The global agenda for adolescent well-being is gaining momentum. The New UN General Comment on the rights of the child during adolescence underscores the unprecedented opportunity we have to address adolescents’ needs and aspirations. Research on adolescence has helped stage ‘the second decade’ of human life, and has enabled us to pay closer attention to the myriad of changes children undergo as they approach and reach puberty.

Recognition that children need space, support and resources for their capacities and identities to form, represents a significant shift for child-focused social policies across the world.

One crucial aspect – often overlooked in discussions on well-being – is violence. Adolescence is a stage in which exposure to peer violence in schools increases. For girls, exposure to sexual violence dramatically increases; particularly in the context of early and forced marriage, but also with respect to dating violence. Sexual violence is also a reality for boys, though it is not often discussed or studied. National data on boys’ experiences of violence are largely unavailable.

However, research with adult male perpetrators of violence often reveals childhood exposure to violence and abuse. Physical fighting and gang violence put large numbers of adolescent boys at risk, including risk of homicide. Vulnerability to forms of online violence – including cyber-bullying, harassment, sextortion and exploitation – amplify the offline risks; although the opportunities for personal learning and empowerment that the Internet provides typically outweigh such risks.

In the recent special issue of the Journal of Psychology, Health and Medicine, the Know Violence in Childhood: Global Learning Initiative highlights key issues related to addressing risk of
Innocenti Research Digest | Adolescence 05-2017

violence victimization in adolescence: one such issue being the importance of thinking about prevention across all settings where adolescents are involved; from the home, to school, to the community.

Engaging families, educators and communities in discussing the risks and harm associated with violence is critical in order to shift social norms that may see violence as inevitable, or necessary, to achieve social order.

Another key issue is the importance of recognizing the agency of adolescents and their rapidly developing capacity to understand the world around them, and to mediate social relationships. Strategies to reach them should be respectful of these emerging capacities and harness them.

The third important issue is the universal importance, across context and country, of strategies to empower girls, strengthen their voice, and work with boys to build gender-equitable peer relationships.

Finally, targeting high-risk urban communities to address gang violence and create viable alternatives for boys and girls, is important in reducing risk of homicide and for building positive opportunities in adolescence.

Overall, the work of the Initiative highlights the importance of understanding and addressing violence as a thread that runs through children's lives. It runs through everyday spaces and relationships, including those with their closest relatives, friends and partners, exposing them to vulnerabilities and risks often shaped in the earliest years.

Ramya Subrahmanian
Executive Director
Know Violence in Childhood
Global Learning Initiative

NEWS

New UN General Comment on the Rights of the Child during Adolescence

In February, the United Nations adopted General Comment No. 20, providing countries with detailed normative guidance on the measures needed to ensure the rights of children during adolescence. This provision helps to raise the profile of adolescence as a period of capacity development, distinct from childhood and adulthood. It highlights the complexity of young people's increasing agency, coupled with significant physical and emotional vulnerability. The Comment recognizes adolescents' creative contributions towards societal development. The rights and vulnerability of particular groups are also noted, including adolescents living with disability, LGBTI communities, and indigenous peoples.

© UNICEF/UN02035/Gilbertson

CEDAW for Youth

Written by young people for young people, this youth-friendly version of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) was launched by UN Women and the UN Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development, in December 2016. CEDAW, an international treaty adopted by the United Nations General Assembly, requires countries to eliminate discrimination against women and girls. This new guide to the Convention highlights the role of youth-led organizations, networks and movements, in holding their governments to account.
UNICEF Warns of the Extreme Risks facing Refugee and Migrant Children on the Central Mediterranean Migration Route

Refugee and migrant children routinely suffer sexual violence, exploitation, abuse and detention, along the central Mediterranean migration route from North Africa to Italy, warns UNICEF in this new report. In 2016, children made up nearly 16% of new arrivals in Italy via the central Mediterranean route, and 9 out of 10 children were unaccompanied. UNICEF is urging governments and the EU to adopt a six-point agenda for action. A selection of multimedia resources documenting experiences along the central Mediterranean migration route – including photo essays and videos – can be found on UNICEF’s WeShare website.

Global Status Report on School Violence and Bullying Launched at International Symposium on School Violence and Bullying

It is estimated that 246 million children and adolescents experience school violence and bullying in some form every year. In response, UNESCO and the Institute of School Violence Prevention at Ewha Womans University (Seoul, Republic of Korea) launched a report at the International Symposium on School Violence and Bullying, from 17 to 19 January 2017. Priority actions for tackling school violence include: strengthening leadership; establishing partnerships; raising awareness; building the capacity of education staff to prevent and respond to violence; establishing reporting mechanisms; and improving data on the causes of school violence and effective responses.

Call for Comments: Are adolescents most at risk of stunting during famine?

UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti is inviting the research community to share incipient research findings on famines and adolescence stunting; a theme given additional relevance by the recent UN alarms on the threat of famines for 20 million people in Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan and Yemen this year. Comments can be sent via a blog on UNICEF Connect or via email directly to: research@unicef.org. If there is a sizable response, Innocenti may consider holding a conference on Famines and anthropometric impact on adolescents.

UPCOMING EVENTS

International Association for Adolescent Health (IAAH) Conference: Towards health and wellbeing for all adolescents by 2030

The first of its kind in the region, this conference aims at breaking the silence around the unmet needs of the large and increasing cohort of adolescents in the Middle East and North Africa. It will explore themes including adolescent health and development, youth friendly clinics, sexual and reproductive health, and child marriage.

Organizers: International Association for Adolescent Health; Arab Coalition for Adolescent Health; and the Egyptian Society for Adolescent Medicine.

Date: 12-14 May 2017
Location: Cairo, Egypt
Registration

11th World Congress on Adolescent Health

The International Association for Adolescent Health’s 11th World Congress: Investing in Adolescent Health – the Future is Now, will include keynotes by representatives of the Lancet Standing Commission on Adolescent Health and Wellbeing, ICRW and WHO.

Organizers: International Association for Adolescent Health (IAAH); MAMTA Health Institute for Mother and Child; and Public Health Foundation of India (PHFI), with the support of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India.

Date: 27-29 October 2017
Location: New Delhi, India
Registration

A Practice-based Approach to Gender-based Violence (GBV) in Crises

This workshop will help participants understand the psychosocial impact of gender-based violence and how to address violence against girls and women in emergency contexts.

Organizer: School of Social Work, Colombia University

Date: 22 April 2017
Location: New York, US
Registration

Focusing on health and social policies, the conference will critically evaluate existing evidence and discuss solution-focused policy and programming, with potential for improving the well-being of adolescents. This effort is supported by Women Deliver and the Lancet Commission on Adolescent Health.

Organizers: Canadian Partnership for Women and Children's Health (CanWaCH); Every Woman Every Child (EWEC); the Partnership for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health (PMNCH); and the World Health Organization (WHO).

Date: 16-17 May 2017  
Location: Ottawa, Canada  
Registration

World Anti-Bullying Forum

This forum will explore strategies to reduce and prevent bullying among children and young people. The themes of peer victimization in schools, collaborating with young people in cyberbullying research, and peer sexual harassment, will be explored.

Organizers: International Bullying Prevention Association; International Center against Bullying; Stockholm University; Orebro University; and Linkoping University.

Date: 7-9 May 2017  
Location: Stockholm, Sweden  
Registration

Society for Research in Child Development (SRCD) Biennial Meeting

This meeting will focus on child and adolescent development. The programme will centre around four themes: poverty, inequality, and developmental science; global change and child development; neuroscience and child development; and behavioural science and public policy.

Organizers: University of Chicago, University of Oregon

Date: 6-8 April 2017  
Location: Austin, Texas  
Registration

Call for proposals: Putting Children First: Identifying solutions and taking action to tackle poverty and inequality in Africa

This three-day international conference aims to engage policy makers, practitioners and researchers in identifying solutions for fighting child and adolescent poverty in Africa, and inspiring action towards change.

Organizers: Ethiopian Centre for Child Research; Ethiopian Development Research Institute (EDRI); Comparative Research Programme on Poverty (CROP); ESRC-DFID Impact Initiative; African Child Policy Forum (ACPFI; Partnership for Economic Policy (PEP); Save the Children; Young Lives; and UNICEF.

Date: 23-25 October 2017  
Deadline for proposals: 30 April 2017  
Location: Addis Ababa, Ethiopia  
Registration

Save the date: G200 Youth Forum

The G200 Youth Forum will be one of the largest international events organized for the youth from around 200 countries in 2017. It will host young leaders, students and academics, representatives of the business world and parliaments.

Date: 6-10 December 2017  
Location: Dubai, United Arab Emirates  
Registration

ONLINE COURSES

UN Women Online Course in Care Economics

This online, moderated course will focus on providing participants with a global perspective on care work and care economy, as they relate to girls and women. The course includes a series of online lectures from international guest speakers, as well as modules on changing trends in the social organization of care, domestic employment and global care chains.

Start date: 22 May  
Duration: 8 weeks, 6 hours per week  
Registration
Innocenti Research Digest | Adolescence 05-2017

from, interventions focused on their empowerment. Primarily focused at youth programme implementers in low- and middle-income countries, the toolkit provides a step-by-step guide to using the PYD Framework, including examples of indicators for measuring PYD-related outcomes.

UNFPA and WHO Technical Guidance on Adolescent Health

Systematic processes for identifying priorities and actions for adolescents to thrive in their communities, are part of the new technical guidance, developed by the UNFPA and WHO. A selection of key resources and tools are provided, together with a monitoring framework, which can be used to track progress towards the implementation of the Global Strategy for Women’s, Children’s and Adolescents’ Health.

WHO Fact Sheets on Adolescent Contraceptive Use

Designed to help policy makers and programme planners reduce inequalities in contraceptive service provision, WHO’s new country fact sheets include data from 58 countries on adolescents’ current sources of contraception, methods utilized, and explanations why contraception is not used.

UNGEI Working Group Tool on Preventing GBV in Schools

“Connect with Respect” – a tool for teachers and education stakeholders – draws largely on evidence and programmatic experience of school-based interventions in Asia and the Pacific. The tool consists of a structured teaching programme for

RESOURCES

World Future Council Good Practice Guide on Protecting Refugee Women and Girls

Profiling more than 30 examples of innovative good practice from 13 different countries, this resource includes case studies on protecting adolescent girls from violence, during their journey and in destination countries. The issues of adequate reception conditions are discussed, with guidance on how to create safe space mobile units and day centres.

USAID and PEPFAR Positive Youth Development Measurement Toolkit

The Positive Youth Development (PYD) approaches to evaluation help measure the extent to which young people are positively engaged in, and benefit

UNICEF/UNI163966/Holt

©
It encloses recommendations on how to proactively identify, resettle and protect children and adolescents at risk.

**LATEST RESEARCH**

**Violence**

*Special Issue of Know Violence in Childhood: A global learning initiative*


This special issue of the Journal of Psychology, Health and Medicine features 15 studies commissioned by the Know Violence learning initiative, focusing on effective interventions to positively impact violence during childhood and adolescence. A review of evidence-based practices to address social norms and violence highlights the importance of combining strategic approaches (e.g. targeting social norms directly, changing attitudes and behaviour to shift social norms), core principles (e.g. using public health frameworks), and intervention strategies (e.g. engaging bystanders, involving stakeholders). A systematic review of preventing school violence observes that some interventions show promise in reducing peer aggression, for instance through peer mentoring/mediation. A global review of violence prevention through parenting programmes concludes that such programmes have the potential to prevent and reduce the risk of child maltreatment. Further evidence is needed on the long-term effects of interventions across different contexts, particularly high-violence, low-resource contexts.

**Gender Socialization**

*Gender Socialization during Adolescence in Low- and Middle-Income Countries: Conceptualization, influences and outcomes*


Adolescence is a critical period in the development of gender attitudes and behaviours, which have potentially life-long effects. The paper identifies 31 programmes designed to shape gender norms...
using one of three strategies: empowering young people (mainly girls) with information, skills, and social support; fostering an enabling environment; and working with men and boys. Gender equality policies and programmes that target the adolescent in isolation, and fail to consider socialization, life course factors, and changes in economic structures, are less effective than those adopting a more holistic approach. Policy and programming recommendations include the need to establish a legal and policy environment that complements and takes advantage of elements of structural change. Gender transformative interventions must be structured and designed in ways that directly relate to structural changes. Moreover, life course approaches that account for the biological and social changes that take place during the gender socialisation processes in adolescence, must be developed.

Download paper [pdf]


International Center for Research on Women (ICRW), December 2016.

An evaluation of the Gender Equality Movement in Schools (GEMS), a curriculum for children aged 12-14 in India, observed significant improvements in the children’s attitudes to gender and violence, the interaction between boys and girls, communication with teachers, and reduced perpetration of violence. The randomized trial involved more than 3,000 boys and girls from the 80 schools in India – 40 schools where GEMS is being implemented, and 40 comparison schools. Findings confirm the value of school-based prevention approaches that begin in early adolescence, when ideas about gender and violence are still being formed. Activities which focus on parental engagement are recommended, as well as regular school and community-based campaigns and events. The report also notes operational issues that future school-based programming might seek to address, including: ensuring GEMS teachers have adequate preparation time; beginning GEMS early (when children are 10 years old) and continuing GEMS for longer; investing in positive discipline skills; and building a response system for dealing with varied complaints of violence.

Download report [pdf]

Education

The Health Benefits of Secondary Education in Adolescents and Young Adults: An international analysis in 186 low-, middle- and high-income countries from 1990 to 2013

Viner et al., SSM – Population Health, December 2016.

Analysis of global data between 1990 and 2013 reveals that improvements in secondary education have led to substantial health benefits, including decreases in adolescent fertility, HIV prevalence, and mortality rates among young people. Positive health outcomes are greatest amongst young women and those from low-income countries, particularly in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. Each additional year of secondary education for girls reduces adolescent fertility by 14.6%, mortality by up to 16.9% and HIV prevalence by 43%. Secondary education has led to smaller, but highly significant, reductions in mortality and HIV for young men. This progress is independent of growth in primary education, national wealth and population. The authors conclude that country-level investments in secondary education are likely to generate major health dividends; a ‘social vaccine’ for achieving health outcomes.

Download article [pdf]
**Child Marriage**

**Has Child Marriage Declined in sub-Saharan Africa? An analysis of trends in 31 countries.**


Decreases in the prevalence of child marriage are concentrated among girls aged 15-17 years according to a study of Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) data from 31 sub-Saharan African countries. The study highlights that high levels of child marriage persist throughout much of sub-Saharan Africa, despite legislative efforts to prevent the practice. The authors note that improving educational opportunities for girls is one of the few interventions that has proved effective in preventing child marriage. However, there is a need to ensure that the most vulnerable girls can access such opportunities.

**Download article [pdf]**

**Sexual and Reproductive Health**

**Examination of Youth Sexual and Reproductive Health Transitions in Nigeria and Kenya using Longitudinal Data**


Longitudinal data from Kenya and Nigeria among adolescent girls and youth aged 15 to 24 show that transition patterns differ within and across the urban areas and countries studied, with urban Kenyan girls having more premarital sex and getting pregnant earlier than girls from the Nigerian cities. Recommendations for delaying sexual and reproductive health transitions consist of strategies to keep adolescents in school and targeting young people living in areas with cultural and religious norms that are supportive of earlier marriage/pregnancy. Lessons learned for future longitudinal studies include the need to start with a large, representative sample of young people, and to build in a longer follow-up duration, to fully examine transition patterns.

**Download article [pdf]**

**Economic Empowerment**

**Evaluation of an Adolescent Development Program for Girls in Tanzania.**


BRAC’s Empowerment and Livelihood for Adolescents (ELA) programme was found to be highly successful in Uganda in terms of economic, health, and social outcomes. Yet when the programme was replicated in Tanzania, it did not have any notable effect on most of these outcomes. This evaluation measured the impact of the programme with and without microcredit services. Results show that layering additional microfinance services onto an adolescent development programme can be an effective tool to attain greater inclusion of youth in financial services, and underscore issues of scalability of research findings.

**Download paper [pdf]**

**When the Money Runs Out: Do cash transfers have sustained effects on human capital accumulation?**


According to the findings of a recent study in the Zomba district of Malawi, many of the initial benefits of a pilot two-year cash transfer programme targeting girls aged 13-22 were found to be short-term. Significant declines in HIV prevalence, teen pregnancy, and early marriage among recipients of unconditional cash transfers (UCTs) during the programme evaporated quickly two years after the cessation of transfers. However, children born...
to UCT beneficiaries during the programme had significantly higher height-for-age at follow-up. On the other hand, conditional cash transfers (CCTs) offered to out-of-school females produced a large increase in educational attainment and a sustained reduction in the total number of births, but caused no gains in health, labour market outcomes, or empowerment. The findings point both to the promise and the limitations of cash transfer programmes for sustained gains in welfare among young women.

Download paper [pdf]

Research Methods
Implementation of Audio-Computer Assisted Self-Interview (ACASI) among Adolescent Girls in Humanitarian Settings: Feasibility, acceptability, and lessons learned

Falb et al., Conflict and Health, January 2017.

ACASI is a tool for data collection in which participants listen to pre-recorded survey questions through headphones and record their answers on a touch screen or keypad. As part of the project COMPASS (Creating Opportunities through Mentorship, Parental involvement, and Safe Spaces), ACASI was implemented in two humanitarian settings: conflict-affected communities in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and refugee camps along the Sudan-Ethiopia border. Nearly 90% of girls in DRC felt that the questions were easy to understand, compared to approximately 75% in Ethiopia. Level of education, but not age, was associated with understanding of the survey in both countries. Time investment in ACASI was substantial in order to contextualize the approach to these specific humanitarian settings, including piloting of images, language assessments, and checking both written translations and corresponding verbal recordings. Overall, ACASI proved acceptable for gathering data on sensitive topics such as violence, and feasible both to participants and to research teams.

Download article [pdf]
ADDITIONAL READING

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


Richardson, L. et al., *Research in the Integration of Behavioral Health for Adolescents and Young Adults in Primary Care Settings: A systematic review*, Journal of Adolescent Health, March 2017.


**CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS EDITION**

Authors: Erika McAslan Fraser, Anna Parke and Lyndsay McLean (Social Development Direct)
Editor: Emanuela Bianchera (UNICEF)
Copy editor: Sarah Marchant (UNICEF)
Layout: Patricia Arquero Caballero (UNICEF)

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Our thanks to the [UK Department for International Development (DFID)](https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-international-development) for funding this Digest as part of the research programme: The Social and Structural Determinants of Adolescent Well-being (2014-2018).

**DISCLAIMER**

The findings, interpretations and conclusions expressed in this Digest are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the policies or views of UNICEF, DFID or Social Development Direct.

**CONNECT WITH US**

For more information or to subscribe for Innocenti Research Digest | Adolescence: ebianchera@unicef.org

Keep up to date with research and publications at UNICEF Office of Research-Innocenti on:
Website | Twitter | Facebook

The [Innocenti Research Digest | Adolescence](https://www.unicef-irc.org/adolescence) is a pilot project. If you find it useful, please respond to the three questions on this [LINK](https://www.unicef-irc.org/adolescence) (no registration).