

MEDIA RELEASE Women's Month: PSA calls for accountability

DATE 4 August 2026

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The Public Servants Association (PSA) calls on government to use Women's Month 2026 as an opportunity to confront the persistent challenges facing South African women and to account for progress made towards genuine gender equality.

Women's Month carries profound historical significance. The 1956 Women's March, in which thousands of women walked to the Union Buildings in protest against discriminatory pass laws, remains one of the most powerful demonstrations of women's courage and political organising in South Africa. It also forms part of a much longer history of women's activism, dating back to pioneers such as Charlotte Maxeke.

The PSA, however, believes that honouring this history requires more an annual commemoration in August. Government, employers, organised labour, and society must confront the realities women continue to experience in their homes, workplaces, and communities. Women cannot be celebrated whilst they remain unsafe. Gender-based violence and femicide (GBVF) remain amongst the most serious threats facing women in South Africa. Women continue to experience violence, sexual harassment, intimidation, and abuse - often from people known to them and in spaces where they should feel safest. The PSA is extremely concerned that despite extensive legislation, policies and strategies, including the National Strategic Plan on GBVF, the experiences of many women has not changed sufficiently. A woman should not have to choose between reporting abuse and fearing retaliation. Survivors must have access to effective protection, psychosocial support, and a criminal justice system that responds decisively to perpetrators.

The PSA urges government to accelerate the implementation and resourcing of the National Strategic Plan on GBVF, with clear targets, transparent monitoring, and public reporting on progress. Prevention, survivor support, investigation, and prosecution must receive the resources required to make the Country's legislative and policy framework meaningful. Government must strengthen mechanisms to ensure that gender equality targets are measurable and enforceable. As the employer responsible for implementing many of South Africa's gender-equality policies, government must ensure that the public service becomes a model of equality and fairness.

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