

Box 1: Lessons learnt and opportunities for interventions to improve family planning in young people in Jordan

Individual level

- Young people in Jordan are interested in sexual and reproductive health topics and are willing to be active participants in research and programmes. As noted in one document detailing the implementation of a reproductive health intervention targeting young people in Jordan, “the taboo nature of reproductive health topics was a concern for the project partner, [but] facilitators and program staff were surprised by the enthusiasm with which youth received the information” (32).
- Interventions that target young people before marriage, such as through premarital counselling, may help to shift attitudes towards family planning and male involvement (18). A young, unmarried Jordanian man indicated, “Of course, family planning concerns both partners and attending workshops on that issue must be compulsory, just like the mandatory pre-marriage blood test” (18). Targeted family planning education for young women and men in Syrian refugee camps could increase family planning uptake by alleviating cultural pressures regarding fertility (20).

Family and community levels

- Create a more accepting community environment among parents, community leaders and religious leaders to shift social norms about family planning and encourage young people to seek reproductive health services. Young people regard parents as trustworthy sources of reproductive health information; however, they may not be adequately equipped to effectively fulfil this role. Furthermore, the social expectations related to fertility, gender norms, and contraceptive use for young people in Jordan are reinforced through families, peers and social structures within communities. Interventions designed to support parents as gatekeepers may also be useful across the Middle East in improving reproductive health outcomes in young people (45).
- Entertainment-focused mass media may offer an effective platform through which to reach young people with information on family planning, especially birth spacing (42). Young people recommend the use of social media along with formal classes on issues related to reproductive health (18). Discussing birth spacing rather than family planning may be a more socially and culturally acceptable entry point with young people.
- Include men in sexual and reproductive health and rights information to encourage their positive and supportive participation in their partner’s health.
- Ensure that youth-friendly sexual and reproductive health services are available in communities. These services should be private, confidential and offer high-quality services specifically for young people. Offering a range of integrated and gender-segregated services may increase the acceptability of such centres.

Policy level

- Improve laws and policies on early marriage. The intersection between gender-based violence, low family planning uptake and early pregnancy in married adolescents suggests the need to improve enforcement of laws against early marriage and empower girls at risk of early marriage (14).
- Develop and approve a comprehensive sexual and reproductive health policy for young people (17,46) that includes measurable indicators to assess youth-friendly services and a robust monitoring and evaluation plan.
- Introduce mandatory comprehensive sexual education in schools, with a focus on puberty, gender-based violence, intimate relationships, family planning, and the importance of birth spacing and delayed first birth for women’s health (46,47).