



# The South African Policing Union

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4 May 2022

Re: **INPUT BY THE SOUTH AFRICAN POLICING UNION (SAPU) ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE SAPS ORGANISATIONAL CLIMATE SURVEY TO THE PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON POLICE**

1. **INTRODUCTION**

First and foremost, as the leadership of SAPU we wish to thank the Chairperson and Committee members of this honourable Committee for the invite to participate in the proceedings on a topic that is not only vital to the SAPS but to the country as a whole.

Over the past few years the absolute necessity to have an effective and responsive policing agency available to deal with either a pandemic, large scale civil unrest or a natural disaster, as recently experienced in KZN and the Eastern Cape, has become a non-negotiable on the agenda of South Africa Inc.

On more than one occasion the women and men in blue where the thin line between upholding safety and security and a possible anarchy.

In order to have an effective policing agency, it is of the utmost importance that the morale of the members serving in the agency must be at a satisfactory level.

Low morale in policing agencies is an international phenomenon and has attracted the attention of many role players in the sector.

A cursory desktop scroll on the issue of low morale in policing agencies across the globe shows the following:

*"MORALE, RETENTION AND RECRUITMENT*

*The police profession now faces unprecedented challenging times in attracting and then keeping qualified and motivated talent."*

Flowers in *POLICE LAW ENFORCEMENT SOLUTIONS*

16 February 2022

and

*"Cops say low morale and department scrutiny are driving them away from the job."*

Westerville in *CRIMINAL JUSTICE COLLABORATIVE*

24 June 2021

and

*"Police recruiting suffers as morale hits new lows"*

*AXIOS TWIN CITIES*

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19 May 2021

If one accepts that low morale in a police agency is a serious impediment in rendering an effective and efficient service to the citizenry that they serve, it is important to reflect on the position in the South African Police Service.

## 2. THE SAPS ORGANISATIONAL CLIMATE SURVEY.

- 2.1 The survey undertaken by SAPS in 2021 is welcomed by SAPU as an important barometer to measure the organisational climate of SAPS in respect of a few dimensions.

Notwithstanding the above, SAPU however wishes to express a level of concern that SAPS Management did not deem it appropriate to involve Organised Labour that is recognised in the sector, to assist with the role out of the survey.

It is high time for SAPS Management to realise that the Labour organisations that are active in the Department represents more than 90% of the workforce, and as such are key role players and social partners that are available to assist with strategic issues. The days of seeing Labour as part of the problem, as opposed to being part of the solution, are long gone. SAPU herewith extends an invite to SAPS to embrace us as important role player in taking the Department forward.

The second concern that must be raised is the low number of responses that were received in the conducting of the survey-it appears that just over 1500 participants participated in the survey and as such the credibility of the findings might be questioned. The fact that not a single Lieutenant-General in the Service deemed it necessary to participate in the study also raises a concern in respect of the buy in of Senior Management in this important matter.

- 2.2 As a trade union SAPU wants to concur with the findings of the survey, *to wit* that a large percentage of the participants are dissatisfied with the promotion process and career progression opportunities, overtime benefits as well as the service allowance. These findings are in line with the feedback that the SAPU receives when the union interact with its membership.
- 2.3 It is internationally accepted that low morale can be linked to poor leadership, lack of resources as well as unsatisfactory conditions of service.

The leadership issue in SAPS has recently been addressed and SAPU wishes to pledge its support to General Masemola, the newly appointed National Commissioner, in addressing the leadership void that was experienced of late. As an operational career police officer, SAPU is confident that he will address the operational needs of SAPS. Just as important, if not more important, is the **urgent need** to address a number of HR issues that have, for too long, been left on the back burner of the debate.

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2.4

A central theme that runs as a golden thread throughout the survey is the general dissatisfaction with the promotion process and career opportunities within SAPS. In this regard see Table 7 (on p.106 of the Survey) where the percentage of dissatisfaction with the promotion process is the highest of all the indicators at 77,81% and the level of dissatisfaction for future career progression is second highest at 68,46%. These two indicators should serve as an urgent wake up call for all interested parties that **these aspects needs immediate attention**. If it is generally accepted that the human capital of SAPS is its most valuable asset and if 75% of the workforce are *extremely not satisfied with the processes used in promotion in SAPS as a result they are not satisfied with opportunities for future career progression in the SAPS* (see par.9 on p.121 of the Survey), then there are serious warning lights flickering which requires that intervention at the highest level is no longer a nicety but a necessity.

It is therefore not surprising that the study revealed that rewards, benefits and promotions offered at SAPS also played a huge role in the high turnover of resignations (*vide* par.5.4 on p.118 of the Study). The number of resignations in SAPS over the last few years averages close to 2000 resignations per year. This figure is for resignations only, and does not include natural attrition due to retirement or medical boarding. For the past five years SAPS has lost close to 10 000 members which means that the recent enrolment of 10 000 trainees will only cover the resignation figure, without addressing the losses due to natural attrition.

SAPU wholeheartedly agrees with the recommendation in par.5.6 (on p. 123 of the Survey) that **SAPS should review its current career pathing, career development and promotion policy**.

For too long studies have been undertaken, external consultants appointed and task teams established **without any tangible results**. SAPU wants to impress on the honourable Portfolio Committee to also add its voice to this call for the promotion and career advancement policies of SAPS to be prioritised and clear timeframes be set for the finalization thereof. The performance agreements of the relevant senior managers should also cater for these deliverables. The current promotion policy was agreed to in 2011 and must be re-visited, given the high level of dissatisfaction. Grade progression also requires serious attention as the last agreement that regulated grade progression was SSSBC Agreement 2/2018, which regulated grade progression for the 2018/2019 financial year.

In terms of SSSBC Agreement 2/2011 parties to the SSSBC entered into a collective agreement that regulates a variety of HR matters, *inter alia*, the scrapping of performance incentives, the scrapping of the scarce skills policy and replaced with a new compensatory framework, the creation of a compensation model that differentiates between operational and support personnel as well as an initiative to incorporate employees appointed in terms of the Public Service Act, 1994 as a category of employees in terms of the SAPS Act, 1995.

**It is with a sense of trepidation that SAPU, as a signatory to the said agreement, must report that besides the scrapping of the incentive scheme (with no model replacing it), NONE OF THE OTHER AGREED TO DELIVERABLES HAVE BEEN FINALISED, TEN YEARS AFTER THE ADOPTION OF THE SAID AGREEMENT.**

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2.5 Another aspect that needs serious attention is the benefits payable to SAPS members. As is made visible in Table 7 (on p.106 of the Survey), the level of dissatisfaction with overtime benefits and service allowance benefits are 56.95% and 57.08%, respectively. The payment of overtime is no longer a privilege but entrenched as a right in terms of the Basic Conditions of Employment Act, 1997 as well as the relevant bargaining council agreements entered into under the auspices of the SSSBC. The practice in SAPS is somehow divorced from the textbook in that far too often members are instructed to perform overtime duties either with no form of compensation or instructed to take rest days. **This practice is in direct conflict with the prescripts and is a large contributor to the level of dissatisfaction and low morale being experienced in SAPS.** Members of SAPS are fully aware that they joined an essential service that requires a call beyond duty. This must however not be seen as akin to modern day slavery: Members who perform duties have the right to be compensated therefore, nothing more, nothing less.

The non-payment of overtime for overtime duties performed is a **major** point of concern. SAPU echoes the sentiments expressed in par. 11 of the Survey (p.122) to the effect that “SAPS employees are extremely not satisfied with overtime benefits. They have great concerns of the overtime benefits that are due to them not being paid to them. (our emphasis). It is quite startling that in this day and age employees must institute legal action to recoup overtime monies legally due to them in terms of an instruction to perform overtime duties.

The overtime allocation for SAPS for the 2022/3 financial year amounts to R739 million. This amount must cover all provinces, divisions and components within SAPS. It is clear that the allocation is not nearly sufficient to cover the overtime duties required in SAPS. A comparison of the SAPS overtime allocation *vis-a-vis* that of the Ethekwini Metro Police (with a staff complement of just over 2000 employees) put the argument that the overtime allocation for SAPS is not sufficient, in perspective: SAPS must utilise R739m for overtime for a staff complement in excess of 170 000 employees, whilst the Metro will be spending R180m on 2000 employees for the same period (according to a report on news.24 on 2 February 2022 reporting on a council meeting of the Metro).

The service allowance payable to operational SAPS members is another indictment that no reasonable person can be proud of. This allowance had its genesis in SSSBC Agreement 4/2001 wherein it was agreed to collapse the danger allowance, special danger allowance and standby allowance of the broad public service into a sector specific allowance to the amount of R400,00 per month. The amount was market related at the time **but has since not been increased** and severely lags behind CPI adjustment levels. This is despite constant demands from Labour that the allowance should be increased. The matter is on the agenda of the SSSBC for a very long period and SAPS is yet to pronounce on an increase. This is in contrast with the comparative allowances in the rest of the public service who since had seen adjustments, with another adjustment in the offing. The three allowances mentioned above currently amount to just over R1200,00 per month - a difference of 300% to that of the service allowance!! The service allowance translates to less than R13,50 per day. If any person in its right mind expects a SAPS member to be satisfied with this amount to “compensate” for long and dangerous hours, whether day or night,

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exposed to the elements and when the rest of the country was in hard lockdown, then that person must think again.

It is for this reason that SAPU has advocated for the service allowance to be adjusted to R1200,00 per month and then linked to annual CPI adjustment. This gesture will go a long way in addressing the dissatisfaction experienced with this allowance. An increase of the service allowance will also have the unintended consequence of luring members who are currently utilised in the support environment back to render classical policing duties. The current allowance does not serve as an incentive for members to be deployed in the operational environment, but a significant increase of the amount will definitely lead to a reversal of the trend currently being experienced.

SAPU accepts that SAPS management are often hamstrung to agree to any demand which has financial implications and places pressure on the compensation budget, due to the lack of funds. This Committee must however do their own analysis whether the fiscus should not be approached in this regard. After the civil unrest of last year, it suddenly dawned on the decision makers that an *increase* in the number of boots on the ground is indispensable, hence the additional 12 000 members that were allocated with the stroke of a pen. Now is maybe the time to address the *compensation* of those foot soldiers.

If cognisance is taken of all the above pitfalls in the HR landscape, it is not difficult to accept the validity of the Survey that a large number of SAPS employees is dissatisfied with SAPS, which in turn leads to the finding that a low morale is prevalent in SAPS.

### 2.6 The utilisation of a trainee model for SAPS.

The Survey recommends that the Department should strengthen its recruitment, retention and retirement strategies with clear policy directives. This recommendation is fully supported by SAPU, however with one *caveat*: **The trainee model as currently being implemented by SAPS needs to be re-visited in its totality.**

The best strategy or policy will not address the challenges that SAPS faces with the current model. The current model entails a Memorandum of Agreement that the Department enters into with a trainee for a period of 21 months wherein the trainee receives a monthly stipend of R4500,00 pm for the first nine months, hereafter the stipend increases to R15 773,25 pm for the remainder 13 months of the contract period.

It is the initial R4500,00 that SAPU has serious challenges with. This stipend amount is slightly higher than the minimum wage prescribed by government for an unskilled worker (currently R23,19 per hour). Any scholar educated in HR and Remuneration policies will be quick to point out that it will be difficult to recruit (and retain) a prospective employee with at least a Senior Certificate and the necessary attributes required to become a police official, with the stipend amount currently being offered. It is for this reason that SAPU is currently engaged with SAPS Management with the view to have the current trainee model being scrapped and replaced with the model envisaged in the SAPS Act, 1995 *to wit* that a prospective employee immediately be appointed as a member of the Service and receives the benefits associated with a member of the Service.

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The stipend model has, *inter alia*, been a contributing factor that not the best human capital necessarily aspires to make policing a career, hence SAPU will pursue its engagement with SAPS Management in order to chart a way forward in delivering on a model which will best serve the interests of the citizens of the country at large.

### 2.7 EHW support to members.

The Survey makes it visible (par.6 on p.120) that SAPS employees are strongly aware of EHW services in SAPS and its accessibility, however SAPS employees are not convinced to the use of EHW services when it is needed. This finding is in line with SAPU's feedback as received from our constituency: a large number of our members are hesitant to access the EHW services, *inter alia* due to the reservation whether the information passed on by the member will remain private and confidential.

If SAPS management however implements the recommendations in this regard (par.1 on p.123) *to wit* that EHW initiatives must be supported and capacitated, EHW must be professionalised and adequately funded, there is a great likelihood that members will be more comfortable to access EHW, rather than resorting to external service providers in this regard.

### 3. **CONCLUSION**

The confirmation and nullification of SAPS assumptions, as elucidated on p.122 of the Survey, does not make good reading:

- SAPS members have low morale;
- Job dissatisfaction has an effect on SAPS members' low morale;
- Unconducive working conditions have an impact on SAPS members' low morale.

It will be easy to challenge the validity and conclusion of the Survey or to enter into a debate on the scientific correctness thereof. Such an approach will however be counterproductive. If it is accepted that quite a few surveys and studies since 2016 have been consistent in their findings that a low morale is prevalent amongst SAPS members, the correct cause of action would be to address the root causes thereof. In our discussion *supra* SAPU has tried to accentuate the HR issues that we believe are key drivers of the low morale in SAPS. If these matters are addressed in a joint problem solving mode by all the relevant role players, the current state of affairs can be arrested and turned around. This will however require the commitment of all the stakeholders.

SAPU wishes to confirm its commitment to such a process. We owe it to the next generation as well as the generations to come.

SAPU Greetings!

**T.M. MOGODISENG**  
**GENERAL SECRETARY : SAPU**

/jvdm

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