

UNITED NATIONS POPULATION FUND



صندوق الأمم المتحدة للسكان

Delivering a world where every pregnancy is wanted, every childbirth is safe and every young person's potential is fulfilled.



Giving Young People a Priority

Forty three per cent of the world's people - approximately 1.8 billion - are between the ages of 10 and 24. Half of them survive on less than 2 dollars a day. More than 100 million adolescents do not attend school and 16 million girls become mothers every year. Almost 40% of the 6,800 new HIV infections each day are among young people.

Young people can transform the social and economic reality of a country, but that requires investments to protect their rights and to equip them to seize opportunities for employment, for healthy family formation and for political participation. Youth rights include the right to reproductive health information and services and to freedom from coercion, discrimination and violence.

Youth in Sudan¹

In 2013, Sudan will have 35 million people and young people make up 62% of this population. A quarter of youth living in urban areas and half of those living in rural areas are very poor. Many do not have the knowledge or the resources to start their adult lives in a productive way. Although their status is the key to Sudan's future, all too many Sudanese youth remain in poverty, are ill-educated, unemployed, or in poor health.

Education, employment and participation

One third of girls aged 15-24 years and almost one quarter of boys in Sudan are illiterate. Only half of young people complete primary school (47% for girls and 53% for boys), indicating high dropout rates, especially amongst school-age girls. An estimated 46% of girls and 54% of boys age 14-19 years are currently attending secondary schools. The uptake in secondary and post-secondary education in Sudan remains low, particularly in rural and nomadic areas where many young people receive little or no education after primary level. Thirty-one per cent of youth age 20-24 years are not in schools of any type but they also have difficulty finding employment.

Over 20% of young Sudanese are unemployed. Young women have more difficulty finding work. The inability to find a decent job also creates a sense of frustration among young people. Many of them work for long hours under informal and insecure work arrangements, characterized by low earnings and lack of social protection.

Despite the large youth population, the participation of young Sudanese in social and political life is limited. Some young people, particularly university students, participate in local or national political life or civil society organizations, but those represent only a small number of this cohort and they are predominantly male. Many Sudanese youth feel that there are severe limitations both on their influence in their families and communities and on their future possibilities.

Maternal and reproductive health

In Sudan, approximately 10% of youth aged 12-14 years and 38% aged 15-19 years are married. Pregnancy and childbirth-related complications are the leading cause of death among adolescent girls, particularly in rural areas. Childbearing before physical maturity is a major health risk and can lead to serious physical disability or even death. One of the most serious childbirth injuries is obstetric fistula. In Sudan, early childbearing and the practice of the most severe form of Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting significantly contribute to fistula and maternal injury. This situation is exacerbated by lack of access to affordable, good-quality emergency obstetric care. Babies born to the youngest, first-time mothers are also more likely to be premature, and less likely to survive when their mothers die.

Sudanese youth also face other health risks and social problems, including substance abuse, smoking, unsafe relationships and exposure to sexually transmitted infections and HIV. Despite these risks, only 5% of young girls and 11% of young boys aged 15-24 years have comprehensive knowledge on HIV/STIs and their modes of transmission (Sudan Household Health Survey 2010).

¹ All figures, unless otherwise indicated, are based on the 2008 Sudan Population Census



UNFPA support for youth

UNFPA works throughout the world to build alliances and to forge partnerships with governments, development partners and youth organizations to leverage investments in young people, particularly those who are poor, vulnerable and socially excluded. In Sudan, UNFPA works closely with many partners, including the Ministry of Youth and Sports, the Ministry of Health, as well as UN agencies and NGOs, to enhance youth participation in development planning and monitoring processes, through formulation of youth policies and programming at the national and state levels and through strengthening the capacities of youth groups.

At the policy level, UNFPA has supported the formulation and adoption of the National Youth Strategy 2007-2031 and also played the key role in the establishment of Youth Parliaments in all states, including in Darfur. UNFPA provides training for youth leaders and organizations on leadership, management, advocacy, strategic planning, and adult-youth partnerships and also supports research on young people to inform policy formulation.

Advocacy for youth is also supported by the Youth Peer Education Network (Y-PEER)—part of a global initiative



pioneered by UNFPA. Y-PEER engages in development of resource materials, training programmes and campaigns for youth, targeting thousands of young advocates, trainers and community volunteers. UNFPA also provides support for active young Sudanese to participate in international youth events and to exchange experiences with other youth in the region.

At the community level, UNFPA supports youth centres which provide gathering points for youth mobilization and activities. The Fund also supports outreach activities to sensitize young Sudanese on a range of issues, including gender and women's rights, sexual and gender-based violence, female genital mutilation, early marriage, substance abuse and environment and climate change. Awareness-raising campaigns through community drama and music, sports competitions, cultural events, youth symposiums and Radio and TV programmes have reached thousands of young people, policy-makers and community leaders across the states.

The particular vulnerabilities of adolescents warrant special attention in the health sector. To that end, UNFPA supports youth-friendly services to improve young people's access to information, knowledge and health referral services, particularly for reproductive health. In 2012, UNFPA has supported the Ministry of Health to develop the national guidelines for youth-friendly health services in Sudan. Training and awareness-raising sessions on adolescent sexual and reproductive health, covering issues of safe motherhood, family planning, HIV/AIDS and gender-based violence, have targeted hundreds of health care providers, teachers, policy-makers, and religious leaders. UNFPA also supports HIV testing and counselling services, as well as training on behaviour change communication, for tens of thousands university students across Sudan.

Through its humanitarian and recovery programme, UNFPA supports reproductive health and HIV and gender-based violence prevention and services for displaced youth and young ex-combatants in conflict-affected areas. The Fund also supports many other initiatives for conflict and disaster affected youth, including distribution of hygiene supplies, establishment of youth promoters' networks, and provision of medical care for youth violence survivors.

Sudanese youth will determine the future of Sudan. They need to be healthy, skilled, and active in the development and recovery of their communities.

