

MEDIA STATEMENT

Issued by the Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities

Attention: Journalists and News Editors

Wednesday, 04 September 2024

DEPARTMENT OF WOMEN YOUTH AND PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES JOINS THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY TO CELEBRATE DEAF AWARENESS MONTH.

Pretoria: The month of September is observed globally as the International DEAF Month for the global deaf community, under the theme “**Sign up for South African Language Rights**”. South Africa's deaf community is well-established, with over 4 million deaf and hard-of-hearing people.

The amendment of section 6 of the Constitution Eighteenth Amendment Bill to include South African Sign Language as the 12th official language in the country is a major stride towards effective protection and promotion of the linguistic rights of the Deaf community.

The year 2024 stands out as a significant year in South Africa, as Mia Le Roux made history by becoming the first individual with a hearing impairment to be crowned Miss South Africa. This month-long celebration aims to encourage inclusivity, advance sign language education, and cultivate a deeper understanding of Deaf culture.

As part of celebrating DEAF awareness month, the Department of Women Youth and Persons with Disabilities (DWYPD) calls on South Africans to dedicate time and efforts to learning South African Sign Language, as it is the most effective way to communicate with and connect with deaf individuals.

Public activities should further be focused on Mainstream and Advocacy for the Rights of the Deaf Community, to foster social cohesion, and education of disability inclusive language to eliminate any form of unfair discrimination.

Working with DEAFSA, the DWYPD encourages institutions and organisations to observe the Month with the following Sub-themes:

Week 1: 1-6 September 2024: Inclusive Education.

Week 2: 7-14 September 2024: SASL Advocacy;

Week 3: 15-18 September 2024: Building Resilient Deaf Communities;

Week 4: 19-22 September 2024: Diversity in Deaf Communities; and

23 September 2024 - International Day of Sign Languages.

In leading socio-economic transformation and the implementation of empowerment and participation of persons with disabilities through mainstreaming and advocacy DWYPD calls upon all sectors of society to develop initiatives to commemorate this month and afford the Deaf community the dignity they deserve.

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For media-related queries:

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