

# Summary of Sexual and Reproductive Health Strategies Stipulated in the National Strategic Plan for Young People's Health (2016-2020) by the Ministry of Health, Myanmar

The National Strategic Plan for Young People's Health (2016–2020) drafted by the Ministry of Health aims at strengthening the existing policy framework to uphold the rights of young people to quality health information and services. The goal of the Strategic Plan for Young People's Health is stated as:

*“To reach the highest achievable standards of health and development of young people in Myanmar by protecting and fulfilling their rights to information, quality services and protective environments.”*

The document emphasizes the comprehensiveness of the plan, and clearly states one of the most important elements of the strategic plan: **the equity and rights-based approach that protects the sexual reproductive health of all young people regardless of age and gender.** The document guarantees that all young people, adolescents and youths, have the right to access the most equitable and highest quality sexual and reproductive health services available in the country.

The document presents guiding principles of the youth strategy as follows:

- **Comprehensive approach:** Recognizing the cross cutting health and development needs of young people such as intentional and unintentional injuries and violence, SRH, HIV/AIDS, mental health, substance use, violence, substance use and substance use disorders, infectious diseases and common conditions.

- **Equity and rights-based approach:** focusing on equitable access to services to all adolescents including vulnerable groups and recognizing the need to move from aspirations to obligations in fulfilling young people rights for the highest attainable standard of health through the provision of accessible, acceptable and effective health care.

## KEY HEALTH PROBLEMS AND CURRENT STATUSES

The document recognizes that sexual and reproductive health issues among youth, including unintended pregnancies, unsafe abortions, and sexually transmitted diseases are major health issues faced by young people in Myanmar.

*“The main problems faced by young people are... risk taking behaviors resulting in sexual and reproductive health problems including unintended pregnancies and its consequences, HIV/AIDS...”*

The sexual reproductive health statuses of young people, while data on unmarried youths are missing in the document, are reported as follows:

- Overall 7.4 % of adolescent girls ages 15–19 are married.
- Nearly two percent had their first birth before age 15 and over 25% had their first birth before age 20.
- Among married women of reproductive age, the use of at least one contraceptive method is slightly lower among women aged 15–19 and 45–49 than women who are 20–24 years.
- A greater proportion of adolescent girls begin childbearing in rural areas (57%) than in urban areas (47%).



## STRATEGIC PRIORITY: SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

Acknowledging health risks young people face, the document sets highest strategic priorities and program objectives in the area of sexual reproductive health. One of the priorities in the document is to **reduce adolescent pregnancy by increasing the use of contraceptives**. Specific targets set are as follows:

1. Reduce adolescent fertility rate from 20 per 1000 in 2014 to 10 per 1000 in 2018 (2014 census)
2. Increase contraceptive prevalence rate among sexually active young people from 38% in 2014 to 52% in 2018

Increased use of contraception by young people is recognized as a key strategy to reduce the number of unintended pregnancy among adolescent and youth by the Ministry.

## IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND KEY ACTIVITIES

In order to achieve these goals, a strategy identified by the Ministry of Health includes increasing access to health services by young people. The document urges us to:

*“Increase access to and use of health services, including counseling and commodities, which are acceptable, equitable, affordable, appropriate, effective, and available through a range of channels and delivered in ways that reach marginalized and vulnerable adolescents as well as the general population of young people.”*

The document further specifies implementation strategies for increasing young people's access to health services. They include **making facility based health services friendlier to young people**. The following strategies are included in the document.

- A. Community based interventions
  - Adolescent clubs



- B. Facility based interventions
  - Adolescent friendly clinic
- C. Convergence within health sector and with other sector
  - National steering committee for adolescent health
  - Township steering committee for adolescent health

The health interventions for young people to be delivered by youth friendly health facilities at various levels of care include the following:

- Capacity building health care providers on attitude toward YP friendly services in non-judgmental, confidential manner
- Youth friendly RH services/RH service delivery corner for adolescents and youth in the health facility with provision of educational materials, supplies and equipment and RH commodities
- Contraception – Information and advice/counseling and peer education on safe sexual behavior, prevention of unwanted pregnancy and STI and HIV
- Awareness raising campaign/youth forums about SRH



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*Pathfinder International and Myanmar Partners in Policy and Research (MPPR) are working together with the Ministry of Health and the Department of Public Health in local communities to help achieve these goals in collaboration with other stakeholders. For more information, please write to MPPR at [myanmarppr@gmail.com](mailto:myanmarppr@gmail.com)*