

## **SOUTH AFRICAN MUNICIPALITIES: DISABILITY ACTION PLAN**

### **Disability Advocacy Campaign Beyond 2011 Local Government Elections and other Activities**

#### **Purpose**

The Disability Action Plan seeks to draw the attention of Special Programmes Portfolio Councillors Committees and the Municipal Councils to the concerns, challenges, opportunities and recommendations of Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) and the Disability Forums, including the SALGA-championed Disability Advocacy Campaign beyond 2011 Local Government Elections.

#### **Summary**

South African municipalities have to prioritise Disability issues, as a means of encouraging Persons with Disabilities to participate in the development agenda of municipalities, not only as voters but as, now, by-election candidates as well. The over-riding intention is to realise the election of Persons with Disabilities in municipalities.

#### **Municipal Councils are invited to:**

- Approve the implementation of the **Disability Action Plan** that seeks to elect and employ Persons with Disabilities in municipalities; and
- Support and encourage the promotion and advocacy efforts on issues and concerns and needs of Persons with Disabilities

### **1. BACKGROUND AND SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS DECISIONS**

The Rights of Persons with Disabilities are protected by the Constitution of the Republic South Africa (Act 108 of 1996). The three spheres of government and state institutions have a responsibility to ensure that, in each line function, concrete steps are taken to ensure that Persons with Disabilities are able to access the same fundamental rights and responsibilities as any other South African.

In 2006 and 2007, Organised Local Government conducted two audits respectively looking at Disability issues. The first audit was in relation to available policies and programmes in municipalities. The follow-up audit was looking at the number of Disabled Councillors and the progress made by municipalities in addressing the needs of the Disabled in spite of the absence of a Disability Policy Framework for Local Government. Both audits revealed that much more still needs to be done, not

by Organised Local Government, but by all stakeholders in the Local Government sector. Organised Local Government developed the Disability Framework for Local Government, which was launched in March 2009 – to reach a target of 2% of Councillors and Officials with Disabilities.

Organised local Government prioritised the Disability Advocacy Campaign as a means of encouraging Persons with Disabilities to participate in the 2011 Local Government Elections, not just as voters but as election candidates as well. For the Advocacy Campaign to be a success, Organised Local Government established the Disability Reference Group (DRG) in 2009 involving various stakeholders such as National Government Departments, Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs) and the private sector, including the business sector and communities at large.

## **2. PROBLEM STATEMENT**

Persons with Disabilities are faced with various challenges when accessing services in municipalities. There are a number of barriers in the environment which prevent Persons with Disabilities from enjoying equal opportunities with non-disabled persons. Structural barriers in the built environment; inaccessible service points; inaccessible entrances due to security systems; poor town planning, and poor interior design are some examples of barriers that Persons with Disabilities are encountering on a daily basis.

The Public Service Commission Report (2004/2007) indicated that as at October 2007, the Disability Equity agenda in the Public Service was regressing instead of improving. The Public Service had only achieved 0.02% representation of Persons with Disabilities from April 2005. In order for the 2% target set by National Cabinet to be reached, a further 19 823 Persons with Disabilities will have to be appointed. The 2007 Employment Equity Report (August 2008) indicated that Persons with Disabilities are grossly under-represented both in the public and private sectors, especially in management positions.

The inclusion of Persons with Disabilities as policy- and decision-makers in Local Government will help pave the way in addressing such shortcomings and challenges experienced by Persons with Disabilities. The desired outcome of the Disability Action Plan is to facilitate political representation and employment of Persons with Disabilities in municipalities. It also aims at conducting an on-going Municipalities' Disability Campaign aimed at ensuring the election (by-elections) and employment of at least two (2) Persons with Disabilities in South African municipalities.

### **3. KEY ISSUES**

The slogan '**Nothing about us, without us**' clearly speaks to the need for the voices of Persons with Disabilities to be heard in all political forums. The political representation and employment of Persons with Disabilities in South African municipalities will ensure that issues of Disability are included in all Local Government planning and programmatic efforts. The needs of Persons with Disabilities in relation to municipal services are unique, and often very different to those of able-bodied persons. It is important for Persons with Disabilities to have role models in order to demonstrate that it is possible to participate and to make a difference in their own communities. It is proposed that the Key Objectives of the Disability Action Plan should include the following:

- At least two (2) Person with Disabilities elected and employed in municipalities;
- The creation of an enabling environment that maximises equal participation of Persons with Disabilities in the development agenda of municipalities;
- Advocacy and lobbying strategies (Organised Local Government to assist) directed at political parties represented in municipalities regarding the inclusion of Persons with Disabilities as election candidates during by-elections;
- Positioning and reinforcement of the issue of political representation and employment of Persons with Disabilities, through securing political commitment and will, and increasing existing levels of awareness in Local Government and society in general

### **4. MATTERS FOR DISCUSSION**

It is proposed that the following are the key elements for the implementation of the Disability Action Plan:

- Participation by political representatives of political parties in the municipalities;
- Collaboration with organisations and the utilisation of existing structures, in particular those organisations working on issues of Disability (including the IEC, the Office on the Status of Persons with Disabilities (OSDP), the Ministry for Women, Children and Persons with Disabilities) etc.;
- Engagement with political parties and other organisations outside the municipal environment;
- Wide media coverage, Public Relations and communication of the issue (for example, using posters, round-table discussions, Community Radio discussions, publicity, billboards etc.)

It is proposed that the Disability Action Plan is implemented by the Municipality and the Disability Forum, which will be guided by the Special Programmes Portfolio Committee in the Municipality

## **5. RECOMMENDATIONS**

**It is recommended that South African municipalities:**

- Approve the implementation of a Disability Advocacy Campaign that seeks to attain at least 2 Persons with Disability elected in both Proportional Representation (PR) and Ward levels of Municipalities;
- Support and encourage the promotion and advocacy efforts of Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) at municipal and community levels;
- Organised Local Government uses its lobbying and advocacy and M&E tools (receiving and perusing reports from municipalities) to gauge whether South African municipalities are doing its part on PwDs;
- Deal with issues of unemployment and recruitment (specific job opportunities) in a manner that is biased towards PwDs;
- Decide on language sensitivity issues and decorum in public platforms when topics cover PwDs;
- Define proper responsibility allocation within municipalities for accountability (Disability Policy Framework to guide, here);
- Take advantage of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Disabled People South Africa (DPSA) and the ruling party (there's a perception that PwDs are only remembered during commemorative dates and elections – we must not be event-driven);
- Work towards involvement in a march similar to that of Women in 1956 if there's no change in the plight of PwDs;
- Decent employment opportunities for PwDs; not projects with a short life cycle;
- All advertised posts and recruitment strategies have to specify the required percentage of PwDs;
- Make optimal use of Inter-governmental Relations (IGR) structures within the Organised Local Government environment;

- Disability Forums have to play their role in a manner that does not favour political parties;
- Must have at least two (2) PwDs Cooperatives operating full-time in each municipality;
- The Organised Local Government Disability Advocacy Campaign has to continue, in municipalities, beyond 2011 LG Elections;
- Deal with challenges of political deployment and the professional and technical skills of officials – they must not be discordant;
- Ensure that PwDs participate in the political life of each municipality;
- Train and capacitate PwDs to contribute positively to the development agenda of each municipality;
- Restructure Organised Local Government Outreach Programmes to be sensitive to the needs of PwDs (e.g. access points, assistive devices, the time factor and empathy);
- Deal decisively with the indignity and ridicule of PwDs associated with Outreach Programmes;
- Ensure that the State of the Municipality Address and the Integrated Development Plan (IDP) address the needs of PwDs;
- Continuous feedback to designated groups such as PwDs on workshops and reports of meetings of municipalities (feedback) on Action or Implementation Plans;
- Municipalities have to work on their visibility in all community platforms;
- Include PwDs in the Office that deals with Municipal Special Programmes and Budgeting: **“Nothing about us without us”**;
- Enhance and complement, through working with Organised Local Government, the role of Community Development Workers (CDWs) in communities;
- Establish platforms where PwDs engage in introspection on their own role with respect to needs and development initiatives;
- Training of PwDs necessary on the changed agenda of the National Strategic Plan (NSP) (SANAC) on HIV/AIDS, TB and STIs, including Gender-based Violence (GBV); and
- Municipalities have to go beyond awareness campaigns and start developing programmes for implementation in communities.

**SUBMISSION BY: MFUZA PARAMOUNT MAPUKATA (PERSONAL CAPACITY)**