

MEDIA RELEASE **COVID-19: PSA still concerned about lack of PPE at Health institutions**

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The Public Servants Association (PSA), as one of the largest unions in the Public Health and Social Development Sectoral Bargaining Council (PHSDSBC), is concerned about the availability and quality of personal protective equipment (PPE) in government institutions, especially for employees who are performing essential and critical work.

The PSA is aware that challenges are faced by government under current circumstances, including the provision of PPE and self-created challenges owing to corruption and nepotism that resulted in, amongst others, inflated prices. The PSA, in ensuring constructive engagements, participates through the Multi-Sectoral Ministerial Advisory Committee (MAC) where organised labour represents employees. Based on numerous complaints from labour regarding the lack and quality of PPE, separate workstreams were established to deal exclusively with the shortages of PPE across all spheres of private and public institutions. The MAC drafted an advisory document to the Minister to resolve the matter amicably.

Matters such as transport and the lack of PPE at certain institutions were as also addressed and positively received by the Minister. The Minister insisted that labour should become actively involved at steering committees across the country to address institutional-specific needs before these are escalated to national level.

The PSA supports the Minister's stance that no Health worker can be coerced to perform functions without the necessary protective clothing. He also indicated that employees should be guided by standard operating procedures that direct specific PPE needed for certain areas of work.

The PSA is involved in steering committees in government departments to ensure *Occupational Health and Safety Act* compliance and assist in resolving workplace challenges as part of the Union's efforts to support the battle against the virus and ensuring employees' safety. The PSA has noticed government's efforts to prioritise healthy and safe working conditions. This should, however, not only happen during the COVID-19 pandemic but must be exemplary with *OHS*A compliance being the norm, especially at grass-root institutions rendering frontline services to ensure workers' safety.

The PSA calls on public servants to report any non-compliance to the Union to ensure that all institutions comply with legislation.

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