



Investing in people for social and economic justice

DISMISSAL OF STRIKING NURSES - AN ACT OF SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC INJUSTICE

The Zimbabwe Coalition on Debt and Development (ZIMCODD) is disappointed by the Government's unpopular decision to dismiss nurses who had engaged in industrial action. The decision and action by the government to summarily dismiss nurses is an act of social and economic injustice. The demands by the nurses are genuine and reasonable. Nurses are earning a paltry \$284 basic salary (before allowances) which is less than half the Poverty Datum Line (PDL) estimate which stands at \$600. The grievances which relate to poor and dangerous working conditions, which threaten their health and affect the discharge of their duties, remain unaddressed.

Zimbabwe is currently facing a health crisis with sporadic cholera outbreaks in various localities. In addition to public resources management issues, leadership crisis, the country is also manifesting a policy prioritisation problem. The claim of insufficient funds to meet the demands of the civil servants becomes questionable in the face of extravagant spending by the same government. Two weeks ago the Mnangagwa led administration allegedly blew a whopping US\$2.3 million (plus other VIP allowances) on a trip China by hiring a luxurious private jet owned by Switzerland-based aviation management company, Comlux. The same administration also considered a priority to splash brand new double cab trucks for traditional chiefs.

His Excellency president Mnangagwa has often called for dialogue and negotiation but this action by his administration is proving otherwise. Furthermore, Chapter 4 Section 65(3) and (4) of the Zimbabwe Constitution which is the supreme law of the land states that, '*Every person has the right to fair and safe labour practices and standards and to be paid a fair and reasonable wage*'.

The responsible authorities in this case must be reminded that the impact of such a dismissal is borne by the victims (nurses), the employing organization and society as a whole. An attempt to fix or vengefully deal with this matter has a wide ranging impact on social and economic rights particularly on health service delivery. Among these are:

- Flight of experienced nursing personnel. The government is not showing gratitude to the sacrificial service rendered by the nurses most of whom have loyally served in the public sector for a long period of time shunning available opportunities to work in the diaspora like their fellow colleagues.
- Risking of people's lives in the hands of inexperienced and retired nursing staff. Some of the nurses being called to replace the dismissed workers have not had clinical experience for over 5 years. Like any other field of practice, technology and knowledge evolves from time to time and these replacements are surely not acquainted enough.
- The impact at individual level is immeasurable and includes suffering and humiliation, depression, anxiety and even suicide. The International Labour Organisation (ILO, 1992) that if the effects of unfair dismissal are not contained by adequate interventions, these symptoms are likely to develop into physical illness, psychological disorders, tobacco and alcohol and drug abuse, and so on; they can culminate in reduced employability, invalidity and even suicide. These negative consequences not only affect the individual but extend to all those

relationally connected to him – the family and community in which s/he lives. 16,000 nurse employees are connected to, or breadwinners of and contributors to livelihoods of 16,000 families – on average at least 4 dependents which translates to 64000 people directly affected by the government’s decision to fire the demonstrating employees. Thousands of children will drop from school, fail to access quality health care, clothing and will experience traumatising stress associated with sudden changing of standard of living.

- Considering that the nursing field is historically dominated by female employees –in taking this drastic action to fire the demonstrating nurses the government is shooting down efforts to empower women in view of their vital contribution to the economy. Research statistics indicate that female headed households constitute 35% of all households in Zimbabwe.

Therefore ZIMCODD calls upon the Government to;

- 1. Reverse its statement on dismissal of demonstrating nurses and refrain from threats and intimidation of workers**
- 2. Withdraw its order against the nurses and retreat to the negotiating table.**
- 3. Increase funding allocation to the Health sector in adherence to the Maputo declaration (2006) and the Abuja Declaration (2003) which Zimbabwe is a signatory to ensure quality of life for citizens.**
- 4. Reaffirm its commitment to upholding and defending fundamental human rights and freedoms including being determined to overcoming all challenges and obstacles that impede our progress as enshrined in the Preamble of our Constitution.**

For more information, please contact:

Mr. Liberty Bhebhe: National Chairperson: +263 774 208436 , [Email:libertybhebhe@yahoo.com](mailto:libertybhebhe@yahoo.com)

Mrs Janet Zhou: Executive Director: [+263775415685](tel:+263775415685), [Email: janet@zimcodd.co.zw](mailto:janet@zimcodd.co.zw)

Contact ZIMCODD Head Office:

226 Samora Machel Avenue, Eastlea, Harare Tel: [+263-4-776830](tel:+263-4-776830)

Website: www.zimcodd.org

Facebook Page: Zimbabwe Coalition on Debt and Development,

Profile: Zimcodd Zimcodd

Twitter: @zimcodd1