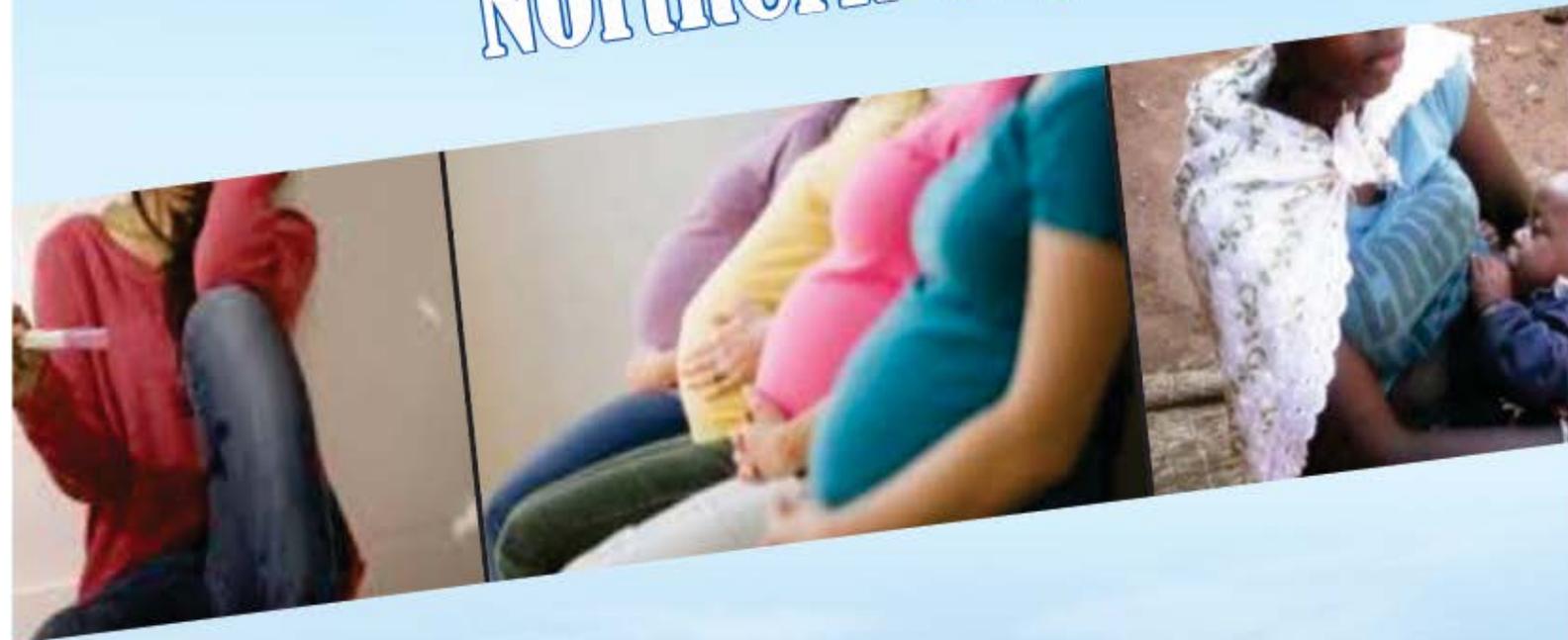




**NCPT**

**NORTHERN CAPE PROVINCIAL TREASURY**

# Teenage Pregnancy in the Northern Cape



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**We serve with passion. We deliver on time.**

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## 1. Introduction

The World Health Organisation (WHO) (2014) identifies adolescence as the period in human growth and development that occurs after childhood and before adulthood, from ages 10 to 19. This is a very critical stage in the development of a young person's life, as it is characterized by profound physical, biological, social, and emotional changes. It is a time in which identity formation begins, as individuals transition from childhood to adulthood, from dependence to independence. New attitudes, feelings, and risk-taking behaviour defines an individual's experience during adolescence, and potentially shapes a person's behaviour, health, and lifestyle over an entire lifespan. Although there has been a decrease in the number of teenage pregnancies worldwide, it still remains a challenge for many parts of the world.

The purpose of this policy brief is to highlight the status quo of teenage pregnancy in South Africa and the Northern Cape Province and also to look at some of the reasons for high prevalence of teenage pregnancy in the Province.

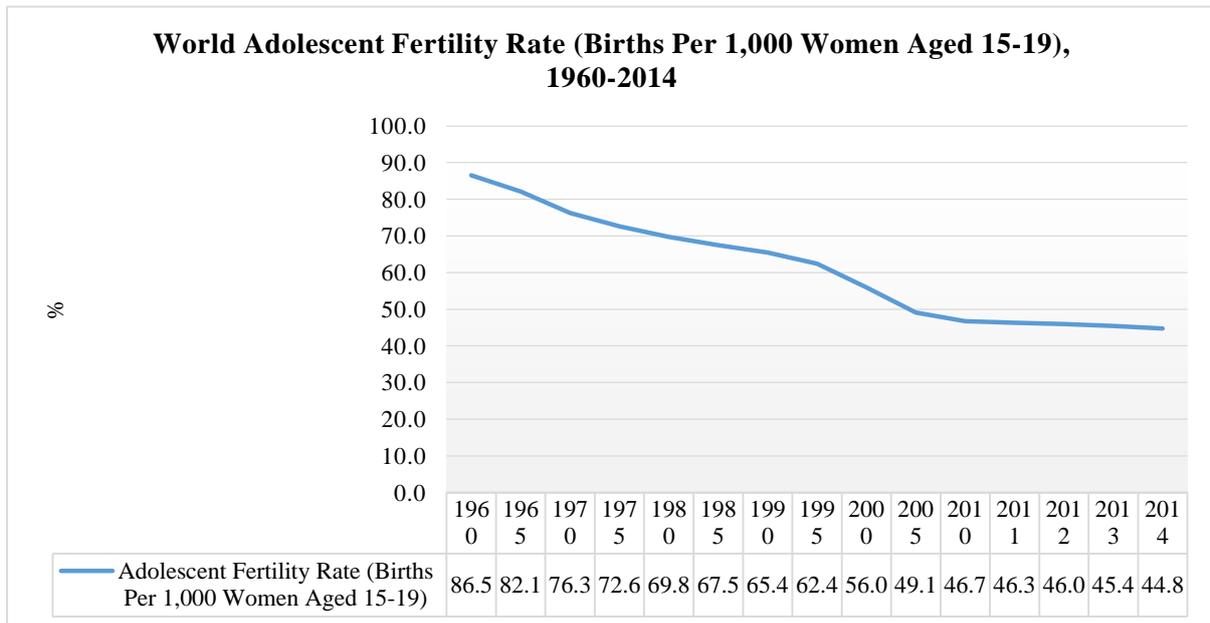
## 2. Analysis of Teenage Pregnancy

This section briefly explores teenage pregnancy in the world, South Africa and the Northern Cape Province.

### **2.1 Global and South African Context**

According to WHO (2014), approximately 16 million girls aged between 15 and 19 years and some 1 million of those under 15 give birth every year (mostly in low- and middle-income countries). The organisation also found complications during pregnancy and childbirth to be the second largest cause of death for 15 to 19 year-old girls internationally. It has also been revealed that about 3 million girls undergo unsafe abortions every year. Moreover, WHO indicated that adolescent mothers' babies face a considerable risk of dying in comparison to those of women aged 20 to 24 years although it remains high, the World Bank (2015) has pointed to a decline in the global adolescent fertility between 1960 and 2014. The graph below provides an overview of such case.

**Figure 2.1: World Adolescent Fertility Rate (Births Per 1 000 Women Ages 15-19), 1960-2014**

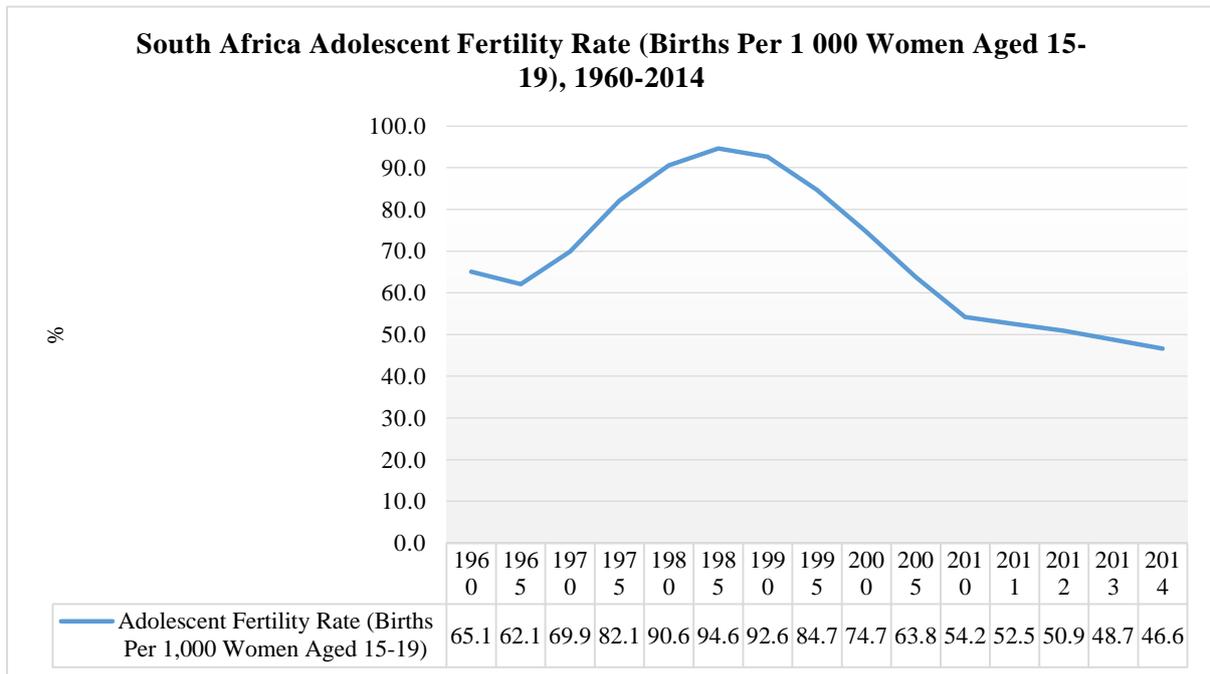


Source: The World Bank, World Development Indicators 2015

Figure 2.1 shows that teenage adolescent fertility decreased from a peak of 87 births per 1 000 girls aged 15 to 19 in 1960 to 45 in 2014. The United Nations also revealed that there has been a decline in the number of births by mothers aged 15 to 19 from 72.3 million between 2005 and 2010 to 66.9 million between 2010 and 2015 worldwide. Furthermore, less developed regions' numbers were substantially higher than those of more developed regions. The same is true for low-income countries in comparison with high-income countries. Africa's births were estimated at 28.2 million from 2010 to 2015, and it was high when compared to other continents like Australia/Oceania (207 000) and Europe (1.6 million). A decrease in the fertility rate can be attributed to a number of factors including the increased awareness and use of contraceptive methods. According to Alkema et al. (2013), contraceptive prevalence increased from 54.8 per cent in 1990 to 63.3 per cent in 2010 globally.

The figure 2.2 below shows South Africa's adolescent fertility rate for the period 1960 to 2014.

**Figure 2.2: South Africa’s Adolescent Fertility Rate Births Per 1 000 Women Ages 15-19), 1960-2014**

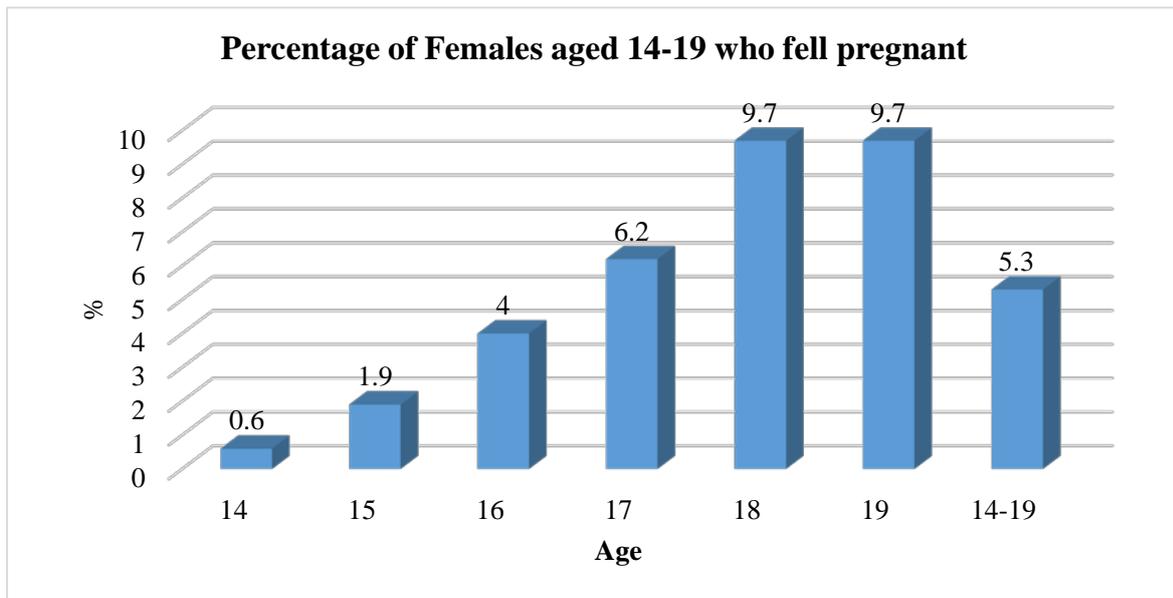


Source: The World Bank, World Development Indicators, 2015

In the context of South Africa, the World Bank revealed that there has been a drop in the teenage pregnancy rate. This has fallen by 18 births per 1 000 teenage females from 65 in 1960 to 47 in 2014. The adolescent fertility rate reached its peak in 1985 (95 births per 1 000 teenagers aged 15 to 19 years). It must also be noted that the South African adolescent fertility rate was higher (by 3 births) than that of the world from 1975 to 2014.

Figure 2.3 below depict a percentage of females (14-19) who were pregnant during the Survey’s Preceding 2015.

**Figure 2.3: Percentage of Females aged 14-19 who fell Pregnant**



*Source: Statistics South Africa, General Household Survey, 2015*

According to Statistics South Africa (Stats SA), the prevalence of teenage pregnancy rose with age in 2014. It is estimated that 0.6 per cent of girls aged 14 were pregnant while 9.7 per cent of girls aged 19 was pregnant at the time of the survey. On average, teenagers who fell pregnant aged between 14 and 19 years were 5.3 per cent. Although Stats SA recently revealed that the total number of births had decreased by the end of 2015 (a drop of 34 823 from 954 385 in 2014 and 19 449 from 939 011 in 2013), it indicated that births by teenage mothers aged 15 to 19 years were higher however in that period. Adolescent births were estimated at 13.4 per cent in 2015, which represented a decline of 0.5 per cent from 2014 and 1.1 per cent from 2013. KwaZulu-Natal was the province that had the largest number of teenage births at 30 233 in 2015, Eastern Cape followed at 19 263 while Limpopo had the third largest number at 16 557. Northern Cape's births by teenagers were estimated at 4 157.

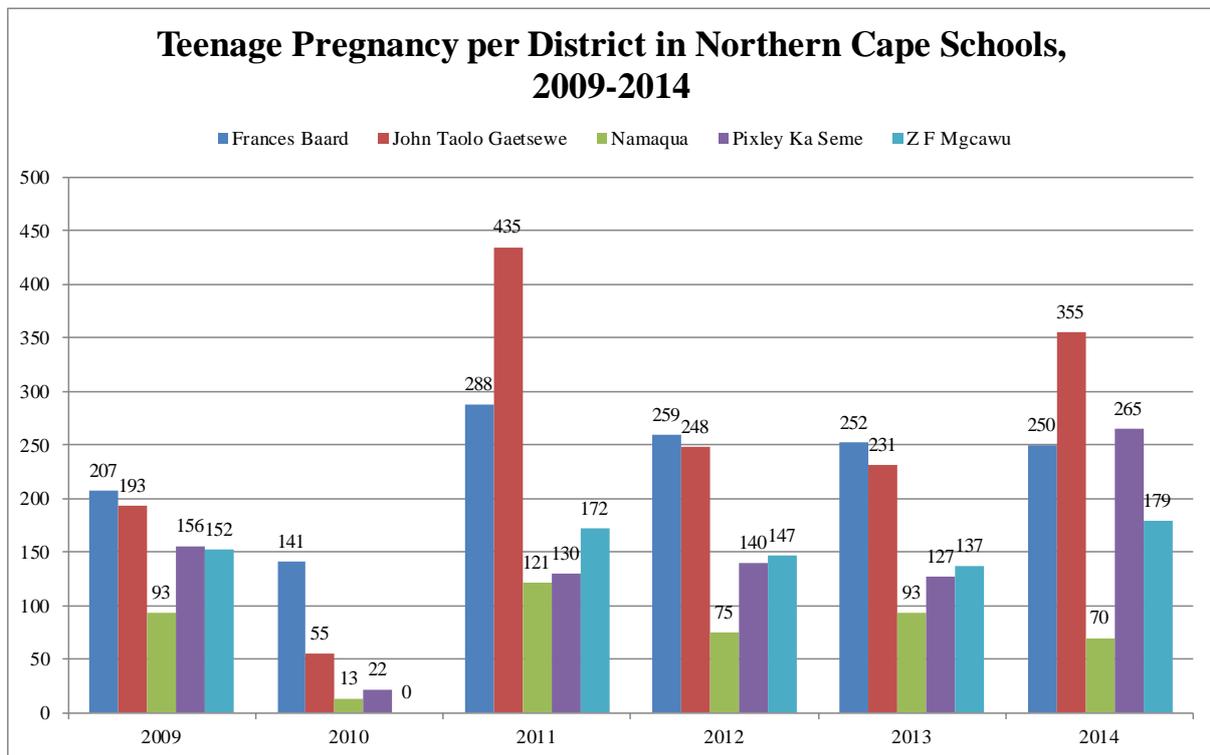
## **2.2 Northern Cape Context**

The Northern Cape Province has the smallest population in South Africa with an estimated size of 1 191 651 people (Stats SA, 2016). The population is predominantly females accounting for 50.15 per cent of the population. The age cohort (25-29) had the largest population size with 114 287 people in mid-2016. According to the 2007-2011 National Strategic plan, 15 per cent of teenage girls in the province were pregnant in 2003. This was the second highest in the country behind Limpopo with 17 per cent.

➤ **Teenage Pregnancy Per District**

Education has been generally acknowledged as playing a key role in improving the quality of life for people, as well as the nation’s development and growth. For this reason, Government prioritised sex education in schools and made it part of the Life Skills Curriculum in schools to prevent or curb teenage pregnancy and promote healthy living. The Northern Cape Province historically has had a very high rate of teenage pregnancy in the country, and the table below shows teenage pregnancy in the province per district.

**Figure 2.4 Teenage Pregnancy per District in Northern Cape Schools 2009-2014**



Source: Northern Cape Department of Education

The John Taolo Gaetsewe (JTG) followed by Frances Baard Districts had the highest number of teenage pregnancies in the province for the years under review, reaching a high of 435 and 288 pregnant teens in 2011 respectively. Also, in 2011 teenage pregnancy was at its peak with 1 146 teens falling pregnant in the province.

➤ **Teenage Pregnancy Per Grade**

As mentioned earlier in the paper according to Stats SA the prevalence of teenage pregnancy increased with age, rising from 0.6 per cent for females aged 14 years to 9.7 per cent for females aged 19 years in South Africa. This situation is also true for the Northern Cape

Province as the table below shows that the number of reported pregnancy increase as teenage girls progressed with their schooling.

**Table 2.1: Teenage Pregnancy Per Grade for the Northern Cape Province, 2009-2014**

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	Total
Grade 8	71	16	156	80	67	69	459
Grade 9	138	42	213	112	111	152	768
Grade 10	186	55	271	245	207	379	1 343
Grade 11	168	60	258	228	212	278	1 204
Grade 12	183	47	216	171	178	187	982

*Source: Northern Cape Department of Education*

The table above shows that the grade mostly affected by teenage pregnancy in the province was Grade 10, as this grade had the highest number of teen girls pregnant in the years 2009, 2011, 2012 and 2014. A number of reasons can be attributed to this, but one of the main reasons is that children in Grade 10 are or they are about to turn 16 years old, so at this age it is when they start to experiment with sexual intercourse. They might not fully understand how to use contraceptives, and they may be too afraid to ask for guidance from parents or teachers. In 2011, all the grades had over 150 teenage girls that were pregnant. In 2014, Grade 10 recorded the highest number of pregnant teens with 379 teens falling pregnant that year. This was followed by Grade 11 with 278 teens.

### 3. Impact of Teenage Pregnancy

Under this section, the effects of teenage pregnancy are looked at focussing on the teenagers that still attended school. WHO categorised these effects into three: health, economic and social. These are briefly discussed below.

#### ➤ **Health effects**

As stated earlier, pregnancy and childbirth complications have been found to be the second largest cause of death in the world for girls aged 15 to 19 years. Some of these girls (3 million every year) end up going for unsafe abortions, something that is contributing to maternal deaths and to long-term health problems. In some cases (low- and middle-income countries), babies born to mothers under 20 years of age face 50 per cent higher risk of being still born or dying during the first few weeks. Stats SA estimated the infant mortality rate at 33.7 per cent in 2016, which is a drop of 14.5 per cent from 2002. Teenage mothers' new-borns also have a chance of having low weight. It must also

be noted that increased teenage pregnancy implies increased unprotected sex with the increased risk of HIV transmission and other sexually transmitted infections. According to Stats SA, the prevalence of HIV for youth between 15 and 24 years was estimated at 5.6 per cent between 2002 and 2016.

➤ **Economic and Social Effects**

With regards to the economic impact, WHO referred to the employability of teenagers. Girls who quit school at an early age have a smaller chance of getting a job compared to those with higher education levels. This does not affect them alone but also their families, communities and countries. For a country, WHO takes this as an opportunity cost as it will be forgoing the annual income a young woman would have earned over her lifetime had she not been pregnant at an early age. A number of factors can also be pointed out on the social side, including a burden on the family and the community to raise those kids. Increased adolescent pregnancy in impoverished areas also puts government under pressure when it comes to social grants.

#### 4. Conclusion and Recommendations

Statistics have shown that South Africa and the Northern Cape are not immune to the teenage pregnancy. Although there have been measures put in place to fight against teenage pregnancy, it remains high for most parts of the world. Teenage girls aged 15 to 19 years are found to be getting pregnant more and more pregnant. Early pregnancy is not only bad for teenagers themselves but also for their babies, families and society at large. Based on the analysis made, this policy brief hereby recommends the following:

- Parents, guardians and educators should be more open to children on sexual matters and how to abstain or use contraceptives.
- Sexual education should be strengthened in the province by educators, parents, guardians, social workers and health professionals.
- The Provincial Government should consider enhancing the school health services.
- The Department of Education should have a programme or strategy for pregnant teenagers to ensure that they do not drop out of school.

- The Department of Education should consider doing an in depth analysis of the severity of teenage pregnancy in the province by conducting a survey for all schools, where learners will be interviewed from Grade 8 to 12.
- Contraceptives should be made available to girls at school and in an environment where girls feel safe to ask for it.
- More emphasis should be put on the various dangers associated with unprotected sex.
- Myths of how and when girls can get pregnant should be eliminated by focussing on facts and education, so that teenagers get their education from educators and not from uninformed sources.

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