

Preface

This is one of the reviews on the literature and projects of sexual and reproductive health of adolescents and youths in eight Asian countries.*

Adolescents and youth make up one-fourth of the population in the Western Pacific Region. At least 17 out of 37 countries and areas in the Region have a median age below 25 years. The health of adolescents is, therefore, a key element and an investment for the social and economic progress in the Region. Many of the problems adolescents experience are inter-related and should be regarded in a comprehensive manner. However, adjusting to sexual development and protecting their reproductive health are the major challenges for adolescents.

Adolescents are vulnerable because they lack knowledge and skills to avoid risky behaviour and lack access to acceptable, affordable and appropriate reproductive health information and services. This is often compounded with environmental disadvantages such as poverty and unemployment. Social



norms of sexuality have also changed in the past 2 decades and puberty comes 2-3 years earlier over one century, but the environment to support adolescents has not changed. There is still much to be desired in terms of governments' institutionalization and allocation of funds. Also families and communities are still unprepared to provide accurate reproductive health information and

* Cambodia, China, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Mongolia, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Viet Nam

Sexual and Reproductive Health of Adolescents and Youths in the Philippines

services necessary for adolescents. Risks of unwanted pregnancies, unsafe abortions, pregnancy-related complications, sexually transmitted infections and HIV/AIDS, all of which are important elements of Millennium Development Goals (MDG), continue to threaten adolescents.

Since the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo in 1994, where the importance of adolescent reproductive health was acknowledged, many studies and programmes have been carried out by various national and international agencies and nongovernmental organizations. In order to assist governments to achieve the objectives of ICPD and MDG, the WHO Western

Pacific Regional Office provided technical and financial support to several countries to conduct literature and programme reviews.

As a result of these reviews, countries now have evidence-based information for the development of national policies and strategies for adolescent sexual and reproductive health. I appreciate the practical and cost-effective use of existing information for increasing awareness of adolescent reproductive health and for improving our work. Here, I also would like to express my thanks to the governments, the reviewers and researchers for your contributions to improving the reproductive health of adolescents and youths.

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