



Hon. Angie Motshekga  
Minister of Basic Education  
South Africa Department of Basic Education  
222 Struben Street,  
Pretoria

31<sup>st</sup> October 2019

**Re: UN family Letter of support to the Minister on Comprehensive Sexuality Education**

Honourable Minister,

With the rising resistance towards comprehensive sexuality education in South Africa and in the broader Eastern and Southern Africa region, we wish to commend and thank you for your vision and leadership towards the health and well-being of young people in South Africa. We specifically recognize the Department of Education's achievements in the following areas:

- The 2017 national policy on HIV, STIs and TB for learners, educators, school staff and officials in the basic education sector,
- The standard operation procedures, under the School Health Initiative for the provision of sexual and reproductive health services that are being updated, ensuring access to good quality health services for young people in secondary schools;
- Development of lesson plans to guide the provision of sexuality education in the Life Skills and Life Orientation curriculum for grade 4 – 12, as well as co-curricula programmes,
- Additional resources to engage stakeholders within school communities in preparation for providing sexuality education in schools.
- Ensuring key stakeholders, including parents, religious and traditional leaders, and the broader community are engaged, recognizing that family should be the primary source of information and support for young people going through the adolescent period.

The need to address early and unintended pregnancies (EUP), HIV and gender-based violence in South Africa is urgent. Early pregnancies are on the rise and with more than 200 adolescent girls and young women aged 15 – 24 infected with HIV every day, we continue to have a crisis on our hands. Evidence overwhelmingly demonstrates that abstinence-only programmes are not effective in delaying sexual initiation, reducing frequency of sex, or reducing the number of sexual partners. They may also cause harm in that they leave young people unprepared to protect themselves from early and unintended pregnancy, HIV, and other STIs when they enter to sexual relationships. Conversely, evidence suggests that quality comprehensive sexuality education that incorporates delaying sexual debut is not a driver of sexual activity, sexual risk-taking behaviour or STI/HIV infection rates. Instead, it has a protective effect.

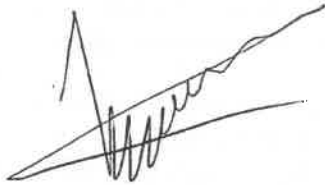
We understand the climate is challenging but seek to reassure you that the steps that the SA Department of Basic Education has taken, under your leadership, to improve young people's knowledge and attitudes related to their sexual and reproductive health are in the best interest of South

Africa's youth. Your position on this issue, Honourable Minister- that all learners have a right to good quality, age-appropriate and evidence informed sexuality education is aligned with the UN International Guidance on Sexuality Education. It also echoes the aims and objectives of the programmes in sub-Saharan Africa wide "Our Rights, Our Lives, Our Future" and "Safeguard Young People". We also recall and value South Africa's progressive and inclusive constitution that underpins these efforts, and its emphasis on child protection and the right of the child and provision of quality education ensured in the national Development plan 2030, ensuring inclusion and participation that no one is left behind is the spirit of the Sustainable Development Goals and upholding the principles of the African Union's Agenda 2063.

As a signatory to the ESA Ministerial commitment, the Department of Basic Education can be commended for embracing the vision of a young African, a global citizen who is empowered, educated, healthy, resilient and socially responsible - an autonomous decision-maker and has the capacity to reach their full potential and contribute to the development of their community, country and the region.


As the UN family, we assure you of our continued support on this important matter and are confident that under your leadership the Department will continue to engage communities to find a resolution to this important issue.

Sincerely,



Prof Hubert Gijzen

UNESCO Regional Director  
and Representative



Ms. Beatrice Mutali

UNFPA Country Director  
South Africa



Mr Mbulawa Mugabe

UNAIDS Country Director  
South Africa