

YouthLens

on Reproductive Health
and HIV/AIDS

New Web Sites Make Information about Youth More Accessible

Growing volumes of information can be overwhelming, but new Web sites provide guidance to program planners and others.

More information than ever before is being produced on youth reproductive health (RH) and HIV issues – research findings, program tools, case studies, meeting notices, and more. However, program planners, researchers, and policymakers often cannot find the information they need because it is buried in the large volumes of material produced. To address this need, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) has recently funded three Web sites that make youth RH/HIV information easier to find and that provide guidance on what tools are most helpful.

The new Interagency Youth Working Group (IYWG), created in 2006 by USAID, has launched a new site designed to bring together resources on youth RH and HIV research and programs. Two other existing sites have added new features. The MEASURE Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) site has added a new “Youth Corner” section with DHS data on youth, and the youth-policy.com site focusing on youth policies has expanded its coverage with more resources and easier access.

The three sites are designed primarily for those working to improve youth RH/HIV prevention, including adults, youth advocates, and peer educators. All three sites provide links to other useful Web-based resources.

Interagency Youth Working Group – www.youthwg.org

The IYWG is a network of nongovernmental agencies, donors, and cooperating agencies with partner organizations funded by USAID. The site includes a database of more than 1,000 resources as well as guidance on about 20 program areas. Organizations with substantial youth projects are identified with their major youth publications and Web links. Family Health International (FHI) coordinates the site content, working with IYWG partners, and Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg School of Public Health/INFO Project hosts the site.

The database includes journal articles, program tools, and other publications about youth RH/HIV. The collection is based on the more than 800 resources collected by the *Youth InfoNet* monthly compendium of resources produced by FHI since 2003, as well as contributions from a wide range of organizations working with youth. Ongoing contributions to the database are screened for quality by technical experts. Users can search by title, keyword, region, country, language, type of document, and date. They can also limit their searches to peer-reviewed articles or documents for which full text is available.

The other main sections of the site are program areas, resources, and IYWG activities. The program areas section includes information on abstinence,





INTERAGENCY YOUTH WORKING GROUP SITE – www.youthwg.org SELECTED SECTIONS AND ITEMS

Program Areas (www.infoforhealth.org/youthwg/prog_areas/index.shtml)

- Sexuality and Family Life Education
 - *Standards for Curriculum-Based Reproductive Health and HIV Education Programs* (FHI, 2006). Evidence-based guidance through 24 standards grouped by development and adaptation, content, and implementation.
 - *School-Based Reproductive Health and HIV Education Programs: An Effective Intervention*. (FHI, 2007). A four-page brief summarizing research showing that well-designed programs work, while implementation issues remain challenging.
- Peer Education
 - *Youth Peer Education in Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS* (FHI, 2006). A report of key issues, evidence of impact, major programs, and guidance.
 - *Youth Peer Education Toolkit* (UNFPA and FHI, 2005-2006). Five items, based on research and program experiences, including a training-of-trainers manual, a set of program standards, and an assessment tool for programs.
- Faith-Based Programs
 - *Family Life Education: Teaching Adults to Communicate with Youth*. Separate manuals from a Christian and a Muslim perspective. (FHI, 2006, 2007). These two training curricula, with participant handbooks, are designed to work with adults, including parents, through faith-based institutions.
 - *Family Life Education: Teaching Youth about Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS from a Christian Perspective* (FHI, 2006). This curriculum has 12 units designed for working with youth directly.

Resources (www.infoforhealth.org/youthwg/resources.shtml)

- Publications, by Organizations with Youth Programs. Key resources produced on youth RH/HIV by organization for easy review, from about 25 groups.
- Web Sites, by Organizations with Youth Projects. Links to more than 30 organizations that have youth projects or areas of concentration.
- Overview Reports of Youth RH/HIV Programs. Links to nine recent major reports from the World Health Organization (WHO), the World Bank, FHI, the African Youth Alliance, and others.

Interagency Youth Working Group (www.infoforhealth.org/youthwg/about.shtml)

- IYWG Publications. Links to *YouthLens*, *Youth InfoNet*, and other publications supported by the IYWG.
- IYWG Meetings. Links to details, including slide presentations, from the first IYWG meeting held May 7, 2007, in Washington, DC.

Database (www.infoforhealth.org/youthwg/search.shtml)

- More than 1,000 resources about youth RH/HIV, searchable by topic, region, and country
- Order system for developing countries from items in database

early marriage, peer education, sex education, youth-friendly services, and other topics. The box on this page includes samples of resources included on the peer education and the sexuality and family life education program pages. The program areas pages provide guidance on the topic, including summaries of the most helpful tools and resources. Links to full-text publications are available as well as a pre-packaged search of the topic on the IYWG database.

The resources section organizes information in easy-to-use ways. Publications from key youth projects can be found by organization, and links to Web sites of youth projects are grouped together. A list of major overview documents with links provides easy access to the latest global thinking on youth issues. Survey and other research instruments, methodology approaches, and potentially even data sets for secondary analysis are conveniently grouped under research tools in the resources section. This page and the training materials page provide links to a small but growing number of tools and materials that organizations are willing to share with others working with youth. All resources include links to full-text versions.

The IYWG activities section includes summaries of organizations helping to lead the IYWG, announcements about its activities, and links to IYWG publications, including *Youth InfoNet* and *YouthLens*. It also includes details of the large meetings sponsored by IYWG with slide presentations. On the home page, users can find news briefs and research results on youth health, updated weekly through the INFO Project's online publication *The Pop Reporter*. Also, a youth events section identifies upcoming youth RH/HIV meetings and archives slides and other information related to past meetings.

The IYWG continues to update the site in a collaborative fashion with organizations working in the field. Users are encouraged to contribute publications, case studies, tools, and other materials through a link on the home page to a submission form that explains the selection criteria.

DHS Youth Corner — www.measuredhs.com/topics/Youth/start.cfm

A new feature of the MEASURE DHS Web site, informally referred to as the “Youth Corner,” makes youth data much more accessible. Youth Corner highlights DHS findings about youth and features data about youth ages 15 to 24 from more than 30 countries. The data comes from surveys conducted in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and Eastern Europe since 2000. The countries include Bangladesh, Bolivia, Burkina-Faso, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Kenya, Malawi, Nigeria, Tanzania, and Uganda. MEASURE DHS has interviewed thousands of young people, and gathered valuable information about their education, employment, media exposure, nutrition, sexual activity, fertility, unions, and general reproductive health. HIV prevalence is available for some countries.

The data can be found under country profiles in two formats: QuickStats and key indicators. QuickStats features 12 important indicators, such as the percentage of youth who have sexual intercourse before age 18, separated by sex. For a more in-depth look at youth in a particular country, key indicators offers data for more than 25 indicators, including domestic violence and women’s empowerment. These data are disaggregated by age (15 to 19 and 20 to 24) and by sex. All of the data were standardized and reanalyzed to make them comparable. In addition, the Youth Corner includes a full list of all DHS publications related to youth. The site developers plan to link directly to those chapters eventually.

The site includes separate pages for resources and publications. The resources page includes links to various documents, including a summary of the six Millennium Development Goals. The publications page links to DHS documents, primarily those focusing on youth.

The home page highlights selected youth findings from DHS surveys, frequently asked questions about the youth surveys, and summaries of key issues that have emerged from the surveys. The home page also includes a link to a map showing HIV prevalence ranges for youth in countries where MEASURE DHS has conducted population-based HIV surveys. Users

can download the map and use it in presentations or publications. Maps of other key statistics, such as indicators related to HIV/AIDS, will be added as the site develops. New DHS reports, country profiles, and other resources will continue to be added as they become available.

DHS YOUTH CORNER SITE COUNTRY PROFILE

Sample QuickStats Page

Nigeria 2003 DHS - Age 15-24

Number of youth interviewed; Female: 3,210 Male: 880

Indicator	Female	Male
Percentage of youth with completed primary education	59.6	75.6
Percentage of youth exposed to at least one media source (newspaper, radio, television) at least once a week	68.1	85.2
Percentage of youth employed in the 12 months preceding the survey	37.5	41.7
Percentage of youth (age 20-24) married by age 18	43.3	4.1
Percentage of youth (age 15-19) who have begun childbearing	25.2	na
Percentage of youth (age 18-24) who had sexual intercourse before age 18	53.5	24.5
Percentage of never-married youth who had sex in last 12 months	31.6	28.7
Percentage of youth who used a condom the last time they had higher-risk sexual intercourse	24.0	46.3
Percentage of youth currently using a modern method of family planning	7.6	na
Percentage of youth with comprehensive knowledge of HIV/AIDS	14.5	22.0
Percentage of youth who were tested for HIV and received the results in past 12 months	3.3	2.3
Percentage of youth HIV positive	u	u

na - not applicable

u - unknown

Note: the actual Web page includes footnotes clarifying some of the indicators

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Youth Policy — www.youth-policy.com

In 2004, a new Web site focusing entirely on youth policies was launched by Constella Futures/Policy Project and FHI/YouthNet. In May 2007, the Health Policy Initiative project, led by Constella Futures, introduced an expanded and revised site. It includes more resources with easier access, commentaries on youth policy news, a “What’s New” section, interviews with policymakers, and a new look.

Youth RH policies and information about policy are organized under three main headings: policy

KEY ELEMENTS OF YRH POLICY

A simple framework for thinking about YRH policy is to organize policy into key elements. The key elements of YRH policy are those broad goals that are the aim of all YRH efforts. These include:

- Encouraging healthy, wanted pregnancy
- Preventing STI/HIV infection
- Improving nutritional status
- Reducing harmful cultural practices
- Reducing human trafficking and sexual abuse/coercion
- Stimulating economic development and reducing poverty

Each of these key elements encompasses a number of specific topics that are elaborated on in these fact sheets.

Dimensions of Policy

YRH policy does not reside in a single document or sector or necessarily at the national level or solely within the public sector. YRH policy encompasses a very broad range of documents and statements. Youth-policy.com classifies this diversity of policies according to the following dimensions:

- Level: international, national, subnational, and local
- Sector: health, education, labor, etc.
- Type: constitutional provisions, laws, national population policy, youth reproductive health policy, operational guidelines
- Authorship: governmental bodies, NGOs, professional associations, and private commercial entities

Excerpt from Youth Policy Web site.

database, making policy, and tools and links. The database now includes about 120 full-text policies. Users can search by policy type, specific topic, country, region, language, and year. The section on making policy describes key elements and guiding principles of youth RH policy, includes fact sheets on key issues, and offers the new feature of policymaker interviews. In the first interview, Dr. Richard Curtain, a public policy consultant from Melbourne, Australia, speaks candidly of his experience working with the national government in the newly independent nation of Timor Leste (formerly East Timor) to develop a youth policy. The tools and links include manuals, frameworks, models, case studies, key reports, and links to useful Web sites.

Under the news section is a series of notes on youth RH policy designed to provide updates on policy-related publications and research findings and to promote discussion. These informal postings, which appear several times a month, have addressed human papilloma virus (HPV) vaccines, male circumcision for HIV prevention, and research on the health effects of female genital cutting.

Over the next year the Health Policy Initiative (HPI) plans to make the site more interactive and to continue to add new policies, resources, tools, and links. Users will be able to comment on the policy notes, and two new features will encourage discussion among policymakers, advocates, program managers, and others working to improve policies affecting youth.

The three Web sites offer an opportunity for many working in the youth RH/HIV field to find information they need in a timely way. The youth-policy.com site, launched in 2004, now attracts more than 2,500 users each month. The IYWG site and DHS Youth Corner site are just beginning to collect such data on their new launches.

— Kathleen Henry Shears

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YouthLens is an activity of the Interagency Youth Working Group (IYWG), a network of nongovernmental agencies, donors, and cooperating agencies working to improve reproductive health and prevent HIV among young people ages 10 to 24. The U.S. Agency for International Development funds the IYWG. Family Health International produces the YouthLens publication series.