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BULLETIN



EC Health HR & Corporate Services boss envisioned to hold the bull by its horns

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Human Resources and Corporate Services boss in the Eastern Cape Department of Health, Mrs Nwabisa Mavuso has over the past week led a delegation of health experts originating from the International Labour Organisation (ILO), The National and Provincial Department of Employment and Labour (DEL) and Organised Labour Unions.

The delegation of health experts met over a 3 day mask to mask meeting scheduled from the 24-26 August 2021 at the East London's International Convention Centre to box around on issue of Occupational Health and Safety in the health facilities across the province.

During the advent of COVID-19 in South Africa in 2020, the Department of Employment and Labour conducted COVID-19/ Occupational Health and Safety ACT inspections in some of the ECDoH Health facilities where serious issues pertaining OHS compliance were identified and raised, furthermore prompting an action plan to be conducted to strengthen areas that were under scrutiny.

This, however led the former Health MEC Sindiswa Gomba to request further guidance and assistance from the ILO which gave birth to the establishment of the Technical Working Group consisting of ILO, DEL, ECDoH and 4 organised Labour Unions (DENOSA, HOSPERSA, NEHAWU and PSA) to oversee and provide strategic guidance on OHS.



From left front row Denosa Provincial Chair Noluthando Masango, ILO TWG Convener Mrs Nomfundo Douw-Jack, MEC for Health Ms Nomakhosazana Meth, HOD Dr Rolene Wagner and ILO Technical Specialist Mr Simphiwe Mabhele

The 1st day of the 3 day mask to mask meeting was graced by the Honourable MEC, Nomakhosazana Meth and Head of Department Dr Rolene Wagner respectively. In her welcoming address Meth expressed her gratitude and further stated that “with the partnership formed at a difficult time in the country and with COVID-19 being the centre of attention, and also the facilities of the department not being at the level of Occupational Health and Safety Compliance, it is not by chance that we gather here in this significant month in the history of South Africa it being a women’s month.

“Technical Working Group takes this work seriously as they have a mammoth task of charting a path that paves for others to follow-suit” She mentioned.

Meth added that “We appreciate the 4 admitted working partners DENOSA, NEHAWU, HOSPERSA and PSA. The partnership would not have been formed had you not raised your concerns on the availability of PPE and general compliance to OHS in our facilities. Through your leadership you continue to assist and strategise with the department to make sure compliance is found in our facilities”.

Appreciating the remarkable job well done by the TWG Convener Mrs Nomfundo Douw-Jack, MEC Meth commended the leadership of Douw-Jack for leading the parties involved in the TWG and making sure that the ECDoH does not close shops, instead strengthens its abilities and capabilities and making sure that workers interests are recognised and are consistently taken good care of. “The Department has a long way to go to ensure OHS compliance particularly on the infrastructure and structural aspects of our facilities” she concluded.

Meanwhile, newly appointed Head of Department and former award winning CEO of Frere Hospital Dr Rolene Wagner stated that “As the Department we welcome the establishment of the ILO Technical Working Group and are looking forward to the recommendations and we further motivate this group to be frank and robust when deliberating. We remain indebted to the Department of Employment and Labour and the ILO leadership in the Southern African Region for having to intervene and help our department to fully buy-in and comply with OHS in all of our facilities. We are grateful to DEL having their findings of non-compliance. We further appreciate that their result has given birth to this working team to safe-guard the workers interest and building a more conducive working environment. Our employees continue to face various forms of risks” she concluded.

Admitting to the entire Department's short-falls on OHS Compliance with a show of eagerness to learn and correct, Head for Corporate Services Mavuso alluded that "The health system must continue to sustain its capacity and the continued fight against the resurgence of COVID-19 in the Province".

She mentioned that "the mask to mask objectives were to reflect on ECDoH OHS, Wellness and Diseases Management, Labour Relations Management, identification of relevant tools and instruments, review of the TWG Work plan, introduction and orientation on Health-Wise Methodology and implementation of recommendations of Health Facility Assessments.

Amongst its decisions the mask to mask meeting further resolute that the Departments Infrastructure budget should be earmarked for maintenance to ensure continued functionality in the facilities and the appointment of trained Artisans to assist with day to day maintenance in the facilities. Moreover, the mask to mask meeting was resolute that OHS should be part of Senior Management Services (SMS) performance agreement where facility managers can be easily held to account on what is happening in their facilities so that consequence management can be implemented where responsible officials and/or management are non-complying.

Furthermore, it was rubberstamped that the urgency of filling of vacant posts is of high importance and the implementation of the organogram to mitigate the staff-shortages in the health facilities.

Organised Labour DENOSA rep, Ms Zodwa Gqirana had this to say "DENOSA feels that this is one of the initiatives that are to ensure compliance of OHS. The policies, OHS ACTS will also assist in information sharing and knowledge more importantly on how OHS committees should operate in the facilities. We believe that working together as workers and the Department will show more diligence and accountability on the safety on everybody in health facilities".



Meanwhile, her associate in the workers emancipation HOSPERSA rep, Ms Lulama Quntana said "As Hospersa we believe the mask to mask meeting was educational and informative. It was a robust learning curve with meaningful eye opening deliberations and articulations. The stressing of Social Dialogue between employer and employee was a highlight. Working relations must always be sound. This was evident in the meeting because the department had acknowledged where it was not doing good and further committed to bring about change where it deems appropriate.

NEHAWU's energetic Nomthandazo Twalingca expressed that "I was very much motivated to work toward improving the health and safety of workers in general and Nehawu members in particular. On doing self-reflection of the workshop in general I decided to conduct random verification of the existence of the OHS committees from the 21 institutions in the department of health where I am servicing. What I found was very much disturbing because even the shopstewards are not taking part and not pushing the employer to take this serious. From here moving forward I will make sure that everybody is on board and is aware of their role"

Moreover, Gqeberha based PSA's Riaan Vosloo mentioned "We succeeded with this intention and it was without doubt a successful 3 day meeting. Going forward as ILO TWG the updated and adopted Workplan on Health and Safety now needs to be implemented and monitored to ensure the protection of all Employees".

OHS expert, Ms Bulelwa Huna based in the National DEL stressed that "It was a very fruitful engagement where all cards were placed on the table so that all parties can come with a common solution to ensure that the health care sector in the Eastern Cape is able to fully deliver a service that is effective for the people of the province through workers that are protected and able to improve the service provided to the citizens while they are being provided with a safe and healthy working environment where by their quality of life is not compromised.

ILO Health and HIV/TB Technical Specialist, Simphiwe Mabhele concluded that "As the Technical Working Group we were looking at instruments that are relevant to this work, looking at how we can improve the Occupational Health and Safety situation in the Eastern Cape Province".

Mask to Mask host Mavuso further expressed her gratitude for the magnificent support shown by the honourable MEC for Health Ms Nomakhosazana Meth together with the Department Head, Dr Rolene Wagner, the ILO for all logistic arrangements that led to the success of the meeting and Organised Labour for responding to the clarion call of bettering conditions and service delivery.