



REPUBLIC OF KENYA

OFFICE OF THE CABINET SECRETARY

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**CABINET SECRETARY,
MINISTRY OF LABOR AND SOCIAL PROTECTION**

**DURING THE EAST AFRICA VIRTUAL CONFERENCE ON
OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH
POLICY EDITION**

**AT NSSF BUILDING BLOCK "A" 8TH FLOOR CS
BOARD ROOM**

OCTOBER 14TH 2020

Principal Secretary, State Department for Labour, Eng Tum
Chairman Geothermal Association of Kenya, Eng Abel Rotich
CEO KenGen, Mrs Rebecca Miano
CEO Geothermal Development Company, Eng Jared Othieno
CEO Kipya Africa, Dr Gathuru Mburu
Secretary Directorate of Occupational Safety and Health, Dr Nyandusi
Ministry Staff
Distinguished participants;
Ladies and Gentlemen

Good morning

I am pleased to join you all in this webinar on occupational safety and health in work places specifically in the geothermal sector. This event comes on the back drop of a report that my ministry released last month on the skills profiles in the energy sector in Kenya which was done as part of my Ministry mandate of regularly conducting Skills Needs Assessment in various sectors our economy.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The importance of energy for social and economic development, access to clean, affordable, and reliable energy has been adopted as one of the United Nations' sustainable development goals that all countries aim to achieve by 2030. Locally, The Kenya Vision 2030 as well as the Big 4 Agenda identifies energy as one of the infrastructure enablers of its socio-economic pillar since it has productive inter-linkages with other socio-economic activities such as manufacturing, services, agriculture, and commerce among others. We appreciate that geothermal is a key source

of electrical power in Kenya, currently contributing up to 44.63% to the electricity generation mix.

As policy makers my appeal to you all is to appraise yourself with the findings of that survey so that implementation of the recommendations can begin. Specifically, the survey questionnaires were administered to enterprises within the energy sector covering both upstream (exploration) and mid-stream (refinery, storage, and Transmission). Covering enterprises mainly involved in Fossil energy extraction (Oil, Gas, and Coal); Electricity generation and transmission (Hydro-electricity, Geothermal, Biogas, and Nuclear), and Energy exploration (coal, oil, wind, geothermal and solar).

The survey sought to establish employment dynamics and skills demanded in the energy sector; establish if there existed skill gaps or skill mismatch, whether there were any gender imbalances, and also to determine immediate and future skills requirements for this sector.

The survey established that the sub-sector with the highest number of employees was energy generation followed by transportation and then transmission. While Skill Area that was most predominant in the Energy sector was Electrical Engineering Technology followed by Business and Administration. Similarly, it was found out that majority of establishments preferred future workers to have Diploma and Artisan Skill Levels training with very few requiring employees with degree level training.

It was also established that the preferred future skills was predominantly in the Engineering and Engineering Trades, Physical Sciences and;

Business and Administration field of study. Unfortunately, it was found out that overall, male employees constituted 75 percent of all employees and there existed a very high number of non- technical employees in the entire sector which may eventually affect the overall sector performance.

From the findings of this report, we recommend that

- Linkages between industry and training institutions be strengthened in order to review curriculum to accommodate emerging occupations.
- Secondly, affirmative action should be taken to encourage female students to venture into technical related trainings through scholarships so as to reduce sex disparity in the Energy Sector.
- Thirdly, the proportion of employees doing non-technical duties in the sector was much higher than would have been expected and may need to be addressed.
- Lastly with changes in technology, it is evident that there are changes in the skills requirements within existing occupations which therefore necessitate the need for retraining and skills upgrading.

The above are thought provoking findings which can form part of discussions in this and other forums for stakeholders in the energy sector.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The geothermal sector is projected to continue growing, and with a good number of workers in the geothermal sub sector being in technical departments, enhancement of occupational safety and health for the workers is vital during the current pandemic and beyond. It is noteworthy

that workers in technical departments in the geothermal industry are the most vulnerable to hazards due to the nature of their roles and responsibilities since several of their activities fall in the category of high risk activities, such as working in confined spaces especially in tunnels, underground, working at height, working in remote areas some with additional security risks to employees, drilling activities, working in awkward postures, repetitive work activities or static work activities and working in extreme weather conditions among others.

Because of the increased risks to employee safety in the geothermal sector, employers need to invest in occupational safety and health not only as a loss control measure, but also as an economic, legal and moral responsibility. Effective and efficient risk mitigation and management in the sector is critical to long-term sustainable development of the geothermal sector, and with the number of workers projected to continue growing in this sector, there is need to have sufficient occupational safety and health (OSH) systems in place that will keep these workers safe.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

My ministry through DOSH continues being ready to offer help to all organization to comply with OSH requirements not as a policing body ,but a facilitative body for the betterment of all workers and will be available to advice on evaluation and control of risks along the geothermal value chain from exploration, drilling, production, steam gathering to power production. Since all these processes may expose workers to different hazards.

It is important to note that the cost of preventing accidents from happening is insignificant compared to the cost of compensating a worker. For this reason, proactive measures need to be adopted in the geothermal project site to reduced accident and injuries. The industry need to identify control measures that effectively minimize both fatal and serious injury, and since all persons are at equal risk of encountering any type of accident, this therefore calls for consistent compliance to safety requirements by everyone in the geothermal project site .

It is important that proper training is done to make sure that all staff can identify task related hazards, and be in a position to take corrective action. Similarly, workers should be provided with workplace tools and equipment that are sound and safe, to control hazardous forms of energy. Moreover, task execution should be supervised by competent officers to discourage unsafe behaviour or deviation from stipulated practice.

Before I conclude, let me say that last month I held a high level meeting to explore ways of reforming the work injury benefit scheme. Our proposal is to move away from the blame based approach to a social injury insurance based system, because when accidents happen in the industry, those injured should be compensated without either the injured or the company being made to feel like the culprit. We are still engaging on this and will soon be consulting all industry players in due course.

Similarly, through public and stakeholder engagement, my office has developed the Occupational Safety and Health (Oil and Gas) regulations. These regulations will soon be gazetted, to provide the best hope for sustainable exploitation of oil and gas resources in the Oil and Gas Sector.

I appeal to stakeholders in the geothermal sector and in particular members of Geothermal Association of Kenya (GAK), to initiate discussions on proposals to develop an occupational safety and health regulatory framework, that recognizes the uniqueness of the activities that are carried in the geothermal sector. Specifically, consideration should put greater emphasis on sustainable, employer-based and employee-centred risk management

Distinguished Participants,

With the reopening of our economy, my appeal is that the geothermal industry will continue to fully implement protocols as guided by World Health Organization, the Ministry of Health and my Ministry through – DOSHS which include; hand washing campaign, provision and use of PPE and masks, temperature checks, maintaining social distancing and sanitizing workplace surfaces.

As I conclude, let me take this opportunity once again state that my Ministry will continue to work with all stakeholders in the Geothermal sector , to ensure that geothermal operations remain safe and that workers remain healthy since healthy workers are the backbone of economic development. Thank you all for taking time to participate in this webinar and for giving me an opportunity to share my thoughts with you.

Thank you and God bless you all.