



NEHAWU

National Education Health & Allied Workers' Union

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MEDIA STATEMENT-FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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NEHAWU PREPARING FOR A STRIKE IN THE SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT SECTOR

On 09 March 2017, the National Education Health & Allied Workers' Union [NEHAWU] will be convening a national meeting of the Public Social Development sector, as part of its final preparations for a nationwide strike in the Social Development sector, to commence on 13 March 2017. Details of the strike will be communicated after the national meeting as outlined.

The strike comes as a result of the failure by the Department of Social Development to table a meaningful response to our reasonable demands, since August 2015. The union has been patient enough in an attempt to promote labour peace and stability in the sector and gave the Department of Social Development, in particular the Minister of Social Development, Bathabile Dlamini enough time to address our demands, but all in vain.

On the 10 February 2017, NEHAWU mounted a successful nation-wide protest action, where we delivered a memorandum of demands. Unfortunately, in response the Minister has continued to display her arrogance and ignorance as far as her oversight role is concerned as she relegated workers issues to the same departmental team of bureaucrats which failed to come with a solution to the issues in dispute.

Central to our demands are the following:

1. The review of OSD for Social Service Professionals and Occupations
2. The introduction of rural allowance

3. The provision of tools of trade
4. The absorption of unemployed Social Workers on a permanent basis
5. The permanent employment of all employees who are under the Gender Based Violence Command Centre
6. Improved conditions of service for all employees in the Department of Social Development
7. The implementation of the 2015 Social Work Indaba resolutions
8. The insourcing of all Public Secure Care Centres outsourced to Bosasa
9. The protection and respect of our noble council for Social Service Professionals.

As NEHAWU we can no longer tolerate the arrogance and intransigency by the department, thus we have resolved to withdraw our labour power in support of our demands. We have used all the avenues to maintain labour peace and a national shutdown comes as a last resort to compel the department to meet our demands.

Our members in the Department of Social Development continue to face the harsh reality that the department does not care nor take serious their demands. It is evident that the Minister is hell-bent on holding the sector and the country at large in ransom, as a result of her failure to exercise her oversight role. Recently, NEHAWU had to fight for the survival of the South African Council for Social Service Professions (SACSSP) which was on the brink of collapse under her watch.

We have also noted with disgust the Minister's interference with operations at SASSA, trying to prevent NEHAWU from fighting nepotism in that agency, instructing the previous CEO to withdraw from progressive collective agreements entered into with the union in the SASSA National Bargaining Forum (SNBF).

The union had to refer the dispute to the CCMA, which ultimately restored the union's right to observe and ensure that recruitment and selection processes are transparent and fair to ensure that the right personnel with the relevant qualifications are appointed. It is not a surprise that today the country is facing a catastrophe where millions of South Africans who are grant beneficiaries are likely to suffer as a result of incompetent leaders both in SASSA and the department.

It is also not a surprise that good managers and executives in the department and SASSA are sidelined and impeded from performing their duties as a result pushing them out to pave way for graft and corrupt activities in SASSA and the department. From an administrative point of view, the key issue around the current debacle on social grant payment is not whether beneficiaries will receive their grants, but also whether it will be done legally. As union organising workers in SASSA we are justly concerned about this development and we strongly believe it could have been avoided.

NEHAWU has always been at the forefront of calling for insourcing of key functions of government. For years we have been unwaveringly agitating against outsourcing of fundamental services like the paying of grants which mainly benefit the working class and the poor. The irresponsible conduct by the Minister and her cronies to ignore our calls and advises from legitimate institutions, should not go unpunished, hence our support for COSATU's call for the Minister to resign.

The failure by the department to put measures and infrastructure in place to insource the paying of social grants is further proof of the rot that has engulfed the department in recent years. It is for these reasons that we want to actively participate in the process that the department is going to undertake in the insourcing the social grant payments.

On 10 March 2017, NEHAWU will be convening the SASSA national meeting to deal amongst other things with the challenges in SASSA, including ways to protect and promote the interest of our members and workers in general and exploring a secondary strike in SASSA in support of the impending strike of our members in the Department of Social Department.

Issued by NEHAWU Secretariat

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