

# TEENAGE PREGNANCY

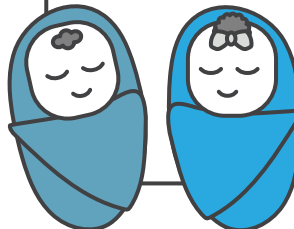
We, the faith community in Southern Africa, view children as whole human beings who need to be loved, nurtured and enabled to flourish as they define their space in society. It is our responsibility to be a safe space and provide love and hope as children go through difficult processes and seek second chances.



- Approximately 100 000 babies were born to teenage mothers in 2017 in South Africa.

- In the Kingdom of eSwatini, teenage pregnancy stands at 16% amongst girls aged between 12 and 18<sup>1</sup> with limited or no access to HIV testing and counselling for girls below 16.

- In Zambia, the teenage pregnancy rate is at an all-time high at 29% and the child marriage rate stands at 31% of all children between the ages of 12 and 18.<sup>2</sup>



## PROMOTE PREVENTIVE APPROACHES INSTEAD OF PUNITIVE APPROACHES



When a teenage girl falls pregnant it is not so much about her “failure to control herself,” as it is about our different institutions having let her down. These institutions include the government, the family, the school, the faith community, health service providers and the larger community.



### STRUCTURAL FACTORS:

- Poverty.
- Lack of gainful economic opportunities.
- Lack of access to information.
- Challenges of rural and urban development.
- Not having access to health services.



### BAHAI FAITH

*Children “must be constantly encouraged and made eager to gain all the summits of human accomplishment, so that from their earliest years they will be taught to have high aims.”*

*‘Abdu’l-bahá, selections 110.1: 142-43.*



### CHRISTIANITY

*“Train up a child in the way that he should go; even when he is old, he will not depart from it.”*

*Proverbs 22: 6*



### AFRICAN TRADITIONAL RELIGION

*“Do not put fear into a child”*



### ISLAM

*‘Aa’ishah, the wife of the prophet(s), said: a woman came to me with two daughters and asked me for food, and I could not find anything except one date which I gave to her. She shared it between her two daughters, then she got up and went out. The prophet(s) came in and I told him what had happened. He said: “whoever is in charge of any of these girls and treats them well, they will be a shield for him against the fire.”*

*Hadith, (narrated by Al-bukhaari, 5649; Muslim, 2629).*

## OUR FAITHS PROMOTE SRHR KNOWLEDGE



### CHRISTIANITY

*“My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.”*  
*Hosea 4:5*



### AFRICAN TRADITIONAL RELIGION

*“Lack of knowledge is darker than night.”*  
*African proverb*



### ISLAM

*Say, “are those who know equal to those who do not know?”*  
*Quran 38:9*



### BAHAI FAITH

*“Knowledge is one of the wondrous gifts of god. It is incumbent upon everyone to acquire it.”*  
*“Tablets of Baha’u’llah revealed after the Kitabi-Aqdas” (Wilmette: Bahai Publishing Trust 1988), p. 39*

1. eSwatini, Swazi Observer/2018/05/11- <https://www.pressreader.com/eswatini/swazi-observer/20180511/281646780777959>

2. Zambia Minister of Gender, Victoria Kalima <https://www.lusakatimes.com/2018/04/08/teenage-pregnancy-statistics-stand-at-29-percent>

**“WE WILL WALK EVERY STEP WITH OUR CHILDREN”**  
SOUTHERN AFRICAN FAITH LEADERS COMMIT TO RESPOND TO TEENAGE PREGNANCY

## MOVE FROM OBSERVATION TO FAITH IN ACTION

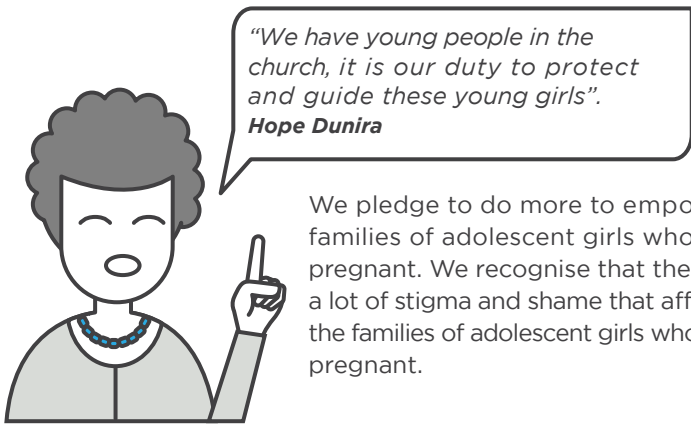
WE ARE DETERMINED TO CONTRIBUTE TO ADDRESSING THE CRISIS IN OUR FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES.  
WE WILL DEEPEN OUR ENGAGEMENT, BOTH INTERNALLY AND EXTERNALLY.

### EXTERNALLY

- Promote access to knowledge and health services.
- Challenge governments to invest in recreational facilities for adolescents.
- Partner with organisations / institutions addressing teenage pregnancy and gender-based violence.
- Ensure consistent implementation of re-entry policies in school for teenage girls who would have fallen pregnant.

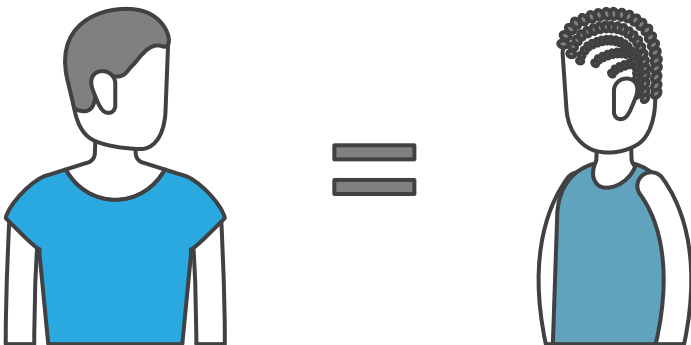


### COMMITMENT TOWARDS PROVIDING SUPPORT IN CONTEXTS OF TEENAGE PREGNANCY



We pledge to do more to empower families of adolescent girls who fall pregnant. We recognise that there is a lot of stigma and shame that afflicts the families of adolescent girls who fall pregnant.

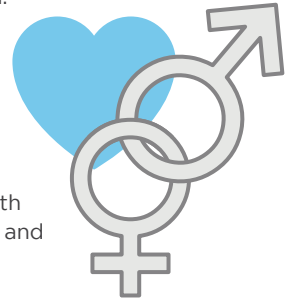
### GENDER EQUALITY FOR GIRLS AND BOYS - FROM UNEQUAL TO EQUAL



We cannot remain silent when an oppressive gender order increases the vulnerability of our daughters. We will speak out against gender ideologies that devalue our girls, including those that claim to be inspired by our sacred writings. Furthermore, we will challenge the double standards in our communities, where teenage pregnancy has been reduced to being a "girls' only" issue.

### INTERNALLY

- Multiply practices and policies that protect and respect the integrity of our girls and women.
- Offer continuous education, dialogue and engage with faith actors about faith teachings and context and provide holistic systems of support.
- Utilise our sacred texts, traditions and teachings, alongside scientific evidence to empower our children.
- Promote life-skills, education and access to quality education and services relating to sexual health.
- Engage medical experts within our own faith communities.
- Initiate and deepen mutual learning amongst ourselves as diverse communities of faith.
- Strengthen our referral systems to ensure that our adolescents and youth interact more effectively with sexual and reproductive health professionals.



#### BAHAI FAITH

*"The emancipation of women, the achievement of full equality between the sexes, is one of the most important, though less acknowledged, prerequisites for peace. The denial of such equality perpetrates an injustice against one half of the world's population and creates in men harmful attitudes and habits that are carried from family to the workplace, to political life and, ultimately to international relations. There are no grounds, moral, practical or biological, upon which such denial can be justified."  
Universal house of justice (Compilation on women, p. 91).*



#### CHRISTIANITY

*"There is neither Jew nor gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus."  
Galatians 3:28*



#### AFRICAN TRADITIONAL RELIGION

*"For the hen too knows what time it is, but leaves the cock to announce it."*



#### ISLAM

*"People, we created you all from a single man and a single woman, and made you into races and tribes so that you should get to know one another. In God's eyes, the most honoured of you are the ones most mindful of him: God is all knowing, all aware."  
Quran 49:13*

ACT UBUMBANO

The Methodist Church of Southern Africa  
*A Christ-healed Africa for the healing of nations*

UBOM BAM LUVUYO  
TRADITIONAL HEALERS FORUM

WE WILL SPEAK OUT SA  
FAITH COMMUNITIES ENDING SEXUAL AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

APOLOLIC

ZANERELA+  
POSITIVE FAITH IN ACTION

AFRICAN NETWORK AGAINST GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

AFRICAN NETWORK AGAINST GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Growing Together in Christ

PSH  
Partners in Sexual Health

OIKOUMENE

CELESTIAL COMMUNITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

Bahai Community of South Africa

actalliance

FAITH TO ACTION NETWORK

BECAUSE WE CAN

Al-Ghurabah Foundation

GENDER LINKS FOR EQUALITY AND JUSTICE

OUR DAUGHTERS ARE PRECIOUS. WE WILL STRIVE TO DO ALL WE CAN TO SUPPORT THEM, INCLUDING WHEN THEY FALL PREGNANT AS TEENAGERS.