

**KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY YOUR WORSHIP CLLR TLOTLANANG
MOGOTLANE THE EXECUTIVE MAYOR OF WATERBERG DISTRICT
MUNICIPALITY DURING THE DISTRICT DISABILITY EVENT HELD ON
THE 28TH NOVEMBER 2012 AT 10:00 AT NORTHAM, IN THABAZIMBI
LOCAL MUNICIPALITY.**

Programme Director,

Mayor of Thabazimbi Local Municipality Cllr Mosito,

Speakers in the District led by Waterberg Speaker Cllr Monama,

**Chief Whips in the District led by Waterberg Chief Whip Cllr
Morumudi,**

Magoshi a rena,

MMCs and Exco members present,

Councillors in the District,

Representatives from the Office of the Premier,

Chairperson of the Waterberg Disability Council,

Members of Waterberg Disability Council,

The leadership of the District Youth Council,

**Senior Management and Officials from Sector Departments and
Municipalities,**

Our government Agencies,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and gentlemen.

DUMELANG!! THOBELA!!

It is a great privilege for me to celebrate the 2012 Disability Rights Awareness Month with you in our district. In South Africa the period 3rd November-3rd December has been declared Disability Rights Awareness Month in response to the United Nations General Assembly's proclamation of the 3rd December as the International Day of Persons with Disabilities.

By joining the family of nations, South Africa is observing and celebrating the 3rd December as the National Day of Persons with Disabilities.

The objectives of the Disability Rights Awareness Month 2012 are amongst others the following:

- Highlighting challenges being experienced by Persons with Disabilities in exercising their rights as equal citizens;
- Enabling Persons with Disabilities as equal citizens in the mainstream society;
- Promote awareness of the capabilities and contributions of Persons with Disabilities as recommended by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and;
- Reflect on progress made in the implementation of policies, programmes and legislation that seek to improve the quality of life of Persons with Disabilities.

Programme Director, South Africa has adopted the 2012 United Nations theme for International Day of Persons with Disabilities, as its theme for the National Disability Month 2012 which reads as follows: **“Removing barriers to create an inclusive and accessible society for all”**.

We should be reminded that every South African carries the responsibility to remove barriers that exclude persons with disabilities from everyday society. South Africans can only be free if ALL South Africans are free.

The South African Constitution recognizes the right of persons with disabilities as equal citizens of the country, and prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability.

Yet, persons with disabilities, “the world’s largest minority”, continue to experience barriers to participation in all aspects of society. Barriers can take a variety of forms, including those relating to the physical environment or to information and communications technology (ICT), or those resulting from legislation or policy, or from societal attitudes or discrimination.

The result is that persons with disabilities do not have equal access to society or services, including education, employment, health care, transportation, political participation or justice.

Programme Director, evidence and experience shows that when barriers to their inclusion are removed and persons with disabilities are empowered to participate fully in societal life, their entire community benefits.

Barriers faced by persons with disabilities are, therefore, a detriment to society as a whole, and accessibility is necessary to achieve progress and development for all. This is what the theme is outlining.

There are other people with negative attitude and stereotypes who pose the biggest barrier to the realization of the rights of people with disabilities as equal citizens of society and examples are as follows:

- It is not the stairs that exclude wheelchair users ... it is the attitude of the architect who designed the stairs ...
- It is not the visual display that exclude people with visual impairments ... it is the attitude of the official who decided to make this the only media to communicate the message ...
- It is not the qualification level of the teacher that exclude disabled children from learning in their local communities, it is the attitude of the teacher who fears disability and is not willing to embark on a journey of discovery ...

Ladies and gentlemen, we need to work together to eliminate these kind of attitude and barriers so that all Persons with Disabilities enjoy the same treatment and rights that is enshrined in chapter two of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa.

During the District Conference People with Disabilities held on the 29th to 30th May 2012, a number of programmes for the Disabled have been identified. These programmes are aimed at capacity building in business management and other skills. Together with our stakeholders, we must work to empower Persons with Disabilities to acquire the necessary skills in order to participate in the mainstream economy of our district and the country.

We still make a call to the District Disability Council Executive to forward a database from their members with businesses so that they are considered for rendering services to the municipality.

Let us make this day special for ourselves and ALL Persons with Disabilities. Working together we can do more to recognise Persons with Disabilities as equal citizens of our society.

I THANK YOU

