



health

Department:
Health
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



THE MINISTER OF HEALTH WELCOMES THE NEHAWU REPORT

29 July 2020

06:00 Johannesburg

The Department of Health notes the statement and has received the report on NEHAWU's fact finding mission. This report is welcomed.

Constructive engagements between management and unions has always been encouraged to create team work in the fight against COVID-19

For the department, it is critical that there are platforms that facilitate ongoing engagement on issues of safety of employees and adequacy of protective equipment, training and preparation for all health workers to care for COVID positive patients.

In a bid to ensure continuous engagement with all stakeholders critical to the fight against COVID1-9, the Minister, Dr Zwelini Mkhize, gave a directive for Occupational Health and Safety committees to be created in every provincial, district and local hospital level.

At the beginning of June, the Ministers of Health and Social Development launched the Multi-Sectoral Ministerial Advisory Committee. Organised labour representing health workers (NEHAWU, PSA, DENOSA, HOSPERSA) forms part of this MAC. At the beginning of July, when there were continued reports that some health facilities were still not complying with health protocols, the Minister of Health requested that a labour work stream be formed by the MAC that will work on a fact finding exercise focusing on issues affecting health workers with specific focus on the PPE requirements.

The Minister further requested that the labour work stream identifies those specific facilities that have shortages so that the Department of Health can immediately intervene in those facilities. This exercise is ongoing and the Minister will now not only rely on reports from the provincial departments of health to understand the situation on the ground. This will now be augmented and the department will benefit from the work done by the labour work stream of the multi sectoral MAC to timeously respond to concerns raised.

This report will therefore assist this critical work stream as the Minister will request that reference be made to specific provinces, districts and facilities so as to urgently respond to the identified shortfalls. The constant reporting of incidents of non-compliance will assist us in protecting our front line workers.

We also continue with our drive to recruit new health workers especially in light of field hospitals that will stretch the current work force. This recruitment is being done on an urgent basis during this pandemic period.

The Department of Health recognizes the critical role to be played by labour in representing their members views during this period. We reiterate our commitment that no health worker should be exposed to a work environment where they have not been provided with sufficient PPE. We will continue to provide as much support as we can in various areas affecting our health workers.

We continue to take seriously all concerns raised by health workers and encourage unions to continue to engage in all structures and platforms to raise issues and bring them to our attention.

We wish to appreciate all the work done by our health workers. In the words of the Minister:

"I salute all the men and women who serve our nation in the health sector. I thank them for their dedication and hard work of caring for our nation in the fight against this invisible enemy. We bow our heads as we pay tribute to those who have lost their lives in this fight and convey condolences to their loved ones. I salute all our heroes:

the doctors, nurses radiographers, physiotherapists, pharmacists, laboratory workers, therapists, technologists, technicians, emergency care officers, drivers, porters, care workers, general workers and all health worker categories for your commitment to serving our people. It is because of your hard work that South Africa will triumph over the pandemic.”

Ends....

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