

Swaziland National Association of Teachers



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STATEMENT BY THE SNAT ON THE EVER-INCREASING COVID-19 CASES INCLUDING FATALITIES [DEATHS]

1. INTRODUCTION

The Swaziland National Association of Teachers (SNAT) has been noting that the statistics of Swazis who contract the novel COVID-19 virus are proving to be insurmountable at the moment. Our members are also hit hard by the effects of this virus thus losing comrades at an unprecedented rate.

As the SNAT, we honestly appreciate the scale of the problem that engulfs the whole World presently. As a Labour Formation, we are taking full cognisance of the fact that COVID-19 wreaks havoc in developed and developing countries alike and has therefore markedly destabilised our support systems as people. Be that as it may, as educators, we are of the ardent view that the Government can actually do more in the fight against the invisible enemy. As the Swazi Populace, we need to escalate the fight against Coronavirus in our respective spaces. We have also learnt that Swaziland has the highest death rate in Africa and this spells doom for us. The virus has a potential of wiping the nation of 1.3 million people off the face of the Earth, in no time.



The SNAT Platform



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2. CRUX OF THE STATEMENT

As the SNAT, we therefore wish to state the following as contributions in terms of what can be done to roll-back the spectre of a dying nation.

- I. The Government must significantly increase the budget for the Ministry of Health [MoH]. This will assist in procuring Personal Protective Equipment [PPE] for our frontline workers as well as medication to fight against all comorbidities whose presence in our bodies facilitates the reproduction of the virus. Many Swazis who die from COVID-19 complications are those who have underlying comorbidities.
- II. The Government must hire more Nursing Professionals to assist in the fight against COVID-19. The current force has been attacked by fatigue and they are also overstretched by the growing numbers.
- III. More testing kiosks must be established country-wide and the Government must roll-out a nation-wide mass COVID-19 testing campaign. This will ensure early detection of the virus in our bodies so that there could be early intervention.
- IV. As the country is gearing up towards the re-opening of schools, as the SNAT, we support that move on condition that the Government shall adequately capacitate all learning institutions with appropriate resources that will prevent the spread of the virus in schools. Unless and until that is done, it goes without saying that schools and tertiary institutions shall be hot spots with the already overstretched and collapsed health system-a period that can be characterized by catastrophe. In this connection, the Government must;
 - a) Significantly increase the budget for the Ministry of Education and Training (MoET) so that all schools, tertiary institutions and MoET Departments can be adequately resourced.
 - b) Supply adequate PPE and all relevant materials to all educators and must ensure that these are replenished timeously.
 - c) All outstanding fees are paid to all schools by the end of January 2021. This will ensure that school Administrators thoroughly prepare schools to be safe centres during this second wave of the virus.
- V. A specific call is hereby made to the Government to employ more teachers in all levels of our education system. This will ensure that there is full compliance in the various schools in terms of numbers of learners per class as required by the COVID-19 Regulations. Fortunately, as a country we are awash with trained educators who are currently unemployed. As professionals, these educators

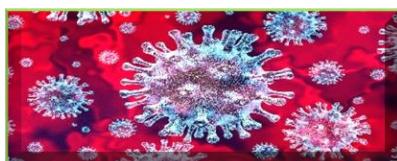


have a duty to perform to the Swazi Nation and this is the time to get them to the war front during this fight.

- VI. The challenges that we now face as a country dictate that COVID-19 has quickly escalated itself to be an Occupational Health and Safety Disease. This means that all workers such as nurses, teachers, fire fighters, emergency personnel, doctors, to mention but a few, who contact COVID-19 in their line of duty, they must be compensated, as per the OHS Act No. 09 of 2001. At the very least, all these frontline workers, including educators, must be given Risk Allowance by the Swaziland Government, their employer of choice. As the SNAT, we are determined to fight for the inalienable right of our members.
- VII. Since the SNAT is a major stakeholder in the education system of this country and due to the fact that the SNAT NEC sits in all consultative meetings at Senior Management [SMT] level with the MoET, we expect the Government to take our views into serious consideration. Such engagements should be meaningful discussions and not merely opportunities to blow-off-steam.

3. CONCLUSION

As the SNAT, we have been bruised by this virus in that it has taken over twenty (20) of our members. As we speak, many are infected and many more are affected. The NEC wishes to encourage our members and the wider society to adhere to World Health Organisation (WHO) and National COVID-19 Safety and Health Standards. The Government is also implored to utilize the lockdown period to prepare well for the tough times that lie ahead.



#COVID-19IsReal



#WashYourHands



#WearYourMask

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