

MEDIA RELEASE **PSA calls on KwaZulu-Natal Premier to end exploitation of Community Health Workers**

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The Public Servants Association of South Africa (PSA) calls on the Premier of KwaZulu-Natal, the MEC of Health, and the MEC of Finance to demonstrate political will and put an end to the ongoing exploitation, bordering on slavery, of Community Health Workers (CHWs) in the province.

Despite receiving a meagre stipend of R4 448, CHWs continue to provide excellent services to communities. It is unacceptable that their dedication and hard work are being met with disregard. The PSA commends the Gauteng Provincial Government for taking decisive actions to end the payment of a meagre stipend and provide decent salaries to CHWs. The PSA thus urges the KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Government to follow suit and address this gross injustice.

The PSA strongly condemns the abuse of CHWs by the KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Department of Health and Cabinet. CHWs are working under challenging conditions, including having their belongings stolen by criminals whilst visiting communities. The Department lacks insurance to compensate them for such losses. Some of these dedicated workers are nearing retirement, with nothing to show for their years of service. The PSA has consistently advocated for the rights and welfare of CHWs, demanding permanent positions with benefits, access to accredited courses, and uniform allowance. The PSA urges government to conduct a skills audit to determine the level of skills, competencies, and experience gaps of CHWs to ensure permanent employment. The PSA further demands that government allows CHWs to contribute to the Unemployment Insurance Fund as they await permanent appointment, to safeguard their well-being. The continuous use of project-based contracts has subjected CHWs to a form of modern-day slavery for over a decade. The PSA stands firmly against the exploitation of workers through these ongoing contracts.

The PSA believes that the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Health requires the services of CHWs and that they deserve fair compensation for their invaluable contributions. In light of the dire circumstances faced by CHWs, the PSA offers CHWs a reduced membership fees to accommodate the stipend they have been receiving.

The PSA implores all stakeholders to join the campaign to convert CHWs to permanent positions and put an end to the exploitation of workers in KwaZulu-Natal. The PSA remain steadfast in support for all CHWs and vows to continue advocating for their rights and improved working conditions.

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