

MEDIA STATEMENT - FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

OUTCOMES OF THE VISIT TO THE LIVINGSTONE HOSPITAL BY THE NEHAWU LEADERSHIP

Sunday June 14, 2020

On Friday June 12th 2020 a delegation of the leadership of the National Education, Health and Allied Workers' Union [NEHAWU] led by the General Secretary, Cde Zola Saphetha, visited the Livingstone Hospital in Port Elizabeth after numerous complaints by our members and workers about unfavourably working conditions and being recklessly exposed to the coronavirus.

The national leadership was accompanied by both the provincial and regional leadership, first met with the branch leadership to get a report on our member's and worker's working conditions and how the hospital was dealing with the outbreak of COVID-19. As of the 11th June 2020, 84 frontline workers were infected with the coronavirus with two deaths at the hospital.

The meeting with the branch leadership was followed by a meeting with the hospital management which was led by the Eastern Cape Department of Health Deputy Director General [District Health Administrator] and an inspection of the hospital premises. The condition of the hospital was appalling especially its state of cleanliness. Medical waste was strewn all over the place and cleaning of the facility had not taken place for days on end.

The entire hospital was in disarray after general assistants, including cleaners, cooks, porters and laundry workers decided to down tools because of unpaid overtime. The Occupational Health and Safety [OHS] committee was dysfunctional and there was a shortage of Personal Protective Clothing. The NEHAWU delegation donated 600 N95 masks, 600 visors and 2000 immune boosters for frontline workers.

During the visit it was discovered that seven managers including the Chief Executive Officer who has since tendered his resignation have been on protracted suspensions which has left a huge void in the management structure of the hospital. In this regard, we call for the speedy finalisation of the disciplinary hearings of these managers so that

if they are found guilty the Department of Health can begin a process of replacing them. Moreover, during the visit it was discovered that the hospital has many unfilled funded posts. Understaffing affects badly the quality of service delivery and staff morale in that one worker does the work of three people while being remunerated for only one.

After the meeting with the management it was agreed that the hospital management must confirm in writing that workers overtime will be paid soon and that NEHAWU will consider persuading members to go back to work in the affected section. We are happy to report that a letter was written by the DDG confirming that payments runs for overtime will be made on the 17th June 2020 and also on the 23rd June 2020.

The human resource department of the hospital will meet weekly with the NEHAWU branch leadership to process and deal with issues of recruitment, including the filling of the 100 posts currently advertised. The hospital manager responsible for OHS matters must meet weekly with all shop stewards and deal with all OHS related matters including statistics around infection of workers and the issue of workers who are above the age of 60.

The meeting noted that some workers have been charged for refusing to work under unsafe conditions. The hospital management has agreed to withdraw all COVID-19 related charges against workers. Lastly, the clinical manager dealing with OHS matters must forward the report presented at the meeting for further scrutiny.

As NEHAWU, we are elated to announce that our visits has started to bear fruits and we have seen photos of a clean hospital that have been forwarded to the leadership by our shop stewards. We will continue to monitor the progress at the hospital and ensure that it does not regress to the terrible state it was in. The visit to the hospital has invigorated our members and workers to fight for their right to work in a safe environment and to hold management accountable if they are subjected to horrible working conditions.

The visits will continue tomorrow [Monday June 15, 2020] as announced last week. The NEHAWU leadership led by the General Secretary, Comrade Zola Saphetha, will visit the Uitenhage Provincial Hospital, South African Revenue Services [SARS] offices in Port Elizabeth and the

South African Security Services Agency [SASSA] in Zwide tomorrow as part of visiting workplaces that are COVID-19 hotspots.

Both the SARS and SASSA offices have been hogging headlines for their horrible handling of the COVID-19 pandemic. After our meeting with the SARS commissioner, Mr Edward Kieswetter, it was agreed that the employer will implement all the necessary COVID-19 regulations including health and safety measures. We also met the Chief Executive Officer of SASSA, Mrs Busisiwe Memela – Khambula, to discuss measures that SASSA will put in place to guarantee the safety of our members and workers. The visit to both SARS and SASSA will be done to monitor compliance to the regulations and commitments made in both meetings.

Members of the media are invited to attend and cover these visits under the following details:

Uitenhage Provincial Hospital

Time: **9:30**

Date: **Monday June 15, 2020**

SASSA OFFICES Zwide

Time: **12pm**

Date: **Monday June 15, 2020**

SARS Offices

Time: **14h00**

Date: **Monday June 15, 2020**

Issued by NEHAWU Secretariat

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