

Civil Society Organisations' Coalition Declares August "The Month of Ignored Women"

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JOHANNESBURG, SOUTH AFRICA – A coalition of civil society organisations led by Margins and the Sisonke National Movement in South Africa has declared **August 2026 "The Month of the Ignored Women,"** launching a national campaign that challenges South Africa to move beyond symbolic Women's Month celebrations and commit to meaningful policy reforms for women living on the margins.

While Women's Month traditionally honours the legacy of the 1956 Women's March and the leadership of women such as Lillian Ngoyi, Helen Joseph, Rahima Moosa and Sophia Williams-De Bruyn, the coalition argues that many women continue to be excluded from economic opportunity, social protection and public recognition.

The campaign calls attention to women whose realities are too often overlooked, including women with low-income, informal workers, domestic and care workers, women living in poverty, transgender women, sex workers and survivors of gender-based violence.

Despite decades of constitutional democracy, thousands of women continue to experience systemic inequality.

Current indicators highlight the scale of the challenge:

- Women face an unemployment rate of **36.6%**.
- Approximately **21.8 million women** live below South Africa's Upper-Bound Poverty Line.
- Around **2.1 million women** remain outside the formal labour market because of unpaid care responsibilities, including childcare and household work.
- Women are disproportionately represented in low-paying and insecure sectors such as domestic work, informal trading and community-based care services.
- More than **40% of South African households** are headed by women, many of whom shoulder significant economic and caregiving responsibilities with limited support.

The coalition says economic inequality is compounded by South Africa's ongoing crisis of gender-based violence (GBV).

The campaign challenges government, business and civil society to move beyond annual messages of solidarity and instead implement lasting reforms that improve the daily lives of women who continue to be overlooked.

The coalition is calling for urgent action in five key areas:

- Enforcement of decent work standards and fair wages for all women.

- Stronger legal and labour protections for domestic workers, child-minders and care workers.
- The decriminalisation of consensual adult sex work.
- Full legal recognition, protection and safety for transgender women.
- Greater accountability within the South African Police Service for the prevention, investigation and prosecution of gender-based violence.

The campaign will officially launch on **Monday, 10 August 2026**, with a special Women's Day programme hosted at **Observatory Golf Club** in Johannesburg.

The event will bring together **120 marginalised women from diverse communities** to celebrate their resilience and reclaim their power. Through storytelling, dialogue and collective action, participants will challenge the invisibility too often imposed on them and affirm their place as leaders, contributors and changemakers in South African society.

The gathering represents more than a celebration. It is a public declaration that every woman deserves to be seen, heard and valued, and a call for the country to move beyond symbolic recognition towards lasting structural change.

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