**PRESS RELEASE**

**NATIONAL ADOPTION COALITION LAUNCHES CRISIS PREGNANCY CAMPAIGN**

***Dialogue must move to care, compassion and awareness, not judgement and shaming***

The National Adoption Coalition of South Africa (NACSA) has launched ‘Choose to Care’, an initiative focusing on crisis pregnancy in a bid to raise awareness of the various alternatives for women experiencing an unplanned pregnancy. The Choose to Care website and campaign serves as a central repository for women experiencing an unplanned pregnancy, their partners, their families and their communities to get information and support via the call centre on 0800 864 658 or the website at [www.crisispregnancy.org.za](http://www.unplannedpregnancy.co.za/)

“Statistics show that 30% of South African teenagers have reported ‘ever having being pregnant’, and most of these pregnancies are unplanned. There are a number of causes including sugar daddies, a highly reported topic in the media, ignorance of birth control, rape, not wanting to use contraceptives, proving one’s womanhood, transactional purposes (survival), as well as healthcare workers and nurses refusal to provide birth control solutions to young women due to their traditional views on sexuality,” explains Pam Wilson, spokesperson for NACSA

Education is of critical importance in the prevention of teenage pregnancies, and that these young women feel that there is a role for them in their society, over and above motherhood. In NACSA’s research it found that current communication about teenage and crisis pregnancy tends to portray young women as faceless, disembodied pregnant bellies in school uniforms with no acknowledgement of who she is and her context. The perspective of the young teenage girl is usually absent.

‘Choose to Care’ is about moving the communication shift from ‘shame and blame’ to ‘care and compassion’, and address all the role players in managing a crisis pregnancy – the young woman in that she is not alone and that she needs to care about her child, the man in terms of taking responsibility for his partner and future child, the community in terms of showing care and compassion for young pregnant women in the community, as well as families to show care and compassion for their daughter by supporting her at this difficult time.

“Statistics indicate that although awareness of adoption has increased, adoption numbers are still declining, whilst child abandonment appears to be increasing. A multi-pronged approach is required to ensure that child abandonment is reduced and that women facing a crisis pregnancy have access to credible information as to their options in a crisis pregnancy. This will include lobbying of government and social institutions, community engagement and the development of a focused crisis pregnancy campaign. Our objective is to create more family and community support for young women to in order to prevent child abandonment and illegal abortions through education and empowerment. We need to provide an accessible solution for crisis pregnancy, with information about the alternatives for women experiencing an unplanned pregnancy in order for them to make informed decisions that are right for them,” adds Pam.

Every year, thousands of women are faced with the unexpected news that they are pregnant. These are most often teenagers, but could just as easily be a single mother of three facing an unplanned pregnancy. From that moment on, lives are changed forever.

In such a situation**,** a young mother faces decisions that need to be made and challenges to be met at a time when she is feeling emotionally confused and overwhelmed at the sudden change of direction her life is about to take. In many instances a teen will feel totally alone and too inexperienced in life to make such enormous decisions.

“We need young women and their families in need of help to know that there are people and organisations available to help them consider all the options and decide on the best solution – most crucially we need to stem the tide of child abandonments and the devastating consequences that such a decision has on the child and mother for the rest of their lives.  The ‘Choose to Care’ campaign encourages individuals, families, communities and organisations to reconsider how they look at their roles and responsibilities in just such a situation and to take positive action,” concludes Pam.

The *Choose to Care* initiative was unveiled by NACSA to key role players on Thursday 18 June at the Children’s Memorial Institute in Braamfontein, Johannesburg.

**If you or someone you care about is experiencing an unplanned pregnancy, get help and support at the Crisis Pregnancy call centre on 0800 864 658 or the website** [**www.crisispregnancy.org.za**](http://www.unplannedpregnancy.co.za/)

***Note to media:*** *For any media interviews about the NACSA and its ‘Choose To Care’ campaign, please contact Nadine Nagel at Teresa Settas Communications on (011) 894 2767 to coordinate.*

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Issued by: Teresa Settas Communications

 Nadine Nagel

 (011) 894 2767 or teresa@tscommunications.co.za

On behalf of: The National Adoption Coalition of South Africa (NACSA