

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND



“ Welcome!
*Broaden your mind
to a whole new
understanding of the
subject of disability ”*

Chapter

1

CHAPTER 1

Introduction and Background

With the establishment of Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) and the National Skills Development Strategy, a target of 85% was set for the development of historically disadvantaged individuals namely black, 54% for women and 4% for people with disabilities. Although this target was set more than a decade ago, very few organisations have met the target. The mining and mineral sector has also been one of the sectors with the greatest challenges in terms of meeting this target. In terms of the Mine Health and Safety Act, safety standards can be violated when including people with disabilities. A person on a wheelchair for example, could find access into a mineshaft difficult and some of the narrow walkways and terrain underground a challenge, let alone the challenges that could be encountered with evacuation procedures when an accident takes place in a mine.

The development of the Disability and Reasonable Accommodation Toolkit was based on the fact that employers experience challenges in meeting the target set for including people with disabilities and the MQA was also driven by the need for the sector to include learners with disabilities into their learning programmes. The mining and minerals sector after a decade of the introduction of skills development has achieved a less than one percent inclusion of people with disabilities.

People with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.

(Technical Assistance Guidelines)

The purpose of the toolkit is to:

- Educate the sector on disability
- Create understanding of the subject of disability
- Provide guidance on the inclusion of people with disabilities
- Highlight incentives available when including people with disabilities
- Seek ways to reasonably accommodate people with disabilities in the workplace
- Identify best practice approaches

Global Prevalence of Disability

Although it is difficult to establish the exact number of people with disabilities worldwide an estimated figure of 500 million is generally acceptable. It is estimated that in Africa between 60 and 80 million people have a disability. This constitutes 10% of the continents population and thus the largest group of persons that are regarded as marginalized and socially excluded. Most live in poverty; have limited opportunities and face barriers to accessing education, health, suitable shelter, adequate food, transport and income generating opportunities. Stigma together with discrimination compounds their plight.

South African Prevalence of Disability

In South Africa, the data collected during Census 2001 indicates that there were 2 255 982 people with various forms of disability. This number constituted 5% of the total population enumerated in this census. Of this number, 1 854 376 were African, 168 678 coloured, 41 235 Indian/Asian and 191 693 white. The number of females affected was 1 173 939, compared to 1 082 043 males.

The provincial prevalence levels show that the most affected province was the Free State with a prevalence of 6,8% and the least affected was Gauteng with 3,8%. The prevalence increased by age from 2% in the age group 0-9 years to 27% in the age group 80 years and above.

Those who had post-secondary education had the lowest prevalence (3%) compared to those who had no schooling (10,5%), primary level (5,2%) and secondary level of education (3,9%).

The prevalence of sight disability was the highest (32%) followed by physical disability (30%), hearing (20%), emotional disability (16%), intellectual disability (12%) and communication disability (7%).

Employment

Based on the Census of 2001, only about 19% of people with disabilities were employed compared to 35% of non-disabled persons. The rate of unemployment among people with disabilities adversely affects those that they are associated with such as carers, friends, family members and work colleagues.

Types of Disabilities

People with disabilities include amongst others, individuals with:

- Physical impairments and any other kinds of disfigurements such as those using wheelchairs, limbs, loss of part or whole limb, missing eye
- Speech and language impairments such as a lisp which adversely affects one's ability to communicate at work, a stutter, poor word formation, serious language impairment
- Sensory impairments such as deaf people or blind or partially blind individuals
- Learning difficulties such as Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD), Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Dyslexia
- Mental distress or mood conditions including emotional, mental health and behavioural conditions such as bi polar, schizophrenia
- Permanent health related conditions resulting in one being classified as a person with a disability such as epilepsy, diabetes, severe anemia, malaria, pigmentation related condition such as albinism

Causes of disabilities

Many factors can cause disability. One can be born with a disability however, there are also other factors such as accidents, natural disasters, war, violence, poverty, unhealthy lifestyles and lack of access to medical care or at times negligence. One also needs to acknowledge that any person who is healthy today could encounter a circumstance that results in a disability at any stage in one's life.

Myths

There are also many common myths around people with disabilities, namely that they are not "normal", that they permanently need to be assisted, they are unreliable, are sickly and cannot function independently in life. This is not always true as there are many professionals today that have a disability and are able to function normally in any work environment. What is key however is inclusion. In the past people with disabilities were not incorporated into the world of work. However, the more they receive mainstream education and employment the more they will function independently and become self sufficient.

Disability tends to be associated with a medical and welfare framework, identifying people with disabilities as ill, different from their non-disabled peers, and in need of care. Due to this fact the emphasis is on the medical needs of people with disabilities. There is also a corresponding neglect of their wider social needs. This has resulted in severe isolation for people with disabilities and their families.

Disabled people's organisations all over the world have worked to reposition disability as a human rights issue. The result is a social model for disability based on the premise that if society cannot cater for people with disabilities, it is society that must change. This model requires substantial changes to the physical environment. In South Africa, employers tend to take disability as part of their corporate social responsibility strategies.

A key factor that must be taken into account is the tendency of society to view people with disabilities as a single and homogenous group. Thus, people on wheelchairs have become the popular representation of people with disabilities. This ignores the diversity of disability and the variety of needs experienced by people with different types of disabilities. It is to be noted however that the international sign for disability is represented by a wheelchair. More recently other international signs have been developed as shown in this toolkit.

The development of the toolkit was borne from the realisation that the mining industry is one of the largest employers in South Africa and it is also one of the largest contributors to the increasing number of persons with disabilities in the South African population. It is this realisation that puts a responsibility on the mining sector to begin to address disability in a systemic way so that it provides a sustainable solution to a problem which it creates.

The disability and reasonable accommodation toolkit was developed within the international framework of rules and standards that establish a range of rights for people with disabilities and responsibilities for regulators, licensed operators and service providers in the mining sector. It is supported by the national regulatory framework which provides guidelines for the protection and promotion of rights of persons with disabilities in South Africa.

The scope of these rights and responsibilities is wide-ranging, and for the purpose of this toolkit, was to address issues of non compliance. The toolkit was developed as an intervention strategy to address the anomalies at the regulators and mine operators' level and to provide guidelines on how to use the toolkit to access issues of best practice in the industry. The intervention strategies are presented as recommendations to enable the industry to implement appropriate sustainability strategies to improve the working conditions of persons with disabilities in the mining sector.

Providing **skills**
for **people**
with **disabilities** for
employability
for **life**