



## Connecting the Youngest Parents to Health Services: Gaps, Lessons, and Opportunities

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### Declaration of Good Standing and Conflict of Interest Disclosure

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## Learning Objectives

1. To highlight the importance of focusing on the needs of first-time (young) parents.
2. To share findings of qualitative research exploring the needs of first-time parents in two countries.
3. To discuss programmatic implications for meeting the needs of first-time parents.

# Background

Every year...

- 15 million girls are married before age 18
- 13 million adolescents give birth
- The youngest mothers face greater risk for adverse health, education and social outcomes
- This period of transition is a window of opportunity to influence life-long practices related to:
  - Use of health services
  - Healthy timing and spacing of pregnancy
  - Home health practices
  - Positive parenting and child discipline

**Yet few programs target this population**



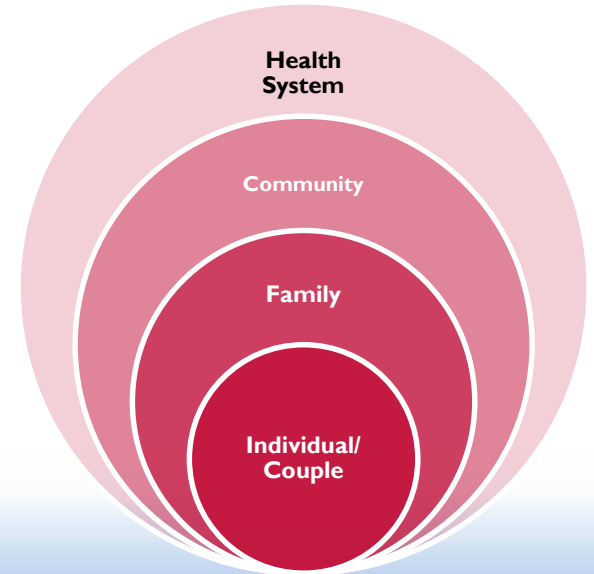
# Methods

**MCSP led qualitative research in Madagascar and Nigeria, using a socio-ecological approach, to identify:**

*What factors influence FTPs' intentions to seek services and to use ANC, MNC, and FP (including postpartum FP) services at relevant times in their reproductive life course?*

## Study participation by country

Data collection method	Madagascar	Nigeria
FGD with young parents (non-users)	24 FGDs	16 FGDs
IDIs with young parents (service users)	24 IDIs	24 IDIs
IDIs with young parents (non-users)	-	24 IDIs
FGDs with parents and relatives of FT/YPs	4 FGDs	8 FGDs
IDIs with influential people (non-family)	12 IDIs	-
FGDs with community health workers	4 FGDs	-
IDIs with providers	8 IDIs	-



# Results: Experiences of First-Time Parents

- Fear
- Stigma and isolation
- Desire to be respected
- Forced to grow up
- Excitement of having an heir
- Marital status a key factor

**I would like to be treated in the same way as other mothers. The neighbors do not consider me as a mother, they still see me as a teenager.**

*Young mother, Madagascar*

**It's not nothing to have a first child, it's the first treasure, this child.**

*Young father, Madagascar*

**I feel ashamed to face even my friends...seeing you pregnant when you're not supposed to be, when you're in school and you were supposed to finish. I'm a student so this is very, very bad.**

*Young mother, Nigeria*

# Results: Factors that Facilitate Use of Health Services

Among users of services...

- Recognition of benefits of services
- Trust that service providers can manage complications
- Appreciation for respectful, polite services

**Question: Why do some prefer a health facility?**

**Response: “Because in case there is a complication with the way that the child is inside the womb, they will be able to manage it so that she or he will come out peacefully without any error.”**

*Young father, Nigeria*

**I won't want to go to a different place simply because I enjoyed the delivery services I got at that hospital, especially their help in terms of prayers...**

*-Young mother 15-17, Nigeria*

# Results: Barriers to Use of Health Services

Among non-users of services...

- Service costs prohibitive
- Health services are not friendly to young people
- Influence of mothers, mothers-in-law
- Role of traditional birth attendant

**The day I came to register.. I cried. The woman said “when you chose to have sex, didn’t you know the end result?” Are nurses taught to insult people when they go nursing school?**

*Young mother, Nigeria*

**[Pregnant girls] do not frequent the hospital much since the traditional birth attendants here are very competent.**

*Young father, Madagascar*

**There are some mothers that will prefer the traditional way. They will start telling you this—and your friends too that have gone through it, they will start putting fears in you. They will start telling you how they will tear you, how they will do this if you go to hospital.**

*Young mother, Nigeria*

# Conclusions

**To increase use of health services by first-time parents:**

**Address health systems barriers**

- Use a broad RMNH-FP platform
- Foster service linkages early in pregnancy
- Reduce financial burden of care

**Address interpersonal barriers**

- Transform social norms that limit women's decision-making power
- Address holistic needs (education, livelihoods) of FTPs





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## Key Messages

1. Use of antenatal, facility-based delivery, postnatal, and family planning services is often lowest among the youngest mothers.
2. First-time parents face barriers to accessing health services at the individual, family, community, and health systems levels.
3. To increase use of these key health services, programs must use a holistic approach to address health system barriers, including unwelcoming treatment from providers, as well as at the community, family, and couple levels.

# Thank you

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