

# DATA ON ADOLESCENT REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH (ARH)

## Adolescence and Youth

The World Health Organisation defines adolescence as the period between 10 and 19 years of age and refers to people aged 15-24 as 'youth'. Adolescence involves rapid physical growth and development, physical, social and psychological maturity, but not all at the same time.

The following data are taken from the 1975 Jamaica Fertility Survey, the 1983, 1989, and 1993 Contraceptive Prevalence Surveys and the 1997, 2002 and 2008 Reproductive Health Surveys. The Reproductive Health Survey (RHS) is conducted every five (5) years by the NFPB in conjunction with the Statistical Institute of Jamaica (STATIN). The 2008 survey is the eighth in the series conducted by the Board.

Through the administering and subsequent collecting of the household survey, the Board is able to determine the frequency of condom use, knowledge of contraceptive methods, risky sexual behaviour and the impact of family life education among other Reproductive Health issues.

High levels of fertility are of grave concern to the Reproductive Health of our young people as they put both the health of the mother and baby at risk if the mother is not physically mature enough to successfully carry the pregnancy to full term and deliver. There are also educational setbacks many adolescent females and males may have to face in order to be able to provide financially for their child. In some cases this may involve dropping out of school in order to seek income. This results in a decrease in the educational level of these youth, increasing the difficulty of attaining the resources necessary to provide for a new family.

There are also psychological factors such as stress and the inability to cope with the pregnancy which may affect young parents and, as a result may affect their child/children negatively.