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SCHOOL OF LEADERSHIP & GOVERNANCE
EDUCATE. EMPOWER. INNOVATE

RESTORING HOPE, REBUILDING FUTURES

**A Collective Response to Learner Vulnerability and
School Dysfunctionality**

DBE Mental Health

**Presenter: Dr Lindiwe Ginya
27 August 2025**

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Introduction : The Urgency of Now

“Children are the living messages we send to a time we will not see.” – Neil Postman

Aims of the presentation:

- Not just to present problems, but to sound an alarm.
- Remind YOU! that the future of the African child depends on our actions.
- Silence in the face of suffering is complicity.
- Our action is POWER!!!
- A call to action for educators, parents, and leaders to address the challenges facing our learners.

Teenage Pregnancy: Breaking the Silence on Stigma and Accountability



SCOPE OF THE PROBLEM

- **Annual scale** - Approximately **130,000 adolescent girls** give birth each year—i.e., about **1 in 7 babies** are born to teen moms
- **Young teens at risk:** Births among girls aged 10–14 rose by nearly **49%** from 2017 to 2021 (from 2,726 to 4,100), with rates rising from **1.1 to 1.5 per 1,000 girls**

STIGMA AND EDUCATIONAL IMPACT

Social humiliation: Teenage mothers reported experiencing **humiliation, degrading remarks**, and judgment from schoolmates

School dropout risk: Many do not return—**one in three pregnant girls (10–19)** fail to resume schooling after giving birth



Teenage Pregnancy: Breaking the Silence on Stigma and Accountability



The Burden of Shame Falls Unfairly on the Girl Child

- While teenage girls face expulsion, stigma, ridicule, and sometimes are forced to leave school, the **boys involved often continue their education uninterrupted**. This imbalance reinforces a culture of silence and impunity for male counterparts, making the girl child bear the emotional, social, and educational burden alone.

Community Silence Protects Perpetrators

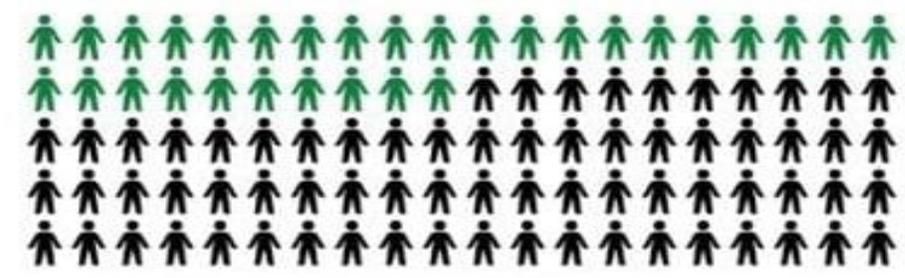
A culture of **"blaming the girl" while shielding the boy or man** thrives in many communities. Families sometimes even protect perpetrators if they are relatives or providers. This silence **destroys the future of the girl** and perpetuates cycles of abuse and poverty.

NATIONAL AGYW STATISTICS: TEEN PREGNANCY



IN SOUTH
AFRICA,
MORE
THAN...

30% OF
TEENAGE
GIRLS FALL
PREGNANT⁵

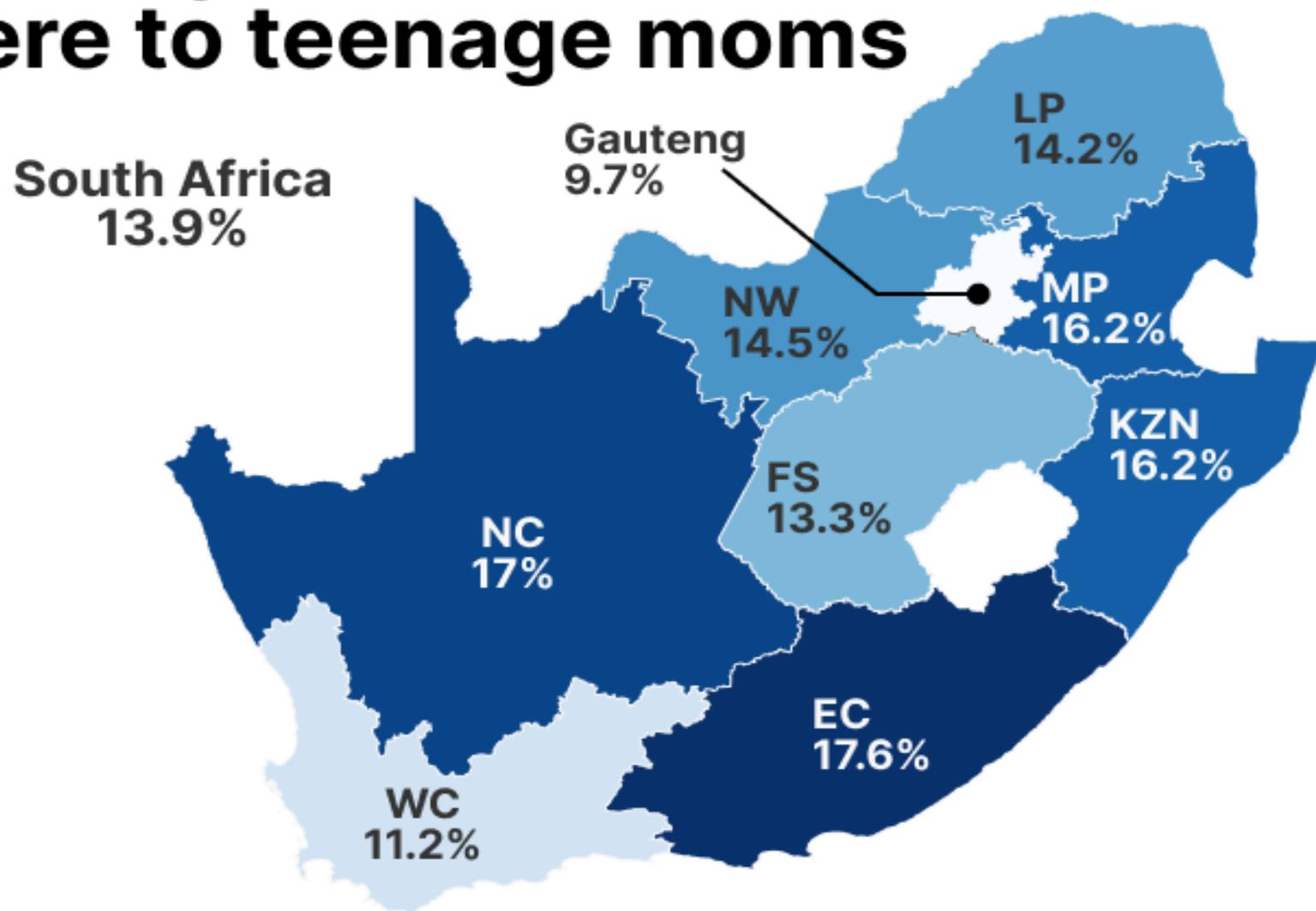


AND MORE THAN 65% OF THESE
PREGNANCIES ARE UNPLANNED⁶

5. Mokoena, A. Review of Teenage Pregnancy in South Africa – Experience of Schooling, and Knowledge and Access to Sexual & Reproductive Health Services. Cape Town: Partners in Sexual Health, 2013.
6. Adewusi OJ, Ajayi AI, Muziki MO, Faruqi Z, Anjorin O, Lambert J. High rate of unplanned pregnancies in the context of integrated family planning and HIV care services in South Africa. BMC Public Health 2018; 18:140. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12912-018-2640-z>

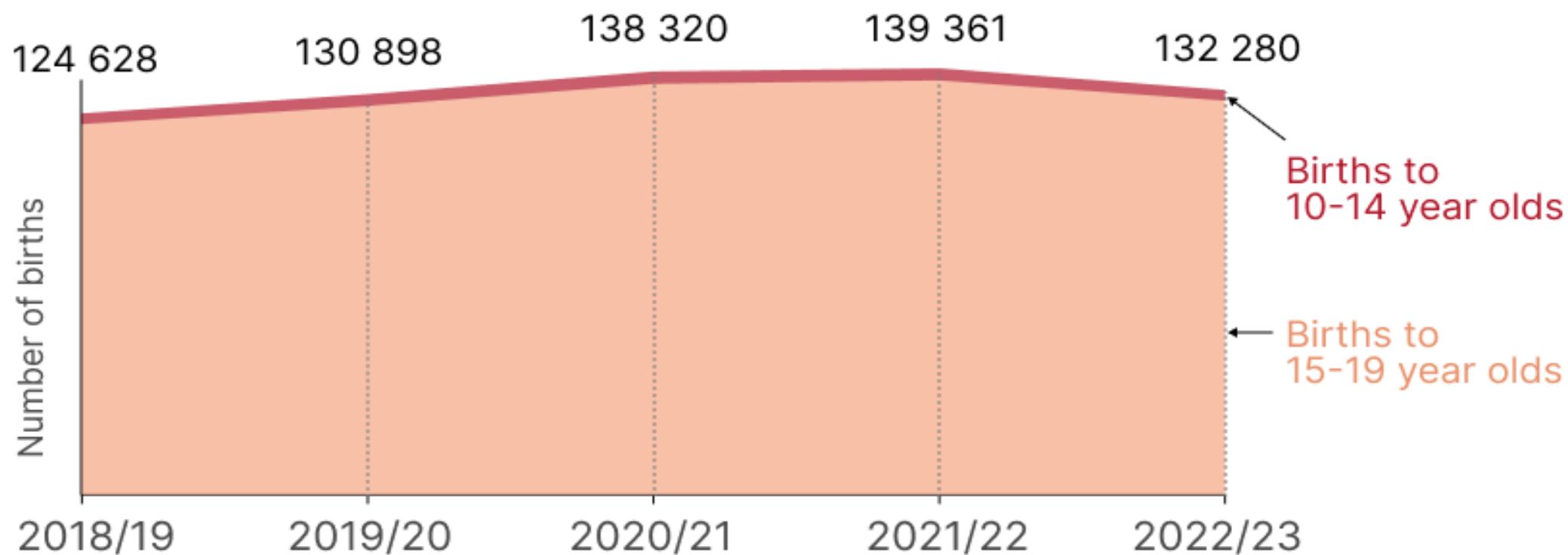
In 2022, one in every seven births in South Africa were to teenage moms

- The Eastern Cape has the highest proportion of teen mothers.
- Gauteng has the smallest proportion of teen mothers



Source: District Health Barometer, 2022/23. Births in public hospitals. Teenagers are defined as 10–19 year olds. Year is from 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023

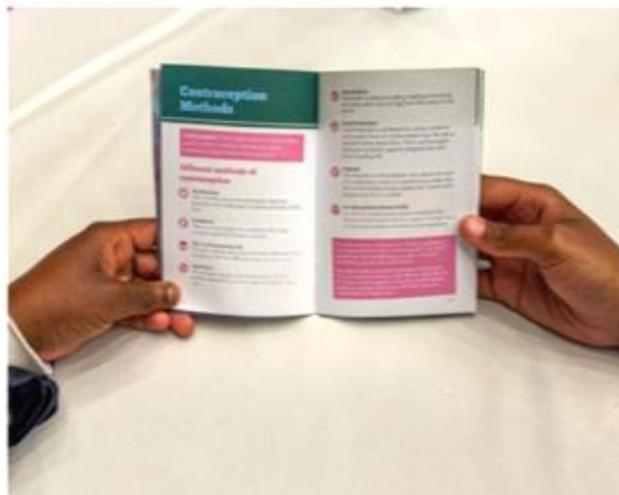
Almost 365 teenage girls give birth in South Africa every day



Source: District Health Barometer 2022/23 • The years represent financial years (1 April to 31 March).

Glimmer of hope in tackling teenage pregnancy - 13 April 2025

Department of Health 2025/04/14 - 22:00



The ongoing efforts to address the scourge of teenage pregnancy in the province has started showing slight decrease in the number of deliveries recorded across health facilities.

From April 2024 to February 2025, the Department saw a slightly reduced number of teen moms' deliveries of 20,709 as compared to 23,987 cases recorded in 2023/2024 financial year. While this is an encouraging trend, it remains crucial to address the underlying issues that contribute to high rates of teenage pregnancy

Despite the statistics showing a decrease of 3,278 teenage pregnancies, there is a persistent challenge that requires immediate attention and collective action. For instance, in 2024, a total of 299 deliveries were recorded from girls aged 10 to 14 years, and 15,991 from those aged 15 to 19 years, with 4,419 terminations of pregnancy (TOPs).

Whereas in 2023, 430 deliveries were from girls aged 10 to 14 years and 19,206 deliveries from those aged 15 to 19 years. These stats show a decrease of 131 deliveries amongst the 10 to 14 years old girls and a decrease of 3,215 deliveries amongst the 15 to 19 years old girls. A total of 4,351 terminations of pregnancy (TOPs) were also recorded during the same period. The comparative data analysis shows a slight increase with 68 more TOPs done in health facilities amongst the 15 to 19-year-olds from 4,351 in 2023/2024 to 4,419 in 2024/2025 financial year.

In line with the Children's Act No 38 of 2005, section 110(1), professionals or persons who encounter pregnant children under 16 years of age in the course of their work are obliged to report to a social worker or the police. As a result, health care workers have reported to the police 257 cases between April 2023 to March 2024, with 242 cases reported between April to December 2024.

Block pregnant girls from attending school - bishop

Bishop Ssebagala says the girls should be allowed back to school only after giving birth.

BY FRED MUZAALE

As schools prepare to reopen today after two years of closure due to the Covid-19 pandemic, Bishop James Ssebagala of Mukono Diocese has directed teachers in Church of Uganda-founded schools to block pregnant or breastfeeding girls who will turn up for studies.

The bishop's directive contradicts the Ministry of Education guidelines to accept girls who got pregnant or gave birth during the lockdown.

Bishop Ssebagala made the directive on Saturday at St Paul Church Kanjuki in Kayunga District while bidding farewell to Christians ahead of his retirement this year.

He said although it is good for parents to support girls who are pregnant, it was not morally upright to allow the victims to sit in class with other children.

"All headteachers, I want to tell you that we shall not allow pregnant or breastfeeding girls in class. When all girls turn up, carry out the usual medical examination so that those found pregnant can go back and give birth they will come back after giving birth," the bishop said.

He added: "Imagine someone saying even breastfeeding ones should be allowed to attend class. No, this we shall not accept because our schools were started purposely not only to impart knowledge but also discipline in children. How can a teacher be teaching



Bishop James Ssebagala prays for children during Service on Saturday. PHOTO/CHARLES JJUUKO

”

"How can other children hear a fellow learner saying excuse me teacher, may I go out side and breastfeed my baby. How can this really happen in Church of Uganda school?" Bishop James Ssebagala

when a girl is giving breasts to her child?"

Commenting on the bishop's remarks, the State minister for higher education, Mr John Chrysostom Muyingo, said it is a government directive that all children should go back to school whether pregnant or breastfeeding.

"It seems my friend the bishop doesn't know the position of government. I will go to his office and talk to him, I know he will understand my explanation and change his position," Mr Muyingo said.

Ms Alice Dhoya, the Kayunga

District Education Officer, said she would educate school foundation bodies about the government position on pregnant and breastfeeding mothers.

"We are, however, not aware if there are such girls who are pregnant or breastfeeding that would like to go back to school," Ms Dhoya said.

Bishop Ssebagala also confirmed 180 children in Christianity and urged them to make God their best friend if they want to be successful in life.

The bishop started his ministerial work as a parish priest in

1991 in Kanjuki.

"There might be some Christians here whom I have annoyed while executing my duties as a bishop and I ask them to forgive me because what I have been doing was for the good of the Church not for my own benefit," he said.

The deacon of Ndeeba Archdeaconry, Rev Noah Tebenkana, raised concern over the issue of land grabbing in Kanjuki Parish and asked the diocese to intervene.

GENDERED ACCOUNTABILITY GAP



CALL TO ACTION: ACCOUNTABILITY AND EMPOWERMENT

1. Reform school policies to:

- **Hold boys and older perpetrators accountable.**
- Provide **support and reintegration** for pregnant learners.

2. Strengthen legal enforcement:

- Treat teenage pregnancies under **10 as statutory rape**, with **criminal investigations** when applicable
- Address **sexual violence prevention**
- Improve **access to contraception** and deliver **comprehensive sex education**.
- Combat stigma by training educators and communities in **gender-sensitive, trauma-informed approaches**.

3. Stakeholders must prioritize

- **Gender justice** by holding boys and men accountable through education, counselling, and legal channels.
- Empower GIRLS through access to information, safe reporting mechanisms, and guaranteed **re-entry into school without shame**.



Misbehaviour & Substance Abuse

Research posits the need for **interventions** to address the prevalent challenge of alcohol and substance abuse in schools, which will improve academic outcomes with long-term social and career impacts. *As substance abuse is more of a **societal rather than just a school's challenge**, the required interventions need not be limited to schools, but extend to other young people in communities, including rural areas.* **Kebogile E. Mokwena, Nomkanka J. Setshego (2021)**



Alcohol & Substance ABUSE

- **One in Three Learners Aged 13–18 Use Substances at School; 66% Consume Alcohol”**

Broader Gauteng & Gauteng North Context

- In **Gauteng**, estimates show that **33% of learners** between ages **13 and 18** engage in substance abuse at school, with **66% of secondary learners consuming alcohol**. These learners often bring **substances** onto **school property**, leading to misbehavior—including **violence, vandalism, and theft**.
- In Gauteng township high schools , **48% of adolescents reported current alcohol use**.
- Female learners aged 15–16 were **3.55 times more likely** to use alcohol compared to younger peers; those aged 18–21 were **8.37 times** more likely.
- Research shows nearly **30% of female learners** are involved in alcohol use, with both **male and female learners engaging in binge drinking**.



Alcohol Initiation and Binge Drinking (General Youth Trends)

According to national surveys (SADHS & YRBS data):

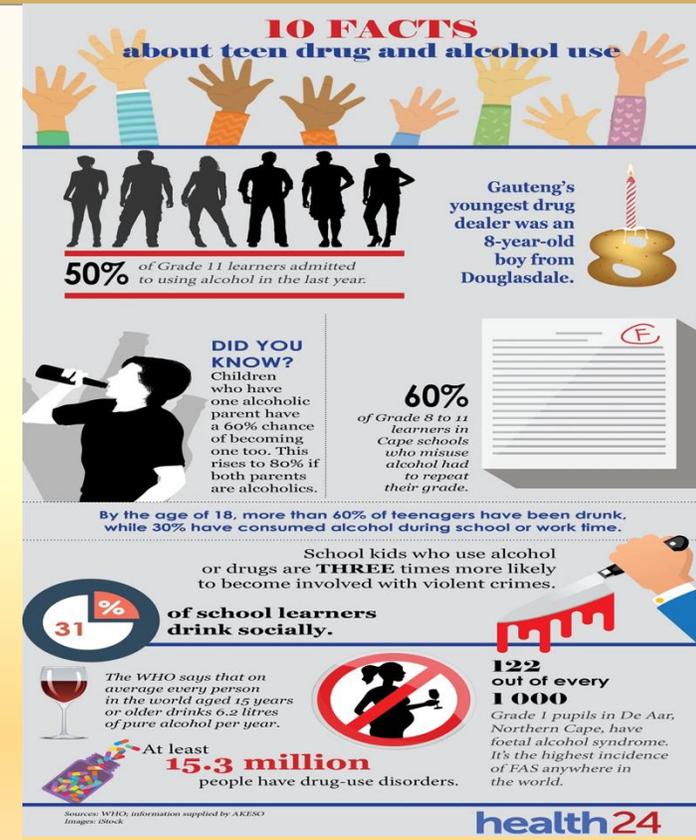
Alcohol initiation before age 13:

Males: ~ 36%

Females: ~24 %

Limitations & Context

- Precise, national-level data specifically for **ages 13–25** disaggregated by gender for both alcohol and drug use remain **scarce or unpublished**.
- The available data is generally **either younger adolescents (e.g., 16–18)** or **broad youth categories**, and not always separated by gender beyond certain behaviors.
- Nevertheless, the consistent trend is that **males lead in both alcohol and drug use prevalence**, though **alcohol misuse among females is rising**, particularly in certain measures.



Learner Misbehaviour & Substance Abuse

Causes

- Peer pressure influences
- Trauma and accessibility
- Boredom
- Lack of supervision

Impact

- Learning disruption
- Unsafe schools
- Social Ills

Consequences

- Addiction
Unemployability
- Criminal records
Alcohol & Drug
Addiction

Suggested Solutions

- School Rehab,
Awareness
- Law
enforcement.
- Restorative
discipline
Extracurricular
activities
- Rehab
collaboration.

CALL TO ACTION – URGENCY & ACCOUNTABILITY

Solution-Oriented Approaches

There is a compelling need to:

- **Secure school environments,**
- Enforce **alcohol- and drug-free policies,**
- **Restore safety for learning.**
- PARENTS to PARENT!!!
- Restore the dignity of adulthood
- **Community Engagement & Gender Responsiveness**
- Involve parents, NGOs, and community leaders in **prevention campaigns**, mentorship programs, and awareness drives.
- Tailor **gender-sensitive initiatives**: girl-focused peer groups, safe spaces, and discussions addressing both substance use and societal pressures/gendered stigma.

Universal Prevention in Schools

- Implement **school-wide, evidence-based substance prevention curricula**: life skills, peer-resistance training, healthy decision-making lessons.
- Foster a **supportive school climate**—promote connection, belonging, and positive peer norms to reduce initiation.

Targeted Interventions & Support

- **Identify at-risk students** (e.g., grade repeaters, those working part-time, high absenteeism) for early support.
- Offer **on-site counseling**, brief interventions, and referrals to health services.
- Train RCL, SBST and school support staff to spot warning signs and provide early support.



Gangsterism

Causes

Broken homes
Grooming

Lack of role models

Community
violence

Impact

Extortion

School dropout
Trafficking

Unsafe School

Consequences

Criminal breeding
grounds

Violence

School dropouts,
Fear-based
learning

Suggested Solutions

CCTV Monitoring

Community patrols

Early intervention,
mentorship

Youth
empowerment

Gangsterism at 2 Orange Farm schools in spotlight after recent attacks on pupils



Thetha Secondary School pupils on are searched upon entry on 17 April 2025 after a pupil was stabbed on the school premises on 14 April 2025 in gang related violence at the Orange Farm school. Photo: Jacques Nelles/EWN

Bullying

“Bullying is an age-old phenomenon and despite efforts to stem its prevalence in school and elsewhere, it will continue to exist. The challenge is that the definition of bullying is expanding and becoming even more complex in the age of digital technology. Labby Ramrathan, (UKZN education expert)

Types of Bullying

- **Physical:** Hitting, kicking, property damage.
- **Verbal/Emotional:** Name-calling, threats, intimidation.
- **Social:** Exclusion, spreading rumours, ostracism.
- **Cyberbullying:** Online harassment via social media, messaging, etc.

Bullying

Causes	Impact	Consequences	Suggested Solutions
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Low Self-Esteem▪ Power Imbalance▪ Trauma▪ Poor school climate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Anxiety▪ Absenteeism▪ Unsafe School	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Broken spirits and futures.▪ Depression▪ Suicide▪ Academic failure.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Anonymous reporting▪ Peer mentors and mediation, consequences▪ Anti-bullying policies,

Parental/ Family Involvement

Causes

- Work Pressures
- Lack of Education
- Mistrust
- Past Traumas

Impact

- Lack of support and accountability
- Unsafe Schools

Consequences

- Educators are left alone to raise children.
- Poor performance, Low self-esteem

Suggested Solutions

- Dialogues, workshops,
- Effective SGBs
- Empowerment workshops
- Flexible platforms
Recognition

How Can Parents Assist Schools

- **Be Present:** Attend meetings, monitor homework.
- **Be Proactive:** Report concerns, support policies.
- **Be Partners:** Co-create solutions with educators.



Impact on African Children & Eventually the Society



The *World Prison Brief* provides a broader snapshot of juvenile representation in the entire incarcerated population:

•As of **March 31, 2024**, **juveniles/minors** made up just **0.1%** of the total prison population of **166,008 inmates**. Which amounts to **166.008**

Age Group	Awaiting Trial (Remand)	Sentenced (Convicted)
Under 18 (Juveniles)	3,105	1,503
13–25 (Inclusive)	Unknown	Unknown
Under 35 (Proxy)	Part of 42,000	Part of 42,000

Insights by Region: Gauteng

For **Gauteng Province** specifically (as of Oct 2023):

Female inmates (total): 1,368	Male inmates (total): 36,398
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Remand: 662 ○ Sentenced: 706 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Remand: 15,081 ○ Sentenced: 19,949

Youth Under Overall Prison Population (13 – 25 years)



Limitations & Key Gaps in the Data

Unfortunately, the available data:

- **Does not break down inmates by specific age brackets (e.g., 13–25).**
- **Only provides overall remand vs. sentenced figures, not disaggregated by age.**
- **Therefore, we cannot accurately pinpoint the number of youth aged 13–25 by gender in either category.**



Youth Under Overall Prison Population (13 – 25 years)



Region	Gender	Remand (Unsentenced)	Sentenced	Total Inmates
South Africa (total)	Female	1,768	2,321	4,089
	Male	53,376	91,872	145,248
Gauteng Province	Female	662	706	1,368
	Male	15,081	19,949	36,398

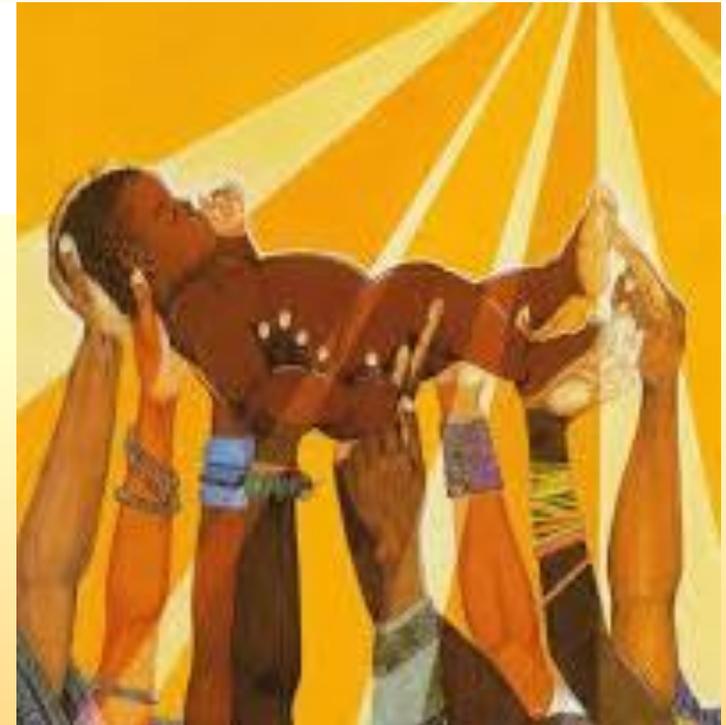


Conclusion: A Call to Action

“It takes a village to raise a child.” African Proverb

- Every adult must become a guardian of hope.
- Boy child can not be left behind anymore ...
- Communities must not ignore their children.

'If we don't build schools that heal, we will build prisons that punish.' Unknown



CAMAGU!!!



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