

Disability mainstreaming in workplaces no longer a choice



It will no longer be a choice, but a must for all sectors of governments and private sector to comply with the 7% employment equity of persons with disability in their workforce as set out in the Cabinet approved White Paper on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (WPRPD).

WPRPD and its accompanying Implementation Matrix was adopted and signed into law on December 9, 2015 by the South African Cabinet.

“it is not a choice anymore to increase the percentage of employment figures of people with disability in your workforce...I hope it resonates clear in the EPWP sector that they do not have a choice, but must implement the set target so that they can achieve it by 2030 as set out in the National Development Plan,” said Mr Benny Palime, Director: Disability Unit at the National Department of Social Development.

Mr Palime was addressing the annual that EPWP Conference currently underway in Mpumalanga and stated that the EPWP programme “must provide people with disabilities full access to working opportunities and not involve them only in sub-programmes of the bigger project”, if the sector is to achieve the set target of 7 percent .

As a starting point, Mr Palime acknowledged there was a need to conduct verification on the level of participation of people with disabilities in the EPWP Social Sector programme, to enable them to determine how many people with disability are already employed in the sector.

“We will take it from there, and continue to conduct planned roadshows in all provinces in the country to create awareness among people with disabilities on the working opportunities available for them out there,” he said.

The Disability awareness roadshows are expected to be rolled out from April this year.

Mr Palime praised the new approved law on disability as a breakthrough, saying it constituted the first step by government towards domesticating the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), and the achievement of the National Development Plan 2030.

“The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities of 2007 recognises disability as an evolving concept which results from the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers. It recognises persons with disabilities as those persons who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others,” said Mr Palime.

He added that the Presidential Task Team and all the stakeholders entrusted with seeing through the speedy implementation of the WPRPD were ready to ensure that there was “progressive realisation in closing gaps that appeared in the previous act”, while making sure the duty bearers enforce the implementation of the new act.

Mr Palime was upbeat that the EPWP social sector will achieve the set target of work opportunities “only if they can provide people with disabilities full access to employment opportunities in the sector”.



Kanego Thete, Social Development of Mpumalanga

“EPWP Social Sector is creating a sharing platform of effective use of the EPWP making an improvement in the unemployment issue we are faced with. Secondly, we would want to understand how other Provinces are dealing with the conditions of unemployment.”



Sthembile Magagula, Northern Cape

“Promotion of uniformity is there to improve on EPWP Phase 3 particularly relating to the code of practice. It is an important task for all stakeholders and government departments to increase our understanding in terms of labour laws and implications to EPWP. In relation to the theme, (“Advancing People’s Power for Revitalising Distressed Mining Communities through Social Sector Interventions”) it fits in well with the call for government to revitalise distressed mining communities particularly in line with unemployment, poverty, transitional sex, HIV/AIDS affected communities, families of migrant miners and other social ills.”



Yolanda Ngqeza, Eastern Cape:

“EPWP in the Department of Education has a huge role that it plays, we deal with over 5 500 schools. EPWP was introduced to our department in 2013, since then there are 414 co-operatives established. The grant given by Public Works has created more than 17 thousand work opportunities.”



Zintle Mpange, Eastern Cape

“As we are all aware that our Nation is faced with a high unemployment rate, my wish is that more people especially in the rural areas may receive more assistance.”



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