MEDIA STATEMENT

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365 DAYS AGAINST VIOLENCE: EVERY LEARNER HAS THE RIGHT TO PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT

On 25 November 2026, Equal Education will host a launch exhibition of a psychosocial support toolkit and a policy brief on the right to psychosocial support for learners. 25 November 2026 marks the beginning of the 16 Days of Activism for No Violence Against Women and Children. We are calling for a sustainable commitment to prevent violence against children for 365 days a year**.** We are calling on the department of basic education and other relevant government departments and state institutions to commit **365 Days Against Violence,** especially in public schools. Our launch of the psychosocial support toolkit and policy brief recognises that violence is a systemic challenge that affects children's mental health. Our learner members, equalisers, existing in violent communities, violent homes, and violent schools.

Violence against children does not begin and end with the incidents that make headlines or the annual 16 Days of Activism campaign. Equalisers refuse to be desensitised to violence. The systemic violence that children experience negatively impacts their education. How they show up at school, how they perform, their behaviour, and their experience of education is shaped by the violent social conditions they experience in their homes, school and communities. Here are some reflections from equalisers regarding their experiences with violence:

"[violence] *affects our learning and gives us stress and fear of school*."

"*When gangs control the streets around schools, attendance drops, exams get missed, and trauma becomes the norm*."

Another put it more starkly:

"*Students are not safe, students are innocent, people are dying*."

These reflections paint a picture of the socio-violent conditions that children are exposed to. Importantly, schools are uniquely positioned to contribute to the holistic well-being of learners by offering psychosocial support for those who are directly and indirectly exposed to violence. Effective psychosocial support requires adequately resourced, coordinated, and accessible systems, including the involvement of psychologists, social workers, and other appropriately trained professionals. Many of our learner members report that these school support systems do not exist or, in some cases, are inadequately provided. Even worse, public ordinary schools located in the most violent communities lack psychosocial support services.

The launch of the psychosocial support toolkit seeks to contribute towards these support systems. The toolkit has been developed by the learners, for learners. It provides practical guidance and approaches to strengthening psychosocial support within school communities. It places emphasis on creating caring and supportive learning environments, recognising learners' psychosocial needs, and strengthening referral and support mechanisms. On the other hand, the policy brief examines the right to psychosocial support for learners through the lens of the right to safety, care and education. It calls for stronger government commitment to ensuring that learners can access appropriate psychosocial services, including professional support within and through the education system.

To address the existing systemic socio-violent conditions against children, equalisers are calling for:

1. One school, one psychologist, including social workers in-school;
2. All schools must develop their own psychosocial support policies and promote teaching and learning with care;
3. There must be ongoing monitoring of delivery of psychosocial support services to ensure improvement of its delivery;
4. The DBE, along with all PEDs, must promote knowledge of and access to psychosocial support for learners;
5. The DBE must investigate the use of artificial intelligence as an option to provide psychosocial support for learners.

Our call to action extends beyond the 16 Days of Activism. It is for 365 Days Against Violence. 365 days of care. 365 days of protecting every learner's right to safety and education.

END

#iSafetyNgoku #16DaysofActivism #365DaysAgainstViolence #365DaysForCare

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