

POPULATION
REFERENCE
BUREAU

THE TIME IS NOW: INVEST IN SEXUAL AND
REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

PRESENTATION SCRIPT



AN **ENGAGE** PRESENTATION

The presentation opens with title slide 1 *The Time Is Now: Invest in Sexual and Reproductive Health for Young People*. When ready to begin, click the forward arrow.

Click Forward 2

There are 883 million people living in sub-Saharan Africa today.

Click Forward 3

One out of every three is between the ages of 10 and 24....that's 280 million young people.

Click Forward 4

And they are playing a pivotal role in the growth and development of our families, communities, and nations.

Today more young people, especially girls, are completing primary education and enrolling in secondary school.

They are leading the technology revolution and have greater access to means of communication and information than ever before.

And our young people continue to show an interest in entrepreneurship and business ownership...a critical pillar for the continent's future economic growth.

Click Forward 5

Our adolescent and youth population is of major significance to development in sub-Saharan Africa. Today, we have the fastest growing population of young people in the world. While this scenario may seem challenging, it is in fact an opportunity.

Click Forward 6

Evidence from East Asia's "economic miracle"...

Click Forward 7

...Has taught us that when large numbers of young people grow up and enter the workforce, a special window opens up for faster economic growth and development.

Click Forward 8

We call this window of opportunity the "demographic dividend."

Click Forward 9

And it is estimated to have contributed as much as one-third of all economic growth in East Asia.

Click Forward 10

How can sub-Saharan Africa capitalize on the demographic dividend?

Click Forward 11

An important first step is increasing access to and use of family planning so couples can choose the timing and spacing of their pregnancies.

Click Forward 12

Childbearing also has to decline so there are fewer children to support with social services and more adults who can speed up economic growth.

Click Forward 13

Improving the quantity and quality of education, especially for girls, is critical so young people can become a skilled labor force.

Click Forward 14

Nations also need dynamic economic conditions to create employment opportunities for men and women.

Click Forward 15

And finally, the demographic dividend is dependent on the right investments in young people so they are healthy, educated, and have access to jobs.

Click Forward 16

For the nations of sub-Saharan Africa, the window of opportunity to experience this demographic dividend may emerge in the future. But we can't get there without our young people.

Click Forward 17

Learning from the East Asian experience, investments in policies and programs that harness the potential of young people are necessary for national development today and tomorrow.

Click Forward 18

One critical area of investment is young people's sexual and reproductive health. Research shows that these investments...

Click Forward 19

Protect the well-being of young people...

Click Forward 20

Maximize their potential for healthy, productive lives...

Click Forward 21

And improve social and economic development.

Although reproductive health is a lifetime concern for both men and women, it is especially important for young people because...

Click Forward 22

...They are experiencing a time of transition that is full of challenges and important choices. But with the right investments, nations can help young people make successful journeys through this critical period. The right investments will...

Click Forward 23

Keep young people, especially our girls, in school...

Click Forward 24

Help young people begin productive working lives, by giving them the information and skills they need to get jobs...

Click Forward 25

And prepare them for their responsibilities as citizens and build more democratic societies.

Click Forward 26

The right investments will increase the age of marriage and encourage healthy relationships between men and women...

Click Forward 27

And by increasing young people's access to family planning, they can delay childbearing until they are ready—

Click Forward 28

—To make decisions together about the timing and spacing of pregnancies and the number of children they have.

Click Forward 29

The right investments will promote good health during this phase of life and support young people's transition into adulthood.

How do investments in sexual and reproductive health help?

Click Forward 30

We know that comprehensive sexual and reproductive health education empowers young people to make healthy choices about their behavior.

Click Forward 31

Global evidence shows that these programs help young people abstain from or delay sex;

Click Forward 32

Reduce the frequency of unprotected sex and the number of sexual partners, which helps reduce the spread of HIV;

Click Forward 33

Comprehensive sex education increases the use of contraception to prevent unintended pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections;

Click Forward 34

And it helps delay that first birth to ensure a healthier mother and a safer pregnancy. In addition to education, access to youth-friendly health services helps young people address a range of reproductive health needs. What makes services youth-friendly?

Click Forward 35

They are available, accessible, and affordable so that young people are likely to use these services.

Click Forward 36

They are acceptable to youth, with trained staff to provide services with respect, privacy, and confidentiality.

Click Forward 37

And they are appropriate and effective, with the necessary skills, supplies and equipment to meet young people's reproductive health needs—

Click Forward 38

—Such as their need for contraception, which remains tremendously high across sub-Saharan Africa.

Click Forward 39

Among married adolescent girls...

Click Forward 40

...67 percent, or about two out of every three girls, have an unmet need for family planning, meaning the couple does not want to get pregnant but isn't using any form of contraception.

Click Forward 41

And among sexually active, unmarried young women...

Click Forward 42

Almost half are not using any contraceptive method but do not want to get pregnant.

Click Forward 43

Fulfilling this unmet need for family planning could reduce the high number of unintended adolescent pregnancies that occur every year.

Click Forward 44

And it will also help reduce the number of maternal deaths in sub-Saharan Africa. Although adolescence is considered the healthiest time in a person's life...

Click Forward 45

Pregnancy and childbirth are the leading cause of death for girls under age 18.

Click Forward 46

The risk of death and disability is aggravated by unsafe abortion. Today, one of every four unsafely performed abortions in sub-Saharan Africa happens to an adolescent girl—the highest proportion of any region in the world. So increasing access to family planning is a key strategy to protect young women's health.

Click Forward 47

But what about our adolescent boys and young men? They too need information and services so they can be partners in preventing unintended pregnancies and reducing the spread of HIV.

Click Forward 48

The good news is condom use is increasing among adolescent males in some countries across sub-Saharan Africa.

Click Forward 49

If we look at data from Demographic and Health Surveys from 2002 and 2005, we see that the proportion of 15-to-19-year-old males who said they used a condom the last time they had sex with someone who was not their partner or was not living with them was 41 percent in Kenya, 36 percent in Malawi, and 33 percent in Zambia.

Click Forward 50

However, more recent data show an increase in condom use among males in just a five-year period, ranging from as high as 55 percent in Kenya to 42 percent in Zambia. This increase is quite remarkable...but we can do even more—

Click Forward 51

—Like addressing the factors that influence sexual and reproductive health behavior early in life.

Click Forward 52

Risk factors are those that increase the likelihood of a behavior that usually has negative outcomes...

Click Forward 53

...While a protective factor is any factor that reduces the impact of a negative behavior or promotes a healthy alternative.

Click Forward 54

There are many risk factors that increase a young person's chance for poorer reproductive health outcomes, like discrimination and inequality, especially among vulnerable populations like poor and out-of-school youth, very young adolescents, or youth living with HIV;

Click Forward 55

A negative peer culture, in which adolescent girls are pressured to accept risky sexual behavior and young men are encouraged to take sexual risks...

Click Forward 56

And harmful practices, like early marriage or sexual and physical violence.

Click Forward 57

Even though some risk factors may always be present in a young person's life, adults, communities, and young people can work together to nurture protective factors--

Click Forward 58

--Like teaching life skills to young people so they can resist peer pressure, communicate with their partner, and use contraception.

Click Forward 59

Opportunities for youth participation, like service learning, school, and sports, which promote positive relationships with peers.

Click Forward 60

And supportive adults and communities. Close relationships with parents and other adults, and being "connected" with the community, are associated with improved sexual and reproductive health.

Click Forward 61

Ultimately, we want the protective factors to outweigh the risk factors so young people can stay healthy and take advantage of education and employment opportunities throughout their lives.

Now, in addition to improving the well-being of young people...

Click Forward 62

Investments in sexual and reproductive health lead to substantial gains in social and economic development.

Click Forward 63

First, they increase returns on all our development investments—including health, economic growth, and education. For example, delaying marriage and childbearing among adolescent girls...

Click Forward 64

Could help increase school enrollment by 20 percent across the continent. And the more educated a girl is, the more likely she is to use contraception and avoid unintended pregnancy.

Click Forward 65

Young people's reproductive health is also closely linked with economic empowerment. In fact, data show that reducing adolescent pregnancy can help increase income at the individual, community, and national level.

Click Forward 66

Turning to our trend graph we are going to look at the relationship between the adolescent fertility rate and gross national income in Ghana.

Click Forward 67

On the left axis we have the adolescent fertility rate, meaning the number of births per 1,000 girls ages 15 to 19 years. The number ranges from zero to 130 births.

Click Forward 68

On the bottom axis we have the gross national income per person, or GNI. This is in US dollars, and it is standardized for what a dollar can buy today in the country. GNI may be higher than GDP because it also accounts for income received from outside the country. On this bottom axis, we go from zero dollars to about \$1,600.

Click Forward 69

This dark blue bubble here is Ghana. And in 1988, Ghana had an adolescent fertility rate of 125 births per 1,000 adolescent girls and a GNI per capita of \$560. So let's play this forward and see what happens over time.

Click Forward 70

We can see Ghana is moving toward that bottom right corner, with fewer births among adolescent girls and gross national income per person increasing as time passes. And by 2008...

Click Forward 71

Ghana's adolescent fertility rate is now 66 births per 1,000 adolescent girls compared to 125 births in 1988, and the GNI per capita is more than \$1,400. What made this change possible?

Click Forward 72

Ghana developed an adolescent reproductive health policy to provide guidance for government agencies and set benchmarks for youth well-being.

Click Forward 73

The country also offered comprehensive reproductive health services for youth through media campaigns and peer education, and provided services in both school and informal settings.

Click Forward 74

Ghana encouraged young people to participate in regional and district level meetings, recognizing that young people have an important role to play in decisionmaking processes. Reducing adolescent childbearing is possible as Ghana has shown us. And beyond improving individual incomes, it could greatly increase the national gross domestic product.

Click Forward 75

For instance, if in Kenya all 1.6 million adolescent girls completed secondary school...

Click Forward 76

...And the 220,000 adolescent mothers were employed...

Click Forward 77

Together, this could add \$3.4 billion to Kenya's gross national income every year.

Click Forward 78

Investments in sexual and reproductive health will ensure our 280 million young people will become 280 million opportunities for sub-Saharan Africa. This population can be the driving force for achieving the demographic dividend, but only if policies and programs are in place to protect their health and enhance their opportunities. And so our efforts should start with...

Click Forward 79

Increasing funding and **support** for adolescent and youth sexual and reproductive health. Policymakers must establish and implement policies and legislation that help young people live healthier, more productive lives.

Click Forward 80

Community leaders should speak about the importance of **protecting** the health and well-being of young people. Parents, teachers, communities, and faith-based organizations must be actively involved to create a supportive environment and end harmful practices, such as early marriage and violence.

Click Forward 81

All sectors—including health, education, youth, gender, labor, planning and finance—should ensure the availability of reproductive health information and services to **prepare** young people for the transition into adulthood.

Click Forward 82

And finally, leaders at all levels should **involve** young people in the design, implementation, and evaluation of policies and programs. Experience from countries like Ghana show us that our investments are most effective when young people are included as stakeholders in decisions that affect them.

Click Forward 83

If “the best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago...the second best time is now.”

Just like a tree, our young people go through many transitions as they mature from young adolescents to full-grown adults. Investing in their sexual and reproductive health will enable them to stay healthy so they can grow, branch out, and flower. With the right policies and programs to protect our young people, we can ensure they lead successful lives, and advance social and economic development.