



**CONTRIBUTION TO THE MOTION ON THE IMPORTANCE OF EMPLOYEE
WELLNESS PROGRAMS AT OMAS BY THE HON. DR ESTHER MUINJANGUE**

BY

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Honourable Speaker, Honourable members,

1. I rise to contribute to this important Motion on wellness programs at OMAs, tabled in the august House by Honourable Ester Utjua Munjangue.
2. The employees are the greatest assets that any employer can pride in effecting services. Government is the largest employer, with a staffing of over 100,000, made up of civil service and the uniformed personnel. The delivery of public services is dependent on effective and efficient public servants. we can record that our public servants, through their dedication and commitment, do excel in the extension of the services to the people.
3. Honorable Speaker, Honorable members, creating a dynamic wellness program for an employee populace that is responsive to their needs, encourages positive behavior and outcomes is the best strategy to ensure long time success. A wellness program can provide targeted health education, promote behavioural change, motivate employees to live healthier which will result in improved productivity and less absenteeism as a result of numerous health related factors.
4. The Public Service being the engine of service delivery is by law (section 2) “professional in its effective and efficient service to the Government in policy formulation and evaluation and in the prompt execution of Government policy and directives so as to

serve the people of the Republic of Namibia and promote their welfare and lawful interests.” It is thus imperative that the necessary policies are in place to maintain a professional public service in Namibia. Debating a motion that speaks to the wellness of staff members is timely at the point where we demand an improved service delivery. It is worth noting that we can have good policies and budget but we will require human resources to realise our goals. It is then incumbent upon the employer to provide fertile ground for high performance culture.

5. The review of the wellness programs is necessary, and compliments existing health programmes. The Public Service has a generous medical aid scheme. There is need to complement it with wellness programs at workplaces. We have the draft Public Service Occupational Safety, Health and Employee Wellness and as my colleague Hon Makgone referee to the circular on Annual wellness calender. We have the wellness programmes perhaps the question is to what extent are OMAs implementing wellness activities. I would like to share with you Honorable members that at the Ministry in the past 3 years we revived the wellness committee we even have a social netball team called the “Golden Hawks”. In the past financial year we implemented the following activities:
 - Covid and Aids Awareness
 - Fun walk/run
 - Financial literacy

- Outdoor wellness with our SOE
- Cancer awareness
- Blood transfusion and blood group testing in February 2023.

We have elevated the wellness activities in the performance agreement of the deputy director General service target at least one activity per quarter.

The Ministry of works have a employee wellness program with a good title “living health doing plenty” developed in 2016.

One of the challenge that can be attributed to the absence of wellness program in OMAs is the lack of involvement from Management. I came across a study that was conducted to explore the implementation and management of employees in the Namibian public service a case study of Ministry of environment. One of the research question was to establish to to what extent employee wellness is supported by the organisation. The study revealed that organisational support for employee wellness is minimal, taking into account the very low management involvement in decision making around employee wellness with lack of support at senior management. As government we do have mechanisms in place supporting staff members one example worth mentioning is support to breast feeding mothers allowing them to breastfeed their babies. But the question remain are the supervisors implementing it.

Wellness activities should also be encouraged in the private sector especially large companies. Incident of shoprite in Walvis Bay where a lady committed suicide due to pressure from work.

6. Honorable Speaker Hon Members, It is therefore important to record that, wellness programs must evolve to ensure that, employees who spend hours at work, are well taken of. There is thus a need for employees to continue to “feel at home” when at work.
7. As I conclude Honorable Speaker, Honorable members to bring about the desired change in the behaviour of staff to contribute to their wellness at workplaces would require that resources are provided to implement the wellness programmes. At present, the wellness are ad hoc, and need to be mainstreamed as an activity for each OMA. The enhancement of the wellness programmes would, without doubt, contribute to staff productivity. As the saying goes, to reap the harvest of a productive workforce, Government must invest in the wellness of staff.
8. As expressed in the Harambee Prosperity Plan 2, Goal 3 of the 1st Pillar on Governance; government has committed to improved performance through the enhancement of performance assessments and agreements which ultimately is inclusive of the review of policy implementation. Through this, we can observe the reinvigoration of efforts on government's part to increase the burden on management for conducting effective wellness programmes.

9. Social progression requires a people centered approach. Thus, such programs need dedicated capacity in form of qualified persons, equipment, facilities and financial support to sustain the objectives. The focus of government remains to ensure that Namibians are in good health and able to serve their country actively through public service.

I so submit, thanks you.