



# **National Commitment Statement by the Government of South Africa**

## **On the occasion of the Regional Launch of the African Union Continental Strategy on Education for Health and Well Being of Young People**

**9th October 2023  
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**

Programme Director; Senior officials from the African Union; SADC, ECCAS, SAFAIDS, UNESCO – ROSA, WCA, Ethiopian Office, Liaison office in Ethiopia, Esteemed delegates from the 10 champion countries, Civil Society Representatives, and Young people present, greetings from South Africa.

It is a privilege and honour for South Africa to be part of the AU Education for Health and Wellbeing Strategy launch. In 2013, South Africa hosted the endorsement of the East and Southern Africa (ESA) Commitment. The Honourable Minister of Basic Education Mrs Angelina Motshekga committed the sector to implement Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) through the Life Skills and Life Orientation curriculum, and ensure access to sexual reproductive health services in South African public schools.

South Africa is present to the challenges faced by adolescents and young people in the country including the high HIV infection - especially amongst adolescent girls young women AGYW; unacceptably high numbers of early and unintended pregnancies (EUP); access to youth friendly health and social services; gender-based violence (GBV); and child marriages in the Continent to mention a few. These challenges poses a threat to education outcomes and the retention of learners in schools.

As a signatory to the ESA Commitment endorsed in 2013, the Department of Basic Education (DBE) is proud to share some significant progress on few achievements in the effort to implement the Commitment:

- In 2015, the DBE (supported by USAID) developed and piloted Sexuality Education Scripted Lesson Plans (SLPs) for grades 4 – 12. The pilot was ended in 2020, and the Department is now scaling up implementation. In 2019, the Department held engagements on the implementation of CSE in

schools with teacher unions, religious leaders, traditional leaders, and school governing body associations that represented parents.

- In 2017, the Cabinet approved the Department of Basic Education National Policy on HIV, STIs and TB for learners, Educators, School Support Staff and Officials in all Primary and Secondary Schools in the Basic Education Sector. This progressive policy makes provision for the Department to strengthen the implementation of CSE and provision of SRH services to learners in schools.
- In 2019, the Departments of Education, Social Development, and Health developed the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for the Provision of SRHS in Secondary Schools to improve access to services in schools; The Minister of Basic Education approved the Protocol for the Management and Reporting of Sexual Abuse and Harassment in Schools; and the Minister launched the Let's Talk EUP Campaign. Together with the Minister and Deputy Minister, has held EUP dialogues with learners across the provinces.
- In September 2021, Cabinet approved the DBE Policy for the Prevention and Management of Learner Pregnancy in Schools. The Department is in the process of finalising the Policy Implementation Guide to support schools in the prevention and management of learner pregnancy.

Despite the reported progress, South Africa is aware of the gaps that still exist and new challenges that threatens our gains. The persistent high HIV prevalence and pregnancies among AGYW; and GBV which was at epidemic levels during the COVID-19 lock down. Even though the Country is noting significant decreases in HIV incidences as reported by Human Science Research Council, we are noting a rise in HIV incidences among boys and young men which is a serious concern. There is a need for a balanced approach in interventions targeting young people to ensure that boys are not left behind.

It is against this backdrop Programme Director that in 2021, South Africa welcomed and agreed to the extension of the ESA Commitment to 2030 where the Deputy Minister of Basic Education the Honourable Dr Reginah Mhaule represented the Minister of Basic Education, Health, and Department of Children Youth Women and People Living with disabilities. The extension give countries an opportunity to refocus efforts and improve on strategies to make the dream to end AIDS by 2030 a reality. South Africa's commitment to adolescent well-being is:

- Aligned with the African Union Strategy on Education, Health and Wellbeing;
- In response to the United Nation's Secretary-General's call for national and global commitments to deliver the 'Rescue Plan for People and Planet' at the SDG Summit 2023, that will help drive SDG transformation for inclusion and sustainability in the years ahead; and

- In support of the Global Forum for Adolescents, the world's largest-ever convening of stakeholders – youth networks, governments, private sector, donors, the United Nations agencies and others – to raise attention to the need for immediate action to advance the major determinants of adolescent well-being, as a major milestone within the 1.8 Billion Young People for Change campaign, convened by PMNCH

Thank you.