

KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY THE LIMPOPO DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT MR BASIKOPO MAKAMU ON THE OCCASION OF DEPARTMENTAL CASSUAL DAY PROGRAMME: TANANI MATIKO DISABLED AND DISABLED & MULTIPURPOSE COOPERATIVE, SHAWELA VILLAGE, GIYANI LOCAL MUNICIPALITY, MOPANI

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“Be an everyday with People with Disabilities”

Programme Director

Hosi Mahumani

Executive Mayor of Mopani District Municipality, Cllr Nkakareng Rakgoale

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Management and Members of Tanani Matiko Disabled & Multipurpose

Representative, South African Association of the Blind, Ms. Rakomako K.O

Good Afternoon

We are converged here as the Limpopo Department of Agriculture and Rural Development on the site of the Tanani Matiko Disabled and Multipurpose Cooperative under the theme,

“Be an everyday hero with Disabilities.”

The theme calls on all of us here and everywhere in the country to be everyday heroes by being with People with Disabilities. This theme captures the challenges People with Disabilities are confronted with on a daily basis. People with Disabilities are often neglected and at worst abused.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) estimates that one billion people, 15% of the world's population live with some form of disability. One fifth of these, or between 110 million people experience significant disabilities.

Among the barriers people with disabilities have to contend with are the widespread ignorance, fear and stereotypes that cause people with disabilities to be unfairly discriminated

against in society and employment. As a result of this unfair discrimination, people with disabilities experience high unemployment levels and those who are employed often remain in low status jobs and receive lower than average remuneration.

People with disabilities suffer from what is called “disabilism” which describes the negative attitudes, behaviours, practices and environmental factors that discriminate (intentionally and unintentionally) against people with disabilities, creating barriers to their equal participation in mainstream society.

Persons with disabilities experience three main types of interrelated barriers, namely:

- Social (lack of disability awareness in society)
- Psychological (fear for personal safety)
- Structural (unfriendly infrastructure like buildings with no provisions for people with disabilities).

Society generally views People with Disabilities as helpless burdens to be neglected and at times to be subjected to abuse. They are viewed as unable to play a role in society, particularly in the economy. People with Disabilities are seen as a charity case, and they have to live at the mercy of our prejudices against them.

Since the dawn of freedom and democracy in South Africa, giant steps have been made in providing for people with disabilities. The Rights of the People with Disabilities are written into the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa.

The national Constitution’s Chapter Two, Bill of Rights, explicitly prohibits unfair discrimination of people on the basis of disability or health status.

Since the adoption of the national Constitution further progress has been made in the policy and legislative arena to advance the rights and aspirations of the people with disabilities. The Integrated National Disability Strategy is in place for government to advance the cause of people with disabilities. The Strategy document was followed up by the White Paper on the Rights of the People with Disabilities to tighten up government interventions to uphold and advance the interests of people with disabilities.

The Employment Equity Act is yet another government intervention to safeguard and advance the interests of people with disabilities. According to this law which applies in both the private and public sectors, employers are under legal obligations to meet set targets to employ people with disabilities. Employers who perform below set target face sanction from the Department of Labour that is the custodian of the act.

Since the passing of the Employment Equity Act we have seen a remarkable improvement in the employment of people with disabilities across sectors. A lot still has to be done to fully bring people with disabilities to be at par with other citizens of the country.

Thanks too to the Disabled People of South Africa (DPSA), People with Disabilities are seen today as capable human beings who can play any role in any sector in society. The DPSA motto of “Nothing about us, without us” resonates in all sectors of society, including in government.

People with disabilities have organised themselves into a critical body of opinion which lobbies for the rights of people with disabilities to be fully realised. No law or policy that affect people with disabilities gets passed without their views being considered.

Tanani Matiko Farming Cooperative is a classic example of the capacity of People with Disabilities to look after themselves and society in general.

Tanani Matiko Disability Project was set up in 2007 by six women and one man with the aim of poverty alleviation and job creation. They plant winter and summer vegetables on a 4 hectare piece of land.

We have gathered here from various sectors of society to observe first hand what disabled people can do for themselves. They don't need our sympathy, what they need is support to make the most of their cooperative. And I can guarantee you that with the necessary support this cooperative can transform to a fully-fledged commercial agricultural enterprise.

To ensure that we are inclusive in our development approach towards improving participation in the economy, particularly by designated groups in our society. The Department has introduced programmes that aim to create an enabling environment for their participation.

One of the flagship programmes of the Department is the recognition of the contribution made by farmers with disabilities in food production and job creation. This is in the form of an annual programme which creates a platform for farmers with disabilities to converge and dialogue on their involvement and participation in the agricultural sector.

Their contribution is recognized by means of awards. The second awards were held in March 2018. These awards are to encourage and recognize the contribution made by this sector of our society in food production, job creation and poverty reduction.

These awards have uncovered an amazing work and contribution made by people with disabilities in agriculture, ranging from school learners to fully fledged farmers.

We are proud to be associated with such success. Tanani Matiko is such a discovery.

Our view is that no one should be left out of the mainstream economy.

Today we are with the cooperative to celebrate casual day and handover production inputs to enhance their work. I wish them well in their work and commit the Department's support to grow the cooperative into a commercial enterprise fully capable to contribute to food security in the country.

I thank you.