



MAKE ADOLESCENT WELL-BEING A PRIORITY: AN URGENT CALL TO ACTION



THE GLOBAL GOALS
For Sustainable Development



“ As a second sensitive development opportunity, after early childhood, adolescence represents an optimal period in life to learn healthy behaviours, acquire social and labour skills and realize human rights protections that have an impact throughout the life course. Investment in adolescent health, well-being and development generates a “triple dividend of benefits” and determines both the present and future health of individuals, as well as that of generations to come. ”

WHY IS ACTION NEEDED?

Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including universal health coverage (SDG Target 3.8), requires keeping adolescents informed and healthy, so they can survive and thrive both now and in adulthood, as recognized in the United Nations Strategy for Women's, Children's and Adolescents' Health. However, to fulfil the promises of the SDGs, further support and commitment are required to deliver for adolescents, especially those most at risk of being left behind.

There are now 1.2 billion adolescents (aged 10 to 19) worldwide and this number will increase until 2050. Nearly nine out of ten adolescents live in low- and middle-income countries. The health and well-being of adolescents, now and in their adult lives, depend on their education, skill development, employability and access to high-quality health services. Adolescents also need a supportive environment that helps them to stay healthy and empowered, embrace gender equality norms and claim their rights.

Adolescents are entitled to information and services that meet all their needs. This includes information and services relating to noncommunicable diseases, injuries, healthy eating and nutrition, mental well-being, risks of tobacco and other substance abuse, physical activity, social support and the cultivation of healthy relationships. Provision of these should be consistent with adolescents' evolving capacities, and free of stigma and discrimination, and should uphold their sexual and reproductive health and rights.

Adolescents face multiple barriers in accessing the knowledge, information, health-care services and commodities they need. Most of their health and well-being issues are preventable or treatable, but appropriate care and services for adolescents are often either inadequate or absent. In addition, many service providers do not fully understand their needs. Age-specific challenges can be exacerbated by gender, ethnicity, religion, disability, location, education level, poverty, marital status, sexual orientation and gender identity, and migratory status, among other factors.

Adolescents have not benefited from the reduction in mortality seen in younger children. While deaths in children under five halved during the Millennium Development Goals period, reduction in adolescent mortality has stalled. Each year there are over 1.1 million adolescent deaths. Major contributors include road traffic injuries, suicide, interpersonal violence, HIV/AIDS and diarrhoeal diseases.

Investment in adolescents delivers the “triple dividend”: improving health and well-being now, enhancing it throughout the life course and contributing to the health and well-being of future generations.

A thriving adolescent population fuels economic growth, helping to increase productivity, decrease health expenditure and reduce inequities across generations.

- **For every dollar invested in selected adolescent health interventions, there is an estimated ten-fold health, social and economic return.¹**
- **Investing in best-practice programmes to end child marriage, costing approximately US\$ 3.80 per person, could bring an almost six-fold return on investment and cut child marriage by around a third.²**
- **Worldwide today, 97.5 million adolescent girls do not attend school. World Bank research shows that every year of secondary school education correlates with an 18% increase in a girl's future earning power.³**

¹ Sheehan P, Sweeny K, Rasmussen B, Wils A, et al. Building the foundations for sustainable development: a case for global investment in the capabilities of adolescents. *Lancet* 2017; 390: 1792–806.

² Ibid.

³ <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2018/03/07/world-bank-invests-us32-billion-in-adolescent-girls-education-in-2-years>

⁴ This is in line with the objectives of 'Youth2030: The United Nations Youth Strategy' and the agenda to accelerate progress on the SDGs in the Decade of Action 2020-2030.

CALL TO ACTION

To ensure that every adolescent can make informed choices about their lives, and fulfil their rights to attain full health and well-being, we the undersigned call on governments, donors and the international community to:



Engage adolescents in all legal, policy and programme processes that affect them, by:

- **placing adolescents at the forefront** of this call to action and all its related components;
- strengthening national platforms for increased and **equitable adolescent engagement** in developing policies and programmes that affect them; and
- **empowering young people** to demand their rights and to hold national systems and institutions accountable so that their distinct and diverse needs are met.



Go beyond the health sector and develop strong multisectoral, whole-of-government policy approaches that truly address adolescent health and well-being, by:

- **developing and adopting a framework for adolescent well-being**, using a multisectoral and multistakeholder lens, to ensure cohesive programming for and measurement of adolescent well-being;
- **prioritizing the collection of more and higher-quality data** about adolescents that can be disaggregated by age, gender and other characteristics, to guide action and define who they are and what they want; and
- **strengthening partnerships at all levels** to ensure linkages between the adolescent well-being agenda and broader efforts to address young people's livelihoods, education and skills, as well as productivity.



Strengthen political commitment and funding for adolescents to accelerate action towards 2030, by:

- **increasing the level and effectiveness of domestic and donor spending** on adolescent well-being, in line with commitments made on Universal Health Coverage and beyond the health sector, to **provide all adolescents with mandatory, prepaid pooled funding** for services that comprehensively address adolescent needs;
- committing to prioritize adolescent well-being in resolutions submitted at the **World Health Assembly** in 2021 and beyond; and
- mobilizing efforts towards a first **Global Summit on Adolescents** in 2023, aiming to increase significantly the levels of commitment and global funding for adolescents and to accelerate action towards 2030.⁴

YOU CAN TAKE ACTION TODAY BY:



SIGNING THE CALL TO ACTION AT:
www.adolescents2030.org



SHARING IT WITH YOUR PROFESSIONAL NETWORKS, FRIENDS AND FAMILY



LEARNING MORE ABOUT HOW ADOLESCENT WELL-BEING FORMS THE CORNERSTONE OF HEALTHY AND PROSPEROUS SOCIETIES - VISIT : www.adolescents2030.org

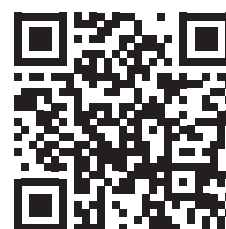




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For more details visit www.unmgy.org/call-to-action-on-adolescent-health