

## Media Advisory

### International Day of the Girl

**Webinar focusing on the challenges facing adolescent girls and young women and how to mobilise collective action to make a difference – Monday, 11 October, 14h00- 15:30**

**8 October 2021, Pretoria:** The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) supported by the Government of Canada, in partnership with the British Council and the Commission for Gender Equality (CGE), are hosting a webinar on International Day of the Girl Child (11 October 2021) to call for increased investment in the health and education of the girl child to address her vulnerabilities and challenges.

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic has negatively impacted years of progress made towards gender equality. The benefits of investing in the health and education of the girl child are far-reaching, including, delayed marriage and childbirth, fewer maternal and infant deaths, lower fertility rates, lower risk of HIV infection, and increased economic and political participation.

The British Council, a global network focused on building connections, understanding amongst societies in the UK and Africa through arts, culture and education, will focus attention on the importance of promoting girls' education for inclusion and empowerment. The socio-economic impact of COVID-19 and learning disruptions had devastating outcomes on girls. According to the five recent countries surveyed in the Connecting Classrooms for Global Learning (CCGL) Education Resilience research, teachers and school leaders highlighted an increase in incidents of abuse and exploitation, both within and outside the home. The British Council argues that girls' education is the most powerful investment for our collective future. It states that the ripple effect of positive change occurs when a girl gets an education, this strengthens economies, reduces inequality and creates more opportunities for everyone to succeed.

The Commission for Gender Equality (CGE), together with UNFPA and UNICEF will highlight how COVID-19 and school closures have led to increases in adolescent pregnancy, due to challenges in accessing sexual and mental health services, including SRH, HIV & GBV services and mental health services and engage on programme interventions that respond to these challenges and vulnerabilities.

#### Speakers include:

- *Dr. Agathe Lawson - Officer-in-Charge, UNFPA;*
- *Ms. Tamara Mathebula - Chairperson, Commission for Gender Equality;*
- *Ms. Caroline Grant - Senior Adviser English for Education Systems & Schools Lead, British Council;*
- *Ms. Sonwabise Mzinyathi - Senior Manager: Global Policy and Government Affairs, Global Citizen;*
- *Ms. Sarah Reis- Gender Dynamics Specialist, UNFPA;*

- *Ms. Lebogang Schultz- HIV Specialist, UNICEF.*

**For more information, please contact:**

Ms. Ziyanda Ngoma | UNFPA | [ngoma@unfpa.org](mailto:ngoma@unfpa.org) | +27 72 299 0868

Mr. Sudeshan Reddy | UNICEF | [sureddy@unicef.org](mailto:sureddy@unicef.org) | +27 82 561 3970

Ms. Mabatlane Matube | British Council | [Mabatlane.matube@britishcouncil.org.za](mailto:Mabatlane.matube@britishcouncil.org.za) | +27 78 800 1292

Mr Javu Baloyi | Commission for Gender Equality | [javu@cge.org.za](mailto:javu@cge.org.za) | +27 83 579 3306

**About UNFPA/ UNICEF Joint Programme:**

The programme, supported by the Government of Canada, titled “Empowering Women and Girls to realize their Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights”, focuses on adolescent girls and young women aged 15 to 24 in marginalised communities to advance their sexual reproductive health and rights, while working to eradicate gender-based violence.

**About the British Council:**

The Council functions as the United Kingdom international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities. It focuses on building connections, understanding and trust between people in the UK and other countries through arts and culture, education and the English language while helping young people gain the skills, confidence and connections they are looking for to realize their potential and to participate in strong and inclusive communities.

**About the Commission for Gender Equality (CGE):**

The CGE is a constitutional entity whose mandate is to promote respect for gender equality and the protection, development and attainment of gender equality in order to strengthen constitutional democracy. The CGE does this through monitoring, conducting investigations, research, public education, policy and legislative review through a gender lens

**About the International Day of the Girl**

On December 19, 2011, United Nations General Assembly adopted Resolution 66/170 to declare October 11 as the International Day of the Girl Child, to recognize girls’ rights and the unique challenges girls face around the world. The Day focuses attention on the need to address the challenges girls face and to promote girls’ empowerment and the fulfilment of their human rights.