

In Nigeria, socio-cultural taboos limit access of adolescents to credible sources of information. Sexuality education is not taught in most secondary schools despite the design and approval of relevant curriculum. Stakeholders withhold reproductive health and sexuality information from adolescents, who are also denied reproductive health services. Early pre-marital sexual activity, pregnancy and risky sexual behaviour are leading to induced abortion or child abandonment.

This study uses a combination of innovative approaches - focus group discussion, rapid participatory assessment and in-depth interview with adolescents and stakeholders - in varying socio-economic, cultural, religious, ethnic and geo-political contexts - to obtain information on, and capture the influence of family, work place, school and the society and the impact of media and peer groups, on adolescent sexual and reproductive behaviour. The study indicates that: (i) premarital sexual behaviour is prevalent among adolescents (ii) most parents refrain from discussing with their adolescent children about sex, pregnancy and contraception because of cultural beliefs, fear and lack of knowledge (iii) increasingly, religion and its insistence on chastity is a dominant factor in adolescent sexual behaviour, overtaking the inhibiting role of culture (iv) established customs and values about sexual behaviour and traditional systems of preparation for adult sexual life are collapsing; and (v) adolescents know more about their sexuality and reproductive health than what parents and society are willing to concede. Hence parents, school, community and government have critical roles in articulating youth-friendly programmes to meet adolescent sexual and reproductive health needs.