



*During the 2016-2018 strategic period, we will build on a substantial base of adolescent sexual and reproductive health (ASRH) programming and advocacy work to invest and test in this sub-thematic area over the coming three years.*

In low and middle income countries, one in every 10 girls becomes a mother by the age of 16. Pregnancy during adolescence is associated with an increased risk for adverse birth outcomes as well as complications during labour and delivery. Mothers under the age of 20 are 50% more likely to have a stillbirth or to lose their baby within the first week after birth than mothers aged 20-29 years, and pregnancy, childbirth and unsafe abortions are the second leading cause of death in young women between the ages of 15 and 18. Adolescents and young adults face critical unmet needs with respect to high-quality sexual and reproductive health information and services and information about how to avoid high-risk behaviours.

Save the Children uses proven approaches such as peer-to-peer counselling to empower adolescents to practice abstinence or use contraception to delay and space childbirth and avoid sexually transmitted infections. We work with families and communities to increase the availability, accessibility and quality of reproductive health services across the adolescent lifespan, with particular attention to the needs of "very young adolescents" (10- to 14-year-olds) who are often overlooked during program design.

Priority program areas include the following:

Very Young Adolescents (10 to 14 years old)

- Engaging parents and communities on adolescent health;
- Puberty education and menstrual hygiene management;
- Comprehensive sexuality education for primary school students;
- Creating preventative health services for adolescents as they enter puberty;
- Community mobilization to delay early marriage; and,
- Challenging gender norms and expectations of boys and girls.

Older Adolescents (14 and older)

- Comprehensive sexuality education for in- and out-of-school adolescents;
- Increasing access to contraception for unmarried and married adolescents (see MNRH);
- Access to youth-friendly sexual and reproductive health information and services (see MNRH);
- Prevention of HIV; and,
- Approaches that support girls' retention in school.

Save the Children aims to ensure delivery of these interventions in stable, transitional and emergency situations (full-spectrum programming). In established country contexts, a crisis may necessitate expanding, intensifying or adapting our approach to accommodate evolving needs. For further information or guidance on programming in crisis contexts, please visit the [Humanitarian Health and Nutrition Page](#).