

FOR PSA MEMBERS: GENERAL 8/2022

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International Nurses' Day 2022

Nurses' Day is clouded by a revelation to Parliament, earlier this year, that South Africa has a vacancy rate for nurses of 13.7% nationally, representing posts that are not being filled and impacting on the country's strained healthcare sector. The worst affected provinces are the Northern Cape with a vacancy rate of 46% and the Free State with a rate of 25.3%.

The Minister of Health further confirmed that South Africa's public hospitals have a shortage of 10 000 nurses. The Minister blamed this on budget cuts by National Treasury to cut costs in the Public Service. The PSA urged government to speed up investing in nurses as the sector continues to lose skilled workers who are leaving the Public Service and even the country in search of better opportunities and remuneration.

The COVID-19 pandemic laid bare the many weaknesses in the health sector. These include nurses being exposed to the virus without adequate protection, attacks by the public, high workloads, unsafe work environments, inadequate infrastructure, and little support. These realities are of even more concern as the country awaits the implementation of the National Health Insurance scheme, which will need government to fill critical posts in the health sector and offer a reliable service.

The PSA notes that nurses are undervalued and undercompensated, driving many of them to seek greener pastures. The nursing profession is characterised by compassion, but is suffering owing to ineffective leadership, poor administration, and poor planning.

This situation is increasingly impacting on nurses' health and morale. Investing in nursing will not only boost the morale of these workers but will also attract young people to this profession to ensure sustainable service delivery. Empowering these professionals will lead to improved service delivery for all citizens.

On Nurses' Day, the PSA expresses sincere thanks and appreciation to nurses as pillars of society for their continued dedication and service, despite challenging conditions. The Union of Choice will remain a voice for Nurses' rights and interests.

GENERAL MANAGER