



AFT PRESS STATEMENT

1 DECEMBER 2025

FOLLOWING THE NATIONAL CONSULTATION INDABA ON ADOLESCENT PREGNANCY

On 28 and 29 November 2025 Advocates for Transformation participated in the National Consultation Indaba on Adolescent Pregnancy convened by the Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities. The indaba brought together government departments, civil society organisations, faith-based institutions, traditional authorities, development partners and adolescents to confront one of the most urgent child protection challenges in South Africa.

South Africa continues to experience unacceptably high levels of adolescent pregnancy. Although recent data reflected a modest decline, the concept note (which informed the indaba) confirmed that the national response remained fragmented, inconsistent and insufficiently coordinated to address the scale and urgency of the crisis. These systemic shortcomings have allowed harmful practices, exploitation and unlawful conduct to persist across communities.

In our contribution to the indaba, Advocates for Transformation emphasised that adolescent pregnancy must be approached as a matter of law, justice and enforceable duty. The Constitution, the Children's Act, the Sexual Offences Act and the Schools Act impose clear and binding responsibilities on the State and on all adults who interact with children. South Africa is further bound by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and the Maputo Protocol. These instruments compel the State and society to protect adolescents from exploitation, coercion, harmful norms and discriminatory practices.

We stressed that the failure to provide adolescents with rights-based legal education has weakened the national response. Many adolescents do not understand the legal meaning of consent, coercion, grooming or statutory offences. Many adults, including teachers, caregivers, faith leaders and traditional authorities, remain uncertain of their mandatory reporting duties. Without widespread legal literacy, the protective purpose of the law cannot be realised.

Advocates for Transformation called for strengthened mandatory reporting, earlier detection and stronger referral pathways. Delayed reporting, hesitation among duty bearers and the absence of co-ordinated systems undermine accountability and expose adolescents to avoidable harm. The justice system can only protect children when mandatory reporters act in accordance with their statutory duties.

We also highlighted the influence of harmful social and cultural norms. Relationships between adult men and adolescent girls continue to be normalised in some communities, despite being clearly prohibited by the Sexual Offences Act. We reaffirmed that challenging harmful norms is not optional but a legal and moral obligation required under both domestic and international law.

Advocates for Transformation welcomed the commitment of government and partners to develop a National Strategic Plan on Adolescent Pregnancy that is aligned with constitutional rights, statutory obligations, international law and the lived experiences of adolescents. We confirmed that our national legal education campaign, launching in January, will contribute directly to the national effort by equipping adolescents with legal knowledge, strengthening adult legal literacy and reinforcing accountability throughout the protection and justice system.

Advocates for Transformation remains committed to working with government departments, civil society organisations, faith based institutions, traditional authorities and development partners to ensure that the rights and futures of adolescents in South Africa are protected. The protection of children is not aspirational. It is an enforceable legal duty that binds all sectors of society. **A**

**Issued by the National Executive Committee of
Advocates For Transformation**

Adv Myron Dewrance SC
National Chairperson