About the Campaign

With the launch of the 3 Billion Reasons campaign, Pathfinder International is calling global attention to the world’s some 3 billion young people—the largest generation of young people in history. Their sheer numbers can be either one of our greatest challenges or greatest opportunities. Pathfinder believes they are our greatest opportunity.

Today’s 3 billion young people represent 3 billion assets for sustained economic growth and development—both within and well-beyond individual country borders. To succeed, however, young people must have the opportunity to acquire healthy sexual and reproductive decisionmaking and behaviors.

The 3 Billion Reasons campaign enjoins the international donor community and developing country governments to act and to act now to protect and promote adolescent and youth sexual and reproductive rights and health (SRRH).

Evidence for Action

Half of the world’s population, approximately three billion people, is under the age of 25, with almost 1.8 billion between the ages of 10 and 24. Almost 90% live in developing countries and face enormous challenges, ranging from a lack of educational and employment opportunities to early marriage and pregnancy, unsafe abortion, and sexually transmitted infections, including HIV.

Targeted investments in young people’s sexual and reproductive health (SRH) will yield dividends for generations to come, and the failure to act will have global reverberations.

What do we know?

- Young women who are equipped with information, life skills, and access to SRH services, are better able to control their fertility and other critical aspects of their lives.
- Young women who avoid unintended pregnancy are more likely to stay in school and continue their education.
- Women who start childbearing at an older age have fewer and healthier children who are better spaced.
- Young men and women who receive comprehensive sexuality education and have access to services are better able to make and implement informed decisions regarding their health and lives in general and their sexual and reproductive behavior in particular. This leads to healthier adult populations.
- When donors and governments invest in the SRH of young people, the result is a healthy labor force and a strengthened economy.

Despite this, we also know young people are among the least prioritized in international health and development efforts.

Our challenge then is to provide young people in developing countries with the knowledge and tools to adopt healthy sexual and reproductive behaviors that enable them to participate in and lead their communities in social and economic development.
The Girl and Boy Agenda

A number of important initiatives to promote the empowerment of adolescent girls in developing countries have been launched in recent years—many aimed at empowering young women through education and economic opportunity. The *3 Billion Reasons* campaign focuses on the fact adolescent girls and young women will not be able to realize their full potential without equal and committed attention to their sexual and reproductive well-being and that no real progress can be made to improve their lives without also engaging and meeting the SRH needs of adolescent boys and young men.

Achievements to Date

As part of *3 Billion Reasons*, Pathfinder has:

- Sponsored research to identify why the donor and international health communities—after having identified young people’s SRRH as one of our most pressing issues in the mid-1990s—have not sufficiently responded with funding and programs for young people. This research, available in *Advancing Adolescent and Youth Sexual and Reproductive Health in Developing Countries: Advocacy Findings and Recommendations*, also identifies new opportunities to communicate more effectively about the importance of investment in young people.

- Founded the *Youth Health and Rights Coalition* to bring together interested youth, advocacy, and service organizations to use our collective voice to more effectively advocate and build large-scale support for young people’s health and rights.

- Led efforts to develop policy briefs that address the SRH needs of young people within US government supported programs. *Know Your Epidemic, Know Your Response: the Case for Continued Investment in Young People* prioritizes young people within the second round of PEPFAR funding and *Protecting the Sexual and Reproductive Health of Adolescents and Youth: an Urgent Programmatic and Policy Priority for the Global Health Initiative* advocates for a concerted focus on adolescent girls’ and young women’s SRH within the administration’s new Global Health Initiative.

- Initiated a series of meetings with USAID’s Office of Population and Reproductive Health, select private foundations, the Office of Global Women’s Issues within the State Department, and the World Bank to advocate for the prioritization of young people’s SRRH in their long-range plans.