

Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities continues to fail persons with disabilities in the country

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Thank you House Chairperson,

The Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities continues to fail persons with disabilities in the country.

It has failed to change their living conditions for the better. It has failed to remove the barriers which keep them locked out of opportunity. As the South African Human Rights Commission has noted, households headed by persons with disabilities have less access to basic services than households headed by persons without disabilities.

Many NGOs in the disability sector are also struggling financially. Without proper funding for them, vulnerable South Africans living with disabilities are at risk of homelessness and losing access to dignified care and education

The Department has also failed to prioritize the development of the Disability Rights Bill. In its annual performance plan for the 2022/23 financial year, the Department does not mention the development of this Bill as a separate target, which will make the monitoring of the development of the Bill very difficult for the committee. This is concerning, given that the committee has been calling for the speedy development of this piece of legislation for quite some time now.

House chairperson, what is also concerning is that the Department does not have a stakeholder database that is updated on an ongoing basis, which explains clearly why many disability rights organizations are being left out when the Department conducts outreach programmes.

The Department states that the purpose of programme 4 in its annual performance plan is to promote good governance regarding the rights and social and economic empowerment of youth and persons with disabilities. It further states that in the current financial year it will support, monitor and coordinate government's implementation of the White Paper on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

However, it is very hard to imagine how the Department will do this, given that the targets it has set under this programme are not SMART enough to achieve this purpose.

It is hard to imagine how simply developing one draft evaluation report on the implementation of the White Paper on the Rights of Persons with disabilities is going to support and coordinate government's implementation of the White Paper.

The question is: for how long must persons with disabilities in the country suffer before the Department rise to the occasion and do what it is supposed to do?

For how long must persons with disabilities remain excluded before the Department starts prioritizing their issues?

For how long must they wait before the Department actually start developing the Disability Rights Bill?

Now is the time for Minister Maite Nkoana- Mashabane and her Department to start listening to persons with disabilities in the country and take effective measures to change their lives for the better.

I thank you.