For generations, we have observed that higher GDP per capita levels have been correlated with lower teen pregnancy and overall fertility rates; however, over the past decade, the Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) region has not observed the declines in teen pregnancy that they may have been expecting given their higher levels of GDP per capita. For 15 year old girls in LAC, adolescent fertility has actually increased over the past twenty years despite improvements in GDP and other developmental indicators. This has left policy makers and academics with many questions about the types of policy changes that may be necessary to address teen pregnancy in the region. The Teenage Pregnancy and Opportunities in Latin America and the Caribbean regional study addresses this very question by providing a framework for thinking about risk factors and presenting qualitative findings that help unpack the varying factors that influence teens’ decisions and actions regarding pregnancy and fertility. These factors include but are not limited to access to information, social norms, peer pressure, values, aspirations for the future, avoidance, and perception of risk as well as the more concrete and more measureable factors of socio-economic situation, education level, and health factors. The Regional study also shows that poverty and lack of opportunities are key determinants of early childbearing. It emphasizes the relevance of strengthening agency and autonomy of women in their participation in markets, community, and relationships; so that they can make effective choices and decide about the life plans they have reasons to value.

Finally, teenage childbearing has progressively become a major policy concern in the region and is currently one of the top three social policy concerns articulated by the President of Ecuador. This evaluation seeks to disentangle specific factors that contribute to the increasing rates of teen pregnancy in Ecuador, building upon the knowledge generated in the regional study.

The Ecuadorian National Inter-Sectorial Strategy for the Prevention of Teen Pregnancy (ENIPLA) was developed in 2011 to address teen pregnancy through policy changes, and is implemented through the Ministries of Health, Education, Social Inclusion, and Coordination. The strategy...
addresses teen pregnancy through a variety of channels with interventions varying in scope and objectives. Some are education based and focus on training health promoters in reproductive health others include teen-to-teen educational programs rolled out in public schools; while others address incentives through a national conditional cash transfer (CCT, Bono de Desarrollo Humano) program for women receiving annual consultation on family planning from health professionals.

Team members of the Gender Impact Evaluation Initiative are currently working with both the National Government of Ecuador and the Municipal Government of Quito to design impact evaluations of specific interventions. The primary focus of the evaluations will be to parse out the role of agency and behavioral factors in driving decision making and actions taken to deter teen pregnancy.

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