

**MEDIA RELEASE**      Floods expose failures in school access in Mpumalanga

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The Public Servants Association (PSA) is dismayed by flood-related school closures across Mpumalanga, which have pushed thousands of learners out of classrooms owing to unsafe roads and inaccessible schools.

Whilst the PSA acknowledges the responsible decisions taken by school principals and the Mpumalanga Department of Education to protect lives, these closures highlight long-standing and unresolved failures in infrastructure, transport, and disaster preparedness. Heavy rains have rendered many access routes impassable, particularly in rural areas where roads have collapsed, bridges are damaged, and scholar transport remains unreliable.

Learners and educators are paying the price for years of neglect. Safety must never be compromised but the recurring reality is that education stops for rural learners every time severe weather strikes, which is unacceptable.

The PSA notes engagements between the Department of Education, district structures, provincial leadership, and the Office of the Premier. These discussions are necessary and must result in urgent action rather than repeated assessments and reports. The current situation clearly exposes inequality. Learners in well-serviced communities continue learning uninterrupted, whilst those in rural areas lose valuable teaching time. This entrenches educational inequality and undermines the Constitutional right to basic education.

The PSA calls for immediate and decisive intervention by the Departments of Education, Transport, and Public Works. There must be emergency repair of damaged and washed-away access roads to schools, rapid deployment of temporary bridges, alternative access routes, and the expansion and reinforcement of scholar transport during extreme weather. A provincial disaster response plan specific to schools and learner safety is required.

The PSA demands guarantees that no learner will be academically disadvantaged as a result of these closures. Catch-up programmes must be mandatory, properly resourced, and monitored. Teaching plans must be adjusted, and additional academic support must be provided to affected schools. Climate-related disasters are no longer exceptional events. They are predictable. Government must plan accordingly as reactive responses place lives and futures at risk. The PSA will continue to monitor the situation and will not hesitate to escalate this matter if concrete action does not follow. The safety of learners and educators, and the right to uninterrupted education, must be treated as urgent priorities.

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