

**SPECIAL PROJECTS**

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# National disAbility Awards 2011

## Barriers need to be removed for the disabled



Sandra Dunn, Inseta CEO.

"DISABILITY is the inability to see ability", Inseta CEO Sandra Dunn said at the Disability Awards Ceremony held last Friday, quoting, an Indian Chef, Entrepreneur, Sculptor and Singer, Vikas Khanna

And one day, she believes, everyone will also see that "disability is the inability to see ability".

"But first we need to remove the barriers that hinder persons with disabilities from realising their full potential and making meaningful contributions in South Africa and the world as a whole.

"Progress has been made and we can truly say the United Nations 2011 theme of "together for a better world for all" is achievable as we celebrate the remarkable achievements of people with disabilities in South Africa and the insurance sector in particular.

Welcoming Deputy Minister Henrietta Bogopane-Zulu, CEO of QASA Mr Ari Serellis; CEO of FPI Godfrey Nti; CEO

of the South African Actuarial Development Programme Ms Nokwanda Mkhize; CEO of the Living Link Mr Stanley Bawden and the Director of the Association for People with Disabilities, Rachel Legasa, Dunn said that it was indeed her pleasure to welcome those attending to this celebration.

Also present were officials from associations representing People with Disabilities; Employer Companies; the SETAs; the Department of Higher Education and Training, National and Provincial Government; Financial Intelligence Centre, Black Lawyers Association

"Let me start by firstly congratulating all the nominees of the National Disability Awards today. It is critical that we bring awareness and celebrate the remarkable achievements of people with disabilities in the workplace and in society as a whole.

"National Skills Development Strategy III requires of us to make significant contribu-

tions to seven key developmental and transformation imperatives: race, class, gender, geography, age, disability and HIV aids.

"Workplaces still do not have adequate representation of people with disabilities. I am however, happy to say that the insurance sector can be well

pleased with its commitment to bringing new entrants with disabilities into the sector.

"In the past financial year more than 10 percent of all new entrants onto Learnership and Internship programmes were entrants with disabilities.

"I had the pleasure of attending a graduation and listening

to a learner share his experience of being on the programme and what a privilege it was for him to work in a diverse environment and have all of his stereotypical views about people with disabilities changed.

"He also remarked on how impressed he was with em-

ployer's commitment to ensure that the learners with physical disabilities were made comfortable by the modification of the offices to accommodate their needs.

"So indeed our work world is beginning to reflect the diversity of our society.

"In 2009, Inseta partnered

with the Living Link to address the challenges faced by learners with mild intellectual disabilities to access decent jobs. A pilot project was launched with the support of insurance firms.

"This project saw the Living Link embark on a job carving exercise whereby they examined jobs in a company with the intention to carve out routine tasks which can be performed by the learners.

"The learners went through a training programme and when they were work ready, they were taken into the workplace through an Inseta funded internship for 12 months.

"During this time they received the support of the Living Link and the employer. We are very pleased to say this project was a success and three of the six learners on the pilot were employed. We will continue this project.

"However, despite all of the great strides that have been made to bring people with disabilities into the work environ-

ment and the commitment of business and our social partners, a lot of work still needs to be done.

"The public transport system with buses and taxis are still not friendly towards people with disabilities. Just the other day I witnessed a person in a wheelchair boarding a taxi.

"This activity that many of us take for granted took the co-operation of the driver, and a number of passengers. Much still needs to be done in this space as these barriers prevent us from realizing a better world for all.

"I am sure that the department of Women, Children and People with Disabilities has begun its work in earnest in removing the barriers and promoting disabilities in development.

"I would like to thank all of you who made this day possible and the judges who gave their time to judging and making sure that the process was fair," she said.

HERE were joint winners in this year's National Disability Company Award 2011 when it was presented last Friday. The judges made the award firstly to insurer Sanlam.

But both companies, it was said, have put in place some incredible programmes to make the workplace accessible; to sensitise their staff members and gone out on a public drive to recruit more learners.

Of note, the judges, said, Sanlam implemented in the year (under review) a learnership for Financial Services Administration with 17 disabled learners.

And because they adapted the learning contents and used RPL to facilitate access, the judges saw above average performances from disabled learners on these programmes. 100 percent of the learners achieved their qualification and 80 percent of them are now permanently employed at Sanlam.

Secondly or rather just as importantly was Netcare.

With a R10 000 finder's fee for their employees who refer a person with disability (and who gets employed), a serious message is made, said the judges.

"Netcare has set a five year target to increase on a year on year basis the number of disabled person that they employ.

## AND THE WINNERS ARE...



Champion Award Winner Lizelle van Wyk of Orion Organisation.



Young leader award winner Karabo Nguyuza of ETANA.



Woman award winner Charlene Sunkel.

Fellow employees are sensitised and motivated to help the company find and retain disabled employees.

"This has resulted in an increase of 48 percent in disabled employees. They were also involved in taking seven disabled persons who were never employed before and giving them a life changing experience through training and thereafter permanent employment.

There were, of course, other individual awards for outstanding individuals with disabilities.

In the category of National Disability Champion Award, the winner was Lizelle van Wyk of the Orion Organisation

When she joined this NGO as the CEO in 1998, she was not daunted by the fact that the organisation was in a form of a crisis, facing financial turmoil

and bankruptcy, its reputation in tatters. Under her leadership Orion has emerged as a beacon of hope for other NGOs catering for persons with disabilities. Orion has developed a therapeutic and training service centre which has 34 people placed permanently in the open labour market.

Through income generating projects, Orion is able to meet 30 percent of its financial com-

mitments. These projects provide employment for 150 persons with disabilities providing them with the capacity for independent living. Our winner is Lizelle van Wyk of Orion Organisation.

The winner of National Disability Young Leader Award was Karabo Nguyuza of ETANA. The award is to celebrate young persons between the age of 18 and 25 with dis-

ability, who display outstanding potential in their studies/workplaces and are poised to achieve great things in business.

Motivated by her employer ETANA's values of 'giving' and 'making it happen' young Karabo decided she was going to also play her part.

Fresh into her learnership at ETANA she has been promoting People with Disabili-

ties in her workplace and is heavily involved in fundraising activities for Helene Franz Special School.

In the National Disability Woman Award 2011 award, the winner was Charlene Sunkel. Charlene was medically boarded in 1997 and was admitted to a state psychiatric lock up ward involuntarily.

While there she endured the worst forms of discrimination,

physical and emotional abuse. This was a life changing experience for her forcing her to take charge of her schizophrenia and claim her life back.

She has since used her creative energy and is now an acclaimed poet, author and her written and produced theatre plays and short films.

She is an award winning advocate for mental health issues.

The National Disability Business Leader Award winner was Martin Trevor Brown of Radical Mobility.

The award is for persons with disability who have displayed outstanding personal achievement in business/workplace and who have advanced the cause of mainstreaming persons of disabilities into the workplace.

If your conventional wheelchair has limited manoeuvrability, can't surmount obstacles, slopes and even beach sand - what should you do?

Martin's idea was to build your own 4x4 wheelchair. Radical Mobility has through innovation and their passion to engineer mobility for accessibility become the leading company in customised wheelchairs.

Martin won the Sanlam business partner Entrepreneur of the Year Award for 2010. He has also set up a fund to help other disabled persons to obtain a power wheelchair.

THE United Nations is concerned that many commitments have been made by the international development community to include persons with disability in all aspects of development, but the gap between policy and practise still continues.

Last Friday was the International Day of Persons with Disabilities a special event started by the United Nations and, which once again, was celebrated in South Africa with an award ceremony.

The annual event is celebrated on 3 December as proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly in resolution 47/13 of October 1992.

The national Awards follows on the success of the inaugural event held two years ago.

In total, the National Disability Awards has four nomination categories - the Business Leader Award (for people with disabilities who have shown outstanding personal achievement in the workplace) as well as the Young Leader Award (for people with disabilities aged 18 to 25 who have displayed great potential in their studies/workplace), Category Three is the Champion Award (for employers or individuals who have demonstrated a sustained commitment to improving the lives of people with disabilities) and finally, the Company Award (for organisa-

## United Nations shows concern

tions that have created opportunities for people with disabilities).

The annual observance of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities on 3 December was established by the International Year for Disabled Persons (1981). The Day aims to promote a better understanding of disability issues with a focus on the rights of persons with disabilities and gains to be derived from the integration of persons with disabilities in every aspect of the political, social, economic and cultural life of their communities. The goal of full and effective participation of persons with disabilities in society and development was established by the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1982.

Through the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons (1982) and the Standard Rules on Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (1993), the United Nations promotes the rights and well-being of persons with disabilities. The Organization's commitment to the full and effective participation of all human rights by persons

with disabilities is deeply rooted in the quest for social justice and equity in all aspects of societal development.

These commitments provide an international policy framework, which has been further strengthened by the newly adopted Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, adopted in 2006. The Convention provides an impetus and unique platform for advancement of the international disability rights agenda in development from which to engage the wider global development community. Work within this community is framed by the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and other internationally agreed development goals.

Although many commitments have been made by the international development community to include persons with disability in all aspects of development, the gap between policy and practise continues.

While the MDGs cannot be fully achieved without the inclusion of persons with disabilities, the current track toward the achievement of the MDGs may further increase their marginalization. Furthermore, the persistent and cumulative im-

pact of the multiple global crises threatens the progress made toward the achievement of the MDGs that has a disproportionate and negative impact on persons with disabilities.

Persons with disabilities represent key target groups in all the MDGs, yet disability and the concerns of persons with disabilities still remains to be included in MDG processes and mechanisms. Their lack of representation could negatively impact on progress in the achievement of the MDGs. Although, Governments, global leaders, policy-makers and other stakeholders acknowledge the need for disability-inclusive development, they must be supported in their efforts and be reminded to keep their promises. The International Day of Persons with Disabilities - 3 December 2010 - can be used for this purpose to further ensure the full and effective participation of persons with disability in all aspects of societal life and development.

Governments have recognised that development policies and actions must also focus on persons with disabilities, so that they benefit from progress made in achieving the MDGs. Furthermore, the recent Gen-

eral Assembly resolution entitled "Realizing the Millennium Development Goals for persons with disabilities towards 2015 and beyond" stresses the need for more data and statistics on the situation of persons with disabilities and calls upon Governments to enable persons with disabilities to participate as agents and beneficiaries of development, in particular in all efforts aimed at achieving the MDGs.

The UN has said that the day can be observed by providing opportunities for participation by all stakeholders - Governments, UN system organizations, civil society and organizations of persons with disabilities - to focus on issues related to the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the MDGs.

Then one can hold forums, public discussions and information campaigns in support of the Day focusing on disability issues and development, finding innovative ways and means by which persons with disabilities and their families can be further integrated into the development agenda.

Then it's time to celebrate. Plan and organize performances everywhere to showcase and celebrate - the contributions by persons with disabilities to the communities in which they live as agents of development and change.

THE Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol are serviced by a joint Secretariat, consisting of staff of both the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), based in New York, and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in Geneva.

DESA services the Conference of States Parties to the Convention that convenes in New York and OHCHR services the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities that meets in Geneva.

In New York, the Secretariat for the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is housed in DESA's Division for Social Policy and Development, which is responsible for activities related to poverty eradication and employment, generational issues and social integration, inclusive development and indigenous issues.

The objectives of the Secretariat at DESA are firstly to support the full and effective participation of persons with disabilities in social life and development as well as to advance the rights and protect the dignity of persons with

## Giving full support from the top

disabilities. In addition they are there to and promote equal access to employment, education, information, goods and services.

The mandate of the Secretariat at DESA also includes the review and implementation of the Standard Rules on Equalisation of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities adopted in 1994, and the World Programme of Action Concerning Disabled Persons adopted in 1982.

In addition, the Secretariat prepares publications and acts as a clearinghouse for information on disability issues; promotes national, re-

gional and international programmes and activities; provides support to governments and civil society; and gives substantial support to technical co-operation projects and activities.

In Geneva, the Secretariat for the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities currently comprises the Advisor on Human Rights and Disabilities, housed in the Operations, Programmes and Research Division.

With the establishment of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Secretariat also comprises the Secretary and staff supporting the Committee.

The objectives of the Secretariat at OHCHR, drawn from the High Commissioner's Plan of Action, include country engagement - to support UN human rights field presences increase their work at the country level on the Convention, with a particular focus on awareness-raising and promoting ratification as well support for human rights bodies - to mainstream disability within the UN human rights programme, specifically in the work of the Human Rights Council and the existing treaty monitoring bodies.



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