



# **Protecting the Right to Innocence: The Importance of Sexuality Education**

**Report of the**

**Protecting the Right to Innocence:  
Conference on Sexuality Education  
(19-21 August 2001)**

**Convened by the  
Minister of Education,  
Professor Kader Asmal, MP**



DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

**2002**



# **Protecting the Right to Innocence: The Importance of Sexuality Education**

**Report of the**

**Protecting the Right to Innocence:  
Conference on Sexuality Education  
(19-21 August 2001)**

**Convened by the  
Minister of Education,  
Professor Kader Asmal, MP**



DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

**2002**

Copyright © Department of Education 2002

All rights reserved. You may copy material from this publication for use in non-profit education programmes if you acknowledge the source. For use in publications, please get the written permission of the Department of Education.

Enquiries and/or further copies:

Gender Equity Directorate  
Department of Education  
Sol Plaatje House  
123 Schoeman Street  
PRETORIA  
Private Bag X895  
PRETORIA 0001

Tel: (012) 312 5420

Fax: (012) 312 5218

<http://education.pwv.gov.za>

**ISBN 1-919917-77-2**

# CONTENTS

<b>1. INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2. KEYNOTE SPEECHES</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Opening address</b>	
Professor Kader Asmal, MP, Minister of Education	
<b>Learning to make wise choices:</b>	
<b>The challenge for education on sexuality in South Africa</b>	<b>9</b>
Judge Kate O'Regan, Justice of the Constitutional Court	
<b>3. SUMMARY OF CONFERENCE INPUTS</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>3.1 Sexuality education in context</b>	<b>14</b>
<i>Culture and religion</i>	14
<i>Gender</i>	14
<i>Age</i>	15
<i>Socio-economic status</i>	15
<i>Orphanhood</i>	15
<i>Disability</i>	15
<i>Sexual orientation</i>	16
<i>Health</i>	16
<b>3.2 Towards a multi-sectoral response</b>	<b>17</b>
<i>The education sector</i>	17
<i>The Department</i>	18
<i>Teachers</i>	19
<i>Parents/caregivers</i>	19
<i>Cultural and religious institutions</i>	19
<i>Peers</i>	20
<i>Health sector</i>	20
<i>The judiciary and the police</i>	20
<i>The media</i>	21
<b>4. WAY FORWARD</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>5. KEY RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	<b>23</b>
Addenda: Draft Plans of Action on Sexuality Education	25



**“Rather than seeking to capture our children’s hearts and minds and to imprison them in a set mould, we should be seeking to liberate them from the tyranny of authoritarianism, from the tyranny of oppression, the tyranny of superstition and the tyranny of peer pressure. We want our children, and particularly our girls, to feel free from the threat of rape and the scourge of sexual harassment and abuse. We must not capture any one. We should protect their innocence. And this can only happen when we teach our children through precept and more importantly through example to respect and value others, regardless of race or gender or creed.”**

**Professor Kader Asmal, MP  
Minister of Education**

**National Assembly**

**Cape Town  
13 March 2001**



# 1. INTRODUCTION

The Conference: “Protecting the Right to Innocence: Conference on Sexuality Education” was convened in recognition of the importance of developing a nationwide programme to educate and guide the nation’s youth around issues of sexuality. Such a programme is urgently needed in the light of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, the level of sexual abuse and rape, teenage pregnancies, precocious sexual activity, and conflicting messages learners receive from society and the media. The Conference represented a major step forward in addressing this critical need in South African society.

The participants were representative of not only the education sector in South Africa, but also of education’s many stakeholders. The Conference programme was structured to elicit the greatest possible level of interaction and participation among those attending, and to create a collaborative process to strengthen and develop strategies and policies on sexuality education for South Africa.

The Conference proceedings focused on the present context, trends and analysis of problems facing sexuality education. Examples of best practice and hard evidence from current regional and international research were also provided. The proceedings provided clear pointers to the way forward, including the need for a multi-sectoral response, recommendations and the basis for a draft plan of action on sexuality education. This report is a summarised version of a comprehensive discussion document, which can be obtained from the Department of Education via the Gender Equity Directorate, room 333, Sol Plaatje House, Pretoria.

The Conference was a successful event, characterised by vibrant debate and active engagement with the issues of sexuality and the sexuality challenges facing the youth of South Africa. The discussions were enriched by the participation of so many different sectors, each of which has an important role to play in making sexuality education a positive force in educating society for a better future.



## 2. KEYNOTE SPEECHES

### Opening address

**Professor Kader Asmal, MP**  
**Minister of Education**

Honoured Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen

When I took over as Minister of Education in 1999 I knew there was a lot I had to learn that related to my portfolio, and it has indeed been a whole new world of discovery for me - particularly in matters that relate to young people. Some lessons have been pleasant, others disturbing.

One of the areas that touched me most, very early after I had assumed this portfolio, was the issue of sexuality and sexual activity, in particular the very tender age at which many of our children became sexually active.

For generations our society has had deep concerns about adolescent sexual activity but, despite that, there has been very little public discussion in this country on what is healthy for our youth. With this conference the Ministry of Education has decided to take the unprecedented step of bringing into the public domain a full and open discussion on sexuality, sexual education and all it implies.

The need for this dialogue flows from the rights enshrined in our constitution and the responsibilities of Government as a party to several international conventions including the United Nations Convention On the Rights of The Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). These oblige government to promote equality and human dignity, to protect our children from abuse and degradation and ensure that the child's best interests are paramount.

In order to meet these obligations it is essential that we promote values of race and gender equality and respect for others in our schools and ensure that these values inform and infuse all work and activities in schools. It is essential that we prepare our children to make their own life choices related to sexuality.

We have therefore brought together to this conference community leaders, parents, students, school governing bodies, religious leaders, health care professionals, traditional leaders, teachers, trade unions and others because we believe this is a matter on which all of us must speak and we must all be involved.

On a daily basis, young people are faced with a host of issues that are of a physiological, emotional, cultural and psychological nature. Very often they feel confused and have no idea as to how to deal with the issues. One of the most challenging and complex of these is sexuality. This weekend I paged through a manual that the Department of Education, together with the Department of Health, published in 1999 for teachers in the Northern Province and the Free State, on Life Skills and HIV/AIDS education. In it there is a moving statement, entitled "You Taught Me", that I'd like to share with you as it captures the importance of what we are doing here today. A young person writes:

**"You taught me the names of the cities of the world,**

**BUT**

*I don't know how to survive in the streets in my own city.*

**You taught me about the minerals that are in the earth.**

**BUT**

*I don't know what to do to prevent my world's destruction.*

**You taught me to speak and write in three languages**

**BUT**

*I do not know how to say what I feel in my heart.*

**You taught me about reproduction in rats**

**BUT**

*I do not know how to avoid pregnancy.*

**You taught me how to solve maths problems**

**BUT**

*I still can't solve my own problems.*

**Yes, you taught me many facts, and thank you, I'm now quite clever.**

**BUT**

*Why is it that I feel I know nothing?*

**BUT**

*Why do I feel I have to leave school to learn about coping with life?"*

Friends, our children should not have to leave school to learn about life. It is our responsibility to prepare them. So I hope there will be no disagreement among those of us who are here today on the importance of sexuality education.

Those teachers who are enthusiastic about sexuality education and are prepared to make important contributions need to be given further support for this. They need support from their principals and the various Departments of Education to enable them to have adequate time in the curriculum and non-teaching hours for individual guidance. They need support from colleagues through the promotion of common values through all sections of the curriculum. In the Draft National Curriculum Statement that I released last week for public comment, Health Promotion is one of the focus areas within our Life Skills Learning Area Statement. Many social and personal problems can be associated with life cycle choices and high-risk behaviour. The curriculum emphasises the development of sound health practices and an understanding of the relationship between health and the environment in which we live. It seeks to ensure the development of learners who are able to make informed decisions about personal, community and environmental health.

The importance of sexuality education in acquiring information, and forming attitudes, beliefs, and values about identity, relationships, and intimacy should not be played down. It is more than teaching young people about anatomy and the physiology of reproduction. It encompasses sexual development, reproductive health, inter-personal relationships, affection, intimacy, body image and gender roles. Parents, peers, schools, religious community, the media, friends and partners all influence the way people learn about sexuality.

Our children today live in a world with many and often conflicting messages on sexuality. They live in a world where women are criticised for forms of sexual conduct for which men are considered positively. They live in a world where some men sexually abuse their children. They live in a world where some people prefer sexual contact with people of the same sex and others with the opposite sex.

These are some of the questions that need to be answered as a part of sexuality education. The sexual double standards in society need to be deconstructed, openly discussed and debated if we are to realise and practice the inalienable human rights enshrined in our Constitution. If The Bill of Rights in our Constitution is to become a living threat in our lives, a part of the warp and the weft of the social fabric, the education system must focus on sexuality, and on the values that will ensure the practice of upholding rights, and enable children to reclaim the innocence of their childhood.

In protecting children's rights to innocence, a special focus is also required on the gap between the *de facto* and the *de jure* rights of children. Speaking of the right of children to innocence, as adults we need to listen and involve children in family discussions and decision-making processes. We also need to give them space and teach our children to play a role in sharing their problems, shaping their own attitudes and prejudices, caring for their health and environment. When such openness is practised within families and communities, only then can we develop tolerant, peaceful and democratic societies.

But enacted laws and policies alone cannot guarantee the right to innocence. To achieve this it is essential to strengthen a culture of respect for children's rights in society. This is one of the main purposes of our transformation agenda in education and we must all, parents, teachers and learners work towards this goal.

Laws are in place to protect children; public awareness campaigns to eradicate harmful practices and social attitudes that discriminate against girls are all in place. But the deepening of poverty, proliferation of conflicts and the consequent spread of violence, the incidence of teenage pregnancy, the spread of the HIV pandemic and the persistence of discrimination, particularly against women and girls, continue.

Harassment of girl students is all too common in our schools and, most alarmingly, research has recently highlighted the role of male and female teachers in the sexual harassment of learners and the rape of learners. Sadly, each year many girls are forced to change schools or even terminate studies because of sexual harassment in the classroom. The failure of many schools to prevent, or even discourage sexual harassment of girl students, reinforces expectations that girls should be sexually available to men and that, and these ultimately irresistible young men, should continue pursuit until conquest is achieved. Double standards dictate that men should establish the terms of sexual encounters but women must alone shoulder the blame and responsibility for the consequences of these encounters.

Although I am pleased to report that the 1998 South African Demographic and Health Survey shows that the rates of teenage pregnancy and births are now declining, teenage pregnancy is still all too common. Those who decide or are forced to complete the pregnancies face at the least school interruption, and I am sorry to say that although the law states that pregnant teenagers should not be excluded from school, we recognise that this still often happens and sometimes results from pressure from other learners, teachers and the community. Pregnancy, for many learners, marks the end of formal schooling.

In an ideal schooling environment, learners should be able to accommodate the inevitable changes to their bodies experienced around puberty and emerging, experiences of sexuality without any negative impact on their education.

Furthermore, the shocking increases in the cases of HIV/AIDS and the consequences thereof are proof of the need to educate children about the disease. In the midst of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, we have to recognise that without proper preparation for safe sexual activity, children from their early teens are becoming infected with HIV. Whilst classmates strive to reach their dreams of a future with jobs, careers and families, these young people instead face the prospect of a life and death struggle against the disease.

“To give every child a better future” is the global slogan of children’s rights. Many of the world’s children, however, still do not enjoy many fundamental freedoms. Today we know that there is unspeakable horror of children being subjected to trafficking, prostitution, warfare, sexual abuse and pornography. The involvement of organised crime in the procurement of children is a reality that we must confront.

Regrettably, we need also to consider the dangers in the growth in sex tourism, which is internationally recognised as the major source of demand for child prostitutes. Most victims of this new tourism shame are from developing countries and consumers are mainly from rich industrialised nations.

Globalisation has provided a context for international relations, democracy has taken route in many countries, and information technology has further reduced the barriers between nations and peoples. Yet some realities remain as true today as they ever were. Children are still the most vulnerable members of society, and poverty remains the greatest challenge to enhancing their development, welfare and protection. Throughout the world certain traditional harmful practices such as forced marriages and female genital mutilation continue as well as the notion of sexuality based on satisfying men’s needs and/or social pleasures.

Poverty and the accompanying moral corrosion, consumerism, racial and gender discrimination, the erosion of values and the breakdown of family structures are some of the critical issues that need our attention.

Many young peoples experiences of sexuality are importantly influenced by their socio-economic circumstances. Early sexual activity and involvement in the struggle in the struggle to win and keep boyfriends and girlfriends is particularly common amongst the poor in our towns, cities and rural areas, as it constitutes one of the few accessible and affordable means of recreation of young people. It is also one of the few arenas in which impoverished youth can engage and explore their sense of self and self-worth. It needs to be viewed, not as a social pathology, but as an essential and indeed traditional, part of growing up.

Overall it is children in developing countries that are the worst hit. Most poor countries are experiencing an increasing use of drugs among children and young people, and an increase in street children who are easy prey to sexual and substance abuse.

In South Africa the overlap of disadvantages has let women and children in rural areas being the most affected. We have compulsory free education but some children are currently forced out of school to head households as a result of HIV/AIDS; others are forced to work as labourers on farms to supplement the family income. These children have prematurely entered adulthood losing their rights to innocence, they have no childhood to speak of and they live in abject poverty.

In our society, the girl child, in particular, suffers discrimination and abuse for a great part of her life. Moreover, the girl child faces deep traditional prejudices and is denied opportunities for equality, education, nutrition, healthcare and often survival itself. Because of gender discrimination, and increasing violence, millions of girls continue to be denied their basic rights, which means that they lose out on opportunities to participate fully as adults in political, economic and social life.

The additional impact of years of social disruption and family fracture caused by apartheid laws lingers in many homes and as many as one in five teenagers do not live with their parents. Opportunities for parental guidance and supervision of youth may therefore be very limited.

In any event the girl child is socialised into norms of society that dictate a particular style of dress, to do certain duties and tasks, to learn to cook and cater, to work on the invisible aspects of keeping society stable and secure. In so doing they nurture and sustain communities and families. This role is reinforced by culture; religion and traditions practised by us adults. Children are taught very early in life that girls belong to the private sphere in society, while boys act in the public space. It is this social construction that needs to be changed.

Many of the problems, which parents encounter in advising their children on sexuality, also stem from different forms of belief. One of the most widely held beliefs and important barriers to sexuality education is that it is inappropriate for parents to talk about sex with children. Clearly this needs to be challenged. South Africa has people of many different religions, and therefore practices and beliefs to sexuality vary considerably. While some religious and denominations have no difficulty with parental advice and discussion of sexuality, contraceptives and condom use and abortion, others differ fundamentally from this. Many parents, and also teachers are inhibited from discussion of sexuality with young people because of fears of encouraging extra-marital sex, which they see as wrong. Very often young women find that they are unable to prevent themselves from becoming involved in sexual activity either because of rape or irresistible peer pressure, but deny themselves the means of protection from the adverse consequences of this because of fundamental beliefs that they should not be or be seen to be sexually active, or that contraception use is a greater sin than sex itself.

Notwithstanding the unity, democracy and just government we have secured, we still have to integrate the islands and enclaves of comfort zones found in race, class, gender, religion, and ethnic groups. We still have barriers that need to be broken down. Although mingling and interaction is a necessary part of childhood, in the playgrounds at school we still see pockets of children keeping their relationships, exchanges and relationships to set groups. Transformation is yet to take place in breaking these comfort zones and behavioural patterns anchoring and pandering to social, class, gender and cultural prejudices.

Sexuality conditions the girl child into marriage and childbearing and rearing activities. While contraception gives women control over sexual relationships, young women often do not understand this and exercise their rights. The notion of sexuality is a key to the gender hierarchy and therefore a site of oppression. The mother/daughter cycle repeats itself with a culture of silence. Girls, in particular, sustain the scars of abuse and violence that prevents them from blossoming into emotionally balanced and caring human beings.

Sexuality is carefully confined to and developed in the home and the family. Social and cultural norms and rules create a bad girl/good girl stereotypes and reinforce boys into a dominant person in society who can do no wrong. To be good girls, it is acceptable to find a man and aspire to the glitter and glamour of jewellery, soft and plush furnishing and latest modes of fashion and to try to model life accordingly. Most girls are fed with ideas from the world of make believe – magazines, television, soaps, advertisements, and films. This titillates their senses. It gives them a false sense of reality. These trappings encase them in a web that clouds and mists the real issues of life of being free and being able to negotiate their sexual space.

Nature does not like a vacuum and when one arises there's rapid movement to fill it. The same is seen in the area of youth sexuality. Thus in the absence of positive guidance about sexuality from parents, from schools, from communities, from health services, young people create their own knowledge and relationship norms and transmit this through gossip and advice-sharing in homes, schools and community settings.

In reclaiming and protecting the right to innocence for children, families and communities, the schooling system must play a central role in the promotion and protection of children's rights especially in health, nutrition and education, and particularly in promoting equal education for girls.

I referred earlier to the guidelines for teachers and the Departments of Education and Health published in 1999, which clearly articulate the aims and objectives of sexuality education, namely:

- To make young people like and respect themselves
- To help learners see sexuality as a natural and positive part of life
- To teach the skills to make informed and responsible decisions
- To explore different values and attitudes
- To help learners act in accordance with their values
- To teach understanding, tolerance and respect for different sexual needs, orientations and values
- To teach learners to protect themselves from exploitation and not to exploit others
- To teach learners how to use health services and how to find information they need

These are all important issues. I have no doubt however that we will have robust debates amongst ourselves and opposition along the way from those who will contend that sexuality education will promote promiscuity. We have to be resolute and get on with that which we know has to be done.

Comprehensive sexuality education involves creating a climate in schools where pupils will be free from abuse, where teachers will be living examples of the values enshrined in the curriculum and where teachers are viewed as trusted and accessible sources of advice on individual problems related to sexuality. Clearly guidance teachers need to be special people and to be committed to their important task. Perhaps schools need to demonstrate their commitment to this work by having periods when teachers are available to help pupils during the main school hours. Teachers need to have the information and experience to encourage positive practices of this kind and demonstrate to children that they can be a valuable source of help.

I hope there will be a broad consensus at the end of this conference on how to move forward. Not only that, but also that there will be an accepted framework that can guide our work in this area. I look forward, with great anticipation, to your guidance on how we should design and implement national policies to protect the rights of our children and young people; how to encourage their participation in issues that affect them both in decision-making and education of their peers; how to communicate to challenge social norms that increase our children's confusion and put them at risk from a range of societal ills and finally, how to promote quality dialogue between adults, young people and children.

Please contribute to the robust debate at this conference and help us build a better future for our children. By investing in the life cycle of children, we can improve the course of human development.

**Ke a leboga,  
I thank you.**

## **Learning to make wise choices: The challenge for education on sexuality in South Africa**

**Judge Kate O'Regan  
Justice of the Constitutional Court**

There are two simple challenges facing South African educators who are concerned about sexuality education. Learners need to be informed about sexuality so that the choices they make are wise choices; and they need to be empowered personally so that in complex interpersonal relationships they can make a wise choice and stick with it.

In the past, protecting the right to innocence has often been confused with protecting ignorance. Many adults deny the fact that young people are sexually active. That denial can flow from a wish that young people were not sexually active, a religious or moral belief that young people should not be sexually active or an ideological commitment to a conception of childhood, which excludes sexuality. Whatever their sources, many of us are in denial about the sexuality of young people and we respond to that denial by remaining silent about sexuality.

I do not doubt that sexuality is a hard topic for us, for all cultures, all classes, all colours, and both sexes. Silence is often the easiest way out. Facing a group of rambunctious and rebellious teenagers and talking to them about sexuality, about condoms, about penises and vaginas, about orgasms and sexually transmitted diseases is no easy task. We can often choose the way of silence. But by that silence, we condemn our children to being forced to make choices in complex personal situations without adequate information, without the thoughtful and wise counsel of an older person, without the advantage of a role model who affirms the marvel and delights of human sexuality on the one hand but insists on the responsibilities and risks that accompany it. Protecting the right to innocence, then, should be about empowering young people to make wise and responsible choices.

We need to start from an acknowledgement that a significant proportion of young people are sexually active. The informative survey recently concluded by Love Life, a South African NGO funded by the US private philanthropy the Kaiser Family Foundation found that one third of 12 - 17 year old South Africans have had sexual intercourse.

- One fifth of that representative sample reported having their first sexual encounter at the age of 12 or younger.
- Most of the teenagers surveyed say they learn about sex from their friends and their peer group and that coercion plays a significant role in adolescent sexual behaviour.
- 22% of sexually active teenagers say that they had sex because they are afraid of what their friends will say if they didn't.
- Almost 4 in 10 of sexually experienced teenage girls say that they have been forced to have sex when they did not want to. Over half of the same group agrees with the statement "There are times when I don't want to have sex but I do because my boyfriend insists on having sex".
- 28 % of the sample indicated that they knew people their age who had sex for money and 16% of sexually active young women said they had sex for money, food, drinks or other gifts.



- Only about half (55%) of sexually active teenagers say that they always use a condom when having sex. One of the reasons given is that they are embarrassed to buy condoms. (70% of sexually experienced respondents).

We cannot ignore these statistics. It is true that only a third of our young people are sexually active according to this survey, but that is a big number and we can be sure that many in the remaining two thirds are being faced with the same choices about sexuality that their peers are. They are also being asked to make these decisions in the context of a rampant and murderous epidemic of HIV/AIDS which it is now estimated could take the lives of half of all South Africans aged 15 years or younger. These young people are therefore being asked to make some of the most complex decisions of their lives and they need help.

In providing that help as parents, teachers, social workers, aunts, uncles and friends we need to proceed from the vision of our Constitution. Our Constitution is founded on the following fundamental values of “human dignity and the achievement of equality”. At its heart is a conception of human beings as responsible moral agents. People who act for reasons of their own and who take responsibility for their action.<sup>1</sup> Our task as educators is to produce citizens who are responsible moral agents, who are able to recognise when they are making decisions, who are able to make those decisions wisely and responsibly and to live with the consequences.

If the Constitution conceives of adults in this way, how does it conceive of children? Importantly our Constitution asserts the human dignity of children, the fact that they are bearers of rights. Section 28 of our Constitution stipulates that:

- “(1) Every child has the right –
- (a) To a name and nationality from birth
  - (b) To family care or parental care, or to appropriate alternative care when removed from the family environment
  - (c) To basic nutrition, shelter, basic health care services and social services
  - (d) To be protected from maltreatment, neglect, abuse or degradation
  - (e) To be protected from exploitative labour practices
  - (f) Not to be required or permitted to perform work or provide services that –
    - (i) Are inappropriate for a person of that child’s age; or
    - (ii) Place at risk that child’s well-being, education, physical or mental health or spiritual, moral or social development
  - (g) Not to be detained except as a measure of last resort...
  - (h) To have a legal practitioner assigned to the child by the state, and at state expense, in civil proceedings affecting the child, if substantial injustice would otherwise result
  - (i) Not to be used directly in armed conflict, and to be protected in times of armed conflict.
- (2) A child’s best interests are of paramount importance in every matter concerning the child.
- (3) In this section “child” means a person under the age of 18 years.”

<sup>1</sup> See Paul Barry Clarke, *Deep Citizenship* (Pluto Press, 1996). See also Ronald Dworkin, *Life’s Dominion*, and Tony Honore, *Responsibility and Fault*.

This constitutional provision makes it clear that children are bearers of rights, they are entitled to respect, may not be abused or neglected and that the state bears a special responsibility for their welfare. The importance of recognising the need to conceive of children as bearers of rights was captured by Professor Michael Freeman in a recent book:

*“We must ask why children’s bodies are still exploited, sexually molested and subjected to physical and psychological violence, and we will find that answer in the way childhood has come to be constructed. The key to unlocking child abuse lies in the way societies have regarded children. If we are to conquer the abuse of children, we must learn to take children’s rights seriously, we must acknowledge their entitlement to “equal concern and equal respect”, we must accept that children are not property or pretty playthings or (literally) whipping boys, but individuals whose physical, sexual and psychological integrity is as important as - indeed more important than - that of the adult population.”<sup>2</sup>*

It seems to me therefore that there are two things we need to do to empower our young people to make wise choices about sexuality. Having accepted that children as young as 10 are faced with these choices, we need to provide them with adequate information to make the choices and we need to empower them as human beings to be able to make the choices and stick with them. I would like to say a little about both these matters.

## **Informing our children**

The law has a concept of informed consent. One cannot consent to something unless one knows what it is we are consenting to. Similarly, choices made when the implications of the choices are not clear are not choices at all. When it comes to sexuality, it is important that all the information is given to children. Before having sex, young people need to know that sexual intercourse carries with it the risk of pregnancy and concomitantly of parenthood; the risk of sexually transmitted diseases and of course the risk of infection from HIV/AIDS.

In turn, they need to be taught about the biology of human reproduction as well as the various methods of contraception, their relative advantages and disadvantages, and the places where contraception can be obtained; they need to be taught the symptoms and implications of sexually transmitted diseases; they need to understand the way in which HIV is transmitted, the universal precautions that can be taken to avoid infection through coming into contact with infected blood as well as the role of condoms and femidoms in preventing the transmission of HIV; they need to be taught about abortion and adoption and the responsibilities of parenthood.

In the main, this information is medical and technical and essential to the process of informed consent. But there is more than this that needs to be communicated. It is the fundamental value of human dignity as asserted by our Constitution. Sexuality all too often becomes enmeshed in a pattern of human relationships, which deny human dignity and in particular are destructive of the equality of women.

<sup>2</sup>Michael Freeman, “Child Abuse: The search for a solution in Freeman (ed) *Overcoming Child Abuse: A window on a world problem* (Ashgate, Dartmouth, 2000) at 9.

The Constitution, conscious of this concern, asserts unhesitatingly:

“Everyone has the right to bodily and psychological integrity, which includes the right

- (a) To make decisions concerning reproduction
- (b) To security in and control over their body
- (c) Not to be subjected to medical or scientific experiments without their informed consent.”<sup>3</sup>

In addition, it asserts that

“Everyone has the right to freedom and security of the person, which includes the right –

- (c) To be free from all forms of violence from either public or private sources...”<sup>4</sup>

One of the dangers of providing technical and medical information without a value-laden context is that we will deny the complex social, psychological and moral issues, which underlie sexuality. We cannot preach morality, nor can we teach values. Sometimes in a diverse society the temptation is to avoid moral discourse altogether. I would suggest however that as educators we would be shirking our responsibilities should we adopt this course.

The first and finest method for the transmission of values is of course the role model. As educators we are primarily important as role models. Young people are highly astute and quick to identify double standards, humbug and dishonesty. They watch adults closely and observe (with the cynicism of youth) our imperfections.

It is of great concern that there is significant evidence that there are educators who misuse their position of power by sexually harassing learners in a variety of ways. We cannot hope to teach the values of responsible sexuality in environments where this is a frequent problem.

Another way to nurture value is to nurture discussion of life problems by learners. Free discussion where young people are able to articulate fears, concerns and facts about their lives without fear of being judged will enhance the values of tolerance and respect. Peer group interaction in a safe space (which lies at the heart of outcomes based education) permitting young people to hear one another will facilitate our constitutional values far more than lectures or preaching will.

## **Empowering young people to be able to stand by their choice**

The real difficulty for young people is not only to make a wise choice but also to be able to implement it. Peer pressure and individual physical and mental coercion often make this hard. It is well established that the ability to stand by an unpopular choice despite pressure to abandon it requires an individual with good self-esteem. As a parent, and as a person concerned about education, it seems to me that good self-esteem is what child-centred education should seek to nourish.

<sup>3</sup> Article 12(2).

<sup>4</sup> Article 12(1)(c).

In this regard, recognition that children are worthy of respect should inform all our dealings with young people. The legal principle of *audi alteram partem*, (forgive the Latin which means always listen to the other side before making up your mind) is a good maxim for all our dealings with young people. Young people like adults find it hard to talk about some of the most difficult and intimate aspects of their lives. They may also sometimes be rude or disrespectful of us, but it is important to listen to what they are saying and respond. Acknowledging what is being said to us is the first way in which we make it clear to young people that we respect.

### **A final thought: taking responsibility ourselves**

Child abuse literature around the globe bewails the fact that our societies have become places where people avoid taking responsibility and that this has fostered a culture of secretary around child abuse. It can be illustrated by the horrific story of young James Bulger who was kidnapped by two children while shopping with his mother and dragged crying from the Centre past at least 35 adult witnesses before being killed by the two children. It illustrates how too often adults are willing not to be involved, to stand back, and to avoid responsibility. As educators we cannot evade our responsibility. Where we see children in danger, children at risk we need to seek ways to take responsible and to act. The law has never imposed such obligations, but our moral vision should. If we are to be a society built on ubuntu and recognition of human dignity and worth, we need to accept our responsibilities as citizens.

In the end, as educators and parents we face the task of ensuring that young people are able to make wise decisions about their sexuality. We need to affirm them so that they can resist pressure for unwanted sex. They need to be able to assess situations, which may become violent or put them at risk and know how to respond. They need to know about the risks of HIV/AIDS and be in a position to avoid the risk of transmission of HIV. They need to know where they can go to get help with all these things. If we do not do these things, the price for failure is very high. In one tragic sense we are already paying it. We cannot let the situation continue without response. We must accept the responsibility we bear and seek to empower our young people to make wise choices about the questions of sexuality that face them. The importance of this conference cannot be overemphasised. For our learners, getting a matric is important. But learning to deal sensibly and responsibly with issues of sexuality and HIV/AIDS is essential. It is indeed a life and death matter.

### **3. SUMMARY OF CONFERENCE INPUTS**

#### **3.1 Sexuality education in context**

The Conference noted the importance of locating the issue of sexuality education in relation to the wider social setting. Sexuality is influenced by factors such as socio-economic status, culture or age. Any initiative to enhance sexuality education needs to take these factors into account.

##### ***Culture and religion***

Given the importance of culture and religion in establishing value systems that inform perspectives and guide behaviour, the role of traditional leaders and religious communities is critical in any response to youth sexuality. It is clear that cultures and religions are not static. Instead, they are open to change over time. Thus, in celebrating South Africa's diversity it is important to recognise the good elements in cultural and religious traditions and to rediscover their positive roots. Such a positive appreciation of cultural and religious diversity also has to be reflected in sexuality education. At the same time, there is a need to interrogate the practices that obstruct the development of healthy sexuality. Going back to cultural and religious values based on respect for women and children, which condemn rape and child abuse, should be a priority.

##### ***Gender***

Gender is a key factor in shaping sexuality. Despite the right to gender equality in the South African Constitution, which is echoed in various laws, there is still a big gap between these frameworks and the reality of people's lives. Unequal power relations between the sexes have been – and, to a large extent, continue to be – condoned and legitimised by culture and religion.

Power relations between men and women, and social norms and values related to both sexes, not only determine what is considered 'acceptable' in relation to sexuality, they also determine how sexuality is experienced. Boys and girls grow up with mixed messages related to sexuality. Girls are taught to be passive, not take the initiative in sexual matters or enjoy sex, be monogamous and satisfy the sexual pleasures of boys or men. They are also assigned with the responsibility to ensure 'good morality' related to sexuality – often not only of themselves, but also of their sexual partners (husbands or boyfriends) and, in the long run, of their children.

Boys, on the other hand, are expected to follow their sexual instincts, even if it means having multiple sexual partners or imposing their will on girls/women by force. Unequal gender relations mean that boys/men can decide on when to engage in sexual activity and with whom. For many girls, their first sexual experience is at a very early age and is often non-consensual. Girls and women tend to be held responsible when their bodies are violated. This means that double standards are applied. More recently, added to these violations of the dignity of girls/women is the threat to life posed by the possibility of HIV infection. The threat of HIV infection also exists when girls and women are monogamous, if their sexual partner engages in unprotected sex with multiple sexual partners.

Often unwittingly, double standards are also applied in the classroom. For example, despite Department of Education policy, pregnant teenagers often drop out from schools. Boys who impregnate girls are not faced with the same social sanction and are allowed to remain in school. Such double standards are indicative of the differential attitudes towards, and expectations of, boys and girls from teachers, education authorities and the community at large.

## ***Age***

Age is an important factor in relation to sexuality. Early sexual activity interferes with the normal growth and healthy development of children. In addition, it leads to psychological problems, which could include the loss of interest in a life. Moreover, early sexual activity is generally non-consensual sex or, even when there is purported consent on the part of the child, he or she is too young to give informed consent and to come to terms with her/his sexuality.

Of particular concern in this regard is the practice of intergenerational sex, i.e. sex across generations, often between older men and younger girls. This has been shown to be a key method through which HIV is perpetuating itself in communities and poses a serious threat to healthy sexuality.

## ***Socio-economic status***

Poverty can force children to exchange sex for money or other goods. As such, sexual activity becomes a survival strategy, not just for the child but sometimes also for the whole family. Poverty often means less access to information and education on making informed choices about sexuality. In instances where access to information is good, desperate socio-economic settings make it difficult for people to utilise the skills and knowledge acquired to insist on safer sex practices. Poor living conditions and lack of services create an environment that enhances the vulnerability of children to sexual exploitation and abuse.

The inter-relationship between poverty and sexuality emphasises that any comprehensive response to sexuality challenges (HIV/AIDS or otherwise) requires that poverty eradication has to be one of the priorities.

## ***Orphanhood***

Orphans are often inadequately cared for or completely abandoned. Not only do orphans lack adult role models who can guide them on matters related to sexuality, they are also particularly vulnerable to sexual exploitation and abuse. The number of orphans is increasing rapidly due to HIV/AIDS. Any sexuality programme therefore needs to incorporate a specific focus on orphans, which includes, amongst others, survival skills, facilitating access to social development services and promoting a culture of care and adoption by communities.

## ***Disability***

Children with disabilities have the same curiosities, drives and physical interests as children without disabilities. Yet, sexuality education programmes do not sufficiently cater for children with learning or intellectual disabilities.

Furthermore, children with disabilities are particularly vulnerable to sexual exploitation and abuse. This is often neglected in discussions about youth and sexuality. For these reasons, sexuality education for children with disabilities is vital. The unique needs of learners with disabilities make it especially important and challenging to provide them with comprehensive sexuality education. The nature of disability of the learner should determine what type of information is needed and how the information is presented.

### ***Sexual orientation***

The Department of Education follows the Constitution in espousing non-discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. In doing this, it is confronting a sensitive issue in society. The dominant view in society has held that all sexuality is heterosexual and has ignored, and even vilified, homosexuality. The task of education is to provide information, address prejudices and stereotypes and promote acceptance of people irrespective of sexual orientation, HIV status, race or gender. Education materials should highlight diversity and promote its acceptance.

### ***Health***

HIV/AIDS in particular has brought home the urgent need for a new value system and the importance of speaking openly about sexuality. Together with the increase in teenage pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases, this epidemic creates the social context legitimating a new approach, but also a context which fuels fear, discrimination and despair – factors negatively affecting a strategy on sexuality education

## **3.2. Towards a multi-sectoral response**

There was consensus at the Conference that children need to learn about sexuality. Moreover, children want to learn about sexuality. They realise that otherwise they may make decisions that they may regret for the rest of their lives. Children want to protect themselves against HIV/AIDS, the threat of sexual violence and rape, teenage pregnancy and sexual exploitation. If parents and schools do not provide the learning required, children are likely to seek the information elsewhere. In this case, it will not necessarily be informed by the norms and values that parents and communities hold dear. It is important that the process of learning is informed by a partnership between children and adults, rather than a one-directional process. This will not only enable adults to better understand the dilemmas related to sexuality facing the youth, it will also allow adults to take up the cause of children's rights and protect children from sexual abuse, exploitation and harassment.

While sexuality education has a crucial role to play in protecting the innocence of children and preparing them to make informed choices related to sexuality, an effective response must be comprehensive and involve multiple stakeholders. Firstly, each stakeholder (medical doctors, pharmacists, traditional healers, religious leaders, family, elders, peers, the media) has different strengths in communicating sexuality choices to youth. Secondly, different sectors and disciplines bring on board different perspectives, knowledge and experience that are required to inform an effective approach. Thus, there is a need for partnerships, both within government and between government and communities.

Furthermore, it has been increasingly recognised that knowledge alone is not sufficient to change behaviour. There are numerous disabling factors restricting people's capacity to act on knowledge, such as poverty, gender inequality and environments that are not supportive to departing from accepted norms and changing behaviour. The need for such a comprehensive, participatory approach is further necessitated by the fact that there is a gap between the objectives of various policies, legislation and government programmes and their actual impact on people's lives. Despite the Constitutional protection of children's rights, many children still experience abuse and bodily harm and do not get appropriate care or recourse when their rights are violated. Similarly, the Department of Education has made significant strides by adopting various policies and programmes that aim to better equip children to deal with some of the challenges facing them. Yet, there is still a gap between policy intent and implementation. The Department cannot solve these problems in isolation.

### ***The education sector***

Schools have a critical role to play in reshaping attitudes towards gender and sexuality, as the most formative years for developing gender identities are during the school-going years, between childhood and adolescence. The key mandate of the education sector is to develop citizens and equip them with the necessary skills and values to ensure their active participation in a vibrant, democratic South Africa. It is therefore in the interest of the education system to ensure that citizens have the necessary education, skills and values to manage their sexuality and to develop the necessary qualities of character to ensure positive lifestyles.



In order to ensure that educational institutions become important agents for the protection and promotion of the rights of children, including the right to education, it is vital that teachers are adequately equipped to deal with issues related to sexuality. Teachers play a formative role in the development of children's identity and sexuality. Yet some teachers feel uncomfortable to discuss issues of sexuality with learners. There is also opposition from some teachers and teacher bodies to sexuality education. Some teachers do not seem convinced of the importance of human rights education, which includes sexuality education.

The new curriculum reflects the values and principles of the new democracy as articulated in the Bill of Rights and the Constitution and in international agreements, such as the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. These values and principles also need to be reflected in all education materials.

Sexuality education will equip children with skills to become assertive, be able to negotiate themselves out of difficult situations and will allow them to make the right choices to stay healthy and protect themselves. The current focus on Life Orientation, one of the eight learning areas in outcomes-based education (OBE), is aimed at this. Life Orientation includes a life skills component that also focuses on sexuality and health, with a strong focus on HIV/AIDS. Amongst others, sexuality education can help to prevent new HIV infections among youth and reduce the impacts of HIV, in particular reducing the stigma and isolation associated with HIV/AIDS, and ensure that teachers and learners affected by HIV/AIDS are not discriminated against. As such, it can influence the course of the epidemic by empowering and protecting young people.

The Revised National Education Curriculum System, released in 2001 for public debate and comment and now adopted by the Cabinet makes South Africa the first country to formally deal with sexuality in the curriculum. The Department of Education has also developed other policies and programmes related to sexuality in general and HIV/AIDS in particular. Various programmes aimed at responding to HIV/AIDS, gender issues, sexual abuse, rape and safety in schools are in place. These initiatives need to be strengthened. Furthermore, the Department of Education is a key player, with the Department of Social Development and the Department of Health, in the National Integrated Plan on Children Infected and Affected by HIV/AIDS (NIP). This programme aims to ensure and facilitate the provision of comprehensive care to children affected by the epidemic.

In implementing these programmes, various valuable lessons have been learned. These lessons relate to teachers, school governing bodies and the content of sexuality education:

### ***The Department***

Political will and commitment, especially in provincial Departments of Education, at district level and among the leadership of schools, are crucial because this is where implementation happens. The Department needs to work closely with other groups like non-governmental organisations, community and faith-based organisations. It also needs to strengthen collaboration with other government departments, especially the Department of Social Development and the Department of Health. The Department needs to create a supportive environment for the voices of children and youth to be heard and incorporate these into policies and programmes. The Department needs to communicate its policies to the public to build support and ensure effective implementation. The Department needs to document success stories and communicate the good work done. The Department needs to upscale present peer education programmes to supplement the curriculum-based life skills programme.

The Department needs to engage with school governing bodies to ensure adherence to its policies on teenage pregnancy and sexual misconduct of teachers, among others. The Department should implement a life skills programme targeting teachers to help them deal with their own sexuality and an advocacy programme for teachers to appreciate the value of sexuality education programmes. Programmes on gender, HIV/AIDS and life skills will be integrated as indicated in the revised National Curriculum Statement. Social and cultural taboos that hinder information exchange around HIV/AIDS and sexuality education must be overcome by educating communities and mobilising against such cultural taboos. Sexuality education should provide young people with necessary information, skills and values for them to make their own positive choices.

### ***Teachers***

The capacity of teachers to teach sexuality education needs to be strengthened through teacher development and ongoing support. There is a need to ensure stability and appointment of dedicated personnel. This requires the allocation of sufficient resources. Moreover, in addition to appointing dedicated teachers, all other teachers should be sensitive to issues related to sexuality. Those implementing sexuality education programmes need to be mindful of learners' and orphans' vulnerabilities and of the special needs of children with disabilities. Tertiary education institutions need to play a more active role, not only in communicating sexuality issues with students, but also in conducting research on sexuality. Specific focus should be given to the governance and management of schools to ensure the safety of children in the schools. Ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the policies and programmes dealing with HIV/AIDS and sexuality education is crucial.

### ***Parents/caregivers***

Parents and caregivers need education to assist them in talking to children about sexuality. A pilot programme in the Northern Province where sexuality education and Life Skills were combined with parent education has been successful, because it allowed children and parents/caregivers to speak the same language. It is important that parents/caregivers and schools speak with one voice to children. For this reason, schools have a role in informing parents and caregivers on sexuality education programmes and getting them to take ownership of the Department's programme. There is a need to work closely with school governing bodies as a means to access and involve parents and caregivers.

Parents, caregivers and families are a window to the community and society at large. Their involvement in sexuality education creates an environment that is supportive of sexuality education. Unless they own the sexuality education programme in schools, we cannot hope to achieve behavioural change.

### ***Cultural and religious institutions***

When it comes to children's rights to innocence and healthy sexuality, dominant societal attitudes do not enable the development of healthy sexuality. Cultural and religious institutions have an important role to play in this regard. However, to live up to their potential to make a positive contribution to youth sexuality, these institutions have to revitalise those values in their traditions that are inclusive and that are based on the notion of *ubuntu*. Furthermore, cultural and religious leaders have to overcome their own reluctance to talk about sexuality. With regard to certain issues related to sexuality, like HIV/AIDS, traditional healers are an important entry point of intervention for members of the community. It is therefore important that they are involved in communicating information on HIV/AIDS to youth.

## ***Peers***

Peer education programmes have been successfully adopted in various places, both inside and outside of schools. For example, at the former ML Sultan Technikon in Durban, students are involved in health education and counselling of other students. A recent study of peer education in several African countries by the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA) has shown that peer education is a very effective and quick way of achieving results. As such, it supplements curriculum-based programmes. Soul City and Love Life are examples of organisations that effectively use peer education to resist negative peer pressure related to sexuality. It is important that peer educators are properly trained and supported. The Departments of Health and Education are currently working with provinces to develop standards of practice for peer educators.

## ***Health sector***

There are four aspects of sexuality education that require the involvement of health practitioners: Sexual Transmitted Infections and HIV, contraception, sexual abuse and circumcision. The Youth-Friendly Clinics Initiative is important in this regard. In relation to Sexual Transmitted Infections, the health professional should counsel the youth on reducing the number of sexual partners, having protected sex, the type of sexual practice and on involving their partners. When a young person comes in to ask for contraception, the health professional should take time to counsel the person. Regarding sexual abuse, medical professionals can help to identify the symptoms and patterns pointing to sexual abuse and provide sexual counselling for abused children. Finally, the Department of Health can ensure collaboration with traditional healers to ensure hygienic and safe circumcisions as well as correct education to patients. This last issue is challenging, and requires a dialogue between medical practitioners and traditional healers on the medical and cultural aspects of circumcision.

However, the health system needs strengthening. Various antenatal clinics do not have the capacity to provide most services needed by young people related to issues such as rape, drugs, Sexuality Transmitted Infections and so on. These deficiencies need to be addressed to ensure that the health sector can provide adequate support and protection to children.

## ***The judiciary and the police***

The law can be a significant instrument of social change. Yet, the law has not sufficiently taken up its role in relation to supporting the implementation of sexuality education. The Committee on Law and Human Rights of the National AIDS Council can assist in realising the potential of law to bring about social change. Guidelines are needed to deal with the contemporary question of how to draw the line between childhood practices that are forbidden and those that are permissible from a children's rights point of view. Such guidelines, and subsequent strategies, need to differentiate between learners of different ages, because they are in various stages of maturity, independence and vulnerability.

As part of the overall transformation of the legal system, attention has been given to providing protection and recourse for those who have suffered sexual abuse. For example, eight out of nine provinces have Sexual Offences Courts, which are designed to be child-friendly. A Sexual Offences Court is soon to be established in Mpumalanga. So far, three multi-disciplinary care centres have been set up, where doctors, police officers and prosecutors work together to take care of children that have suffered sexual abuse and to gather evidence against the perpetrator for a court case. Prosecutors and police officers have received training to deal with the needs of traumatised victims of abuse. The Department of Justice has also embarked on public awareness campaigns to educate the public about their rights and the available facilities to pursue their rights.

The South African Police Service (SAPS) is in the process of transforming the Child Protection Unit into the Family Violence, Sexual Offences and Child Protection Unit (FSC). Those working in that unit have undergone special training facilitated by the Department of Justice. The Department, in collaboration with the National Network on Violence Against Women, is also working on raising awareness and changing perceptions about sexual abuse among police officers and other sectors of society.

One of the new proposed initiatives is based on a partnership between the Department of Education and the Department of Justice. The “Prosecutor Adopt a School” programme is intended to inform children about who prosecutors are and how they can help them. The success of this programme depends to a large extent on the involvement of teachers. The programme is currently under discussion between the two departments.

### ***The media***

Television and other forms of media have a strong effect on children. South Africa has very high media coverage: 99% of the population has access to radio and 75% has access to television. As such, it can reach sections of the population that fall outside the formal schooling system, including children who have dropped out of school.

Because of its reach the media can be an effective tool to raise awareness about issues like HIV/AIDS and violence. It can create the space for a frank and open discussion on sexuality and sex. The media can play a positive role by transmitting key values that can guide the sexual behaviour of youth and by helping children to recognise situations of abuse and sexual exploitation. Love Life and Soul City are two excellent examples of using youth culture to raise awareness on sexuality issues and shifting values and behaviour related to sexuality. However, the media increasingly portrays explicit images about sexual activity and modes of sexual behaviour that can be in stark contrast to cultural and religious practices. It is important to engage the media and try to reshape the images and values it transmits to promote a culture that contributes to healthy sexuality of youth.

## **4. WAY FORWARD**

In addition to publishing this report of the Conference, the Department of Education has committed itself to develop a National Plan of Action (see Appendix 1) and guidelines for sexuality education in schools. It also undertook to ensure the inclusion of Life Skills and HIV/AIDS as part of Life Orientation in every class and every school, from Grade R through to Grade 12. Furthermore, the Department has undertaken to convene a national conference on HIV/AIDS and the Education Sector in 2002 to continue the dialogue.

The main considerations for future deliberations are:

- Advocacy and communication.
- Critical evaluation of negative media messages and sensationalism.
- Sexuality education curriculum development and human resource development.
- Research to support policy and implementation and to develop best practices, based on traditional values and modes of behaviour.
- Formalising and resourcing of partnerships.
- Making better use of, and enforcing, existing legislation.

## 5. KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

This section summarises the key recommendations made at the Conference, which should inform the Department of Education as it moves forward to devise a National Plan of Action for sexuality education.

1. The Department must cultivate and demonstrate total commitment to sexuality education throughout the Department, at provincial level, at district level and among school authorities. This also points to the need for better communication among the different levels of the government's education system.
2. The Department needs to examine existing and past efforts in sexuality education and Life Skills training to learn from the successes and failures of what has been tried.
3. Multi-sectoral collaboration and cooperation is required to ensure that South Africa's progressive legislation is put into practice throughout society to protect children's right to innocence. The Department of Education needs to work in partnership with the Departments of Health, Justice, Social Development and others to enhance the overall efforts to improve the quality of life of children and help them to choose positive lifestyles.
4. Particular emphasis must be placed on the need for effective poverty eradication programmes as part of a comprehensive response to sexuality challenges facing South Africa's children.
5. The social inclusion of orphans must be promoted by developing and strengthening programmes for orphans and by cultivating a culture of adoption in communities.
6. Sexuality education should not be taught in isolation, but should be part of a broader Life Skills learning curriculum. It should include a focus on values such as responsibility, respect for oneself and others, human rights and gender equity. Different cultures and values must be examined and assimilated into sexuality education, as long as they do not contradict the principles of the Constitution.
7. The effort to inform, educate and empower children should start at a young age, from pre-primary school onwards, because young children are already exposed to sexuality.
8. Because many of society's problems around sexuality, HIV/AIDS and sexual abuse are related to unequal power relations between boys/men and girls/women, gender equity has to be paramount in education in general and in sexuality education in particular.
9. The Department of Education needs to work with law enforcement agencies to ensure that cases of sexual abuse are prosecuted and that criminals are stopped from perpetrating these acts.
10. Training of teachers is critical to equip them to deal effectively with sexuality education. Guidance teachers play an important role. But sexuality education should not merely be the domain of guidance teachers.

11. Sexuality education and the termination of threatening sexuality practices, such as inter-generational sex and precocious sexual behaviour, cannot be left to schools only. Rather, it must involve parents/caregivers and the community at large to ensure that children receive consistent messages. Together with educators and schools, communities must protect the most vulnerable learners, including girls and children with disabilities.
12. Society needs to learn to listen to children and learn to understand their needs. Adults need to open up communication channels with young people to hear what they have to say and to make them more receptive to listen to what adults are saying. The Department of Education must facilitate better communication between children, the education system and adults.
13. Peer education can be an important component of effective sexuality education. The Department of Education should entertain partnership with organisations such as Soul City and Love Life in their use of peer educators.
14. The Department needs to examine the influential role of media in shaping perceptions, values and attitudes about sexuality among youth. The media should be sensitive in its approach with regard to messages about sexuality, which are in the reach of children. As much as possible, parents/caregivers need to monitor what their children are watching and reading. The Department of Education must also recognise the positive aspects of media and its potential to change social values and behaviour related to sexuality in line with Constitutional principles.
15. The Department of Education must institute an ongoing monitoring and evaluation system to review progress of departmental programmes in general, and of the implementation of sexuality education in particular, to report on outcomes and results and to modify programmes based on these lessons.

## Addenda: Draft Plans of Action on Sexuality Education

### Plan of Action 1

Objectives	Output	Strategy	Activities
Develop national statement on the “Right of Children to Innocence” or “Sexuality and Youth”	National Statement (NS) <sup>5</sup>	Advocacy campaign targeting key leaders and stakeholders across sectors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Draft a national statement based on Sexuality Education (SE) Conference recommendations</li> <li>• Integrate SE success stories from schools into the NS</li> <li>• Consult with education and multi-sectoral stakeholders, including at Cabinet level</li> <li>• Revise NS</li> <li>• Publish and disseminate NS broadly</li> <li>• Implement a media campaign</li> </ul>
Build and maintain commitment to sexuality education at DoE	An education sector that has all political leaders and managers demonstrating their commitment to SE National Statement	Nationwide and community-driven advocacy campaign to promote the NS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organise a high-level summit for education sector political leaders</li> <li>• Present workshops targeting teachers and principals designed in collaboration with Teacher Unions</li> <li>• Design and implement media campaign</li> </ul>
Mobilise School Governing Bodies (SGBs), parents, traditional leaders, religious organisations and other key community partners to support SE and promote the NS	SGBs, parents, traditional leaders, religious organisations and key community partners signatories <sup>6</sup> to the national statement	Communication strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Equip and involve parents in ongoing SE programmes</li> <li>• Identify critical partners within CBOs</li> <li>• Present community-level information and advocacy workshops on NS</li> <li>• Implement a multimedia campaign</li> </ul>

<sup>5</sup> National Statement - This should be a statement of intent signed by all relevant partners as proposed by the Minister. The Statement should contain the integrated response to sexual abuse, rape and sexual exploitation, intergenerational sex, HIV/AIDS and safe schools. It would also include the commitment to the integrated response by national leaders, school governance and management structures and key community organisations.

<sup>6</sup> Signatory carries with it the expectation that you commit as well to the implementation of the National Statement.



## **Plan of Action 2**

<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Output</b>	<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Activities</b>
Promote and coordinate an intersectoral, multi-departmental response to SE and support for the NS	Deputy signatories to the NS	Multi-sectoral strategy on implementation of NS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arrange signature ceremony</li> <li>• Set up intersectoral, multidepartment coordination structures</li> <li>• Implement collaborative projects with clearly defined roles for all partners</li> </ul>
Ensure adequate expression of SE in the Life Orientation curriculum	Adequate SE in Life Orientation curriculum	Target the Life Orientation Curriculum Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure nationwide coverage of SE training of teachers</li> <li>• Consult with the Life Orientation Committee to ensure the adequate expression of SE</li> <li>• Establish a national panel of specialist SE educators to continuously monitor and review curriculum</li> </ul>
Strengthen the implementation of SE and national statement at school level	SE and NS reflected as key component of school development plans	Integrate NS and SE into the norms and standards of school development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement SE and NS in school development plans</li> <li>• Provide training to school managers and SGBs</li> </ul>
Establish children and youth forums and networks to inform DoE responses to SE	Children and youth forums convened at least twice a year	Town hall meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with peer clubs, PTAs to identify representatives to the forum</li> <li>• Host the forums</li> <li>• Incorporate the contributions of children and youth into DoE responses</li> </ul>

### **Plan of Action 3**

<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Output</b>	<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Activities</b>
Urgent eradication of gender-based violence, sexual abuse and other forms of abuse in the education sector	Eradication of cases of sexual abuse within the school system and in line with the NS, CRC and CEDAW	Implement existing programmes and develop partnerships with government departments and communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enforce existing DoE policy against sexual abuse</li> <li>• Partner with key government sectors to enforce prosecution related to sexual abuse and gender-based violence</li> <li>• Support school management teams to enforce existing policy against sexual abuse</li> <li>• Mobilise communities using multimedia approaches to support DoE enforcement of SE policies</li> </ul>
Establish register of sex-offenders	Sex-offenders register existent throughout the school system in the country	Multi-sectoral approach to enforcing laws against sex offenders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish sex-offenders register</li> <li>• Implement punitive measures against offending teachers linked to licensing</li> <li>• Establish disciplinary committee with peers and school system management to enforce policy</li> <li>• Work with justice system to ensure its enforcement in criminal cases through child-friendly courts</li> <li>• Establish safe places and toll-free line for learners to identify and report offending teachers</li> </ul>

### **Plan of Action 4**

<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Output</b>	<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Activities</b>
Prevent HIV transmission among youth and children	Reduce the rate of new HIV infections in schools, both of learners and teachers by an agreed percentage	Integrate existing SE and HIV/AIDS-related programmes in schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct snap surveys to monitor the incidence of HIV in schools</li> <li>• Strengthen implementation of the life skills programme</li> <li>• Implement peer education programmes on a large scale</li> <li>• Implement sexuality and HIV/AIDS programmes in schools</li> <li>• Implement media campaign to stigmatise sex with teachers and older men in communities</li> </ul>
Mitigate the impacts of the HIV/AIDS epidemic	Reduced impact of HIV/AIDS on the school environment	Implement existing programmes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integrate the DoE HIV/AIDS strategy</li> <li>• Train teachers as first-level counsellors</li> <li>• Appoint school social workers to support learners and educators</li> <li>• Strengthen and broaden the primary school nutrition programme</li> <li>• Support peer education programmes (see below)</li> </ul>
Ensure access of orphans to schools	An agreed percentage increase of orphans integrated into the school system	Implement existing programmes for orphans in cooperation with relevant sectors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enforce the SA Schools Act relating to orphans, including exemption of school fees</li> <li>• Facilitate access to social development and health services</li> <li>• Establish a data base of orphans and vulnerable children to inform responses</li> </ul>

### **Plan of Action 5**

<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Output</b>	<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Activities</b>
Equip teachers to manage their sexuality and to conduct sexuality education adequately	Teachers signatories to the NS and conducting SE	Support and encourage teachers to implement SE programmes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish and implement life-skills education programmes for teachers</li> <li>• Establish psycho-social and professional support system for teachers</li> <li>• Establish guidelines and committee to select teachers equipped to conduct SE</li> </ul>
Use peer education as a core component of a sexuality education programme to promote positive role models for children	Assertive and empowered cohort of children	To focus on peer education and support mechanisms for peer education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adopt and implement minimum criteria for the development and implementation of peer education programmes</li> <li>• Establish and provide support to a “trusted adult” network to facilitate peer education</li> <li>• Implement multimedia campaign to bolster peer education programmes</li> </ul>
Help reduce the negative impact of the media on youth sexuality and promote those aspects of media that contribute to healthy sexuality and positive lifestyle choices	Media that are signatories to the NS	Involve the media in all aspects of the implementation of SE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mobilise the media to become signatories of the NS</li> <li>• Hold consultations with media management to promote responsible sexual behaviour as NS</li> <li>• Encourage the integration of Indigenous Knowledge Systems in media programming</li> </ul>

**Plan of Action 6**

Objectives	Output	Strategy	Activities
<p>Ensure consistent and continuous monitoring and evaluation of the implementation and outcomes of sexuality education</p>	<p>SE plan that is successfully implemented and updated as necessary</p>	<p>Institutionalise monitoring of SE and NS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop baseline indicators for SE</li> <li>• Develop monitoring tools for different levels</li> <li>• Prepare an annual report of implementation and outcomes of SE for presentation to the media</li> <li>• Establish an independent national commission or institution tasked with monitoring the implementation of DoE key programmes and progress in achieving its overall mandate on SE and the NS</li> </ul>



**HIV/AIDS is everybody's concern**