NAPTOSA FOCUS

SCHOOL RELATED GENDER BASED VIOLENCE (SRGBV)

ANTI-SRGBV- THAT’S NAPTOSA

NAPTOSA is pro many issues in education and plays a constructive role in education matters because we believe in the inalienable right of every child and student to quality education within an equitable and non-discriminatory system of education. NAPTOSA in certain instances even takes up a neutral position, such as political alignment. But in one area we are, and will remain, “anti” and that is the area of School-related Gender-based Violence (SRGBV).

Whereas many people and organisations pay only lip service to fighting SRGBV, NAPTOSA is actively involved in campaigns to bring an end to SRGBV.

SRGBV is embedded in, and mirrors, Gender-based Violence (GBV) which is not only limited to certain countries or cultures, but is a world-wide phenomenon requiring responses at international, national, union and site level.

INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN

16 days of activism for no violence against women and children

This is the most well-known global campaign against GBV, championed by the United Nations, that runs annually from 25 November to 10 December. NAPTOSA fully supports this annual campaign and our government’s call on members of society to:

- reject and report abusers
- not protect abusers
- not engage in abusive activities and become an abuser
- sign the Pledge Against Gender-Based Violence
- challenge and denounce cultural practices that perpetuate gender inequalities
- be sensitive and supportive to GBV victims
- seek personal help to change harmful behaviours
- teach children values of gender equality
- protect children from exposure to violence and harmful content on internet and social media

Through a strategic partnership between the United Nations Girls Education Initiative (UNGEI) and EI, the “Education Unions Take Action to End SRGBV” programme was launched in January 2016. The programme supported nine education unions in seven African countries to test different strategies to empower and mobilize teachers and education union staff as active agents of change to address SRGBV in their respective contexts. NAPTOSA was an active participant in this programme.

Unions Take Action to End SRGBV – An Innovative Partnership

From 2016 through 2019, NAPTOSA participated in a programme called Education Unions Take Action to End SRGBV designed to test out new ways of addressing SRGBV by empowering teachers as active agents of change in their organizations, schools, classrooms and communities. The programme built on a resolution adopted by Education International (EI) in 2015 that calls on its 1,000 member unions to support efforts to reduce SRGBV worldwide. During this period, NAPTOSA collaborated with eight other education unions in seven African countries to explore common challenges and share promising strategies. Together, the unions that participated in the programme represented over 1 million teachers at primary, secondary and tertiary institutions in Eastern, Southern and West Africa. The programme was sustained through a strategic partnership between EI and the United Nations Girls Education Initiative (UNGEI) and benefited from the technical support of Gender at Work and the financial contribution of Global Affairs Canada.

Education International (EI) - ROLE

SRGBV and GBV issues feature strongly on the agenda of EI. World Congresses of the organisation have adopted several Resolutions to give impetus to the fight against these scourges. In 2013, a Resolution on School-related Gender-based Violence called on governments “…to provide a well-defined legal and policy framework outlining the state’s obligations to prevent SRGBV and promote child protection and protection of education personnel across all relevant government ministries and impose on education ministries, and their partners, an obligation to include teachers and educators’ unions and organisations in establishing sustainable and holistic mechanisms, for preventing and responding to, SRGBV in all educational settings”.

The 2019 World Congress saw several Resolutions touching on SRGBV, inter alia noting/resolving:

- That materials, talking points and other resources be developed to assist member organisations in lobbying their national governments to enact and enforce legislation to protect citizens from all forms of sexual harassment and sexual violence.
- That national governments and international actors be called upon to raise awareness and increase understanding of the multiple and intersecting nature of discrimination experienced by marginalised women and girls, especially within and through education.
- That despite a number of international protection policies like the Beijing Declaration, 131 million girls worldwide are still out of school.
- That EI continues to advocate for women and girls in all its programmes, campaigns and practices and commit to actively work with civil society and other groups on advancing gender equality for women and girls.

SOUTH AFRICAN CAMPAIGN - Strategic plan on gender-based violence and femicide

Because of the unacceptably high levels of gender-based violence and femicide in South Africa, government has set aside R1.6 billion to roll out a strategic plan for the country to combat this stain on our social fabric. In launching the Strategic Plan, President Ramaphosa said “Women and girls are being abused, assaulted and murdered in our country every day - at the hands of men. We are in the throes of a deep crisis that must be brought to a decisive end.” The key priorities are:

- Urgently respond to victims and survivors of GBV.
- Broadening access to justice for survivors.
- Changing social norms and behaviour through high-level awareness raising and prevention campaigns.
- Strengthening existing architecture and promoting accountability.
- The creation of more economic opportunities for women who are vulnerable to abuse because of poverty.
UNION STRATEGY

It is within these broad international and national campaigns and strategies that NAPTOSA’s actions to end SRGBV are grounded.

While NAPTOSA condemns all forms of SRGBV, be it against learners or education staff, our focus is mainly centred on our teachers, lecturers and education support staff members.

For NAPTOSA it all starts with our constitution in which the union commits to promote a system of education that is non-discriminatory with regard to colour, language, gender, religion, ethnicity, origin, social class, birth, political or other convictions, disabilities, natural or cultural characteristics.

In recent years NAPTOSA embarked on a range of strategies to combat SRGBV which has given teachers an opportunity to speak about their personal experiences of SRGBV and to find solutions that directly impact their communities. The listed strategies encompass the following:

1. ENCOURAGING MEMBERS TO ADHERE TO THE SACE CODE OF PROFESSIONAL ETHICS

NAPTOSA supports the Code of Professional Ethics established by the South African Council of Educators (SACE) and encourages members to adhere thereto, especially those provisions focusing on SRGBV, namely that an educator must:
- refrain from improper physical contact with learners;
- refrain from courting learners from any school;
- refrain from any form of sexual harassment (physical or otherwise) of learners or colleagues;
- refrain from any form of sexual relationship with learners from any school;
- refrain from exposing and/or displaying pornography material to learners and/or keeping same in his/her possession;
- promote gender equality;
- use appropriate language and behaviour in interactions with colleagues;
- avoid any form of humiliation; and
- refrain from any form of abuse (physical or otherwise) towards colleagues.

2. Adopting an SRGBV Framework

NAPTOSA’s SRGBV Framework was developed in August 2016 and formally adopted by the National Executive Committee (NEC) in November 2016. The Framework defines SRGBV; provides data regarding the extent to which the Union’s members and learners experience SRGBV; and outlines the Union’s goals and activities for eradicating SRGBV. It also sets out an initial plan of action to engage NAPTOSA structures and members at national, provincial and branch levels. NAPTOSA uses the Framework to co-ordinate strategies to address SRGBV within schools; direct school management towards appropriate remedial and preventative interventions as well as to facilitate and drive leadership development initiatives for women.
5. NAPTOSA SUPPORTING LEADERSHIP OF WOMEN AND YOUTH

The NAPTOSA Constitution requires representation of female leaders at various levels of its structure.

The NAPTOSA School of Leadership and Governance (SOLAG), started in 2016, empowers both women leaders and young leaders within the Union.

4. RAISING AWARENESS OF SRGBV AMONGST MEMBERS

Methods for raising awareness on SRGBV issues, adopted by NAPTOSA, include the following:

- Activities of change/core team members to create spaces for members to share experiences and identify solutions to SRGBV
- News Flashes and the Insight Magazine
- Webinars
- NAPTOSA diary (2-page focus on SRGBV)
- Community radio

3. ESTABLISHING A NATIONAL SRGBV CHANGE/CORE TEAM TO ADVANCE WORK ON SRGBV AT NATIONAL AND PROVINCIAL LEVELS

The SRGBV Framework identified the creation of a four-person national change team (made up of three female members and one male member) as a first step in its action plan. After an initial pilot period, the national change team’s mandate was extended permanently. Following a 2020 webinar where it was decided to give new impetus to NAPTOSA’s fight against SRGBV, a National CORE SRGBV TEAM, consisting of provincial and national members and officials, were established with the aim of:

- Sensitizing school communities
- Forming school clubs
- Identifying anti-SRGBV activities at school level
- Partnering with the Departments of Social Development, Health, Justice and the South African Police Service
- Involving religious leaders to address congregations and community leader to address residents within their wards

This in-house publication focused on NAPTOSA’s role in the fight against SRGBV within the global and national contexts. In future publications focus will be placed on SRGBV issues at site level, such as sexual harassment and workplace bullying.

Until then, let us remain resolutely “Anti-SRGBV”

Material and Images courtesy of:

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