



PROGRESS REPORT FOR FIRE CADRE

CONDITIONS OF SERVICE OF FIRE OFFICERS

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to give an overview of the fire grievance forwarded to us and progress made thus far and also to map way forward.

KEY ISSUES/WELFARE ISSUES FOR FIRE CADRE

PROVISION OF PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES TO FIRE OFFICERS

Following the pronouncement that fire officers should be engaged in paramedical services which included attending to horrific accidents without undergoing proper counselling, the union requested for the employment of the resident Psychologist at each fire station in order to provide regular counselling to fire-fighters.

Ministry in response appreciated the need to have Psychologist based at fire stations so as to be available to each shift. Efforts were made by Ministry of Local Government to source Psychologist from Ministry of Health but, due to shortage of Psychologist in Botswana the plan could not materialise.

As an interim relief and through Savingram ref: MLGRD 1/3/6 II (43) dated January 2019, it was agreed that Local Authorities should engage Private Psychologists to provide Psychological services to Fire Personnel.

ALIGNMENT OF COMPETENCY BASED CAREER PATH (CBCP) WITH JOB EFFECTIVENESS DESCRIPTION (JEDs) FOR FIRE CADRE

In this matter the union identified that there exist some disparities between the Competency Based career Path (CBCP) and Job Effectiveness Description (JEDs) for fire cadre especially on the issue of **Experience Vs qualification**. This brought confusion during recruitment as some Local Authorities used Experience over Qualification whilst others used qualification over experience.

In approaching the Ministry, the union requested that the anomaly be corrected and alignment be done so as the two (CBCP and JEDs) speak to each other.

Upon investigation, Ministry identified that indeed there is a disparity as such advised Local Authorities to use JEDs as they are more explicit. Currently the new CBCP has been developed and awaits approval by DPSM.

INCLUSION OF FIRE PERSONNEL ON THE TRAINING PLAN

In this matter it was identified that Fire fighters were not included in the training plan for the Ministry to pursue diplomas and Degree in Fire engineering. Ministry promised to prioritize Fire personnel in their training plan more so that their qualification is only offered overseas as such very expensive for self training.

It is evident that indeed Ministry honored its promise as ever since 2017 fire personnel are included in Ministry Training plan

RE-INTRODUCTION OF MULTIPLE GRADING TITLE FOR FIRE CADRE

Following the introduction of multiple grading Tittling in many cadres in 2009, the fire cadre was once included and later on retracted without any valid reason.

The union advocated for the re-instatement of the Multiple- titling into the cadre as that will help to address the issue of stagnation in the cadre especially at C-Band, which will eventually have a pushing effect on the lower grades. Ministry agreed with union suggestion and commissioned investigations so as to identify what caused the stoppage. A meeting was held with different fire personnel to address the matter but unfortunately it was rejected by the same personnel as they believe that will not work as fire cadre works with command or ranks (just like discipline forces).

ALIGNMENT OF FIRE JEDS/CBCP WITH THAT OF BDF

The union has noted the salary discrepancies that exist between the Ministry's fire department and that of BDF despite using the same ACT and CBCP. The union advanced the notion that since there is only one employer (DPSM) there is a need for uniformity in payment as such requested that there be alignment.

In response Ministry jointly with DPSM indicated that they are in process of reviewing both the Fire act together with its regulations as such incorporation and alignment shall be addressed during the review. Currently the cab-memo has been sent for approval by cabinet there after the review process will commence.

AMENDMENT OF STATION FIRE OFFICER JED

The union proposed that there be an abolishment/waiver of Ambulance Emergency Assistant as a requirement to the position of Station Fire Officer more so that the qualification is no longer a pre-requisite to the cadre and the last group to be trained on this course was 2003 as a short course, but at the current moment it is a fully-fledged programme of three (3) years.

The item is to be discussed on our next consultative meeting.

CLOSING OF STRUCTURAL GAPS IN THE CADRE

The matter arise from the establishment/structural gaps that exist between D4 to D1 scale which is a contributing factor on the lack of progression in the cadre. The union requested that Ministry should expedite in closing of such gaps as they lead to exploitation of officers.

Currently Ministry has engaged consultants to help on the restructuring process which will held in addressing the gap

STANDBY ALLOWANCE FOR FIRE OFFICERS

The matter arised from Fire Officers from Chobe District Council, Southern District Council and Kgalagadi District Council being compelled to work standby without being compensated for working such. The union requested Ministry to compensate officers for working standby as officers are forced to work extended hours.

In response Ministry indicated that standby allowance was only provided for industrial class employees through R.I.E as such believe it cannot be paid Fire personnel. Further to that Ministry believed that already Fire Personnel are paid 30% overtime allowance in compensation for extended hours worked.

The matter has been escalated to DPSM as we believe officers qualify to be compensated with either overtime or be paid standby.

SCARCE SKILL FOR FIRE PERSONNEL

Following the Introduction of the Scarce Skills in 2008, the Union believed that the Fire cadre was omitted as there existed few fire specialist in the market, to an extend of the government Hiring expatriates from overseas. The union

requested for the introduction of Scarce Skills to the cadre at a rate of 30% for Degrees and 15% for Diplomas.

Ministry agreed with our proposal and wrote to DPSM requesting for scarce Skills for the cadre. Despite all the justification made, DPSM rejected the request with the pretext that they are in the process of abolishing scarce skills.

REVIEW OF THE FIRE ACT AND ITS REGULATIONS

In this matter the Ministry intends to review the fire act as it is believe that it is outdated. Currently the cab-memo has been sent to cabinet for approval there after the review process will commence. Assurance has been made by both the Ministry and DPSM that all stakeholders will be involved in.

WAY FORWARD

- **A joint meeting with both DPSM and Local Government will be convened to expedite the resolvment of the pending issues**
- **Benchmarking exercise in South Africa to be done**