproductive Health in Crises are providing training workshops and capacity building support to institutionalize and prioritize ASRHR from the onset of a humanitarian emergency.

## Program Highlights

### Very Young Adolescent Gender Norm Package

This package includes three reinforcing components:

- 1) Choices engages boys and girls in dialogue and reflection about social justice and gender norms;
- 2) Voices engages parents and caregivers in facilitated discussions featuring testimonial videos; and
- 3) Promises uses mass media to support keeping girls in school and delayed marriage.

We evaluated the VYA package in **Nepal**, and Choices has been adapted in **Bangladesh, Bolivia, Egypt, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Malawi** and **Zambia**.

### Gender Roles, Equality and Transformations (GREAT) and Growing Up GREAT! (2015-2020)

The GREAT project aimed to shift gender norms, increase contraceptive use, and decrease sexual- and gender-based violence in northern **Uganda**. We adapted this approach in urban areas of the **Democratic Republic of the Congo** and currently implement Growing Up GREAT! as part of the USAID Passages project.

### My First Baby and REAL Fathers

Our work with first-time and young parents includes:

- My First Baby, developed in **Bolivia** (2006-2009) and later adapted to **Nepal, Mozambique** and **Nigeria**, helps young married girls to understand pregnancy and childbirth and how to take care of themselves and their baby;
- Healthy Transitions for Nepali Youth Program (2018-2021) builds on and expands My First Baby to reach young women, their husbands and influential household members;
- Responsible, Engaged and Loving (REAL) Fathers Initiative (2013-2017), developed and evaluated in **Uganda** and adapted to **Malawi** aims to reduce intimate partner violence and harsh punishment of children;
- Formative research and program design under the Maternal and Child Survival Program (2014-2019).

### Keep It Real (2013-2015)

We delivered comprehensive sexuality education to young people both in- and out-of-school in **Ethiopia** and **Uganda** to increase the percentage of youth that are informed and able to make healthy SRH decisions. Youth visits to health centers, youth-led health service mapping in communities, health provider talks at schools, and youth clubs strengthened linkages to health services.

### Long-term Integrated Adolescent Development

With Sponsorship funding, we integrate SRH and livelihoods programming for adolescents across 13 countries. Through this long-term investment, we support positive youth development throughout adolescence.