

**Honourable Speaker**

**Honourable Members**

HON: J. MATUNDA

I raise to support the Motion tabled by Hon. Alexia Manombe-Ncube for the recognition of Namibia Sign Language as a National Language and the appointment of a Sign Language Interpreters for the Live Parliamentary Debates.

**Honourable Speaker**

**Honourable Members**

Recognizing the Namibia Sign Language as an official Language will make it the second official Language to English which is currently the only official Language in Namibia. Sign language have been defined from a linguistic point of view as language, and those using sign language have been defined as a linguistic minority. Deaf people are also persons with a disability in the sense that all their rights will be fulfilled only when their linguistic rights are met, when the Sign language and its use in all spheres of human life is recognised and respected. In other words, Deaf people are persons with a disability whose rights can be secured by securing their linguistic rights. Sign Language build on the hand movements and acts as a tool to communicate and interact with people.

**Honourable Speaker**

**Honourable Members**

Whether you're deaf, hard of hearing, struggle with the English language or communicate perfectly well, Sign language creates an open line of communication between all group of people. Communication in Sign language has multiple benefits for the deaf and hard of hearing people. Besides the fact that it allows them to communicate comfortably, there are also some social and cognitive benefits, especially for children and their development. Signing is a visual format of communication and should support speech and not replace it. Signs give extra visual information about the words used in the message, making it easier to understand. The extra cues given in signs, support the learning of new words and helps to model how and when to use them.

**Honourable Speaker**

**Honourable Members**

Honourable Deputy Minister, you're right to say and I quote and unquote; **"It is important for the whole family to learn Sign language as many deaf children are born into families who are not deaf, thus services must be in place to provide Sign language learning and support to families so that they can learn and use Sign language at home and make it easy to communicate with the deaf children and assist them with educational activities"**.

I would like to suggest that this call should not target the families alone but to be extended to all O/M/A/s including Private Sectors that the basics of the Sign Language should be taught to all in order to for them to accommodate the deaf and those that are hard of hearing.

The Electoral Commission of Namibia has given me an opportunity to supervise the registration of voters and again they have appointed me as a Returning Officer for past elections. I was tasked with the duty of training the registration and elections officials. I was very fortunate to work with two deaf people because at the end of our exercise I was able to communicate with them comfortably in Sign Language. It was tough at the beginning of the training but jubilant at the end of the exercise. In my mind during the training of the election officials, I already placed them at the application of the ink on the fingers because it was easy to explain, the offer which they had refused and preferred other duties that the others are doing.

I tried my best to train them on all materials and equipment being used. At the end of the training, the group wrote a test and the deaf was among the top performers. They immediately turned to those who were tongue-in-cheek about their situation telling them that hearing and speaking are not the only means of understanding the principles of learning.

**Honourable Speaker**

**Honourable Members**

I support the call for the appointment of Sign Language Interpreter for the Live Parliamentary Debates because Sign Language Interpreter is like an interpreter for any other language, who interprets from one language to another. In this case, the call is to accommodate a group of people whose linguistic rights is not yet met. The debate in the National Assembly discusses issues that affects our people daily and the people in this category is really left out in the dark as far as lack of interpretation is concerned.

**Honourable Speaker**, I was preparing my contribution during the hour of the eight o'clock news bulletin. My daughter Kanahepero Kavetu immediately alerted me that "Mom even the weather forecast needs to be interpreted so that the deaf people can also know the weather forecast before going out of the house. What if tomorrow will be raining and they go unprepared? Meaning that they will come back wet. "Please add that point too" my daughter alerted.

**Honourable Speaker**

**Honourable Members**

The primary purpose of any language is to facilitate communication in the sense of transmission of information from one person to another with the benefits of listening to radios etc. Think of being in a Foreign Country and the language being spoken there you don't understand it. Immediately you will feel lost and start isolating yourself from the others. I found myself in one foreign country. I got sick and approached a Pharmacy. None of the people at the Pharmacy was able to speak English. We stood there until a tourist come in. She saw us desperate and approached us and we informed her of what we want. It was only than that we were assisted.

**Honourable Speaker**

**Honourable Members**

I wholeheartedly support the motion for the recognition of Namibia Sign Language as a National Language and the appointment of a Sign Language Interpreters for the Live Parliamentary Debates. I thank you.