

## SHANTI ASHRAM: FOCUS GROUP ON ADOLESCENTS AND HEALTH

Most people would probably agree that the teenage years are something special. Almost everybody has those intense and life-enriching memories from that time of rapid change and both challenging but also wonderfully exciting new experiences. We can agree that adolescence is not only a time where characters are being shaped but also the most life defining decisions can be made when it comes to higher education, child marriage or pregnancy, taking up of harmful habits, healthy nutrition and many many more. In the mean time the protective shield of the family slowly starts releasing adolescents into their own world of experiences, responsibilities, beliefs and understandings of the world.

Another important consideration is that adolescents make up a vast part of the world population (in 2012 1.2 billion adolescents were making up almost 1/5<sup>th</sup> of the world population), especially in developing countries and in Asia. And with life expectancies rising globally we know that today's adolescents have many years ahead of them. Furthermore, puberty is the time that gender roles and stereotypes may become visible for the first time.

Solely from those factors we could conclude that adolescents deserve special attention and protection. An adolescent aged 17 is no less a child than a 7 year old.

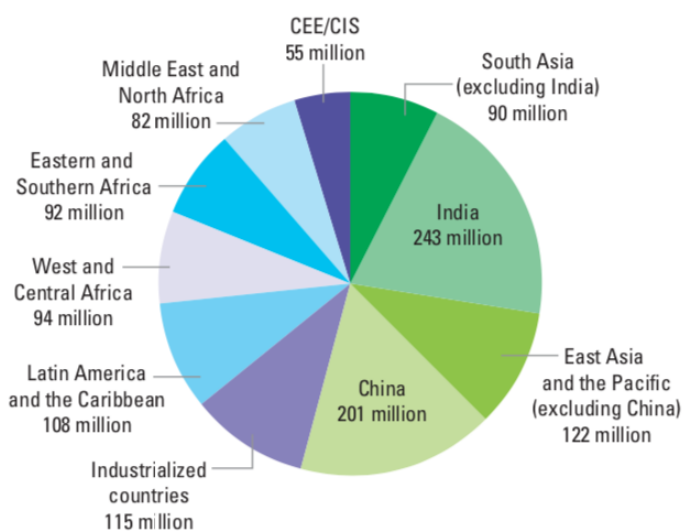
However reports show that in the last decade's improvements of health status and social support have been concentrated on children aged up to 10 years. Why is it that the vulnerable age of adolescence has not been a major focus? We need to look closer at an age in which children are more likely to drop out of school, get into an abusive relationship/marriage, quit seeing doctors and getting vaccinations and start behavioral patterns (good or bad) that can persist for a lifetime.

Considering all of this I can conclude that adolescence is not only the age of prevention, but also the age of possibilities. We can not only protect children from illnesses and other hazards, but also empower them to embrace their opportunities to the fullest, take care of themselves and most importantly enjoy this adventurous time of being both, a child and a young adult.

**FIGURE 2.3**

### **More than half of the world's adolescents live in Asia**

Population of adolescents 10–19 years old by region, 2010



## TOPICS

**Immunization** – adolescent vaccinations, hpv

**Nutrition** – healthy food, height + weight, obesity, underweight, etc

**Prevention (!)** – preventable diseases, prevention of NCDs by living a healthy lifestyle every day, harms of smoking, drinking, etc

**Mental Health** – depression, stress, sadness as a part of life

**Digital Media** – social media, television, smart phones, abuse of those

**Being healthy everyday** – health is not something that is being done to someone by a doctor, but something everybody can take care of → what they can do every day of life to improve their health/keep up their health

## QUESTIONS

→ What is health?

Do you think health is important and why?

→ What do you know about hygiene? And prevention of infections? Why is it important?

→ What are diseases that one can prevent? And how do we prevent them?

→ Do you know something about healthy nutrition? What is healthy food and what is an unhealthy diet? What are the consequences of eating unhealthy/too much/too little? Overweight/underweight

→ Which immunizations for adolescents do you know? Which have you taken? Do you know about hpv?

→ Have you ever felt so stressed that it became painful to you?

Is there someone you feel like you can talk to about... health/mental health (being? sad, stressed, etc)/sex+sexuality/reproductive education/etc?

→ Do you know things that you can do for your health every day?

## Vaccination as per the National Immunization schedule by Government of India

<b>Age</b>	<b>National Rural Health Mission</b>
<b>Birth</b>	<b>BCG, OPV(0), Hep B Birth dose (To be given at the place of delivery)</b>
<b>6 Weeks</b>	<b>OPV1, Penta1(DPT+HepB+HiB)</b>
<b>10 Weeks</b>	<b>OPV2, Penta2(DPT+HepB+HiB)</b>
<b>14 Weeks</b>	<b>OPV3, Penta3(DPT+HepB+HiB), IPV</b>
<b>9 Months</b>	<b>MMR-1, /MR/Measels, JE Vaccine-1</b>
<b>16-24 Months</b>	<b>MMR-1, OPV Booster, DPT 1st Booster, JE Vaccine-2</b>
<b>5-6 Years</b>	<b>DPT 2nd Booster</b>
<b>10 Years</b>	<b>TT1</b>
<b>16 Years</b>	<b>TT2</b>