

Report Disability Awareness Month 15 November – 10 December 2005

Disability awareness month was an overall success. A few challenges came across during the planning and execution of the month, which will be addressed during Disability Awareness month 2006. It was clear from the 3rd of December, which is a reflection on achievements and challenges during the past year, that some matters require urgent attention. Below are some activities which took place:

15 November 2005

Disability Awareness month was launched in Bloemfontein. The event was attended by the Premier, MEC's, business partners, the media and other government officials.

22 November 2005

BarloWorld along with other motor vehicle franchises supported the economic empowerment of people with disabilities by purchasing hand made teddy bears. A cheque of R8 000 was handed over to Tswelopele workshop for persons with disabilities in Botshabelo. The funds came from the car dealers for the purchasing of teddy bears.

29 November 2005

The disability information line road show, which was one of five, was held in Bloemfontein. It was clear from comments by attendees that this initiative still needs to develop. ABSA, who assisted with funds, committed that more assistance will be given in 2006.

1 December 2005

I was requested to attend the closing function of Tsimologo ABET centre for the blind in Thaba Nchu. Background was given about the awareness month as well as information on what the OSDP's functions are. The centre indicated that resources will be even less in 2006. Mr. Modise from the department of Education, responsible for ABET – Motheo district, also attended the function and further discussion.



Blind learners of the Tsimologo centre



Mr. Eric Gama and one of the learners, reflecting back on the past year



Learners rejoicing in song

3 December 2005

The International day for Persons with Disabilities was held in Botshabelo. The event was attended by ±300 disabled persons from around the province. A representative from the disability sector indicated the achievements within the sector and also the challenges still facing them. Toys, collected by the motorcycle community, were handed to disabled children. Cheques were handed over to the three winners of the Premier's Disability Excellence awards, sponsored by Old Mutual, Vodacom and Standard bank. Certificates of recognition were also handed to other participants.



One of the sponsors, Old Mutual, handing over the prize money for Disabled Man in the Premier's Disability Excellence awards.





From left to right: Me. L. Sait (Chief Director Special Programmes), Me. S. Mnumzana (MEC; Sport, Arts, Culture, Science and Technology and Dr. Nwaila (Director General; Free State Province)





Me. Mnumzana handing over a certificate of recognition to one of the participants in the Premier's Disability excellence awards.

The following achievements were recognized during this month:

- Recognition of the rights of people with disabilities in the Bill of Rights
- Successful participation, development and influence in the legislative framework to include Disability planning in developmental programmes e.g Employment Equity Act with code of good practice on the employment of People with Disabilities;
Technical Assistance Guide, ensuring non-discrimination of Disabled People in the workplace;
Preferential Procurement Act, ensuring preferential access to the tendering process by Disabled People
Integrated National Disability Strategy, providing guidelines to government departments for the integration of disability in all their programmes
- Self-representativity in institutions such as the South African Parliament, full participation in Local Government elections, Disabled people as councilors in a number of municipalities and representativity in other institutions such as South African Human Rights Commission, Gender Commission, Youth Commission and boards such as SABC, Lottery, etc.
- Influence in establishment of OSDP and Municipal Disability Desks in the process of establishment

The following challenges came across:

- Lack of implementation of progressive policies e.g
- Poor access to information
- Employment
- Education
- Lack of sustainable funding of Disabled People Organizations

- Lack of National CBR programme/policy that would lead to Disabled People living independently
- Activism amongst disabled people to mobilize themselves and participate in their democratic movement
- Failure as Disabled People Organizations to speak in one voice
- Women and children with disabilities remaining the most vulnerable group to abuse
- Persons with disabilities, particularly people with mental disabilities, including those with physical disabilities remaining the most vulnerable groups with regards to HIV/AIDS.
- Deaf community also being a vulnerable group because of the lack of access to information
- Government to fast track the implementation of policies including the 2% employment target of disabled persons by government.

It was also stated that it is not only government's responsibility to facilitate the development of people with disabilities but disabled people to rise up and facilitate their own development.

Commitments by Premier and the Free State Government:

Economy

- Building economic infrastructure and creating work opportunities, scaling up efforts to employ persons with disabilities by setting up a target above the national average
- Invest in improving roads, rail and air transport as well as telecommunications and energy
- Encourage more investment in key economic sectors such as manufacturing, information and communications technology, mining and business services, enhancing the economy's competitiveness
- Take more young people and persons with disabilities through learnerships in order to gain skills and work experience to access jobs
- Encourage use of labour intensive methods in sectors of the economy that lend themselves to this form of operation, including government procurement system
- Conduct research and devise ways of ensuring people with disabilities are mainstreamed into the economy as a whole

Sustainable livelihoods

- Create job opportunities through Expanded Public Works programme, working towards a concrete benchmark ensuring that people with disabilities are part of the programme
- Those wanting to start and sustain their small business have access to credit through dedicated funding through the micro-loan financing, through reforms to existing support agencies and through changes introduced in the financial system and institutions
- Ensuring that people with disabilities are involved in local economic development initiatives that provide work, build community infrastructure and ensure access to local opportunities, and encourage the emergence of co-operatives
- Intensify efforts aimed at building a spirit of community, good citizenship, social activism, moral regeneration and solidarity.

Access to Services

Aligning strategies and operational plans to ensure that:

- Water and sanitation, electricity and telephone service programmes are sped up
- More subsidized housing of which at least 40% of those build in 2006, are allocated to people with disabilities and ensure that it is accessible
- By 2006 a policy on accessible transport is in place, in consultation with the disability sector. Transport forums and boards established should be represented by the disability sector

- Health services are improved and staff them with adequately trained and caring staff, enhancing access to health promotion and nutrition, promote awareness on, and provide comprehensive care, management and treatment of HIV and Aids
- More is spend on education and literacy amongst children from poor households and children with disabilities.

Comprehensive Social Security

- Expand reach and coverage of those who are eligible for social grants, and increase these at least at the rate of inflation
- Speed up extension of free health service to people living with disabilities

Crime and Corruption

- Strengthen the prosecution system to improve the co-ordination among all law enforcement agencies and set up additional special courts to deal with abuse of women, children and people with disabilities

Constitutional Rights and Governance

- Improve interaction between Government and the Disability Sector through accountable representatives, one stop government centres, imbizo's and creative use of electric government services
- Ensure better co-operation among national, provincial and local governments with regards to integrated planning and monitoring of implementation programmes agreed upon
- Ensure that people with disabilities become elected representatives at all levels of government
- Improve access to Government information so that people with disabilities are aware of their rights and take advantage of opportunities provided by democracy to ensure the progressive rights of persons living with disabilities.

4 December 2005

Arrive alive campaign held at the Engen garage on the N1. Signatures were gathered from motorists to pledge that they will be wearing their seatbelts during the festive season. Though some motorists were reluctant to give their pledge, a lot of signatures were gathered.

6 December 2005

Vodacom together with Bloemfontein Celtics met with disabled children from 3 institutions identified by Vodacom. Toys and sweets were distributed to the children.



Disabled children with Celtics players





7 December 2005

At the game between Bloemfontein Celtics and Pirates, the cheque towards the winner of the category, day care centre, in the Premiers disability excellence awards, was handed over.

Recommendations

It is clear as indicated in the speech delivered by the disability sector on the 3rd of December that the big challenge is for disabled people to speak with one voice. The Free State Government is trying to address this challenge in the form of the Federal Council on Disability. However, the current state of the Federal Council indicates that there is still a lot of work to be done. In order for this to be fast tracked and ensure full participation of people with disabilities in all government programmes, a new executive council should be elected and training should be given on what the Government expects from the Federal Council and what their role would be. This is vital in order for Disability Awareness month to be even more successful during 2006.

Through partnership established during Disability Awareness month, it is important to up hold these partnerships to ensure that disability is present in all programmes and activities. With the financial year almost at an end, we need to communicate the need of people with disabilities with our partners for funds to be allocated accordingly.