

Young People Worldwide

One-third of the world's population, approximately 1.7 billion people, is between the ages of 10 and 24 years.¹ Today's generation of young people is the largest the world has ever known. In general, young people are healthier and more educated today than the generations before them. Nonetheless, young people, particularly young women, face significant challenges that prevent them from meeting their full potential.

Half of all new HIV infections occur in young people ages 25 and under, and 14 million adolescent girls give birth every year.^{2,3} Over 70,000 teenage girls are married each day.⁴ Complications from pregnancy, childbirth, and unsafe abortions are the major causes of morbidity and mortality for young women between the ages of 15 - 19 years in the developing world. Girls under 16 are five times more likely to die in childbirth than women in their 20s, while mothers under 20 years are twice as likely to die as women in their 20s.⁵ People between 15 - 24 years have the highest rates of sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV, the virus that causes AIDS.⁶ Furthermore, approximately 20% of women under 24 years of age have been infected with the specific strains of human papillomavirus (HPV), an STI that cause almost all cervical cancers.⁷

These global statistics speak for a neglected population. Young people's choices are hindered by poverty, lack of access to schooling, gender disparities, and silence.

Therefore, young people must be empowered through balanced, comprehensive laws, policies, and education that provide them with both awareness about and autonomy over their own sexual and reproductive health. Globally, regionally, nationally, and locally, we must work together to deliver for youth.ⁱ

Young People in Latin America and the Caribbean

- The Latin American and Caribbean region has the highest rate of abortions globally (4.5 million annually), the majority of which are performed under unsafe conditions among young and marginalized women, resulting in high rates of maternal mortality.⁸
- In Chile and Argentina, more than one-third of the maternal deaths among adolescents resulted directly from unsafe abortion.⁹
- In Guatemala, only 25% of 20 - 24 year-old women have completed primary school. The proportion is 14% in rural areas and only 10% among indigenous women.¹⁰

¹ Population Reference Bureau. *The World's Youth 2006 Data Sheet*. Washington, DC: PRB; 2006.

² Joint United Nations Programme on HIV AIDS (UNAIDS). *2006 Report on the Global AIDS Epidemic*, Geneva, Switzerland: UNAIDS, 2006.

³ UNFPA. 2004. *The State of World Population 2004: The Cairo Consensus at Ten: Population, Reproductive Health and the Global Effort to End Poverty* New York: UNFPA: 76.

⁴ UNFPA, *State of World Population 2003: Investing in Adolescents' Health and Rights*, New York, 2003. http://www.unfpa.org/swp/2003/pdf/english/swp2003_eng.pdf (accessed September 25, 2007)

⁵ UNFPA, *Early Marriage and Violence Limit Girls' Opportunities and Violate Their Rights*, October 2003.

http://www.unfpa.org/swp/2003/presskit/press_releases/swp2003_pressrelease03.pdf (accessed October 9, 2007)

⁶ "The World's Youth 2000." Population Reference Bureau. http://www.prb.org/pdf/WorldsYouth_Eng.pdf. (accessed October 10, 2007)

⁷ Executive Summary of Lancet Sexual and Reproductive Health Series. 2006

⁸ Alan Guttmacher Institute. *Sharing Responsibility: Women, Society and Abortion Worldwide*. 1999.

⁹ S Bernstein. *The State of World Population 2000: Lives Together, Worlds Apart: Men and Women in a Time of Change*. New York, NY: United Nations Population Fund, 2000.

¹⁰ Guttmacher Institute, 2006. *Early Childbearing in Guatemala: A continuing Challenge*

- In Peru, among unmarried, sexually active adolescent women, 42% use traditional methods (rhythm or withdrawal), and 29% do not use a contraceptive method.¹¹
- In the Caribbean, almost two-thirds of adolescents report that they have not had sexual intercourse, however of those with sexual experience, about half reported that their first sexual intercourse was forced.¹²
- In Trinidad and Tobago, HIV infection levels are six times higher among 15 - 19 year-old females than among males of the same age.¹³
- In Colombia, a project undertaken in 13 clinics by PROFAMILIA integrated youth-friendly services into clinics that primarily served adults. The number of visits by adolescents to acquire contraception increased by 37% during the first six months of the project.¹⁴

Women Deliver has drawn together experts on these issues from all over the world. If you have comments on this fact sheet or recommendations for additional fact sheets, please contact vbrocato@familycareintl.org or nsorkin@familycare.intl.org.

ⁱ For the purpose of the WOMEN DELIVER Fact Sheet, we use the terms “youth” and “young people” interchangeably to refer to individuals ages 10 - 30. Nonetheless, we recognize the UN definition of young people as 10-24 years, youth are 15-24 and adolescents are 10-19.

¹¹ J Reyes, Ochoa LH. *Perú: Encuesta Demográfica y de Salud Familiar 2000*. Lima, Perú: Instituto Nacional de Estadística e Informática; Calverton, MD: Macro International, 2001.

¹² L Halcón *et al.* *A Portrait of Adolescent Health in the Caribbean*. Washington, DC: Pan American Health Organization, 2000.

¹³ J.A. Inciardi, J. L. Syversten, and H. L. Surratt. 2005. HIV/AIDS in the Caribbean basin. *AIDS Care*; 17 (Suppl.1): 9-25.

¹⁴ International Planned Parenthood Federation. *Integrating Sexual and Reproductive Health Services for Youth in Colombia*. [IPPF/WHR Spotlight on Youth]. New York, NY: The Federation, 1999.