



# NATIONAL NEWS FLASH



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## NAPTOSA WEBINAR ON SCHOOL RELATED GENDER BASED VIOLENCE (SRGBV): 16 JULY 2020

On 16 July 2020 NAPTOSA hosted a successful webinar on School Related Gender Based Violence.

The (Zoom) webinar was attended by approximately 140 participants and was honoured by a message from the Minister of Basic Education who gave her support to NAPTOSA's programme on SRGBV and invited the Union to partner with the Department of Basic Education in this matter.

The webinar came at a time when violence, especially gender-based violence, has escalated during the current period of COVID-19 lockdown, exacerbated by a loss of income, loss of jobs, unemployment, lack of food and poverty.

NAPTOSA's President, Mr Ntantala, in his opening address, captured the essence of SRGBV and why it was important to tackle the matter anew. He pointed out that NAPTOSA's programme started when the National Executive Committee, some years ago, embraced the SRGBV campaign, resulting in the establishment of a National Change (Core) Team for NAPTOSA. Mr Ntantala further indicated that NAPTOSA's programme was underpinned by United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4.5 that provides for the elimination of gender disparities, by an Education International (EI) Resolution that quality education is not possible without addressing issues of child protection, by the SACE Professional Code of Ethics and by NAPTOSA's own Charter of Professionalism that, *inter alia*, determines that members of NAPTOSA "will refrain from improper or inappropriate relations with learners, be these sexual, political or emotional".

Participants were made aware of the work done through NAPTOSA's School of Leadership and Governance (SOLAG) to promote woman leadership in the union.

Presentations were also received from the following experts in the field:

- Ms Belinda Baker, School Therapist
- Ms Nina Benjamin, an Associate at Gender @ Work
- Dr Saheda Omar, Clinical Director at the Teddy Bear Clinic

Ms Baker emphasized that schools play an important role in educating young people about gender-based violence and helping change the underlying attitudes that lead to it, and although schools are

not a panacea for transforming all of the ills of society, ending violence against children and women will require major and far-reaching social change in which schools can, and should, play a significant role.

Ms Benjamin spoke to the four-year “Education Unions Take Action to End School-related Gender-based Violence” programme launched in 2016 by Education International in collaboration with the UN Girls’ Education Initiative (UNGEI). She pointed out that nine EI member organisations, in seven African countries, participated in the programme of empowerment where teachers and teacher unions take ownership and develop their own strategies to transform the informal institutional norms, policies and practices that perpetuate gender-based violence in their respective contexts. NAPTOSA is one of the participating unions.

Ms Benjamin listed the following strategies adopted by the participating unions to end SRGBV:

- forming change teams to test approaches to end SRGBV at all levels;
- setting up “SRGBV Reference Groups”;
- mandating Gender Coordinators to lead efforts to end SRGBV;
- mobilizing young members in the fight against SRGBV; and
- creating safe spaces where women and members who experience vulnerability can be heard and can share their experiences.

Noting the added pressures of the COVID -19 pandemic on populations worldwide, she called on unions to connect with members to “continue raising consciousness at a HEAD level, creating empathy and passion for change at a HEART level and supporting members to take action so as to walk the talk”, in the fight against SRGBV.

Dr. Omar dealt with the topic “Why protecting children is your responsibility”. She pointed out the provisions of the Constitution and the Children’s Act and that the protection of children is based on the principle of “the best interest of the child”. She emphasised that the responsibility does not lie with a specific person or group such as parents, teachers or child protection organisations, but that all role players involved with children, at whatever level, carry the responsibility to ensure their safety and protection. At school level it would, *inter alia*, mean the education support personnel, those transporting children and coaching staff.

According to Dr. Omar children are today facing unprecedented risks and that it can only be addressed through acts of unprecedented solidarity between all involved.

Ms Tshwanelo Mmutlana, PCEO of NAPTOSA North West Province, and member of the National Core Team on SRGBV, summarized the way forward for NAPTOSA, calling for greater involvement with the issue at Provincial, Branch and Site levels. She identified the following issues to be addressed by NAPTOSA in the context of the anti-SRGBV programme:

- Identify various forms of violence in provinces / districts / schools
  - **Bullying**
  - **Psychological violence**
  - **Sexual harassment**
  - **Corporal punishment**
- Identify inherited violence from communities impacting on schools

- Identify teachers' roles in addressing SRGBV
- Identify teachers' contribution to SRGBV
- Identify /create platforms to hear our stories / SRGBV Club
- Teach learners about different manifestations of SRGBV
- Advocate against COVID-19 discrimination

The President closed proceedings with the profound words that teachers are like candles that consume themselves to bring light to others.

The Webinar proceeding can be viewed via the following YouTube link

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=1hXoj2AAeUE&feature=youtu.be>

**BASIL MANUEL**

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**