WHY YOUTH SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH (SRH) MATTERS IN JORDAN

Youth in Jordan face considerable challenges in addressing SRH needs, including obtaining information on puberty and sexual development, preventing unintended pregnancy and STIs, early marriage, and sexual coercion and violence. Jordanian youth need reproductive health-related support, information, and services. There is significant demand for reproductive health information, counseling, and accessible, youth-friendly services; however, very few youth access health services in general due to a range of barriers found within the health system and their communities.

While on one hand, the relatively conservative social and cultural norms found throughout Jordan can help to keep youth healthy in some ways, but on the other hand, they may create barriers to youth being able to obtain specific and timely sexual and reproductive health information and services.

WHY IS THIS RESEARCH IMPORTANT?
The sensitive cultural context surrounding the youth SRH in Jordan makes studying it very challenging. There are few studies that focus on understanding youth’s perspectives on SRH in Jordan, especially unmarried youth. As there is limited data, many argue there is no need.

WHAT DO YOUTH HAVE TO SAY?

“[I] wish that society would be a little bit more... understanding...that they wouldn't keep saying: ‘No, unacceptable, shameful, wrong, forbidden...’ this creates psychological stress for the girl.” — Syrian female youth in Mafraq

“We need to make parents aware... to teach them how to explain these topics to their children, to not feel shy...” — Jordanian female youth in Zarqa

“We should have cultural centers to educate the public.” — Jordanian male youth in Irbid

“When there is awareness within society, fears will decrease...” — Syrian female youth in Irbid
**WHERE DO YOUTH OBTAIN SRH INFORMATION?**
Youth like being able to look up SRH issues on the internet anonymously. They also discuss SRH issues with their friends, but they know these sources are not trustworthy.

**WHERE DO YOUTH WANT TO RECEIVE SRH INFORMATION AND SERVICES?**
Youth want more robust and trustworthy educational resources outside of the clinical setting, such as through community centers and schools.

**WHAT ARE YOUTH’S CONCERNS WITH REGARD TO SRH INFORMATION AND SERVICE PROVISION?**
- Confidentiality and fear of social repercussion is an important barrier to accessing SRH information and services.
- Youth, especially girls, want information from their parents, but they realize their parents aren’t prepared for this type of discussion.
- Youth of both sexes want more resources pertaining to sexual assault and violence.
- Youth associate “shame” with normal biological and behavioral changes associated with puberty, and they believe that social norms increase the shame they feel in relation to SRH issues.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**
- **Introduce education on SRH into schools.** Sensitize policymakers, community and religious leaders, and other key stakeholders of the value of providing SRH information and services to youth through formal programming.
- **Support parents and develop a cadre of peer educators** to become skilled and trusted resources.
- Resources should address a wide range of topics for male and female youth, such as those related to puberty, marriage, male-female interaction, spousal and familial relationships, mental health, harassment and violence, and supporting a family to be most relevant to youth’s needs.
- **Combine SRH and mental health services,** especially for married adolescents and Syrian refugees, to help youth cope with psychological stressors related to their SRH, including family and social pressure, street harassment, and gender-based violence.
- **Ensure that health services are youth-friendly,** and address issues that limit confidentiality.
- **Sensitize communities** to youth SRH issues to create a more supportive social environment to reduce shame and fear.