



# SHE CONQUERS CAMPAIGN FOR EMPOWERING ADOLESCENT GIRLS AND YOUNG WOMEN



**Towards further empowering the youth of South Africa**



**She Conquers** - is a national campaign aimed at empowering adolescent girls and young women, is a coordinated initiative to intensify efforts to enable adolescent girls and young women to reach their potential and maximise their contribution to a democratic South Africa. The Campaign is born out of evidence which suggests a disproportionate burden of HIV among 15-24 year old adolescent girls and young women in South Africa. UNAIDS estimates that there are 1 975 new HIV infections among adolescent girls and young women aged 15-24 years each week. In addition, there are 70 000 babies born to adolescent girls and young women aged 18 years and younger each year – many of them unplanned. A third of young women who have dated have experienced violence from a boyfriend, and this age group has the highest rate of rape reported to the police. These problems both compound and are compounded by high school dropout, and low education attainment. This results in a large section of the population who are under-equipped for contributing to the national economy and thus many experience long term unemployment and poverty. South Africa needs an evidence-based, strategic response to lift the burden of ill-health and disadvantage from the shoulders of young women and release our communities from the web of health and social problems.

This campaign will adopt a targeted approach to scale up and fast track efforts to empower young people, especially adolescent girls and young women. High HIV incidence in young women and girls is compounded by high levels of teenage pregnancy, school dropout, and gender based violence, and occurs in a context where there are limited economic opportunities for young people. These health and social problems are inextricably interconnected, and are driven by biomedical, socio-behavioural and structural factors.

The campaign will leverage of the DREAMS project funded by PEPFAR in 5 districts in KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng, projects funded by the Global Fund in 10 districts as well as funding by KfW (Development Bank) for a project in Buffalo City.

The **objectives** of the Campaign are:

1. Decrease new HIV infections in girls and young women.
2. Decrease teenage pregnancies, in particular to decrease the number of deliveries in girls less than 18 years of age.
3. Keep girls in school until matric, and increase the retention of adolescent girls and young women in school.
4. Decrease sexual and gender based violence amongst adolescent girls and young women.
5. Increase economic opportunities for young people, particularly for young women.

The **primary target** for this Campaign is young women and girls aged 15-24 years. The **secondary target** group includes adolescent boys and young men aged 15-35. Boys and men between 15 and 35 are also included as they contribute to the cycle of new infections and pregnancies as well as sexual and gender based violence and are affected by low levels of employment. The Campaign seeks to address particularly vulnerable groups

including orphans and vulnerable Children (OVC), youth that are not in employment, young sex workers, youth with disabilities and rural youth.

The **guiding principles** of the Campaign are rights based, evidence based, multi-sectoral, youth led, and driven through peer education and peer support. A core principle of the Campaign is that adolescent girls and young women must be supported to drive the Campaign, encouraged to support the implementation of interventions and provide leadership around the strategy and direction of the Campaign.

The **Comprehensive Package of Interventions** will be scaled up to address current barriers experienced by young women and girls. This includes biomedical, socio-behavioural and structural interventions to increase access to information, services and support. Biomedical interventions seek to increase access to sexual and reproductive health (SRH) information and services through adolescent and youth friendly clinics and the Integrated School Health Programme. Socio-behavioural interventions focus on increasing community mobilization and support; access to peer groups and clubs; opportunities for awareness and information on gender, violence against women and girls, substance abuse, stigma and discrimination; and access to parenting programmes for parents of teenagers and for teenage and young parents. Structural interventions seek to increase access to economic opportunities like grants and other forms of social assistance, bursaries and funding to increase access to post school education, and increase post-schooling options including employment, mentorship and internships for youth.

**Communication** is a key element of this Campaign. The campaign strategy recognizes the importance of mobilizing young women and girls, their social networks and peers, and their communities. The logo and name of the Campaign will be selected through a national competition that will be launched on 24 June 2016. The approach will not only allow young people from the length and breadth of the country to participate in naming the campaign but also raise awareness and interest in the campaign by all sectors of society.

The **3 year Campaign**, from June 2016 to July 2019, will be phased in and implemented in all districts in South Africa. The first phase will prioritise 51 sub-districts that have been selected because of the high HIV prevalence, teenage pregnancy and orphan hood among young women and girls. The Campaign will be steered and managed by a national steering committee that brings together government, civil society, development partners and the private sector. The Campaign will intensify efforts to coordinate and create synergy across all current sectors and programmes working with young people to foster a targeted, coordinated and evidence based response. All stakeholders must help to deliver the comprehensive package of interventions in a coordinated fashion, to deliver a country-owned and country-led response to address the needs of young women and girls.

The Campaign will be monitored over the 3 year implementation period using routine monitoring and reporting systems. An end term evaluation is planned for the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of the

Campaign to assess the implementation of the Campaign, and to assess whether the objectives of the Campaign were achieved.

In order to ensure accelerated **implementation** of the campaign the following actions have been taken: presentation and approval for the campaign by the SANAC Interministerial Committee; presentation and adoption by the SANAC extended Plenary; discussion with groups of young people; discussion with provincial officials mandated by Premiers. In addition, audits of existing projects and programmes (whether government or NGO led) have been initiated in all districts. These audits indicate the much is being done but with little co-ordination between and among projects. Besides bringing new approaches and resources, one of the key objectives of this Campaign is to ensure that we join up of dots, that is create synergies to ensure that the maximum value from investments is achieved. Led by the Office of the Premier in each province, District and Provincial AIDS Councils will play a lead role in coordinating Campaign activities.

