Very Young Adolescent (VYA) Sexual and Reproductive Health Resource Library

**Toolkit Purpose.** This toolkit is for program managers, educators, health workers, advocates, researchers and policy makers committed to making a difference in the lives of very young adolescents (girls and boys between the ages of 10-14). The toolkit offers resources which address the unique developmental, cognitive, and social opportunities and challenges facing this age group. It provides links to examples of successful programs, research results, curricula, advocacy materials and other resources useful for working with VYAs.

**What is the challenge?** There are about 1.2 billion adolescents in the world today, and 50% of them (around 600 million) are between 10-14 years old. So far, this age group sometimes referred to as very young adolescents (VYA) has been overlooked in most sexual and reproductive health programs and policies, which are often directed at older adolescents. Also, little comprehensive data exists for VYAs. Yet, this group faces unique challenges: they are beginning puberty, seeking information, developing attitudes, and experimenting with behaviors that will affect their current and future well-being. This life stage lays the foundation for young people to establish healthy behaviors and relationships, and avoid coerced or unwanted sex, which can lead to early pregnancy, HIV, sexually transmitted infections, and intimate partner violence.

**This is when interventions are most needed.** Early adolescence marks the beginning of a transition from child to adult, setting the stage for future sexual and reproductive health and solidifying gender norms and attitudes. Interventions with VYAs can lay the foundations for lifelong healthy relationships, behaviors and practices. Although VYAs are beginning to form close relationships with their peers, they still need their family and community to establish boundaries, provide a sense of belonging, and support learning and skills development. But while caring adults seek to protect VYAs, many are ill-prepared to provide this support. VYA programs can equip adults with information on the issues girls and boys face during puberty, and provide the communication skills required to guide children safely through these transitional years.

**Solutions involve everyone.** Join with the VYA Alliance to support policies and programs that prioritize VYAs. This is an imperative step in our quest to achieve a healthy future for the world’s next generation.

**VYA ALLIANCE SNAPSHOT**
OUR PURPOSE

The VYA Alliance started as a consortium of members: Deutsche Stiftung Weltbevoelkerung (DSW), Institute for Reproductive Health at Georgetown University (IRH), Plan International USA, and Save the Children who, since 2010, have been working together to catalyze action to meet the needs of very young adolescents (VYA) globally through their work and in a Community of Practice (CoP).

This K4Health VYA resource library was created by Save the Children and IRH on behalf of the VYA Alliance. As of 2015, the VYA Alliance has shifted over to the Very Young Adolescent Task Team under the 5-year, USAID-funded Passages Project. The Passages project is about transforming social norms for adolescent and youth sexual and reproductive health, with VYA as a key population.

OUR GOALS

- Raise awareness of the importance of investing in VYAs.
- Develop and test innovative programs.
- Make program practices, tools, and guidelines widely accessible.

OUR EXPERIENCE

DSW (Deutsche Stiftung Weltbevoelkerung) is an international development and advocacy organization. Our focus is on achieving universal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), which is fundamental to improving health and fighting poverty. DSW’s Youth-to-Youth Initiative and the Youth Adolescents Program guide communities to advocate for VYAs with governments and other stakeholders in Uganda, Tanzania, Kenya and Ethiopia. DSW, in close partnership with Bayer HealthCare Pharmaceuticals, implemented the Young Adolescents Project (YAP) between 2009 and 2012 in three districts in Uganda. The aim of the project was to remove social and structural barriers faced by VYAs in accessing age appropriate SRHR information and services. Currently YAP program 2013-2015 is running in the Coastal region of Kenya in Kilifi County.

Georgetown University’s Institute for Reproductive Health (IRH) has been committed to generating and applying evidence to programming and advocacy for VYAs since we developed the My Changing Body puberty curriculum in 2005. Research-to-practice initiatives include formative research, program development and impact evaluation, as well as national and regional technical consultations with a focus on fertility awareness, body literacy and gender. Current intervention studies include the Gender Roles, Equality and Transformation (GREAT) Project (Uganda), the CycleSmart menstrual management kit (Nepal, Burkina Faso), and GrowUp Smart and Twelve Plus (Rwanda). Research initiatives include a study with the Search Institute to assess whether developmental assets are significantly associated with SRH among VYAs, and ongoing technical input into the JHU/WHO Global Early Adolescent study.

Plan International USA is part of a global organization founded in 1937 that works with communities worldwide to end the cycle of poverty for children. Plan International's activities are centered on a Child-Centered Community Development (CCCD) approach, which is rights-
based, holistic, gender-sensitive, and inclusive. Plan's specific impact areas that affect VYAs include SRH/HIV, child protection, child participation, education, and gender and social inclusion. In 2012, the Centre for Development and Population Activities (CEDPA) became part of Plan International USA. CEDPA's Better Life Options and Opportunities Model using the Choose a Future! Curriculum has proven effective in building the internal and external assets that VYAs need to make a healthy transition to adulthood in Latin America, Asia and Africa.

**Save the Children** is a global leader in VYA health with programs in 10 countries. SC?s innovative tools and programs build a life-long foundation for gender equality and SRH in early adolescence in order to improve broader maternal and newborn health outcomes. SC?s VYA programs encompass gender and sexuality education, puberty education and menstrual hygiene management, parent engagement, and access to age- and life stage-responsive health services. Current projects include the VYA Gender Norms Package including Choices, Voices, and Promises (now scaling up in seven countries; helps VYAs form positive gender norms at individual, household, and community levels), and the Gender Roles, Equality and Transformations (GREAT) Project in Uganda. Save?s previous work with this age group includes Protecting Futures (puberty education for girls to improve school attendance) and the Malawi Girls? Education Project (promoted girls? education by ensuring protection, psychosocial support and female role models).

![Image of children]

**General Resources**

**Welcome!**

The general resources section is a compilation of resources relating to adolescent sexual and reproductive health (ASRH); during times of crisis, the impacts of educating adolescents on reproductive health, the steps needed to create programs within communities resistant to teaching reproductive health, and what kind of information should be taught in reproductive health programs for VYA.
As girls approach adolescence, they face the start of a narrow bridge. As they move through adolescence they must cross it, and in the process, many will fall off. Why? The pathway to adulthood is not always easy, and many girls face challenges and obstacles that can derail their progress. One of the biggest challenges is the risk of early pregnancy and poor reproductive outcomes. In many parts of the world, young girls are at risk of early marriage, which can lead to unintended pregnancies and poor health outcomes. To prevent these outcomes, it is essential to provide young people with the information and resources they need to make informed decisions about their sexual and reproductive health.

**Preventing Early Marriage**
- Evaluating report of Equal Community Foundation's Hummingbird Raise Programme
- Preventing Early Pregnancy and Poor Reproductive Outcomes
- International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education: An Evidence-informed Approach
- Prevalence and Risk Factors Associated With Nutrition-Related Noncommunicable Diseases in the Eastern Mediterranean Region
- Prevalence and Risk Factors of Anemia among Adolescents in Denizli, Turkey
- Adolescent Girls Initiative-Kenya: Baseline
- Gender Equity Movement in Schools Training Manual for Facilitators
- Prevalence of Overweight and Obesity among Adolescent School Going Children (12-15 years) In Urban Area, South India

**Resources**
- Logic might have it, then, that a lot of effort in these arenas is being made to reach these adolescent girls, to help them make good decisions, and to create opportunities for them. Programs must be designed with them as the target audience. This toolkit will help you do that.

**Methods**
- In order for young people to make good decisions about sexual and reproductive health (RH) matters, they need good information. They must understand the consequences of their decisions and have the skills to express their views and interests. This toolkit will help you design, implement, and evaluate programs that empower young people with the knowledge, skills, and confidence to make informed decisions about their sexual and reproductive health.

**Conclusion**
- Many adolescent girls in Kenya face considerable risks and vulnerabilities that affect their education status, health, and well-being. This report describes the intervention and research design of AGI-K as well as the findings from the baseline survey. It highlights the importance of providing young people with the information and resources they need to make informed decisions about their sexual and reproductive health. It also emphasizes the need for programs that empower young people with the knowledge, skills, and confidence to make informed decisions about their sexual and reproductive health.

**Abstract**
- The islands of Ambae (rural), Aneityum (rural with tourism) and Efate (urban).
- The purpose of the study is to explore how gender norms emerge in romantic relationships among early adolescents (EAs) within these communities. The study examines the role of structural and contextual factors, such as cultural and social norms, in shaping these norms. The study also investigates the impact of these norms on girls' well-being and education outcomes.

**Research**
- CHOICES is a curriculum developed by Save the Children to empower girls by changing gender norms. There are curriculums for multiple countries- this one is for Egypt.

**Design**
- This study is a cross-sectional survey of school-going girls in the project area. The sample included girls in grades 8 and 9, who were between the ages of 12 and 16. The sample size was 387 girls, and the data collection technique was a personal interview of the study subjects. The data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics.

**Background**
- The prevalence of smoking and alcohol use among adolescents is rising globally. Many adolescents use these substances to cope with stress or to fit in with their peers. The study explored the prevalence of smoking and alcohol use among teenage girls in the project area and examined the factors associated with these behaviors.

**Methods**
- This study used a community-based design to examine the prevalence of smoking and alcohol use among teenage girls in the project area. The data were collected through a cross-sectional survey of school-going girls in grades 8 and 9. The survey included questions about smoking, alcohol use, and other risk behaviors, as well as demographic and sociodemographic variables.

**Results**
- In boys and girls, respectively, prevalence (95% CI) was 30% (26-34)/21% (18-25) for smoking, 49% (45-54)/48% (43-52) for alcohol use. The study found that many adolescent girls in the project area had tried tobacco and alcohol, and many had used these substances multiple times. The study also found that girls who smoked or drank alcohol were more likely to have lower grades, be truant, and be involved in other risk behaviors.

**Conclusion**
- The results of this study highlight the importance of addressing the prevalence of smoking and alcohol use among teenage girls in the project area. The study also emphasizes the need for programs that target these behaviors and help girls make healthy choices.