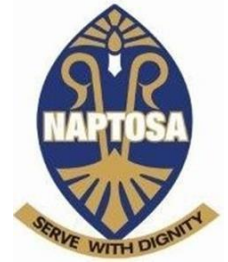


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NNF 26 of 2024

14 August 2024

Women's Month 2024

NAPTOSA observes this year's Women's Month under the national theme "Celebrating 30 Years of Democracy Towards Women's Development," reflecting on the journey that has brought us here. Marking the 68th anniversary of the historic march, that took place on 9 August 1956, we honour the incredible contributions of women who have been at the forefront of change and social transformation. While we celebrate these milestones, we are also compelled to confront the challenges that persist, reminding us of the work that still lies ahead in achieving true gender equality.

One of the pressing challenges we face is the growing disparity in the labour market. The unemployment statistics released on August 13th, 2024, by Stats SA, showed a 0.6% increase in the official unemployment rate over the last quarter, climbing from 32.9% to 33.5%. While both men and women have seen unemployment rise, the impact has been greater on women. This underscores the urgent need to address gender inequalities in the workforce. Despite the significant strides made in women's rights, many women continue to face higher unemployment rates, underemployment, and barriers to career progression. These challenges not only threaten women's economic independence but also stifle overall economic growth, highlighting the critical link between gender equality and economic prosperity.

The effects of climate change further add to these challenges, particularly for women. According to the United Nations, societal norms and laws have historically assigned different roles and responsibilities to women and men. This has placed a heavier burden on women—especially those in the Global South—who often bear the primary responsibility for securing food, water, energy, and other vital resources, as well as caring for the young and elderly. These responsibilities increase their vulnerability to the adverse impacts of climate change, further exacerbating the gender gap. The intersection of climate change and gender inequality is yet another reminder of the interconnectedness of the challenges we face.

In South Africa, the pervasive issue of gender-based violence and femicide (GBVF) continues to cast a long shadow over our society. GBVF, which disproportionately affects women and girls, is deeply rooted in our institutions, cultures, and traditions. This systemic problem touches every aspect of life, making it a national crisis that demands urgent attention. Considering this, NAPTOSA strongly supports the President's call for South African men to pledge their commitment to ending gender-based violence and

femicide. We urge men, especially those in the education sector, to lead by example, sign the pledge, and take meaningful action to change their attitudes and behaviours toward women. It is however not enough to just sign the pledge—men must bring it to life by embodying its principles in their daily lives. (Sign the pledge at: www.stateofthenation.gov.za/endGBVF)

As we move forward, we call on all women to rise and lead from the front. It is time for women to step out of the shadows, support one another, and reach their full potential. Women’s Month is not just a celebration—it is a call to action for all of us to continue the fight for a just and equal society.

Happy Women’s Month to all the diverse South African Queens. NAPTOSA celebrates you!

Mr BL Manuel

Executive Director