

FOR PSA MEMBERS: **GENERAL 15/2023**

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Teachers' Day: PSA urges Minister of Basic Education to re-introduce rural allowance

International Teachers' Day is observed on 5 October 2023. The PSA, serving thousands of educators and support staff, repeats the call on government to address the country's critical shortage of educators, especially at basic-education level.

Teachers' Day 2023 is commemorated under the theme: "The teachers we need for the education we want: The global imperative to reverse the teacher shortage". This draws attention to the staffing crisis in education on a global level, resulting in many learners falling behind and dropping out of the education system.

Government must evaluate and implement measures that will attract young people to this crucial sector. Such measures include concluding a collective agreement to re-introduce the rural allowance incentive policy. This incentive was introduced in January 2008 but was withdrawn in 2022. Unions subsequently submitted a draft collective agreement to re-introduce the incentive policy. This is currently under discussion at the Education Labour Relations Council. The PSA is concerned that the termination of the policy negatively affected the retention of quality educators in rural areas, especially for subjects such as Maths and Science. The PSA views the incentive policy as a solution to reverse educator shortages over time. It will further ease classroom overcrowding, with a direct positive impact on teaching and learning.

The education sector should further be exempted from austerity measures to assist in improving the quality of education, especially in rural schools. The PSA thus urges the Minister of Basic Education to re-introduce the rural allowance incentive, supported by proper monitoring, to encourage educators to work in rural areas. This support to rural learners is critical to enhance skills development in combatting unemployment and improve economic conditions.

The educator shortage that is plaguing the country has a ripple effect on society. This is evidenced by, amongst others, soaring unemployment and crime statistics. Many schools are overcrowded, understaffed, and poorly resourced. Policies aimed at alleviating this crisis should be implemented urgently as failure to address issues will be disastrous for the education system and the country.

On Teachers Day 2023, the PSA commends the work of all educators who despite a harsh and challenging work environment, make a daily impact in the classroom to mould a better future for young South Africans.

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