Adolescent Girls Help Forge a New Path to Improving Access to Contraception and Reducing Unintended Pregnancies.

WASHINGTON, DC / NUSA DUA, INDONESIA – January 25th, 2016 – Today, as Population Services International (PSI) joins global health experts at the International Conference on Family Planning in Nusa Dua, we are pleased to announce the launch of the Adolescents 360 project. By applying a user-centered approach, with youth involvement throughout, this initiative aims to increase voluntary, modern contraceptive use and reduce unintended pregnancy among adolescent girls between the ages of 15 and 19 in developing countries.

The four-year $30 million grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the Children’s Investment Fund Foundation, is implemented by PSI and consortium members: IDEO.org, the Center on the Developing Adolescent from the University of California, Berkeley, Triggerise and Ogilvy & Mather Africa. Working in three focus countries with PSI/Ethiopia, PSI/Tanzania and Society for Family Health, a PSI independent member in Nigeria, the initiative will develop cost-effective solutions to delivering high quality, affordable and accessible voluntary contraceptive information and services to adolescent girls.

The need for contraception among adolescent girls is high. In sub-Saharan Africa alone, 40% of girls and young women want to use contraception but aren’t able to access it. Within the region, girls aged 15-19 account for 16% of all births each year, an estimated 2.2 million unintended pregnancies, and 25% of all unsafe abortions. Complications resulting from pregnancy and childbirth are a leading cause of death for this age group. About 70,000 adolescent girls die annually in developing countries from pregnancy-related complications. For a girl under 15, the risk of maternal mortality is double that of a woman over 20 years old.

Adolescent girls rarely have a say on matters related to their own health and many face significant barriers in accessing contraceptive services and products. Limited insight into the factors affecting adolescent contraceptive behavior, and how to address them, continues to challenge the sexual and reproductive health community, leaving many girls without any support.

“Historically, health organizations defined problems and solutions for youth, rather than with them. This creates significant risks for misinterpretation of what the problem is and makes assumptions about the types of solutions that might work best,” explains Jennifer Pope, PSI director of family planning and reproductive health. “Adolescents 360 places young people at the center of the design process, encouraging them to become actors and assets to the project, and co-creating with adult allies. This not only ensures program impact, but also builds collective efficacy and ownership of the project.”

Using this approach, the project will generate insights into how adolescent girls think and feel in each country and cultural context, and work with them to develop solutions tailored to their unique needs. The project will also work with parents, boys, and community leaders to address the issues that lead to early and unintended pregnancy.

These insights will further contribute to how PSI engages and strengthens the private sector to improve access to contraceptive services. As adolescent girls worldwide are more likely to access private health
care providers (e.g., clinics and pharmacies), the project will create a private sector model that can be adapted and replicated in additional countries and settings.

“By bringing together youth-driven research and design, coupled with innovative private sector service delivery and financing models,” says Pope, “we have the potential to significantly change the adolescent sexual and reproductive landscape for girls around the world.”

About Population Services International
Population Services International (PSI) is a leading global health organization working in reproductive health, HIV, child survival, non-communicable diseases and sanitation. Partnering with the public sector and harnessing the power of markets, PSI provides life-saving products, services and communications that empower vulnerable populations to lead healthier lives.

About the Children’s Investment Fund Foundation
The Children’s Investment Fund Foundation is an independent philanthropic organization, headquartered in London with offices in Nairobi and New Delhi. It works to transform the lives of poor and vulnerable children in developing countries. Areas of work include children and mothers’ health and nutrition, children’s education and welfare, and smart ways to slowdown and stop climate change. It places significant emphasis on quality data and evidence to measure and evaluate progress with partners to achieve large scale and sustainable impact. More information at ciff.org

Contact

For more information:

Karen Sommer Shalett
Population Services International
kshalett@psi.org
202.250.9391