

LABOUR RESOURCE AND RESEARCH INSTITUTE



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June 6, 2022

Dear Swedish Prime Minister, Magdalena Andersson
Cc: Minister for Finance, Mikael Damberg
Minister for International Development Cooperation, Matilda Ernkrans
AGS

Subject: The impact of Swedish fund reduction on the global partners

The Labour Resource and Research Institute (LaRRI) based in Windhoek Namibia, is a worker research, education and advocacy centre. The institute aims to provide an alternative developmental agenda that favours the working class, with the scope and nature of its work informed by the struggles and experiences of the working class. LaRRI provides research, education, lobbying and advocacy related to labour, economic and development issues to workers through trade unions and otherwise. LaRRI envisions to help build a society, based on social justice and equality, with a strong and vibrant labour movement that is democratic and accountable to its members, and capable of promoting rights and interests of working people. Its mission is to empower workers and trade unions to influence policy-making in favour of the poor, and promote critical thinking and debate from a pro-labour perspective.

The work that LaRRI does has a huge impact on the labour movement in the country and on the continent through the Swedish support that reaches it through Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) and related organisations such as Afrikagrupperna (AGS) and Olof Palme Center (OPC). This support has enabled LaRRI to lead a discourse about equality and welfare of workers without fear of reprimand as a labour support organisation. The organisation has also succeeded to influence policy about various aspects of workers social life through targeted research work and advocacy in Namibia. Some of the policy interventions covers areas of workers in the informal economy, just access to social security benefits, trade union services and benefits to its membership and trade. Another major achievement of the organisation has been its many publications on living and working conditions of workers in the country leading to the first ever domestic workers minimum

wage order being gazette. The minimum wage which was as little as USD\$20 (N\$300) currently it stands at USD\$ 120 (N\$1800) per month and increases by 5% annually due to the efforts that the institute has put in its mandate. This has changed the lives of thousands of domestic workers and their families. At the moment a national minimum wage is due to be gazette after LaRRI assisted workers to develop a position paper during the negotiation stage.

We have since observed with concern developments in the Russian Federation and Ukraine and how they inform and affect geopolitical welfare. While we note the importance of the world to take precautions and also support victims of the war it is our belief that all interventions be balanced that stakeholder in the war take in order to mitigate suffering.

Accordingly, we have also noted the moral decision of the Swedish government to rededicate its aid to the parts of Europe that has been significantly affected by the ongoing war. While we do not know when exactly the war will end, it is our hope that it will come to an end soon so that normalcy can prevail. We have also noted the financial reduction in aid to Swedish organisation that do promotion of democracy work in Southern Africa and particularly Namibia. As a beneficiary of this critical aid, we have already felt the impact of aid reduction and narrative of possible discontinuation of aid. Seemingly, it will have not only have dire consequences to activities that we do but a psychological effect to personnel that do this important work and a constituency at large. At the moment, it is only Sweden through SIDA and related organisations that provide core funding support to non-governmental organisation in Namibia since the country was declared an upper middle class by the World Bank some years ago. We also note that wars are not planned for, nor envisaged under normal circumstances. However, we are of the view that this sudden reduction of funding in programs or total withdrawal is not only disadvantageous but also unfair to a larger extent as we had made commitments without consideration that the current situation will prevail. It is also our view, while it is important to extent humanitarian services and assistance to the war affected Ukraine we should not reverse the gains made so far in the work of democracy in other parts of the world.

The role that LaRRI plays in the country for workers is crucial towards the fight for a just society. Through advocacy, training and research, the labour movements are kept abreast with aspects that affect workers including contemporary issues such as violence and harassment, occupational health and safety, leadership and management, Africa Continental Free Trade Agreement, and the current COVID19 pandemic. Without LaRRI, trade unions will be left without a training, research, education and advocacy hub which plays an instrumental role in the support of workers and a focal point for unions on research issues. The absence of LaRRI will leave a vacuum for trade unions and without the support they need to engage government and employers in their fight for workers' rights. LaRRI has been and still is the main centre of resource, information and education when it comes to workers' rights and labour.

Our achievements and aid towards vulnerable workers over the years have been due to the support received from our partners. In consideration of the past 2 years of constant upheaval and uncertainty,

it was through the support of AGS and OPC that LaRRI was able to remain functional. As we actively try to resolve some of the injustices faced by workers in the country, we need your help to make our efforts go even further. Your support is crucial to our efforts towards a just society.

I hope that our plea is heard and that your decisions on current and future distribution of financial resources and support will consider the impact it will have on our organisation and the constituency we serve.

Sincerely,




Dr. Michael Uusiku Akuupa
LaRRI Director