

ISDR National Symposium



Mmaphaka Tau
Senior Manager
Disaster Management

UN/International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR) campaign on Hospitals Safe from Disasters 2008-2009 successfully launched in Mpumalanga, Ermelo.

"... Most wrong actions come about because people are not being held accountable early enough..." – John C Maxwell, Leadership Gold.

This is the quote Mr. Tau used to introduce the theme of the campaign to the audience on 15 October 2008 referring to the influence that the key messages of the UN/ISDR campaign are meant to have to prevent wrong actions relating to structural and non-structural resilience of hospitals from disasters.

The symposium hosted approximately 200 attendees from a variety of organizations and included inter alia; Chief Directors of Hospital Services, Directors of Emergency Medical Services and various Health Coordinators, Health Services Quality Assurance Officials, Hospital Managers from every district in the Mpumalanga Province as well as representatives from some of the Provincial Disaster Management Centers in the country, notably, Free State, Eastern Cape and North West.

Fundamentally, the campaign is aimed at promoting a culture of risk avoidance that will culminate with the building of disaster resilient hospitals/health facilities by promoting increased awareness of the importance of disaster reduction as an integral component of sustainable development, with the goal of reducing human, social, economic and environmental losses due to natural hazards and related technological and environmental disasters.

ISDR campaigns are developed annually and for 2008 - 2009, the Secretariat of the United Nations International



Dr. Ransie Velleman of Mpumalanga Department of Health and Social Services (left) next to one of the attendees



Mr. Hannes du Toit: Chief Fire Officer - Sasol

al Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UN/ISDR) and the World Health Organization (WHO) has partnered with governments and other stakeholders to ensure the successful rolling out of the campaign in terms of the below mentioned theme.

In South Africa, the National Disaster Management Centre (NDMC) has partnered with the Mpumalanga Provincial Disaster Management Centre to launch a national campaign aimed at raising awareness about why and how to redouble efforts to protect health facilities so as to ensure that they can function during and in the aftermath of disasters.

The theme for 2008/2009 is therefore "Hospitals Safe from Disasters: Reduce Risk, Protect Health Facilities and Save Lives" and is aimed at achieving the following key objectives:

- The need to protect the lives of patients and health workers by ensuring the structural resilience of health facilities.
- The need to make sure that health facilities and health services are able to function in the aftermath of emergencies and disasters – when they are most needed; and
- The need to improve the risk reduction capacity of health workers and institutions, including emergency management in health facilities.

Various speakers from the Department of Health (National and Provincial levels), the National Disaster Management Centre and Sasol presented on issues relating to Disaster Management in Hospitals and Improvement of Health Facilities Planning through the Hospital Revitalization Program.

In his closing remarks, Mr. Tau noted that 'Disaster Resilient Hospitals and Health Facilities are everyone's right. They are everyone's responsibility' and stated that this launch should serve as a platform to pave the way for effective implementation and roll-out of programmes aimed at ensuring hospitals safety and that these measures should be promoted across the country within the



NDMC officials Seipati Maisela and Carin Joyce

programme of integrated sustainable development.

In reaffirming the Department of Health's commitment to ensuring the safety of hospitals in line with the objectives of the campaign, Mr. Mphaphuli from the National Department of Health discussed the Hospital Revitalization programme which envisions the transformation of not only the infrastructure and technology of hospitals, but also the transformation of management and quality of care in these facilities nationwide.

His colleague, Mr. Rhett Davis added that special interest groups should be one of the focal parts of any hospital



Mr. Ndina Mphaphuli National Department of Health

disaster plan and that 'To fail to plan is to plan to fail'.

The following resolutions were adopted for further implementation under the coordination of the Mpumalanga Provincial Disaster Management Centre supported by the National Disaster Management Centre:

NOTING

- The need for a structured, integrated and well co-ordinated hospitals disaster risk reduction approach.
- The need for mainstreaming of Disaster Risk Reduction within the hospitals revitalization policy and implementation programmes

THE SYMPOSIUM THEREFORE RESOLVED:

- To assign the provincial co-ordination, monitoring and evaluation and reporting roles against the UN/ISDR objectives to the Provincial Disaster Management Advisory Forums Technical Task Team on health disasters.
- Provincial Disaster Management Centre to report against the UN/ISDR objectives on regular basis.

Enquiries:

MPDMC: Mr. Slykie Dihudhlu,

tel.: **013 766 6477**

NDMC: Mr. Mmaphaka Tau,

tel: **012 334 0404**