Global Early Adolescent Study

Objectives and Background

The ages 10 to 14 are among the most critical for human development, yet one of the most poorly understood stages of the life course. While biological processes are universal, the social contexts within which they occur vary considerably. Across early adolescence, young people are expected to assume socially defined gender roles that shape their sexual and reproductive health future.

Objective: The Global Early Adolescent Study (GEAS) aims to understand the factors in early adolescence that predispose young people to subsequent sexual health risks and promote healthy sexuality, so as to provide the information needed to promote sexual and reproductive well-being. In some sites, it is used alongside an intervention to assess impact. Specifically, the GEAS explores how young adolescents:

- Perceive norms regulating both romantic and platonic relationships between boys and girls;
- Form normative beliefs about gender;
- Reconcile these individual beliefs with social norms in their communities and contexts;
- Regulate their behaviours as a result of gender norms.

The GEAS has involved two phases of research:

Phase I took place over 2 years, and used a mixed-method approach to develop and test four instruments to assess gender norms and sexuality for use among early adolescents and to explore the ways gender norms are related to different domains of sexuality in this age group, using in-depth interviews with adolescents and their caregivers. Phase I also involved the development and piloting of three new quantitative instruments to be used with early adolescents on gender norms about relationships as well as on health, sexuality and related behaviours. Finally, the GEAS team conducted a systematic review of the gender literature globally as it pertains to young adolescents.

Phase II uses the validated instruments produced in Phase I to pursue the following objectives through a 3-year longitudinal study of 10 to 14-year-olds:

1. Describe gender socialization as an evolving process in different cultural settings from early to later adolescence;
2. Investigate parental/caregiver and peer influences on gender socialization of young adolescents;
3. Understand how the contexts (schools, neighbourhoods, media, culturally diverse settings) within which a young adolescent develops moderate parental/adult caregiver influences on gender socialization;
4. Assess the relationships between gender socialization in early adolescence and both sexuality and subsequent sexual behaviours throughout the adolescent years.

Geographic location

**Phase I:** Ghent, Belgium; Cochabamba, Bolivia; Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso; Shanghai, China; Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo; Cuenca, Ecuador; Assiut, Egypt; New Delhi, India; Nairobi, Kenya; Blantyre, Malawi; Ile-Ife, Nigeria; Edinburgh, Scotland; Cape Town, South Africa; Baltimore, USA; Hanoi, Vietnam

**Phase II:** Ghent, Belgium; Shanghai, China; Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo; Cuenca, Ecuador;
The GEAS Tool Kit is comprised of the following:
- Parent/Guardian Questionnaire
- Health+ Instrument
- Gender Norms Instrument
- Vignettes-based Measure of Gender Equality

Evidence:
- A systematic review of gender socialization in young adolescents, published in PLOS One.
- A set of papers synthesizing the findings of the formative research carried out in Phase I, including six original articles, one review, three commentaries and an editorial, published in a Journal of Adolescent Health special supplement.

Partners
Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health

Phase I:
- Assiut University, Egypt
- Instituto de Desarrollo Humano, Bolivia
- Obafemi Awolowo University, Nigeria
- Population Council, India
- University of Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso
- University of St Andrews, Child and Adolescent Health Research Unit, Scotland, UK
- Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences, Vietnam

Phase I & Phase II:
- African Population and Health Research Centre (APHRC), Kenya
- International Centre for Reproductive Health, Ghent University, Belgium
- Shanghai Institute of Planned Parenthood Research (SIPPR), China
- University of Cuenca, Ecuador
- University of Kinshasa School of Public Health, DRC
- University of Malawi College of Medicine, Malawi
- University of the Western Cape, South Africa

Phase II:
- Institute of Women and Ethnic Studies, New Orleans, USA
- Rutgers, Netherlands
- University of Gadjah Mada, Yogyakarta, Indonesia
- Institute of Reproductive Health, Georgetown University, USA
- Save the Children, USA
- Promundo, USA
- Population Council, Kenya

Sources of funding
Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, David & Lucile Packard Foundation, Ford Foundation, Oak Foundation, USAID, WHO

Date issued
February 2018