

# Breaking the Silence

Advocacy  
Sheet  
No. 4:  
December 2003



Preventing HIV/AIDS in Latin American and Caribbean Adolescents and Youth

## Health Sector Reform and Social Protection of Adolescents and Youth

Experts from nine countries in Latin America met in Honduras in December 2003 to develop ways to include the **sexual and reproductive needs, including HIV prevention, of adolescents and youth** in health sector reform and in strategies for their social protection. The meeting featured participants from several PAHO units as well as countries such as Honduras, El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Panama, Dominican Republic, Peru and Ecuador. The most important conclusions from the meeting are detailed below.



### Adolescents are among Socially Excluded Populations

- Adolescents make up approximately 30% of the population in Latin America and the Caribbean; in Honduras, 61% do not have access to health services, a number that reaches 48% in Paraguay, 47% in Ecuador and 31% in Peru<sup>1</sup> [http://cys.bvsalud.org/dol/docsonline/4/2/124-ESLAC\(esp-.pdf](http://cys.bvsalud.org/dol/docsonline/4/2/124-ESLAC(esp-.pdf) (in Spanish)
- Indigenous youth are especially marginalized, and they number around one million in Bolivia and Guatemala and 2.7 million in Peru, according to national census figures<sup>2</sup>
- Attention must be brought to the exclusion of youth in health matters, and to ensure that protecting their health becomes a main axis in national public policies



### Gender, Empowerment and Adolescent Health

- The disaggregation of data by sex and age and the ability of health professionals to use gender tools are key not only for improving the quality and effectiveness of adolescent health care, but for promoting equitable relationships and the comprehensive development of adolescent women and men
- Adolescents have the right to obtain scientifically-based information with the help of schools, the media, health care services and families; confidentiality of information in reproductive health care facilities is key to ensuring adolescent access to quality care



### Quality Health Services for Adolescents

- The use of health services by adolescents would increase if these were adapted to the health needs of young people by age and sex, and included respect and confidentiality
- Few countries in Latin America and the Caribbean offer differentiated services that are attractive to adolescents in response to their needs or expectations



### A New Agenda for Health Sector Reform

- The health needs of specific population groups, such as adolescents, have not been incorporated into the design and implementation of health sector reform processes in the Región<sup>3</sup> <http://www.lachsr.org>
- The challenge for health systems right now is to develop a new agenda for sector reform centered on population health and strengthening public health<sup>4</sup>
- The sexual and reproductive health of adolescents, and their prevention of HIV/AIDS, should be included in the reform processes by designing adolescent health care models based on promotion and prevention strategies

<sup>1</sup>Exclusión en salud en países de América Latina y el Caribe. PAHO/WHO/SIDA 2003

<sup>2</sup>Anuario estadístico de América Latina y el Caribe 2000. ECLAC 2001

<sup>3</sup>Análisis de las reformas del sector salud en la región de las Américas. PAHO/WHO 2003

<sup>4</sup>Inaugural address by Dr. Mirta Roses Periago, Workshop on the Leading Role of the Ministries of Health, Bridgetown, Barbados, 6-7 November 2003

# Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS Prevention: Steps on How to Include Them in Health Sector Reform

1. Identify a **health priority in adolescents** in the country (for example, the growing HIV and/or pregnancy rates among adolescents, identifying HIV positive adolescents through counseling and volunteer testing and increasing access to antiretrovirals within the framework of the new WHO/UNAIDS 3X5 Initiative). Collect data or evidence that supports this choice.
2. Identify **required actions** for handling the health priority. Collect information on best practices, effectiveness of interventions and political, social and economic probability of the actions being implemented in the country.
3. Establish as an **objective** the inclusion of **identified actions** for handling the health priority of adolescents within the country's health sector reform.
4. Identify **what health sector reform consists of in the country and what stage it is in**.
5. Identify **decision makers** (primary audience) and the key constituents who influence those decision makers (secondary audience) regarding health sector reform in the country.
6. Evaluate **decision makers' vision** regarding the need to include adolescent sexual and reproductive health and VIH/AIDS prevention in health sector reform.
7. Develop a **communications plan, strategic alliances and a plan of action** with decision makers and key constituents.

*Note: If the first three steps have already been taken in your country, proceed directly to step four*



## PAHO Support of this Initiative

### • **Child and Adolescent Health Unit**

Dr. Matilde Maddaleno, Regional Advisor in Adolescent Health  
Rafael E. Flores, Human Development Economist  
<http://www.paho.org/adolescence> (under construction)

### • **HIV/AIDS/STI Unit**

Dr. Rafael Mazin  
Regional Advisor in HIV/AIDS  
<http://www.paho.org/aids>

### • **Policy and Health Systems Unit**

Dr. Priscilla Rivas-Loria, Regional Advisor in Health Sector Reform  
Dr. Cecilia Acuña, Extension of Social Protection in Health  
<http://www.lachsr.org>

### • **Health Services Organization Unit**

Dr. Rocío Rojas, Indigenous Health Initiative  
[http://www.paho.org/English/AD/THS/IndigN-v1e1\\_ENG.htm](http://www.paho.org/English/AD/THS/IndigN-v1e1_ENG.htm)

### • **Gender and Health Unit**

Dr. Elsa Gómez, Regional Advisor in Gender and Health  
<http://www.paho.org/genderandhealth>

## Criteria for the Comprehensive Evaluation of Quality Health Services for Adolescents<sup>5</sup>

### • **Care Model of Health Services**

- ✓ Differentiation of services for adolescents by age, sex, language and culture
- ✓ Comprehensive health services for adolescents
- ✓ Adolescent services that include health promotion and disease prevention and care

### • **Organization of Health Services**

- ✓ Accessibility and attractive environment
- ✓ Respect and confidentiality for adolescents
- ✓ Human resources assigned to adolescents
- ✓ Training of human resources in adolescence
- ✓ Multidisciplinary teams (comprehensive care)
- ✓ Networks of various community actors
- ✓ Networks of various governmental sectors

### • **Management of Health Services**

- ✓ Youth participation in management processes
- ✓ Autonomy in decision making and/or actions that affect the delivery of services
- ✓ Adolescent satisfaction with services
- ✓ Gearing of management towards health results of adolescents

<sup>5</sup>Guía para la evaluación de servicios de calidad para adolescentes y jóvenes. PAHO 2003



**Pan American  
Health  
Organization**

Regional Office of the  
World Health Organization

**Family and Community Health Area (FCH)  
Child and Adolescent Health Unit (FCH/CA)  
HIV/AIDS/STI Prevention Unit (FCH/AI)  
Contact us at [singlets@paho.org](mailto:singlets@paho.org)**

Content: Cecilia Breinbauer Design: Sylvia Singleton  
Photos © Waak/PAHO