

Keynote address by Health MEC Sello Lehari during the Departmental Disability Day Event held at Rio Casino and Hotel in Klerksdorp

21 November 2024

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Programme Director,

Acting Executive Mayor for the Matlosana Local Municipality, Cllr Victor Seithisho

MMC for Health in the Dr Kenneth Kaunda District, Cllr Wendy Makgetha

Delegation from Office of the Premier, represented by the Deputy Director for Disability, Thapelo Motlogi

Accompanied by Moagi Kodisang – Provincial Disability Forum

Chief Director for the Dr Kenneth Kaunda District, Philemon Maboe

Acting CFO for the NWDoH: Seipone Mekgwe

Chief Director Supply Chain, Frida Ntsimane

Acting Chief Director for Regional Hospitals, Portia
Tlou

Senior Managers of the Department present here
today,

Programme Managers and other officials of the
department present,

Chairperson of the PDF: Mr Itumeleng Kalamore

Members of the Provincial Disability Forum present,

Our Stakeholders and Partner Organisations in
attendance,

Our Persons with disabilities from the community,

Ladies and Gentlemen;

Good day

INTRODUCTION

It is an honour for me to address this gathering and
this Departmental Disability Day Event which also
serves as a build-up event towards the International
Day of the Persons with disabilities which is

commemorated annually on the 3rd of December. This day of the 3rd of December was proclaimed by the United Nations as the annual observance of International Day for Persons with Disabilities in 1992.

Subsequently, in the year 2000, South Africa as the member state of the United Nations through a Cabinet decision, having recognized that the 3rd of December alone was not enough and that various government departments were not doing as much as necessary for persons with disabilities, decided that the 3rd of November to the 3rd of December each year will be a Disability Rights Awareness Month (DRAM).

This commitment by our government is consistent with provisions of the Constitution of South Africa, which states that everyone has the right to have access to health care services and state information irrespective of gender, disability and other considerations.

THE ROLE OF GOVERNMENT

We recognize that persons with disabilities have difficulty in accessing health care services and health information. It is therefore the responsibility of the Department to ensure that, persons with different types of disabilities have access to health care services and information on health issues as stated by the Constitution.

These efforts made by our government is a clear indication of how serious we take programmes for persons with disabilities. We have now managed to prioritize Awareness Campaigns which seek to recognize persons with disabilities as capable beings and duly take care of their needs and wellbeing. Since this move was introduced and accepted by all stakeholders and sectors, government departments are now expected to plan their disability related events as build-up for the big day of 3rd December.

The annual observance of the Disability Rights Awareness Month aims to promote an understanding of disability issues and mobilize support for the dignity, rights and well-being of persons with disabilities. It also seeks to increase awareness of gains to be derived from the integration of persons with disabilities in every aspect of the political, social, economic and cultural life.

This event therefore aims to reflect on the work that the department is doing in the implementation of programmes, policies and legislation that seek to improve the quality of the lives of persons with disabilities; to raise awareness and place sharper focus on disability and identify challenges and opportunities for persons with disabilities and their participation in mainstream society.

For the past number of years, the Department has engaged with all relevant stakeholders and programmes in order to highlight the potential,

opportunities and challenges of colleagues with disabilities. It is my earnest wish that today's event will further promote the acceptance of persons with disabilities as normal and valuable citizens of our country and province. It is my view that persons with disabilities, just like the rest of us remain dedicated to the attainment of a healthier North West Province and the country.

Since many years back, the Department coordinated the Disability Day Event on a rotational basis in all four districts in the Province to commemorate the Disability Rights Awareness Month.

The hosting District for 2024 Departmental Disability Day event is Dr. Kenneth Kaunda District and the main purpose is to celebrate Disability Rights Awareness Month through sharing with you some of the services rendered by the Department for Persons with disabilities such as:

- Awareness raising campaigns on health related issues for Persons with Disabilities in all four districts.
- The provision of different types of assistive devices to Persons with Disabilities.

As the Department, I acknowledge that there are still a number of Persons with Disabilities who need assistive devices and that will be given the necessary attention.

- We will also continue to build accessible and disability friendly health care facilities to enable Persons with Disabilities to access our services.
- The Department will continuously educate its employees on disability issues to ensure that disability is mainstreamed at all levels.

In today's event, you were given an opportunity to talk about Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI), Pre-Exposure Prophylaxes (PrEP), Sexual Assault and Assistive Devices. I, together with all Executive Managers of the Department of Health will ensure that we take into considerations all issues that you have raised and give them the necessary attention to ensure that you also enjoy the right to access health care services.

SUPPORT FROM THE MEC

On 19 November 2024 I had a meeting with the Provincial Disability Forum, through the **Kopano ke maatla** programme, wherein we made an agreement that, from now on, the Department will work hand in hand with the Provincial Disability Forum to ensure proper consultation with the Disability Sector in the Province because I understand your motto that says "Nothing about Us without Us".

Equally and in order to respond adequately to the challenges of persons with disabilities, we must address critical issues such as:

- Abuse of Vulnerable people in society, including persons with disabilities, women and children, and the elderly. I am highlighting this issue particularly because in four days we will kickstart the 16 Days of Activism on no-violence against women and children.
- Other issues that affect persons with disabilities and that we must address include inadequate shelter and housing.
- Inadequate sanitation and general access to services.

- Insufficient jobs and economic development for persons with disabilities and others.

Programme Director, the late former President Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela, in a message to the 2004 conference for the disabled said,

I Quote,

“We cannot claim to have reached anywhere near to where society should be in terms of practical equality for persons with disabilities. We continue to try. We realise that legislation and regulations are not sufficient or the end of the long walk to equality and non-discrimination. Education, raising awareness, eradication of stigmatization and conscientization are key elements in achieving non-discrimination against persons with disabilities in practice and in their lives.”

Unquote

I urge all of us, each stakeholder, partners and both public and private organizations to play our part and meaningfully contribute to the empowerment process of persons with disabilities.

I thank you.