An injury to one is an injury to all!
he last five months have seen the country navigate a very serious period where the economy and the country went into extreme lockdown. We want to salute the frontline workers who have performed commendably during his period. While we are now at alert level one with the economy broadly opened, it does not mean that the virus is gone, and we are pass the danger. We still need to act responsibly and protect each other from this deadly virus.

We are busy finalising the preparations for the upcoming COSATU Bargaining Conference and also our National Strike on the 07th October, the Global Day for Decent Work. This is a very difficult period for workers. We are grappling with the economic challenges that have been compounded by the outbreak of COVID-19. Sadly, the more the economy collapses, the more the National Treasury believes in its discredited neoliberal economic framework.

Our underperforming economy has forced the government to borrow more money worsening our already bad public debt. South Africa’s debt levels will exceed 100% of gross domestic product by 2024-25 and rise to almost 114% by 2028-29, according to National Treasury.

It shows gross government debt will rise to 80.5% of gross domestic product in this fiscal year, compared with a projection of 65.6% in February, Bloomberg said. Generally, Government debt as a percent of GDP is used by investors to measure a country’s ability to make future payments on its debt, thus affecting the country borrowing costs and government bond yields.

The ongoing jobs losses in a number of economic sectors are deeply alarming. This situation will not be resolved if the economic solutions that are being imposed by government suffocate the economy. The attitude of the State and the Class Character of its policies will determine our new normal going forward.

The capacity of the state has been severely tested during the Covid-19 lockdown and the country’s social inequalities have been laid bare. Government needs to learn lessons and use the budget and other available economic mechanisms to close these identified gaps and lay a foundation for a new inclusive economy.

Before the Covid-19 lockdown 29.1% of people of the working age were already unemployed. The latest jobs and economic projections paint a dire picture of the pending economic firestorm in the coming months, with more people facing unemployment and poverty. This means that millions of workers will be dependent on the state for their well-being and that of their families.

For this to change, decisionmakers will have to first acknowledge that poverty is not accidental, but it flows from the logic of the capitalist system that has been propped up by government policies for over a quarter of a century.

One of the most fundamental features of our national situation has been the inability of our policymakers to find a solution to the systemic and deep existential crisis of the South African capitalist system. This current economic crisis has persisted for more than a decade since the Global Financial Crisis of 2008. In our account of the deepening socioeconomic crises that is currently engulfing South Africa, we need to look at the misguided macroeconomic policy framework that has been implemented over the years, especially over the span of the recent fifth democratic dispensation.

The fourth democratic dispensation that was elected in the midst of the 2009 recession relatively succeeded in pulling the economy back to growth by adopting a “counter-cyclical” fiscal policy stance, on the back of NEDLAC Framework Response to the International Economic Crisis. However, that growth trajectory was short-lived as it decelerated year after year as the expansionary spending on infrastructure by the public sector (more than R2 trillion over 10 years) was paralleled by declining private sector investment.

The New Growth Path (NGP) which was introduced...
in 2010, proposing a new "macroeconomic package" seeking to strike a balance between a "looser monetary policy" and "more restrictive fiscal policy", as well as proposing the creation of a state-owned bank was summarily replaced by the National Development Plan (NDP) when the latter was adopted in 2012. Thus, the NDP was used to restore and ensure continuity with the old Neoliberal macroeconomic policy paradigm.

Therefore, the rentier monopoly finance-capital that oversees the country’s monetary policy at a distance as well as the Neoliberal deep-state within government and SARB succeeded in displacing a paradigm shift proposed in the NDP, since the latter favoured the development of the real productive economy. Since then, flimsy arguments have been presented to defend the current narrow interpretation of the mandate of the SARB.

The Treasury’s last budget was an austerity budget that was neither geared towards achieving structural economic transformation nor inclusive growth. Its sole mandate was to contain the public-debt and reduce budget deficit through a fiscal austerity – mainly fixated on the so-called bloated public service wage bill.

This slide back to Neoliberal macroeconomic policies led to the 51% decline that we saw in the second quarter of the year. The National Treasury has to confront and adjust its economic philosophy that has led to the fragmentation of the state and rendered it a mere "regulatory state" through the “right-sizing” of the public service, “down-sizing” of the public sector through privatization and deregulation.

Logically as these cuts intensified, inequalities have widened, and more jobs have been lost. The increase in inequality means working families’ purchasing power is significantly diminished.

To fix this, there is a need to dispense with the illusory assumption that the state is above class conflict. The current socio-economic situation reflects the class character of the policies that have been implemented by the state since 1996.

The state is a powerful force with a lot of influence. It holds monopoly to tax, print money and to engage in borrowing on behalf of the country. It influences who has access to national productive resources and also determines how they are deployed and used. It is within this context that the role of the state should be understood and framed.

South Africa needs a capable developmental state that responds to the South African Constitution that states that “Public Administration must be development-oriented”. The Constitution further states that the “people’s needs must be responded to, and the public must be encouraged to participate in policy-making”.

These constitutional injunctions place the public service and the broader public-sector at the centre of the socioeconomic development and elevate the need for people-centred development programmes.

The collapse of service delivery, as symbolised by public protests, can only be traced back from the decision to push for the reduction of the headcount of personnel in the public service and the commercialisation of the State-Owned Entities in their mode of governance. This right-wing push for SOEs to operate along the lines of the private sector is the source of the inefficiencies and corruption that we have seen.

Evidence shows that introducing private-sector practices such as public-private partnerships, outsourcing, agencification and privatisation helped to weaken these institutions. The attempts to curb spending on personnel salaries of public servants and treating public spending as consumption rather than an investment is a source of the shortcomings, we have seen during the Covid-19 lockdown.

The country needs a new public sector model that will refrain from commodifying public services like health, education, and road infrastructure. Citizens cannot be treated as “customers” or “clients” in the practice of the delivery of public services.

We cannot continue with a system of tender and procurement contracts between the state and private businesses (both black and white) that has spawned an industry of corruption and fraud. This system has seen many senior public servants advancing their own narrow personal or some nepotistic interests.

This country needs a capable developmental state to implement a uniquely South African developmental economic model. We fully support our members in the public service who are fighting back against the undermining of collective bargaining and government’s decision to renege on the 2018 Collective agreement. We also need to use the upcoming Bargaining Conference to sharpen our organisational capacity and also better understand our changing economy.
Since the outbreak of COVID-19 across the globe, many workers were hugely affected and suffered loss of wages, working time, and the extreme their jobs!

The pandemic has changed our world in ways we could hardly have imagined. Working remotely is a new challenge, with no labour legislation available in most companies to regulate such an ‘arrangement’, should not put workers in a disadvantaged position!

In this edition, we cover the period since the declaration of Covid-19 as a ‘pandemic’ by the World Health Organization (WHO) and how did labour respond.

The most depressing scandal during Coronavirus lockdown was about corruption related to personal protective equipment, non-payment of danger allowance to the frontline and essential workers, and the undeserving individuals benefiting from COVID-19 Unemployment Insurance Fund Benefits, with many poor workers forced into poverty and destitution.

The so-called ‘new risk mitigation’ introduced by the Employment and Labour is still to stand the test of time.

On International issues, many global unions have expressed how various governments and employers are undermining labour rights during the coronavirus outbreak. Many global federations argue that ‘COVID-19 corner-cutting measures will lead to more deaths and a devastating environmental catastrophe.’ According to the International Labour Organization, ‘Global labour income is estimated to have declined by 10.7 per cent, or US$ 3.5 trillion, in the first three quarters of 2020, compared with the same period in 2019.

This figure excludes income support provided through government measures. One reason for the estimated increases in working-hour losses is that workers in developing and emerging economies, especially those in informal employment, have been much more affected than by past crises…’

The G20 Ministers ‘recognised the need to increase the sustainability and the resilience of national, regional, and global supply chains and to expand production capacity and trade, notably in the areas of pharmaceutical, medical and other health-related products. The Ministers further recognised the importance of continuing to foster women’s economic empowerment with a view to achieving global recovery.’

It is not yet Uhuru!
Now is the time to celebrate those who are gone, but not forgotten. To immortalise men like Silumko, a teacher who shaped the stories of the past for the children of the future. That he also sacrificed his life to save a young child from the sea is part of his legacy. For the many people who can't gather to pay their final respects, we've created The Memory Collection. To read Silumko's story or share your memories of a loved one who has passed, visit thememorycollection.co.za.
COSATU since its inception in 1985 it has advocated for One Union, One Industry principle. Since the establishment of the Liberated Metalworkers Union of South Africa, the union faced various organizational challenges to stand the ground in the metal industry.

LIMUSA was established on November 24, 2014 and registered with the Registrar of the then Department of Labour, now called the Employment and Labour Department.

"LIMUSA was formed after a long period of internal resistance and struggle which took place within NUMSA which necessitated members to raise concerns how various forms of alleged despotic manipulation happened in leading the organisation," said former LIMUSA members. According to the former members ".....the focus in NUMSA had increasingly been towards setting up of a new political party, using the resources of the workers and leas on their working conditions." The Union then affiliated to COSATU around March, 2015. The National Union of Mineworkers took a decision to extend its scope to, include metal, motor industry, filling stations and all related sectors. NUM General Secretary, David Spunzi said on the NUM and LIMUSA merger that 'As per COSATU resolution and NUM congress resolution, our scope has been extended to include metal, motor industry, filling stations and all related sectors that LIMUSA was organizing.

For NUM to officially recruit workers in these areas, we have been waiting for two things to happen. The first one was for LIMUSA to officially wind down their operations and that has been done.' Spunzi alluded that 'Secondly, the amendment to our constitution has to be endorsed by the Registrar of the Department of Labour. This one is still pending. In anticipation of endorsement, we are moving forward with the administrative part of the merger.'

NUM General Secretary said 'In a short space of time, eleven of the twenty-six LIMUSA staff members will be absorbed into NUM. the remainder will be phased in over a period of twelve months.'
On the 26th March 2020, Workers in South Africa were glued to their television or listening on Radio, as the President of the Republic, Honourable Cyril Ramaphosa announced that ‘South Africa will enforce a three week lockdown over coronavirus....’ And that the South African Police Service and the South African National Defence Force will be deployed in every street in ensuring that the ‘lockdown is implemented.’

The President emphasized that ‘our fundamental task at this moment is to contain the spread of the disease. Without decisive action, the number of people infected will rapidly increase from a few hundred to tens of thousands, and within a few weeks to hundreds of thousands.’

He said ‘the nationwide lockdown is necessary to fundamentally disrupt the chain of transmission across society. Companies that are essential to the production and transportation of food, basic goods and medical supplies will remain open. Pharmacies, laboratories, banks, essential financial and payment services, including the JSE, supermarkets, petrol stations, and healthcare providers will remain open where workers were forced to stay at home and work remotely. In many companies, working remotely has never happened and cannot take place as many of these workers having nothing at their disposal to execute such ‘work’.

Remote working during lockdown has allowed workers to work outside the office environment and is based on the concept that work does not need to be done in a specific place to be executed successfully.

**PROS & CONS of the New Normal**

remote working and how are employees prepared to adapt

**Pros of remote working, amongst others are:**
- less stress in commuting to and from work
- less cost of traveling to work
- connecting virtually from the comfort of your home
- connecting the dots on the work and the home balance which is still lacking due to overtime work faced by most workers
- increased productivity
- high flexibility to work and play to refresh

**Cons of remote working, amongst others are:**
- lack of office space at
Worker Issues

home to do work like at the office and working in isolation
- people not available on demand for tasks
- isolation which impacts on mental health of staff
- parental responsibilities rising due to a high demand from kids to be looked after
- eating disorder due to less activity
- developing health problems such as back pains, stress, obesity
- working long hours without scheduled breaks
- lack of data to connect or insufficient tools of trade to execute the tasks at hand
- stress emanating from meeting deadlines
- Unable to participate in scheduled Webinars, Zoom meetings or other virtually planned platforms due to disturbances at home

According to Advocate Fundile Sangoni, Advocate of the High Court in the latest piece he wrote under the topic, 'The Remote Workplace under COVID-19,' he alluded that 'The COVID-19 pandemic triggered what many call a new normal across the world. In South Africa, almost overnight, most people had to stop attending work and confine themselves to their homes as the country went into a national lockdown. Some companies shut down completely, while others had to devise new models urgently, to enable their employees to resume work from wherever they were locked down.

As the lockdown has begun to ease and the economy is gradually reopening, the government has retained the injunction, in the COVID-19 regulations, that "all people who are able to work from home must do so". The regulations direct large businesses and other institutions to minimise the number of employees at the workplace at any given time." 'They suggest rotations, staggered working hours, shift systems, remote working arrangements and similar measures. These measures are aimed at ensuring the least physical interaction between employees at the workplace. The advent of remote working attempts a commendable balance between the country's health and economic needs. A different, and more intimate question which arises however, is how the sudden remote workplace will affect the professional lives, relationships and development of individual employees and service providers.'

When the pandemic plunged us into the isolation of our homes, many of us experienced a total shut down in our practices. Similarly, many of our colleagues in corporate were suddenly secluded from their teams and departments and have experienced difficulty sourcing new work and meeting their targets while working from home. This has threatened the ability of some of our colleagues to continue their practices and compromised others in their journeys towards promotion and other responsibilities.'

'Many companies currently have their attentions and resources devoted to ensuring the smooth running of their technical operations during this time. This is understandable as we are traversing uncharted waters. However, it is equally important for companies and institutions to ensure that the new normal and its remote workplace establish a playing field in which all people have equal prospects of thriving.'

'Those who are in positions of leadership should use their agency to ensure that no person is left behind in this unfamiliar journey.'

In other countries, according to Alex and
others, they exposed that 'the transition to remote working is uneven, with businesses in industries with higher income and better educated employees more likely to transition to remote working. Productivity effects are also uneven, with many firms becoming less productive as a result of the transition.' (How the COVID-19 crisis is reshaping remote working, July 2020)

'In some situations, remote working has in fact been shown to improve employee productivity. For instance, in a recent experiment the Chinese travel website Ctrip had call centre employees volunteer to have the opportunity to work from home. A randomly selected subset of the volunteers was allowed to work from home, while the rest served as a control group.

In the experiment, those that were allowed to work from home were more productive and reported higher satisfaction (Bloom et al. 2015, Bloom 2014). Remote working has also been raised as a way to create more inclusive workplaces. Mas and Pallais (2017), for example, suggest that women with young children place a higher premium on flexibility associated with remote working.'

Yet, while there has been a rise in remote working, there are many challenges to broader adoption – ranging from workplace norms and stigma, to the need for effective management of remote teams (Neeley 2015, 2020), to more general productivity benefits of in-person work that are difficult to replicate remotely (due to unplanned physical workplace interactions, for example).

Moreover, there are important logistical constraints and remote working is simply not feasible for some jobs. In a recent paper, Dingel and Neiman (2020) construct an occupation-level classification of the feasibility of doing different jobs from home.

They find that overall, roughly 37% of jobs have the potential to be done from home – but considerable variation exists across occupations. In practice, many businesses that could implement remote working policies still choose not to.'

The COVID-19 crisis has led to renewed interest in remote working, as businesses face a bleak set of options: continue business as usual but with the risk of grave illness, shut down the business, or transition to working from home. To understand exactly how businesses are adjusting to the crisis, we have been surveying thousands of small businesses – representing a wide set of industries, firm sizes, and regions across the US. In one paper (Bartik et al. 2020a), we find (among other results) that 43% of small businesses had temporarily shut down even just a few weeks into the crisis.'

In South Africa, new opportunities of technological advancement in companies or organizations prevailed which necessitated the appreciation of all employers to embrace the Fourth Industry Revolution within their company's business plans.

Working from home has forced many employers to open their cheque books to purchase Information and Technology devices for workers working remotely to maximize production and meeting of targets.

Training of the employees on how to operate remotely has also put a heavy burden on most employers. Many employers realized that the demands of provisions of data are extraordinary while before workers were able to connect with Wifi provided in most companies to execute work. Insuring of the technological devises has been a recurring effect, with many of these devices hacked by cyberattacks because of lack of normal updates which could have been done whilst working from the office.

COVID-19 is ravaging the world's population, and many small businesses along with it. And at the time of going to work on a fulltime basis, many workers might have lost the spark to work in teams and also might be traumatized for losing their fellow colleagues or loved ones during the lockdown period.

However, embracing of technology in all workplaces, is must to do task and some companies may consider saving on operational costs by continuing with remote working. But that must never compromise jobs as the cost of cutting jobs may be devastating for many families. It may result in forcing many workers into destitution. Labour laws must be amended to cater for such eventualities and protect workers.
We salute our unions for their courageous victories for workers during this pandemic.

In the clothing and textile industries, SACTWU ensured that hundreds of thousands of clothing and textile workers received their salaries through an historic collective bargaining agreement with the Bargaining Councils and the UIF.

Our unions have fought for essential and critical service workers, to receive their PPEs so that they can render their services without losing their lives. These battles are not over. We must support these workers and unions fully. Our unions are fighting in the Bargaining Councils, streets, workplaces, schools, NEDLAC and Parliament in defence of workers everywhere.

They demand safe and healthy workplaces, and a decent and living wage to support their families. This is our mission and struggle!

COSATU is alive and in the trenches in these difficult times.

The victories we have won at NEDLAC include allocating R40 billion relief for unemployed and unpaid workers from the UIF, increasing social grants, providing food vouchers, and the special grant for the long termed unemployed.

It also includes the announcement by the President for a new budget and a massive stimulus plan to rebuild our economy and create jobs.

Covid-19: The battle we must and shall win!

This global pandemic has already infected 2 million and taken the lives of thousands. It has devastated economies across the world.

International Solidarity

We take this opportunity to also salute the Cuban health professionals who have joined our battle against COVID 19 and reaffirm our principled stance that the bond of solidarity between Cuba and Africa has stood the test of time. It has transcended generations and defeated many obstacles, from apartheid to disease and injustice. Thank you Cuba for your selflessness. Workers welcome you with open hands to join our battle to save lives.

Covid-19 is showing us the damage of unfettered capitalism here and internationally. These failures of capitalism and the insatiable greed of leaders are a painful reminder of what lies ahead. We cannot be complacent in the fight...
against exploitation and corruption.

The Triple Challenges Facing South Africa
As a federation welcome the leadership of President Ramaphosa and the Alliance for the decisive steps taken to contain the devastating effects of Covid-19.

We are saddened by the extent to which it has exposed the fault-lines of our post-apartheid reality and the legacy of persisting inequalities, hunger and poverty in many communities, workplaces, townships and rural areas.

We must and shall flatten the COVID-19 curve, as we must and should flatten the inequality, unemployment and poverty curves. In other words, we do not have the luxury of thinking in a linear way. We do not have only one crisis, but in fact we have multiple and simultaneous crises. Central to which are mere survival and no income for most of our people.

Corruption
Covid19 has exposed the ugly reality of corruption, parasitism and rampant looting. Thieves are helping themselves to food parcels meant for the poor. These thieves must be exposed and decisively dealt with by the law without fear or favour. You cannot steal food parcels from the poor and call yourself a leader.

Black Economic Empowerment
We support the Black businesses in their fight to be included in government procurement and contracts. Economic transformation must not be postponed any longer. Government cannot continue to do business with companies that do not comply with the Employment Equity Act and all our progressive labour laws.

Gender Based Violence
We condemn those who abuse women and children. Let us mobilise all our available resources to tackle this national shame. We are demanding the urgent ratification and implementation of the International Labour Organisation Convention 190 on Eliminating Violence and Harassment in the world of work.

Criminal Activities
The vandalism of our schools is a disgrace. We need tougher laws and sentences against these criminals. Let us expose them for the traitors they are. They are sabotaging the education of our children. We must be decisive against such criminals.

Reopening the Economy
We amplify the courageous stand by our teachers’ unions in defence of a healthy and safe learning space for our children. No school must re-open without the necessary health and safety guarantees for teachers and children.

Under the Covid-19 lockdown, we are witnessing the painful reality where the living and working conditions of workers are worsening, while the rich live lavishly. Senior executives continue to award themselves huge bonuses. This must change. It is neither sustainable nor just.

Rebuilding the State
Covid-19 has exposed the carelessness of some of our policies. Twenty-six years after 1994; it is criminal that many people still do not have access to water, our housing and human settlements system is grossly inadequate; our health system is poorly funded, and our economy is bleeding because of unreliable energy supplies.

The capacity of the state is being tested and the irrationality of austerity budgets that weaken the government has been painfully exposed.

Employers Must Obey the Laws and Show Solidarity
We have seen some employers acting to protect their selfish interests by seeking to protect their profits only and showing no solidarity with their workers and their families.

Governments across the world all too often rush to help the rich at the expense of workers and the poor. Let us condemn those who use this crisis to profit by retrenching workers, denying them their wages and their pensions.

We will not allow the relief and stimulus packages to be freely given to employers. All stimulus investments and loans to companies must be conditional upon them protecting and creating jobs. There can be no free lunches. We cannot return to 40% unemployment.

We must no longer accept that 13 million people in South Africa can be condemned to live on less than R10 a day. We cannot give the unemployed people little stipends to keep them afloat and then fail to stop excessive profiteering on essential goods.

Going forward:
Reopening the Economy
As we prepare to reopen the economy, we need to
ensure that any employer wishing to reopen has a health and safety plan in place. These must be negotiated with and agreed to by workers and unions. Workers need to be provided with safe transport to work. Workplaces must provide PPEs, adhere to social distancing, and perform screening and testing without fail. This needs to be equally applied to our educational institutions. This must be our new normal.

Health and safety has been one of the cornerstones of our campaigns and Covid-19 has strengthened our commitment to make this central to collective bargaining. Worker sells their labour, not their lives.

Building an Inclusive Economy

We agree with President Ramaphosa that Post-Covid-19, we need a new people centred economy that focusses on creating jobs for all South Africans. The Post Covid-19 economic transition must be characterised by bold, progressive policies and decisive action to ensure socio-economic transformation.

Our economic recovery must be built upon a progressive and decisive social compact between government, labour and business. It must be geared towards building an inclusive economy.

We must eliminate current monopolies and build an economy that meets the needs of our people. COSATU welcomes the economic relief measures announced by the President. We need to do more to build the capacity of the UIF.

We need a new budget aligned to the needs of an economy reeling from Covid-19. The relief measure needs to be expanded to include a R1 trillion stimulus plan if we seek to defeat unemployment.

The private sector and the banks in particular must come to the party. Public and private sector investments must be coordinated to ensure that they are geared towards productive economic investments that will spur inclusive economic growth and create jobs in areas like ports, railways, energy, health and broadband spectrum.

At the heart of rebuilding our economy must be local procurement. Government and the private sector and indeed all consumers must play their role. We must all actively buy locally produced goods. The days of cheap imports must end.

Key Lessons to be Learned

What are some of the big lessons that we need to learn from this crisis?

Public service workers are not a nuisance like we have been repeatedly told by neoliberals. They are an asset and a precious resource because they keep us alive and protect us.

Ordinary workers who look after us, who clean, produce food from the farms, transport us, dig wealth from the mines and cook for us; must be treated as national heroes and rewarded accordingly. Now we know that the true celebrities that needs to be celebrated are ordinary workers!

As we speak here today, public service employees, our frontline soldiers against the virus, are engaged in a titanic struggle with the employer at the Public Service Coordinating Bargaining Council (PSCBC) to protect collective bargaining and their right to inflationary increases.

We salute our unions for never wavering in their fight for better wages and improved conditions.

Government, as an employer, needs to honour Resolution 1 of 2018 and this is non-negotiable. The fact that they need to fight for what is due to them is embarrassing. Public health is a very important sector and requires major investment to develop its capacity to fight such pandemics and ensure decent healthcare for all our people.

A healthy and productive workforce is a condition for a healthy and productive economy and people!

National Health Insurance is not a luxury. It is a necessity and cannot be delayed any further. Let us build the NHl now and not later. Health is not a commodity. Let us build a well-resourced, capable and dignified health system for all.

The workplace will never be the same. We have been talking about the future of work and the 4IR, now we are living it. We must act fast to ensure that these new technological systems and developments work for everyone and that no one is left behind.

We must build a new state that serves the needs
and interests of the poor and the working class.

Conclusion
In the face of this crisis, the rivalry between unions are trivial and meaningless. Let us work to close the gap between leaders and members and lead our workers in the struggle against exploitation by employers and the pains of poverty and unemployment.

Let us build programmes of unity in action to resist exploitation of workers and attempts by capital to divide and mislead workers. We need to work together to overcome our differences.

To all COSATU members, we must continue to work together to build and strengthen this federation and her affiliates into an even sharper shield in defence of workers and their families. Shopstewards, it is through your struggles in the workplace and activism in your communities that the federation remains a resilient and exemplary protective shield for the millions of workers.

We remain a fighting federation that continues to enjoy respect and credibility with the working class because we are capable of presenting solutions to the challenges confronting society. There are no easy answers, perfect solutions and sometimes trade-offs are necessary to fix problems. However we cannot be complacent. The challenges of the future mean that some solutions of the past have become redundant.

Let’s continue to be a forward-looking organisation that grapples with new developments like 4IR and climate change and ensure that workers are not left behind.

Guided by the concluding words of the Communist Manifesto, our message is clear; “Workers of the world unite, you have nothing to lose but your chains”.

South Africa
The President of the Republic of South Africa has come out clear to share the hardships endured by the nation since the outbreak of the novel COVID-19 pandemic. Addressing the nation, he said ‘the challenges that confronted us before the outbreak of the coronavirus – low economic growth, unemployment, poverty and inequality – have been exacerbated by the pandemic.

Our efforts to turn the economy around, to create opportunities for young people, to stabilise public finances and to restore state-owned enterprises have suffered a great setback. To emerge from this crisis will require an extraordinary effort.’

The African National Congress [ANC] delivered a May Day message online by President Cyril Ramaphosa and said ‘we salute the great struggles waged by workers and celebrate their achievements. This Workers Day is unlike any we have experienced before.’ He said ‘This is a time of great upheaval and uncertainty throughout the world because of the coronavirus pandemic.

Workers are at the forefront of the fight against this virus. We applaud the nurses, doctors, health workers, police, security officials, traffic officers, soldiers and essential service workers who are serving our people with such dedication and courage.

‘Today, let us observe a moment’s silence for all those who have lost their lives to this virus’, declared Ramaphosa. ‘Our central concern on this Workers Day is for the health of all our people.’

On Revolutionary Alliance
Here in South Africa, the long and bitter struggle for the recognition of May Day as a public holiday was inextricably tied not only to the struggle for workers’ rights, but also the struggle to end apartheid. The campaign that COSATU led in 1986 to force the National Party government to recognise May Day was supported by formations across society and led to a national stayaway of 1.5 million workers, students, taxi drivers, vendors, shopkeepers, domestic workers and self-employed people.

‘May Day is Ours’ became a rallying cry that drew attention to the appalling conditions of workers under apartheid and the suffering of black South Africans more broadly. With the advent of democracy in 1994, Workers Day finally received the proper recognition that generations of workers had fought for.

As we celebrate this day, we remember the great trade union leaders who forged the formidable labour movement that continues to fight for the rights and interests of workers. ‘We remember leaders such as Clements
Worker Issues


‘We are marking Workers Day at a difficult time for our country and the world.’

COVID-19 Lockdown!
Ramaphosa said ‘We all recognise that the lockdown is necessary to save lives. It has kept the infections and the fatalities low, while giving us the time to mobilise more capacity for the expected peak in infections.

Now we have moved into a new phase of our public health response, significantly increasing the rate of community-based screening and testing, and implementing a rigorous programme of isolation and contact tracing. We are expanding our capacity to care for those who require hospitalisation, we are building field hospitals and buying medical equipment, medicines and other supplies.’

health workers and other frontline staff are safe and have all the personal protective equipment they need. Today, South Africa moves from level 5 of our coronavirus – which is the most stringent – to level 4, which will lead to the gradual relaxation of some of the measures we put in place five weeks ago. As we begin the process of easing the lockdown and many people start gradually returning to work, we must remain vigilant and careful.’

➢ As they resume operations in the permitted sectors, employers need to take responsibility for the health and safety of their employees.
➢ Every workplace is required to implement measures to protect workers.
➢ Workplaces must adhere to social distancing norms.
➢ Sanitisers must be readily available and the usual person to person meetings we are used to must be limited.
➢ Companies are expected to screen all workers for COVID-19 symptoms each day when they report for work, and companies with more than 500 employees must make arrangements to test their workers.
➢ It is now mandatory for people to wear masks when out in public and workplaces
must ensure that their staff are provided with masks.

- The power to stop the virus is literally in our hands.
- We can protect ourselves by taking the basic precautions – regular washing of hands, wearing masks, sneezing into our elbows or tissues and minimising physical contact.

In doing so, we can prevent the pandemic from becoming a crisis that overwhelms our communities and our health system. This pandemic is more than a health crisis.

The South African Communist Party [SACP] in their May Day message paid tribute to workers across the globe and called upon workers to unite – in every workplace, in every factory and every other firm, in mines, in farms, in schools, colleges and universities, at supermarkets, in the entire retail sector, in the airlines and the entire transport sector, including but not limited to taxis, buses, trucks and ships, and at the docks, in restaurants, in hotels and the entire hospitality and tourism sector, and everywhere in the economy, in the community, the battle of ideas and the struggle to protect the environment, and in every other place where societal activity takes place.

SACP General Secretary said 'This year the International Workers Day, also known as the May Day is commemorated under lockdown conditions in South Africa and many countries across the world. This is a result of the global public health emergency caused by the spread of the deadly coronavirus (Covid-19). The underlying cause of the problem is the capitalist system.'

Capitalism not only involves the sucking of labour’s blood socially, a mode of appropriation of society’s wealth by capital. That is, the wealth of every society in which capitalism prevails appears as an immense accumulation of commodities, but its essence is the unpaid labour of workers, the surplus, in value terms, that the workers produce through their labour-power – the aggregate of the mental and physical capabilities that they exercise whenever they produce and trade in goods and services.

Through its unsustainable expansion, capitalism is also directly responsible for environmental degradation, global warming and the passing of unknown, hence 'novel', viruses from animals to human beings.

The capitalist system achieves this by means that destroy nature – deforestation, contamination and pollution of our environment, and wide spread use of antibiotics on livestock producing new, drug resistance ‘superbugs’, to name but a few.

On Trade Unionism

Nzimande said ‘The SACP pledges its unwavering solidarity with its ally, Cosatu, the entire progressive trade union movement and working class of our country, Southern African region, Africa and the whole world.

The global spread and impact of the Covid-19 pandemic calls upon workers to unite – in every workplace, in every factory and every other firm, in mines, in farms, in schools, colleges and universities, at supermarkets, in the entire retail sector, in the airlines and the entire transport sector, including but not limited to taxis, buses, trucks and ships, and at the docks, in restaurants, in hotels and the entire hospitality and tourism sector, and everywhere in the economy, in the community, the battle of ideas and the struggle to protect the environment, and in every other place where societal activity takes place.

Without unity, every capitalist crisis ends in the working class being the worst affected, being retrenched and losing income as well as other things that concomitantly go with income loss.

The sustainable solution is to unite and fight to roll back economic exploitation, stop capitalism from destroying our natural environment, and replace the exploitative system with a socialist transition towards universal social emancipation.’ Class struggle continues!
Coronavirus has extremely changed our world in ways we could hardly have imagined. Many countries with sound collective bargaining mechanisms between labour, government and business were able to convene and mitigate the negative effects of the pandemic in the labour markets.

The Executive Director of the National Economic Development and Labour Council (NEDLAC), a social partner’s forum in South Africa, Ms Lisa Seftel said ‘a common ground programme was ‘necessary’ to slow down the spread of the Covid-19 virus.’

Outcome of NEDLAC Special EXCO on the COVID-19 pandemic held in March 2020.

We are committed together to save lives and save the economy was the message from a special Executive Council meeting of National Economic Development and Labour Council (Nedlac) convened to discuss a common programme to slow down the spread of the Covid-19 virus.

Over 60 leaders from organised business, labour, government and community attended the meeting including the Presidents of both COSATU and NACTU, the leadership of BUSA and BBC and the Ministers of Labour, Trade, Industry and Competition, Finance and Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development and the Deputy Ministers of Health and Trade, Industry and Competition.

The social partners acknowledged that this situation is unprecedented and requires an unprecedented response. “The Covid 19 crisis will require the best traditions of social partnership to ensure that we contain the spread of the virus and make every effort to protect employment, earnings and industrial output”, said the Minister of Trade, Industry and Competition, Ebrahim Patel.

The meeting agreed to work together in the following areas to support the call of the President, Cyril Ramaphosa on 15th March 2020 for “co-operation, collaboration and common action:

Enhancing the public health response
The social partners committed to intensify public health messages as well as implementing the identified ways of improving hygiene to curb the spread of the virus to workplaces and into communities including through using national and local champions.

Containing the virus
The meeting recognised the importance of tracing
contacts and testing to identify people who have contracted the virus. The social partners agreed to work together with the Department of Health to ensure that every single person who has been in contact with someone who has the virus is tracked, traced and monitored so that they can if necessary be requested to self-isolate or go into quarantine. There was also agreement on the need to make testing accessible.

**Security of health supplies and medical equipment**

Ensuring security of health supplies such as hand sanitizers, protective equipment for health professionals, and stocks for testing and treatment as well as ARV and other chronic medicines is critical. Especially at a time when existing supply chains may be vulnerable and ineffective.

The social partners committed to work together to fast track, support and address the constraints to the importation, manufacturing and distribution of health supplies and medical equipment. In this regard, the meeting condemned panic buying which would put more and unnecessary pressures on supply chains.

**Workplace adaption**

The message from the meeting was that it can’t be regarded as „working as usual” in this period. Workplaces will need to adapt in different ways to respond to the Covid-19 epidemic. Employers and trade unions agreed to work together to manage issues like short time, shift work, changing working hours and lunch breaks to reduce too many workers congregating in one place. There was an acknowledgement that working from home and using online and technology platforms were important, where possible.

It was recognised that in the medium term, some of these workplace adaptions can also lead to economic opportunities such as an increase in the use of electronic technology for workplace communication.

**Support to workers and companies who are negatively impacted by the virus**

It was acknowledged that many economic sectors and especially small and medium enterprises will be severely affected by the epidemic and that workers should not be punished by a reduction of income due to factors outside of their control. "Employers have a legal duty of care towards their employees," stressed the Minister of Labour, Thulas Nxesi. He indicated that the current occupational health and safety, unemployment insurance and compensation fund legislation provides for such circumstances including special leave where unemployment insurance can be claimed and where compensation can be given if an employee contracts the virus at his/her workplace.

Government indicated that they are committed to a number of additional measures to support companies and their employees who become distressed due to the negative impact of the Covid-19 epidemic including the recently established Temporary Employee Employer Relief Scheme administered jointly by the CCMA and UIF. However it was stressed that proper processes should be put in place so that these measures are not abused.

Thulani Tshufuta representing the community constituency at Nedlac stressed that there can be no place for stigmatisation and discrimination, because if this happens, then workers and community members are not likely to come forward about their symptoms of ill health.

**Macro-economic impact and potential interventions**

The government indicated that they are monitoring the economic impact of the virus and noted suggestions made by the social partners regarding economic impact of this virus at a time when our economy is already very stressed.

Finally, the meeting recognised that there were areas that needed more attention to develop mitigation measures – most pressing was ways to contain the epidemic spreading through public transport and the impact of school closures on school feeding schemes.

The meeting agreed unanimously that a Nedlac Response Team should be set up urgently to address this and take forward the other issues discussed above.

In addition, organised business and labour were urged to embark on sector specific engagements to give effect to the common commitments agreed.
The Alliance

Alliance Secretariat

on the release of its Covid-19 Framework document

and the launch of its Anti-Racism Campaign

By ANC Secretary General, ES Magashule, SACP First Deputy General Secretary, Solly Mapaila and COSATU General Secretary, Bheki Ntshalintshali
The Alliance


In April and May 2020 the Alliance Political Council held four meetings, while the Alliance Secretariat met in between the meetings of the Alliance Political Council, sometimes twice a week. The Alliance Secretariat established an Alliance Task Force that met in between its meetings to perform the work it was assigned, in response to Covid-19. The engagements centred on the management of the pandemic and our responses as the Alliance, country and continent.

Alliance Covid-19 Framework document

The Secretariat today publicly releases the Framework document, adopted by the Alliance Political Council and the NEC of the ANC as well as the SACP and Cosatu. The Covid-19 Framework document has guided our approach to the political economy of Covid-19, as the pandemic unfolded over the last few months.

It recognises that the Covid-19 pandemic, which over the past few months since it started in December 2019, has seen over 6.7 million cases and over 360 000 global deaths. In less than two months, it has overtaken the number of deaths from malaria, as well as from malnutrition, influenza and other global causes of morbidity, with the spike in deaths after northern hemisphere flu season in April and May 2020. There is neither recommended therapeutic medicine nor vaccination yet. These are under development and trial, implying that we will live with Covid-19 for a number of months.

The Alliance Covid-19 framework notes that globally, countries with strong public health systems, with comprehensive social security systems and developmental states fared much better in halting the spread of the pandemic, and in cushioning or assisting their citizens and economies to weather the social and economic impacts. On the flipside, countries with delayed interventions have seen fast rising infections, challenges to their health systems and deaths.

The pandemic has affected all countries of the world. It affects families, communities and nations, and it impacts on workers and businesses, large and small. By April 2020, over 85% of children were out of school, as 160 countries had some form of school closures. The Covid-19 pandemic has brought to a halt the global travel, sports, performing arts, and tourism, among others industries.

The impact on global and national economies is equally devastating, with slowing production and demand, and there are fears of a global recession, if not a depression. It has therefore become an era of stimulus, as countries seek to mitigate the impact of the pandemic on their economies and citizens.

Covid-19 has exposed the ugly face of South Africa’s structural fault lines of poverty, unemployment and inequality, and has disproportionately affected and will more likely continue to affect poor and working class communities, with their gender, geographical and racial dimensions.

The Framework paper therefore points towards the seven pillars of South Africa’s response to the pandemic, which should continue to guide us as a united nation, as we fight this war. These pillars are:

1. Public health responses: public health prevention, preparing health facilities for treatment, getting necessary equipment for treatment, ensure other dis-eases not
neglected, and build National Health Insurance (NHI) capacity

2. Social relief: deal with hunger, food parcels/vouchers, expand social grants, access to water, mental health, solidarity

3. Assist SMMEs, workers and informal sector: expanded Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF), relief for informal sector

4. Stimulate supply and demand: bridging funding and rescue to businesses

5. Economy reconstruction: industry master plans, domestic investment, macroeconomic policy alignment, as per ANC's 2019 Manifesto and new opportuni-ties

6. Build strategic state strategic capacity and contract between the state and the people

7. Social mobilisation: to build community resilience and solidarity

8. African agenda and global issues

Working with government and other social partners, the Alliance has committed to forming part of all these pillars, to ensure effective reach and implementation of all the above. It recognises that this calls for maximum unity. This is not the time for factionalism, for corruption or for racketeering. It is the time to unite, to fight this war, rebuild our country, advance development and an inclusive growth path. It is a time for South Africa to continue to unite and broaden its national unity.

The Framework paper finally calls for the urgent development of a Covid-19 Reconstruction, Development and Inclusive Growth Plan that can form the basis of a social compact for as we come out of lockdown.

The paper points to some of the elements of such a Plan, including speeding up the implementation of the NHI; that we bring back and investigate the feasibility of a minimum income support grant; focus on domestic resource mobilisation through amongst others impact investments (“prescribed assets”); financial sector transformation, and expedite plans for industrialisation and localisation, including in sectors such as pharmaceuticals, the green economy, agriculture and agro-processing, beneficiation and the creative and other sectors.

The Alliance formations, such as the ANC Economic Transformation Committee, the SACP Politburo and Cosatu are working on their individual contributions to the Covid-19 Reconstruction, Development and Inclusive Growth Plans. The Alliance will consolidate the outcomes and give content to the new economy and broader social transformation required going forward.

The large-scale opening up under Covid-19 lockdown alert level 3 places challenges and opportunities to us, to make up lost ground to get economic and other activities back on track, albeit in a cautious manner.

At the same time, it has great potential to increase the spread of infections, especially as we now approach the flu season, as schools and businesses start opening, as more people start using public transport. The fundamental right to life remains sacrosanct.

We must therefore, as President Cyril Ramaphosa reminded us, ensure that we all act responsibly, as government, as parents, as businesses, as workers, as public servants and representatives, and as communities and citizens of our nation. It is in our hands.

We will discuss and act on these matters at all levels of the Alliance, and look forward to public engagement and engagement with civil society on this Framework paper.

LAUNCH OF ALLIANCE ANTI-RACISM CAMPAIGN

At a time when global humanity is engaged in this war against the Coronavirus, we saw the heinous murder of George Floyd by those who are tasked to serve and protect.

This sparked protests across the USA by the African-American and other progressive communities, against this latest expression of institutional racism, which started with the extermination of Native Americans, the Transatlantic Slave Trade and Slavery.

Across the world, progressive humanity has responded to this, and are pledging solidarity in different ways, against racism. These protests and acts of solidarity not only points fingers to the USA for its continued
institutionalised racism, echoing the call that Black Lives Matter, but also provides opportunities for tackling racism wherever it rears its ugly head, from India, Brazil, China to the USA, in Britain and Europe, the Middle East and Palestine.

South Africa is standing up to be counted. The USA, and its African-American community in particular, has played a critical role against our own struggle against the institutionalised racism of apartheid. Today, we must as a nation add our voices in solidarity to their call: That Black Lives Matter.

The Alliance, starting tomorrow, Friday 5 June 2020 at 19:00 through an event to be addressed by ANC President Ramaphosa and other Alliance leaders, will launch its campaign of solidarity with the peoples of the USA. It will be the start of our Black Fridays, where henceforth we all are called upon to wear black on this day of the week.

The Alliance Anti-Racism campaign, to be launched tomorrow, will also highlight the racism in our own society and against police and security force brutality. The deaths by citizens at the hands of security forces are of deep concern to the Alliance. Security forces, as set out in our Constitution must secure the safety of communities and act against crime. They must be tough, but act in the spirit of the Constitution.

The Alliance also notes that the demon of racism remains a blight on the soul of our nation. It reflects itself in institutionalised racism in apartheid geography, in the economy and in social spheres.

It also finds expression in the kind of blatant racism and misogyny in social media, that we’ve seen against Minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, cde Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma. As a society, this must not be tolerated, and we will and must use the institutions set up to bring the perpetrators to book.

On the 26th of this month we celebrate 65 years since the adoption of the Freedom Charter, who so eloquently told us “that South Africa belongs to all, black and white”, that all lives matter.

We therefore call on all South Africans to join us on this campaign to educate, advocate and rally against the demon of racism.

ON SOUTH AFRICAN AIRWAYS

The Alliance welcomes progress to ensure that South African Airways (SAA) is restructured and to emerge out of the old with a new, viable and growing national airline. In line with the commitment made in the Budget Speech in February 2020, government should act unambiguously and support the restructuring and building of this new national airline.

The Alliance Secretariat further resolved that everything possible must be done to urgently restore SAA operations, in line with the national coronavirus lockdown regulations and the resumption of activity in the domestic aviation industry.

CONCLUSION

Our nation has overcome great adversities, and we can again overcome. We must work together to do this, and all take responsibility for our own actions, to care for others and to build our society. It is in our Hands.

Issued by the Alliance Secretariat
COVID-19 Pandemic: **SCHOOLS RE-OPEN**

with safety concerns raised globally by unions

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OVID-19 has exposed many countries in relation to developing public infrastructure such as hospitals, schools and also eradication of squatter camps as many citizens were highly affected during lockdown implementations, to curb the spread of coronavirus. Many argued that the global economy is in unchartered waters!

Through the outbreak of the pandemic, the world is experiencing the worst pandemic crisis in one hundred years. By mid-April 2020, more than 80 percent of countries around the world had imposed strict containment and mitigation measures to control the spread of the disease. The economic fallout has been immense, with dire consequences for poverty and welfare, particularly in developing countries.

Many states though have responded positively to put precautionary measures to curb the pandemic such as China, South Korea but others found themselves wanting, with death cases
recorded sky-rocketing. While some have tried to downplay the threat posed by the coronavirus, the majority of South Africans have understood its danger and have acted accordingly. An estimated 42-66 million children could fall into extreme poverty as a result of the crisis this year, adding to the estimated 386 million children already in extreme poverty in 2019.

Schools were first to be closed down and over the period of lockdown, discussions have ensued between Education authorities and organized labour in the teaching and learning fraternity to ease the lockdown of schools. As all other workers return to their workplaces, many argued to reduce the spread of COVID-19 virus at all education institutions.

Effects of COVID-19 on Children

According to the Policy Brief, titled ‘The Impact of COVID-19 on Children’, released by the United Nations in April alluded that ‘Children are not the face of this pandemic. But they risk being among its biggest victims. While they have thankfully been largely spared from the direct health effects of COVID-19 - at least to date – the crisis is having a profound effect on their wellbeing. All children, of all ages, and in all countries, are being affected, in particular by the socio-economic impacts and, in some cases, by mitigation measures that may inadvertently do more harm than good. This is a universal crisis and, for some children, the impact will be lifelong. Moreover, the harmful effects of this pandemic will not be distributed equally. They are expected to be most damaging for children in the poorest countries, and in the poorest neighbourhoods, and for those in already disadvantaged or vulnerable situations.

There are three main channels through which children are affected by this crisis: infection with the virus itself; the immediate socioeconomic impacts of measures to stop transmission of the virus and end the pandemic; and the potential longer-term effects of delayed implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.’

It further elaborated that ‘188 countries have imposed countrywide school closures, affecting more than 1.5 billion children and youth. The potential losses that may accrue in learning for today’s young generation, and for the development of their human capital, are hard to fathom. More than two-thirds of countries have introduced a national distance learning platform, but among low-income countries the share is only 30 percent. Before this crisis, almost one third of the world’s young people were already digitally excluded.’

Rising malnutrition is expected as 368.5 million children across 143 countries who normally rely on school meals for a reliable source of daily nutrition must now look to other sources. The risks to child mental health and well being are also considerable. Refugee and internally displaced children as well as those living in detention and situations of active conflict are especially vulnerable.

Risks for child safety:

Lockdowns and shelter in place measures come with heightened risk of children witnessing or suffering violence and abuse. Children in conflict settings, as well as those living in unsanitary and crowded conditions such as refugee and IDP settlements, are also at considerable risk. Children’s reliance on online platforms for distance learning has also increased their risk of exposure to inappropriate content and online predators.

This policy brief provides a deeper analysis of these effects. It identifies also a series of immediate and sustained actions for the attention of governments and policymakers, including in relation to the following three priorities:

- Rebalance the combination of interventions to minimize the impact of standard physical distancing and lockdown strategies on children in low-
income countries and communities and expand social protection programmes to reach the most vulnerable children.

- Prioritize the continuity of child-centred services, with a particular focus on equity of access – particularly in relation to schooling, nutrition programmes, immunization and other maternal and newborn care, and community-based child protection programmes.

- Provide practical support to parents and caregivers, including how to talk about the pandemic with children, how to manage their own mental health and the mental health of their children, and tools to help support their children’s learning.

For each of the above, specific protections must be put in place for vulnerable children including refugees, the displaced, homeless, migrants, minorities, slum-dwellers, children living with disabilities, street children, living in refugee settlements, and children in institutions.

State of Readiness in South Africa!

Speaking to SADTU General Secretary, Mr. Mugwena Maluleke said ‘The Unions and SGB Associations heard of the progress made towards compliance. With the overall school readiness said to be 94%, the unions and SGB Associations consequently support the call to re-open schools on 08th June 2020 with the clear understanding that no school may open that is not Covid-19 compliant.

It should be stated that three out of the nine provinces were still experiencing challenges with regard to the delivery of water tanks which will make the resumption of learning and teaching impossible unless alternative measures are taken to ensure that all learners receive education.

The Unions and SGB Associations cautiously welcome the progress. We are particularly thankful for the extent of PPEs deliveries, the improvement in the number of completed water supply projects and the delivery and improvement of toilet facilities. This improvement came as a result of the constant emphasis by the Unions and SGB associations that water and sanitation are the non-negotiables in the fight against the spread of the virus.

Other concerns in provinces!

Provincial Education Departments have been engaged in localizing the implementation of the COVID-19 Directives in all Districts and Circuits. And the process has not been without hiccups.

For example, in the North West, the COSATU Provincial Secretary, Kopano Konopi said ‘We have noted with concern reported cases of some interference on the appointment of the cleaners and screeners in some areas with the Bojanala District being the most affected.

Council reaffirmed the authority of School Governing Bodies (SGB’s) to man-age the recruitment of Cleaners and Screeners within the Framework set by the De-partment of Education. We also wish to urge SGB’s to follow transparent recruitment processes that united communities rather than create unnecessary divisions. Learning and Teaching in our Schools cannot be held at ransom by petty historical squabbles between some few individuals in our communities. We further urge the Department of Education to urgently attend resolve all cases relating to disputes on the appointment of these Covid19 support staff.

Konopi said ‘Council has noted with deep concern the issue of Learners in Special Schools. The Learners with Disabilities are more vulnerable to Covid19 due to the na-ture of their Disabilities. These learners should at all cost be protected and at best special measures be employed to ensure that they are not unnecessarily exposed to possi-ble spread of the disease. We have directed that the Department of Education gives urgent and focus attention to this category working with the relevant role players and to further provide update to the Alliance.’

Maluleke said ‘We remain committed to the principle that all schools must be COVID-19 compliant and
ready to open together. We will closely monitor the promise to complete the outstanding water deliveries, toilets, and additional classes.’

As Unions and SGB Associations we have put it to the Minister that we expect:

- A sense of urgency from the government in ensuring that as a bottom line, all learners must access quality education in a healthy and safe environment.
- Alternative arrangements be made to accommodate all the learners from schools that are not COVID-19 compliant.
- An integrated plan to get schools that are not COVID-19 compliant ready in the shortest time.
- The establishment of an inclusive Task Teams at the level of the districts to monitor and evaluate the plans to deal with all the outstanding work in order to have all schools COVID19 compliant.
- A coherent employee and learner wellness plan that includes but not limited to Psycho-Social Support Plan services.
- Direction on the revised curriculum that addresses the time remaining in the year as well as addressing the over-emphasis on assessment.
- A new school calendar needs to be consulted on immediately.
- A plan for the sustained supply of COVID-19 consumables to ensure sustained compliance.
- The urgent conclusion of an agreement to address the replacement of staff, on leave because of possible active cases.
- The uniform application and implementation of the Collective Agreement on Concessions dealing with co-morbidities as signed at the ELRC.
- Urgent attention to address and deliver the critical PPEs for the special schools in order to comply with the inevitable physical and social contact.
- Urgent negotiations between the DBE and Department of Communication to ensure the zero-rating of data for continuous learning in order to ensure continuity of learning in the event the school is closed due to active cases detected.
- Concrete additional TV and Radio lessons be continued throughout the period of COVID-19 and that the public broadcaster change the schedules to suite the learners. The unions and SGB Associations consequently tentatively support the call to re-open schools on 8 June 2020 with the clear understanding that no school may open that is notCOVID-19 compliant as per directive of the Minister and State President.

Maluleke concluded that ‘We as a collective of the major stakeholders in education re-main committed to seeing that learning resumes in our schools but wish to caution against over-zealous “recovery” plans that further traumatize our teacher and educa-tion support workers. We remind schools that only our matric classes are faced with catching up on work missed. We call on all our members to heed the call to return to school or alternative accommodation except where schools are not ready and thus un-safe.’
Covid-19 lockdown has deepened the financial stress that is faced by more than 10 million consumers who have impaired records and are unable to repay their debts on time. Some of these consumers would lose their jobs and have their wages cut and have their cars and houses repossessed.

Most people take debt not out of choice but because of South Africa’s monopolised economy which imposes a high cost of living on the working class who have to supplement their meagre or slave wages with debt in order to pay for public services that have been privatised including transport, energy, food, housing and rental and education among others.

As a result, the amount of reckless credit is high in South Africa and most of income is used to pay creditors and not for productive purposes and to create jobs. Instead of debt repayment holiday consumers instalments for credit agreements and personal loans should be cancelled for a period of at least three months in order to give real debt relief to consumers. One of the first Covid-19 measures implemented by government was to buy government bonds and reduce the repo rate. However, banks who act selfishly for their shareholders and not the public interest, have not extended the same benefits to the working class the workers and the poor. There should be immediate implementation of the National Credit Amendment Act or the so called debt relief law which provides for enhanced powers for the National Credit Regulator to police reckless credit and where possible to cancel the reckless credit agreements where consumers have no assets or little assets and no capacity to repay the debt.

Government must stop pandering to the monopoly interests in the financial sector over the interests of the public. A debt repayment for customers in good standing as proposed by banks is not adequate to give cash to indebted consumers.

South Africans do not need a debt trap in the form of a debt postponement holiday. The same debt cancellation relief should apply to all forms of insurances and pension premiums as well.

Article written by Adv Lepaku Mpheane
The current outbreak of Covid-19 has brought to the surface a number of known challenges as a reminder, but it also creates a window of opportunities to address such challenges using new tools and strategies as part of our transformation journey.

The changing role of the progressive labour movement is imperative during such episodes in our lives - a feature that also calls for bold union leadership! It is a leadership that should not only engage in fighting the Covid-19 outbreak but ought to ensure that workers interests are not only advanced but entrenched in the post-Covid-19 recovery initiatives. Without any doubt other social sectors are busy ensuring their interests are safeguarded after this pandemic.

The recent persistent public statements by various unions bear testimony to our lack of preparedness to tackle Covid-19 on the battlefield as compared to retreating into lockdown. The rejection of returning to school due to lack of readiness by government, the strong calls for PPE’s at the workplace as workers are increasingly falling victim of infections, and which is unfortunately receiving lacklustre response, the emerging battles due to retrenchments, murky and doubtful business rescues for distressed companies are amongst a litany of growing number of incidents that call for more assertive leadership from all in COSATU.

Given the ever-raging debate about how we transform our economy, this is another opportunity for Cosatu to support any initiative with added strength. Cosatu must build a formidable campaign out of this crisis - unfortunate as it may be - and propagate for an economic system that will be more resilient and capable, including reinvigorating the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) policy. This would include, inter alia, redirecting the economy to productive sectors rather than persistent financialisation that benefits a few.

Addressing the resilience of our economy is not a phenomenon that can be initiated in the middle of a crisis and we need therefore to rebuild the economy to ensure that it will bounce back every time it experiences distress. Mobilising for the alternative system cannot be viewed as an academic exercise since currently we are witnessing the caving in of capitalism to this current crisis notwithstanding incessant efforts to prop up...
The Economy

A combination of fighting against Covid-19 with a focus on post-Covid-19 recovery initiatives, especially economic revitalisation, is non-negotiable. Covid-19 will eventually pass and leave us with untold socio-economic devastation, which is why we have to prepare for the aftermath whilst simultaneously battling the virus. Another combined thrust is that of revitalising the economy whilst integrating it with intensified struggle for workers - a combined campaign that must not be viewed as mutually exclusive.

Resurgence of international solidarity amongst workers, which has lamentably been on the decline, must be back in the arsenal that workers use for their welfare in such times of crisis. However, there is a dire need for strengthening the soft underbelly of trade unions and guarding against inward-looking tendencies within the labour movement and destructive trade union rivalry. Going beyond the paradigm of the federation’s organisational confines and mobilising workers irrespective of affiliation, is a call that Cosatu must champion with the passion it deserves at this time.

With regards to public service, a case for a transformed public servant to buttress the transformation of the public service has to be championed. The public service has been challenged for being unproductive and definitely the Covid-19 outbreak can only serve to deteriorate the severely compromised productivity in the public service - hence the need for a creative approach of remoulding the current public servant into a transformed cadre that conducts himself or herself as patriot rather a conventional staff member.

Cosatu must play its role in nurturing relations within the Alliance more than before including the remobilisation of trade union veterans to provide support. Every resource at the disposal of the workers must be utilised for the advancement of their interests during such times of crisis.

Engagement with various stakeholders must unavoidably be more robust if Cosatu is convinced we are at war against Covid-19. This virus has displayed its lethal features by being borderless and classless. That is why building a stronger political, social and economic ally with various stakeholders beyond the labour movement by ensuring that organised civil society understands and supports workers on job losses is paramount.

This current juncture demands a more adaptive attitude and strategy by unions to inspire creativity in finding solutions by workers and not depending on being always directed by employers and government. That is why we need to explore indigenous methods and promote multi-pronged strategies which ought to include crafting new forms of crisis readiness.

Cosatu has to invest more in this.

Efforts to search for alternative financial enablement, strengthening cooperatives to absorb those who have lost their job, campaigning for rescue efforts such as lay-off schemes, turnaround solutions including productivity improvements must be advanced. Workers ought to explore buying businesses that are closing down.

Strengthening the role of shop stewards during such challenging times may also mean exploring new roles and skills which may include intensive monitoring and evaluation of anti-Covid-19 practices at the workplace.
Workers should campaign for skills enhancement in all its forms to ensure safe workplaces, job retention and therefore sustainability of the companies they are working in. Workers should enhance Occupational Health and Safety at the workplace, especially in companies that are lacking in implementation.

Samwu (South African Municipal Workers’ Union) noted “with great concern that municipalities were never ready for lockdown level 5 and 4, there is therefore no reason for us to believe that they will be ready for a more relaxed level 3 which includes the return of all workers. Our members have been reporting to us the failure by municipalities to provide them with the necessary Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for them to be able to fully and safely execute their duties. Other municipalities have gone to an extent of requesting workers to buy their own PPEs, essentially subsidizing the operations of the employer.”

Samwu, supported by Cosatu and having mobilised other unions in local government sector, should campaign for diversion of the current unspent municipal funds to secure PPE’s. Nehawu and other public sector unions within Cosatu should also campaign for this. Lack of funds cannot be a deterrent to access PPE’s to protect the lives of public sector workers, their families as well as the public whom they are serving on daily basis.

Recently Cosatu said that about Eskom that its “approach is based upon a social compact, where all parties from government to labour, business and society make a contribution and where necessary, a sacrifice for the sake of the national interest.” This statement highlights the need to champion national interests which should not compromise workers’ interests.

Cosatu must also ensure that workers have an upper hand in the battle against Covid-19 at the workplace in preparation for bigger battles such as the devastating effects of this pandemic. Strengthening the confidence of the workers at this juncture is so crucial. Cosatu’s mobilisation strategy ought to go beyond ensuring that workers simply follow compliance as directed by government. Workers must embrace the rationale for current hygienic and other safety measures for the sake of their health and socio-economic prosperity.

Whilst Cosatu has always played a crucial leadership role in the South African society, the intensification of its role has never been more needed especially to advance the interests of the workers and defend their hard-earned gains.

Cde Sisa Njikelana is a former General Secretary of the South African Allied Workers Union, underground ANC member, an SACP member, former MP and chair of the South African Independent Power Producers Association.
The Swazi economy is facing a deep-seated structural crisis. This crisis negatively impacts workers, communities, and the poor in general. This explains the government’s attempts to make structural changes meant to reconfigure the economy. However, they want to do this while maintaining the narrow interests of the royal family who are sadly at the heart of the collapse in the first place.

Historically, the royal family inherited a highly skewed colonial economy at independence. In fact, the edges of the skewed nature of the economy were further sharpened by royal bourgeoisification process oiled by Tibiyo and Tisuka TakaNgwane.

To date, royalties accruing from mining and land held in trust by the monarchy for the Swazi nation in these entities goes to the king and his family. This has helped to maintain the huge but highly unproductive and parasitic royal family.

This is on top of their unfettered share from government in the form of the Swazi National Treasury (SNT), which, needless to say, is separate from central treasury. According to the Royal Emoluments and Civil List Act, Parliament should legislate a portion of government revenue to royal institutions. Over the years, five percent of our annual budget has been going to the king to dispense as he pleases.

Combined, these reckless expenditures, parasitic nature of the economy and lack of Foreign Direct Investment (FD) has made Swaziland rank as one of the poorest countries in the continent. In fact, a recent Oxfam report released this year claims that Swaziland is the most unequal country in the region.

This can also be attributed to two key factors: the
deliberate designs of the Tinkhundla royal regime to monopolise national resources and allocate these for their own narrow interests and the slow growth of the economy in the 1980s and 1990s that never really translated into effective development for the benefit of the majority of the people. The parasitic character of the Swazi economy is such that the majority who work and produce do not benefit. Instead, the beneficiaries are royal family members who are famous for globetrotting in luxurious hotels. They are also known for attending best educational institutions the world can offer, enjoying the most expensive health facilities and queuing to lay claim for everything Swazis produce.

Tibiyo Taka Ngwane is thus the cash cow that facilitates this gluttony. The consequence is that the economy gets drained with no proportionate input to create the wealth looted. In this regard, the following factors are important to the full understanding of the causes for the economic collapse:

Economic governance - the capacity to manage the economy was never given priority. Policy documents and budgets lacked credibility. There were always huge variations between planned spending and actual outcomes hence the backward system of supplementary budgets still persists to this day. Line ministries showed less commitment to stay within expenditure limits and steps were not taken to correct the discrepancy over the decades.

Corporate capture of government - policy decisions taken by the government reflect the interests of big business. A glaring example is the increasing role of royal family businesses in the economy, aptly exemplified by the conflict of interest involving Litfole Lenyatsi (king’s business) in Sikhuphe airport construction projects. Another factor has been that business partners of the king stifle and ultimately buy out most successful independent businesses in the country e.g. Tiger City Building, MPD Building, Tum’s George Hotel, etc.. This is meant to benefit a small yet politically connected clique to the detriment of not just local business but increasingly foreign ones too. The dramatic fall out between Singapore businessman Shan Rethenam and king Mswati illustrate this point more clearly but also shows just how extensive the monarch’s business hand reaches is in the economy.

The double role of the king as an executive head of state and businessman has meant an unfair competition to other local businesses, especially those that deal with government in one capacity or the other. The other worry is the measures taken to prop up the sugar industry against a background where it may no longer be viable to do so in the long term given the dynamics in the global markets.

Failure to put in place fiscal austerity measures - including commitment to implement policy reforms when called upon to do so by credible multilateral agencies like the IMF and others.

Domestic revenue collection was always on the periphery of government priority hence the late establishment of the Swaziland Revenue Authority (SRA). The introduction of more efficient taxes like the Value Added Tax (VAT) was taken with no sense of urgency at all.

As such, whatever Structural Adjustments Programs (SAP) said to be implemented will only hurt the ordinary Swazi. One is then left to wonder why government would opt for the very programs that caused the 2008 collapse of the global economy in the first place?

To this day, the world doesn’t seem to find a sustainable way out of the accumulation processes and contradictions inherent in neo-liberal capitalism.

Failure to put in place proper financial management systems - that minimise wastage and curbs corrupt practices in the utilisation of public funds. This has resulted in the government losing millions of Emalangeni and is in fact the major obstacle to possibilities of obtaining budget support from Official Development Assistance (ODA) countries.

A case in point is the EU’s rejection of Swaziland loan request. Another example was the IMF/World Bank refusal to back Swaziland’s loan application to the AfDB on grounds that the country’s excessive public spending compromises its loan repayment capacity in the long term.

In fact, a 2019 assessment of Swaziland economy by the IMF has
found that from as far back as 2016 “rising government spending and low revenue from the Southern African Customs Union (SACU) have increased public debt and contributed to large domestic arrears. On top of that International reserves have declined while real GDP growth has been sluggish.”

A largely agrarian economy that remains feudalistic - and characterised by subsistence farming which still remains the most dominant economic activity for some 70 percent of the population.

Underdevelopment of this core sector of the Swazi economy is no accident of history either. The link between the sugar industry, the majority of whose shares are directly controlled by the royal family, and multilateral giants like Coca-Cola, helps to explain why stifling agricultural development was deliberate to ensure Swazis could not subsist on their meagre farm produce instead remain trapped in the vicious cycle of dependence on slave-wage labour. It is also very important to understand that all of this was a deliberate design to ensure exclusive control and ownership of the economy by the royal family and their friends. Consequently, Swaziland today has skewed land ownership patterns dominated by members of the royalty that do not even use it for productive purposes.

Since the economy is largely agro-based, the semi-feudal nature of land ownership frustrates the developmental potential of land as a springboard for economic prosperity.

Added to this is the high and unsustainable levels of poverty, systematic destruction of jobs and an economy no longer expanding but dependent on SACU revenues. All this has exposed the fragility and lack of foresightness on the part of the Swazi government. Theirs has always been about looting without regard for the future sustainability of the country.

Whilst the economy is on a free-fall, there are no credible measures taken in the medium term to normalise the situation. Instead, the government has engaged in underhand tactics aimed as fleecing citizens of their last penny. Such measures include the new three percent tax for low income earners, adoption of new car registration plates, aggressively dealing with traffic offenders by demanding exorbitant fines or bail, new travel documents fees, the PM and Finance Minister’s unilateral “home grown Fiscal Adjustment Roadmap” recently presented to the IMF etc.

While these stern measures negatively affect the ordinary taxpayer, they still do nothing about the big-time tax evaders in royal owned business. In fact, for some time now, the Swazi regime has been involved in an exercise to expand the tax base by targeting all those things upon which the poor and working masses rely for their livelihoods (like taxing trees, domestic animals and other such basics).

This was originally part of the government’s 1997 Economic and Social Reform Agenda (ESRA) policy. Sadly this backward policy has now been taken forward with a new sense of determination by the new government. The fact that the budget estimates points to about 68 percent of the whole budget being for security services indicates the priorities of the government. In essence, Swaziland’s economy is suffering from a lack of a clearly articulated national development plan to grow it, support strategic sectors, and enforce a redistributive mechanism to ensure the effective and full participation of all the people in the development of the country.

It is clear from the foregoing that the only solution for Swaziland is democracy. Democratisation will ensure that sound economic policies are developed and sold to the masses for popular mandate and then implemented to benefit everyone not just the royal family and their hangers on.

NB: Bongani Masuku is COSATU Head of Secretariat and former President of the Swaziland Youth Congress (SWAYOCO). He writes in his personal capacity.

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Recovering from the COVID-19 crisis:
What policies are needed?

For workers, what risks and opportunities has the COVID-19 crisis brought about? Catelene Passchier, Chair of the Workers’ Group of the ILO Governing Body shares her views on the policies needed to recover from the Covid-19 epidemic. She also calls for more regulation of digital work and enhancement of social dialogue and tripartism to provide social justice and decent work for all.

ACTRAV INFO: How would you assess the Covid-19 pandemic’s impact on workers and their organizations and what key policies should be applied to recover from the Covid-19 crisis? This week, the International Labour Conference (ILC) was supposed to start its work. The issues on the agenda would have been very important to discuss, especially in today’s Covid-19 crisis. They include social protection and inequalities in work, as well as the important tasks carried out by the Committee on the Application of Standards.

We will now have to make sure that these issues feature prominently in next year’s ILC agenda, and that the risks and challenges laid bare by Covid-19 will be taken into account in future work.

The Covid-19 crisis has greatly affected everyone worldwide. But workers in healthcare and other fields of care, as well as those working in vital services and sectors like retail, food production and transport, have been shouldering the most. They have also taken the biggest risks, with their health and safety at work insufficiently protected too often. This shows the fundamental importance of this issue that the ILO should address as a high priority.

At the same time, millions of workers at the lower end of our labour markets, in precarious jobs or the informal economy, have suffered from lockdowns everywhere. They are paying a high price, losing their jobs and livelihoods without enjoying proper protection in social security. This leaves many of them in
poverty, unable to feed their families. Universal social protection is therefore needed more than ever. There is an urgent need for a global, coordinated effort to implement universal social protection, with major investment in funding it, especially to help the poorest countries and regions provide their populations with concrete support.

Let me stress that this crisis includes a prominent gender dimension. Most of the ‘heroes’ of the crisis are women: females make up the majority of workers in healthcare and essential services. Many of them are also migrants. Yet most of them are still suffering from poor wages and poor working conditions, while the crisis has increased their burden of unpaid work. In the informal economy and at the lower ends of global supply chains, hit hardest by the crisis, such as the garment industry, it is mostly women who are losing their jobs without enjoying access to any social protection. Add to that the reports we are receiving from around the world about a crisis-induced increase in domestic violence against women and girls, and it becomes clear that any policy package for dealing with consequences of the crisis and recovery from it must feature a strong, inclusive approach to gender.

For millions of workers, the effects of today’s crisis are already devastating. But the prospect of a quick, fair recovery is likewise gloomy, with the crisis making existing inequalities even worse. Yet ever more unions in various countries and regions are standing up for workers’ rights and protection and claiming a place at the table to discuss relief measures and recovery plans. The ILO is well placed to remind the international community of the key role that social justice, social dialogue and respect for workers’ rights must play in any plan to deal with the current crisis and the recovery from it.

In its May 1 solidarity message, the Workers’ Group called upon governments and employers to address a number of key issues without delay.

One central issue is certainly the need to strengthen the public sector. The crisis has exposed how decades of austerity and neo-liberal policies have left public services and the public sector incapable of properly responding to the crisis. It is high time to improve public services and the public sector, with huge investments to make sure people enjoy universal access to healthcare, water, sanitation, food and shelter, with guarantees in adequate staffing and respect of workers’ rights, including decent wages.

Furthermore, we now clearly see how vulnerable the global model of trade and production is, and that there is a lack of properly paid work in global supply chains. This issue, which has already been on the ILO agenda since 2016, must be addressed with new, strong tripartite commitment, ensuring that governments and businesses take responsibility for their supply chains beyond national borders.

The fourth ILO Covid-19 monitor shared figures on young workers. Its shocking statistics are a warning about the emergence of a lost ‘lockdown generation’. Although it is right to draw attention to the very high number of young workers in ‘informal jobs’, the analysis does not sufficiently differentiate between informality and precarity. Our unions everywhere know that even before the crisis many young workers were stuck in all kinds of precarious jobs, including on-call work, temporary contracts, agency work, undeclared employment and bogus self-employment. For too long, the debate in the ILO has been paralyzed when it comes to so-called ‘non-standard forms of employment.’ Now is the time to act and effectively follow up on the issue of the ‘Labour Protection Floor’, which was addressed in the Centenary Declaration and seeks to protect all workers, regardless of their employment status.

An often-forgotten dimension of this crisis is its impact on migrant workers, many of whom work in vital sectors and services that ensure our societies can continue to run properly. But because of the precarious nature of their employment contracts or immigration status, they stay without the protection needed against the virus. Reports worldwide also tell us about migrants being forced to work in unsafe circumstances in jobs and sectors that cannot be considered ‘vital’ at all, or about special ‘shipping’ of labour migrants to meet urgent seasonal needs in agriculture. Often housed in overcrowded, unhygienic communal or worksite accommodation, and
This has exposed the general lack of a regulatory framework, leading to new risks and lack of protection in health and safety, excessive working hours and precarious working conditions, made worse by the increased use of platforms as intermediaries. As we can expect this development to stay and even expand further, the need for ILO action in this area – as already mentioned in the Centenary Declaration – is clear.

**ACTRAV INFO: Finally, how can we enhance the role of the ILO and the multilateral system to mitigate the impact of Covid-19?**

Recently, many people have rightfully spoken about the ILO’s central role in the multilateral system. The world at large will be in dire need of leadership in social and economic affairs, a role that the ILO must be take up with convincing authority. The ILO can only play this role if there is a sense of urgency on all sides, with agreement that there can be no going back to ‘business as usual’ but that there needs to be a joint commitment to a future that is more sustainable in social, economic and environmental terms.

This is the moment to remind everyone that social justice and the fight against inequalities must be a top priority, with a central role for governments in tackling the employment crisis and its fallout: starvation and social unrest. This issue is an accident waiting to happen, with millions of workers in the formal and informal economy losing their jobs and millions of SMEs going out of business.

This may not be so far from how the world was in around 1919, when governments, businesses and unions deeply understood that only with social justice and social dialogue as guiding principles could there be proper recovery from the vast destruction of World War I. In the preamble to the ILO’s constitution in 1919, the following was declared loud and clear: “…. conditions of labour exist involving such injustice, hardship and privation to large numbers of people as to produce unrest so great that the peace and harmony of the world are imperiled, and an improvement of those conditions is urgently required.”

In the Philadelphia Declaration, as confirmed last year in the Centenary Declaration, the ILO is
International

called upon to ensure policy coherence in the multilateral system. This means examining and considering all international economic and financial policies and measures in light of the fundamental objective of achieving social justice. This is no small task in a world facing growing challenges to multilateralism. But taking into account the wide, tripartite support for this key message in the Centenary Declaration, the ILO must play a pivotal role in guiding its constituents and the wider world through the Covid-19 crisis towards a fairer, more sustainable future of work.

Unions worldwide are calling for a new social contract. This is the moment to show the world that social dialogue and tripartism are essential to recovering from a crisis as devastating as Covid-19. It would be great if our tripartite cooperation at ILO level showed the way forward, placing the ILO at the heart of recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic with a view to achieving a more inclusive, more sustainable development model and to making societies more resilient.

COVID-19 pandemic

a new global disaster

Introduction

On 31 December 2019, the World Health Organization [WHO] reported a cluster of pneumonia cases in Wuhan City, China. ‘A severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2’ [SARACoV-2] was confirmed as the causative agent of what we now know as ‘Coronavirus Disease 2019’ [COVID-19]. The majority of case-patients initially identified were dealers and vendors at a seafood, poultry and live wildlife market in China. Travelers to area where there is ongoing sustained transmission mainland China, Hong Kong, Singapore, Vietnam, Taiwan, Italy were the greatest risk areas of infection.

Rapid development of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) into a pandemic has called for people to acquire and apply health information, and adapt their behaviour at a fast pace.

Healthcare is not a luxury but a human necessity

The Covid19 pandemic has taught many global states on the necessity to invest in quality healthcare for all that provides universal access on the basis of the needs of the citizens.

The worst case scenario was the nationalization of healthcare by Spain. It proved to all global citizens that universal health care is possible!

In an attempt to control the 2019 coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, governments across the world have implemented distancing measures during the search for medical countermeasures, resulting in millions of people being isolated for long periods.
Background

As of March 25, 2020, 414,179 cases and 18,440 deaths were reported due to the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), caused by the novel severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2), had been reported worldwide.

Hardly after five days, there were more than 3,207,248 cases reported, with 227,971 deaths recorded worldwide as of the 30th April 2020.

The epidemic began in mainland China, with a geographical focus in the city of Wuhan, Hubei. However, on Feb 26, 2020, the rate of increase in cases became greater in the rest of the world than inside China. Substantial outbreaks are occurring in Italy (69,176 cases), the USA (51,914 cases), and Iran (24,811 cases), and geographical expansion of the epidemic continues.

Clinical studies of hospitalised patients have shown that, at onset of COVID-19, patients frequently show symptoms associated with viral pneumonia, most commonly fever, cough, sore throat, myalgia, and fatigue.

According to the report from the WHO–China Joint Mission on COVID-19, 80% of the 55,924 patients with laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 in China to Feb 20, 2020, had mild-to-moderate disease, including both non-pneumonia and pneumonia cases, while 13.8% developed severe disease and 6.1% developed to a critical stage requiring intensive care.

In a study of clinical progression in 1099 patients, those at highest risk for severe disease and death included people over the age of 60 years and those with underlying conditions, including hypertension, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, chronic respiratory disease, and cancer.

Most governments, including the UK Government, have responded to the COVID-19 pandemic by advising the public to remain indoors, avoid unnecessary social contact, to protect themselves and health-care systems, and to save lives.

Assessing the severity of COVID-19 is crucial to determine the appropriateness of mitigation strategies and to enable planning for health-care needs as epidemics unfold. However, crude case fatality ratios obtained by dividing the number of deaths by the number of cases can be misleading.

First, there can be a period of 2–3 weeks between a person developing symptoms, the case subsequently being detected and reported, and observation of the final clinical outcome. During a growing epidemic, the final clinical outcome of most of the reported cases is typically unknown. Simply dividing the cumulative reported number of deaths by the cumulative number of reported cases will therefore underestimate the true case fatality ratio early in an epidemic.

This effect was observed in past epidemics of respiratory pathogens, including severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) and H1N1 influenza, and as such is widely recognised. Thus, many of the estimates of the case fatality ratio that have been obtained to date for COVID-19 correct for this effect.

Additionally, however, during the exponential growth phase of an epidemic, the observed time lags between the onset of symptoms and outcome (recovery or death) are censored, and naive estimates of the observed times from symptom onset to outcome provide biased estimates of the actual distributions.

Ignoring this effect tends to bias the estimated case fatality ratio downwards during the early growth phase of an epidemic.

The role of World Health Organization (WHO)

The World Health Organization declared Coronavirus a global pandemic and swiftly engaged all member states on a regular basis to activate response teams to combat the devastating effects of Covid-19.

WHO alluded that “Health systems are being confronted with rapidly increasing demand generated by the COVID-19 outbreak. When health systems are overwhelmed, both direct mortality from an outbreak and indirect mortality from vaccine-preventable and treatable conditions increase dramatically.

Analyses from the 2014-2015 Ebola outbreak suggest that the increased number of deaths caused by measles, malaria, HIV/AIDS, and tuberculosis
attributable to health system failures exceeded deaths from Ebola.[1,2] A system’s ability to maintain delivery of essential health services will depend on its baseline capacity and burden of disease, and the COVID-19 transmission context (classified as no, sporadic, clusters, or community transmission). Maintaining population trust in the capacity of the health system to safely meet essential needs and to control infection risk in health facilities is key to ensuring appropriate care-seeking behavior and adherence to public health advice. A well-organized and prepared health system has the capacity to maintain equitable access to essential service delivery throughout an emergency, limiting direct mortality and avoiding increased indirect mortality. With a relatively limited COVID-19 caseload, health systems may have the capacity to maintain routine service delivery in addition to managing COVID-19 cases. When caseloads are high, and/or the health workforce is reduced due to infection of health workers, strategic shifts are required to ensure that increasingly limited resources provide maximum benefit for a population. Countries will need to make difficult decisions to balance the demands of responding directly to COVID-19, while simultaneously engaging in strategic planning and coordinated action to maintain essential health service delivery, mitigating the risk of system collapse. Many routine and elective services may be postponed or suspended. In addition, when routine practice comes under threat due to competing demands, simplified purpose-designed governance mechanisms and protocols can mitigate outright system failure. Establishing effective patient flow (including screening, triage, and targeted referral of COVID-19 and non-COVID-19 cases) is essential at all levels. Successful implementation of these strategic shifts will require transparency and frequent communication with the public, specific protections to ensure access for socially vulnerable populations, active engagement of communities and other stakeholders, and a high degree of cooperation from individuals.”

Establish simplified purpose-designed governance and coordination mechanisms to complement response protocols. A designated focal point for essential
health services should be a member of the COVID-19 Incident Management Team. In the early stages of the epidemic, when COVID-19 caseload can still be managed and routine services are not yet compromised, this focal point can assist in repurposing human, financial, and material resources from routine services and mobilizing additional resources. When routine services begin to be compromised, the essential health services focal point leads on triggering a phased reprioritization of services, as described in the sections below, working through relevant authorities to coordinate with public and private service providers, and reorient referral pathways.

**KEY ACTIONS:**
- Establish (or adapt) simplified mechanisms and protocols to govern essential health service delivery in coordination with response protocols.
- Establish triggers/thresholds that activate a phased reallocation of routine comprehensive service capacity towards essential services, through the specific mechanisms identified below.
- Assess and monitor ongoing delivery of essential health services to identify gaps and potential need to dynamically remap referral pathways.

Countries around the world are facing the challenge of increased demand for care of people with COVID-19, compounded by fear, misinformation and limitations on movement that disrupt the delivery of health care for all conditions.

Maintaining essential health services: operational guidance for the COVID-19 context recommends practical actions that countries can take at national, subregional and local levels to reorganize and safely maintain access to high-quality, essential health services in the pandemic context. It also outlines sample indicators for monitoring essential health services, and describes considerations on when to stop and restart services as COVID-19 transmission recedes and surges.

**Identify context-relevant essential services**
- Countries should identify essential services that will be prioritized in their efforts to maintain continuity of service delivery. High-priority categories include:
  - Essential prevention for communicable diseases, particularly vaccination;
  - Services related to reproductive health, including care during pregnancy and childbirth;
  - Care of vulnerable populations, such as young infants and older adults;
  - Provision of medications and supplies for the ongoing management of chronic diseases, including mental health conditions;
  - Continuity of critical inpatient therapies;
  - Management of emergency health conditions and common acute presentations that require time-sensitive intervention;
  - Auxiliary services, such as basic diagnostic imaging, laboratory services, and blood bank services.

The selection of priorities will be guided by health system context and the local burden of disease, but should initially be oriented to preventing communicable disease, averting maternal and child morbidity and mortality, preventing acute exacerbations of chronic conditions by maintaining established treatment regimens, and managing emergency conditions that require time-sensitive intervention.

Routine health promotion visits may be limited, and delivery of vaccinations and antenatal care will likely need to be adapted (see optimizing platforms and task sharing below). Specific guidance on immunization in the context of COVID-19 is under development and will shortly be available. Strengthening supply chains to ensure continuity of established treatment regimens for key chronic diseases can limit acute exacerbations, reduce the need for provider encounters, and minimize unscheduled attendance at emergency departments. Since availability of referral services may be limited in
the context of increasing demands on the health system associated with COVID-19, all health workers should be prepared, including through targeted in-service training and in line with scopes of practice, to take on additional responsibilities related to the initial management for key life-threatening syndromes (difficulty breathing, shock, altered mental status, and injury in patients of all ages—see WHO/ICRC Basic Emergency Care). And emergency units at first-level hospitals may become the primary location for maintaining care for common symptomatic presentations, such as fever, pregnancy-related bleeding, chest pain, and headache.

If the outbreak period is prolonged, authorities will need to regularly reconsider the status of outpatient services that are time dependent and life saving, but not time sensitive on the order of hours to days. Decisions about when to initiate cancer treatments, for example, may need to be integrated with an analysis of the benefits of early treatment, the risk of immuno-compromise during an outbreak, and the estimated duration of service limitations. And the priority for surgical procedures initially deemed elective may change over time. Strategies for the restoration of comprehensive and elective services should be revisited and revised periodically as the outbreak evolves.

**KEY ACTIONS:**
- Generate a country-specific list of essential services (based on context and supported by WHO guidance and tools).
- Identify routine and elective services that can be delayed or relocated to non-affected areas.
- Create a roadmap for progressive phased reduction of services.

**Optimize service delivery settings and platforms**
The settings where specific essential services are delivered may need to be modified for many reasons, including:
- Existing service locations may be unavailable because they have been designated for the exclusive care of people affected by COVID-19;
- Routine health service delivery may need to be adapted (e.g. vaccinations delivered by targeted approaches; postnatal care delivered at home);
- Need to limit the number of provider encounters due to increased demand and decreased staff;
- The primary venue for maintaining acute care services may be shifted to first-level hospital emergency units in order to concentrate services in a setting suited to high-volume high-acuity care available 24 hours per day.

**KEY ACTIONS:**
- Conduct a functional mapping of health facilities, including those in public, private, and military systems (this is a shared action with Operational planning guidelines to support country preparedness and response, Pillar 7: Case management).
- Taking into account re-purposed facilities, concentrate 24-hour acute care services at designated first-level hospital emergency units (or similar) and ensure public awareness.
- Redirect chronic disease management to focus on maintaining supply chains for medications and needed supplies, with a reduction in provider encounters.
- Establish outreach mechanisms as needed to ensure delivery of essential services.

WHO has urged all global citizens to be taking precautionary measures, which includes washing hands, sanitizing hands and covering the face with a mask.

‘Disseminate information to prepare the public and guide safe care-seeking behaviour, is critical’, declared WHO Director General, Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus.

People with and without COVID-19 will initially access the health system in the same way. Since people present prior to having a diagnosis, there is overlap in patient flow for services directed to COVID-19 and for other essential services. Basic infection-prevention measures (hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette, physical distancing) should be promoted universally.

In some settings, promotion of self-initiated isolation of those with mild respiratory symptoms may be indicated to limit facility crowding. Frontline care sites—including primary health centres, clinics, and hospital emergency
units, as well as ad-hoc community settings (schools, etc) that have been designated as care sites—will need to expand their capacity for screening, isolation and triage, including with designated physical areas and appropriate security. All frontline sites will need to be ready to assess and refer patients appropriately and safely to reduce transmission and ensure rational use of scarce advanced care resources. In some settings, specific facilities may be designated for the care of patients affected by COVID-19. In other settings, there may only be one hospital. Instituting targeted referral and counter-referral criteria and processes will be crucial to keep the system from becoming overwhelmed.

Rapidly re-distribute health workforce capacity, including by re-assignment and task sharing. Many countries face existing health workforce challenges, including shortages, maldistribution, and misalignment between population health needs and health worker competencies. Additional factors may limit the availability of health workers to deliver essential services during the outbreak, including re-assignment of staff to treat increasing numbers of patients with COVID-19, and loss of staff who may be quarantined, infected, or required to care for infected friends and family. The combination of increased workload and reduced number of health workers is expected to pose a severe strain on the capacity to maintain essential services.

These predictable challenges should be offset through a combination of strategies. Critical support measures include ensuring appropriate working hours and enforced rest periods; providing guidance, training and supplies to limit health worker exposures; providing physical security and psychosocial support; monitoring for illness, stress and burnout; and ensuring timely payment of salaries, sick leave, and overtime (including for temporary staff to eliminate perverse incentives for staff to report to work while ill). Health workers in high-risk categories for complications of COVID-19 may need to be reassigned to tasks that reduce risk of exposure. Offering accommodation arrangements to reduce staff travel time and protect health workers’ families from exposure may be appropriate.

Mechanisms to identify additional health workforce capacity include:

- Request part-time staff to expand hours and full-time staff to work remunerated overtime;
- Re-assign staff from non-affected areas (ensuring alignment of clinical indemnity arrangements where necessary);
- Utilize registration and certification records to identify additional qualified workers, including licensed retirees and trainees for appropriate supervised roles;
- Mobilize non-governmental, military, Red Cross/Crescent, and private sector health workforce capacity, including through temporary deployment to the public sector where relevant;
- Where appropriate, consider establishing pathways for accelerated training and early certification of medical, nursing, and other key trainee groups, ensuring supportive supervision;
- Identify high-impact clinical interventions for which rapid training would facilitate safe task sharing, and consider expansion of scopes of practice where possible;
- Utilize web-based platforms to provide key trainings (e.g., on management of time-sensitive conditions and common undifferentiated presentations in frontline care), clinical decision support and direct clinical services where appropriate.

Formalize organized lay provider systems (such as Community First Aid Responders, Red Cross/Crescent volunteers);

Train and repurpose government and other workers from non-health sectors to support functions in health facilities (administration, maintenance, catering, etc.);

Increase home-based service support by appropriately trained, remunerated and supplied community health workers;

Increase capacity of informal care givers for home care support such as family, friends, and neighbors.
The South African Commercial, Catering and Allied has condemned the irresponsible and nefarious advertisement by Clicks store which allegedly labeled black hair in a distasteful manner. The advert depicted natural black hair as ‘damaged and dry, dull and frizzy’.

SACCAWU President Louise Thipe said ‘The advert that profiles and defines African hair in many negative terms against Caucasian hair which they define and profile as “normal” is nothing but anti-black sentiment and open racism, which does not have a place in our Society.

Thipe alluded that ‘We cannot help but wonder whether Clicks is willfully driving the gender-based violence, especially against black African women with this sorry excuse for an advert. This kind of racist attitude from a company which employs majority of blacks is not only despicable but downright arrogant and disrespectful of the very people who generate their profits through rendering service as workers and sourcing goods and services as customers.

It is ironic that the same profits generated by the ever-toiling black workers are used to mock, ridicule and insult not only the black workers but the entire black population, which represent the majority in this Country.’

She said ‘The lackluster apology tweeted by Clicks declares that: “We know we need to do better ...” yet notwithstanding such knowledge they went on to embrace an advert that openly declares natural black African hair as not being normal. Another tweet states: “We do not condone racism and we are strong advocates of natural hair”.

Clearly the natural hair referred to in this tweet is not black African hair, which has been profiled by Clicks to be Dry, Damaged, Frizzy & Dull, thus very far from the alleged “advocacy for natural hair”! This is an insult to the collective intelligence of black people in this Country and entrenchment of the mentality of white superiority over blacks. We declare that a mere apology cannot undo the damage done, unless it is accompanied by Clicks’ concrete action.’

‘We thus demand that Clicks takes such action and dismiss any person or institution associated with the advert (including the advertising/marketing agent, if any), its approval as well as those responsible for the approval and management of their website content. Although such action will not undo the harm visited upon the black majority, it will go a long way to demonstrate that Clicks is indeed sorry and will not tolerate any behaviour that goes against their values.’

Meanwhile, Clicks has issued an ‘apology’ declaring that ‘Clicks has taken full accountability and apologized unreservedly for the advertisement published on its website and has taken immediate action to address all concerns’.

Other political parties and ordinary citizens expressed their anger over the advert by Clicks and demand the company to ‘shoulder responsibility.’
NEHAWU members demand WAGE INCREASE in the public service

On the 3rd September 2020, the National Education, Health and Allied Workers Union [NEHAWU] declared a National Day of Action against inadequate provision of personal protective equipment at all health centres for frontline workers and other essential workers, rampant corrupt activities undermining the fight against coronavirus and also disrespect for collective bargaining in the public service.

The National Action led by National Office Bearers and Provincial leadership was cascaded in all Branches or Regions across the country, with ordinary members participating. The National event was taking place at the Union Buildings, in Pretoria.

‘NEHAWU has organised the Siyahlala Day of Action from the 28th August 2020 as an integral part of the national programme of action to protect and defend its members and workers against infection by the coronavirus’, declared NEHAWU General Secretary, Zola Saphetha.

Saphetha said ‘the national union is called on and encourage all its members and workers to stay away from work because employers have neglected their duty of providing and maintaining workplaces that are safe and without risk to the health of workers.

The aim of the action is to send a clear message to the employer that workers are tired of being anxious and constantly fearing for their lives while saving the lives of others. Workers are suffering from extreme exhaustion because we have a historical understaffing problem which has been exacerbated by the fact many workers need to go on self-isolation because they are recklessly exposed to the virus by employers. In this regard, workers need to stay away from work for one day because they are tired and they fear for their lives.’

‘The Siyahlala Day of Action was led at all fronts to afford workers some time to rest and recharge their batteries. Moreover, the day will also be used to highlight workers anger at the non-implementation of PSCBC Resolution 1 of 2018 especially clause 3.3 which speaks to the salary increase of public servants. Workers have been patient for far too long and they want to send a message to government that they will not fold their arms while government reneges on implementing a binding collective agreement.’

Saphetha declared that ‘NEHAWU refuses to stand idle while its members and workers are getting infected on a daily basis because employers who blatantly refuse to comply with the Occupational Health and Safety [OHS] Act and to provide adequate quality Personal Protective Equipment [PPEs] to workers. We can no longer standby while our members and workers are on a daily basis contracting the virus while others are succumbing to it because employers are neglecting their role of providing a safe workplace environment for workers.

The same government that is telling workers that there is no money for salary increases is busy losing billions of rands to corruption including losing money meant to procure PPEs meant for front line workers.

‘The failures by government and other employers to respond adequately to our demands of protecting workers from the coronavirus has necessitated that we embark on the Siyahlala Day of Action and as such we call on all our members and workers to canvass openly that it’s no longer safe at the workplace.’

On Tackling Corruption

Saphetha said ‘The outbreak of the coronavirus has introduced a new breed of tenderpreneurs called Covidpreneurs who rushed to establish companies when the pandemic broke out in the country to loot state resources meant to protect workers.

Our members and workers...
have been complaining about poor quality of PPEs which increases the danger of them contracting the virus.

NEHAWU has always been at the forefront of highlighting the rampant scourge of corruption in the healthcare sector, way before the outbreak of the coronavirus in the country. NEHAWU as a union organising in the health sector has always been exposing corruption especially in supply management, procurement, servicing of medical equipment, human resources and corrupt activities associated with outsourcing. However, this is not only about Covidpreneurs lining their pockets with ill-gotten gains but about frontline workers who are getting infected on a daily basis.

DENOSA seeks mandate from workers on wage increase saga

The Democratic Nursing Organisation of South Africa (DENOSA) across all provinces took a resolution to visit all its members at workplaces to take stock how are they surviving to tackle coronavirus, with zero provision for danger allowance or persona protective equipment.

In Gauteng and in Mpumalanga leaders and organizers ventured into all regions at all healthcare facilities where they were formally ‘giving feedback to nurses about the continuing non-implementation of salary increment by government and on a stalling negotiation process on risk allowance as well as to take the mandate from members on the way forward.’

DENOSA Mpumalanga provincial office said ‘it resolved that the provincial leaders must embark on a province-wide consultation with members at institutions to collect mandate and also check the department’s compliance with Covid-19 safety regulations and general occupational health and safety of the workplace.’

‘As DENOSA, we are extremely angry with how the government has undermined the collective bargaining agreement at the bargaining chamber, and our members are also angry and they have made that known to us,” says DENOSA Mpumalanga Provincial Secretary, Mzwandile Shongwe.

‘By playing this cat-and-mouse with workers and doing anything to avoid paying them, workers themselves are now prepared to do anything also to get their money because their labour is being exploited without any pay.’

Meanwhile, the Public Service Collective Bargaining Council (PSCBC) said in a statement that ‘the arbitration of the wage dispute in the public service is taking place at the PSCBC. The matter was set down for virtual oral arguments on the 28th August 2020 relating to the jurisdiction of the PSCBC. On the 28th August, the proceedings were postponed sine die pending the proceedings before the Labour Court under the case number J500/20.

The parties agreed that the applicants in case number J500/20 shall file affidavits in answer to the cross application before the Labour Court by 14th September 2020, and the respondents any replying affidavits by the 28th September 2020.

Further, the parties have agreed to jointly request the Judge President of the Labour Court to grant an expedited date for the hearing of the matter in that court, or the Labour Appeal Court sitting as a court of the first instance in terms of section 175 of the Labour Relations Act, of 1995, and that regard to issue directions relating to the filing of the record and of heads of argument’.
The South African Commercial, Catering and Allied Workers Union (SACCAWU) has been deeply concerned about alleged discrimination based on pregnancy as currently is experienced by our women members, in particular during the COVID-19 pandemic.

SACCAWU National Gender Coordinator, Patracia Nyman said, "Women members reported that they are denied Temporary Employer/Employee Relief Scheme (TERS), by the Department of Employment and Labour (DE&L) and the Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF) benefit due to them, having been on Maternity Leave. Some of the affected members are alleged to have returned to work long before the lockdown whilst some of them have not even been paid their UIF maternity leave benefit during their maternity leave taken prior the lockdown."

It is inhumane to deny women members their rightful income at the time they need it most. Some of these women members are in single parent headed households and in a case like this it also denies their family an income, and literally reducing women workers to paupers, if not condemning them to destitution but equally vulnerable from affording any protective means to this deadly virus. This kind of insult, as we under the circumstances deem it to be; is not immune or different from gender based violence (GBV) the society, led by the State President, claims to be fending off or fighting."

Nyman argued that ‘At a time like this, being in the midst of a crisis, it becomes even more imperative to uphold and implement the principles of gender equality, gender sensitive protection of women workers on maternity leave and enabling workers to raise their families in conditions of security and ability to meet the obligation to fund their families’ wellness. The conduct of the DE&L and the UIF, if it is correct as alleged, is totally unacceptable and essentially violates the rights of women based on their reproductive role and the legislation that protects women workers from discrimination based on pregnancy. In this case we refer to the South African Constitution, Employment Equity Act, Basic Conditions of Employment Act or relevant pieces of legislation that specifically prohibit discrimination based on pregnancy and gender."

We are mindful of the provisions of Maternity Leave as contained in the different laws, such as the BCEA and UIF prescribe that maternity leave is separate from any other UIF benefit payments. We are also mindful that TERS provisions and TERS regulations do not talk to women having taken maternity leave before lockdown as preventing one from receiving a TERS payment."

She said ‘The TERS benefit is a special provision due to the crisis/disaster brought about by COVID 19 pandemic and it is totally separate from having taken maternity leave prior to the lockdown or when the TERS was legislated, thus the fact that a woman worker had taken maternity leave should be immaterial and not up for consideration, let alone discussion. Therefore, women members are entitled to receive payment and it is very problematic that some employers have to return the rejected applications because it means that women workers have to wait without any income in the hope that their application will be accepted."

This entitlement is not double dipping of the TERS, and the underlying assumption that it is seen as double dipping is tantamount to discrimination against women workers. The maladministration of both employers and UIF in clearing the UIF
maternity register/list on workers commencing duties subsequent to the end of such leave must not be blamed on workers who have no role whatsoever in administration and regulation of UIF regime/system. It is very disturbing that women workers who have been put on leave due to their workplace not being an essential service are punished in this fashion and now have to experience triple trauma of job security, loss of income and the impact of COVID 19.

We are also of the view that women currently on maternity leave should be allowed to receive the TERS payment as we are in a unique situation and uncharted terrain as aptly referred to, furthermore the UIF maternity payment is far from adequate especially when they do not receive a maternity leave contributions from the employers, and therefore cannot access any other form of social relief compensation.’ Nyman concluded by saying ‘Maternity protection is one of the preconditions for achieving genuine equality of opportunity and treatment of women and men at work, and enabling workers to raise families in conditions of comfort, certainty, safety and security. We expected that, in both formulation and application of policies we as the society, but, particularly the State we must ensure that we do not engage in gender-blind practices as same might double negate effects to groups that are already in vulnerable economic crisis state.’

SACTWU: No to job losses or cut in wages

Coronavirus pandemic has impacted immensely in the manufacturing sector during lockdown as many countries were demanding production of personal protective equipments and other commodities to curb the spread of the virus. The union led various educational programs to sensitise workers about taking precautionary measures and also screening to safe lives.

‘The COSATU-affiliated Southern African Clothing & Textile Workers Union (SACTWU) has declared a series of wage disputes,’ said the General Secretary, Andrie Kriel.

Kriel alluded to the fact that these disputes arise out of deadlocked recent wage negotiations, in a number of industrial sectors in which we have members. Negotiations have been difficult under COVID-19 lockdown conditions.

However, the biggest general problem which has led to these wage disputes is employer demands for downward variations in conditions of employment of our members. These destructive opportunistic efforts by employers include proposals to cut members’ wages, taking away their annual bonus entitlements, wage freezes and reductions in shift- and other allowances.’

He said ‘while we acknowledge that the lockdown has been difficult for our industry, we will not just sit by and meekly accept these brutal employer attacks on our members’ standard of living. To date, we have declared 18 wage disputes covering just over 14 000 workers, in 6 sectors and at a number of stand alone workplaces. These sectors include carpet textiles, non-woven textiles, home textiles, worsted textiles, general goods and handbags, laundry services and a number of specific plant bargains. We are determined not to allow workers’ decades-long and hard-won conditions of employment gains to be eradicated by employers who are hell-bent on opportunistically using the COVID-19 crisis to rob our members of what are rightfully theirs. Fortunately, employers in the home textiles sector have recognized this, and we have now settled the dispute for this sector amicably.’

Meanwhile, negotiations in our other sectors, such as in the clothing industry, are continuing.
The Working Class!

The class that endures untrustworthy leaders
Leaders who contradict words and deeds
Leaders who raise high slogans of freedom

But denouncing the struggle for freedom
Denouncing driving force of revolution
Looking back into the past and testing the present
Philistine and corrupt leaders stampeding for their purses
Who say one thing and do another

Who claim to represent the cause of the working class
These Leaders!
Their words are full of fat fictions

They believe that they are everything and the people are nothing
They are collaborators of people's enemies
Have no vigilant eyes to discover and correct mistakes
These leaders are afflicted by disease

Sometimes they disregarding and fear the masses
They diminish conscious strength belief of the masses
They take themselves as liberators and messiahs

Leaders! Tell the people!
What road are you supporting, defending and advancing
Is it socialist or Capitalist - imperialist Road?

by Thobile Maso
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