

## **Stigma surrounding young people's sexuality**

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### **Key messages:**

- Adolescent sexuality is often treated in a negative context, linked to ignorance, danger, shame and guilt.
- As a result: sexually active adolescents are stigmatized, in particular girls
- Fortunately so, a shift can be seen over the past 15 years. Increasingly, sexuality is being seen as integral to adolescent identity formation.
- However, this shift is prudent, there is still opposition and research on sexual pleasure among adolescents is still largely lacking.
- Inequitable gender norms are linked to poor ASRH outcomes and wellbeing
- Traditional gender norms regulate (perceptions of) expressions/behaviour of boys and girls
- Research shows that there is a growing acceptability for girls to challenge the norms, less for boys, and that challenging gender norms could lead to verbal and physical negative consequences.
- An other research project has indicated a correlation between positive attitudes toward gender equality on the one hand and higher current use contraceptives, positive (ideas about) sexual experiences and good communication about sex on the other.
- Conclusion: stigma is still present in adolescent sexual and reproductive health, and gender roles are barriers to develop healthy sexuality, but in Western countries stigma is more and more recognized and trends towards more positive approach is growing.