Adolescents have limited learning and job opportunities. Many adolescents are over age for the grade/level they are in and eventually end up dropping out. While several technical and vocational training programmes are in place, opportunities for secondary education are limited especially for adolescents living in remote areas.

Early marriage and teenage pregnancy are of major concerns. Adolescent birth rate is high at 52 per 1,000 girls aged 15-19. Almost one out of 10 women in the rural interior districts is married or in union before age 15 and 49% were married or in union before age 18 (MICS 2010). The Ministry of Health reports that the average percentage of teenage pregnancies (ages 10-19) is 16.1% for the period 2003 – 2007. Moreover, the health services do not provide adolescent friendly services.

Sexual abuse, violence against young people, and the juvenile justice system are some of the major issues. A national system to identify and refer children and vulnerable youth who are being exploited or manipulated by others, or become otherwise involved in crime, is lacking. Identification and referral of these children is not structured, or coordinated due to very limited qualified professionals trained to deal with young people facing any kind of protection issues. This makes it difficult to provide appropriate guidance and support to steer these vulnerable children in a different direction or provide them with the support they need.

Adolescents have limited opportunities to make their voices heard. Several institutions such as the national youth parliament and strategies have been established by the government to encourage youth participation and their involvement in decision making processes. Still young people have been provided limited opportunities to participate in processes and decisions that affect them.

UNICEF Response

With the financial support of the Dutch NatCom, UNICEF is implementing the “Working together for adolescent development in Suriname” programme providing direct support to the implementation of the National Integrated Adolescent Development Framework under the leadership of the Presidential Task Force.

- UNICEF supports the strengthening of the national inter-sectoral coordination mechanism
- Through comprehensive community participatory planning processes, two local communities developed and implemented Community Action Plans for Adolescent Development with activities
covering adolescent health promotion, life skills education, awareness on violence against children, and adolescents’ participation through arts, music and sports.

- In Gujaba, a community located at the upper Suriname River, UNICEF supported the development of youth-friendly health services and the establishment of youth clubs, integrating basic life-skills, ICT training and leisure activities for local young people.
- Jointly with UNDP, UNICEF supported youth participation in the 2015 national election by means of debates, so called KRUTU’s, broadcasted through popular television stations. The debates reflected young people’s voice on the upcoming elections and issues concerning young people.
- A youth friendly web-page was developed under the official website of the National Assembly to allow easy access of young people to the national laws and legislations, and allow their reflection on the national policies.

**Way forward**

In the 2017-2021 Country Programme UNICEF will keep supporting the country in strengthening:

- Its capacity to prevent early pregnancies, and providing support to young mother and their children so that they do not fell off the system
- Youth participation in decision making
- Quality of secondary education, which can better prepare adolescents for the future
- Promotion of healthy life style though formal and informal education
- Decrease the rate of drop outs
- Promotion and implementation of climate change education
- Prevention of juvenile offence, and juvenile justice system