DISABILITY RIGHTS AWARENESS MONTH
2012
INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

03 November – 04 December

CONCEPT DOCUMENT

DRAFT FOR CONSULTATION WITH THE DISABILITY SECTOR
1. INTRODUCTION

The South African Constitution recognizes the right of persons with disabilities as equal citizens of the country, and prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability.

Yet, persons with disabilities, “the world’s largest minority”, continue to experience barriers to participation in all aspects of society. Barriers can take a variety of forms, including those relating to the physical environment or to information and communications technology (ICT), or those resulting from legislation or policy, or from societal attitudes or discrimination. The result is that persons with disabilities do not have equal access to society or services, including education, employment, health care, transportation, political participation or justice.

Evidence and experience shows that when barriers to their inclusion are removed and persons with disabilities are empowered to participate fully in societal life, their entire community benefits. Barriers faced by persons with disabilities are, therefore, a detriment to society as a whole, and accessibility is necessary to achieve progress and development for all.

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), ratified by South Africa in 2007, recognizes that the existence of barriers constitutes a central component of disability. Under the Convention, disability is an evolving concept that “results from the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.”

2. PURPOSE AND OVERVIEW OF 2012 DISABILITY RIGHTS AWARENESS MONTH

In response to the United Nations General Assembly’s proclamation of the 3rd of December as the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, South Africa joined the family of nations by observing and celebrating this day as the national day of persons with disabilities. In 1992, the United Nations General Assembly appealed to Member States to devote this day to the reflection on issues of persons with disabilities so as to advance the equalisation of opportunities for this constituency.

In South Africa the period 03 November – 03 December has been declared Disability Rights Awareness Month. A major focus of this month is awareness
raising through practical action in order to sensitise citizens about norms and standards that guide processes that aim to improve the quality of life of persons with disabilities. Such standards should assist all stakeholders in facilitating the participation of persons with disabilities in the social, economic and political life.

Accessibility and inclusion of persons with disabilities are fundamental rights recognized by the CRPD and are not only objectives, but also pre-requisites for the enjoyment of other rights. The CRPD (Article 9, accessibility) seeks to enable persons with disabilities to live independently and participate fully in all aspects of life and development. It calls upon States Parties to take appropriate measures to ensure that persons with disabilities have access to all aspects of society, on an equal basis with others, as well as to identify and eliminate obstacles and barriers to accessibility.

In spite of this, in many parts of the world today, lack of awareness and understanding of accessibility as a cross-cutting development issue remains an obstacle to the achievement of progress and development through the Millennium Development Goals, as well as other internationally agreed outcomes for all.

The commemoration of International Day of Persons with Disabilities (IDPD) in 2012 provides an opportunity to address this exclusion by focusing on promoting accessibility and removing all types of barriers in society. Based on the main theme of IDPD 2012 sub-themes can be selected to cover all aspects of society and development, including, but not limited to, removing barriers to education, employment, transportation, travel and tourism or sports. You can select a sub-theme to address a specific issue of exclusion and accessibility in your community.

**Include:** Observance of the Day provides opportunities for participation by all stakeholders – Governments, civil society and organizations of persons with disabilities – to focus on issues related to the removal of barriers to create an inclusive and accessible society that would benefit all.

**Organize:** Hold forums, public discussions and information campaigns in support of the themes of IDPD 2012 to find innovative ways and means by which barriers to the inclusion of persons with disabilities and their families can be broken down.

**Celebrate:** Plan and organize performances everywhere to showcase - and celebrate - the contributions made by persons with disabilities as agents of change and development in the communities in which they live.

**Take Action:** A major focus of the Day is practical action that would help to remove barriers that limit accessibility for and participation by persons with
3. OBJECTIVES OF THE DISABILITY RIGHTS AWARENESS MONTH 2012

Disability Rights Month 2012 aims to:

- highlight challenges being experienced by persons with disabilities in exercising their rights as equal citizens;
- raise awareness of enabling mechanisms and opportunities that reduce these challenges and enable persons with disabilities to participate as equal citizens in mainstream society;
- promote awareness of the capabilities and contributions of persons with disabilities as recommended by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities;
- reflect on progress made in the implementation of policies, programmes and legislation that seek to improve the quality of life of persons with disabilities;
- reach consensus on priorities for action during 2013/14.

3. THEME AND KEY MESSAGES

South Africa has adopted the 2012 United Nations theme for the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, as its theme for National Disability Rights Month 2012 - “Removing barriers to create an inclusive and accessible society for all.”

Stakeholders are encouraged to promote the following key messages across their areas of work:

- Disability Rights is about dignity …
- Disability Rights is about non-discrimination …
- Your attitude … is it a barrier?
- An inclusive society … how far are we on the journey and how do we change the road map to accelerate our progress?
- What is your responsibility and contribution?
South Africans should be reminded that every South African carries the responsibility to remove barriers that exclude persons with disabilities from everyday society. South Africans can only be free if ALL South Africans are free.

Negative attitudes and stereotypes pose the biggest barrier to the realisation of the rights of persons with disabilities as equal citizens in society –

- It is not the stairs that exclude wheelchair users … it is the attitude of the architect who designed the stairs …
- It is not the visual display that exclude people with visual impairments … it is the attitude of the official who decided to make this the only media to communicate the message …
- It is not the qualification level of the teacher that exclude disabled children from learning in their local communities, it is the attitude of the teacher who fears disability and is not willing to embark on a journey of discovery …
- It is not as much the different behaviour of persons with autism, intellectual disabilities or psychiatric disabilities that detract from their participation, it is the lack of tolerance for difference in society …

4. DISABILITY RIGHTS AWARENESS MONTH 2012 CALENDAR ACTIVITIES

The following national activities will anchor the Disability Rights Awareness Month 2012 Calendar:

4.1 Disability Rights Awareness Month 2012 will officially kick off on November 3 when the Department of Women, Children and People with Disabilities, partnered by the KwaZuluNatal Provincial Government, eThekwini Metro and the KwaZuluNatal Provincial Disability Forum launch the month at Illovo Sportsground, eThekwini. The event will take the format of a public participation imbizo, led by Deputy Minister Bogopane-Zulu and Premier Mkhize. The targeted 1,000 participants will be mainly from KwaZuluNatal, but representatives of national organisations of and for disabled people, as well as public representatives at all three spheres of governance, national departments and public entities, human rights organisations, representatives of the international community, companies and the media are also invited to participate. The event will provide the people and government of KwaZuluNatal with an opportunity to showcase the province’s achievements and share some of their challenges, as well as launch the National Disability Rights Awareness Month calendar and messages raise awareness and encourage action.
4.2 **A high level engagement** between key Cabinet Ministers and the leadership of key national disability organisations will take place on 15 November in preparation for the Siyahlola dialogue with President Zuma on December 4. This engagement is an outflow of the meeting that took place in April 2012 between President Zuma, Ministers Xingwana and Dlamini and Disabled People South Africa.

4.3 **International Day of Persons with Disabilities** on December 3 will be celebrated in Mbombela, Mpumalanga over two days, stretching into December 4. The venue is rotated annually between provinces, and this will be the first year since 1999 that the Day will be celebrated in Mpumalanga Province.

- Activities on December 3 will
  - **showcase achievements** by people with disabilities through the National Disability Awards, hosted by the Insurance SETA (InSETA) and supported by the Department of Women, Children and People with Disabilities and the Mpumalanga Provincial Government. Medalists of the 2012 The event will be attended by approximately 350 guests (by invitation only) and our medalists from the 2012 Paralympics as well as Special Olympics, together with disabled achievers in the international arena and Gifted Stars winners, will be invited to grace the occasion. The first National Disability Awards were successfully run in 2009. The awards are intended to showcase and celebrate the contributions of persons with disabilities to the communities in which they live and people who have contributed to the disability sector. Nominations are open to persons with disabilities who have achieved remarkable successes or made a significant contribution to our community, and people within our community who have contributed to the disability sector.
  - The other focus of the day’s activities will be on **empowering people with disabilities through dialogue**. Venues will be availed for organisations for and of persons with disabilities, disabled public servants and sportsmen and women, parents of disabled children etc, to interact with national organisations on critical issues in preparation for the dialogue with President Zuma and national and provincial political leaders the following day.

- The National Disability Rights Awareness Month will officially wrap up at the KaNyangazane Stadium, Mbombela in Mpumalanga on December 4 during a **Siyahlola dialogue** between the South African Cabinet, led by President Zuma, provincial and local political leaders, organisations of and for
disabled persons and disability rights activists. The Siyahlola Monitoring Programme of the Presidency provides President Zuma and members of his Cabinet to obtain first-hand information about the achievements and challenges of service delivery and development through engagement with citizens. The DWCPD is co-hosting the event with the Mpumalanga Provincial Government and The Presidency and targets about 3,000 participants.

4.4 The DWCPD has, as the department mandated to provide leadership for the promotion and protection of the rights of persons with disabilities through, among others, coordination and monitoring of domestication of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, entered into a number of partnerships to kick-start the development of a Disability Rights Awareness Month calendar which will have something happening every hour of every day between November 3 and December 4.

Run-up events to the month include:

- **October 26**: Supporting the Zwakala DTv Awards, hosted by DeafTV at the SABC studios in Auckland Park. Zwakala coincides with International Deaf Awareness week, and serves as tool to create awareness of this silent minority that is cut off from the hearing world due to prejudice, lack of tolerance and understanding. DTv's national poetry and drama competition for Deaf learners, reach all the schools for the deaf in SA. It provides a platform where Deaf youth can express their feelings, their fears, and their hopes through the performing arts.

- **October 27**: Co-hosting the Consultative Forum on a National Women and Girls Campaign with Brothers for Life and UNAIDS at the Sunnyside Hotel in the City of Johannesburg. This event will form part of a high level delegation from the United Nations who will be visiting the country as part of the mid-term review of the International Accelerated Agenda for Women and Girls on HIV and AIDS in 2010 on behalf of South Africa.

- **November 2**: Supporting the Phakamisa Breast Cancer Campaign, a CSI project of Astrazeneca, when Astrazeneca will raise disability rights awareness among the company's employees as well as the Phakamisa Team to facilitate more inclusive breast cancer screening and counseling for disabled women.

Other confirmed events which will be supported and/or co-hosted by the DWCPD during Disability Rights Month include:
• **6 November**: Launch of the book, “Can you Imagine?”, written by 12 year old Adeife Adeniran of Prinhof School as a tribute to her mother, to raise awareness about the abilities and potential of disabled children if provided with opportunities, to provide a positive story about a disabled child to libraries across Africa, and to raise funds for education of visually impaired children in Nigeria;

• **10 November**: The launch of the annual Games for Vulnerable Children and Orphanages at the Tshwane Events Centre (formerly known as the Showgrounds). The Games will bring together Orphanages around Gauteng Province to participate in sporting events as well as music, cultural displays and talent exhibitions. The participating orphanages would engage in poetry competition, Jika-Majika (Music dance), football, netball, volleyball, and basketball as well as indoor games such as chess and scrabble. This event will present vulnerable and orphaned children with the opportunity to interact and participate in healthy sporting events with other orphanages.

• **17 November**: Finals of Gifted Stars Talent competition at the Sannie du Plessis Theatre in Mangaung, Free State. The Gifted Stars talent competition is a vehicle to fast track the integration of people with disabilities into the mainstream society, to facilitate the normalization of people with disabilities within the community and to showcase the abilities and contribution of this segment of the South African population. The competition was launch in June 2012 and is open to all South Africans with disabilities throughout the country. It is, as the tag line says, ‘Our time to shine’! Standard competitions are challenging to enter when the accessibility for people with disabilities are not taken into account.

• **22 November**: The breakfast launch of Disability and HIV Best Practice Report will take place in Gauteng. The report, a collaborative project with SANAC and UNAIDS, seeks to provide insights into the challenges and experiences of people with disabilities in accessing HIV and AIDS programmes and services in South Africa. The launch of this report will provide an opportunity to showcase the work done to date.

• **27 November**: The DWCPD in partnership with a range of organisations involved in HIV and AIDS as well as eye-care and visual impairments, will host a lecture on HIV and AIDS as a Cause of Blindness in Gauteng. The seminar is the first in a series of events that will examine the inter-relations between HIV and disability. The events will complement the HCT Campaign currently under way and led by SANAC. This seminar will focus on HIV and AIDS as a cause of blindness due to Cytomegalovirus under
the theme: “Treatment as Prevention: Prevention of HIV Related Blindness”.

5. SELF-REPRESENTATION BY ORGANISATIONS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

The government of South Africa subscribes to the principle that people with disabilities have a right to represent themselves in issues affecting them through participation of organisations of disabled persons in policy development, implementation and monitoring processes, and in particular in raising awareness of the rights of persons with disabilities.

The participation of the disability sector in planning and implementing activities during the National Disability Rights Awareness Month is therefore non-negotiable.

The DWCPD has therefore:

- invited national disability organisations to nominate delegates that will participate in the Local Organising Committee for the International Day of Persons with Disabilities;
- ensured that provincial disability organisations in KwaZuluNatal forms part of the Local Organising Committee for the launch of National Disability Rights Awareness Month;

The draft concept paper for the Disability Rights Awareness Month will be finalised after consultation with national disability organisations, and a meeting with the sector will finalise branding materials and planning for the high level events of the National Disability Rights Awareness Month.

The DWCPD will furthermore be encouraging all its stakeholders to ensure that they empower enterprises and cooperatives (co)-owned by disabled persons, as well as organisations of and for persons with disabilities in localities where events are hosted during the month.

6. PARTNERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

The Department of Women, Children and People with Disabilities (DWCPD) has called on national and provincial departments, public entities, municipalities, legislatures, companies, small businesses, labour unions, political parties, organisations of and for disabled persons, the media and civil
society at large, to become part of the solution to us collectively creating a free South Africa by taking ONE action/forming ONE partnership that will raise awareness of the rights, potential, discrimination, achievements and challenges persons with disabilities experience during 2012 Disability Rights Awareness Month.

All activities received by October 15 will be incorporated into the published 2012 National Disability Rights Awareness Month Calendar.

We encourage our corporate sector to partner with us as well as organisations of disabled persons in raising the bar in 2012. We are therefore happy to announce that Old Mutual, in acknowledgement of the role the company plays in shaping attitudes of society, has come on board to co-fund the roll-out of the advocacy campaign for the month. This will enable the DWCPD to intensify our communications and media campaign during the month.

Companies, government departments and entities and municipalities who want to follow suit by partnering with the DWCPD and/or organisations of and for persons with disabilities by providing logistical and/or financial support, are requested to contact the DWCPD DisabilityRights team.

Details of events/offers of support should be forwarded to DisabilityRights@dwcpd.gov.za.

Media enquiries can be directed to Cornelius.Monama@dwcpd.gov.za

Requests for interviews with Deputy Minister Hendrietta Ipeleng Bogopane-Zulu can be directed to Thabo.Sephuma@dwcpd.gov.za

6. ATTACHMENTS

The following documents are attached:

- 2012 Disability Rights Awareness Month Calendar (available after 15 October 2012);

- 2012 Disability Rights Awareness Month Campaign Materials (available after 28 October 2012);

- 2012 Disability Rights Awareness Month Event Summaries (available after 12 October 2012);

- 2012 Disability Rights Awareness Month Communications and Media Plan (available after 15 October 2012)