

# Young People's Sexual and Reproductive Health in Ogun State, Nigeria

## Status of Young People's Sexual Behaviour in Ogun State

Ogun State, Nigeria has a population of about 4,000,000 people and young people aged 10-24 years old account for one-third of this total number.<sup>1</sup> According to 2007 national seroprevalence data, the HIV prevalence in Ogun State is 1.7% and young people aged 15- 29 years are the most affected by this epidemic.<sup>2</sup> In a survey among in-school adolescents, the mean age at first sexual intercourse for females was 14 years and 15 years for males.<sup>3</sup> Although, society restricts premarital sex for females, it is tolerated and sometimes applauded for males. Adolescent males have also been found to report having multiple sexual partners and having intercourse with casual partners. Without question, there are grave risks associated with unprotected sexual intercourse for young people and these include the exposure to early unwanted pregnancy, unsafe induced abortion, sexually transmitted infections including HIV.

## Factors Contributing to Negative Sexual Health Outcomes for Young People

- Lack of knowledge about their sexuality and the skills to cope with the challenges of growing-up
- Increasing socio-economic challenges which result in pressures on young people to exchange sex for money or other material gains.
- Pressure on young people by their peers and adults to engage in sexual relations including tolerance of sexual activity among young men as part of their socialization.
- Glamorization of sex in the mass media without equally highlighting the associated risks

## What Do Young People Need?

- Accurate and comprehensive information on their sexuality and skills for coping with the challenges of growing-up
- Support and skills to postpone sexual initiation for those who are not yet sexually active and access to protective measures to prevent unwanted pregnancy and STIs/ HIV for those who have initiated sex
- Access to a range of youth-friendly services that are designed to promote their sexual and reproductive health including HIV counselling and testing.
- Protection from sexual abuse and exploitation and care to mitigate its outcome for victims/ survivors
- Better life options especially quality education and employment opportunities

## What Actions Need To Be Taken?

Policy makers, community leaders and stakeholders need to:

- Speak publicly in favour of the design of health, educational and social development policies and programmes that will enhance young people's well-being.
- Ensure the enactment and implementation of policies that address the provision of sexual and reproductive health information and services to young people
- Endorse and commit funding to support realistic and effective programs to address young people's health, educational and social development concerns including increased funding to keep girls in school
- Prohibit the abuse of young people, including sexual abuse and insist that the news and entertainment media provide more responsible coverage and treatment of sexual behaviour;
- Mobilize other community stakeholders to support and fund programmes designed for young people in the state

Young people are essential to the future of Ogun State and investing in their health and development should be an urgent priority.

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# Young People's Sexual and Reproductive Health in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria

## Status of Young People's Sexual Behaviour in Akwa Ibom State

Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria has a population of about 4,000,000 people and young people aged 10-24 years old account for one-third of this total number.<sup>1</sup> According to 2007 national HIV/AIDS and reproductive health survey (NARHS) data, the HIV prevalence in Akwa Ibom State is 8.8% and young people aged 15- 24 years especially girls, are the most affected by this epidemic.<sup>2</sup> The 2008 Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey shows that, 78.7 percent of males and 28.9 percent of females aged 15-24 had engaged in high-risk sexual intercourse in the past 12 months.<sup>3</sup> Although, society restricts premarital sex for females, it is tolerated and sometimes applauded for males. Adolescent males have also been found to report having multiple sexual partners and having intercourse with casual partners. Without question, there are grave risks associated with unprotected sexual intercourse for young people and these include the exposure to early unwanted pregnancy, unsafe induced abortion, sexually transmitted infections including HIV.

## Factors Contributing to Negative Sexual Health Outcomes for Young People

- Lack of knowledge about their sexuality and the skills to cope with the challenges of growing-up
- Increasing socio-economic challenges which result in pressures on young people to exchange sex for money or other material gains.
- Pressure on young people by their peers and adults to engage in sexual relations including tolerance of sexual activity among young men as part of their socialization.
- Glamorization of sex in the mass media without equally highlighting the associated risks

## What Do Young People Need?

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- Support and skills to postpone sexual initiation for those who are not yet sexually active and access to protective measures to prevent unwanted pregnancy and STIs/ HIV for those who have initiated sex
- Access to a range of youth-friendly services that are designed to promote their sexual and reproductive health including HIV counselling and testing.
- Protection from sexual abuse and exploitation and care to mitigate its outcome for victims/ survivors
- Better life options especially quality education and employment opportunities

## What Actions Need To Be Taken?

Policy makers, community leaders and stakeholders need to:

- Speak publicly in favour of the design of health, educational and social development policies and programmes that will enhance young people's well-being.
- Ensure the enactment and implementation of policies that address the provision of sexual and reproductive health information and services to young people
- Endorse and commit funding to support realistic and effective programs to address young people's health, educational and social development concerns including increased funding to keep girls in school
- Prohibit the abuse of young people, including sexual abuse and insist that the news and entertainment media provide more responsible coverage and treatment of sexual behaviour;
- Mobilize other community stakeholders to support and fund programmes designed for young people in the state

Young people are essential to the future of Akwa Ibom State and investing in their health and development should be an urgent priority.

## References

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