



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



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

▪ Acronyms	4
Introduction	5
▪ A Human and Child Rights Framework	12
▪ Meeting Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health Needs	16
Adolescent-Inclusive Implementation of the MISP for Reproductive Health in Humanitarian Settings	21
▪ MISP: Coordination Fact Sheet for Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health	25
▪ MISP: Adolescents and Sexual Violence Fact Sheet	29
▪ MISP: Adolescents and Maternal and Newborn Health Fact Sheet	33
▪ MISP: Adolescents and STI/HIV Prevention and Treatment Fact Sheet	36
▪ MISP: Adolescents and Family Planning Fact Sheet	39
▪ Adolescents, Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Fact Sheet	41
Participation Tools	44
▪ Adolescent Participation	44
▪ Community and Parental Participation	47
▪ Reproductive Health Entry Points in Existing Adolescent Programs	49
Assessment Tools	52
▪ Assessing Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health	52
▪ Initial Rapid Assessment for Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health	56
▪ Situational Analysis for Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health	57
▪ Comprehensive Sexual and Reproductive Health Survey for Adolescents in Emergency Situations	61
Facility-Based Tools	67
▪ HEADSSS Assessment	67
▪ Adolescent-Friendly Sexual and Reproductive Health Service Checklist	75
Community-Based Distribution and Peer Education Tools	78
▪ Peer Education Resource List	78
▪ Community-Based Distribution Introduction	80
▪ Preparing to Implement Community-Based Distribution – Checklist	81
▪ Adolescent Community-Based Distribution Supervision Tool	83
▪ Client Referral Form for Adolescent Community-Based Distributors	86
Sharing Lessons Learned	87
▪ Sharing Lessons Learned Form	88

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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