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| **POLICE AND PRISONS CIVIL RIGHTS UNION** **SUBMISSION TO THE PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON POLICE****TOPIC: SAPS ORGANISATIONAL CLIMATE SURVEY**A Submission prepared by the Police and Prisons Civil Rights Union1 Marie Road, Auckland Park, Johannesburg, 2000Tel: 011 242 4600; Fax: 086 625 3054; Email: gs@popcru.org.za |

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The Police and Prisons Civil Rights Union (hereafter POPCRU) is once again pleased to be part of this most important platform of addressing critical matters that will be beneficial to both our members and society at large. Firstly, it is important to acknowledge that the findings of Organisational Climate Survey are well aligned with critical issues that we have been constantly raising in different platforms; including this Portfolio Committee. Most importantly, we should indicate that we had a programme of action in 2013 and 2018 whereby we marched to the Union Buildings to table similar challenges included in this study. Our demands to Minister Bheki Cele included, among others, speedy finalisation of grading for Public Service Act appointees, resolving the backlog on promotion by implementing SSSBC Agreement 2 and 3 of 2011; implementation of Housing Scheme; restructuring within the SAPS; lack or resources; improvement of working conditions; police killings; review of Employee Assistant Programmes; enhancement of productivity and morale.

It is on this premise that we welcome this research report as it provides empirical evidence on a myriad of factors related to our organisational resolutions. Nevertheless, we have a serious concern with the management’s lack of willingness to address various challenges presented herein. Based on the presented findings of the survey, we have structured our Submission as follows:

**1. Promotion and Grade Progression**

In any workplace, there are policies that are developed to regulate and govern working relationships between employers and employees, similarly within the South African Police Service (SAPS). On 28 September 2011, the SAPS and organised labour through the Safety and Security Sectoral Bargaining Council (SSSBC) engagements developed and agreed on a promotion and grade progression policy to regulate upward mobility of personnel (Agreement 2 and 3 of 2011). The Agreement sought, as its purpose, to promote employees from one post to another and grade progress them accordingly. This has been a progressive collective agreement that would have made our members more dedicated to their work whilst also uplifting their morale on the other hand.

Unfortunately, since this agreement came into effect on 1 April 2013; its prescripts were never fully implemented. There is an upward mobility backlog, in particular for Constables, Sergeants and Warrant Officers. These officers, in all these ranks, remain stagnant for eleven years to thirteen years before considered for promotion; this has been a grave concern to us over the years. POPCRU thus submits that this Agreement 2 of 2011 must be implemented to the latter to eliminate upward mobility backlog and further ensure that our members are duly promoted and grade progressed. This will resolve the challenge presented by the majority of participants who indicated they have been on the same rank for a period of more than ten years and above as depicted in figure 6 of the survey.

Another agreement that created chaos and huge impact on the morale amongst our members was Agreement 3 of 2018 when only Clause 3.1 of the Agreement was implemented. This Agreement was dealing with Job Evaluation and Grading of Entry Level Posts in SAPS. SAPS, in implementing this Agreement, promoted all officers in constables’ level from other Units to level of Warrant Officers, except in the Tactical Response Team (TRT). It must be noted that proper implementation of this Agreement could have added a significant value on members’ career development an uplifting of their morale thereof.

**2. Health and Wellness Programmes**

Our members in SAPS, especially those deployed to horrific crime scenes, find themselves in almost perpetual agony that unfortunately affects their lives and their families. POPCRU understands that there is a programme that was initiated precisely to help employees to be able to deal with these horrific crime scenes they are exposed to, which amongst others include but not limited to, briefing and debriefing sessions and counselling. It is however noteworthy to indicate that the mentioned sessions are not helpful to support police officers to deal with trauma encountered during horrific crime scenes. This is attested by the fact that 64.48% of members agreed that they do access these services and 43.17% agreed that they actually utilize the services; however; psychological challenges among members remains rife, which suggest that there is a challenge of efficiency with the provided wellness services. It is unfortunate that the survey did not probe much on the effectiveness of these services; empirical evidence could have added more value on this challenge.

Police suicide, which is directly linked to the poor morale within the SAPS, is at an alarming rate. The Minister of Police, Hon Bheki Cele revealed that in the past two years, 67 police officers committed suicide with range of factors including, relationship challenges, depression, financial difficulties and poor coping skills attributed to the cause.[[1]](#footnote-1) This disturbing challenge has regrettably worsened to include femicide as it has been reported that numerous members have taken both their lives and the lives of their partners. These unfortunate and regrettable incidents affirm that the Wellness Programme and other programmes introduced to help in mitigating these incidents have not been effective; there is therefore a dire need to review them and employ well experienced professionals so that these services can have a positive impact on our members.

We are in actual fact dismayed that the SAPS is currently using spiritual services (Chaplains) to perform this critical function after the majority of social workers resigned from SAPS for greener pastures. A lack of relevant professionals in this Programme compels our members to go and acquire expensive professional services from private practitioners whilst others opt to take their lives due to lack of psychological support. Based on this deliberate negligence of our members psychological being; we then submit that if SAPS cannot employ the required professionals to provide psychological support to our members, it must from now on incur costs paid by members who consult privately for these services. One police life lost, one too many. Moreover, we submit that confidentiality of these services must be carefully looked at, taking into consideration 34.70% of members who indicated that their information is not treated with confidentiality.

**3. Compensation package**

It is evident that the renumeration or compensation package are a direct cause of forever demoralised personnel within the SAPS. Despite the meagre salaries they earn, our members would still be expected to work uncomfortable hours and not be fairly remunerated or payment be unreasonably delayed in some instances. This occurs mostly when members are deployed to quell sporadic public unrests, like the ones experienced in July 2021, in Gauteng and KwaZulu Natal. The same can deplorably be said with regard to the danger allowance which has since been set at R400 since 2001. We submit that this allowance be increased to R1 500 and be paid retrospectively from 2020. We further propose that this danger allowance should be increased annually based on the Consumer Price Index (CPI) moving forward.

Additionally on allowances, we are of the view that uniform and clothing allowance for non-uniform members (Detectives, Crime Intelligence, Protection and Security Services, Presidential Protection, Directorate for Priority Crime Investigation (DPCI) and Full-Time Shop Stewards, which is an integral component of the renumeration package must be reviewed. We propose that the current R1 600 uniform allowance must be increased to at least R3 000 for both uniform and non-uniform members , which is a bit more reasonable than the current amount.

Over and above the current challenges faced by SAPS members and fellow public servants; what then became the last straw was when the government reneged on General Public Wage Agreement, which our members saw themselves going for three consecutive years without increment on cost-of-living adjustment. This had negative impact on the moral of our members and the entire workforce in SAPS. Our members are also finding themselves confronted with difficulties in accessing their savings on housing allowances with no valid reason provided by the employer. This makes it even more difficult for them to purchase houses for their families; hence we have some of our members living in informal settlements, renting properties and some staying with their parents as outlined on page 53 of the report. This is the most unfortunate reality confronting our members who work tirelessly in ensuring that South Africa is a safer place for all its inhabitants.

A more critical concern is the fact that majority of the participants (54.49%) indicated that they are not satisfied with their salaries. SAPS employees cannot continue living a life of being grateful when they survive a day; more so when the Head Office is top-heavy with high-ranking officers who are literally idling around in over-resourced air-conditioned offices. Our members need to be reassured that their well-being and economic needs are a priority as the service they provide is of a paramount importance to the safety and security of this country.

**4. Resources and Working Environment**

The working conditions within the SAPS, which amongst others includes dilapidated infrastructure, inadequate personnel and lack of resources as previously indicated in this Portfolio Committee, have also proven to be a contributing factor on members’ low morale. We have, on numerous occasions, raised this concern to this Committee and to the SAPS management; however, SAPS continues to show lack of interest in addressing these long-standing challenges. We are consequently not surprised that this survey revealed that 51.7% of the participants indicated that they do not have the required resources to perform their daily duties. It is evident that the SAPS is understaffed, with police population ratio currently sitting at 1: 413.[[2]](#footnote-2) This understaffing is compounded by high rate of absenteeism, resignations and natural attritions which subsequently compels police stations, especially in rural and townships to be manned by inadequate personnel.

In previously disadvantaged areas, majority of police stations are not conducive for our members efficiently provide services to the community. To make matters even worse, the safety of police officers is of a critical concern as they are often exposed to attacks by heavily armed criminals. This is stressful and of course demoralizing; hence 41.72% of the participants stated that they are not happy with their current work environment whilst 37.17% are of the view that SAPS is not a good organization to work for. This denotes that a lot needs to be done to ensure that SAPS transforms into an employer of choice with competitive remuneration, promotion opportunities improved infrastructure, better methods of communication and adequate resources.

We therefore submit that apart from employing extra police officers, SAPS must properly implement Agreement 2 of 2011, in particular Part D Clause 5.2. This will ensure that almost 30 000 trained police officers who are employed under Public Service Act (PSA) currently doing administrative functions in offices are released to fight crime on the ground. Moreover, the process of incorporating Public Service Act (PSA) appointees into a category of SAPS Act and the required legislative amendments must be finalised so as to ensure that SAPS employees are governed by one Act. Additionally, the responsibility of building and maintaining buildings should be transferred from the Department of Public Works to SAPS to effectively address infrastructural challenges.

One other serious challenge is on the Forensic Science Laboratories; with only four Laboratories country-wide, which have a huge backlog due to lack of key apparatus required to process information and evidence brought into laboratories; the fight against crime will never be a success. Sadly, this has a negative impact on the finalization of cases and subsequently securing convictions in courts, especially on GBV and related life-threatening cases. Hence a whopping 61.63% of SAPS members expressed that SAPS is not winning the fight against crime. This impediment should be resolved as a matter of urgently to enhance productivity and subsequently service delivery to the majority of the population, mainly the previously disadvantaged.

**5. Conclusion**

We would like to take this opportunity to applaud men and women in blue for the commitment they put whenever they execute their constitutional mandate despite the disheartening working conditions as revealed by the survey. As POPCRU, we believe that if we are to have a well-functional Police Service which is capable of efficiently preventing and fighting crime, the morale of the personnel must be uplifted to add more value on employee productivity and service delivery. We should therefore work together to ensure that the majority of our members (38%) who are not looking forward to go to work every morning get the required assistance and support that will uplift their morale and productivity.

In a nutshell, we are in support of the presented recommendations as they will motivate employees and further ensure that SAPS efficiently executes its constitutional mandate. We then urge SAPS to develop a programme of action on the implementation of the outlined recommendations. Political will on proper implementation will be of a significant value towards the upliftment of employee morale within the SAPS.

1. <https://www.iol.co.za/news/politics/67-police-officers-died-by-suicide-in-two-years-says-bheki-cele-559491af-6a07-46f5-b426-8091ebc9fa91> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. <https://www.saps.gov.za/about/stratframework/annual_report/2020_2021/annual_report_2020_2021.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)