

# *The State of the World's Children 2011 – Adolescence: An Age of Opportunity*

## **Key Facts**

### **General facts**

- An adolescent is defined as an individual **aged 10-19** by the UN.
- In 2009, there were an estimated **1.2 billion adolescents** in the world, forming around **18% of the global population**. The large majority of the world's adolescents (88%) live in developing countries.
- In the industrialised world, adolescents represent only 12% of people, but in contrast, they account for more than one-fifth of inhabitants of sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia and the least developed countries.

### **Physical well-being**

- It is estimated that around **240 million** adolescents have a mental health or behavioural problem, with **depressing** being the most frequently experienced disease.
- In 2009, among 2.6 million **new HIV cases** worldwide, over 1/3 involve young people aged 15-24.
- More than **70 million** girls and women aged 15-49 have undergone **female genital mutilation/cutting** (FGM/C), usually by the onset of puberty.
- In 2004, nearly 400,000 adolescents died of **unintentional injuries** such those caused by **road accidents**.
- Adolescent females run a greater risk of **nutritional difficulties** than adolescent males, notable **anaemia**, the available evidence in 14 developing countries suggests.

### **Education and employment**

- The **lowest rates of secondary school attendance** are found in Eastern and southern African, with net enrolment ratios of 24% for boys and 22% for girls.
- In 2009, **81 million young people were unemployed**; youth unemployment remains a concern in almost every country.

### **Protection**

- Around **150 million** children aged 5-14 are currently engaged in **child labour**, with incidence highest in sub-Saharan Africa.
- At present, around 1 in 3 women in the developing world (excluding China) is **married before the age of 18**. In Niger, the rate raises to over 70%. Girls who marry early are most at risk in being caught up in a negative cycle of premature child-bearing, high rates of maternal mortality and child undernutrition.
- **Premature child-bearing** may put maternal and child health at risk. In Africa, 25% of women aged 20-24 gave birth before the age of 18.

### **Participation**

- The **right of children to express their views freely** on all matters affecting them is a guiding principle of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- In addition to being a right, participation stimulate the full development of a personality. Through meaningful civic engagement, young people prepare to be **active citizens**.