



# ANNEXES

## Annex I: Adolescent Development and the Youth Cohort

Successfully engaging with youth requires understanding the many shifts and nuances that occur during this stage of life and the variations within the youth cohort. While the stage of adolescence has varying definitions, this guide uses the USAID Youth in Development policy which distinguishes youth cohorts by the following age bandings and stages of development: Early Adolescence (10-14 years), Adolescence (15-19 years), Emerging Adulthood (20-24 years), and Transition into Adulthood (25-29 years).<sup>45 46</sup> While some aspects of youth development are biological, others are social in nature. Understanding cultural norms, institutions, and rituals can provide important insights into both how a society defines youth and the expectations placed on young people.

Gender plays a key role in each of the developmental areas, noted in the text box below. A young person's gender can influence relationships formed with peers, the experience of becoming a parent, access to inheritance, perceived roles and responsibilities, and decision-making processes.<sup>47</sup> These are critical time periods in which biological and psychosocial forces converge to influence gender identity formation.<sup>48</sup>

### Youth to Adulthood Transitions:

Youth is a time of transition and young people experience radical shifts across many spheres, including physical, cognitive and psychosocial changes. These include:<sup>49</sup>

- **Physical:** rapid and uneven periods of growth; transition through puberty to sexual maturation
- **Cognitive:** shift from concrete to abstract thought, critical thinking; development of different parts of the brain which impacts behavior, decision-making and risk assessment
- **Social/Familial:** importance of peers, development of identity, understanding of diversity, transitions from parents' home to spouse's home; becomes a parent and/or head of household
- **Cultural:** transition from childhood to adulthood; possibly goes through initiation rituals; takes on adult responsibilities within the community
- **Financial:** transition from financially dependent to self-reliant or reliant on spouse; inherits land and other assets
- **Ethical/Moral:** development of sense of fairness, idealism, personal value system, moral reasoning, concern for personal dignity
- **Emotional:** high emotional intensity, erratic behavior, self-regulation



# Annex II: Adolescent Development Characteristics<sup>50</sup>

Early Adolescence (10-14)	Mid and Late Adolescence (15-19)
<b>Physical Development Characteristics</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Irregular and varying growth spurts</li> <li>• Sexual maturation occurs</li> <li>• Girls often mature earlier than boys</li> <li>• Uneven bone-muscle growth and disproportionate changes in weight and muscle development</li> <li>• High levels of energy alternates with fatigue</li> <li>• Chemical and hormonal imbalances/swings</li> <li>• Ravenous appetites and thirst (needs water)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Girls reach full physical development</li> <li>• Boys are close to full physical development</li> <li>• Eating habits can become sporadic and unhealthy</li> <li>• Physical appearance becomes very important</li> <li>• Lack of exercise and poor diet may lead to weight gain and becoming overweight</li> </ul>
<b>Intellectual / Cognitive Development</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Capacity for abstract thinking begins</li> <li>• Wide range of ability and intellectual interests become more important</li> <li>• Highly curious</li> <li>• Focus on now, not later</li> <li>• Vivid imagination</li> <li>• Likes hands-on and social learning</li> <li>• Needs strong examples and models of expected performance</li> <li>• Relates to real-life problems and situations</li> <li>• Argues to clarify their own thinking and convince others</li> <li>• Forgets easily or are easily distracted</li> <li>• Seeks to make connections</li> <li>• Risk taking behaviors may emerge</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Capacity for abstract, critical, and meta-cognitive thinking</li> <li>• May be critical and argumentative</li> <li>• More importance is placed on life goals and ambitions</li> <li>• Can set goals and follow through</li> <li>• More disciplined work habits and study skills</li> <li>• Improved ability for planning and organization</li> <li>• Can understand multiple perspectives</li> <li>• Beginning to self-regulate and take responsibility</li> <li>• Risk taking behaviors may emerge (experimenting with tobacco, alcohol, drugs, unprotected sex, reckless driving, etc.)</li> </ul>
<b>Emotional Development Characteristics</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-esteem and self-concept linked to physical development</li> <li>• May feel awkward or strange about themselves and their bodies</li> <li>• Time of emotional peaks and valleys</li> <li>• Seeks out attention, sometimes without regard for how it is achieved</li> <li>• Moody and easily offended (highly sensitive)</li> <li>• May be rebellious or rude to parents/adults</li> <li>• Believe they are alone in their personal problems and situations</li> <li>• Erratic and inconsistent in behavior; may revert to childish behavior in times of stress</li> <li>• Searching for acceptance from peers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A stronger, more developed sense of identity</li> <li>• Functions more independently</li> <li>• Become more interested in their own inner experience and may use a diary or social media to document their experiences</li> <li>• Better able to delay gratification and compromise</li> <li>• Emotions become more even</li> <li>• Can think through ideas to explore different perspectives</li> <li>• Parent engagement declines</li> <li>• Peer relationships remain important</li> <li>• Increased concern for the well-being of others</li> </ul>



## Social Development Characteristics

- A sense of self is connected to identification with a particular group
  - Tests limits of acceptable behavior
  - Are rebellious toward parents and authority figures
  - Can be aggressive and argumentative
  - Fiercely loyal to peer group values
  - Need frequent affirmation of love from adults
  - Are confused or frightened by new school/social settings
  - Needs moderate times alone to regroup and reflect on daily experiences
  - Vacillates between desire for regulation and direction and desire for independence
- Positive peer relations add to feelings of self-worth
  - Gravitate towards groups with which they feel an affinity
  - The more a teen wants to belong, the more susceptible he/she is to peer pressure
  - Beginning to tolerate individual differences and may begin to replace affiliation with peer groups with more intimate relationships
  - Needs to know they are loved by parents & other adults
  - Needs reassurance that they are capable of giving and receiving affection in intimate friendships and sexual relationships

## Moral/ Ethical Development Characteristics

- May test rules and limits
  - Able to make principled choices
  - Tend to be idealistic
  - Strong sense of fairness
  - Transition from ego-centric to having consideration for others
  - Evidence that they have conscience
  - Develop their own personal value system
  - Begin to view moral issues in shades of gray, vs. black & white
- Engages in moral reasoning and prosocial behaviors
  - Interest in social, cultural, and family traditions expands
  - Emphasis on personal dignity and human rights
  - Poses deep, broad philosophical questions about life
  - More comfortable with complex, ambiguous issues of morality and fairness



# Annex III: The Basics about Adolescent Brain Development

## Key Concepts:

- **Pruning:** At age 9 or 10, there is a proliferation in the development of neurons (specialized cells that transmit nerve impulses) and synapses (the connections between neurons that allow for the communication of messages) followed by a pruning of the brain in which unused connections die off, resulting in belief that there is a “use it or lose it” period of brain development. This makes the type of experiences and learning opportunities youth have access to during this period particularly important to cognitive development.
- **Neuroplasticity:** Neuroplasticity refers to the ability of the brain to alter its structure in response to experience. Emerging science indicates that the brain continues to change throughout adolescence and adulthood; that is, the brain is constantly forming new neural pathways, removing old ones, and altering the strength of existing connections. Recent neuroscience research shows that the effects of trauma are not necessarily permanent, and can be counteracted by positive experiences and healthy personal connections.<sup>52</sup>
- **Pre-frontal Cortex:** The brain develops from the bottom up, like a stack of building blocks. The final portion of the brain to develop is the prefrontal cortex. Often called the CEO of the brain, the prefrontal cortex is one of the last areas of the brain to mature. A mature prefrontal cortex is necessary for good judgment, controlling impulses, solving problems, setting goals, organizing and planning, and other skills that are essential to adults.
- **Reacting Emotionally:** Teens process information differently than adults. While adults usually rely on the pre-frontal cortex (the center of reasoning and language) to respond to situations, adolescents rely more on the amygdala, which is part of the limbic system that controls a wide range of emotions. This means that teens are more likely than adults to respond emotionally, react quickly, and act without consideration of the consequences of their actions.
- **Risk Taking:** Adolescents’ attraction to risks is no coincidence. Chemical changes occurring in the adolescent brain contribute to risk-seeking behaviors. The levels of serotonin and dopamine fluctuate in the adolescent brain. Dopamine levels increase dramatically during adolescence as part of the brain’s ‘feel good circuitry’ that gives a sense of well-being. Taking risks can elevate dopamine levels. Teens may go out of their way to seek pleasurable feelings, including engaging in risky behaviors.



## Strategies to Address Adolescent Development within Programs:

Young people’s experiences during adolescence and early adulthood shape the trajectory for their adult lives. Access (or lack of access) to services, education, and opportunities during this time period sets the foundation for an individual’s future health, income, and well-being.<sup>53</sup>

- **Brain Development:** Provide exposure to a variety of learning opportunities and experiences (academic, sports, arts, music, debate, community service, etc.) to stimulate brain connections and new pathways through early-to mid- 20s.



- **Pre-Frontal Cortex:** Provide opportunities for young people to develop these planning and other “executive function” skills. Engage youth in decision making with greater complexity and independence over time. Support youth to set goals, prioritize tasks, and engage in time management. Use active learning and interactive exercises, such as role plays and project-based learning to help youth plan, set goals, prioritize, and make decisions.
- **Cognitive Development and Adolescent Learning:** Learning should be relevant to young people’s lives and linked to real-world situations. Provide opportunities to apply learning with real audiences with real outcomes. Introduce more abstract thinking for older youth.
- **Emotional Development:** Use emotional sensitivity to benefit learning. Classwork should engage the senses and emotions to heighten memory. When learning is personally relevant and connected to their emotions (e.g., role play and simulations), students are more engaged. Avoid emotionally stressful environments that can inhibit learning (such as a highly punitive or authoritarian classroom). Provide opportunities for youth to develop competencies such as self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship skills.
- **Positive Risk Taking:** Enable youth to take healthy risks in safe settings by engaging youth in decision making, community activities, and doing novel and challenging activities. Young people’s openness to risk provides an opportunity to learn new things and think outside the box.
- **Negative Risk Taking:** Help youth understand how their brain works and how to identify potential risky situations. Include content relating to negative behaviors (drugs and alcohol, tobacco, unprotected sex) and positive healthy and protective behaviors. Educate youth on their rights, particularly relating to hazardous work, gender based violence, sexual harassment.
- **Moral Development:** Provide opportunities for youth to define values and ethics. Promote debate and opportunities to discuss opinions. Provide opportunities for advocacy, community service, and youth participation.
- **Social Development:** Embrace adolescents’ natural social interests. Use group work (in addition to paired and independent learning). Alternate grouping for different activities. Youth groups, clubs, student government build on young people’s natural interest in their peers.
- **Sexual Maturity:** Allow for open discussions of development, puberty, and sexuality, and encourage teens to talk about feelings relating to these changes. Include life skills programs that educate youth about reproductive health beginning in early adolescence.
- **Physical Development:** Allow for physical activity as well as periods of rest. Use a range of tactile and physical activities and allow for physical activities within learning environments. Hands-on and active learning are particularly effective learning strategies. Provide opportunities for sports, dance or other forms of physical movement.
- **Addressing Youth Who Have Experienced Trauma:** Provide opportunities for youth to build positive relationships with supportive adults.

