



NATIONAL NEWS FLASH



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CRIME STATISTICS: EDUCATION IS NOT IMMUNE

How ironic that on the eve of Women's Month, the Minister of Police releases the crime statistics for the period 1 April 2019 to 30 March 2020, which, yet again, makes for horrific reading, especially as far as gender-based violence and the involvement of children in serious crimes are concerned.

"We live in a violent society" has become such a common mantra that society itself has become somewhat callous towards the reality thereof, accepting that there is nothing that can be done, but to live with it. Unfortunately education is not immune to violence and the impact of societal violence does not stop at the gates of our schools. Nine teachers were killed during SAPS's latest reporting period. This is sad beyond measure because it not only affected the families of the teachers whose lives were taken, but impacted on whole school communities – colleagues, learners and parents.

NAPTOSA previously expressed its horror at the number of children involved in murders, knowing that many of them are children that we teach at our schools, in our classrooms. Sadly, this statistic has shown an increase, with 779 murder cases involving children. Add to this, 353 cases of attempted murder, 5 672 cases of assault with the intent of causing grievous bodily harm and 3 058 sexual offence cases and it is clear that we have a grave situation on our hands as far as the mind-set of many children is concerned.

Unfortunately, in society today, with all of its substantial pressures, too many parents are not sufficiently involved in the lives of their children. The result is that the responsibility for raising many children shifts to schools, in general, and teachers, in particular, in an attempt to right the ills of society.

It is said by some that, for schools to play this role, school security services should be beefed up, weapon detection systems should be implemented, or, in extreme cases, that teachers should be armed. As NAPTOSA we believe that the most effective preventative measure whereby societal violence can be addressed is to, *inter alia*, develop children's emotional, interpersonal and social skills and to impart the timeless principles and values of respect for others, peaceful conflict resolution, honesty, empathy and justice, to name but a few.

Whilst teachers in subjects like Life Orientation can touch on some of these areas, and do a sterling job, NAPTOSA believes that well-resourced, specialised services, such as counsellors and psychologists, are needed, if schools are to have any impact in entrenching non-violent behaviour in learners. Districts, with such specialised services, are, unfortunately, over-stretched. NAPTOSA's

many calls to have more school-based specialised services have, unfortunately, been ignored by the DBE. The “unaffordability” card has been played once too often. This has effectively scuppered the chances of schools playing any significant, and lasting, role in this regard.

Until government acknowledges the role that schools could play in combatting violence, and make a decision to invest in the required specialised services, more generations will unfortunately have to live under the dark cloud of societal violence. Political will is lacking. NAPTOSA demands political resolve.

Despite all the well-meaning campaigns and speeches condemning violence against woman and children, the crime statistics show that gender-based violence continues unabated. NAPTOSA’s renewed focus on ‘School Related Gender-based Violence’ (SRGBV), following a recent very successful webinar on this matter, could not have come at a more opportune time. While it is true that NAPTOSA, as an education sector union, will not be able to stop gender-based violence in South African society, it should not discourage us from doing as much as we can to promote anti-SRGBV actions in our sphere/s of influence, trusting that it will spread and have a wider societal impact.

We therefore call on all NAPTOSA members to support our SRGBV campaign, showing others that we are a caring union, wishing to improve our society.

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