

# **Why conduct research on sexually transmitted infections (STI), contraceptives and mental health with adolescents?**

## **Background information**

- It is well documented that adolescents engage in high risk behaviors. This includes early onset of sexual activity, lack of condom use and substance use.
- These behaviors result in high rates of pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections among adolescents.

## **Purpose of conducting this research/evaluation**

- Helps to better understand the needs of the target population; focuses on cultural and contextual issues.
- Assists in identifying protective factors that can be enhanced in interventions.
- Tracks behaviors over time to assess trends.
- Helps to identify and to publicize “best practices”.

## **Recruitment and retention issues**

- Teens who receive services at a family planning clinics are asked to participate in surveys or focus groups.
- About 10% of teens decline to participate.
- It appears that teens answer the surveys candidly as the trends in the data are similar to findings of national studies.
- As we provide clinical services, we have to ensure that teens do not feel coerced to participate and understand that their responses will not impact service provided.
- As teens are transient, it is difficult to conduct longitudinal studies.