

**ADOLESCENT PREGNANCY IN LAC:
MAGNITUDE, CONSEQUENCES, RISK FACTORS
AND POLICY OPTIONS**

**BASED ON TEENAGE PREGNANCY REGIONAL STUDY
March 2014**

OVERVIEW

- **Motivativation:** magnitude of the phenomenon and implications for social advancement
- **Complex decision making process**
- **Risk factors**
- **Policy options**

WHAT WE OBSERVE IN THE REGION

- LAC countries have **some of the highest teenage pregnancy rates** in the world
- In a context of adolescent fertility rates declining worldwide, adolescent fertility in Latin America **declines at a record-slow pace.**
- The annualized rate of decline between 1997 and 2010 was 1.25% in LAC—the lowest after East Asia and the Pacific region. Indeed, the adolescent fertility rate curve in LAC is almost flat over time.
- Adolescent pregnancy rates in LAC countries are **higher compared to countries in other regions with similar characteristics**, in particular those with the same GDP per capita.



WHY SHOULD WE CARE?

Teenage pregnancy is relevant from a development-policy perspective mainly for two reasons:

- 1) Adolescent pregnancy is a manifestation of the lack of (economic) opportunities.
- 2) Early childbearing may have important intra- and inter-generational implications that could trigger intergenerational poverty traps and high social costs.

The Regional Report assumes the principle that fertility decisions should be the result of choice, rather than defined by constraints.

ADOLESCENT PREGNANCY IS A MANIFESTATION OF THE LACK OF (ECONOMIC) OPPORTUNITIES

- Prior studies find *significant correlation between early motherhood and negative outcomes for the mother and the child*
- Background papers for this report: *teenage mothers are less likely to complete secondary education, teenage pregnancy decreases years of schooling, lowers school attendance and reduces work hours*

CAVEATS:

- Negative effects attributed to teenage motherhood reduce significantly once one controls for co-founding factors.
- this Report focuses on the cost of teen motherhood, and not of teen pregnancy

INTERGENERATIONAL POVERTY TRAPS AND HIGH SOCIAL COSTS

Teenage pregnancy might in addition:

- Increase the risk of maternal mortality, fetal death, and infant mortality, as well as the probability of health problems and morbidity
- Impact teen mothers' opportunities in the marriage market – they are also more likely to live in a single-headed household, to divorce
- Cause psychological consequences of being pregnant during adolescence
- Increase the risk of serious complications from unsafe abortions
- Trigger additional negative impacts on the mother: loss of free-time, friendships, childhood, control over how to spend their time
- Trigger additional negative impacts on the fathers: increased responsibility and economic stress, less investment in education

Effects on the child:



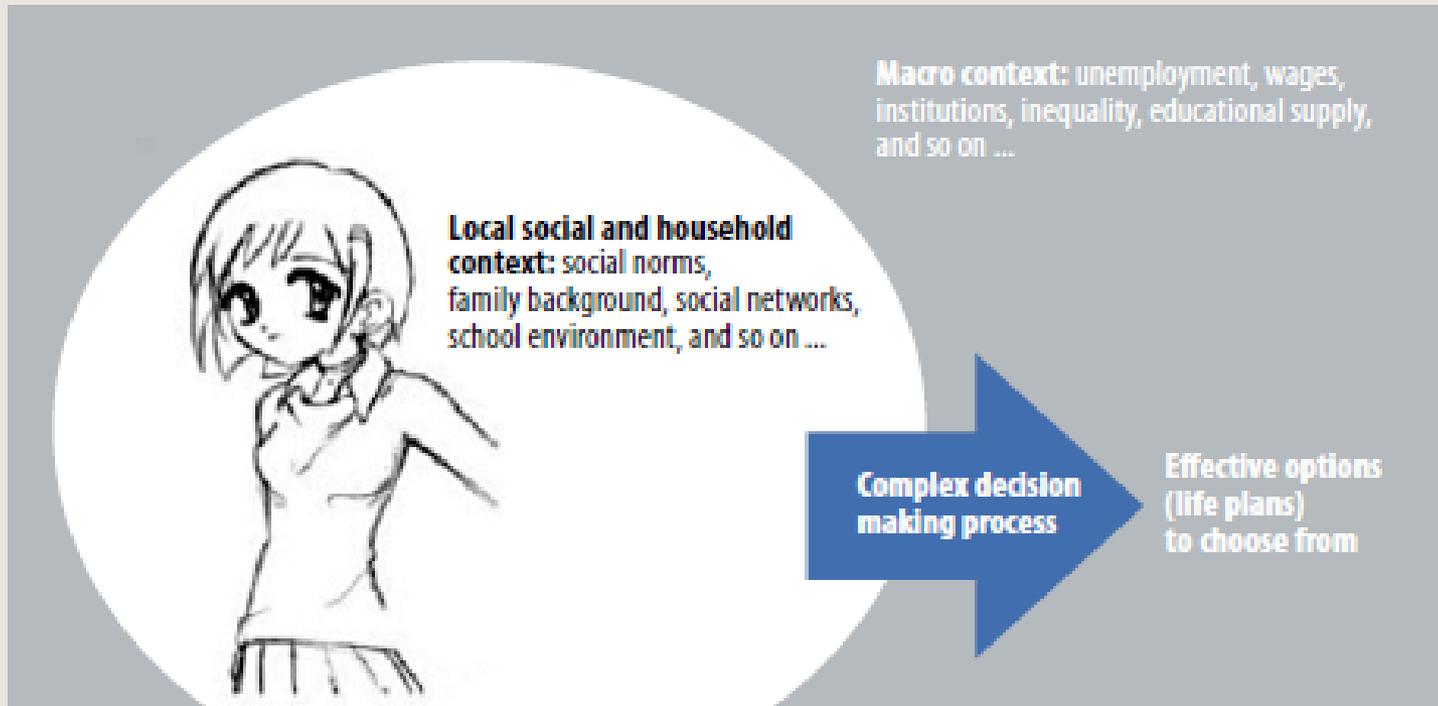
- higher risk of presenting risky behaviors/behavioral problems when they become adolescents.

Effects on other members of the household:

- Negative effects on the well-being of the siblings of the teen mother
- Costs on mothers of the teenage mothers who often take over the care work

Coping strategies are unequally distributed

COMPLEX DECISION MAKING PROCESS



RISK FACTORS

Teenage pregnancy associated with:

■ Lack of opportunities (poverty, social exclusion)

Macro level:

- Adolescent fertility in Latin American countries correlates positively with poverty, inequality, public health expenditure, female labor force participation rate and negatively with unemployment and the share of rural population. 

Micro level:

- Adolescents who have more education, live in urban areas and come from wealthier families have a lower probability of getting pregnant. 

■ Local social and household context:

Women may get pregnant due to a lack of agency:

- by following existing norms or socially accepted behaviors
- by having low bargaining power in their relationship and thus being unable to get their partners agree on the use of contraceptives
- by a context marked by constraints: Girls lack control of their life plans and/or getting pregnant may be the seen as the only goal to be achieved and motherhood as the purpose in life (given the lack of educational and labor market opportunities) or as the main way out of parental homes

POLICY OPTIONS

Policy objective should be to widen the set of options for women, as well as their capacity to aspire and to be in effective control over their lives.

1) **Opportunities/endowments/assets**

Macro level:

- reduction of inequality and the creation of more opportunities for women
- Policies and programs that reduce poverty and gender inequalities

Micro level:

- affect fertility choices by **increasing the opportunities and assets** of teenage girls. (policy interventions that focus on increasing education, health, and employment prospects in communities)

2) **Intangible assets/agency**

- Providing adolescents with positive role models;
- using peer promoters to increase control over own decisions and shape life plans
- Expanding access to youth-friendly reproductive health services;
- Supporting comprehensive sexual and family life education



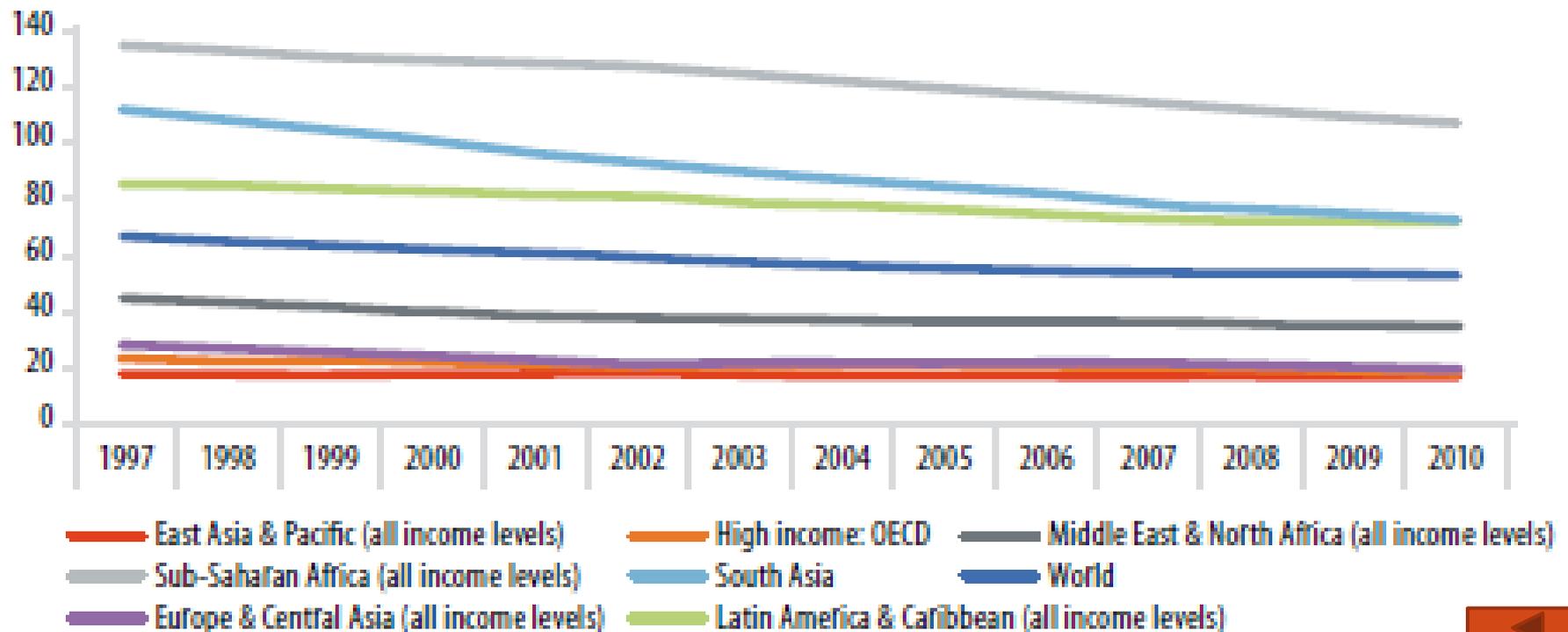
Complexity of the phenomenon:

- long-term and multi-sectoral approach **more effective**
- complex and simultaneous efforts at different levels (addressing: society, community, family and the individual).

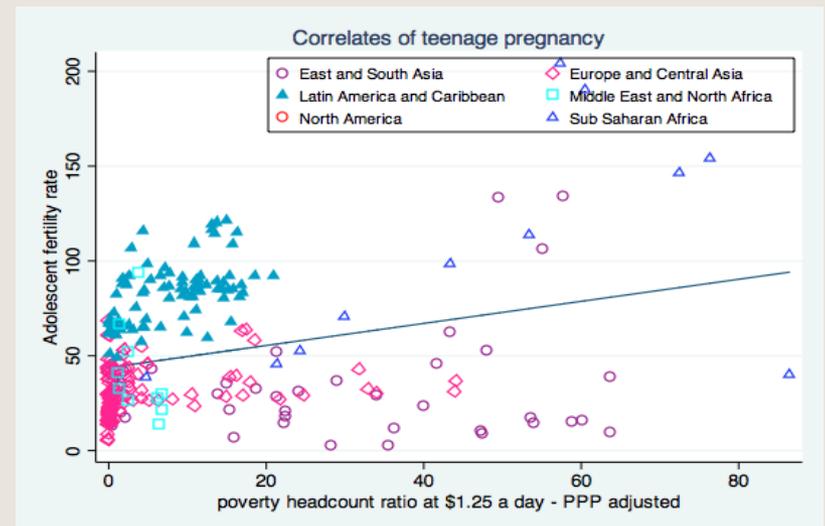
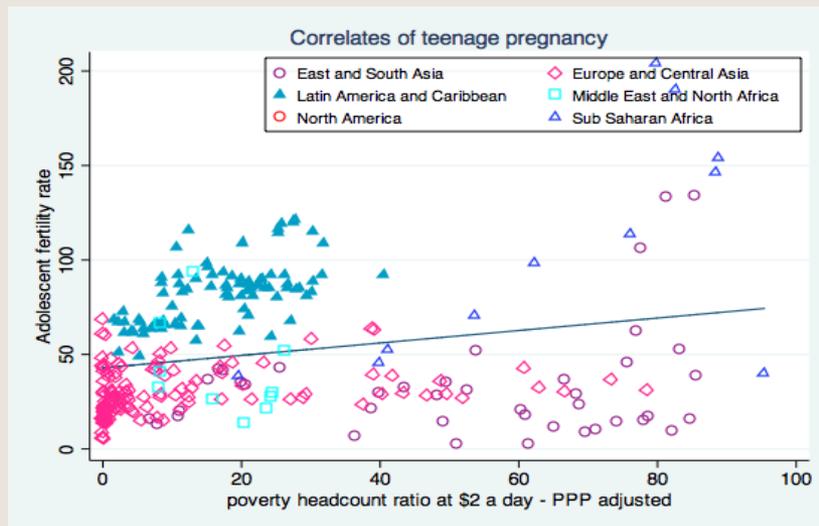
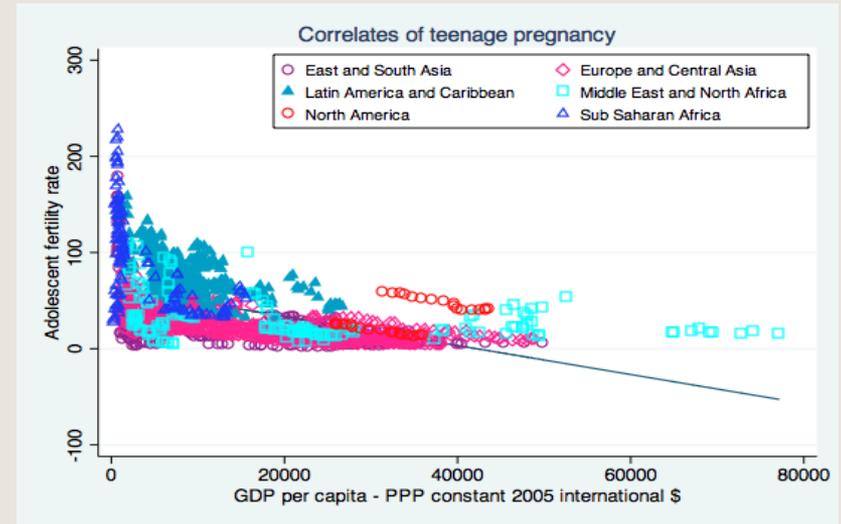
Thank you!

WHAT WE OBSERVE?

FIGURE A. ADOLESCENT FERTILITY RATE BY WORLD REGIONS (1997-2010)

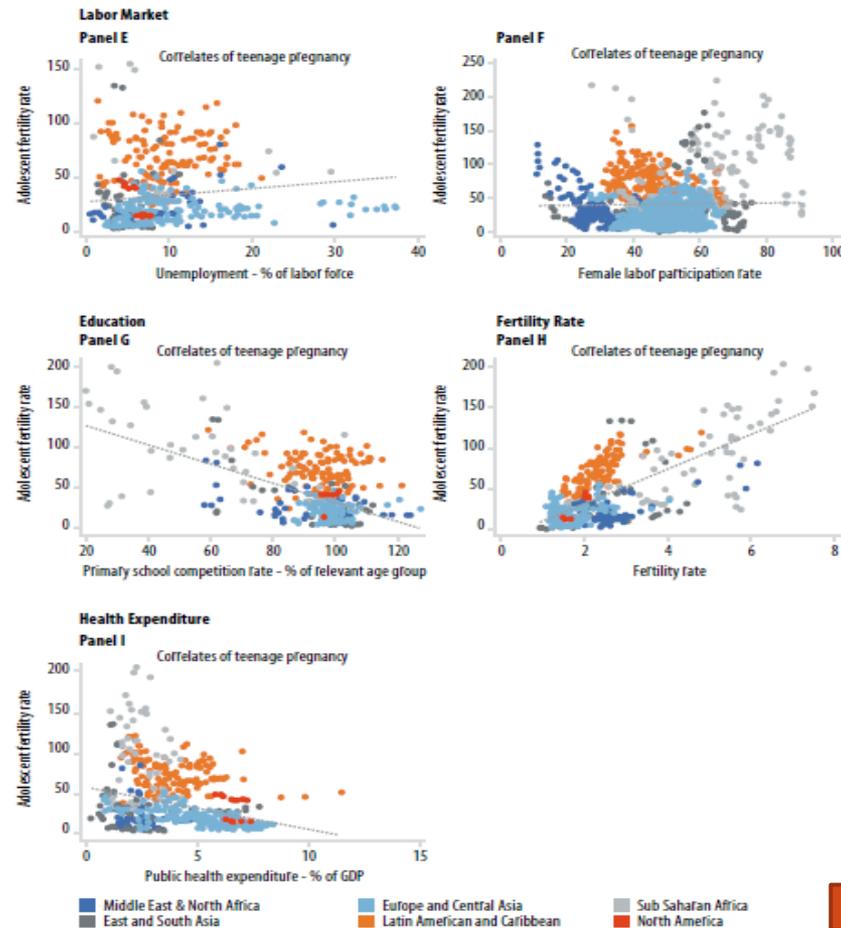


Adolescent fertility rate in LAC is higher than in countries with similar growth and poverty: 2000 – 2010 based on World Development Indicators



RISK FACTORS

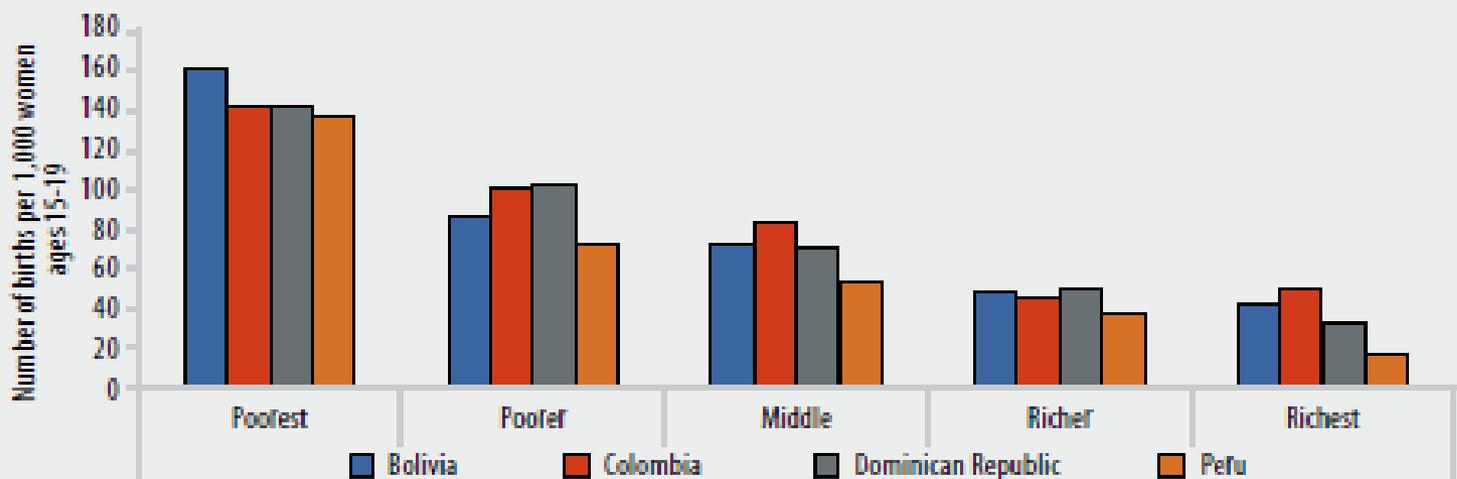
FIGURE 10. ADOLESCENT FERTILITY RATE AND SOCIOECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS (2000-2010) - (CONT.)



Source: WDI 2009, authors' calculation.

RISK FACTORS

FIGURE 16. ADOLESCENT FERTILITY RATE BY QUINTILE 2005
(BIRTHS PER 1,000 WOMEN AGES 15-19)

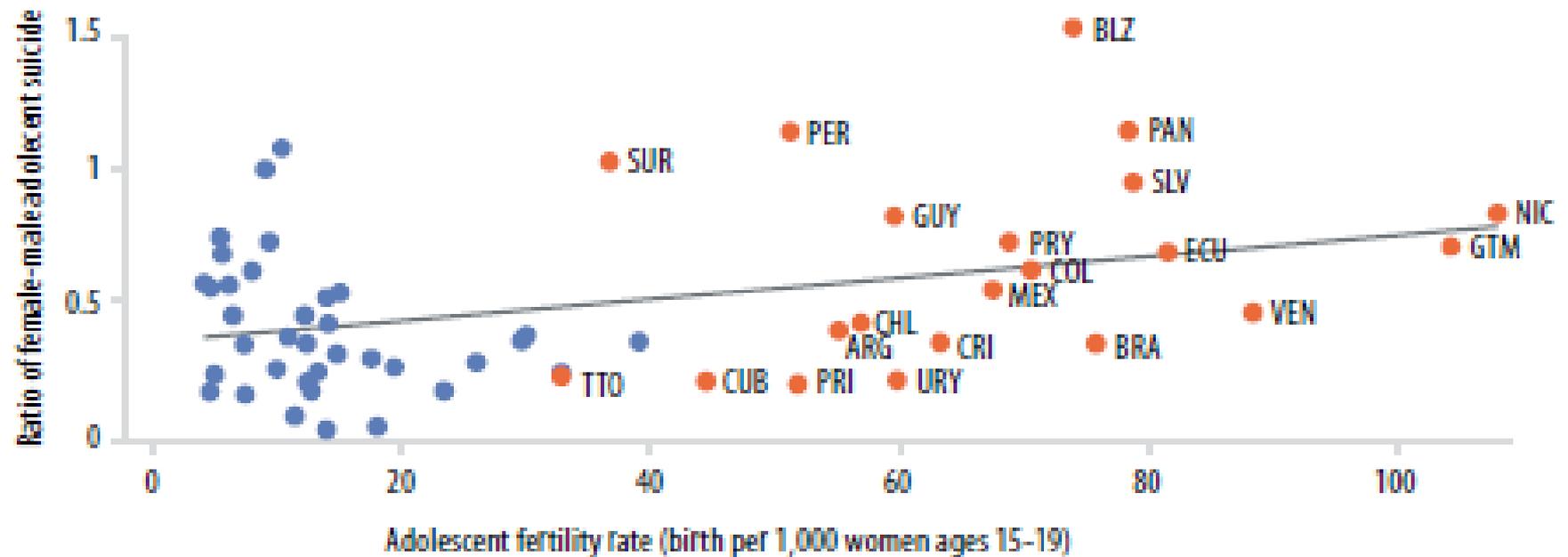


Source: DHS 2005, authors' calculation.



CONSEQUENCES

FIGURE C. FEMALE-MALE ADOLESCENT SUICIDE RATIO CONDITIONAL ON ADOLESCENT FERTILITY RATE IN LAC AND OECD, 2005



Source: PAHQ, 2005.



AFTER OBSERVATIONS – TO DISCUSS FRAMEWORK?

FIGURE 11. TEENAGE PREGNANCY: RATIONALITY, CONTEXT AND CONSTRAINTS

	No peer effects	Social interactions (norms)/peer effects
Full rationality	A Standard model	C Multiplicity of equilibria arise
Bounded rationality (Behavioural issues/ incomplete information)	B Traps may arise	D Most likely scenario