

## Global Accelerated Action for the Health of Adolescents (AA-HA!): Guidance to Support Country Implementation

### Adolescents: The greatest resource for a society to thrive

- Yet, more than 3000 adolescents die every day
- UN Agencies have come together providing guidance on how to improve adolescent health
- Act now! No excuses!

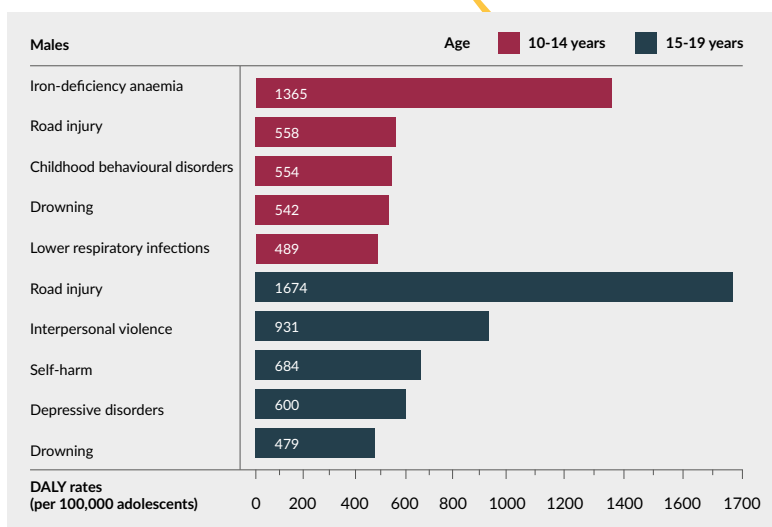
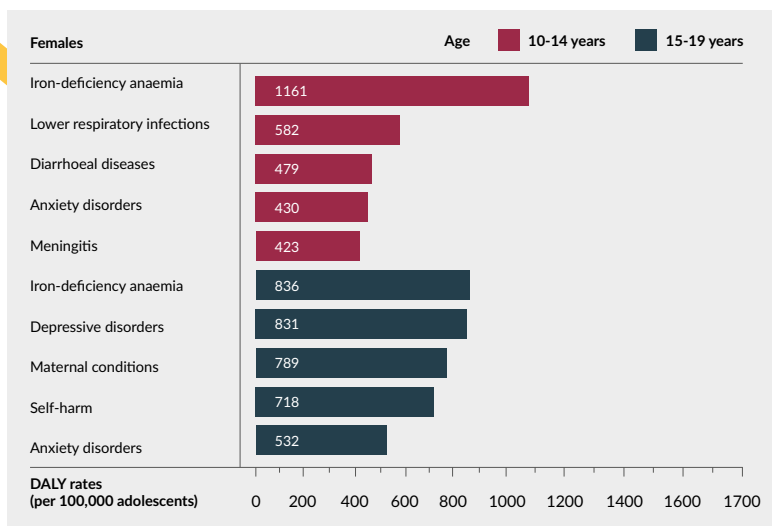


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# Adolescents bear a substantial proportion of the global disease and injury burden

- Adolescents are one sixth of the world's population.
- They account for 6% of the world's global burden of disease and injury.
- The recent very rapid declines in mortality among infants and young children have not been mirrored among adolescents.
- In 2015, an estimated 1.2 million adolescents aged 10 to 19 years died. Over two thirds of adolescent deaths occurred in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) in the African (45%) and South-East Asia (26%) regions.
- Many adolescent diseases and injuries are preventable or treatable.
- While some causes of adolescent mortality or morbidity have a great impact in most regions (e.g. road injury, lower respiratory infections, drowning and depressive disorders), the relative and absolute impact of these and other adolescent burdens differ greatly within and between regions.
- Adolescence is the period when many risky (or protective) behaviours start or are consolidated, having a major impact on health as adults. Examples include diet and physical activity, substance use and sexual risk behaviours.
- Adolescent health needs particular attention in humanitarian and fragile settings.

Estimated top five causes of adolescent disability-adjusted life years (DALYs) lost by sex and age, 2015.



# Accelerating action for the health of adolescents

Today, we have an unprecedented opportunity to improve the health of adolescents and respond more effectively to their specific needs. The Global Strategy for Women's, Children's and Adolescents' Health (2016–2030) identifies adolescents as being central to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)<sup>1</sup>.

Building on the momentum created by the SDGs and the Global Strategy, the Global Accelerated Action for the Health of Adolescents (AA-HA!): guidance to support country implementation provides technical guidance to policy-makers and programme managers as they respond to the health needs of adolescents in their countries. WHO and UN partners developed this guidance document in consultation with adolescents and young people, Member States, civil society organizations and other partners.

<sup>1</sup> EWEC. The global strategy for women's, children's and adolescents' health (2016–2030). New York; 2015. ([http://www.who.int/pmnch/media/events/2015/ga\\_2016\\_30.pdf](http://www.who.int/pmnch/media/events/2015/ga_2016_30.pdf))

## How to use the AA-HA! Guidance to Support Country Implementation

The AA-HA! guidance provides a systematic approach to prioritize national health needs. It is a tool that can be used by policy-makers and programme managers in health and other sectors who are responsible for adolescent health programming in countries.

### The systematic approach for the implementation of accelerated action for the health of adolescents (AA-HA!)

<b>SECTION 1</b>	Understanding what is special about adolescents and why investing in them results in long-term societal benefits
<b>SECTION 2</b>	Understanding global and regional adolescent health profiles
<b>SECTION 3</b>	Understanding what works – the AA-HA! package of evidence-based interventions
<b>SECTION 4</b>	Understanding the country's adolescent health profile Undertaking landscape analysis Conducting a consultative process for setting priorities based on explicit criteria
<b>SECTION 5</b>	Planning and implementing national programmes
<b>SECTION 6</b>	Strengthening accountability for adolescent health: - monitoring and evaluating adolescent health programmes - priorities for adolescent health research
<b>Leadership and participation of adolescents and young people</b>	
<b>Addressing adolescent health needs in humanitarian and fragile settings</b>	

The AA-HA! guidance to support country implementation:

- Describes the steps needed for effective adolescent health programming.
- Gives examples of evidence-based interventions in six key adolescent health areas (unintentional injuries; violence; sexual and reproductive health including HIV; communicable diseases such as acute respiratory infections and diarrhoea; noncommunicable diseases, poor nutrition and lack of physical activity; mental health, substance use and self-harm).
- Provides guidance on how to include adolescents in each step.

# AA-HA!'s overarching messages



## Approach

The AA-HA!: guidance to support country implementation provides a systematic approach for understanding adolescent health needs, prioritizing these in the country context and planning, monitoring and evaluating adolescent health programmes.



## Prevention

More than 3000 adolescents die every day from largely preventable causes such as unintentional injuries; violence; sexual and reproductive health problems including HIV; communicable diseases such as acute respiratory infections and diarrhoea; noncommunicable diseases, poor nutrition and lack of physical activity; mental health, substance use and suicide. Even more suffer from ill-health due to these causes. Although much research is still needed, effective interventions are available for countries to ACT NOW.



## Priority-setting

The nature, scale and impact of adolescent health needs vary between countries, between age groups and between sexes. Governments should prioritize their actions according to the disease and injury risk factor profiles of their adolescent population as well as the cost-effectiveness of the interventions. Adolescent health needs intensify in humanitarian and fragile settings.



## Leadership

Strong leadership at the highest level of government should foster implementation of adolescent-responsive policies and programmes. To accelerate progress for adolescent health, countries should consider institutionalizing national adolescent health programmes. Through the Sustainable Development Goals and the Global Strategy for Women's, Children's and Adolescents' Health, globally-agreed targets related to adolescent health exist, along with indicators to monitor progress towards these. Age and sex disaggregation of data will be essential.



## Yields from investing in adolescent health span across generations

There is a pressing need for increased investment in adolescent health programmes, to improve adolescent health and survival in the short term, for their future health as adults and for the next generation. This is a matter of urgency if we want to curb the epidemic of noncommunicable diseases, to sustain and reap the health and social benefits from the recent impressive gains in child health and ultimately to have THRIVING and peaceful societies.



# AA-HA!

## Together...

### WITH adolescents, FOR adolescents

Adolescents have particular health needs related to their rapid physical, sexual, social and emotional development and the specific roles they play in societies. Simply treating them as old children or young adults doesn't work. National development policies, programmes and plans should be informed by adolescents' particular health-related needs and the best way to achieve this is to develop and implement these programmes with adolescents.



### Whole-of-government approach

To achieve the Sustainable Development Goals' targets, health and other sectors need to normalize attention to adolescents' needs in all aspects of their work. An "Adolescent Health in All Policies (AHiAP)" approach should be practised in policy formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

# Why invest in adolescent health?

We will not achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development without urgent investment in adolescent health and well-being.

There are at least three arguments why investing in adolescent health is indispensable.

1. Adolescents have the fundamental right to health.
2. Investments in adolescent health bring a triple dividend of health benefits (for adolescents now, for adolescents' future lives and for the next generation of adolescents).
3. Investments in adolescent health reduce present and future health costs and enhance social capital.



## Act Now!

This is an exciting time for adolescent health. Many countries have either taken steps to implement comprehensive adolescent health programmes or are planning to do so.

Although more evidence-based interventions and programmes are needed, today, national governments have the necessary evidence and tools to address adolescent health challenges effectively. The AA-HA! package includes 4 documents that aim to contribute to these efforts.

1. The Global AA-HA! reference document is intended for policy-makers and programme managers who are responsible for adolescent health programming in countries. It provides a detailed overview of the data on the adolescent burden of disease and risk factors, the range of evidence-based interventions that are available for use in national priority-setting and programming, and summarizes approaches to adolescent health programming, monitoring and evaluation. It has 75 case studies from across the globe that provide concrete examples showing that countries have done what is being suggested.
2. The AA-HA! summary document is intended for a broader audience of policy-makers and government representatives in health and other sectors. It advocates for an evidence-based response to adolescent health and provides a brief summary of the key content that is covered in the Global AA-HA! reference document.
3. The AA-HA! comic book has been written for young adolescents to inform them of the key messages in the Global AA-HA! documents.
4. The AA-HA! brochure aims to facilitate dissemination of the overarching messages and to inform the public about the Global AA-HA! documents.

To find out more about the Global Strategy and the Global AA-HA!  
Guidance to Support Country Implementation, visit:

[www.who.int/global-aa-ha](http://www.who.int/global-aa-ha)  
[www.everywomaneverychild.org](http://www.everywomaneverychild.org)

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