

ADOLESCENTS AND YOUTH

Our strategy

Young people are at the heart of UNFPA's mandate. UNFPA Cambodia is committed to programming which supports the health, development and human rights of adolescents and youth.

Our work

Education for a Healthy Future

Globally, evidence shows that educating young people about sex and relationships has a positive impact. Cambodia's Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports has recently developed a new Comprehensive Sexuality Education curriculum with support from UNFPA. It sets out a programme of age-appropriate education for primary, lower secondary and upper secondary students. As well as essential information about body changes and reproduction, the curriculum covers HIV and AIDS, drugs and contraception. Gender, relationships, family life and violence are also included in the package. Teaching these topics can be challenging, so we also support a programme of cascade training, which has already reached 3,000 teachers.

Hotline Counselling

Inthanou is a UNFPA-supported telephone hotline that provides callers with an opportunity to discuss sexual and reproductive health concerns. The hotline targets young people, especially those who are at risk, and provides correct information and non-judgmental listening. Telephone counsellors are trained to deal with a range of issues and can refer callers to health and other services if needed.

Adolescents and Youth (UN definition)

Adolescents are defined as people aged 10 – 19, going through the transition from childhood to adulthood. Youth are defined as young people aged 15 – 24.



Photo: UNFPA Cambodia

The Facts :

- 35% of Cambodians are aged between 10 and 24
- Young people's choices will help shape Cambodia's future; when young people can realise their potential, they can drive social and economic development
- Despite progress on gender equality, girls and young women in Cambodia still face particular challenges
- Fewer girls than boys complete school and go on to higher education; cultural issues can limit young women's opportunities
- Eight per cent of 15 to 19-year-old girls are already mothers. Teenage fertility has not changed during the last decade, even though the average fertility level of Cambodian women has fallen sharply
- Young Cambodians are now migrating to the city in large numbers. This can bring educational and economic opportunities but also exposes young people to new challenges and risks, particularly for the majority working in lower-paid jobs
- Among men who report that they have perpetrated violence against women and girls, most say that they first did so when they were aged 15 - 19



Photo: UNFPA Cambodia

SMARTGirls – An Empowering Approach to Entertainment Workers' Health

In Cambodia, there are estimated to be over 35,000 young women working in the entertainment sector, which includes massage parlours, bars, casinos and karaoke bars. Despite Cambodia's great progress in reducing HIV prevalence, these young women are vulnerable to HIV, as well as unwanted pregnancies and violence. Their work and rights are often not respected. SMARTGirls is an empowering and holistic programme in which young women are trained to reach their peers with information on safe sex, contraception and other health concerns. Peers are backed up by drop-in centres, where women can meet and talk in a relaxing environment and get training, advice and referrals to health services. UNFPA Cambodia supports SMARTGirls in eight provinces, reaching one-third of Cambodia's entertainment workers.

Media for Youth Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights

Exchange of information is changing fast with young people at the forefront. UNFPA is supporting BBC Media Action's popular and innovative multi-media youth programme, Loy9, to deliver sexual and reproductive health information. Loy9 uses a mixture of engaging formats to explore issues through drama as well as informative programming. The programme is designed based on young people's preferences and uses radio, TV, internet and social media. Loy9 is interactive, empowering and engaging.

Policy for Youth Development

UNFPA supported the Royal Government of Cambodia in developing its Youth Policy, which provides the framework for the Government's efforts to support youth development. We are working with the Youth Department to support the implementation of the policy.

Leading the UN Partnership for Youth

Many UN agencies have a role to play in supporting youth rights and development. UNFPA leads the UN Working Group on Youth which coordinates this work in Cambodia. The Working Group collaborates closely with the UN's Youth Advisory Panel, an active group of young people from all backgrounds who are consulted on UN programming.

Case Study: Proud to be a SMARTGirl

"I go for health check-ups at the Chhouk-Sor Women's Association for sexually transmitted infections (STIs) detection, HIV testing, and birth spacing counseling and services every two-months" explained Sreymom, a 19 year-old girl, from Takeo province, who moved to work as a waitress in a restaurant before working in a karaoke bar in Phnom Penh. Several months ago, she accidentally became pregnant but she did not want to keep the baby and went for an abortion with assistance from a friend. "Currently I use a condom. It is a dual protection method that prevents me from having unwanted pregnancies and protects me from sexual transmitted infections and HIV/AIDS". "My friend, Sokunthea works as an outreach worker for the SMART Girl programme advised me to join the group a few months ago. I am so glad to be a Smart Girl."

Many young women who sell sex to support their families have been reached by the programme. Mrs. Soeun SreyRoth has been selling sex for years in various places to support her alcoholic husband and 3 children. "My income is very small and I find it difficult to get health care services elsewhere when I need them. Luckily, the SMART Girl programme has ensured that I receive STI check-ups and treatment and HIV/AIDS testing every 3 months. I get condoms and the pill through the programme facility".

She agreed that many vulnerable women have benefited a lot from the programme. "I enjoy attending any events organized by the SMART Girl programme and learning from other girls".

SreyRoth wishes she were able to attend the vocational training sessions provided by the SMART Girl programme to enable her to choose a new career. She is hoping that her kids will look for another way of income when they grow up.



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