



The Shopsteward

The official publication of the Congress of South African Trade Unions

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COSATU PROVINCIAL CONGRESSES



MAY DAY

1 May 2025 *Rallies*

PROVINCE	ACTIVITY	STARTING TIME	VENUE
MPUMALANGA	NATIONAL RALLY	9AM	KEES TALJAARD STADIUM, MIDDELBURG
WESTERN CAPE	RALLY	10AM	THE CASTLE, CAPE TOWN
FREE STATE	RALLY	9AM	KROON PARK ARENA, KROONSTAD
EASTERN CAPE	RALLY	10AM	SISA DUKASHE STADIUM, MDANTSANE
GAUTENG	RALLY	9AM	SHARPEVILLE CRICKET PITCH, SHARPEVILLE
KWAZULU NATAL	RALLY	9AM	CURRIES FOUNTAIN STADIUM, DURBAN
LIMPOPO	RALLY	9AM	OLD PETER MOKABA STADIUM, POLOKWANE
NORTHERN CAPE	RALLY	9AM	THABO MOOROSI MULTIPURPOSE CENTRE, MOTHIBISTAD, KURUMAN
NORTH WEST	RALLY	9AM	LEHURUTSHE STADIUM, ZEERUST



“Build Working-class unity for economic liberation towards socialism”

DIGITAL CONNECT

Another Cosatu Initiation

WHY JOIN A LABOUR UNION

A labour union is an organized group of workers who come together to collectively bargain with employers in order to protect and advance their rights, interests, and working conditions. Unions represent workers across various industries and sectors and work to ensure fair treatment for employees. Here are some key reasons why joining a union can be important:

- Improved Wages and Benefits
- Job Security
- Workplace Safety
- Stronger Voice in the Workplace

Just to name a few...



Img:Application form by Cosatu Media

Labor unions can also engage in political and legislative activities to advocate for policies that benefit workers, such as fair wages, improved labor laws, and protections against discrimination or exploitation.

COSATU DOCUMENTS



COSATU NATIONAL CONGRESS RESOLUTIONS



UNIONS CONTACT DETAILS



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COSATU is set to celebrate May Day by hosting rallies across all nine provinces.

As we join in the festivities, it is important to remember that this day was not given freely, workers fought hard and long for it. Now that we have it, it's clear the struggle continues because although we have won some victories, the road to workers' full emancipation is long and winding.

For instance, it is apparent from the recently released report on the George Building collapse that the people charged with the responsibility of ensuring construction companies comply with the laws and regulations governing the sector, do not care enough to do their jobs, and as a result 34 workers lost their lives and 28 were injured.

The increase in the National Minimum Wage to R28.79 that came into effect on 1 March, counts as a definite victory for workers; and yet on a recent

early morning interview on Umhlobo Wenene, COSATU heard how farm, security, domestic and other workers still do not receive the minimum wage even though it was first introduced in 2019.

On a week-long oversight visit to the North West province early this month, the Portfolio Committee on Employment and Labour accompanied by the department and the South African Police Service, uncovered violations of various laws including the Basic Conditions of Employment Act, Unemployment Insurance Act, National Minimum Wage Act and Occupational Health and Safety Act.

They also saw the appalling living conditions that workers are forced

to endure, with some segregated along racial lines. So gross were the violations that some farm owners were immediately arrested.

Most appalling, however, was a farmer who took to TikTok to rant that a fellow farmer who was arrested, was put in the back of a police van with undocumented foreign nationals. It is truly unbelievable that 31 years into democracy, some South Africans still believe that even while under arrest, they deserve superior treatment.

COSATU has welcomed government efforts to keep steel maker ArcelorMittal open while a more sustainable plan is sought fearing the devastation that will befall both the workers and the surrounding communities if operations

were allowed to shut down.

Meanwhile a similar fate awaits workers and communities in Middleburg, Mpumalanga as coal mines contemplate retrenchments and closures in line with the transition to green energy. COSATU and its Affiliates will continue to demand a Just Transition that prioritises the needs of workers and working-class communities, safeguards jobs and job creation, and ensures that workers are trained and reskilled, so they are employable in a green economy.

However, it is important to say that COSATU's strength and influence to continue waging the workers' struggle depends entirely on the number of members affiliated to the unions under its umbrella.

The more workers COSATU has affiliated to it, the stronger it will be. So, this May Day attend a COSATU rally in your province and join a COSATU union in your sector, because together we can win more victories for the working class. ■■■■■





Word from the Editor

Norman Mampane

Plummeting relationship between the US and South Africa worrying, what's the way forward?

Rising cases on collapse of diplomatic decorum across the globe is worsening, with the latest case scenario featuring Rwanda severing diplomatic ties with Belgium, accusing the European nation of consistently undermining

Kigali amid the ongoing conflict in Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

The Southern African Development Community (SADC) has since withdrawn its peace keeping mission troops in the DRC.

What does this decision hold for peace initiatives in the Central region?

On the other hand, the United States of America has regrettable expelled the South African Ambassador to the United States of America, Mr. Ebrahim Rasool.

International relations between the two countries began under President Trump after under E.O. 14204, the U.S. declared it was 'considering refugee resettlement for disfavoured ethnic minority Afrikaners facing unjust racial discrimination in

South Africa.'

South Africa has declared its commitment to inclusive multilateralism as the most effective means to address the most pressing challenges facing the world.'

The Department of International Relations and Cooperation said 'South Africa remains committed to building a mutually beneficial relationship with the United States of America.'

Trade conflicts, positions on Israeli genocide, the BRICS+ block issue, and the suspension of US finances are just a few of the geopolitical issues that have exacerbated the situation!

How long will this aftermath last?

In Africa, the poorest households are paying more in taxes than they receive in transfers and subsidies.

The South African

government received a backlash from progressive labour organizations and civil society for increasing value added tax by 0.5% on the occasion of the tabling of 2025 Budget Speech by Minister of Finance Enoch Godongwana.

Instead of reducing inequality, fiscal policy often makes poverty worse through austerity measures and budget cuts crippling quality public services in communities.

Many citizens argue that South Africa is abandoning the notion of building a capable, developmental state through the neoliberal policies trajectory.

Workers demand a People's Budget!

In this edition, we are covering COSATU's Social Responsibility Project at Sandringham High School after the federation donated school shoes and dignity packs to the needy learners, the reaction

of SAMATU to the health market inquiry recommendations to improve competition within the sector and the effects of the closure of ArcelorMittal on jobs in South Africa.

The history of the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU) was revived with the 70th anniversary celebrations held at Liliesleaf Museum in Rivonia, Gauteng.

We must salute all the heroes and heroines who laid a firm foundation for COSATU since its inception in 1985!

On Organizational developments, we witnessed back-to-back convening of Worker's Parliament across the nine provinces, with provinces renewing their mandates.

Congratulations to all elected leaders. We wish you successful term of office in building COSATU Locals to respond to

all labour grievances or disputes of workers on the ground.

On the other hand, we have observed strengthening of COSATU Gender Structures to deepen the struggle for gender equality and fairer wages.

With the commemorative events of Beijing30+, we are contending that various labour organizations will push forward with equal pay for work of equal value and eradicate violence and harassment in the world of work.

We hope you will enjoy reading this edition and will contribute to the enrichment of comradely debates by replying to others' perspectives.

Happy International Women's Day! Happy Human Rights Day!

Aluta Continua!



COSATU Public Service Coordinator, Itumeleng Molatlhegi engaging with the employer in one of the sessions at the PSCBC Offices.

PUBLIC SERVICE UNIONS settle with the employer for a 5.5% salary increase

After a 21-day consultation period, the Public Service Co-ordinating Bargaining Council (PSCBC) successfully concluded wage negotiations, resulting in a majority agreement (84.34%).

The public service trade unions in South Africa have

agreed to a 5.5% salary increment for 2025/26 financial year.

The PSCBC was established for the purpose of maintaining and promoting good labour relations between the employer and employees in the Public Service. Its functionality consists of

providing a platform that facilitate negotiating of collective agreement, monitor implementation and enforcement compliance of collective agreement and to prevent and resolve disputes through conciliation and arbitration.

The PSCBC General Secretary Mr Frikkie De Bruin said, "The PSCBC

commends all the parties for their commitment to constructive negotiations, ensuring fair labour relations and sustainable outcomes. The collective bargaining process is vital for negotiating workplace conditions, wages, and other important issues. The PSCBC plays a key role in facilitating this

process by bringing parties to the council to engage in negotiations and reach mutually beneficial agreements.”

De Bruin elaborated that, “At a Council meeting held on 20 January 2025, parties to the PSCBC were given a 21-day period to consult with their stakeholders on the Draft PSCBC Wage Agreement. This period concluded yesterday 18 February 2025. We are pleased to announce that the parties have successfully obtained mandates, achieving a majority party agreement of 84.34%.

Two PSCBC resolution were formed as part of the process. Resolution 01 of 2025 on Salary Adjustments and Conditions of Service and Resolution 02 of 2025 on Further Research and Negotiation.”

“On 1 October 2024, labour rejected the employer’s offer of a 3% salary increase, which was a counter to the 12% demand tabled by labour earlier. Both parties have reviewed and discussed other demands to ensure mutual understanding, though they remain firmly positioned with no compromise at this point.

Due to the urgency of the matter, both sides have agreed to a facilitated process to bridge the gap, scheduled to begin on 8 October 2024. According

to the PSCBC Resolution 2 of 2024 of the Negotiations Protocol Agreement, the facilitator’s responsibilities included documenting points of agreement and disagreement, as well as managing the negotiation process and timeline to ensure progress within reasonable timeframes.”

“Earlier in 2024 around October, the Parties to the PSCBC engaged in facilitation over the last two weeks as to find amicable solutions. During the facilitation progress was made as to close the gap between the cost of living adjustment (COLA) demand of Labour and the offer from the employer.

The employer proposed adjustments to the housing and danger allowances in an attempt to respond to the demands of labour. Various of the demands such as the demand on a death grant and a bursary payment for children of public servants has been placed into a process as to collectively try and find solutions over a longer period.

There are also areas where there is still disagreement or very little progress made, such as the increase to the medical aid subsidy, pay progression and the abolishment of levels 1-3. Parties continued to seek solutions on these areas. Labour requested time to consult their members on the detail of the proposals

made, and it was hoped that the consultation will be finalised within 14 days.”

“Late in 2024, the Parties to council reconvened for wage negotiations at the PSCBC on 4 December 2024. During this special council meeting, labour rejected the employer’s current offer of 4,7% salary increment. Labour requested employer to improve their current offer, however employer maintained that the 4.7% salary increase was their final proposal, while still expressing commitment to further discussions.

Both labour and employer agreed to a negotiation timetable for December, with the next meeting scheduled for 12 December 2024.”

De Bruin concluded that “Earlier in 2025, the Parties to the Council reconvened for wage negotiations at the PSCBC on 20 January 2025. At this meeting, the Employer tabled an offer of a 5.5% cost of living adjustment (COLA).

The proposed agreement spans a 3-year multi-term period and includes increases in housing allowances, adjustments to medical aid contributions, enhanced danger allowances, improvements to the police service allowance. Parties have been granted 21 days for consultation. Negotiations were successfully concluded with a wage agreement, resulting in

a majority agreement (84.34%).”

Key agreements reached on the PSCBC Resolution 01 of 2025 included:

- Salary increase: 5.5% for 2025/2026, adjustments for 2026/2027 and 2027/2028 based on the Consumer Price Index (CPI)
 - Housing Allowance x2: Increased to R1,900 (April 2025), with CPI-based adjustments
 - Medical Aid Subsidy: Adjusted by Medical Price Index (MPI) (2025/2026) and MPI+ 0.5% (2026/2027-2027/2028)
 - Allowances: Danger Allowance: R650 (from R623.29)
 - Special Danger Allowance: R950 (from R931.82)
 - Service Allowance for Police: R950 (from R700)
- Resolution 02 of 2025:

Further Research and Negotiation (2025/2026)

Key issues for future discussions:

- Death Grant
- Childcare and Breastfeeding
- Facilities
- Recruitment Policy
- Bursary Scheme for Dependents
- Uniform Standardisation
- Incentive Framework
- Comprehensive Danger Allowance



ANCYL joined NUM Youth Structure on the picket lines outside the Minerals Council South Africa premises in strong opposition to the ongoing retrenchment of mineworkers

No to VAT Increase

says COSATU

Hundreds of workers participated in pickets against Value Added Tax, Budget Cuts and austerity measures at Cape Town on the occasion of the tabling of the Budget Speech by the Minister of Finance, Hon. Enoch Godongwana on the 12th

of March, 2025. Godongwana finally presented the 2025 budget, outlining the economic path the country must take after the first session on the 19th of February was postponed after the Chief Whips of political parties

‘agreed to cancel due to disagreements on VAT increase.’

The Minister in the Presidency and the Minister of Finance, announced that ‘the tabling of the 2025/26 annual budget, scheduled for 19 February

2025, is postponed to 12 March 2025.’

The budget is a detailed plan of government that guides how the collected revenue will be distributed and spend to support national priorities across all spheres such

as education, healthcare, infrastructure, energy security sports, arts and culture development to stimulate and sustain economic growth.

Anger has been fuelled by workers' and their families' struggles with personal debt, the burden of living expenses on the populace, and the high rates of unemployment, poverty, and inequality.

South Africa's economy grew by 0.6% in 2024, falling short of government projections despite having a

'honeymoon period' of no loadshedding. According to the Statistics South Africa 'agriculture; construction; trade; transport; manufacturing; and general government services industries recorded negative growth in 2024.'

Delivering the Budget Speech, Godongwana said 'government proposes to increase South Africa's value-added tax (VAT) rate by 0.5 percentage points in 2025/26 and 0.5 percentage points in 2026/27', a position

COSATU totally rejected. Matthew Parks, COSATU Parliamentary Coordinator reacts to the tabling of the Budget Speech by arguing that '0.5% VAT hike is a painful blow to millions of highly indebted working-class families and an already battered economy.'

The decision not to adjust tax brackets for low- and middle-income workers is not acceptable when they are already drowning in debt with their meagre wages not keeping pace with inflation.'

Parks recommended that 'the Parliament must exercise its legislative authority to amend the 2025/26 Budget tabled to scrap the VAT hike and the failure to adjust tax brackets for lower and middle income workers, to replace them with an additional immediate R2bn for SARS and higher taxes upon the wealthy and large corporations, as well as to adjust the SRD Grant for CPI, to increase funding for public employment programmes, and industrial and export financing.'

Parks further elaborated that the federation has noted with extreme disappointment the 2025/26 Budget tabled at Parliament by government.

Whilst there are many progressive provisions that COSATU campaigned for in the Budget, its primary source for funding these with an unnecessary 0.5% VAT hike for each of the next two years and not adjusting personal income tax brackets for 2025 will be a painful blow to millions of highly indebted working-class families and an already battered economy.

Revenue

COSATU cannot support tax hikes upon the working class and the poor and thus calls upon Parliament to reject this ill-considered pickpocketing of workers and amend the Budget with more progressive tax revenue options. VAT is regressive and hurts the poor who already cannot afford to buy essential foods, electricity or transport.

The decision not to adjust tax brackets for low- and middle-income workers is not acceptable when they are already drowning in debt with their meagre wages not keeping pace with inflation.

These tax hikes will now make the lives of millions even more difficult.

Whilst the Federation appreciates government's heeding its call for an expansion of zero-rated goods to include other meat, vegetables and dairy products, this should be expanded to include sanitary pads and school supplies. The freeze of fuel price taxes for a second year will bring welcome relief to commuters and the economy.

We are deeply irritated government has allocated a damp additional R500 million to boost the South African Revenue

Service's tax and customs compliance efforts. SARS has shown that it has the capacity to deliver. The R3.5 billion allocated to it over the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) needs to be brought forward to 2025 and 2026 to enable it to ramp up collection of the R800 billion in owed taxes by at least R60 billion. Further discussions must take place on how the Reserve Bank's reserves can support the fiscus.

These would be far more humane and sober revenue options than fleecing workers with a VAT hike and not adjusting tax brackets for inflation.

The temporary relief provided for the sugar industry is welcome. More must be done to assist this struggling sector to transition as must greater support be provided for industries to adjust to the Carbon Tax.

Public Services

Whilst we are extremely irritated by the anti-poor VAT hike and failure to adjust tax brackets for inflation, we welcome government's realisation that bleeding public services working class communities and businesses depend upon is reckless and harmful to the economy.

The additional MTEF allocations to frontline services, in particular Education (R29 billion), Health (R28.9bn), Home Affairs (R3bn), Defence (11.7bn) and Correctional Services (2.6bn) will help repair damage inflicted by previous austerity budget cuts.

The commitment to hiring more teachers, doctors, nurses, home affairs, police and border management officers, amongst other critical frontline personnel will boost public services; but details on when this will be done, and the exact numbers must be provided.

The finalisation of the public service wage agreement will help public servants heal financial wounds. We are concerned about the impact the

loss of valuable skills and experience by public servants who may opt for early retirement, may have upon the state's ability to provide public services.

Local Government

The rising number of municipalities battling to pay staff, including pension funds, or provide basic services as well as the doubling of municipal debt owed to Eskom to R94 billion, and community debt owed to municipalities nearing R300 billion; requires accelerating interventions to stabilise and rebuild local government.

It is critical that a new municipal funding model be developed and the move towards the District Development Model be expedited.

State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs)

COSATU applauds the outstanding work done by Eskom and municipal workers to overcome loadshedding. We are pleased that the debt relief package has provided Eskom breathing space to ramp up maintenance. It is critical that Eskom be given more support to tackle corruption, wasteful expenditure, cable theft and bring on board new generation capacity.

The allocation of R219bn for energy infrastructure will be an invaluable boost. These measures must translate into affordable electricity if the economy,

in particular mining and industry are to survive and grow.

Whilst government is naturally reluctant to provide further debt relief to SOEs, Transnet should be assisted to settle its debt to free up capital for the modernisation of its port and railway network as these will unlock the mining, manufacturing and agricultural sectors and create thousands of badly needed jobs and boost state revenue.

The R19.2 billion infrastructure support for Metro Rail will boost its efforts to return to full capacity and enable 10 million workers and commuters travel quickly and save money on transport.

Treasury must urgently honour its court signed business rescue agreement to provide the Post Office with the long delayed R1.4 billion. Failure to do so will see the collapse of this institution.

Government needs to table the Road Accident Fund (RAF) and Benefits Scheme Bills at Parliament as part of a package of interventions to set the RAF on a sustainable path and ensure its funds are directed to the poor not the wealthy, let alone insatiable ambulance chasing lawyers.

Stimulus

We welcome the

additional allocation of R46.7bn to bring the total MTEF spending for infrastructure to R1.03 trillion, in particular roads (R402bn), water (R156bn) as well as investments in rail, ports, new hospitals and 13 000 university beds. Parliament needs to crack the whip on government to ensure these funds are spent timeously and support locally produced materials.

Law enforcement must tackle the construction mafia hindering many construction projects.

We are worried no additional support is being put in place to cushion the agricultural and manufacturing sectors, amongst others, that will be hit hard if the United States does not extend the African Growth and Opportunities Act and imposes painful tariffs upon South African exports from 2 April.

We cannot afford to be complacent with an economy sitting at 1% growth and an unemployment rate of 41.6%. The R31 billion allocated for investments by the Development Bank and the Industrial Development Corporation as well as R1 billion for SMMEs will not have the impact the economy needs. Engagements on a mass industrial financing plan need to be accelerated to mobilise much greater resources from the public and private sectors.

This needs to be done by

November's Medium-Term Budget Policy Statement.

Social Relief

COSATU welcomes the substantial above inflation increases for social grants, helping 19 million recipients cope with the rising costs of living. We are deeply dismayed that government failed to provide similar inflationary protection for the 8 million SRD Grant recipients, who once again will be denied any increase. This is an absolute abomination.

The additional R8.8 billion for Public Employment Programmes as well as R22 billion from the Unemployment Insurance Fund for job creation programmes are a welcome shift from previous disastrous cuts but are still inadequate to make a meaningful dent in the 12 million unemployed.

COSATU will be requesting urgent engagements at Nedlac on a revamped public programme that pools together various funding

options, reduces corruption and wastage; and ensures recipients are paid the National Minimum Wage and receive the training and experience needed to find permanent work once exiting them.

The R3bn pilot project for the missing model to be access support for tertiary education is positive. It must be accompanied by a clean-up of NSFAS and an inflation recovery for its threshold.

We are pleased Treasury has committed to further engagements with COSATU to finalise the next phase of the Two Pot Pension Reforms, in particular to help workers who have lost their jobs or are drowning in debt, whilst simultaneously boosting retirement savings.

These reforms, initiated by COSATU, have injected over R43 billion into the pockets of more than 2.2 million workers as well as the economy.

Conclusion

Whilst there are many

progressive provisions in the Budget, including allocating 61% for social wage expenditure, which COSATU campaigned for, we are deeply dismayed by the VAT hike and the failure to adjust income tax brackets that will inflict unnecessary pain upon working class families and the economy.

The failure to show any relief for the 8 million SRD Grants is beyond shameful. We are equally disappointed that government continues to shy away from putting sufficient resources to support SMMEs, industrialisation and export sectors.

The Budget does not foresee growth rising beyond 2% over the next decade whilst we need at least 3% growth if we are to turn the corner on unemployment.

We dare not normalise a 41.6% unemployment rate. This is a ticking time bomb that will one day explode and the price of picking up the pieces will be far greater than we

can afford.

COSATU is thus calling upon Parliament to exercise its legislative authority to amend the 2025/26 Budget to scrap the VAT hike and the failure to adjust tax brackets for lower and middle income workers, to replace them with an additional immediate R2bn for SARS and higher taxes upon the wealthy and large corporations, as well as to adjust the SRD Grant for CPI, to increase funding for public employment programmes, and industrial and export financing.

We cannot afford to continue to stumble along a path of business as usual and expect better results. A bold and decisive Marshall Plan is needed if we are to capacitate the state, stimulate growth and slash unemployment. We do not have endless time to make the bold changes our many socio-economic crises demand.

COSATU will be seeking further engagements with government on these burning matters. ██████████



Delegates in plenary at COSATU Free State Provincial Congress at Bethlehem, Free State

COSATU CONCLUDES PROVINCIAL Congresses and Gender Conferences

The Congress of South African Trade Unions held ordinary Provincial Congresses in the month of February/March 2025 Under the Theme: “Building Working-Class Unity for Economic Liberation towards Socialism.”

The Federation held its Parliament of Workers at The Lakes Hotel and Conference in Benoni which was addressed by Alliance partners, the South African National Civic Organization (SANCO), the South African Communist Party (SANCO) and the African National Congress (ANC).

Provincial Congresses were convened in terms of the Constitution of the Federation ‘to assess implementation of National Congress, the Central Committee and Central Executive Committee decisions, to carry out the aims and objectives of the federation with regard to the organization of workers in the provinces, facilitate and encourage cooperation between affiliates, coordinate campaigns and programmes to address challenges encountered by workers across all sectors of society, consider reports of activities of affiliates and also elect an eligible member as a Provincial

Chairperson, Deputy Chairperson, Treasurer and Provincial Secretary. Each delegate in good standing with the Federation which has a branch, province within the jurisdiction of the Provincial Congress may participate’ in the plenary activities.

COSATU National Office Bearers addressed all provincial congresses and gender conferences.

Zingiswa Losi, COSATU President said “COSATU has recently campaigned against the budget cuts, austerity measures and an increase on the value added tax [VAT]

imposed by the government and was disappointed about an unnecessary 0.5% VAT hike for each of the next two years and not adjusting personal income tax brackets for 2025 will be a painful blow to millions of highly indebted working-class families and an already battered economy. for in the Budget.”

“COSATU cannot support tax hikes upon the working class and the poor and thus calls upon Parliament to reject this ill-considered pickpocketing of workers and amend the Budget with more progressive tax revenue options. VAT is regressive

and hurts the poor who already cannot afford to buy essential foods, electricity or transport. The decision not to adjust tax brackets for low- and middle-income workers is not acceptable when they are already drowning in debt with their meagre wages not keeping pace with inflation. These tax hikes will now make the lives of millions even more difficult.”

COSATU National Office Bearers wished all these parliament of workers successful deliberations.

Majority of the provinces have resolved to ‘re-build COSATU Locals by strengthening affiliated trade unions to recruit unorganized workers in every sector of the economy, re-convene political education for shopstewards and members to sharpen their political consciousness and class consciousness and ensure rigorous re-prioritisation of the campaigns of the federation in every site of struggle, starting with the Listening Campaign.’

Gauteng Provincial Congress elected the following Comrades

- * Chairperson- Amos Monyela
- * Deputy Chairperson- Mogomotsi Seleke
- * Secretary- Louisah Modikwe
- * Treasurer- Justice Nkomo

Gauteng Provincial Gender Conference elected the following Comrades:

- * Chairperson- Candy Mosidi
- * Deputy Chairperson -

- Thandi Nkosi
- * Secretary- Rashie Mankoe
- * Deputy Secretary- Violet Mhlakaza

Eastern Cape Provincial Congress elected the following Comrades

- * Chairperson- Noluthando Masango
- * Deputy Chairperson- Phumzile Tshuni
- * Secretary- Mkhawuleli Maleki
- * Treasurer- Lungiswa Sikatele

Free State Provincial Congress elected the following Comrades

- * Chairperson - Legopo Gape
- * Deputy Chairperson - Sizwe Mokoena
- * Secretary - Tiisetso Mahlatsi
- * Treasurer - Nthabiseng Tladi

Northern Cape Provincial Congress elected the following Comrades

- * Chairperson - Jacques Cupido
- * Deputy Chairperson - Rudolph van Zyl
- * Secretary - Orapeleng Moraladi
- * Treasurer - Linda Seekoei

Western Cape Provincial Congress elected the following Comrades

- * Chairperson - Motlatsi Tsubane
- * Deputy Chairperson - Andile Ngqaneka
- * Secretary - Malvern De Bruyn
- * Treasurer - Samukelisiwe Fika

The Congress of South African Trade Unions has constitutionalised its Gender

Structures which saw gender coordinators leading campaigns on gender equality, distributing dignity packs for boys and girls in schools, fighting against gender-based violence in the world of work and also contributing to the gender struggles with other like-minded and progressive civil society organisations.

Delegates descended to participate in the provincial gender conferences to strengthen the structures and give fresh mandates to the office bearers.

These Conferences comes amidst international women formations celebrating #Beijing30+ in New York wherein they argue that ‘Women’s rights, power, knowledge and skills are crucial for effective climate action.’

Delegates recommended vigorous commitment into action to ensure that working women see tangible improvements in their rights, working conditions, and access to social protection.

Some of the key recommendations relates to ensuring women play a central role in safeguarding our future by;

- Eradicating gender-based violence and harassment in the world of work
- Championing the campaign to promote gender equality in the world of work and in society
- Fighting for fairer wages for women workers across all sectors of the economy

Eastern Cape Provincial

Gender Conference elected the following Comrades

- * Chairperson-
- * Deputy Chairperson-
- * Secretary-
- * Deputy Secretary-

Free State Provincial Gender Conference elected the following Comrades

- * Chairperson- Mantsopa Lekhoane
- * Deputy Chairperson- Itumeleng Moipolai
- * Secretary- Sootho Ditabe
- * Deputy Secretary- Makgauta Mpondo

Gauteng Provincial Gender Conference elected the following Comrades

- * Chairperson- Candy Mosidi
- * Deputy Chairperson - Thandi Nkosi
- * Secretary - Rashie Mankoe
- * Deputy Secretary - Violet Mhlakaza

Northern Cape Provincial Gender Conference elected the following Comrades

- * Chairperson - Lerato Sithole
- * Deputy Chairperson - Shalet Fredericks
- * Secretary - Siamisang Riet
- * Deputy Secretary - Thembisa Petersen

Western Cape Provincial Gender Conference elected the following Comrades

- * Chairperson - Joyce Sekadi
- * Deputy Chairperson - John Abrahams
- * Secretary - Sherly Hendricks
- * Deputy Secretary - Thobeka Nkumbi ■



DENOSA 9th National Congress was held at Birchwood Conference Centre and Hotel, Boksburg

PUBLIC SERVICE UNIONS for fair and better salaries for nurses: DENOSA 9th National Congress Outcomes

Hundreds of delegates from far flung Branches and Regions of the South African Democratic Nursing Union (Denosa) gathered at Boksburg at the 9th National Congress to discuss, amongst others, slow implementation of the National Health Insurance, shortage of staff, unsafe workplaces, poor salaries and insufficient development of nurses as impediments to provide quality

healthcare services.

The Workers' Parliament was convened under the theme "Promoting Organisational Growth Through Innovative Practices Towards Resilient Quality Healthcare and Effective Member Servicing."

According to Kwena Manamela, DENOSA General Secretary, the National Congress was

held in terms of Clause 13.1.3, which calls for the convening of the National Congress every four years, to amongst others, elect national office bearers.'

"The 9th National Congress was an appropriate level of the organizational structure, amongst others, to make decisions on building the union and advancing for the interests of the members."

'The National Congress

is a constitutional structure geared towards recognizing the importance of debating issues which promotes the unity of all nurses, balancing both professionalisation of nursing and promoting trade unionism and, also to build a democratic, worker-controlled organization based on membership participation on policy issues and decision making.'

Alliance partners addressed the delegates in plenary calling for unity

of workers.

Addressing the delegates COSATU President Zingiswa Losi said “COSATU salutes the torchbearers of DENOSA such as Prof Philda Nzimande, Ephraim Mafalo, Dorothy Matebeni, Thembeke Gwagwa, Ethel Radebe, who founded the union on the shores of the union building on 5th December 1996, guided by the ANC stalwart, uMama Albertina Nontsikelelo Sisulu. We welcome the Congress theme: “Innovative Practice and Resilient, Quality Healthcare.” It speaks directly to the pressing need to transform our healthcare system in the face of post-pandemic realities, systemic inequality, and global policy shifts.

We applaud DENOSA for placing at the centre of this Congress critical issues such as the full and fair implementation of the National Health Insurance (NHI) — where nurses must not be relegated to the margins, but be at the forefront of delivery and design and also the evolution of healthcare post-COVID-19, and the need to build resilient systems that protect both patients and workers.”

Losi urged ‘DENOSA to come armed with practical, bold resolutions to rebuild worker power, to strengthen our unity, and to chart a clear socialist alternative to the crisis of capitalism as COSATU was heading to its Central Committee in

September 2025.’

Losi reiterated that “COSATU is engaging our Alliance Partners, the ANC and SACP, about the modalities for their contestation of the 2026 local elections, in particular the SACP’s Special National Congress Resolution to contest state power.

The COSATU February CEC after receiving the presentation from the SACP GS, deliberated on it and also discussed the political report to the CEC and resolve that:

- CEC reaffirmed the confirmation of the 14th COSATU National Congress political resolution on the NDR and the State Power and agreed on the following process:
- To convene a Special CEC in April 2025 to specifically discuss the state of the NDR, the alliance, and the resolution of the 5th Special National Congress of the SACP to independently contest the 2026 Local Government Elections.
- To augment the political report, add the history of the labour movement and rearrange the chronological narrative of the evolution of the Federation for the past 40 years.
- To convene a Political Commission before the Special CEC in April 2025 to sign off the amended Political Report to guide

discussions leading to the 8th CC.

- To allow unions to report back to members on the SACP 5th SNC resolution.
 - The federation is to embark on a political program to raise class consciousness and re-reclaim the confidence of our constituencies after the Special CEC in April 2025
 - COSATU should pronounce at the 8th Central Committee in September 2025 on the SACP 5th Special National Congress Resolution.
 - CEC agreed that the SACP should play a key role in uniting the federation.
 - The CEC agreed to revisit the founding principles of the federation, intensify the campaign to unite COSATU and its unions, and invite the former leaders to tap into their institutional memory on the management of organizing in the same sector.
- We are processing the CEC decision of holding a Special CEC to develop a discussion paper on this matter for deliberations at our September Central Committee and of course, the Federation will be holding our 15th National Congress in September 2026.

ANC President, Cyril Ramaphosa said “This is the first time I have had occasion to address DENOSA since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. It was just five years ago that we faced the worst global health emergency in modern times.

The pandemic changed our world almost overnight.

We became used to lockdowns, mask-wearing and social distancing. Many lives were lost to the virus, shattering families and communities. We lost a number of nurses and healthcare workers, brave men and women who were at the frontline of the pandemic. Despite the risks to their own health, healthcare workers continued to provide treatment, care and support to our people. It is in great measure thanks to their efforts that our country was able to recover from COVID-19 and begin the task of rebuilding.

For you who are in the profession, nursing is a calling. It requires a strength of character and commitment to service that is rare. Even under difficult conditions, it is your responsibility to administer quality care, reassure sick patients and deal with anxious families. We should recognise the efforts to elevate the stature of the nursing profession in democratic South Africa.

During apartheid, nursing was one of the few occupations open to black professionals alongside teaching, the police and a handful of other professions. The training and opportunities available to black nurses mirrored the inequalities of the skewed education system. The training and development of white nurses



DENOSA Newly Elected National Office Bearers at Boksburg

took priority.” Ramaphosa emphasised that “At this crucial moment in the history of democratic South Africa, we call on DENOSA to continue to assert its vanguard role.

We have a Government of National Unity with key strategic priorities for the next five years. These priorities are: firstly, driving inclusive growth and job creation; secondly, reducing poverty and tackling the high cost of living; and, thirdly, building a capable, ethical developmental state.

The nursing profession is integral to the advancement of all these strategic priorities. In particular, nurses have an important role to play in building a capable state. Nurses are part of the hardworking, dedicated corps of public servants that keep this country going from day to day. It is encouraging to see more new nursing

registrations with the South African Nursing Council. At the same time, however, we are seeing a decline in training numbers. This decline cannot be simply explained by less people seeing nursing as an attractive career, but that factors such as accreditation delays also play a part. We welcome the fact that this is one of the issues under discussion at this Congress.

In an environment where South Africa has a shortage of nurses, we are encouraged that the issue of South African nurses being recruited in large numbers by other countries is also on the agenda. Achieving improved, equitable health outcomes across the population is a critical enabler of economic growth and poverty eradication. “

Solly Mapaila, SACP General Secretary

outlined the role played by the SACP in driving the National Health Insurance campaign, and highlighted the problem of neo-liberalism, which is characterised by budget cuts, austerity measures and moratorium of appointments of staff in the provision of healthcare to the citizens.

“SACP rejects the commodification of the healthcare in South Africa and we demand full implementation of the National Health Insurance, with nurses playing the primary role in its execution, paid decent salaries and working in safe workplaces.”

The Congress duly elected the following leaders:

- President: Simon Hlungwani
- 1st Deputy President: Simphiwe Daniel Gada
- 2nd Deputy President: Linah Jiyane
- National Treasurer:

- Linda Eustacia Katz-Hulana
- General Secretary: Kwena Daniel Manamela
- Deputy General Secretary - Operations: Dimakatso Sebopa
- Deputy General Secretary-Membership: Khaya Sodidi

We furthermore congratulate our newly elected Gender Structure leadership:

- National Gender Chairperson: Khutlang Lethena
- National Gender Deputy Chairperson: Dipuo Sekwati
- National Gender Secretary: Ntsako Mathebula
- National Gender Deputy Secretary: Nozuko Xoki

The National Office Bearers will serve for a period of four years in office.

THE CLARION CALL!

‘An injury one! is an injury to all’!

This is 70th anniversary year of SACTU, born in 1955,
This is the 70th anniversary year
of Freedom Charter adopted in 1955,
This is the 40th anniversary year of COSATU,
formed in 1985.
SACTU was a red federation, forged in the heat of action.

The clarion call!
‘An injury one! is an injury to all’!

In trouble times, workers’ weapon was developed,
Workers’ federation came into being,
The shield, the spear, the defender and the leader of the
workers’ rights,
Apartheid regime banned the red federation in 1960,

The clarion call!
‘An injury one! is an injury to all’!

Arise prisons of starvation,
The sun cannot set forever beyond mountains,
Arise toilers of the earth,
Fighting against the system of exploitation,

The clarion call!
‘An injury one! is an injury to all’!

We are neither gatekeepers nor saviours of exploitation,
So, comrades, come and rally,
And the last fight let us face,
Internationale unites the human race,

The clarion call!
‘An injury one! is an injury to all’!

by Thabile Maso

Gallery



COSATU Provincial Congresses







ILO Convention on Fishing188 aims to ensure decent working conditions for fishers aboard vessels

COSATU DEMANDS SAFETY

for commercial vessels workers

Many South African fishers endure dreadful working conditions. Many of these workers only return home with unpaid wages and unremitted contributions from their bosses.

'Fishermen also face specific risks including the possibility of the vessel being wrecked or capsized; fires and explosions onboard; being washed overboard, or tripping and falling due to the motion of the vessel or slippery surfaces; injury from working with heavy, dangerous or unguarded equipment. Fishermen also suffer from special health problems, such as skin complaints and respiratory diseases, or the effects of noise and vibration. It is for these reasons that employers are charged with the responsibility of ensuring fishing vessels are safe and fit for purpose.'

A similar worst case scenario unfolded when a 63-year-old FV Lepanto sank on May, 2024 which killed 11 crew members, was the most devastating event. The ship capsized approximately 34 nautical miles off the coast of Kommetjie town, near Cape Town. Around October 2024, the Minister of Transport, Barbara Creecy, called for an urgent safety inspection of all commercial fishing vessels operating in South African waters. Minister Creecy ordered the South African Maritime Safety Authority (SAMSA) to conduct safety inspections of all commercial fishing vessels operating in the country's waters, after a vessel belonging to the Sea Harvest Group caught fire off the coast of Gansbaai. Fortunately, all 20 crew members onboard were rescued unharmed by a vessel in the vicinity.

COSATU has supported the process of conducting safety inspections on all commercial vessels.

The South African Maritime Safety Authority (SAMSA) was established on the 1st of April 1998 under the SAMSA Act 5 of 1998. It leads and champions South Africa's maritime interests as custodians and stewards of maritime policy. The audits are intended to assess compliance with safety regulations in the commercial fishing sector following a directive from the Minister of Transport, Hon. Barbara Creecy.

These audits will be conducted over a four-month period and will cover all major fishing ports across South Africa. The focus of the audits will be on identifying potential risks, assessing operational safety practices, and strengthening emergency preparedness

on South African-registered fishing vessels.

This initiative stems from growing concerns regarding vessel safety, particularly in light of recent maritime incidents involving fishing vessels.

SAMSA Acting CEO Mbalenhle Golding said 'SAMSA remains committed to protecting lives, property, and the marine environment by ensuring that South Africa's fishing industry adheres to the highest safety standards. The audits will play a vital role in shaping a robust Fishing Vessel Safety Improvement Plan, aimed at preventing future maritime incidents.

Golding emphasised the importance of the initiative, stating: "SAMSA remains committed to protecting lives, property, and the marine environment by ensuring that South Africa's fishing industry

adheres to the highest safety standards. The audits play a vital role in shaping a robust Fishing Vessel Safety Improvement Plan, aimed at preventing future maritime incidents.”

“SAMSA encouraged all fishing vessel operators to cooperate fully with the audit teams and actively participate in this essential safety initiative.” According to Article 1 of the Maritime Labour Convention, ‘commercial fishing means all fishing operations, including fishing operations on rivers, lakes or canals, with the exception of subsistence fishing and

recreational fishing.’

Article 8 on the responsibilities of fishing vessel owners, skippers and fishers, the fishing vessel owner has the overall responsibility to ensure that the skipper is provided with the necessary resources and facilities to comply with the obligations of this Convention. The skipper has the responsibility for the safety of the fishers on board and the safe operation of the vessel, including but not limited to the following areas:

(a) providing such supervision as will ensure that, as far as possible, fishers perform their work in the

best conditions of safety and health;

(b) managing the fishers in a manner which respects safety and health, including prevention of fatigue;

(c) facilitating on-board occupational safety and health awareness training; and

(d) ensuring compliance with safety of navigation, watchkeeping and associated good seamanship standards. The skipper shall not be constrained by the fishing vessel owner from taking any decision which, in the professional judgement of the skipper, is necessary

for the safety of the vessel and its safe navigation and safe operation, or the safety of the fishers on board. Fishers shall comply with the lawful orders of the skipper and applicable safety and health measures.

COSATU General Secretary, Solly Phetoe reiterated that ‘the federation welcomes the start of the nationwide audit of all commercial fishing vessels operating in South African waters launched by the South African Maritime Safety Authority (SAMSA)’.

Phetoe said “The nationwide audit is in line with and follows an order issued by Minister of Transport, Barbara Creecy, in October 2024 for SAMSA to conduct safety inspections of all commercial fishing vessels operating in the country’s waters. Minister Creecy’s order was on account of two grave incidents involving Sea Harvest Group’s commercial vessels.

The first took place in May last year when the Lepanto sank to the bottom of the sea off the coast of Hout Bay, taking 11 fishermen with it. The fishermen’s bodies were never recovered, they were eventually presumed dead by an order of court in September 2024.

The Armana caught fire off

the coast of Gansbaai in the early hours of the morning in October; fortunately, the 20 crew members onboard were rescued unharmed by a vessel in the vicinity.

COSATU applauds Minister Creecy for the bold decision to act on what has always been a burning issue but was never given the warranted attention.

The International Labour Organisation describes the fishing occupation as more hazardous than firefighting or mining because fishermen work and live in the vessel, in cramped and congested conditions and as such there isn’t the clear separation between work and personal time.

Fishermen also face specific risks including the possibility of the vessel being

wrecked or capsized; fires and explosions onboard; being washed overboard, or tripping and falling due to the motion of the vessel or slippery surfaces; injury from working with heavy, dangerous or unguarded equipment. Fishermen also suffer from special health problems, such as skin complaints and respiratory diseases, or the effects of noise and vibration. It is for these reasons that employers are charged with the responsibility of ensuring fishing vessels are safe and fit for purpose.

The audit was launched eGqeberha but SAMSA said it would get underway in earnest in Cape Town. COSATU has previously requested Creecy to ensure SAMSA prioritises Sea Harvest Group vessels when conducting the audit. We reiterate this call because

the outcomes of the audit will play a vital part in the Marine Court of Enquiry that is set to uncover all the questions left unanswered by the report into the sinking of the MFV Lepanto. The report was released in December.

COSATU has been working closely with the families of the 11 deceased fishermen to ensure they are appropriately compensated for their kin’s tragic deaths. Crucially, the families want to know what happened on that fateful day so the can finally have closure.

The Portfolio Committee on Transport is currently holding parliamentary hearings on the Merchant Shipping Bill. The Federation welcomes the overall progressive objections of the Bill, particularly its provisions to ensure safety and protection

of marine workers labour rights and holding employers accountable for conditions of service and compliance with labour laws.

COSATU is however aggrieved that the Bill was not presented to

Nedlac for engagement with organised labour, business and community. As a result, the Bill is not explicit on whether the Basic Conditions of Employment Act, Occupational Health and Safety Act, Compensation

for Occupational Injuries and Diseases Act and National Minimum Wage apply to marine workers on South African vessels or on vessels in South African waters.

Consequently, COSATU

will be calling on Parliament to ensure the Bill is amended and strengthened to safeguard workers' safety and labour rights. The Federation will not rest until all workers' rights are observed and protected. ■



The South African Maritime Safety Authority (SAMSA) grounded the fishing vessel 'Elke M' at St Francis Bay on 7 January 2024 after removal of onboard fuel and pollutant in promoting the protection of the environment

WE NEED A RADICAL FISHING

rights paradigm shift to benefit all formerly disadvantaged communities!

Fishing sector was cited as one of economic growth drivers in 2024 according to Statistics South Africa's data, released on 4 March 2025, with the nation's gross domestic product (GDP) growing by 0.6% in Q4, rebounding from a slight dip in the previous quarter.

The Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment, Dr Dion George has reiterated

that 'forestry and fishing sectors, as part of the top-performing agriculture industry, are proving their worth—delivering real value through sustainable practices and smart policies that boost growth, create jobs, and protect our natural resources.'

Public concerns still exist around processing of fishing license applications, approvals and issuance with the South African Maritime

Safety Authority. South Africa was acknowledged globally as being among leading maritime countries with advanced standards for sound labour working conditions in its commercial fishing subsector, but the country is not about to let up.

However, Minister George stressed that much more needs to be done. The Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and

the Environment 'assured all role-players that government is committed to ensuring South Africa's economic growth opens doors for every citizen.'

COSATU Deputy Parliamentary Coordinator Tony Ehrenreich reflects on the road traversed since 2014 when the federation tabled its demands to improve the fishing industry to feed the poor and marginalised communities.

COSATU supported the allocation of fishing rights that were geared to transform the fishing industry and eradicate the historical domination by a few individuals.

These were persons who were insisting on enjoying continued fishing rights, who got into the fishing industry under apartheid era and were able to enrich themselves significantly.

Many of them in fact had alternative incomes and were relatively wealthy. In fact, very wealthy in relation to the workers who are exploited in the fishing industry.

We argued that the natural resources of the country should be used to benefit the most marginalised and undo the apartheid generational disadvantages that still exist in most industries. Many had a chance to enrich their families during the shameful period on the basis that they had guarantees of the fish income and we argued that it cannot a guaranteed lifetime concession.

As COSATU, we wanted to see changes that makes the systemic environment fairer, whilst being cautious about the unintended consequences. We argued that radical transformation of the fishing industry

was inevitable, and we wanted to see the following changes;

- the fishing rights must shift to cooperatives led by workers, so that the benefits of the natural resources are spread more equitably and fairly. Presently, only a few are enriched.
- the value of the resources must also extend prosperity to all those involved in the industry. Presently, workers have insecure existence.
- the fish must continue to be a cheap source of protein for poorer communities, promoting local value chains into communities.
- all the parties to the fishing industry must be consulted about their role in a future fishing industry, right along the value chain.
- legitimate players in the industry will be supported in their interest, but the illegitimate ones will be sidelined.

We argued that the fishing rights must change, and some must exit the industry, through having their rights removed.

This should include old apartheid beneficiaries, lawyers and teachers who have got rights after apartheid but had no links to the industry.

People who have other

sources of income or already have significant wealth, no matter what their colour.

We argued that this must, however, be done fairly and objectively, with a fair transition being allowed till the appeals have been considered. In this respect government must allow exemptions for certain past rights holders to go to the sea, whilst their properly documented appeals are being considered, which would indicate their wealth status.

We argued that the industry will not be the same as it was before as those who controlled and dominated the industry unfairly, and that they must be exited through the process of audits.

COSATU argued further that we will not allow the fishing rights holders who historically exploited the fisherman to claim that they now also represent the fisherman's interest.

Many of the rights holders have abused fisherman in the past and now want to misuse the fisherman's interest, to defend themselves.

COSATU therefore insisted that government must assist fisherman with funding to buy boats, from existing rightsholders, so the fisherman can go to

sea by themselves.

Often the fisherman crewed the boats of the wealthy rightsholders, who sit at home and counted the money generated by their quotas.

COSATU committed to working with the hawkers to ensure that a fairer system evolves, that secures their livelihoods and also ensures that the fish is sold at the most affordable prices.

We insisted on a fair managed transformatory process, that takes account of all the legitimate just voices in the sector and will oppose any attempts by any party to try and defend their apartheid gained fishing privileges, whether in court or in protest.

There were two sides in these rights' allocation; those who wanted to defend their ill-gotten gains from apartheid and corruptions and those who wanted to promote fairness, justice and transformation.

We argued that whatever technical glitches were there must be resolved to push ahead with the radical transformation of the fishing industry.

The struggle for fairer fishing dispensation continues!

SUGAR TAX REMAINS

the antithesis of the all-important Sugarcane Value Chain Master Plan to 2030

argues Advocate Fay Mukaddam

The Economy



The financial future of KwaZulu-Natal and Mpumalanga depends heavily on the sugar industry, providing 65 000 direct jobs and supporting 270 000 indirect jobs

The well-funded US anti-sugar lobby, operating from a position of economic privilege, has failed to grasp the unique challenges facing South Africa's rural communities. The diet of the average American is significantly different from the diet and dietary needs of someone living in rural South Africa. Sugar used in food in the USA comes from different sources such as maize, sugarcane and sugar

beet, while in South Africa, it is only from sugarcane.

More egregious is the lobbyists' failure to acknowledge that, prior to the installation of the Health Promotion Levy (HPL), commonly known as the sugar tax, South Africa never conducted a full population study to assess the main contributors to excess calorie intake and its associated health problems. This would have enabled a South African

based-balanced, measured and holistic approach in devising an effective strategy to fight non-communicable diseases and obesity.

Since the introduction of the sugar tax in April 2018, drinks manufacturers have drastically reduced the sugar concentrations in their beverages. This they did by reformulating away from sugar, a development which had a catastrophic impact on the industry whose

operations are mainly based in deeply rural and job-starved regions of KwaZulu-Natal and Mpumalanga.

Since its implementation, the HPL has been associated with substantial job losses, thereby exacerbating the country's unemployment rate crisis. Industry member, SA Canegrowers, estimates that 16,000 jobs were lost in the first year of its implementation. Another industry member,

SA Farmers Development Association, is on record saying their black small-scale sugarcane farmers have been hardest hit by the devastating levy. When it comes to the milling sector, two sugar mills (Darnall and Umzimkulu) have been permanently closed. The financial future of KwaZulu-Natal and Mpumalanga depends heavily on the sugar industry, providing 65 000 direct jobs and supporting 270 000 indirect jobs. At least one million rural livelihoods are dependent on the sugarcane growing and milling activities of the industry.

Let us be crystal clear about one thing... no one disputes that every effort must be made to improve people's health. What is contentious is pushing through measures that are not balanced and which fail to see the problems holistically. To advocate for the dismantling of the sugar industry while offering no viable alternative for the hundreds and thousands of families who depend on the sector for their livelihoods is at best misguided and at worse, grossly inconsiderate. People's livelihoods are now at stake.

There is lack of concrete evidence regarding whether or not the sugar tax has actually had the intended impact. In contrast, according to the 2023 National Food and Nutrition Security Survey, which highlighted obesity trends since 2016, overweight and obesity among men rose over 7%. Among children under five, it rose over 10%.

What we need now are the much-anticipated results of the total intake dietary study

to guide us in the fight against the NCDs. Scaremongering about the risks of sugars is not supported by scientific evidence and it detracts the focus on the real causes of obesity. In fact, obesity is caused by multiple factors such as genetics, overeating and too little physical activity. Sugars are no more

any other single agricultural activity.

Several farmers attested to the fact that by switching to sugarcane, they saw significant improvements in their livelihoods, enabling them to improve their children's educational opportunities, and to invest in better, more efficient farming equipment. In addition, the farmers pointed out that sugarcane was less labour-intensive and that, because of the consistent demand, it provided a stable income. In addition to generating income for households, the crop provided spill-over benefits to crop production, enhancing farmers' access to resources like fertilisers and agricultural loans.

What the sugar tax has done is to bring about the existential crisis for the industry, which is the bedrock of the economies of rural KwaZulu-Natal and Mpumalanga.

The sugar tax remains the greatest threat to the industry's sustainability. The sugar tax remains the antithesis of the all-important Sugarcane Value Chain Master Plan to 2030 as it works against the very objectives of the master plan. Any increases to it or lowering of the threshold would decimate the industry. What is happening is akin to a classic example of addressing the symptom, while ignoring the complex social and economic realities at work.

The way forward is clear.

Firstly, as indicated earlier, the release of the results of the comprehensive total intake dietary study will assist to establish the foundations upon which informed decisions about public health policy can be built. Secondly, and operating simultaneously, we must develop evidence-based health education programmes that respect local cultural and economic realities. These strategies must be seen as complementary to the ongoing efforts by the sugar industry to modernise and diversify its operations.

Thirdly, we need genuine collaboration between health advocates and industry stakeholders. It is obvious that only by working together can a sustainable solution be found that protects and improves public health while maintaining and developing economic stability. Finally, we must aim for partnering as opposed to confronting, acknowledging the importance of healthy lifestyles and the valuable role the rural-based industry has in our economy. South Africa requires solutions that address our socio-economic reality and not imported 'one-size-fits-all' ideologies.

The sugar industry needs support and encouragement to continue with its transformation and diversification policies in a manner that recognises the need to promote public health and protect rural livelihoods. Advocate Fay Mukaddam is the Independent Chairperson of the South African Sugar Association (SASA), which represents the country's sugar industry.

'Effort must be made to improve people's health'

responsible for obesity than other calorie-containing food and drinks, when consumed in excess of burned calories.

May we draw your attention to a scientific study carried out among small-scale farmers in Noordsberg, KwaZulu-Natal, which indicated clearly that sugarcane was a pivotal livelihood resource providing employment and income.

Sugarcane — grown alongside maize, beans, and potatoes — was considered the most significant cash crop in most households and generated more revenue than



Former NUM General Secretary, former ANC Secretary-General, Kgalema Motlanthe and former COSATU Assistant General Secretary, Dr. Sydney Mufumadi at the 70th anniversary celebration event at Liliesleaf Museum, Rivonia

COSATU celebrates 70th Anniversary of SACTU

Founding members of the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU), Veterans of the African National Congress and trade unionists gathered at the 70th anniversary of SACTU in Rivonia, Gauteng on the 5th of March 2025.

SACTU was launched on the 4th and 5th of March 1955 in Johannesburg

as a result of political repression meted against African workers by the apartheid regime.

Apart from racial intolerance by White trade unions, the government also passed repressive legislations that made it imperative for Black workers to organise workers across the colour line.

African trade unions were free to operate but were not legally recognised by the state.

The inaugural conference emerged with a solid federation out of nineteen trade unions, representing about 20 000 workers. Some of the prominent trade unions which joined SACTU were the Food and Canning Workers’

Union, African Food and Canning Workers’ Union, Textile Workers’ Industrial Union, Natal South African Railways and Harbours Non-European Workers’ Union, and Transvaal Metal Workers’ Union which had a membership of more than 2,000 members.

When the National Party came into power in 1948, they introduced

the apartheid laws aimed at controlling the black population. Many of the laws aimed at weakening the position of black workers.

These included the following:

- African trade unions were not recognised and therefore were not allowed to strike.
- They were not allowed access to the industrial councils, which is where most important decisions were taken about workers (white unions actively participated in the councils).
- They were no longer allowed to sit at wage board determinations.
- Racially mixed trade unions were not allowed to exist.
- The Minister of Labour had the right to reserve any job for a particular race group.

The factors made it difficult for trade unions to organise effectively.

“The federation was established in March 1955, after right wing unions dissolved the South African Trades and Labour Council in 1954 to form the exclusive white, coloured, and Indian workers’ Trade Union Council of South Africa.

It combined the unregistered African unions affiliated to the Council of Non-European Trade

Unions with fourteen registered unions which refused to join the TUCSA.

The South African Railways and Harbours Union and the Food and Canning Workers’ Union were among the founder members. The Industrial Conciliation Act, 1956 banned the registration of multi-racial trade unions.”

“One of its SACTU’s campaigns was the pound-a-day campaign which called for a massive stay away from work on the 26 June 1957. This was very widely supported. SACTU was able to make some gains and by the early 1960s, its membership reached 55,000.”

“SACTU organised workers on a non-racial basis and argued that politics and economics could not be separated in the working-class struggle against exploitation and oppression.

Therefore, it organised workers in the workplace but it also took up broader political issues as part of the struggle against apartheid.”

According to Baskin, Jeremy who wrote extensively about the History of COSATU in a book, ‘Striking Back: A History of COSATU in 1991, argued that “SACTU was explicitly political and was one of the founders of the Congress Alliance

in 1955, and all African National Congress (ANC) members who were workers were required to join SACTU.

From 1973 there was a revival of industrial militancy. The government retaliated with violence and several hundred strikers were shot. But the Bantu Labour Relations Regulations Amendment Act in 1973 did permit some industrial activity within a restrictive framework of works committees.

By 1976 there were about 40,000 African union members,[6] but most were in unions not linked to SACTU, and there were disagreements over whether the SACTU model should be emulated or avoided. John Taolo Gaetsewe was the last elected General Secretary.

In 1990, the ANC was unbanned, and some activists argued that the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) should merge into SACTU.

However, by this point, COSATU had a far larger membership and profile than SACTU ever had.

Instead, before the end of the year, the federation dissolved itself, with its remaining members transferring to COSATU.”

Other prominent leaders of SACTU

were Petrus Beylveld, Cleopas Sibande, Lucy Mvubelo, Leon Levy, John Nkadimeng, Mark Shope, Billy Nair, Stephen Dhlamini, and Phyllis Altman, Leslie Massina, and Vuyisile Mini.

After realising that the struggle against the economic exploitation and oppression cannot be achieved in isolation, SACTU turned to international arena to forge links with other international trade unions.

Between 1955 and 1963, SACTU headquarters in Johannesburg opened communications lines with other international trade union federations such as the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) and the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU).

These links were extended to other countries such as Africa, North America, Europe, Latin America, Asia, Australia and New Zealand.



COSATU former leaders, ANC Veterans League members gathered at Liliesleaf to celebrate the 70th anniversary of SACTU

COSATU and the ANC Veterans League Celebrate the 70th Anniversary of SACTU: Honouring the Past, Building the Future

On Wednesday, the 5th of March 2025, the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) and the ANC Veterans League came together to mark the 70th anniversary of the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU), with an event that highlighted the enduring legacy of SACTU and its transformative role in the struggle for workers'

rights and social justice.

The occasion was broadcast live by SADTU Online Television, bringing together prominent leaders from COSATU, the ANC, the SACP, and the ANC Veterans League, as well as veterans from the liberation struggle and trade union movement.

The 70th anniversary celebration saw the

presence of leading figures in the political and trade union movements, including senior current and former leaders of the liberation and trade union movement, including former Deputy President Kgalema Motlanthe, Ronnie Kasrils, COSATU President Zingiswa Losi, General Secretary Solly Phetoe, and veteran trade unionists such as Bheki Ntshalintshali,

Thozamile Botha, and Sydney Mafumadi.

The event was also graced by the Secretary General of the ANC Veterans League, Ivie McKay Langa.

Throughout the occasion, the audience was moved by the reflections of SACTU Veterans, some of whom were part of the underground movement

during the apartheid era and were instrumental in the formation of SACTU.

These veterans shared gripping personal stories, shedding light on the origins of SACTU, their underground activities, and the sacrifices they made for the liberation of the working class.

One of the veterans, who co-authored the iconic book *Organise or Starve*, shared a profound quote: "In the darkest hours of apartheid, when hope seemed a distant dream, we understood that organising was not just a choice – it was survival.

To organise was to fight, and to fight was to survive. This principle became our guiding light, and it is as vital today as it was then." These words captured the essence of the struggle and underscored the deep commitment of SACTU's founding members to the cause of workers and liberation.

In her opening remarks, Losi emphasised the enduring legacy of SACTU and the role of trade unions in the ongoing fight for workers' rights. "SACTU laid the foundation for the labour movement in this country.

It was born in the heart of oppression, yet it stood as a beacon of hope and solidarity. As we celebrate 70 years, we honour the past and look toward the future,"

she said. Losi acknowledged the continuing challenges facing workers, particularly in sectors such as mining, transport, and energy. She called for renewed efforts to rebuild and strengthen unions, ensuring they remain a powerful force for change in South Africa's evolving political and economic landscape.

Kasrils, a renowned anti-apartheid activist, reminded the audience of the crucial role that SACTU played in challenging the oppressive apartheid system. "SACTU was not just a trade union; it was a revolutionary movement.

It brought together the working class to confront the injustice that sought to exploit us all. The road to freedom was long and fraught with danger, but it was a road paved by the efforts of brave men and women who fought for dignity and justice."

Former General Secretary of NUM, ANC, and Deputy President Kgalema Motlanthe spoke about the political and economic landscape in which SACTU was formed, praising its vision and commitment to worker liberation.

"We cannot ignore the immense contribution SACTU made to the political struggle against apartheid. The fight for workers' rights was inseparable from the

struggle for political freedom. SACTU was a critical part of our victory over apartheid," said Motlanthe.

Bheki Ntshalintshali, COSATU's former General Secretary, shared his reflections on the labour movement's evolution. "We stand on the shoulders of giants. SACTU gave birth to COSATU, and as its successor, we must ensure that we continue to fight for the dignity of workers. Today, we face a diverse set of challenges, but the spirit of solidarity and unity that defined SACTU must guide us in this new era," Ntshalintshali emphasised.

Thozamile Botha, a long-time trade unionist, spoke about the need for unity within the labour movement. "The unity that SACTU fostered between workers, irrespective of race or sector, is something we must continue to nurture. Our strength lies in our collective action," said Botha.

Sydney Mafumadi, COSATU's first Deputy General Secretary, spoke about the need to renew and strengthen the union movement. "SACTU's founding principle of 'one industry, one union, one country' must continue to resonate with us.

We must remain vigilant in the face of political and economic pressures that seek to divide us," said Mafumadi.

Solly Phetoe, COSATU's General Secretary, delivered the closing remarks, urging all workers and trade unions to unite in the ongoing fight for economic justice and workers' rights. "As we mark 70 years of SACTU, let us not forget the sacrifices made by those who came before us. We must carry their legacy forward, ensuring that the fight for dignity and equality continues for future generations of workers," said Phetoe.

In her vote of thanks, **Ivie McKay Langa, the Secretary General of the ANC Veterans League**, expressed gratitude for the work of COSATU and the ANC Veterans League in ensuring that the legacy of SACTU endures. "We are proud to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with you in the fight for workers' rights. The road ahead is long, but as long as we remain united, the future is bright," Langa said.

As the event concluded, the speakers called for continued solidarity and collective action to tackle the pressing issues facing South Africa today. "Our work is not done," said Losi. "We must unite, strengthen our movement, and fight for the future of our children and grandchildren. The spirit of SACTU is alive, and it is more important than ever."



Newly elected NUM National Women's Structure at Boksburg Newly elected NUM National Women's Structure at Boksburg

NUM NATIONAL WOMEN'S STRUCTURE RENEWS ITS MANDATE to advance gender struggle

The National Union of Mineworkers [NUM] 9th Women's Structure elective National Conference was held on

the 7th and 8th of March 2025 at the Birchwood Hotel in Boksburg. The conference was

held under the theme, "Working Class Women Advancing Socio-economic Transformation."

The 350 voting delegates and guests engaged in the plenary debates about challenges affecting working women

and society and resolved on how to advance gender struggles globally.

The elective conference coincided with the celebrations of the International Working Women's Day, which reasserted the empowerment of women economically to promote an inclusive and equitable industry.

Challenges faced by women in the mining, energy, metal, and construction sectors such as the lack of personal protection equipment, unhygienic ablution facilities, sexual harassment, lack of lactation facilities, ablution facilities which unpalatable trend of sex favours for promotions

and retrenchments, were debated extensively in plenary.

Women delegates argued that 'illegal mining costs South Africa billions of rand every year. It accounts for up to 30% of the country's gold production, with financial losses exceeding R14 billion.'

Many women workers are holding a view that the government and the Department of Minerals and Energy must tackle this scourge which is characterized also by high levels of human trafficking, violent crimes and consider introducing legislative framework on artisanal mining in South Africa.

The following comrades were duly elected:

- Women's Structure Chairperson: Marget Gabaneele
- Women's Structure Deputy Chairperson: Basetsana Ndlovu
- Women's Structure Secretary: Nthabiseng Mashiteng
- Women's Structure Deputy Secretary: Anne Atlee
- Women's Structure Treasurer: Sarah Mokobane

The Deputy Minister of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities Mmapaseka Letsike, Ekurhuleni Executive Mayor Cde Nkosindiphile Xhakaza and NUM President

Dan Balepile addressed delegates at the NUM Women Structure elective National Conference.

Delegates paid a special tribute to the former Chairperson, Lydia Nkopane, who has retired for having served the union for 32 years.

Lydia Nkopane said, "We must not allow employers to substitute real workers with subcontractors. Women workers are able and capable of building communities that are safe. I thank NUM for having provided us with an opportunity to lead."

Congratulations to the elected women leaders!



Members of SADTU in Gauteng celebrated International Women’s Day on March 8 at The Lakes Hotel & Conference Centre, Benoni.

GENDER EQUALITY IS A TRADE UNION ISSUE!

Millions of working women across the globe celebrated International Women’s Day on March 8, 2025, with a renewed commitment to breaking gender barriers and uplifting the status of women and girls in working-

class communities.

For various international federations, the day was about advancing the struggle to ‘achieving true gender equality, equal pay, regaining control of reproductive rights, empowering of women and girlstoparticipateinproductive

economic activities and also accessing quality healthcare and education.’

United Nations Women is leading the 30th anniversary review of the 1995 Beijing Women’s Conference and argues that ‘we have fought

for decades for a world where women and girls thrive. Progress on achieving gender equality is real, but the fight is not over.’

Womenleadersandgender activists in 1995 signed the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, which

was a visionary 1995 plan agreed by 189 governments to achieve the equal rights of all women and girls.’

The report states, “It finds that many countries have made strides on gender equality and women’s empowerment, from banning discrimination in employment to adopting gender-responsive climate action plans. Innovation is accelerating progress, and opportunities are opening to scale up proven strategies. Yet gender discrimination remains deeply embedded in all economies and societies, imposing chronic constraints on the rights and hopes of women and girls.”

Based on the findings, UN Women has collaborated with partners to design the “Beijing+30 action agenda”, which brings people together to realize the promises of the platform and the global goals, reinforcing how everyone has a role to play.

United Nations Women Executive Director Sima Bahous said that “the promises of the Beijing Declaration on women’s rights must not only be remembered “but fully realised”.

Significant progress has been made since 1995:

- Fewer girls out of school
- Maternal mortality dropped by a third
- Women’s representation in parliaments more than doubled.
- Women make up 70% of the healthcare workforce but hold only 25% of leadership roles.

- One in three women faces physical or sexual violence, and nearly 25% of workplace violence happens in hospitals or clinics — and women are most affected.

Women and girls fleeing war deserve safety—not more risk of rape and violence.

“Today and every day, we push forward #ForAllWomenAndGirls because equality is non-negotiable, empowerment is unstoppable, and our movement is undeniable.”

In South Africa, the celebrations were held under the theme: “Accelerate Action,” which signified a genuine assessment of how women have progressed since the convening of the 1995 Beijing Women’s Conference.

The Women’s Day was utilised to celebrate the social, economic, cultural, and political achievements since the 1994 democratic dispensation.

The Minister of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities, Hon. Sindisiwe Chikunga has called on all sectors of society to continue the fight for women empowerment and a safer society for women and children. She highlighted the government’s commitment to advancing youth development opportunities and the role of providing quality education to combat youth unemployment and empowering the next generation of boys and girls.’

Chikunga said, “South Africa continues to make strides in women’s

representation in government, with women making up 46% of Parliamentarians and 43% of Cabinet members. The huge challenge is that the majority of women remains underrepresented in high-income sectors and continue to face significant wage gaps.”

While gender equality benefits everyone, data shows that progress remains slow, with barriers still limiting opportunities for women worldwide.

The latest State of Economic Inclusion Report has identified a gap: while 90% of Economic Inclusion programs reach women, only 33% focus on women’s economic empowerment as a core objective. According to a report for 2023-2024, in India, for example, in states like Haryana, Punjab, Gujarat, Rajasthan, a total of 36.7 percent of women are involved in unpaid work.

In 2019, before COVID-19, women around the world were three times more involved in care work than men, but in India, this rate was eight times higher. During COVID-19, the rate of women losing their jobs was higher than that of men, so the participation of women in this care work increased further. Again, this ratio is not the same across states in India.

From the experiences from various countries on pushing forward with gender equality, it is quite clear that true transformation requires broader societal shifts.

In various communities, gender-based violence is escalating extremely!

ILO Convention 190 is the first global treaty to eradicate violence and harassment in the world of work. International federations reaffirmed their commitment to ‘a future where every woman’s workspace is free from violence and harassment, where every woman’s work is seen and valued, and women are empowered.’ Reflecting on both the progress made and the urgent need for decisive action, violence against women demands urgent attention.

One in three women faces physical or sexual violence, and nearly 25% of workplace violence happens in hospitals or clinics — and women are most affected. The late Archbishop Desmond Tutu once said, “It is by standing up for the rights of girls and women that we truly measure up as men.”

Gender equality is not a women’s issue—it is a shared responsibility. Let’s continue to challenge outdated norms and create a future where fairness is a lived reality.

A global gender equality struggle continues day and night in celebrating the social, economic, cultural, and political achievements of women. Promoting a world that is diverse, equitable, and inclusive.

A world where difference is valued and celebrated. **Aluta Continua!**



POPCRU STRENGTHENS BILATERAL TIES WITH GLOBAL POLICE unions from Sweden and Norway

Over the 36th years of existence, the Police and Prisons Civil Rights Union (POPCRU) has maintained its international proletarian posture by establishing international solidarity actions with workers across the world such as in Cuba, Swaziland, Zambia, etc.

The union since its inception has maintained that 'the emancipation of the working must be act of the working class itself.'

Recently, POPCRU hosted working class formations from Norway and Sweden at their Auckland Park headquarters to engage, share perspectives

about geopolitics affecting and impacting on the working-class communities. The worrisome negative trajectory of the rising dictatorship of the bourgeoisies, right-wing parties leading in Germany, Netherlands, Austria, Italy, Belgium and also the economic uncertainty fuelled by trade war.

Capitalism, neoliberalism and fascism continues to alienate the human race from each, only prioritizing producing for profits whilst the poor working-class communities are suffering as a result of hunger, poverty,

diseases and wars!

Economic inequality is threatening democracy is most countries!

Police unions in Norway and Sweden belong to the Nordic Police Federation (Nordiska Polisförbundet, NPF) which is an association of police unions from Iceland, Denmark and Finland, established in 1921 with the aim of promoting common Nordic interests in the field of policing. One of the main tasks of the NPF is to advocate for police officers' professional issues. This includes improving working conditions, work

environment, and social rights for police officers. POPCRU's National Spokesperson, Richard Mamabolo elaborates on the key outcomes of engagements and reasserts how the union is enhancing its international solidarity work and sharpening its proletarian international outlook.

'POPCRU has for long recognized the significance of strengthening bilateral relations with other police unions worldwide to enhance collective bargaining power, professional development, and advocacy for progressive policing models.'

Mamabolo said “The Police and Prisons Civil Rights Union (POPCRU) leadership significantly hosted international guests from Norway and Sweden. The visit of our comrades from Norway and Sweden was not just a diplomatic engagement—it was a strategic initiative aimed at enhancing labour relations, improving working conditions, and advocating for ethical and community-centred policing models.”

This engagement reinforced the strong ties between POPCRU and its international allies while positioning South Africa as a key player in global labour movements. In an era where policing faces increasing global challenges—ranging from transnational crime to human rights concerns—it is essential for police unions to collaborate and share best practices.

POPCRU has for long recognized the significance of strengthening bilateral relations with other police unions worldwide to enhance collective bargaining power, professional development, and advocacy for progressive policing models.

Policing unions from both these countries visited our POPCRU Headquarters with the sole aim of strengthening international relations to allow both parties to exchange best practices in labour rights and policing standards, develop strategies to improve working conditions and collective bargaining

efforts, create a unified stance on human rights, police accountability, and justice system reforms and advocate for the demilitarization of police and community-centred policing models.

Also present was the Safer South Africa Foundation (SAAF), which gave a distinct account of its initiatives in crime-prevention activities.

Given the common struggles faced by police officers globally, including job insecurity, political interference, and operational challenges, fostering bilateral relations enhances the ability of unions to push for fair policies at both national and international levels.

POPCRU shares a long-standing and strategic partnership with Norwegian and Swedish police unions, which has been instrumental in advancing its vision for a progressive and professional policing system in South Africa.

The Norwegian Police Union has been a strong ally in knowledge-sharing, training, and policy development. Some key areas of cooperation include capacity building and training as they have provided technical assistance and training programs to enhance skills within the South African policing sector.

This partnership has emphasized human rights-based approaches to policing, advocating for policies that prioritize

community engagement and conflict resolution in line with the goals set out by our SSAF as led by Mme Riah Phiyega as the CEO and Executive Director, and our former President Dr Cebekhulu as the Chairperson of the Board.

On the other hand, Sweden is renowned for its progressive policing model, emphasizing trust, accountability, and social justice.

POPCRU's relationship with Swedish police unions has been particularly beneficial in promoting community-oriented policing, and learning from Sweden's model of proactive, service-driven policing rather than reactive enforcement, we are sure to advance our practices in this very vital field.

The Swedish police union has supported POPCRU's efforts to advocate for greater gender representation and protection against gender-based violence (GBV) in the police force as well, something we have been excelling on campaigning for in the midst of the many bridges we still face.

Overall, by reinforcing our ties with international police unions, POPCRU achieves several critical goals which include access to global labour strategies that help secure better wages, benefits, and working conditions for officers, modernising South African policing, promoting a stronger international network that enables POPCRU to

participate in global forums, influencing policies that impact policing and labour rights and the exposure to global best practices strengthens POPCRU's internal structures, making it more effective in mobilizing members and negotiating policies.

While the relationship with Norwegian and Swedish police unions is invaluable, POPCRU will continue to expand its international footprint by engaging with unions in Africa, Latin America, and Asia to address common challenges in policing and security sector reforms, advocating for international labour standards that protect police officers' rights across different jurisdictions and participating in global policing conferences to influence policies on fair labour practices, police accountability, and community policing.

POPCRU's efforts to strengthen bilateral relations with international police unions, particularly those in Norway and Sweden, are vital for the future of policing in South Africa.

These partnerships not only help improve labour conditions but also support the transformation of policing into a more professional, ethical, and community-oriented service. Moving forward, continued global collaboration will empower POPCRU to drive progressive change, enhance police officers' rights, and ensure a fair and just policing system for all.



Plummeting relationship between the **US AND SOUTH AFRICA,** what's the way forward?

Rising on cases of diplomatic decorum across the globe is worsening, with the latest case scenario featuring Rwanda severing diplomatic ties with Belgium, accusing the European nation of consistently undermining Kigali amid the ongoing conflict in Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

The Southern African Development Community (SADC) has since withdrawn its peace keeping mission troops in the DRC.

What does this decision hold for peace initiatives in the Central region?

Even though the United Nations has declared 2025 International Year of Peace and Trust, the continuing war in Ukraine, the conflicts in the DRC, Sudan and genocidal attacks by Israeli government on Palestinians, is a great concern for peace loving global citizens.

Trade union negotiators must note that active participation in conflict resolution mechanisms doesn't mean eliminating

inherent conflicts, but it's all about overcoming sterile antagonism.

The UN General Assembly has called on the international community to resolve conflicts through inclusive dialogue and negotiation in order to ensure the strengthening of peace and trust in relations between UN member states.'

On the other hand, the United States of America has regrettable expelled the South African Ambassador to the United States of

America, Mr. Ebrahim Rasool. International relations between the two countries began under President Trump after under E.O. 14204, the U.S. declared it was 'considering refugee resettlement for disfavoured ethnic minority Afrikaners facing unjust racial discrimination in South Africa.'

South Africa has declared its commitment 'to inclusive multilateralism as the most effective means to address the most pressing challenges facing the world.'

The Department of International Relations and Cooperation said 'South Africa remains committed to building a mutually beneficial relationship with the United States of America.'

Trade conflicts, positions on Israeli genocide, the BRICS+ block issue, and the suspension of US finances are just a few of the geopolitical issues that have exacerbated the situation!

How long will this neoliberal populism aftermath last?

In Africa, the poorest households are paying more in taxes than they receive in transfers and subsidies.

The South African government received a backlash from progressive labour organizations and civil society for increasing value added tax by 0.5% on the occasion of the tabling of 2025 Budget Speech by Minister of Finance Enoch Godongwana.

Instead of reducing inequality, fiscal policy often makes poverty worse through austerity measures and budget cuts crippling quality public services in communities.

Many citizens argue that South Africa is abandoning the notion of building a

capable, developmental state through the neoliberal policies trajectory.

Workers demand a People's Budget!

In this edition, we are covering COSATU's Social Responsibility Project at Sandringham High School after the federation donated school shoes and dignity packs to the needy learners, the reaction of SAMATU to the health market inquiry recommendations to improve competition within the sector and the effects of the closure of ArcelorMittal on jobs in South Africa.

Fresh news received is the progress made by the Minister of Trade, Industry and Competition, Hon Parks Tau to safeguard the steel company, ArcelorMittal South Africa (AMSA), and preserve South Africa's industrial capacity through the R417 million Temporary Employer/Employee Relief Scheme to sustain 2 982 employees over the next 12 months and a financial assistance of R380 million to AMSA, in addition to the R1 billion working capital facility extended by the Industrial Development Corporation.

Organised labour still demand nationalisation of the steel industry as critical component of re-

industrialisation!

Recently, social workers have celebrated World Social Workers Day across the globe on the 18th of March under the Theme: "Strengthening Intergenerational Solidarity for Enduring Wellbeing". The rising cases of mental health and gender-based violence and also harassment demand that social workers must be given their rightful in society to mend the broken social fabric.

Social workers hold communities together. They care, support, and advocate yet their work is undervalued and underfunded.

Let's support the employment of more social workers like any other occupation to build safer communities. Indeed, social workers need better pay, fair conditions, and investment in public services.

The history of the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU) was revived with the 70th anniversary celebrations held at Liliesleaf Museum in Rivonia, Gauteng. We must salute all the heroes and heroines who laid a firm foundation for COSATU since its inception in 1985!

On Organizational

developments, we witnessed back-to-back convening of Worker's Parliament across the nine provinces, with provinces renewing their mandates.

Congratulations to all elected leaders. We wish you successful term of office in building COSATU Locals to respond to all labour grievances or disputes of workers on the ground.

On the other hand, we have observed strengthening of COSATU Gender Structures to deepen the struggle for gender equality and fairer wages.

With the commemorative events of Beijing30+, we are contending that various labour organizations will push forward with equal pay for work of equal value and eradicate violence and harassment in the world of work.

We hope you will enjoy reading this edition and will contribute to the enrichment of comradely debates by replying to others' perspectives.

Happy International Women's Day! Happy Human Rights Day! Aluta Continua!



SAEPU ACCELERATES THE BACK-TO-BASICS Campaign in Limpopo and Mpumalanga

SAEPU worker leaders and shopstewards on the ground at various EMS Station to recruit workers

The economic struggle against the capitalists, employers and the neoliberal governors does require progressive trade unions to be better organised, to fight back against austerity measures, job cuts and other associated ills of capitalist states.

The South African Emergency Personnel Union (SAEPU) launched

a provincial membership campaign to unite unorganized Emergency Medical Services (EMS) sector personnel, attract them, and provide quality membership services.

Typically, EMS systems in other countries are integrated into the greater healthcare system and include collaboration across public health,

healthcare, and public safety (they are often run by fire departments). (e.g., private versus public providers, with the required protocols).

Being organized within a trade union can help members accomplish fair wages, better working conditions, enforcement of labour standards, attaining personal goals of ordinary

members through skills development, career pathing, maintain a work-life balance, reduce stress levels and improve their focus on tasks at hands.

SAEPU President, Mpho Mpogeng elaborates vividly on their understanding of sector, membership service, recruitment drive and accelerating the Back-to-Basics campaign.

COSATU: SAEPU has been implementing various methods and strategies to recruit unorganised Emergency Medical Services

Personnel across the length and breadth of Limpopo and Mpumalanga to effectively build an authoritative relationship with employees in the station and nurture a sound

labour relations milieu. How has been the reception by the employees?

SAEPU President Mpogeng: The gathering was overwhelmingly

positive, but a few Personnel had blended feelings knowing exceptionally well that there are seven unions within the Department of Health, so it'll not be simple

for them to join one union just by the stroke of pen. It warrants that SAEPU leads organizing campaigns to win their hearts and minds. So far, we are contending that we heading in the right direction.

COSATU: How is the status of the membership of SAEPU in the current period and how do you envisage to increasing the numbers in other seven [7] provinces wherein you are still to visit?

SAEPU President Mpongeng: Our Membership is growing steadily; we planned to increase numbers by intensifying our recruitment drives within the seven (7) provinces. In Limpopo for example, the Department of Health has about +1 200 employees and SAEPU is sitting at 650 memberships, meaning that we are dominating the space within the Department, and we can say that we are the majority in the Department of Health in the EMS sector only. In Mpumalanga, the numbers are still very low, but we managed to get reasonable numbers during our recruitment drive.

COSATU: What are the three most reported grievance registered by employees across all the EMS stations visited thus far? And how do you aim to address their labour challenges?

SAEPU President Mpongeng: The top three

grievances are issues related the provision of uniform, the shortage of human resource personnel and the 13 overlapping hours which workers were robbed of by the Department of Health in Limpopo. To address these matters, we have to start by uniting the workers first because if, we are divided, the Employer will not take us seriously.

COSATU: Insofar as safety at the workplace, what has the union done to engage management and other labour service organizations to address the scourge of vicious attacks on EMS workers across all provinces?

SAEPU President Mpongeng: We provided the Department of Health with possible solutions but it is unfortunate that the employer is not responding positively and they are not interested to attend to the issue of attacks. We printed lots of T-shirts raise public awareness; we engaged with media houses to navigate our campaign and also to bring the Department into the picture. Safety of all workers at the workplace is of paramount importance. Law enforcement agencies must play their primary role too to protect its citizens.

COSATU: What other mechanisms may be implemented by government and the Department of National Health in particular, to address safety concerns at the workplace?

SAEPU President Mpongeng: The Government and Department of National Health should provide additional resources, improve infrastructure and enforce stricter safety protocols in all health institutions.

COSATU: Do you think EMS employees are afforded sufficient in-service training and development to become better to deal with rising number of disasters affecting communities such as floods, fires and others related fatal crashes on the roads?

SAEPU President Mpongeng: No, we believe that more training and development opportunities are needed to equip EMS workers with the necessary skills to respond to emergencies. Almost all the colleges within the provinces are not functioning; it is only few colleges that are operating which are in Gauteng, Eastern Cape and Free State predominantly.

COSATU: Do you think all these challenges have not affected the mental health of EMS employees? If, yes, to what extent? And what can be done?

SAEPU President Mpongeng: Yes, the challenges faced by EMS workers take a toll on their mental health. Most of the personnel are now abusing drugs and imbibing alcohol like it is no one's business. We request the Department of Health to ensure that the

plans of Employee Wellness Programme (EWP) must be implemented effectively because the personnel lack counselling due to traumatic incidents they are exposed to. We highly recommend that every quarter all employees must go through counselling or debriefing sessions.

COSATU: Work and life balance is a huge challenge, especially for young workers. What is the union doing to keep young workers active in the organization and are the intervention having an impact?

SAEPU President Mpongeng: The Government issued the moratorium for colleges to close, so it is quite difficult to get the young workers active and most of the workers are in their forties; only 2% of the employees are youth because of the moratorium.

COSATU: How far is the union in pushing ahead with the nationalization of the EMS sector, wherein uniform standards such as same uniform may apply and other operational standards at the workplace?

SAEPU President Mpongeng: We came up with a proposal and handed it over to the Department of Health and the Presidency. They are partially addressing it, as we can see now that we are having the same branding of ambulances and uniform. We are still lacking behind because workers in the country are earning

unequal salaries, so we need to pursue the matter of standardisation, have our own Department that will include EMS workers, Firefighters, Rescue Divers and Forensic Pathology.

COSATU: Many communities are complaining about the sloppy response by EMS workers when called for emergency cases and how is the union contributing to resolving the impasse?

SAEPU President Mpogeng: The issue of shortage is a very serious challenge, take note that there is a ratio "1 Ambulance is equal to 10 000 people", but we have

seen in most communities that one ambulance is catering close to 20 000 people; so it is obvious that the respond time is going to be badly affected.

This shortage of ambulances creates anger and fuel attacks because community members run out of patience and end up attacking our Personnel's without knowing that they are not the ones responsible for this poor service delivery.

We are busy with an advocacy campaign to enlighten the community members about their human rights and also to engage with them that the workers

are not responsible for staff shortages or procuring ambulances so that they must not be attacked or suffer the consequences of that.

COSATU: What other priorities is the union dealing with and on what areas of work to strengthen the union?

SAEPU President Mpogeng: Our union is very small to start with, our organizational priority currently is to empower our members to appreciate an understanding their labour right at work and how to mitigate as and when those rights are violated.

It is a mammoth

organizational responsibility we have shouldered especially when we tackle perception about trade unions with the current cohort of employees.

Inservice training is one key component of our priority and skills development. Union bashing is rife in the EMS sector, with emphasise on 'comply and complain later' syndrome.

COSATU: Thanks for sharing your insights about developments within SAEPU!

SAEPU President Mpogeng: Thank you. Aluta Continua! [REDACTED]



SAMATU marches against the rising **UNEMPLOYMENT FIGURES OF HEALTHCARE WORKERS**

COSATU, SACP, SAMATU and ANCYL leaders led a march in Pretoria to the National Treasury

The South African Medical Association Trade Union [SAMATU] led hundreds of doctors and Alliance leaders in a national march to the National Treasury to deliver a memorandum of demands in Pretoria on the 31st of January 2025.

The march comprising of the presence of unemployed doctors, COSATU President, Zingiswa Losi, General Secretary Solly Phetoe, SACP Deputy National Chairperson Thulas Nxesi and ANCYL President Collen Malaji demanded that the Minister of Finance, Hon. Enock Godongwana must come out to collect the memorandum and expected that the Budget Speech to be tabled in 2025

must eradicate all austerity measures, which are crippling the public service in provision of quality, public healthcare services.

According to SAMATU General Secretary, Dr. Cedric Sihlangu staff shortages were hindering the country's development goals in providing good health and improving the well-being of its citizens. Austerity measures are affecting provision of quality service delivery in key sectors such as education, health, policing and infrastructure development.

"Unemployment of doctors leads to poor healthcare service delivery and burn-out of the employed doctors due to shortage of staff",

said Dr. Sihlangu.

Other demands were:

- That government must provide adequate funding for healthcare infrastructure and equipment
- That government must review the shift system, and that the employer must discontinue with its attacks on commuted overtime for doctors.
- That government must employ other healthcare professionals such as pharmacists, nurses, and all others to provide quality public services to the citizens
- That government must apply fair compensation modalities for healthcare workers and lastly, that healthcare workers must

work in safe workspaces.

Through this march, the union hoped to push for relief, or even a total removal of these burdens, which they believe is slowing down the country's impact to deliver universal care for its citizens. Members of SAMATU student wing, the South African Medical Students Union [SAMSU] came in great numbers to support the march.

The memorandum was received by the officials in the office of the Director-General in the National Treasury and others from the National Health Department. SAMATU gave the government officials 14 days to respond to the memorandum of workers.

Health Market Inquiry:

Unveiling the roots of inequalities in South Africa's two-tier healthcare system

by Bokang Motlhaga



The South African Medical Association Trade Union calls for a more inclusive and equitable healthcare system for all South Africans.

Commentary

Recently the discourse surrounding the South African two-tier healthcare system has illuminated numerous underlying factors that have led to the inequities in access to healthcare by the South African populace.

In 2014, the Competition

Commission instituted a market inquiry into the country's private healthcare sector to probe into the state, nature, and form of competition in the market in terms of Section 43B of the Competition Act, 89 of 1998; consequent to the fact that the private healthcare sector caters to roughly 16% of the population who can afford medical insurance,

while the remaining 84% solely rely on the public healthcare services.

The Health Market Inquiry (HMI) process encompassed an extensive engagement with the various stakeholders involved in the private healthcare sector.

These included private healthcare providers,

medical schemes, administrators, and other key players in the sector. Numerous market failures were found, requiring government's intervention to protect consumers.

At its core, the HMI exposes the divide between the private and public sectors, each functioning in silos, thereby perpetuating inequities rather than

addressing them.

The key findings of this inquiry underscore the exorbitant pricing models prevalent in private healthcare cultivated by lack of price regulation and limited transparency in fee structures; tendencies towards oligopolistic dominance whereby there is minimal opportunity for new competitors to enter the market and limited innovation; and a non-standardised quality of healthcare provided to patients.

A summary of the findings
Facilities

The HMI reveals a striking dominance by three major hospital groups, which command a significant share of the market at a national level. These groups account for 83.1% of beds in private healthcare and 86.9% admissions.

The implications of this market concentration extend not only on a national scale but also deeply influence local markets, with 60% exhibiting similar high levels of concentration.

This dominance poses challenges to competitive dynamics, making it difficult for smaller competitors to penetrate the market.

Furthermore, the HMI highlights that the National Hospital Network (NHN), which has a primary

objective of bringing together independent hospitals and healthcare facilities to enhance their bargaining power and competitiveness against the dominant hospital groups, has had relatively limited impact on influencing market competition.

The inquiry highlights a notable void, the absence of standardised quality measures within the private healthcare sector.

Without established metrics to gauge the quality of care provided, patients and stakeholders are left without reliable indicators to benchmark or compare healthcare services effectively.

This lack of transparency obscures the evaluation of hospital performance, allowing the big players to maintain their dominance unchallenged by qualitative scrutiny. Moreover, the inquiry notes lack of demonstrable competition among facilities.

The dominance of the big three hospital groups stifles the emergence of a vibrant, competitive environment within the sector as these institutions operate in a space relatively free from the pressures of market-driven innovation and improvement.

Practitioners

One of the critical findings of the HMI in

relation to practitioners in the private healthcare sector is the fee-for-service tariff setting, which creates incentives for overserving without necessarily improving patient outcomes. Essentially, the inquiry reveals that this mechanism leads to practitioners providing and charging patients for unrequired services, therefore driving private healthcare costs for patients upwards without proportional benefits to patient care.

The HMI found that the private healthcare sector does not possess an accurate database of the number of practitioners within this sector. However, using the claims data, the inquiry revealed that the practitioner to patient ratio in the private sector is 1.75 practitioners to 1000 patients, while in the public sector the ratio is 0.3 practitioners to 1000 patients.

This highlights the imbalances in human resource between the private and public healthcare sectors, which is root to the conglomerate of issues faced by the 84% consumers of public healthcare, including long patient waiting times and practitioner fatigue.

Funders

The HMI exposes that funders, who play a crucial role in the financing and delivery of

healthcare services, are currently operating within an incomplete regulatory framework, which results in distorted competition within the market.

Competition of medical schemes and benefit options is risk-focused, which has led to a proliferation of medical schemes and benefit options, which in turn exacerbate information asymmetries within the market.

Consequently, consumers face a bewildering array of choices, often presented in a manner that is complex and not easily comparable. This complexity potentially disempowers consumers, leaving them unable to make informed decisions or exert influence over the market through their choices.

Therefore, the market discipline that consumer choice should impose is greatly absent. Additionally, the inquiry highlights that the markets for schemes and administrators are highly concentrated, which further undermines competition.

The relationships and incentives within these concentrated markets remain unclear, raising concerns about their impact on efficiency and accountability.

Without clear incentives aligned with promoting consumer interests and enhancing service delivery, the market players continue to prioritise profit-driven motives over the quality and accessibility of healthcare.

In examining the dynamics of private healthcare pricing, the Minister of Health, Dr Aaron Motsoaledi, has likened it to the pricing models employed by airlines and hotels. Much like these industries, where prices can surge based on real-time demand and consumption, private healthcare costs also increase in response to the demand of patients for these services.

This strategy underscores how private hospitals adjust their pricing structures to

maintain financial viability amid varying demand levels, illustrating a critical aspect of the inquiry's findings on cost models within this sector.

The comparison highlights the complexity and challenges of pricing in private healthcare, where financial realities dictate that costs must be covered, even when demand falls short.

This model, while economically rational, raises important questions about affordability and accessibility, especially as consumers bear the brunt of the high costs of private healthcare.

The HMI unveils the complexities and challenges inherent in South Africa's two-tier healthcare landscape, with a clear indication that while the primary

objective of the two healthcare sectors is to deliver quality healthcare services to the nation, access to private healthcare services remains a pipeline dream for a majority of lower-income households in South Africa due to high costs associated with accessing these services.

With this backdrop, the National Health Insurance (NHI) emerges as a potential channel for addressing these inequalities, offering a unified framework aimed at bridging socio-economic differences as far as access to healthcare is concerned.

Can the NHI fulfil its promise to harmonise resources and ensure uniformity in access to quality healthcare for all South Africans?

As we ponder this question, it becomes crucial to explore how the NHI implementation will redefine the current healthcare dynamics, providing not just a solution, but a pathway to a more inclusive and equitable healthcare system for all South Africans.

Article written by Bokang Motlhaga, South African Medical Association Trade Union (SAMATU) Media Officer.

SAMATU is a Trade Union for Medical Doctors registered in terms of the Labour Relations Act (REG: LR2/6/2/513). We offer professional Trade Union services to Doctors, inclusive of labour relations and bargaining services.



Minister of Finance, Hon Enock Godongwana in the 2023 Budget increased allocations for all three spheres of government, to assist with urgent spending pressures. Relative to the 2022 Budget, direct provincial allocations increased by R92.7 billion, to R2.17 trillion over the medium term.

It's not austerity that we face: **THE STATE OF THE STATE**

By Professor Lucien van der Walt

With a new Budget in the works, we need to take a serious look at the state of the state, and to consider the implications for working-class movements.

As a starting point, let's face it: the South African government does NOT practice austerity. I know this argument may

be controversial in some left-wing and labour movement circles.

But facts do not fit the argument that Mzansi has a hard-nosed neo-liberal state hell-bent on gutting jobs and welfare.

Austerity is about cutting state spending to reduce budget deficits. A deficit is when the state spends more than

its income.

For decades, and still today, Mzansi's government has not cut spending. Rather, overall spending has grown rapidly, year after year. The bulk of this growth is on government wages; on welfare, including grants; on bailouts of state companies; and on absorbing losses to corruption.

State spending has also grown more rapidly than state income, notably since the early Zuma years, i.e., there is an ever-growing deficit. Finance Minister Enoch Godongwana's controversial proposal to increase VAT to 17% was an attempt at filling the gap.

But the gap has mainly

been covered by loans.

This has led to South Africa accumulating the largest sustained state (so-called “national”) debt in its history. In 2022, national government debt was around R4.3 trillion, needing R380 billion a year in repayment.

Much of that repayment was just to cover the interest.

Government allocated twice as much to debt repayments than to health spending in the 2022 budget that year. Another R2 trillion (or so) of debt sits in state companies like DENEL, ESKOM, SAA, SABC, and Transnet.

Yes, there are some freezes in jobs here and there, as well as understaffing in, for example, state hospitals and universities. Infrastructure, hospitals, roads, schools, the electricity grid, and so on, are in a dire and declining state.

But it is mistaken to blame this on a systematic programme of cutting spending. Funding shortfalls may seem a result of austerity. But the key reason lies in how the state spends (ever-increasing amounts of) money. The outcomes are similar, but the causes are very different.

First, as noted, overspending has led to a ballooning debt that requires growing repayments.

This swallows money that could have gone elsewhere.

Second, chronic mismanagement and corruption are sinkholes for state money. For example, ESKOM’s Medupi and Kusile megapower stations were started in 2007 but only finished in 2021. Then they needed two more years to fix major flaws. This is still not finished: the late February 2025 blackouts were largely due to an ongoing problem with a unit at brand-new Medupi.

These builds also cost five times more than planned: an extra R400 billion. The state had to bail ESKOM out, also taking the hit for endemic corruption in the state corporation, like contractors providing black rubbish bags at R51.00 each.

Third, the state has systematically shifted spending from investment to consumption. Gross fixed capital formation by the state fell from 15% in 1975 to around 7% in 2010. The state has cut back on maintaining (and expanding) infrastructure and facilities.

It has meanwhile greatly increased what it pays government employees as income and what it gives sectors of the public through welfare.

The government wage bill has ballooned. And there are now around 26

million people – almost half the population – receiving non-contributory grants. This excludes the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS). In the late 1990s, the figure was around five million.

The issue is not so much about government employment numbers, but in the rising cost per employee. This is why the ballooning wage bill exists alongside the widespread physical decline in government-owned facilities where many work, as well as alongside serious understaffing in some areas.

For example, much of the increase in basic education spending has been on equalising and then raising salaries, and not on upgrading township and rural schools. Soldiers’ and police wages and perks have improved, but army bases and police stations are run-down and under-equipped.

There is no harsh, clear neo-liberal plan underway. Faced with difficult choices, the South African political elite dither, balance factions, watch public reactions, and then take the easiest road. Paying wages and funding welfare, plus borrowing more money, are low-hanging fruit.

They provide quick political wins and which is far easier than fixing the big issues. For example,

the mid-term budget of 2023, denounced by some as an “austerity budget,” involved (relatively tiny) cuts of R21 billion.

Treasury opted instead to borrow another R1.5 trillion and tighten taxation a bit. The political elite views state spending as a means of winning support and votes, and, often enough, as a patronage system.

The state certainly freezes posts at times, but it does not cut the overall wage bill. It tries to limit the government wage bill, but when pushed, ends up granting real wage increases. It sometimes increases grants below the rate of inflation, but it steadily increases the numbers on welfare.

It speaks of efficiency, while growing the Cabinet and boosting pay and perks for parliamentarians.

It is not a “developmental” state as senior politicians claim. The growing spending on state personnel also does not translate into increased state capacities.

Generally, the South African state struggles to develop and implement plans, has contradictory policies, and is deeply fractured. But it is also not a state waging a neo-liberal Thatcherite class war as some critics insist.

It is a bumbling state that is sleep-walking towards bankruptcy. And this is not captured by the notion of austerity. The associated idea that the Cyril Ramaphosa-led African National Congress (ANC), or the Democratic Alliance (DA) and the Government of National Unity (GNU) are implementing a ruthless neo-liberal agenda misreads the situation.

Neo-liberalism has an influence on the state, but it is only part of a messy picture. Much of what the ANC (and the GNU) do, in fact, frustrates the core neo-liberal project: providing conditions for businesses to thrive.

For example, the decline of reliable power, ports, railways, and roads depresses economic growth and job creation. This then limits the tax

revenue available for the state's deficit and debt.

And without economic revival, the state cannot cut back on government jobs, wages or grants without risking unrest.

And so, the cycle continues. The existing pattern of state spending cannot revive the economy. Many state jobs are essential, like teaching, but do not create new value nor directly expand the economy. Rising aggregate demand due to state spending on wages and grants does little to expand private sector employment and production.

In South Africa's fairly open and uncompetitive open economy, much of that extra spending goes on cheap (and luxury) imported goods.

To have a Keynesian-

type stimulus, you need to ensure that increased demand is directed at local suppliers. There is no such system in place.

Instead, South Africa exports a demand stimulus to capitalists abroad, like those running t-shirt factories in Vietnam.

So, yes, we are in a mess, with the working-class facing an inefficient and expensive capitalist state.

Demanding that such a state spend more, tax more or do more, or hoping it can undertake big Keynesian or "developmental state" push or roll-out a universal BIG, is fine. But it is not a practical solution.

The state can also probably tax more, in order to avoid cuts and reduce the deficit,

but this does not solve the pattern of runaway spending. The scope for more tax revenue is also limited by sluggish, uncompetitive economy that is unattractive to investors.

Politically, yes, we should defend jobs, wages, and services for the broad working-class.

But we need to undertake a proper analysis of the actually-existing state and its class character, rather than rest on old theories and old battles.

And we need to think about implications for working-class strategy.

Article written by Professor Lucien van der Walt, from the Neil Aggett Labour Studies Unit (NALSU), Rhodes University.

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