



MAKE ADOLESCENT HEALTH & WELLBEING A PRIORITY AN URGENT CALL TO ACTION

Draft For Consultation

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This Call to Action is published for consultation. For more details visit www.unmgcy.org/call-to-action-on-adolescent-health

“ As a second sensitive development opportunity after early childhood, adolescence represents an optimal period in life to learn healthy behaviors, acquire social and labour skills, and realize human rights protections that have an impact throughout the life-course. Investment in adolescent health and development generate a “triple dividend of benefits” and determines both the present and future health of individuals, as well as that of generations to come. ”

There are 1.2 billion adolescents (10-19 years old) worldwide today and this number will rise through 2050. Nearly nine out of ten adolescents live in low- and middle-income countries. The health and well-being of adolescents now and in their adult lives greatly depend on key education opportunities and access to quality health services that help them stay healthy, empowered, embracing gender equality norms and demanding rights.

While the majority of adolescent health issues are preventable or treatable, **adolescents face multiple barriers in accessing the knowledge, information and health care they need.** The provision of appropriately tailored service and health care is weak or absent for adolescents and understanding among service providers of their specific needs is limited. These challenges can be exacerbated by age, sex, ethnicity, religion, disability, location, wealth, marital status, sexual orientation and gender identity, migratory status and other characteristics.

Adolescents have failed to experience the reduction in mortality seen by younger children. While under five deaths halved during the Millennium Development Goal period, progress in adolescent mortality has stalled. Globally, adolescents carry 11 percent of the global disease burden and each year there are more than 1.1 million adolescent deaths.

- For every dollar invested in selected adolescent health interventions, there is an estimated ten-fold health, social and economic return
- Investing US\$5.20 per capita per year in specific adolescent interventions across 75 LMICs could save approximately 12.5 million lives and prevent over 30 million unintended pregnancies by 2030.
- Even though adolescents carry 11 percent of the global disease burden, they received only 1.6 percent of developmental assistance for health through 2015

Progress towards Universal Health Coverage (SDG Target 3.8) and the wider 2030 Agenda requires keeping adolescents informed and healthy, both to survive and thrive. Investment in adolescents delivers a “triple dividend” - improving health now, enhancing throughout the life-course and contributing to the health of future generations. Investments in keeping adolescents healthy fuels economic growth by contributing to increased productivity, reduced health expenditure, and ensuring reducing inequities across generations. The UN Strategy for Women’s, Children’s & Adolescents Health recognises this, but now, more than ever and to keep the promises made in the SDGs, further support and commitment is required to deliver for adolescents.

Health interventions for adolescents must include effective implementation of health education including comprehensive sexuality education programs, recognizing the emotional dimension of human relationships, with respect to the evolving capacity of the child from a participatory, intercultural, gender-sensitive and human rights perspective.

Adolescents should have access to a comprehensive package of youth friendly-health knowledge and services addressing the prevention of non-communicable diseases, injuries, healthy eating and nutrition, stress management and mental health care, risk of tobacco and other substance abuse, benefits of movement and exercise, and the cultivation of healthy relationships, in a manner consistent with their evolving capacity, that are mutually enforcing and free of stigma and discrimination, including sexual and reproductive health.

To ensure that every adolescent can make informed choices about their lives, and fulfil their rights to attain full health and wellbeing we, the signatories of this call to action, call on the international community and national governments to:

- 1 Deliver on their commitments to adolescents in Universal Health Coverage as agreed at the **UN High Level Meeting on Universal Health Coverage**
- 2 Commit to prioritise **Adolescent Health and Wellbeing**, in resolutions submitted at the **World Health Assembly in 2020**
- 3 Mobilise efforts towards a **first ever global summit on Adolescents in 2022**, aiming to increase significantly the levels of commitment and global funding for adolescents and accelerating action through to 2030
- 4 Develop strong multisectoral, whole-of-government policy approaches and ensure that **national health systems reach all adolescents and are responsive to the distinct and diverse needs of all adolescents**, including the realization of their sexual and reproductive rights
- 5 Increase domestic and donor spending on adolescent health and cover all adolescents with mandatory, prepaid, pooled funding for services that comprehensively address adolescent health needs
- 6 Always engage adolescents in global, national and sub-national policy, legislation and programme processes that affect them; through formal and informal mechanisms

YOU CAN TAKE ACTION TODAY BY:

- 1 **SIGNING THE CALL TO ACTION AT:** www.unmgcy.org/call-to-action-on-adolescent-health
- 2 **SHARING IT WITH YOUR PROFESSIONAL NETWORKS, FRIENDS AND FAMILY**
- 3 **LEARNING MORE ABOUT HOW ADOLESCENT HEALTH CAN BE THE CORNERSTONE OF BOTH UNIVERSAL HEALTH COVERAGE AND PROSPEROUS SOCIETIES:** www.unmgcy.org/adolescent-health-uhc

