NAPTOSA

NATIONAL PROFESSIONAL TEACHERS' ORGANISATION OF SOUTH AFRICA

— SERVING EDUCATION SINCE 1887 —



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70 YEARS *Since* 1956: HOW FAR HAVE WE REALLY COME?

EMPOWERED WOMEN, EMPOWER NATIONS

Government has officially launched Women's Month 2026 in Durban, marking 70 years since 20,000 women marched on the Union Buildings in 1956 to say "Wathint' Abafazi, Wathint' Imbokodo." This year's theme, "Empowered Women, Empower Nations," invites the nation to celebrate the progress women have made. NAPTOSA joins in honouring that legacy, but as an organisation representing thousands of women educators, we believe an honest reflection on where South Africa stands today is equally necessary.

A NATIONAL DISASTER IN NAME ONLY?

In December 2025, following sustained civil society pressure, President Cyril Ramaphosa classified gender-based violence and femicide (GBVF) as a national disaster under section 23 of the Disaster Management Act.

It was a historic acknowledgement of a crisis that sees a **woman murdered every two-and-a-half hours** in South Africa.

Yet, the President confirmed that no temporary powers were assigned, no regulations issued, and no additional resources allocated because of the classification.

Six months on, organisations such as Women for Change have pointed to ongoing failures, including shortages of rape kits at police stations.

For NAPTOSA's members—educators who work daily with learners and families affected by violence in their homes and communities—the gap between political declaration and practical delivery is deeply concerning.

WHO'S MISSING AT THE TABLE?

The National Council on GBVF, established under the 2024 Act, includes no representative from organised labour or business, despite the Act specifically requiring their inclusion.

The 7-member Council, appointed by President Ramaphosa on the recommendation of Parliament's Portfolio Committee, comprises academics, activists and professionals—but no unions.

Workplace GBVF is the daily reality of the cashier harassed by customers, the cleaner who fears her colleagues, and the young woman told she will only be promoted if she meets a manager's demands.

A Council tasked with coordinating the national response to GBVF cannot be multi-sectoral while excluding the voice of the workplace.

NAPTOSA calls on the Presidency and Parliament to correct this failure and ensure FEDUSA and other labour federations are brought into the Council's work.

THE LEADERSHIP GAP PERSISTS

Women make up roughly 70% of South Africa's teaching workforce yet occupy only around **34–39% of principal posts**, a gap that has barely moved in over a decade.

Strong at entry level. Narrowed at the top. The pattern is consistent.

It's the same story in other sectors:

Women hold only **~19%** of directorships on JSE-listed company boards.

Only **~26%** of top management positions in the private sector.

(Source: Commission for Employment Equity)

In Parliament, women hold **~44–45% of National Assembly** seats—proof that **where there is political will and deliberate mechanisms, transformation** happens.

NAPTOSA'S CALL

Government must match the GBVF national disaster classification with real resources, regulations and accountable timelines, not a declaration in name only.

The Presidency and Parliament must urgently correct the exclusion of organised labour from the National Council on GBVF, in line with the spirit and letter of the 2024 Act.

The Department of Basic Education and provincial education departments must set transparent, monitored targets to close the gap between women in the teaching corps and women in school leadership.

NAPTOSA reaffirms its commitment to mentoring, supporting and advocating for women educators pursuing leadership roles, and to holding all social partners accountable to genuine social dialogue.

> Seventy years after the women of 1956 marched for dignity and equality, NAPTOSA states that honoring their legacy requires more than commemoration.
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> **IT REQUIRES COURAGE, ACTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY, TODAY.**

