

THEMATIC WEEK 1: 03 – 09 NOVEMBER

Children and young people with disabilities empowered to chart their own destiny through access to quality lifelong learning

National Priorities 2 and 3: Education, Skills, Health, Social Wage

Status Quo:

- It is estimated that as many as 500,000 children with disabilities of school-going age remain out of school, exacerbated by high drop-out rates of learners with disabilities. Whilst no accurate statistics are available, we do know is that every township and every village has a few identified children with disabilities who are not in school.
- Disability-related health services (community based mental health care services; rehabilitation services) remain largely unavailable in impoverished and rural communities
- SASSA's SOCPEN system as at December 2018 shows that:
 - 1 058 263 beneficiaries receive a disability grants.
 - 149 745 children with disabilities receive care dependency grants.
 - 215 268 social grant beneficiaries access grants-in-aid
- SARS provide a 33,3% disability tax rebate for all disability related household costs to income taxpayers

Challenges:

- No integrated provincial plans exist to identify and enrol all out-of-school children with disabilities in formal education programmes, partly due to the lack of an integrated database of out-of-school children.

Current interventions include:

- **Mobilisation of out-of-school children of school-going age:** Through the Conditional Grant on Learners with Severe to Profound Disability (LSPID), the DBE has expanded access to public funded education for this category of children. 6 654 learners with SPID are utilising the learning programme and have access to therapeutic services. This means that this category of learners has begun to enjoy their constitutional right to a basic education. A big step is that data on all the audited special care centres and learners has now been captured on SA-SAMS.
- **Working with other organisations and institutions:** The DBE is working with disability formations to track children who are out of school. Most organisations have referred to the number, but names have not been forthcoming. They have mostly, as a default response, referred to the children in special care, whom the DBE is already attending to.
- **Utilisation of existing school buildings and building of new schools:** Provincial education departments have begun to explore the option of utilising existing buildings (made available by the merging of small and nonviable schools). In addition, provinces are and have been building new schools to accommodate the learners.



- According to a 2006 Infrastructure audit done by DBE, 95-97% of ordinary primary and secondary schools are physically inaccessible. All new schools are being built according to universally designed plans, but no systematic programme has been rolled out to retrofit existing schools. The same applies for TVET colleges.
- Accessible and available scholar transport remains a major barrier to school enrolment and consistent school attendance, despite the National Learner Transport Policy prioritising learners with disabilities.
- The backlog in wheelchairs, hearing aids, artificial limbs and other assistive devices has exponentially increased over the past 9 years, mainly due to insufficient budget allocations
- Persons with disabilities in poor and rural communities, upon diagnosis of disability, still tend to 'retire', i.e. they are put onto a grant for life
- Persons with disabilities and their families have insufficient support to off-set the cost of disability to household income
- NGOs delivering essential family support services are under-resourced and are often not integrated into the service delivery network

For more information:

https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/TreatyBodyExternal/Countries.aspx?CountryCode=ZAF&Lang=EN (click on CRPD)

Achievements:

- Enrolment of learners with disabilities in ordinary schools went up from 77,000 (2002) to 121,461 (2015) (63% increase)
- Special School enrolment went up from 64,000 (2002) to 119,559 (2015) (53% increase)
- Number of special schools increased from 295 in 2002 to 501 (447 Public, 54 Independent schools) in 2019
- Introduction of the Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS), which provides a policy framework for the standardisation of the procedures to identify, assess and provide programmes for all learners who require additional support to enhance their participation and inclusion in school. The main focus of the policy is to manage and support teaching and learning processes for learners who experience barriers to learning within the framework of the *National Curriculum Statement Grades R – 12*.
- The Universal Service and Access Obligations (Government Gazette 37718) requires that: All telecommunications companies (TELCOS) connect schools with a target: 5 250 schools collectively; and each major TELCO has approximately 1 500 schools to connect. Through this initiative, all 447 special schools will be provided with the basic technology standard package, connectivity as well as suited to the needs of each school.
- The South African Sign Language Home Language Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (SASL HL CAPS) for Grades R-12 was approved by the Council of Education Ministers in a meeting



women, youth & persons with disabilities
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 Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities
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held in July 2014. 44 learners in eight (8) of the seventeen (17) schools for the Deaf that offer Grade 12 wrote the first National Senior Certificate (NCS) examination in SASL Home Language in 2018. In 2019, 101 learners in 15 schools will write the NSC examination.

- NSFAS allocated R76,6m for reasonable accommodation support for students with disabilities at public universities and TVET colleges in 2017
- South Africa produced its first Deaf law graduate in 2019.

Priority Interventions for 2019-2024

MTSF priority interventions:

- Retrofitting all public education infrastructure to comply with norms and standards contained in Part S Code 0040 of the Building Regulations
- Zero rejection system in place to prevent children with disabilities of compulsory school-going age from being diverted from school enrolment
- Costed plan of action to enrol all out-of-school children with disabilities of compulsory school-going age in formal education programmes
- Provide affordable vocational rehabilitation and related skills programmes to persons with disabilities after onset of disability
- Develop a national integrated referral and tracking system for children with disabilities 0-18 years
- Integrated and holistic basket of accessible and affordable healthcare and rehabilitation services at a district and community level, as well as access to higher levels of care, must be provided to all persons with disabilities
- A more responsive system to eradicate backlogs of assistive devices, expand the range of assistive devices to all persons with disabilities, and improve on turnaround times for issuing of assistive devices at community level
- Introduce measures to ensure early development screening for all children, and clearly defined eligibility criteria to reduce exclusion errors for social assistance support for children with disabilities
- Ensure roll-out of basket of social services to families caring for children and adults of disabilities regardless of geographical location
- Ensuring access for all persons with disabilities to integrated community-based personal assistance services supporting independent living in community regardless of geographical location



CALL TO ACTION:

To the Education Sector

(Minister; Deputy Minister; MECs; HODs; school principals; SGB chairpersons; university and college principals)

Take action now to ensure that every child and young person with a disability is enrolled in a formal education programme; that they receive the required education support services; that our education institutions embrace disability as part of the diversity of our school, university and college communities.

To the Health Sector

(Minister; Deputy Minister; MECs; HODs; CEOs of hospitals; medical aid schemes)

Let us ensure that every child and adult in need of an assistive device that will enable them to play, learn, work and socialise, is issued such device within 3 months of application.

To the Social Welfare Sector

(Minister; MECs; HODs; NGOs)

We must ensure that every child and adult with a disability, regardless where they live and with whom they live, have access to family and independent living support services.

To the Academic Sector

Liberate children and adults with disabilities by ensuring that the training of educators, engineers, architects, information and communication specialists etc. are enskilled in universal design and disability access.

To Parents and Families

Insist on having your child screened regularly during the child's first 1000 days for hearing loss, eyesight challenges and other developmental delays; insist on intervention services to enable your child to grow and learn; ensure that you enrol your child with disability in school before they turn 7 years of age.

To community based early childhood development centres

Embrace all children in your community, regardless of their race, culture, religion or abilities. Diversity strengthens, not weakens!



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