



ZIMBABWE NURSES ASSOCIATION



GOVERNMENT HAS FAILED HEALTH WORKERS – NURSES PLUNGED INTO POVERTY

THE Zimbabwe Nurses Association wishes to express its deep concern and disappointment over the current state of neglect and impoverishment experienced by nurses in Zimbabwe. It is now safe to say that the government has failed its workers, particularly those in the health sector. As we speak, nurses are living in abject poverty, unable to afford even the most basic necessities of life.

Currently, the salary of a nurse remains at a paltry US\$240 and an additional amount in ZiG that equates to approximately US\$150—an income far below the poverty datum line. This situation has rendered our nurses incapable of sending their children to school, buying clothes, affording food, or even securing transport to work. Many are walking long distances to their workstations, while others are forced to live in overcrowded single-room accommodations with their families due to an inability to pay rent. This is not only unacceptable—it is pathetic and dehumanizing.

We urgently call on the government to review and adjust nurses' salaries to a minimum of US\$840, a figure that reflects the pre-October 2018 value, when the exchange rate was 1:1. Such a revision is critical to alleviating the chronic underpayment and harsh living conditions being endured by our health workers.

Furthermore, the working conditions in public health institutions are dire. Most hospital buildings are dilapidated and no longer fit for purpose. There is a severe lack of medical resources, equipment, and essential drugs. In the absence of these tools, nurses are being unfairly blamed by the public for delays and inefficiencies. They are overburdened by improvisation, leading to long queues, slow service delivery, and increased suffering of patients. This also results in heightened exposure to infections and extreme fatigue for the nurses.



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The chronic shortage of staff is worsening the situation, with the nurse-to-patient ratio as high as 1:20 or even 1:30 in some wards. This is unmanageable and endangers both patient care and nurse wellbeing. We demand that the government urgently recruit more staff and consider the reintroduction of locum arrangements, allowing nurses on leave or off-duty to work additional shifts for fair compensation.

We are also gravely concerned about the violation of nurses' rights. It has come to our attention that nurses who have completed their mandatory bonding are being denied their diplomas and verification letters—documents that are necessary for them to seek employment, locally or internationally. This is a blatant infringement on their right to choose their employer, and we demand immediate release of these documents to all eligible nurses. Over 4,000 nurses are currently affected by this injustice.

Another pressing issue is the government's unreasonable rental charges for nurses staying in government accommodation. Nurses have been charged up to US\$120 per month for basic rooms, and shockingly, these deductions are made from the US dollar component of their salaries, not the ZiG portion. We call on the government to revisit these charges and ease the financial burden on already underpaid staff.

Lastly, we call for alignment with international labor practices for shift work. Nurses often work long, irregular hours and should be entitled to fewer working days per week to reduce fatigue and the risk of occupational exposure to infections. This model is standard practice in many countries and must be adopted here to safeguard both nurses and the patients they serve.

A demotivated nurse means a neglected patient. You cannot demand excellence or compassion from professionals who are barely surviving. We call on the Government of Zimbabwe to treat this matter with the urgency and seriousness it deserves. The health of the nation depends on it.

ZINA president
Enock Dongo