

REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA



**OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT IN PRESIDENCY: DISABILITY
AFFAIRS**

**CONTRIBUTION TO THE GENERAL DEBATE ON THE NATIONAL
BUDGET 2018/2019.**

BY HON. ALEXIA PT. MANOMBE-NCUBE, MP

DEPUTY MINISTER: DISABILITY AFFAIRS IN THE PRESIDENCY

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Hon Speaker

Hon Members

Allow me to start by quoting the former United Nations Secretary General “Wherever we lift one soul from a life of poverty, we are defending human rights .And whenever we fail in this mission, we are failing human rights.”

Let me now take this opportunity to present to this August House my humble contribution to the national budget debate as tabled by the Minister of Finance Hon. Calle Schlettwein, ~~and my humble contribution to the National budget debate tabled by the Minister of Finance Hon. Calle Schlettwein.~~

Hon Speaker, Hon Members,

It is important to mention that in this twenty first century persons with disabilities in Namibia both young and old continue to find themselves suppressed, live in abject poverty and force to live deprived due to social discrimination. Particularly when you take into account the extra cost of disability.

Persons with disabilities and their families had many hopes resting on the budget speech for the last 3 years, since the inception of the disability sector under the office of the Vice- President in The Presidency, despite the President made it quite clear of these sector to be close to his office in order to liverish from the resources in his office, surely for People with Disabilities this move was a cause for hope and was another highlight of the President’s commitment. Despite all this effort the most significant population is left behind.

The lack of mention of disability sector by the Minister of Finance in his budget speech, this brought a bigger disappointment to the disability fraternity as they were closely listening.

The only mention this sector finds is in reference to the social safety nets, but one need to remember that disability is not a unilateral issue, any changes in allocations for Education or Health directly affect disability sector, besides this further engagement with the Minister of Finance has resulted in positive outcome, *being receptive as he is, he made additional*

towards additional allocation through the Ministry of Higher Education to NASFAF in order to meet individual needs of students with disabilities. On these note I will be indebted if I fail to acknowledge the support that the Minister of Finance provided us, this is a gesture that will go unnoticed as it will enable the creation of integral, inclusive and equal society where people with disabilities are able to realize their aspirations and fulfil their potential.

Hon. Speaker, Hon. Members, While political will that exist in Namibia being celebrated, as Government we failed to budget expenditure to meaningful implementation of laws and policies on disability that are enacted in all earnestness, let alone international obligations.

According to the Namibia inter-censal demographic survey 2016, out of a total population of 2,3 million, there are 108,992 people with disabilities, representing 5% of the total population. Therefor the specific allocation of 2018-2019 budget to Disability Affairs is nothing but inadequate. Ideally and as in line with National Disability Act, “the National Planning Commission in achieving its objectives in collaboration with all ministries have to carefully scrutinise all the different ministries plans and programs to ensure that they includes the need of people with disabilities before acknowledge and approving them”.

Advocacy effort must focus across ministries to ensure that their service delivery design is inclusive and accessible to persons with disabilities, as well as with state to do their bit considering disability as a state subject in the constitution.

All these efforts, therefore may prove challenging sans government mandate, but influencing this mandate seems difficult given the failure to recognise the disability sector as a lobby significance. Namibia is obliged to report on compliance with the Committees on the Rights of people with disabilities and Human Rights bodies for State obligations, which includes the allocation of maximum possible resources towards respecting, protecting and fulfilling the rights under the convention.

The State is having an obligation to collect a disaggregated data on disability, the present lack of this would make any kind of monitoring meaningless, particularly in absence of adequate resources. To this end collection of data and monitoring and accountability are crucial, as this is a first step toward empowering people with disabilities in obtaining a realistic estimate of the number of people who are coping with various types of disabilities.

In implementing the SDG's and to ensure that people with disabilities are not left behind will require resources beyond domestic mobilisation. International Cooperation and Partnership between the Public and private sector are crucial.

In light of the above:

The Office of The Vice-President, Disability affairs, with the support of the United Nations country Team in Namibia under the leadership of the UN Country Resident Representative Ms. Kiki Ghebo, is organising a stakeholder workshop and a National Disability Conference, the workshop will take place on 29-31 May 2018 and the first ever National Disability Conference will take place 22-24 August 2018 in Windhoek. The main objectives of the conference and the workshop are to interrogate the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and to ensure better understanding of mainstreaming disability in the Namibian context.

- Due to main challenges and barriers faced by persons with disabilities in the country, the Office of the Vice- President: Department Disability Affairs engaged NUST to assist in the introduction of the Disability Study Programmes for the purpose of addressing human skill shortages in Disability issues as well as capacitate the personnel assistants, family members and persons with disability on how to cope with their disability.
- Currently there is a high need of Sign Language Interpreters country wide to improve service delivery to the deaf community, in public health facilities, maternity, magistrate courts and in institutions of higher learning due to language barrier which could be addressed by sign language interpreters. In addition, disability is on increase due to motor vehicle accident and disability counselling for persons with disability and their families is important.

Based on this background the Department of Disability Affairs in collaboration with NUST will introduce the short courses in disability counselling and sign language interpretation this financial year.

The programme shall target general public and line ministries, Non- Governmental Organizations/Civil Societies, Organisations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs), local and foreign corporate companies. Namibian and foreign learners who wish to gain knowledge in Disability Counselling.

Regarding University of Namibia, number of students with disabilities registered with the university across different faculties and specialisation, with varying nature of disabilities. The statistics over the years from 2013 has seen a significant gradual

increase in the number of student. However with the increase number, one of the most difficult challenge the current Unit is facing, is the proper coordination and administration of academic and other activities. The roles and functions of the Disability Unit at UNAM are currently not well defined and allocated, in the absence of the centre. Thus the office of Disability Affairs and University of Namibia are working together to establish a centre of excellent for disability that will improve and enhance the quality of learning for students with disabilities.

In addition, the Department is revamping its three (3) Disability resource centres in line with its mandate to equip and train persons with disabilities in community skill development programme in conjunction with Community Skills Development Foundation (COSDEF) which the office identified as its institutional developmental partner.

Namibia and Senegal have been nominated as the two states in Arica to implement the African Disability Architecture which aims to create conditions for more effective disability mainstreaming in the African Union which is a mechanism to sustain disability inclusion through strengthening the African Disability Architecture (AUDA) operational pillar and disseminate experiences and promising practices across the continent.

In implementing the AUDA programme, Namibia was chosen to champion the African Union Disability Architecture and mentor the Republic of Botswana as a sister country where good practices on disability will be shared between the two counties.

The budget and other resources, the AU commission through its AUDA projects partners will cover the cost. Thus far a joint planning meeting took place, in Addis Ababa between Namibia, Senegal and The AU commission during the period 20 to 21 February 2018.

Despite all challenges, Namibia has made strides and is recognised by international community. In June 2017 Namibia was honoured and awarded a Disability Ambassadorial Country status. The award was given in recognition of her significant progress and commitment to mainstream disability, programs, budget and for commitment to sign/domesticate Africa legal policies, instruments and human rights, including the Namibian government leadership role in the adoption of the protocol to the African charter for human and people's right on the rights of persons with disabilities. This achievement should be seen as a collective contribution by Namibia las a whole and take it as an encouragement and redouble our efforts.

In conclusion, Hon, Speaker, Hon. Members, we are confident that with the political goodwill that is prevailing, we can achieve our commitments for people with disabilities by 2030.

I thank you and I support the budget.