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## RESEARCH REPORT

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### *Women's Leadership in COSATU*

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*While all Naledi publications adopt a pro-labour perspective, their conclusions do not represent the policies of COSATU.*

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## 1. Introduction

The aim of this paper is to provide updated figures on women's representation in leadership structures in COSATU. These figures enable the federation to review progress and to set targets for women's leadership, as resolved in the 1997 COSATU Congress. The paper provides the most recent statistics (for 1998) on women's leadership in COSATU at regional and national level.

The intention of this report was to focus on collecting the actual figures and is therefore confined to a more quantitative (statistical) reflection on women's leadership. It will be valuable to embark on further research that examines the qualitative aspects, in other words, women's experiences of leadership.

## 2. COSATU Policy and Resolutions on Women's Leadership

The issue of women's participation and leadership in COSATU has been on the agenda since its launch in 1985. At the 1994 COSATU Congress delegates noted that "COSATU's long-standing resolutions around gender inequality issues have not been effectively implemented." The Congress resolved to implement a number of strategies over a period of four years, including the following:

*"Special measures will be put in place to ensure that women are effectively represented in all decision making structures of the federation. The CEC will be empowered to ensure that in this regard office bearers at a national, regional and local level will be assigned to build women's leadership and ensure proper representation of women in all structures of the federation."*

Despite this positive sounding resolution, the position of women in the federation has not changed substantially. This was highlighted in strong terms in the Secretariat report to the most recent Congress in 1997:

*"COSATU's commitment in principle to build women's leadership is unquestionable. Since our inception, this matter has been on our agenda. We have taken countless resolutions on this important question. Despite all this, we have not been able to change the patriarchal mindset of many of our members and, to some extent, of our leaders.*

*Revolutionaries have a responsibility not only to deal with forms of oppression that affect them, but to fight for the implementation of corrective measures to address the lack of women leadership in the federation, to empower and capacitate women, and to ensure their representation in all structures of the federation."*

The 1997 Congress discussed possible strategies to increase women's representation in the leadership structures of the federation. The September Commission, supported by the COSATU National Office Bearers and the COSATU National Gender Committee proposed the implementation of a quota system in the federation and affiliates as part of a broader strategy of women's empowerment. This proposal was supported and motivated by CWIU, NEHAWU, SARHWU and SAMWU. There was heated debate on the matter, with strong opposition to the use of quotas from a number of unions. The Congress resolved to put in place "measurable targets" to build women's

leadership within a broad political programme. The following is an extract of some relevant aspects of the Congress resolution pertaining to the building of women's leadership. Congress resolves:

- (1.3) *To encourage all affiliated unions to elect women shopstewards at every workplace where there are women members. Women must be encouraged to become shopstewards with the assistance of organisers. Where they are not elected as shopstewards they could be elected as alternates who must be provided with training.*
- (6.2) *COSATU and its affiliates should ensure the inclusion of women within any required delegations to meetings, conferences, congresses and workshops.*
- (6.3) *The CEC should develop a broad political programme with a specific focus to develop and deepen the consciousness of our members on gender issues, building women leadership, their capacity in the federation and in affiliates, promote their participation in structures as well as eliminate gender imbalances and all forms of gender discrimination. Furthermore, the CEC should set and monitor the implementation of measurable targets by affiliates and the federation to achieve the above. Affiliates and the federation should share information on progress as well as education programmes.*

The COSATU resolution contains a number of other important clauses on the elimination of discrimination in the workplace, affirmative action, parental rights, the building of gender structures and the building of a national women's movement. All of these are important elements in a comprehensive strategy to build women's leadership and empowerment in the labour movement and in society. In the light of the debates and the Congress resolution on women's leadership it is important for COSATU to actively develop and implement an integrated and comprehensive programme of this nature. Within this broad political programme there is a need to focus on the issue of women's representation in leadership structures.

### **3. Women's Representation in Leadership in the Federation**

In order to adequately address the low levels of women's representation in leadership there is a need to collect accurate and updated statistics on the proportion of women in leadership at all levels, as well as the proportion of women members in each affiliate. The following tables are based on the most recently available data, collected by NALEDI, with the assistance of affiliate gender co-ordinators during September and October 1998. Unfortunately, the only data that could be collected is for regional and national office bearers. Only two unions (SADTU and SACCAWU) have data available on local or branch leadership, while only one (SADTU) has a gender breakdown of membership. The process of data collection highlighted the need for the federation to explore the establishment of data-bases by all affiliates containing a gender breakdown of membership and leadership that can be updated on a continual and regular basis. Without such information available it will be impossible for COSATU and affiliates to monitor their progress.

### 3.1 National and Regional Leadership

Table 1 below reflects the proportion of women in regional and national COSATU office bearer positions. Table 2 shows the proportion of women in national and regional leadership in COSATU Affiliates.

**Table 1: National and Regional Women Leadership in COSATU 1998/99**

NOB's	ROB's	Secretaries	Presidents/ Chairpersons	Vice Pres./ Chairpersons	Treasurers
16%	25%	0%	0%	30%	66%

There is one female national office bearer in COSATU (1<sup>st</sup> Vice President). At the regional level there are 8 female office bearers out of 36 (25%), of which 6 are Regional Treasurers and 2 are Vice Chairpersons. There are no female Secretaries or Presidents/Chairpersons at regional or national level.

**Table 2: National and Regional Women Leadership in COSATU Affiliates 1998/99**

UNION	NEC Delegates	NOB's	ROB's	Secretaries	Presidents / Chairs	Treasurers	Estimated membership (1994)
CAWU	8%	0%	13%	0%	0%	43%	2-3%
CWIU	14%	17%	15%	0%	0%	50%	-
CWU	33%	0%	3%	0%	8%	0%	-
FAWU	11%	0%	24%	0%	40%	0%	-
NEHAWU	16%	33%	34%	0%	10%	80%	62%
NUM	0%	0%	2.5%	8%	0%	9%	-
NUMSA	0%	0%	6%	0%	0%	20%	15%
POPCRU	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	-
PPWAWU	13%	0%	13%	0%	0%	43%	8%
SAAPAWU	17%	17%	28%	0%	50%	57%	-
SACCAWU	11%	33%	16%	0%	16%	44%	65%
SACTWU	38%	33%	30%	0%	31%	66%	65%
SADTU	3%	0%	7%	0%	5%	20%	62%
SAMWU	4%	17%	14%	0%	24%	10%	15%
SARHWU	33%	0%	12%	20%	0%	22%	-
SASBO	50%	14%	71%	84%	50%	66%	-
TGWU	22%	0%	22%	20%	22%	11%	45%
<b>Average</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>36%</b>

*Please note: The figures for SASBO and TGWU refer to branch office bearers since neither union has regional structures. SAPSA is not included in this table.*

It is important to note that regional leadership refers to regional office bearers. It is likely that the proportions of women would be higher in regional executive committees, however, it was not possible to collect this information given the

\* The percentages for Secretaries, Presidents/Chairs and Treasurers include national and regional office bearers.

\* The percentage for Presidents/Chairpersons includes Vices and Deputies.

time constraints and the difficulties encountered in data collection. It will be useful to collect this information in order to make such comparisons.

Table 2 also includes a column on *estimated* membership. This data was collected in 1994 by a NALEDI survey, which requested unions to estimate the proportion of women members, since actual figures were not available. These figures should therefore be treated with caution, since they are relatively old, and also only an estimate. Nevertheless, it is important to have a rough sense of the gender breakdown of membership in order to assess how closely the proportion of women in leadership approximates their proportion in membership.

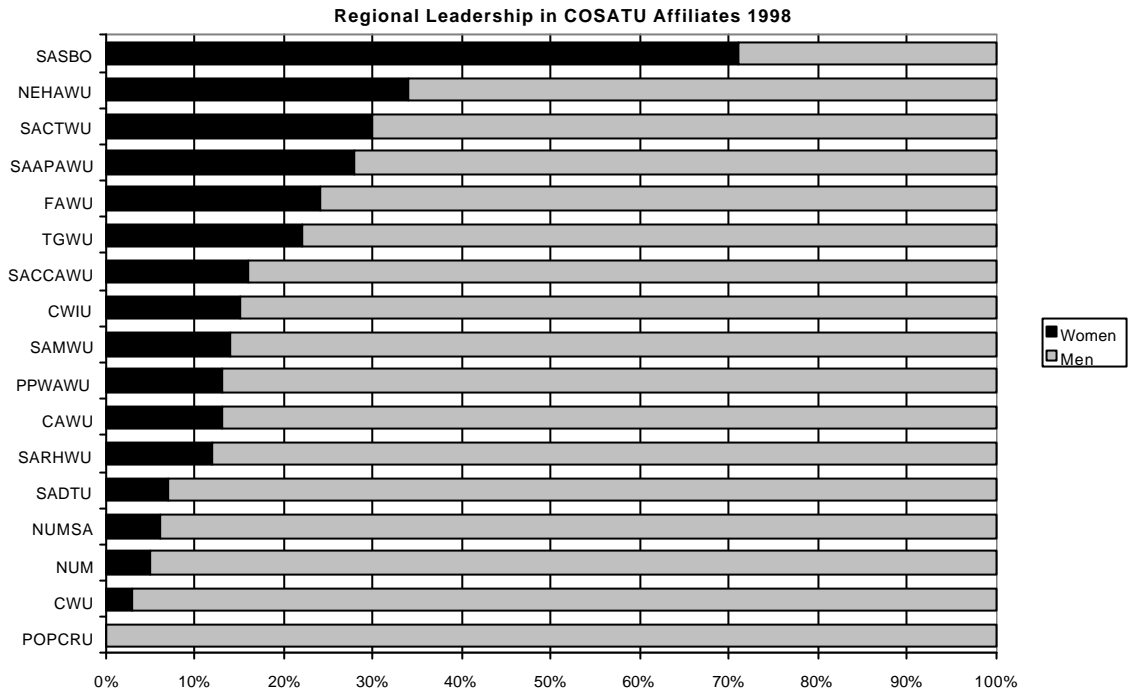
There are only 5 unions that have women national office bearers (three of the five each have two women in national office bearer positions). Not one of these women occupies the position of Secretary. One union, SAAPAWU, has a woman President. There are a total of 10 women in national office bearer positions.

At regional level, the levels of women leadership remain low. Nevertheless, almost all unions have some women in regional office bearer (ROB) positions (16 out of the 17 unions for which information has been collected). The only union that does not have a single woman in an office bearer position at regional or national level is POPCRU. Although most unions have women in ROB positions, the overall proportion is low – only two unions have more than 30% of women ROB's. Furthermore, there is a distinct gendered allocation of positions. Most of the women ROB's occupy the position of Treasurer, or in some cases of Vice Chairperson. It is relatively common for women to occupy the position of Treasurer, as it is often seen as less influential. This means that women regional office bearers do not sit on national structures, since it is the Regional Secretary and Chairperson that automatically form part of the national constitutional structures of the unions. SARHWU and T&GWU, both relatively male-dominated unions, have women occupying the position of Regional Secretary (in the case of TGWU this is a branch secretary – the union does not presently have regional structures, but the office bearers of the five branches are represented on the NEC and CEC). In the case of SASBO, the level of women in regional leadership is high (71%), however, it should be noted that this is for women in branch committees, and cannot in real terms be compared with ROB positions. However, SASBO does not have regional structures. Although this level of women's representation is positive for SASBO, it should not create a misleading picture, since the most powerful positions in the union are occupied by men.

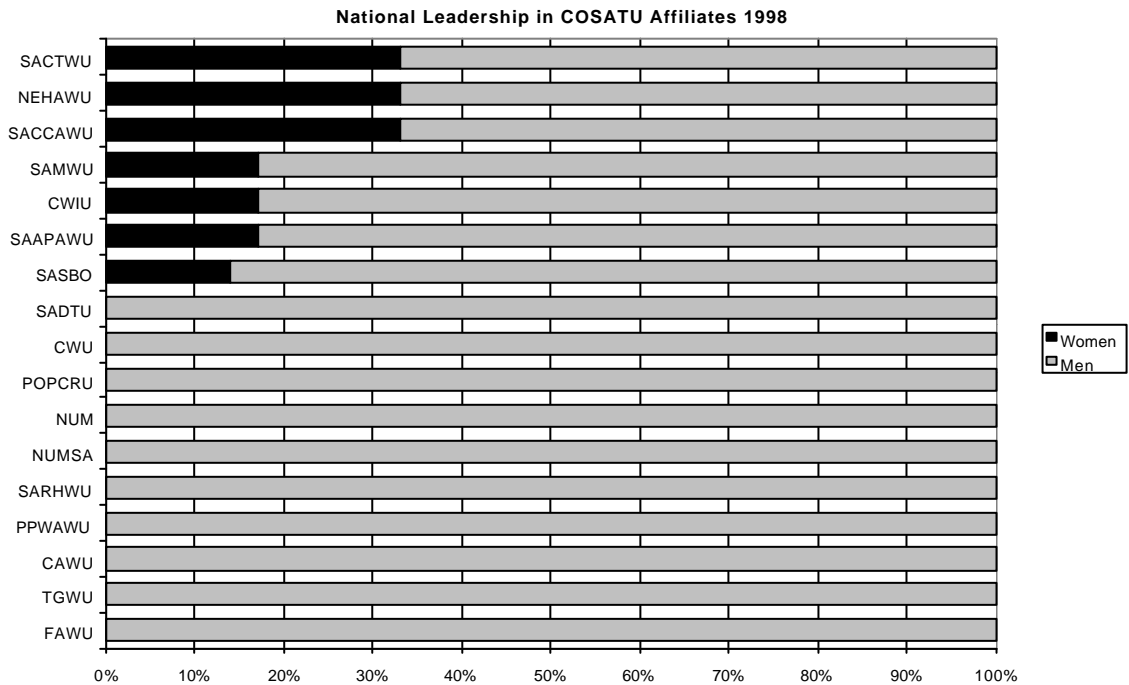
Some affiliates have notably higher representation of women at National Executive Committees than are represented amongst National and Regional Office Bearers. For example, CWU, FAWU, PPWAWU, SARHWU and TGWU all have over 10% women in the NEC, although they have no women NOB's. SACTWU had 38% women in the NEC (49% women worker delegates, but only 11% officials that are women). Information should be collected on representation to both CEC's and NEC's to distinguish between these structures in terms of level of representation of women.

The following graphs illustrate the serious under-representation of women in leadership at all levels.

**Graph 1<sup>1</sup>**



**Graph 2**



<sup>1</sup> The figures in Graph 1 for SASBO are for branch committees, and therefore not strictly comparable with regional office bearer positions. However, SASBO does not have regional structures.

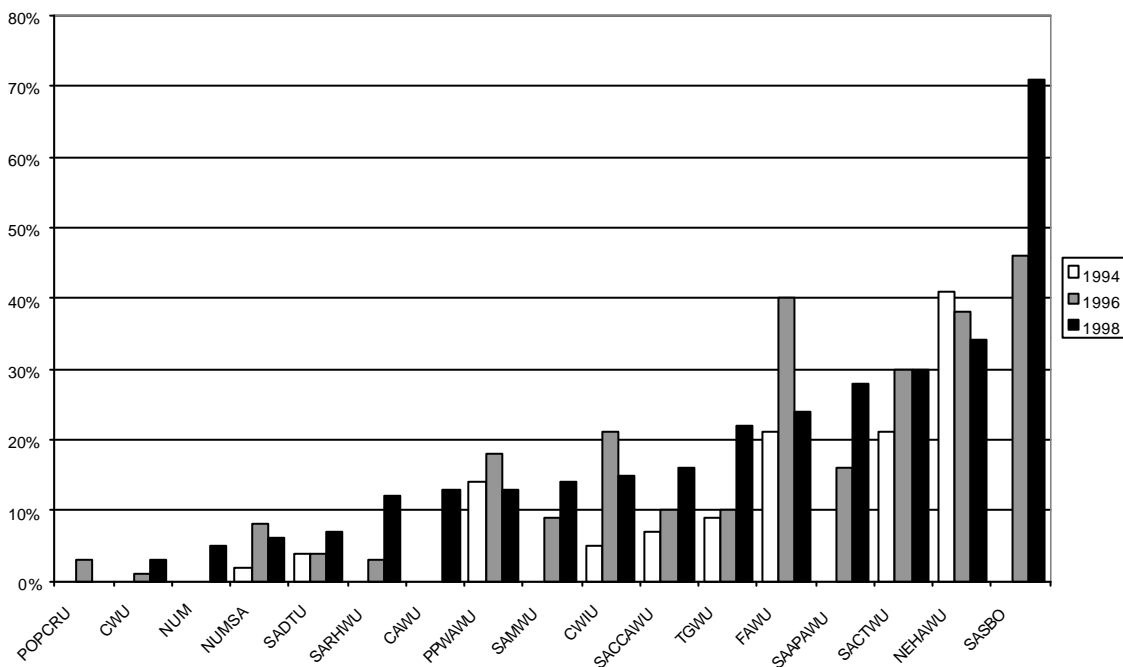
Graphs 1 and 2 show the gender breakdown of national and regional leadership figures (office bearers) within COSATU affiliates for 1998, illustrating the male-dominated leadership of many affiliates.

At the national level (Graph 2), 10 out of 17 affiliates have no women office bearers. It is clear that at higher levels of leadership there are fewer women (comparing national and regional levels). Amongst the unions that do have women national office bearers there are some unions that have adopted specific policies around building women's leadership, including quotas and women's empowerment programmes. There appears to be some linkage between increasing numbers of women in leadership and conscious strategies to elect women.

The following graphs compare the figures of women's leadership in the affiliates for 1994, 1996 and 1998. Graph 3 represents Regional leadership while Graph 4 represents National leadership. The graphs are intended to capture whether there is a consistent trend in increasing or decreasing proportions of women's leadership over time.

### Graph 3

Regional Women's Leadership in COSATU Affiliates 1994-1998

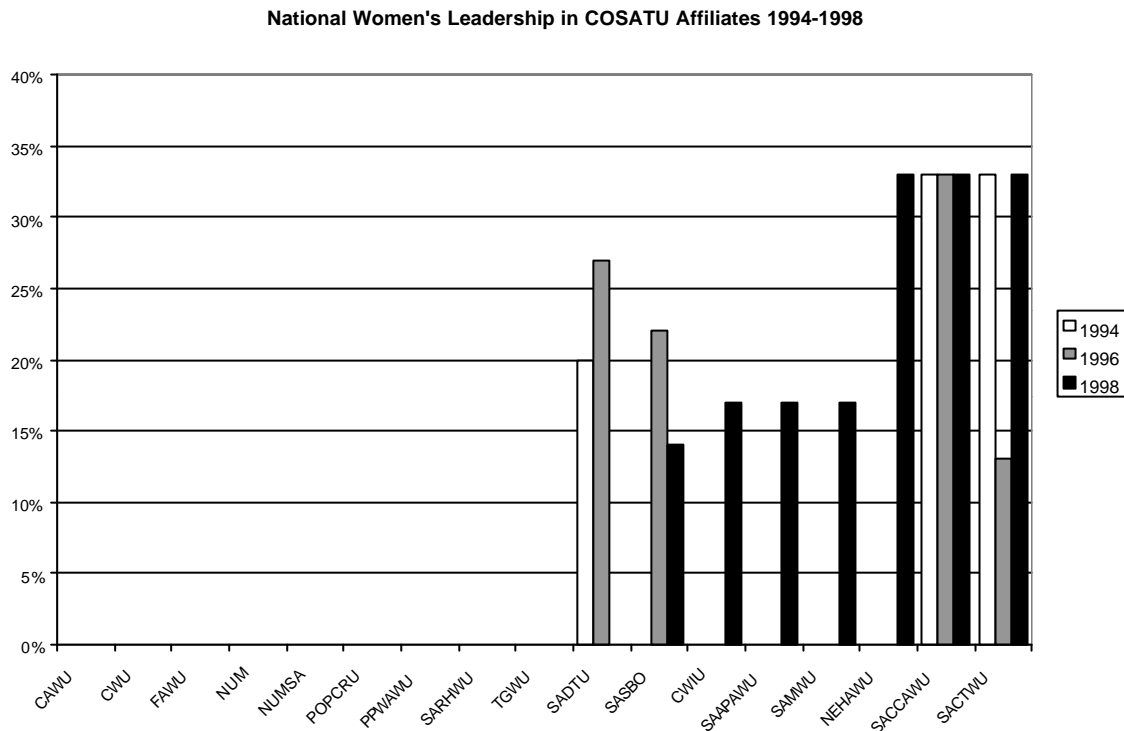


Clearly, the above graph does not show a consistent trend across affiliates of improvements in the proportion of women's leadership. At the regional level a few affiliates have shown some improvements in women's leadership levels over time. However, the graph does not reflect steady increases in each affiliate. In fact, the average across affiliates has not increased since 1996. In 1994, the average was 9%, in 1996 it was 15% and remained at 15% in 1998. (This excludes SASBO in 1998, since SASBO branch leadership

cannot realistically be compared with regional office bearers. If SASBO is included this brings the average up to 18%).

A few unions have demonstrated increases in regional women's leadership, namely TGWU, SACCAWU, SAAPAWU, CAWU, SARHWU, SAMWU and SADTU. Some of these unions have explored various strategies to increase women's leadership and participation, these mechanisms and strategies are discussed in Section 4 below.

**Graph 4**



At the national level the average increased slightly to 10% in 1998, compared to 6% (both in 1996 and 1994). As can be seen from the above graph, 7 unions now have women in national office bearer positions, showing an increase from 3 in 1994 and 4 in 1996. Three out of the four unions that did not have women national office bearers in previous years have adopted conscious strategies and policies to ensure the increase in women's leadership. CWIU, NEHAWU and SAMWU have all adopted quota systems.

A deeper analysis of the trends in each affiliate and the factors contributing to increases and decreases in women's leadership would require more in-depth research than the scope of this project allowed. Nevertheless, it can be argued that the uneven numbers across affiliates and over time reflects the fact that the federation's resolutions and policies have had little effect on women's representation in leadership structures. There are however, a few unions that have made consistent progress. The mechanisms and strategies that have been used by these unions are discussed later in this report.



### 3.2 Local Leadership

Only two affiliates have information available on the gender breakdown of local leadership, SACCAWU and SADTU. Table 3, below, provides information on the local and regional leadership of SACCAWU. The union is female-dominated, and *estimates* that 65% of its membership are women.

**Table 3: SACCAWU Local and Regional Leadership 1998/99**

Province	Local Office Bearers	REC Members	Regional Office Bearers
Wits	31%	29%	0%
N Province	39%	27%	0%
W Transvaal	44%	36%	25%
OFS/N Cape	39%	13%	25%
Kwazulu Natal	46%	33%	0%
Mpumalanga	39%	38%	50%
W Cape	40%	46%	0%
E Cape	30%	7%	25%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>39%</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>16%</b>

Graph 3 (page 7) showed that SACCAWU has made consistent progress in increasing the proportion of women in leadership at the regional level. Nevertheless, Table 3 above shows that regional women's leadership figures are lower than those for local leadership and much lower than the estimated female membership. In fact, the proportion of women in regional office bearer positions is more than half of those in LOB and REC's. This reflects a trend that has often been acknowledged in organisations, that the proportion of women in leadership decreases as levels of responsibility and power increase. This raises important questions about what barriers exist that hamper women's movement upwards in leadership, since there are women leaders in local leadership positions. Comparing the estimated proportion of women members with those in leadership highlights the need for continued efforts to ensure that leadership is reflective of membership.

Research was undertaken on SACCAWU as part of a 1996 NALEDI research entitled *Union Glass Ceiling: The under-representation of women leaders in COSATU*. The figures for 1996 compared with 1998 at different leadership levels are reflected below.

**Table 4: Comparison of Women's Leadership in SACCAWU - 1996/1998**

Local Office Bearers	15% (1996)	39% (1998)
Regional Office Bearers	10% (1996)	16% (1998)

The above table reflects the fact that there has been consistent improvement in women's leadership at the local and regional levels. The number of women in local office bearer positions has more than doubled since 1996. This reflects good progress in a relatively short period. However, the regional figures in particular still fall far below the proportion of women members in SACCAWU.

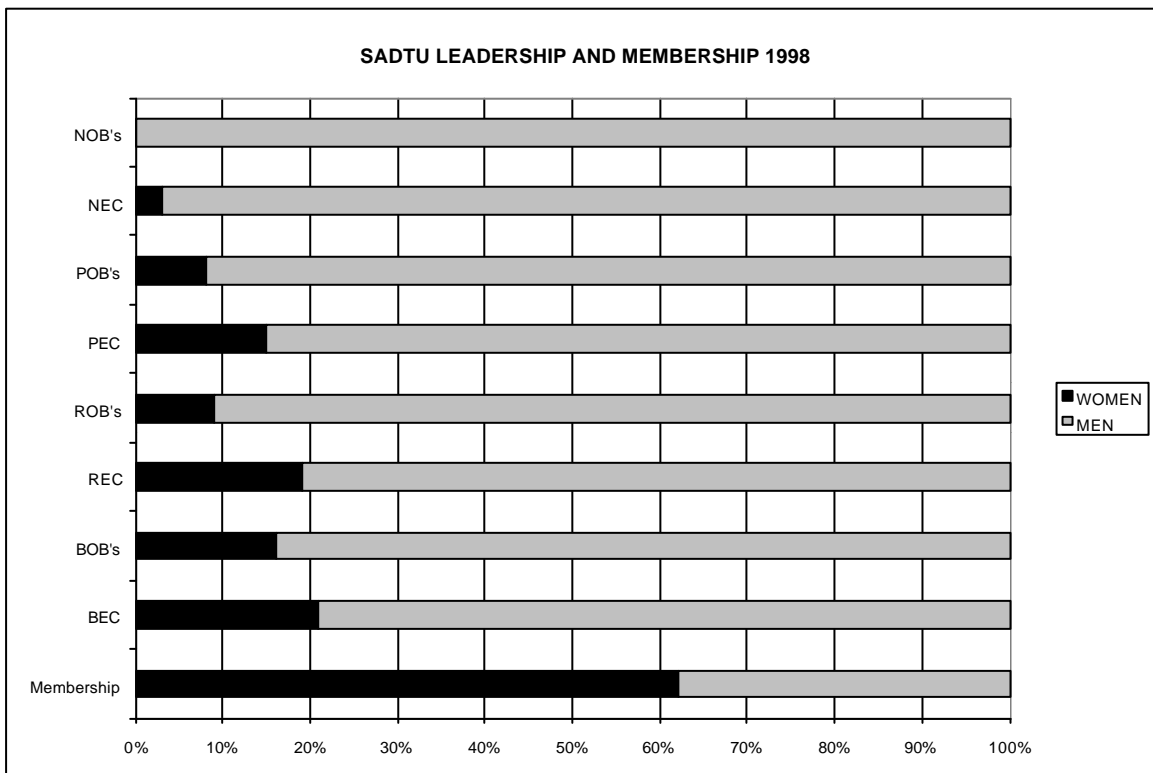
Table 5 below reflects the percentage of women members, compared with leadership at different levels. SADTU can be commended for collecting this information, since accurate information is an important part of dealing with women's leadership. It enables unions to plan and strategise on the basis of the concrete situation.

**Table 5: SADTU Women Leadership and Membership 1998**

Province	Membership	BEC's	BOB's	REC's	ROB's	PEC	POB's
KZN	64%	23%	18%	21%	13%	27%	25%
W Cape	56%	15%	19%	27%	30%	27%	25%
Mpumalanga	63%	11%	7%	27%	15%	9%	0%
N Cape	57%	26%	18%	15%	8%	9%	0%
Free State	59%	24%	20%	14%	0%	18%	0%
N Province	52%	17%	7%	9%	0%	9%	0%
Gauteng	68%	28%	19%	18%	0%	9%	0%
North West	67%	-	-	-	-	18%	25%
E Cape	72%	26%	20%	-	-	9%	0%
<b>Average</b>	<b>62%</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>8%</b>

Table 5 demonstrates that there is a large difference between membership proportion and leadership figures. Although SADTU is a female-dominated union (since it organises in a female-dominated sector) its leadership is male-dominated. As depicted in Graph 5 below, the proportion of women's leadership decreases from branch level upwards. Notably, the percentage of women's leadership drops amongst office bearer positions at all levels.

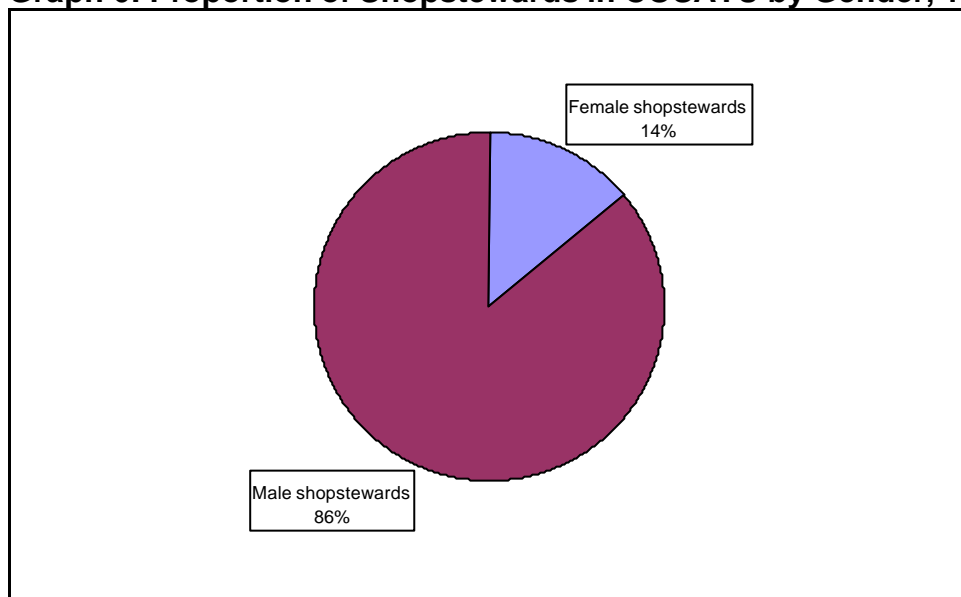
**Graph 5**



### 3.3 Shopstewards

There are no recent statistics available on the proportion of female shopstewards in COSATU. There is a need to collect this information within the federation in order to measure progress in terms of women's leadership. Graph 2 reflects the estimated proportion of female shop-stewards in COSATU according to a survey undertaken by Pityana and Orkin in 1991.

**Graph 6: Proportion of Shopstewards in COSATU by Gender, 1991**



Source: Pityana and Orkin, 1991

Of the approximate figure of 25 000 shop-stewards, there are only 3 500 (14%) women. The proportion of women membership in COSATU was *estimated* as 36%. However, this figure has not been verified and there is a need to obtain accurate and updated figures on the proportion of women membership in COSATU. This relatively low proportion of shop-stewards disadvantages women from taking up leadership at all levels within the union; since the position of shop-steward is arguably the most important step in leadership development and an important recruiting ground for other leadership positions in the unions.

The statistics that have been reflected in the previous sections for national, regional and local leadership indicate some progress in unions. However, overall the figures demonstrate the need for continued and renewed efforts to develop and promote women leadership in COSATU.

#### **4. Mechanisms used by unions to increase women's representation in leadership**

This section provides a brief overview of some of the mechanisms that have been used by COSATU unions, and unions in other countries, to increase women's leadership. The emphasis is on developing a range of complementary strategies in the spirit of the resolution. Thus, these

mechanisms should be implemented in conjunction with strategies for women's empowerment and for the mobilisation and increased activism of women workers, as part of a political programme (e.g. education programmes targeting women, integration of gender perspectives into union education, building gender structures, campaigns and collective bargaining strategies). The following are possible mechanisms that unions should consider implementing (many of which have been adopted by COSATU unions).

- **Additional Ex-officio positions on constitutional structures**

Unions can include women on constitutional structures through the use of ex-officio positions. This enables women to be exposed to these structures and to participate in union decision-making. SACCAWU has two ex-officio positions on each of the REC's and LEC's comprised of gender co-ordinators (worker and union staff member). At national level there are two ex-officio positions per region. These ex-officio representatives also attend COSATU constitutional structures as part of the SACCAWU delegation. SACCAWU combines the strategy of ex-officio representation with an empowerment programme and gender-focused campaigns and collective bargaining.

- **Portfolio positions**

Some unions (e.g. SADTU) have portfolio positions on their national, provincial, regional and local executive structures. This extends the leadership base at these levels beyond office bearer positions and potentially creates space for additional seats that can be occupied by women. The drawback of this strategy is that firstly most portfolio positions have tended to be occupied by men (apart from the gender convenor) and secondly, the portfolio positions do not form part of the constitutional structures.

- **Reserved seats for women**

Unions could decide to earmark certain positions for women on executive structures. This mechanism could be combined with a mentorship programme. The reserved seats could either be additional seats or office bearer positions. In the implementation of this mechanism it would be important to ensure that women are elected to key positions in the unions and not only relegated to less powerful positions.

- **Deputy Secretary position at regional and local levels**

Some unions (e.g. SADTU) have Deputy Secretaries at regional level. This position could potentially be used as a reserved seat for women in order to develop women leadership. The drawbacks are similar to those mentioned above, that is relegating women to deputising positions only.

- **Quota system**

Some unions have adopted quota systems (e.g. NEHAWU, SARHWU, CWIU and SAMWU). The key feature of a quota system is that the union adopts a fixed percentage for the representation of women in constitutional structures, meetings and education programmes. The positive feature of this strategy is that it enables women to be represented directly in office bearer positions, whereas other strategies mentioned here create additional positions. A central challenge is the effective implementation of the quota. Nevertheless it

has been largely successful in a number of unions internationally, provided it is combined with other strategies. It is particularly important that the unions implements mechanisms to create a supportive environment for women leaders.

- **Representation of sector co-ordinators on constitutional structures**

Some unions have increased the number of sector co-ordinators especially for those industries that are female-dominated. These sector co-ordinators usually sit on constitutional structures, thus extending the exposure of women leaders to decision-making bodies. This is also an important step to ensure that women workers are well-represented in union policy-making particularly since these sectors tend to be characterised by poor working conditions and insecurity.

- **Targeting women for education programmes**

Many unions have acknowledged the fact that the proportion of women in education programmes tends to be extremely low. The disproportionately low percentages of women in education programmes has also been highlighted by DITSELA. The Congress resolution commits the federation and affiliates to ensuring that women participate in such programmes. Having reflected upon the low levels of women's participation in basic shopstewards training, SACCAWU took a decision at the end of 1998 that 60% of delegates to shopsteward training should be women. Other unions should consider establishing mechanisms to ensure that a certain proportion of women are targeted and included in education programmes. In this way a cadreship of women shopstewards and union leadership can be built.

## **5. Barriers to women's participation in unions and in leadership positions**

The following are the key barriers to women's participation in unions, as identified through research undertaken internationally, NALEDI research and through discussions in gender structures in the federation. This should be taken as a guideline and unions should identify particular barriers in their own structures and specific contexts.

- *Gendered division of labour in the home*

Women's disproportionate burden of family responsibilities and domestic labour means that women have double workload and therefore find it difficult to take on additional responsibilities in the union. Furthermore, male partners are often not supportive of women's activism, and in some cases hostile to it. The impact of family responsibilities on women's participation is confirmed by a study in the UK that showed that the age profile of women shopstewards was made up disproportionately by young women without children and older women whose children have grown up.

- *Nature of shop-steward work and Accessibility of meetings*

Shop-steward and union work is extremely demanding, requiring a significant time commitment. Meetings are often held after working hours which is inconvenient for women, since they remain the primary caregivers for children.

- *Stereotypes about gender roles*

Union members and leadership (and broader society) often have fixed attitudes about women's roles. In many cases they do not see women as 'natural leaders'. This contributes to women not having confidence in themselves and not being supported and encouraged as worker leaders. Furthermore, women tend not to be exposed to union processes and politics to the same extent that male union members are. Thus, these stereotypes about "a woman's place" often contribute to discouragement and discrimination directed at women in unions.

- *"Masculine" union culture*

Unions tend to be characterised by male-domination in union culture and practice. This takes the form of women not being taken seriously, or being relegated to boring and unrewarding jobs, women being ignored or made invisible, "lip-service" to gender issues, lack of real understanding of women's experiences and a general lack of sensitivity to women's particular organisational needs.

- *Sexual Harassment*

Many women are completely discouraged from union activity since they are immediately 'approached' by male comrades and feel that they are not treated as comrades but as sex objects. In many cases women are reluctant to report cases of sexual harassment because they are usually blamed or not taken seriously.

Proposed strategies to overcome barriers to women's effective participation in unions are discussed in Section 6 below.

## **6. Recommendations**

This section highlights some of the key recommendations that have been made in the September Commission report and in various resolutions. These are therefore not new recommendations, however, many of these have not yet effectively been implemented. The recommendations proposed by the September Commission Report are comprehensive and provide a useful basis for unions to develop strategies to improve women's leadership and empower women in the unions and the workplace. The September Commission report and the September 1997 Congress resolutions proposes strategies in a range of areas including organisational; collective bargaining and campaigns and education and training. The following section highlights key focus areas (but is not intended to be exhaustive).

### **1. Organisational strategies**

- a) *"The CEC should set and monitor the implementation of measurable targets by the affiliates and the federation."*

The Congress resolution needs to be effectively implemented with a clear understanding of the aims and objectives of 'measurable targets'.

- Affiliates should submit reports to the CEC on their programmes for the implementation of this resolution
- Unions should implement a combination of concrete strategies to increase women's leadership (drawing from those that have been used by other unions, as discussed in Section 4)
- The NGC should play a strong monitoring role and provide leadership around the options that unions can use in increasing women's leadership through targets

### *Information systems*

The following information is needed to ensure effective monitoring and implementation of 'targets':

- Gender breakdown of membership
- Figures on women's representation at all levels – shopstewards, local office bearers and LEC members, regional office bearers and REC members, national office bearers and NEC and CEC delegates, attendance of women at conferences, congresses and workshops
- Gender profile of staff

The NGC, NALEDI and COSATU Secretariat should discuss and establish a process for the collection of the above information

#### *b) Election of shop-stewards*

COSATU should plan a campaign to raise awareness around electing women as shopstewards. Organisers should be encouraged to draw up lists of women candidates.

#### *c) Gender portfolio allocated to NOB*

This resolution needs to be implemented as an important way of ensuring that office bearers are integrally involved in gender issues in unions.

#### *d) Building gender structures*

The September Commission highlights the importance of gender structures as 'workplace engines' to harness vibrant and dynamic women's activism at the workplace level. This is critically important in empowering women workers and developing women shopstewards and leadership. The NGC should strategise around building these structures for effective mobilisation and empowerment. NALEDI will conduct research on gender structures.

#### *e) Eliminating barriers to women's participation*

The following are a few of the strategies that could be combined with other approaches mentioned in this section:

- Childcare at meetings
- Transport at meetings
- Timing of meetings
- Challenge stereotypes about women as leaders
- Develop mentorship programmes
- Create a supportive and encouraging environment
- Implement Sexual Harassment Policy
- Education on gender issues
- Leadership training

## **2. *Education and Training***

COSATU should focus on running education programmes targeted at different levels, including the local, regional and national levels. It is important to target education and training at local and shopfloor level to build new layers of women leadership in the unions.

## **3. *Research***

The key priority areas during the next year include:

- Women's leadership in the federation  
(research that focuses on both the qualitative – experiences of women leaders – and on the quantitative – statistics on women's leadership)
- Building effective gender structures
- Workplace issues – Employment Equity and Casualisation

## **4. *Campaigns and Political Programme***

COSATU should embark on vibrant campaigns as part of a broader political programme, Part of building a workers' movement involves taking up struggles that empower and conscientise women workers. The transformation of our society requires that we take up concrete struggles that build worker power and challenge patriarchal and capitalist relations. This is an extremely important element of the political programme, since women's emancipation is not only about representation and structures but it is fundamentally about transforming power relations through basic struggles.

The following are important areas of focus:

- Parental rights campaign
- Elimination of Sexual Harassment
- Building of the national women's movement
- Workplace struggles around equal pay
- Valuing of women's work
- Employment equity
- Casualisation



## 7. Conclusion

This report has identified a number of challenges with regard to the development of women's leadership in COSATU. The main findings of the report are summarised as follows:

- a) The proportion of women in leadership is generally low in the federation, despite a number of resolutions committing the federation to confronting this challenge.
- b) Comparing figures since 1994, it is clear that only a few unions have made concerted efforts to increase women's leadership and that the overall trends in the federation indicate slow growth in women's leadership.
- c) For regional office bearers, the average proportion of women across affiliates was 9% in 1994, 15% in 1996, and 18% in 1998 (with the inclusion of SASBO).
- d) For national office bearers, the average proportion of women across affiliates was 6% in 1994 and 1996, increasing slightly to 10% in 1998.
- e) The numbers of women in leadership positions tend to be fewer at higher levels in the union structures.
- f) The leadership positions that are occupied by women tend to be less influential positions such as Treasurer and Vice Chairperson, rather than Secretary and President/Chair.
- g) Women's representation in union leadership is still much lower than their proportion of membership, in both SACCAWU and SADTU (the only unions with available information).
- h) Notwithstanding the above, there are nevertheless some unions that have made significant progress at the level of developing policies and strategies to increase women's leadership. Where there has been significant progress, it is usually the result of conscious strategies and efforts to overcome barriers to women's leadership.
- i) There is a need for *all* affiliates to develop clear programmes for women's leadership development. In the spirit of the Congress resolution, the programme should be comprehensive, including:
  - Clear mechanisms to increase the numbers of women in leadership positions (drawing from the mechanisms used by other unions)
  - The setting of clear targets and time-frames for women's leadership
  - Development of effective information systems to ensure the effective monitoring and implementation of 'targets'
  - A concerted effort to elect women as shopstewards
  - Building of gender structures
  - Education and training programmes for women at all levels
  - Raising awareness around gender issues throughout the federation
  - Policies and strategies to eliminate barriers to women's participation in unions and leadership
  - Campaigns that empower and conscientise women workers and harness shopfloor activism
  - Research that enhances the analysis of gender relations in the workplace and in the unions