



*Republic of Namibia*

## **KEYNOTE ADDRESS**

BY

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MINISTER OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES**

During the

**OFFICIAL OPENING  
Of The National Conference On Disability**

WINDHOEK,  
14 JULY 2009

Programme Director, Secretary General of NFPDN, Mr. L. De Wee,  
The EU Ambassador, H.E. Dr. Elizabeth M. Pape,  
The Chairperson of NFPDN, Mr. Martin Tjivera,  
The PS of OPM, Ms. N. Mbako,  
Distinguished Invited Guests,  
Members of the Print and Electronic Media,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I feel honoured and privileged to be accorded this opportunity to address you at this important conference under the theme “Inclusion and participation of people with disabilities in Development”.

This conference aims at taking stock of the progress made on disability issues, clarify roles of key stakeholders, discuss ways and means on how to advocate disability issues and lastly develop strategies on how to mainstream disability issues in the HIV/AIDS sector. Therefore, the theme for this conference is most appropriate and could not have come at a better moment than this.

Programme Director,

Government is aware of the exclusion and lack of participation of people with disabilities in development issues. Therefore, I recommend that people with disabilities as equal members of Namibia's society needs to be fully involved and active in order to improve their quality of life, dignity, well-being and be empowered in line with the mission of the National Disability of 1997. Government is committed in creating an enabling environment in order to achieve the essence of life which are equally, full participation, independence and self determination.

Government, through different line ministries continues to provide services to people with disabilities which includes disability prevention, rehabilitation, education, health services and employment to mention but a few. Majority of these services are available in most regions.

Similarly, Government through the MoHSS has supported the 5 year Namibia Disability Programme in partnership with the National Federation of People with Disabilities in Namibia and VSO, which resulted in the establishment of regional offices in Kunene, Oshana, Kavango and Otjozondjupa.

The National Disability Council was also inaugurated in August 2008, and the majority of the council members are persons with disabilities. I am proud to announce that recently, my office facilitated the process of the operationalisation of the Act in accordance with the Ministry of Justice. Currently, the Act is in operation and the MoHSS has allocated a budget through the Directorate Developmental Social Welfare Services for the operations of the council for the current financial year 2009/2010.

Given this, I therefore encourage council members to redouble their efforts to ensure that the needs of people with disabilities are brought at the top agenda of Government.

Government through the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare continues to provide disability pension. According Population and Housing Census (2001) out of 85 567 people with disabilities, 21 758 (25.4%) are receiving disability pension (grants) from Government.

With regards to HIV/AIDS, Namibia is among the top ten countries worldwide. The Ministry of Health and Social Services will work around the clock to include all people in Namibia in the fight against this epidemic regardless of race, sex, disability and status. However, it remains a challenge to meet the special needs of the people with disabilities, especially the deaf and visually impaired citizens. Regardless of these challenges, workshops on HIV/AIDS were held with the deaf community in different regions.

I would like to encourage organizations of people with disabilities, especially the umbrella organizations to participate at the various platforms at national and regional level to voice their concerns.

In conclusion, I thank the EU for funding the National Disability Programme and wish to encourage donors and stakeholders to ensure the continuation of this programme, as well as the expansion to other regions. Again, I would like to thank the organizers who work around the clock to realize this important conference.

Finally, I wish you all the best in your deliberations and look forward to receive the outcome of this conference.

I now have the distinct honour to declare this conference officially open.

I thank you.