

**KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY HON MEC CHRISTIAN MARTIN IN EAST LONDON, 14
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PROGRAMME DIRECTOR

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER OF SETA

SETA BOARD MEMBERS

BUSINESS LEADERS

MEDIA

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN

I greet you all

Honorable guests, I would like to begin by saying our Province is still faced with a multiplicity of social challenges like poverty, unemployment, HIV/AIDS and underdevelopment. As government, we have seen the danger that poverty and underdevelopment pose to our developmental gains since the dawn of our democracy especially to people with disabilities. In 2007 President's state of the nation address, one of the main important points he highlighted was the need to clearly define the poverty matrix of our country. This challenge therefore requires a proper development of a database of households living in poverty.

EASTERN CAPE INTERVENTION

The Eastern Cape Government embarked on a consultative process in crafting poverty reduction strategies. It also undertook a study tour of South America visiting Chile and Argentina in December last year. One of the lessons learnt from the visit to Chile was their Comprehensive Poverty Reduction Strategy called the Chile Solidario Programme which successfully helped in reducing poverty from 46% to 13%

As part of the Provincial intervention in addressing poverty challenges, the Provincial government established the Provincial Poverty Reduction Programme located in

Department of Social Development. The Programme identified and profiled 11 poorest or least developed local municipal areas.

- Umzimvubu, Nyandeni, Mbizana, Qaukeni, Ntabankulu, Mnquma, Mbashe, Ngqushwa, Elundini, Intsika Yethu, Ngcobo

Social Development has set aside more than R44 million for special interventions in both community development and developmental social welfare services. Apart from this budget there are interventions to eradicate poverty in the Province. This year alone, the Department has set aside the following:

- R41,3 million for 54 integrated food security projects
- R25 million for women income generating projects
- R1 million for 14 women savings clubs
- R13 million for youth entrepreneurial projects

Other Department's poverty reduction programmes will add to this intervention. This intervention will see the identification of specific activities that will have an impact in the reduction of poverty, help the poorest of the poor access their rights in terms of basic services. It will also see the identification of families who live below the poverty living levels by working with them in creating positive sustainable family households.

This effort requires the monitoring of these households as they graduate out of poverty. Underpinning these interventions is a unique and novel approach of allowing all outside resources to enter the community with a concept of one basket of services from all departments to minimize duplication and maximize impact.

Programme Director, recently government has convened the first ever Provincial Disability seminar on 24-25 July with the following objectives:

- Assessment of all departments around employment and services to disabled people and decide on an intervention strategy and the way forward

- Understand the experience of people with disabilities on issues of access; poverty; employment and government services.
- And making disabled people part of all discussions and decision on issues affecting them.

PRE-SUMMIT CHALLENGES

PREVALENCE OF DISABILITY IN SOUTH AFRICA

There is a serious lack of reliable information on the nature and prevalence of disability in South Africa. This led naturally to a failure to integrate disability into mainstream government statistical processes.

Statistics are unreliable for the following reasons:

1. there are different definitions of disability
2. different survey technologies are used to collect information
3. there are negative traditional attitudes towards people with disabilities
4. There is a poor service infrastructure for people with disabilities in underdeveloped areas.

STATISTICS

- Eastern Cape has approximately a population of 6.4 million(Stats SA census 2001)
- 5% of the people have some form of disability
- Of these 1.6% are young people and 31.5% are over 85years with 25% being visually impaired and 24.7% with physical disabilities

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Statistics reveal that an estimated 99% of disabled people are excluded from employment on the open labour market. The extremely high levels of unemployment amongst people with disabilities can be attributed to a number of factors:

1. low skills levels due to inadequate education
2. discriminatory attitudes and practices by employers
3. past discriminatory and ineffective labour legislation
4. lack of enabling mechanisms to promote employment opportunities
5. inaccessible public transport
6. generally high levels of unemployment
7. inadequate access to information

SEMINAR DELIBERATIONS

From this engagement, we have discovered that the Province has the following challenges:

- Has not achieved 2% minimum employment equity
- Transportation for people with disabilities is still a problem
- Some of government's buildings are still inaccessible
- There is no government information material in Braille
- There is a lot of skills shortage like drivers licenses

I want to quote Dr. Martin Luther King Jr, one of the greatest civil rights activists. He says, "An individual has not started living until he can rise above the narrow confines of his individualistic concerns to the broader concerns of all humanity." We cannot claim to live in a democratic paradise whereas a section of our own citizens has not fully enjoyed the democratic gains others have tasted. Like Dr. Martin Luther King Jr, we

have to constantly ask ourselves, have we lived the kind of lives that have been able to bring a positive societal change.

DISABILITY SEMINAR RESOLUTIONS

The Disability Seminar agreed that people with disabilities have not fully enjoyed the democratic gains and came up with the following resolutions:

- There must be a commitment to ensure integrated, barrier-free and comprehensive service delivery to achieve equitable service delivery for disabled people
- There must be universal access for people with disabilities so that they can attend our schools and participate in the economic mainstream
- People with disabilities must be involved in the development and implementation of policies and programmes. The implementation of all of these resolutions will be monitored by the Steering Committee which is composed of all government departments and organizations representing people with disabilities.

As we are gathered in this session, we must live here with a clear plan that will ensure that people with disabilities fully enjoy the benefits of a democratic society. In our debates, let us remember these last words from **Dr. Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela**. He says, "For to be free is not merely to cast off one's chains, but to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others."

Let us all build a caring society together.

I thank you