INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the latest edition of the Adolescence Research Digest. In this issue we highlight the results of the ground-breaking Lancet Commission on adolescent health and wellbeing, which were presented in London in May and Washington in June. The Commission report stresses that adolescence is a critical period of formative growth and brain development that profoundly affects health and well-being across the life course. Two-thirds of young people aged 10-24 are growing up in contexts where preventable and treatable health problems like HIV/AIDS, early pregnancy, depression, injury and violence, and access to safe sex, are a daily threat to their well-being and life chances.

The report highlights the detrimental effects of decades of neglect and under-investment in young people and calls for urgent, substantive investment in the largest ever generation of adolescents, now numbering 1.8 billion worldwide.

Two inter-related recommendations of the Commission’s report seem particularly pertinent. First, it stresses that different interventions are needed to address each country’s unique needs and it offers three broad categories of countries with different combinations of predominant risk factors:

- ‘Multi-burden’ countries (largely in sub-Saharan Africa, southeast Asia and Oceania) where key risk factors are infectious and vaccine-preventable diseases, under-nutrition and sexual and reproductive health;
- ‘Injury excess’ countries (largely in Latin America and central Asia plus Syria and Iraq) where key risk factors are violence, unintentional injury and traffic accidents;
- ‘Non-communicable disease’ countries (largely in North America, western Europe, southern Latin America and Australasia) where key risk factors are physical disorders, mental disorders and substance-use disorders.

These useful broad categorizations are a good starting point, but interventions need to be further tailored to reflect sub-national and regional differences and sub-groups of youth. To understand these differences, we must improve data collection on adolescent boys and girls. It is very important, however, that this investment in data includes both ‘big data’ to track broad trends as well as smaller-scale, qualitative data collection that explores the diverse, complex lived realities of young people and how they are affected by and respond to both adversity and opportunity.

This brings us to a second recommendation made by the Commission – the importance of involving young people in transforming their well-being, personal development and health. Young people ought to be involved in designing interventions to respond to their needs and priorities, as well as in research that concerns them.

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In this issue, we highlight research examples based on participatory methods, carried out in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and in Kenya, and involving girl-led research and technology-based community mapping. These experiences show how the genuine participation of young people in research can both support their own professional transformation and improve the quality and relevance of data collection. This can ultimately inform the development of effective interventions that not only ‘do no harm’ but also work proactively to promote adolescent well-being and young people’s positive contribution to their societies.

Dr Lyndsay McLean, Guest Editor

Lyndsay is Research Lead for the La Pépinière project, funded by the Department for International Development (DFID) in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), and is co-author of “The Realities of Adolescent Girls and Young Women in Kinshasa, DRC: Research about Girls, by Girls”.

NEWS

In April 2016, the World Bank announced it would invest USD 2.5 billion over five years in education projects directly benefiting adolescent girls.

The US State Department has launched a new Global Strategy to Empower Adolescent Girls. The interagency strategy focuses on three priorities: legal and policy frameworks that protect adolescent girls’ rights, including access to education; early and forced marriage; and female genital mutilation/cutting.

In an attempt to understand how parliamentarians can accelerate collective efforts to end child marriage across South Asia, the Asian Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development hosted a two day conference on ending child marriage in Nepal in March 2016 for 25 Members of Parliament from 13 countries.

A new resolution adopted at the 49th Session of the Commission on Population and Development held in May 2016, urges governments to collect data on adolescent girls in order to implement and track the success of the Sustainable Development Goals. The resolution emphasises data collection in the following areas: birth and marriage registration, sex-disaggregated data and statistics on gender indicators, and the needs of adolescent girls between the ages of 10-14 years.

The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation announced a USD 80 million commitment to close gender data gaps, including how much time women and girls spend on unpaid work and what implications this has on their life chances and choices, such as completing education.

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Participants of the World Humanitarian Summit endorsed a new Global Compact for Young People in Humanitarian Action. More than 20 humanitarian partners – governments, NGOs and UN agencies – agreed to put in place mechanisms to guarantee that the priorities and participation of young people are addressed by the humanitarian system.

On 4 May 2016, UNICEF held a symposium on the Adolescent Brain, highlighting that adolescence is a “second window of opportunity” – a time for social and emotional learning, as well as developmental challenges. Participants discussed how violence, poverty and technology affect the adolescent brain, and how to translate adolescent neuroscience into programming.

Myanmar’s first ever Adolescent Conference was held on 18-19 May 2016, bringing together over 400 adolescent participants. The event was organized by the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement, and supported by UNICEF, ActionAid and 15 other local and international
organizations. The two-day event provided a list of recommendations for the country’s forthcoming national youth policy, including providing sexual education in schools, increased access to technical and vocational education and training, and help centres where adolescents can report cases of violence, exploitation and abuse.

Leading researchers, policy makers and education experts from 19 countries joined a two-day expert consultation on protecting children from bullying, organized by the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, with the support of the UNICEF Office of Research–Innocenti. Participants discussed the need for clarity on definitions and for a global bullying database to guide policy and monitor progress. The consultation, held on 9-10 May 2016, also agreed on the importance of promoting a child-centred approach to ending bullying. Recommendations from the expert consultation will inform the upcoming Secretary-General’s report on protecting children from bullying.

UNICEF Innocenti and the Know Violence Initiative held a two-day expert roundtable on social protection and childhood violence. The roundtable highlighted the potential for social protection to decrease violence at the margin, and the need for more rigorous measurement in impact evaluations, as well as greater investments to shed light on this research gap. In tackling the lack of data, a set of ‘light’ indicators could be developed to include in surveys.

UPCOMING EVENTS

The fifth annual Girl Up Leadership Summit will be held in Washington D.C. on 11-13 July 2016. Over 300 girl advocates from around the world will participate in leadership training, learn from influential speakers, and engage in skills-based workshops.

The first annual Conference on Child Behavioral Health in Sub-Saharan Africa will take place in Kampala, Uganda on 12-15 July 2016. This inaugural conference will share findings on innovative research and interdisciplinary partnership to scale up evidence-based practice on child behavioural health services in Uganda, Ghana, and Kenya.

A two-day international conference on Adolescence, Youth and Gender: Building Knowledge for Change will be held in Oxford, UK, on 8-9 September 2016. The conference will promote dialogue on current approaches to adolescence, youth and gender in international development and consider the implications for policy and programming.

The 2016 Society for Life-course and Longitudinal Studies (SLSS) conference will be held in Bamberg, Germany on 5-8 October 2016 on the theme of ‘Education and the Life Course: Determinants and Consequences of Unequal Educational Opportunities’.

Don’t forget to celebrate International Youth Day on 12 August. For further updates about this year’s events and annual theme, visit the International Youth Day website.
RESOURCES

UNESCO has launched an eAtlas on Gender Inequality and Education. The eAtlas has about 100 interactive maps and charts showing the educational pathways of girls and boys in over 200 countries.

‘Connect with Respect’ is a new curriculum tool for teachers in Asia and the Pacific, aimed at advancing gender equality, social cohesion and respectful relationships among young people. The resource was developed through a regional partnership between UNESCO, UNICEF, Plan International, UNWomen, UN Girls’ Education Initiative (UNGEI), and the UN Secretary-General’s UNiTE to End Violence against Women campaign.

The Population Council has developed a Girl Roster Toolkit to help increase adolescent girls’ access to vital resources, facilities and services, particularly those girls in the poorest communities and marginalised from society.

A new USAID-funded guide to strengthening the linkages between clinical and social services for children and adolescents who have experienced sexual violence has been launched. The guide provides a basic framework, examples, resources, and contact information for health providers and managers.

Girl Effect launched a new Girl Safeguarding Policy outlining how to approach digital initiatives and programmes involving girls. It includes guidelines and checklists on: data privacy and security; platform content and design; partnerships; and research, monitoring and learning.

A facilitator’s guide has been shared as part of a gender transformative programme for young people – Changing the River’s Flow 4 Young People. The programme was implemented by SAF AIDS across nine southern African countries, with Sonke Gender Justice’s One Man Can campaign.

UNICEF and the Global Child Forum have developed a Children’s Rights and Business Atlas. The atlas is an online risk assessment tool that enables businesses to assess the potential for direct or indirect infringement of children’s rights across 198 countries and 10 industries.

The International Planned Parenthood Foundation (IPPF) has launched a new learning report on: Love, Sex and Young People. The report includes case studies from Benin, Kenya, Nepal and Nicaragua of the A+ programme, an innovative IPPF youth-led programme funded by Danida.

A series of 10 briefs on Taking Action to Address Child Marriage: the Role of Different Sectors has been produced by the International Center for Research on Women (ICRWF), including one brief on integrating child marriage prevention and response into youth programmes.

A new reading pack on Youth and Jobs has been produced as part of an e-learning series for the Governance and Social Development Resource Centre.

Pathfinder has developed a training module for facility-based health-care providers (e.g. doctors, nurses, midwives) on providing reproductive health services to young married women and first-time parents in West Africa. The training addresses the particular challenges and pressures of childbearing for young married women, and includes guidance on how to provide non-judgemental care.

A new online course on Promising Programmatic Approaches for Adolescent and Youth Sexual and Reproductive Health has been launched by USAID’s Global Bureau of Global Health. The course offers case studies of effective programmes and complements the Youth Sexual and Reproductive course, which is a suggested prerequisite.

A technical brief on HIV and young people who sell sex has been produced by the World Health Organization in association with the UN Interagency Working Group on Key Populations. The brief is a source of information on how best to provide services, programmes and support for young people who sell sex.
LATEST RESEARCH

A selection of the latest research on adolescent well-being, released in the last few months:

Health

Our future: a Lancet commission on adolescent health and wellbeing

Patton, G. et al., The Lancet Commission, May 2016

With a record 1.8 billion adolescents and young people globally, there is both risk and significant opportunity in the realization of adolescent health and well-being, argues a new Lancet Commission. This ground-breaking publication draws on the global expertise of academics, policy makers, practitioners, and young health advocates, to examine key issues, including the benefits of life course research approaches; rapidly changing social and structural determinants of adolescent well-being and their implications for health promotion and prevention; and models for youth engagement and accountability. The Commission states that the most powerful actions for adolescent health and well-being must be inter-sectoral, multi-level, and multi-component, and involve the direct engagement and empowerment of young people to bring about change.

Global burden of diseases, injuries, and risk factors for young people’s health during 1990–2013: a systematic analysis for the Global Burden of Disease Study 2013

Mokdad, A. et al., The Lancet, May 2016

Risk factors that develop in adolescence such as injuries, mental health disorders and sexual and reproductive health problems are leading causes of morbidity and mortality amongst youth populations. This article is based on systematic analysis of the Global Burden of Disease Study 2013, which includes annual data for 188 countries from 1990 to 2013. It finds that HIV/AIDS, road injuries, and drowning are the leading causes of death for young people aged between 10–14 years, and transport injuries are the highest cause of death for ages 15-19 years and 20-24 years. Maternal disorders are the highest cause of death for young women aged 20–24 years. This study emphasizes the need for increased context-specific efforts to reduce the ‘burden of disease’ for young people, which will impact both on future population health and global economic development. It also concludes that more robust disease burden indicators, harmonised data collection tools, and forecasting are critically required.

School-based interventions going beyond health education to promote adolescent health: systematic review of reviews

Shackleton, N. et al., Journal of Adolescent Health, April 2016

A recent systematic review of reviews (RoR) has found that multi-component school interventions, including school policy changes, parental involvement, and work with local communities, are effective in promoting sexual health and preventing bullying and smoking. Undertaken as part of the Lancet Commission on Adolescent Health and Wellbeing, this RoR largely draws from studies carried out in the United States, but also identifies strong evidence to support economic incentives for adolescent girls to stay in school and reduce adolescent marriages and pregnancies in low- and middle-income countries. The RoR concludes that there is a need for more rigorous evaluations of school sexual-health clinics, condom-availability programmes and peer mediation in reducing violence.

Costs and cost-effectiveness of a mental health intervention for war-affected young persons: decision analysis based on a randomized controlled trial

McBain, R. et al., Health Policy and Planning, May 2016

Over 1 billion young people live in war-affected contexts, placing them at increased risk of adverse mental health outcomes. Further, despite growing evidence on the measurement of related interventions, there has been limited examination of their associated costs. In response, a randomised controlled trial in Sierra Leone carried out between 2012-2013 has assessed the cost-effectiveness of a novel group-based mental health programme – the Youth Readiness Intervention (YRI) – a behavioural treatment working to reduce the functional impairment associated with psychological distress among war-affected young people. This study finds that while the intervention is not cost-effective at a ‘willingness-to-pay’ threshold of three times average
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gross domestic product per capita, it translated into a range of benefits not captured by the cost-effectiveness analysis, such as improved school enrolment.

Adolescent suicidal behaviours in 32 low- and middle-income countries


The prevalence of adolescent suicidal behaviour varies across countries, but there is a consistent set of risk factors: bullying, physical violence, loneliness, limited parental support and alcohol/tobacco use. To date, much of the evidence on adolescent suicide and suicidal behaviours has come from Europe and North America. This study analyses the data of students aged 13 to 17 years who participated in the 2003–2012 Global School-based Health Surveys in 32 low- and middle-income countries. It finds that the commonality of risk in this context may lend itself to interventions that identify vulnerable adolescents in school settings. Whilst evidence has shown the effectiveness of school-based suicide prevention interventions in high-income countries, there is need for further research in low- and middle-income countries to verify their wider applicability.

Violence

Collecting data on violence against children and young people: need for a universal standard

Devries, K, et al., International Health, April 2016

Children and young people face significant risks if ethical standards are not upheld in the collection of data on violence. These risks are more serious in settings with weak and under-developed child protection systems. While guidance documents on ethical research with children have been developed by a number of agencies, alongside organizational codes of conduct and child protection policies, this paper emphasises that practical guidance on good practice within violence research is needed, including consideration of:

• the type and order of questions to avoid over-burdening respondents;
• the selection of interviewers;
• maintaining confidentiality; and
• developing clear, written plans outlining the kind of support to be offered to children involved in research.

Is working risky or protective for married adolescent girls in urban slums in Kenya? Understanding the association between working status, savings and Intimate Partner Violence

Muthengi, E. et al., PLoS ONE, May 2016

A recent baseline survey of adolescent girls in urban slums in Kenya finds that patriarchal gender norms, high levels of poverty, and the employment of married adolescent girls may trigger inter-marital violence. Using a logistic regression and analytic sample of 452 adolescent married girls aged between 15 and 19 years, this study reports that compared to girls who did not work, married adolescent girls who were working and without regular savings were significantly more likely to experience Intimate Partner Violence (IPV). In addition, complementary qualitative findings drawn from in-depth interviews with 32 adolescent girls and 16 young men indicate that savings decrease girls’ dependency on men and allow them to leave abusive partners.

Spanking and child outcomes: old controversies and new meta-analyses


Up to 80 per cent of parents globally spank their children, and there is growing evidence to support the associated risks this presents to child and adolescent development. As validated in a recent meta-analysis of 50 years of research, this type of corporal punishment may lead to mental health problems, cognitive difficulties and increase children’s aggression and anti-social behaviour. The association between spanking and detrimental outcomes did not vary by age group (the age ranges included: less than 2 years; 2 to 5 years; 6 to 10 years; and 11 to 15 years). Researchers also found that adults who were spanked as children were more likely to support physical punishment against their own children.
unmarried peers, according to analysis of long-term panel data in Andhra Pradesh, India. The Young Lives data used in this paper tracks a cohort of approximately 1,000 children who were born in 1994-1995 from the ages of 8 to 19 years. It finds that married young women are significantly disadvantaged in terms of subjective well-being, psychosocial outcomes, and access to education. Related to this data and thematic focus, Young Lives have recently produced a policy brief on tackling child marriage and early childbearing in India and a working paper exploring the factors shaping trajectories to child and early marriage in India.

Education

Towards inclusive education: the impact of disability on school attendance in developing countries


The average disability gap in primary and secondary school attendance is 30 per cent, with disabled children consistently facing more problems than non-disabled peers in educational participation, according to data from 15 low- to middle-income countries. This working paper by UNICEF’s Office of Research–Innocenti uses nationally representative data from 18 surveys which collect information on educational status and administer the Washington Group Short Set (WGSS) of disability-screening questions and education status. The data shows that more than 85% of disabled primary-age children who are out of school have never attended school. Countries that have reached close to universal primary education such as Indonesia, South Africa, West Bank and Gaza, report high ratios of disabled to non-disabled out-of-school children, suggesting that more targeted approaches are required to address the challenges faced by disabled children in attending school.

Marriage and Fertility

Teenage marriage, fertility, and well-being: panel evidence from India


Young women who are married by the age of 19 have significantly poorer outcomes than their unmarried peers, according to analysis of long-term panel data in Andhra Pradesh, India. The Young Lives data used in this paper tracks a cohort of approximately 1,000 children who were born in 1994-1995 from the ages of 8 to 19 years. It finds that married young women are significantly disadvantaged in terms of subjective well-being, psychosocial outcomes, and access to education. Related to this data and thematic focus, Young Lives have recently produced a policy brief on tackling child marriage and early childbearing in India and a working paper exploring the factors shaping trajectories to child and early marriage in India.

Training and Employment

The role of training programs for youth employment in Nepal: impact evaluation report on the employment fund

Chakravarty, S. et al., World Bank, April 2016

Providing training to over 40,000 Nepalese young people, including a specialised adolescent girls’ initiative reaching 4,410 women aged 16 to 24 years, the Employment Fund (EF) intervention is one of the largest providers of Technical Education and Vocational Training (TEVT) in Nepal. Using a quasi-experimental approach, a new World Bank report finds strong impact of the EF programmes on economic and psychological empowerment, in addition to improvements in non-farm employment outcomes, such as in electronics, beautician services, and tailoring. The report also finds higher impact on employment for women than for men.

Street-Connected Young People

What works in addressing the needs of street-connected children and young people

The International Initiative for Impact Evaluation (3ie), April 2016

Street-connected children and young people (SCCYP) – defined as those who work and/or sleep on the streets and may or may not be
empowerment necessarily implies both economic autonomy and social integration. The findings support the case for a participatory approach to programming for girls and young women and a holistic approach to empowerment combining interventions to support individual AGYW to build their social, economic and psychological assets as well as to ensure that institutions and norms in their wider environment facilitate their empowerment.

**ADDITIONAL READINGS**

Other interesting readings selected by our team (* = not open access).

- Ardington, C. et al., *Social protection and labor market outcomes of youth in South Africa*, Industrial Relations & Labor, March 2016*
- Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University, *From best practices to breakthrough impacts: a science-based approach to building a more promising future for young children and families*, May 2016
- Darroch, J. et al., *Adding it up: costs and benefits of meeting the contraceptive needs of adolescents*, Guttmacher Institute, May 2016

This paper discusses three innovative, technology-based mapping methods for engaging young people in formative participatory research, based on a study in Muhuru Bay, Kenya with 10-18-year-olds, their parents, teachers, community leaders, and local health workers. Methods used to identify and discuss locations of positive and negative youth activity included: dot map focus groups; geocaching ‘games’; and satellite imagery-assisted logs. Despite some challenges, the authors conclude that technology-based participatory mapping tools in low-income settings can be effective methods for understanding the local geography of young people’s behaviour and well-being.

**Research Methodologies**

**Participatory mapping in low-resource settings: three novel methods used to engage Kenyan youth and other community members in community-based HIV prevention research**

Green, E.P et al., Global Public Health, April 2016

This qualitative peer-to-peer research was led by an innovative new Girl-Led Research Unit established by DFID’s La Pépinière programme, which seeks to empower adolescent girls and young women (AGYW) in the capital, Congo. The study highlights the conflicting expectations of AGYW in Kinshasa and how they are closely monitored and quickly categorised as either ‘good girls’ or ‘bad girls’. It highlights that for AGYW in Kinshasa, adequately supervised by responsible adults – are vulnerable to multiple risks and excluded from mainstream opportunities. This systematic review examines the evidence on the effectiveness of interventions for improving opportunities for SCCYP reducing the risks of adverse outcomes and promoting healthy lifestyles. The study found that therapeutic approaches did not lead to better outcomes for SCCYP in comparison to services such as free meals and accommodation. However, family therapies were found to be effective for certain outcomes in relation to substance use and delinquent behaviour.

**The realities of adolescent girls and young women in Kinshasa (Democratic Republic of the Congo): research about girls, by girls**

McLean, L, et al., La Pépinière / DFID, May 2016
Deuba, K. et al., Experience of intimate partner violence among young pregnant women in urban slums of Kathmandu Valley, Nepal: a qualitative study, BMC Women's Health, March 2016

ECPAT International., Global study on child sexual exploitation in travel and tourism, May 2016


Global Child Forum, Children’s rights and the corporate sector in Southeast Asia, May 2016


Jewkes, R. et al., Understanding the relationships between gender inequitable behaviours, childhood trauma and socio-economic status in single and multiple perpetrator rape in rural South Africa: structural equation modelling, PLOS One, May 2016

Junior, J. et al., The perspectives of young women in rural western Kenya on unconditional cash transfers, Poverty & Public Policy, March 2016


Levesque, R., Reviews in research on adolescence: genres, trends, and challenges, Adolescent Research Review, March 2016

Mathews, C. et al., Effects of PREPARE, a multi-component, school-based HIV and Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) prevention programme on adolescent sexual risk behaviour and IPV: cluster randomised controlled trial, AIDS and Behavior, June 2016

Moodley, N. et al., Projected economic evaluation of the national implementation of a hypothetical HIV vaccination program among adolescents in South Africa, BMC Public Health, April 2016


Musoke, D. et al., Supporting youth and community capacity through photovoice: Reflections on participatory research on maternal health in Wakiso district, Uganda, Global Public Health, April 2016

Roudi, F., Adolescent girls in Egypt, Population Reference Bureau, April 2016


Schlecht, J., A girl no more: the changing norms of child marriage in conflict, Women’s Refugee Commission, March 2016

Vindevogel, S. et al., A mixed-methods study of former child soldiers’ transition trajectories from military to civilian life, Journal of Adolescent Research, April 2016*

Ward, J. and Viner, R., G279(P) Secondary education and health outcomes in young people from the Cape Area Panel Study (CAPS), Archives of Disease in Childhood, April 2016*
