

Innocenti Adolescence Research Digest

Issue 01 | April 2016

A quarterly digest synthesizing the latest research findings in adolescent well-being over the previous three months.

INTRODUCING THE ADOLESCENT DIGEST SERIES FROM INNOCENTI

We are pleased to introduce the Adolescence Research Digest, a new quarterly publication by UNICEF's Office of Research-Innocenti. This synthesizes the latest research evidence, resources and news related to adolescent well-being in low- and middle-income countries. The Digest aims to promote awareness and uptake of new adolescent well-being research findings amongst UNICEF staff, practitioners, policymakers and academics in the development and humanitarian sectors.

Adolescence is a critically sensitive period in terms of growth and maturity with many rapid transitions about which too little is currently known. As part of Innocenti's broader research programme on 'The Social and Structural Determinants of Adolescent Well-being in Low- and Middle-Income Countries', we hope that the Digest will become an essential service for those interested in this area, providing easy access to the latest and most relevant evidence.

The Digest is co-produced by the UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti in collaboration with [Social Development Direct](#) specialized in the provision of social development technical assistance and research services including research synthesis and research communication products.

For each edition, Social Development Direct authors will scan a broad range of existing literature on adolescent well-being published over the preceding quarter, including: international peer reviewed journals, evaluation reports, systematic reviews, as well as toolkits, resources, and conferences.

They will then independently select the most useful and interesting content according to set criteria. Particular attention will be paid to research that promotes effective interventions in improving adolescent outcomes in low- and

middle-income countries, and that support safe transitions to adulthood. Studies with potential for impact, scaling-up and for generating new insights and understanding will be highlighted. Working alongside an in-house editor and review team, the suggested content will then be evaluated for its utility for UNICEF's key audiences.

The Adolescence Digest team would like to encourage your active contribution with suggestions of new research, resources, events and conferences. We hope that this publication will promote knowledge exchange and use of research evidence amongst our readers and welcome your feedback on this first edition. Happy reading!

Kerry Albright
Chief, Research Facilitation and Knowledge Management, UNICEF Office of Research-Innocenti

IN THIS ISSUE:

Introduction	1
News	2
Upcoming Events	2
Resources.....	3
Latest Research.....	4
Additional Readings	8



UNICEF Ianaslezic©2010

NEWS

The United Nations Security Council has adopted [resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security](#). The resolution acknowledges the key role young people can play in securing sustainable peace, and has a specific focus on preventing and countering violent extremism.

In January 2016, [Gambia's parliament passed a bill banning Female Genital Mutilation](#) and setting strict penalties for offenders. The new law states that a person who engages in female circumcision could face up to three years in prison or a fine of 50,000 dalasi (US\$1,250).

[Zimbabwe banned child marriage](#), raising the minimum age at which both men and women can marry to 18. The landmark ruling made by a Zimbabwean court in January 2016 followed a challenge by two young brides to the government's Marriage Act on the basis that it discriminated against girls by setting the minimum age to marry at 16 for women, but 18 for men.

Nepal held its first-ever [Girl Summit](#) as a follow-up to the global Girl Summit 2014, where commitments were made to end child, early and forced marriage. Similar national events have been held in Bangladesh, Ethiopia and Uganda.

UNICEF and UNFPA launched the [Global Programme to Accelerate Action to End Child Marriage](#) – a multi-country initiative designed to protect millions of vulnerable girls from child marriage.

The UN launched the [Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth](#) - a new initiative to tackle the youth employment crisis. It was unveiled at the UN's Annual Youth Forum and is a unique global

partnership aiming to lift the economic prospects of young people entering the workforce.

The first ever [Youth Forum](#) was held at the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW60) in New York in March 2016. The two-day event saw 300 young men and women join together as partners in achieving gender equality.

The London School of Economics (LSE) and UNICEF Innocenti held a [Global Kids Online meeting](#). A network of 40 academics and UNICEF staff from 14 countries began drafting research and policy recommendations for the launch of a global toolkit to research children's digital experiences in late 2016.

UPCOMING EVENTS

The Lancet has announced that it will publish its forthcoming report: [Our Future: A Lancet Commission on Adolescent Health and Wellbeing](#), with a launch event in London on 10th May. The report will review the evidence base and consider the policy and legal frameworks for adolescent health and well-being.

Young people will play a key role in the [Women Deliver conference](#) to be held in Copenhagen, Denmark on 16-19 May 2016. The event will include a Youth Pre-Conference and a Youth Zone and will be the largest gathering on girls' and women's health and rights in the last decade.

The United Nations celebrates International Youth Day on August 12 to recognize efforts of the world's youth in enhancing global society. For further updates about this year's events and annual theme, visit the [International Youth Day website](#).

A two-day international conference on [Adolescence, Youth and Gender: Building Knowledge for Change](#) will be held in Oxford, UK on 8-9 September 2016. The conference will address key questions relating to adolescence, youth and gender in global contexts.

The 15th [European Association for Research on Adolescence conference](#) will take place in Chiclana/ Cádiz, Andalusia, Spain on 16-19 September 2016. The theme for the conference is: ¿Qué será, será? Visions of, and Challenges for Adolescent Research in the Future.



© UNICEF/UNI163972/Pudlowski

RESOURCES

[UNICEF's Adolescent Kit](#) is available to order via UNICEF's supply catalogue from Spring 2016. It includes a package of guidance, tools and supplies to reach adolescents aged 10-18 years affected by conflict and emergencies. The adolescent kits were tested throughout 2015 with UNICEF country offices and their partners in South Sudan, Indonesia, State of Palestine, Bhutan and Myanmar.

The World Health Organization launched new [Global Standards](#) for quality health care services for adolescents.

USAID have developed a [companion guide for health providers and managers](#) on the comprehensive care of children and adolescents who have experienced sexual violence.

Members of the Coalition for Adolescent Girls have developed a [toolkit for meaningful adolescent girl engagement](#) for practitioners, policy-makers, advocates, researchers, donors and governments seeking to engage adolescent girls as 'partners and allies'.

UNESCO's Institute for Statistics (UIS) has developed a public [learning assessments database](#) to help monitor education progress globally. The database provides information on how different countries are measuring learning, the type of data they are gathering, and how this is being utilised.

The International Labour Organization released the annual [Global Employment Trends for Youth 2015](#), with a special focus on scaling up investments in decent jobs for young men and women.

The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) launched the [guidance note: Girlhood, Not Motherhood](#) aimed at empowering girls and reducing vulnerability to adolescent pregnancy.

A new e-course on [WASH in Schools for Girls](#) has been developed by the United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI), UNICEF, Emory University and the Government of Canada. The e-course aims to address adolescent girls' menstrual hygiene management needs as well as water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) services in schools.

New UNICEF [Guidelines for Industry on Child Online Protection](#) were launched to promote awareness of child safety in the online world and to develop practical tools to assist governments, industry and educators.

The International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) has created an [online Youth Hub](#) with resources on comprehensive sexuality education, service delivery, and advocacy.

A [Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction for Children](#) was developed to introduce children, aged 10-14 years, to the Sendai Framework and concepts of disasters, risks and hazards. The child-friendly document was developed by the Children in a Changing Climate coalition (ChildFund Alliance, Plan International, Save the Children, UNICEF, and World Vision).

Sonke Gender Justice released the [One Youth Can facilitator's guide](#) and accompanying [participant workbook](#). The resources are aimed at practitioners working with youth on issues of citizenship, human rights, gender, health, sexuality and violence. The One Youth Can campaign aims to help youth "break the gender rules" and end violence.

The Working Group on Youth-Inclusive Governance Indicators, composed of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), youth NGOs and academics, has identified a list of [national-level youth-inclusive indicators](#) and methods for monitoring Sustainable Development Goal 16 Targets (16.6, 16.7 and 16.10 to promote just, peaceful and inclusive societies).

The new [Global Strategy for Women's, Children's and Adolescents' Health, 2016-2030](#) has been launched. This updated strategy was developed by a wide range of national, regional and global stakeholders under the umbrella of the [Every Woman Every Child](#) movement, led by the World Health Organization.

USAID's YouthPower project has launched a new website [YouthPower.org](#) with useful resources for practitioners and researchers on what does and does not work in youth development.

LATEST RESEARCH

A selection of the latest research on adolescent well-being, released in the last few months.

Violence

[Global prevalence of past-year violence against children: A systematic review and minimum estimates](#)

Hillis, S. et al, Pediatrics, January 2016

Globally over half of all children – 1 billion children aged 2 to 17 – have experienced violence over the past year. This systematic review of population-based surveys in 96 countries finds that a minimum of 50 per cent of children in Asia, Africa, and North America have experienced past-year violence (physical, sexual, emotional, or multiple types). The study highlights a need for improved population-based surveillance, coupled with scaling-up interventions to prevent violence against children.

Sexual and Reproductive Health

[Sexual and reproductive health of young people in Asia and the Pacific: A review of issues, policies and programmes](#)

UNFPA/UNESCO/WHO, December 2015

Of the almost one billion young people aged 10 to 24 years living in Asia and the Pacific, a significant proportion are sexually active. The report reviews young people's sexual and reproductive health in 32 countries. It notes that most young people lack the knowledge and life-skills around negotiating safe relationships. One in three girls are married by the age of 18 and one in seven has given birth. Up to 63 per cent of adolescent pregnancies are unintended, often leading to unsafe abortions, which are mostly unreported. Less than a third of young people have comprehensive knowledge of HIV. High rates of coerced sex and sexual violence were also found. The report emphasises the need to increase the quality and coverage of comprehensive sexuality education and increase youth participation in policy and programming.

[The role of material deprivation and consumerism in the decisions to engage in transactional sex among young people in the urban slums of Blantyre, Malawi](#)

Kamndayam M. et al, Global Public Health, March 2016

Transactional sex – the exchange of sex for goods or resources – can put young women at increased risk of HIV infection and unintended pregnancy. This qualitative study of 60 young people aged 18 to 23 from urban slums in Malawi explores the structural factors supporting transactional sex. The study concludes that the experience of transactional sex is different for young men and women. Factors influencing decisions to engage in transactional sex for both men and women include housing and food deprivation. However, young women also identify transactional sex as a solution to their family's health needs, enabling them to meet the costs of private medical care. Consumerism and a 'desire for fashionable goods' are also important influencing factors for young women. The authors conclude that interventions that engage with acute economic pressure, quality health care and consumerism are essential to reducing the sexual and reproductive health risks for young people in urban slums.

[Emerging evidence, lessons and practice in Comprehensive Sexuality Education \(CSE\)](#)

UNESCO/UNFPA/UNAIDS Secretariat, December 2015

Young people are increasingly demanding their rights to sexuality education. This UNESCO report, produced with UNFPA and the UNAIDS Secretariat, examines CSE status in 48 countries. It notes that CSE is particularly critical during adolescence and has positive impacts on safe sexual behaviours, reducing HIV, other sexually transmitted infections, unintended pregnancy, and gender inequality. The report finds that almost 80 per cent of assessed countries have policies or strategies in place to support CSE. However, it identifies a significant gap between global and regional policies and implementation. It concludes that effective delivery of high-quality CSE involves a sustained commitment to increased teacher training, as well as engaging parents and communities in implementation and scale-up.

Social Protection

[Effects of a large-scale unconditional cash transfer on mental health outcomes of young people in Kenya](#)

Kilburn, K. et al, Journal of Adolescent Health, February 2016

Cash transfer programmes targeted at reducing national poverty have the potential to improve the mental health of young people in low-income countries, according to a study of Kenya's Cash Transfer for Orphans and Vulnerable Children (CT-OVC). The programme provides an unconditional cash transfer of US\$20 per month directly to the main caregiver in the household. Examining data on the psychosocial status of 1,960 youth aged 15–24 from households in intervention and control locations, the study finds that the odds of depressive symptoms reduce by 24 per cent among young persons living in households that receive cash transfers. The effects are only significant for young men and are greater among men aged 20–24 and orphans.

Education

[Factors affecting successful completion of secondary education in India](#)

Singh, R. and Mukherjee, P., Young Lives, February 2016

This policy brief presents longitudinal analysis by Young Lives in Andhra Pradesh to explore factors which help or hinder children to successfully complete secondary education in India. Key determinants predicting whether children complete secondary school include: being a boy; higher literacy skills in the early primary grades; high self-efficacy (belief in their own capabilities); and non-participation in paid work or long hours of domestic chores before the age of 12. Other important factors include household wealth, family education, ethnic background, and birth order.

[Undermining learning: Multi-country longitudinal evidence on corporal punishment in schools](#)

Jones, H. and Pells, K., UNICEF Innocenti Research Brief, February 2016

Corporal punishment is highly prevalent, even when prohibited by law, according to a new Innocenti Research Brief. Using longitudinal data from Young

Lives in Ethiopia, India, Peru and Viet Nam, the study finds that corporal punishment is associated with poorer cognitive development outcomes. Young children are significantly more likely to experience corporal punishment, with the incidence at age 8 more than double the rate reported by 15-year-olds, in all four countries. Boys and disadvantaged children are also at a higher risk of experiencing corporal punishment.

Work and Employment

[Out of school and out of work: Risks and opportunities for Latin America's *ninis*](#)

De Hoyos, R. et al, World Bank, January 2016

One in five young people aged 15-24 years are considered to be '*ninis*' in Latin America. The term comes from "ni estudian ni trabajan" (neither study nor work) – known globally as NEETs (neither employed nor in education or training). Based on a three-year study of the factors keeping young people in school and helping them into employment, the report finds that most *ninis* in Latin America are typically young urban girls with incomplete secondary education. However, there is a growing '*masculinisation*' of the *nini* profile, as men find it more difficult to secure jobs. Findings show that NEETs are a global concern, numbering 260 million worldwide. Effective interventions to reduce school dropout rates and improve the employability of young people include early warning systems to identify youth at risk, along with targeted socio-emotional interventions, tutoring and conditional cash transfers.

ICT and Youth

[Mobile phones and education in sub-Saharan Africa: From youth practice to public policy](#)

Porter, G. et al, Journal of International Development, January 2016

The significant growth of young people's mobile phone usage in Africa presents both opportunities and risks, but what is the specific impact on education? This paper draws from an ongoing mixed-methods research study of young people's mobile phone usage and its impacts across Ghana, Malawi and South Africa. It includes a questionnaire with approximately 4,500 young people aged 9-18. Findings emphasize that the positive direct value of

phone usage is currently limited to the 'mundane' involving activities such as calls between pupils about their homework. The authors conclude that there is a need for the education sector to promote responsible phone use, not only among pupils, but also among teachers and parents, in all three countries.

[One in three: Internet governance and children's rights](#)

Livingstone, S. et al, UNICEF Innocenti Discussion Paper, January 2016

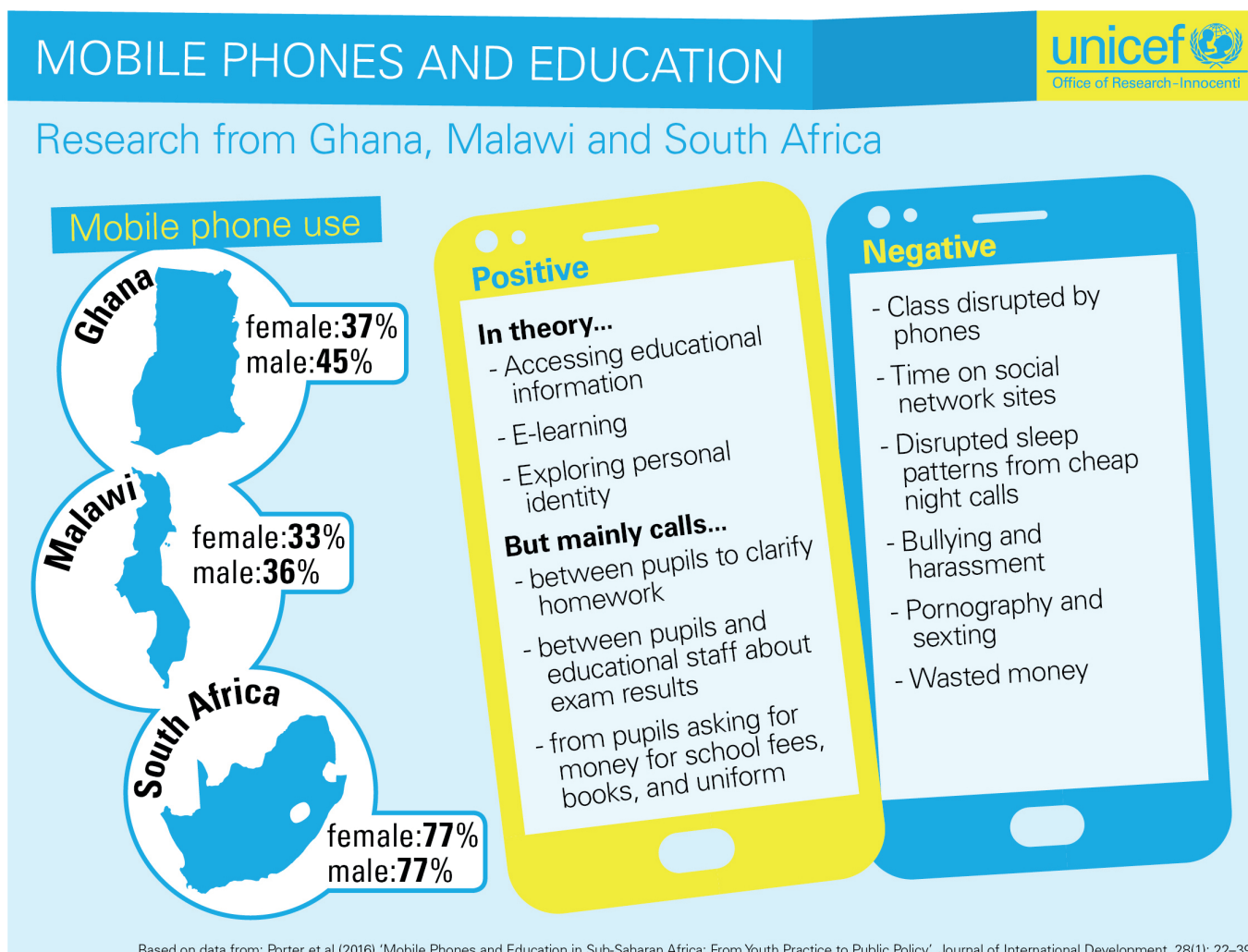
An estimated third of all Internet users globally – approximately 300 million – are below the age of 18, mostly living in developing nations. Internet governance has not sufficiently recognised young people's specific rights and needs, both in terms

of protection from harm as well as the right to access and use digital media. The paper sets out recommendations for embedding children's rights in the activities and policies of international Internet governance institutions, including:

- focusing on the role of business alongside the state and public institutions in the creation of legislative and policy frameworks;
- including parents and children (and their representatives) as stakeholders;
- developing Internet governance mechanisms to represent and implement children's rights online.

[Access to Justice](#)

[Rights, remedies and representation: A global report on access to justice for children](#)



Child Rights International Network, February 2016

How effectively can children use the law to challenge violations of their rights? Developed by the Child Rights International Network, this report analyses data on the legal systems of 197 countries and presents a global ranking and interactive map, scoring countries against international standards for access to justice for children. It finds that just under half of countries allow the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) to be directly enforced in courts, enabling children to challenge laws or practices that violate their rights. Just 3 per cent of the world's children are able to access the international complaints procedure under the CRC, introduced in 2014.

Adolescent Boys

[Adolescent boys and young men: Engaging them as supporters of gender equality and health and understanding their vulnerabilities](#)

Promundo/UNFPA, March 2015

Drawing on global research on adolescent boys aged 15-19, this paper highlights two connected objectives: (1) the need to engage adolescent boys/young men as allies to achieve gender equality, and (2) the importance of addressing their specific health and social development risks and needs. It highlights gendered vulnerabilities facing boys and girls throughout their lifespan from early years (0-9) through to early adulthood (20-24). Key findings for adolescent boys include:

- Boys are more likely to repeat a primary grade than girls in 90 of 113 countries where data is available.
- Poor mental health is among the leading causes of the global burden of disease for adolescents aged 10-19 and young men are less likely to seek out mental health support.
- It is estimated that one in seven boys experiences sexual violence as a child.

Key entry points for engaging boys include: sexual and reproductive health services; comprehensive sexuality education; fatherhood and caregiving; preventing violence against women, girls and boys; and reducing stigma around sexual orientation and gender identity.

Participation in Peacebuilding

[Young people's participation in peacebuilding](#)

Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development, January 2016

More than 600 million young people live in fragile and conflict-affected contexts today. Young women and men often want to and have the capacities to play active roles in peacebuilding. Led by the IANYD Working Group on Youth and Peacebuilding, this Practice Note explores research on youth and conflict, highlighting the growing body of evidence which suggests that engaging young people positively during the transition period after violent conflict is important for long-term peace and security. Examples of promising practice in policy and programming provide lessons on what can work in youth and peacebuilding.

Research

[Investing when it counts: Reviewing the evidence and charting a course of research and action for very young adolescents](#)

McCarthy, K. et al, Population Council, January 2016

The years between ages 10 and 14 are a pivotal period for young people transitioning from childhood to adolescence. This Population Council report identifies actions for stakeholders involved in research and/or programmes for very young adolescents (VYA), including: testing methods of gathering information with girls versus boys, and younger versus older VYAs; establishing a data repository; conducting fresh analyses of existing data, disaggregated by gender and age in two- and three-year intervals; focusing on marginalised VYA populations, including young married girls, migrants, refugees, and other vulnerable populations; and embedding research in programming initiatives.

ADDITIONAL READINGS

Selected by the Digest team (* = not open access).

Devries, K., [Violence against children and education](#), International Health, February 2016

Edin, K. et al, [Perspectives on intimate relationships among young people in rural South Africa: The logic of risk](#), Culture, Health & Sexuality: An International Journal for Research, Intervention and Care, March 2016*

Elgar, F. et al, [Structural determinants of youth bullying and fighting in 79 countries](#), Journal of Adolescent Health, December 2015*

Hindin, M. et al, [Monitoring adolescent sexual and reproductive health](#) (Editorial), Bulletin of the World Health Organization, March 2016

Hughston, L., [Acinonyx Cervidae Hircus: Child-led evaluation of the building skills for life programme in Cambodia](#), Plan UK/Plan International, December 2015

Jiang, Y. et al, [Peer victimization and substance use in early adolescence: Influences of deviant peer affiliation and parental knowledge](#), Journal of Child and Family Studies, March 2016

Kangaude, G., [Enhancing the role of health professionals in the advancement of adolescent sexual health and rights in Africa](#), International Journal of Gynecology and Obstetrics, January 2016*

Kim, J., [The effect of peers on HIV infection expectations among Malawian adolescents: Using an instrumental variables/school fixed effect approach](#), Social Science & Medicine, March 2016*

The Lancet Psychiatry, series of papers on [Substance use in young people](#), February 2016*

Meinck, F. et al., [Physical, emotional and sexual adolescent abuse victimisation in South Africa: Prevalence, incidence, perpetrators and location](#), Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health, March 2016

Murphy, L., [Improving access to health for women and girls in low-income urban settlements](#), IDS Policy Briefing 110, February 2016

Musaiger, A. et al, [Obesity, dietary habits, and sedentary behaviors among adolescents in Sudan: Alarming risk factors for chronic diseases in a poor country](#), Food and Nutrition Bulletin, March 2016*

Niwa, E. et al, [Negative stereotypes of ethnic outgroups: A longitudinal examination among Palestinian, Israeli Jewish, and Israeli Arab youth](#), Journal of Research on Adolescence, March 2016

Peterman, A. et al, [Age and intimate partner violence: An analysis of global trends among women experiencing victimisation in 30 developing countries](#), Journal of Adolescent Health, December 2015*

Phillips, S. and Mvizi, M., [Empowering adolescent girls in Sub-Saharan Africa to prevent unintended pregnancy and HIV: A critical research gap](#), International Journal of Gynecology & Obstetrics, January 2016*

Sampson, A. and Villela, M.R., [How young people peacefully challenge community norms embedded with violence a Brazilian favela](#), British Journal of Criminology, February 2016*

Schofield, T. et al, [Harsh parenting, physical health, and the protective role of positive parent-adolescent relationships](#), Social Science & Medicine, March 2016*

Ssewamala F. et al, [Cash, care and classroom': Social protection to reduce adolescents' risk of HIV. Applying a family-level economic strengthening intervention to improve education and health-related outcomes of school-going AIDS-orphaned children: Lessons from a randomized experiment in southern Uganda](#). UNAIDS Science Now, January 2016

Yakubovich, A. et al, [Community-based organizations for vulnerable children in South Africa: Reach, psychosocial correlates, and potential mechanisms](#), Children and Youth Services Review, March 2016

Contributors and Contacts

CONNECT WITH US

To submit suggestions for new, relevant research, conferences and opportunities for the next edition please email the [authors](#).

For more information and updates please sign up to our website www.unicef-irc.org.

CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS EDITION

Authors: Erika McAslan Fraser, Anna Parke and Lyndsay McLean (Social Development Direct)
Editor: Emanuela Bianchera (UNICEF)
Graphics: Patricia Arquero (UNICEF) and Justin Pearce-Neudorf (Praxical.org)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Our thanks to the [UK Department for International Development \(DFID\)](#) for funding this Digest as part of the research programme: The Social and Structural Determinants of Adolescent Wellbeing (2014-2018).

DISCLAIMER

The findings, interpretations and conclusions expressed in this Digest are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the policies or views of UNICEF or DFID.

RESEARCH FOR CHILDREN AT INNOCENTI

UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti
Florence, Italy
www.unicef-irc.org
+ 39 055 20330
florence@unicef.org
[@UNICEFInnocenti](#)

The Office of Research – Innocenti is UNICEF's dedicated research centre. Publications produced by the office contribute to a global debate on issues affecting children.