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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

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### **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 This study is part of a broader investigation into the monitoring and evaluation of affirmative action policies in the South African Public Service. This specific investigation has its origins in the Public Service Commission (PSC) investigation of 1999 into the State of Representativeness in the Public Service, in which it was found that a mere 915 people with disabilities were employed in the public service at that stage. With the slow progress in attaining disability equity, the PSC considered it relevant that an investigation into disability equity be undertaken. The Portfolio Committee on Public Service and Administration as well as the Joint Monitoring Committee on the Improvement of the Quality of Life and Status of Children, Youth and Disabled Persons, which engaged with the PSC on this aspect, also expressed concern about the slow progress in achieving disability equity and supported this investigation.
- 1.2 The Government has clearly expressed its intention in transforming the South African public service as espoused in the White Paper on the Transformation of Public Service. A specific measure was adopted in the White Paper that within ten years (2005), people with disabilities should comprise 2% of the public service personnel.
- 1.3 This study is therefore a comprehensive assessment of the progress that has been made with regards to disability equity in the South African public service and a proactive attempt to assist departments in meeting the 2005 target.

### **2. METHODOLOGY**

The statistical backdrop for the study was PERSAL. A print out from PERSAL indicating the number of people with disabilities according to salary levels, race and gender for all national departments and provincial administrations as at September 2001 was obtained. Data from Vulindlela was also used.

A detailed questionnaire was developed to obtain information pertinent to the key objectives of the study. This was sampled with key stakeholders within public sector and civil society organizations. The project was communicated via a circular to the Heads of all departments and provincial administrations. The Regional Heads of the PSC assisted in the collation of information at the provincial level.

Information was solicited from all national departments and provincial administrations. In the case of provincial administrations where the overall returns were less than 50% of departments, the data was excluded from the analysis. The data for the following provinces has been excluded: Free State, North West and Mpumalanga. The provincial analysis is thus based on 6 out of the 9 provinces.

The employment targets contained in the White Paper on the Transformation of the Public Service and the affirmative action measures contained in the

Employment Equity Act, 1998 were used as a methodological yardstick to assess disability targets.

### **3. PROBLEMS EXPERIENCED**

The main problems experienced by the PSC in the execution of this study related to the inability to obtain information on time, especially from provincial administrations. Furthermore, the quality of information submitted was in many cases tardy and indicative of the lack of quality control. This can be ascribed to poor information management within departments.

Some of the problems experienced by departments in completing the questionnaires on time related to the timing of the study, which fell during the vacation period, causing possible delays.

There was discrepancy in the data found on PERSAL and the information submitted on the questionnaires, especially in terms of numbers. This is probably due to the fact that PERSAL is not being updated timeously.

### **4. KEY FINDINGS**

#### **4.1 Progress against target**

Based on information submitted by national departments and provincial administrations for 797 750 employees in the public service, it was found that there are 2007 people with disabilities. This represents an average of 0,25% which is far short of the 2% that needs to be achieved by 2005. The figure of 797 750 is broken down as follows: national departments, 224 894 and provincial administrations, 572 856.

The overall percentage of attainment for the national departments is 0,47% or 1062 people with disabilities. The overall percentage of attainment for the provincial administrations is 0,16% or 945 people with disabilities.

Only 3 departments namely Education, Sport and Recreation and SAMDI have reached the target of 2%. Of the 6 provinces surveyed none of them has reached the target of 2%.

#### **4.2 An assessment of the impact of the Employment Equity Act (EEA)**

The EEA has contributed to an increase in the employment of people with disabilities, but it should be noted that the impact seems to have been minimal except in the smaller departments. In these departments, due to statistical reasons, the increases in percentage terms have been more pronounced. It is still too early to pronounce definitively on the full impact of the EEA.

#### **4.3 Employment distribution of people with disabilities**

It was generally found that people with disabilities occupy the most junior levels within departments, with more than 50% employed between levels 1-5, and 40% employed between levels 6-9. From the management level the representation drops sharply, with 5,9% at levels 10-12, 1,3% at levels 13-14, and 0,08% for senior management levels 15-16.

The employment of people with disabilities was confined to low levels, involving little decision-making and authority. Males with disabilities were more represented than their female counterparts at higher levels, with African women with disabilities being at the lowest ranks.

#### **4.4 Specific policies, strategies and plans on disability**

Only 20% of the national departments had a specific policy on disability, whilst none of the provincial administrations had any such policy. Furthermore, 26% of the national departments and 45% of the provincial administrations use the Employment Equity Plans as guides for ensuring disability equity in the workplace. A number of departments and provincial administrations, however, indicated that specific policies on disability were either in the process of being developed, or in draft form.

#### **4.5 Recruitment and selection practices**

The current recruitment and selection practices employed by most national departments and provincial administrations are not specifically focused on attracting people with disabilities. There is a lack of innovation or creativity in proactively recruiting people with disabilities, with over 65% of departments across the public service using only generic methods of recruitment. Only 6 departments showed initiative by making contact with Civil Society organizations to distribute their vacancy lists.

#### **4.6 Skills development**

It was noted that people with disabilities were particularly discriminated against due to past educational policies and employment practices. This has made it difficult for them to enhance their skills base. Although training opportunities are provided across the public service, these tend to be of a generalized nature, are often not needs based and of limited use for developing the particular skills that are required to make people with disabilities attain their true potential.

#### **4.7 Work environment and collegial support**

Almost half of the national departments stated that they have a budget allocated for this purpose. In the provinces there is limited evidence of a supportive work environment to cater for the needs of employees with disabilities. The Department of Land Affairs clearly depicted how budgets were used and how the environment provided support. For example people with disabilities can access the budget for specific training, vehicles for the disabled are adapted, buildings are made more accessible with Braille signage and voice prompts in lifts. Only two departments in two provinces mentioned a specific budget that is set aside for improving the work environment for employees with disabilities. These departments include the Department of Finance in the Northern Cape (R50 000) and Traditional and Local Government in KwaZulu-Natal (R25 000).

#### **4.8 Awareness and sensitization to disability.**

Most departments have awareness programmes and activities in support of International and National Days for Disabled People. Many national departments sensitize through diversity management workshops, posters, seminars, newsletters and experiential workshops. The results show that raising awareness and increasing sensitization to disability is currently not regarded as a priority by many departments within the provinces.

### **5. RECOMMENDATIONS**

It was found that people with disabilities comprise approximately 0,25% of the public service personnel, which is far from the stated target of 2%. At this rate it is doubtful whether this target will be met by 2005. The recommendations contained in this report are intended to assist the acceleration of disability equity in a practical manner.

#### **5.1 Work Environment**

The environment in the workplace within departments and provincial administrations needs to be made more supportive of employees with disabilities. This should include the provision of practical assistive devices and supportive accommodation. Departmental buildings should have basic accommodation and assistive devices such as ramps, toilets, Braille and voice prompt lifts. Funds should be allocated for the assessment of the environmental and collegial support needs of employees with disabilities.

#### **5.2 Recruitment and Selection**

Departments must pay serious attention to reviewing their current strategies with regards to recruitment and selection. The DPSA should examine the possibility of using more innovative and creative recruiting mechanisms so as to ensure that all prospective employees with disabilities are able to respond to vacancies within the Public Service. It should also engage with Civil Society organizations to set up a data base of people with disabilities from which departments and provincial administrations can draw information. Advertising needs to be approached from a multi-faceted point of view, and where possible at least one person with a disability should become involved in selection panels.

#### **5.3 Skills Base**

There is a need to improve the skills base and the level of education of people with disabilities. In this regard the training and development of people with disabilities should be accelerated. Departments such as SAMDI, Labour and DPSA should collaborate to ensure that departments and provincial administrations link the needs of people with disabilities to career pathing and skills development. Skills development of people with disabilities, particularly women, needs to be seriously addressed together with the possibility of fast tracking their development within the workplace.

#### **5.4 Affirmative Action Plans**

The Affirmative Action principle should be the starting point in assisting national departments and provincial administrations in the acceleration towards the attainment of the laid down target. Affirmative Action Plans must be included in the annual departmental human resource planning with specific reference to plans on redressing numeric targets for people with disabilities and supporting their advancement.

#### **5.5 Statistics on Disability**

It is quite clear that statistics on disability are sketchy and poorly documented and this is further complicated by the fact that there is no standard definition on disability. The PSC must monitor the situation on an annual basis, and at the end of 2005 undertake a comprehensive audit on disability equity in the public service. Indicators on disability equity should form a critical part of the PSC's monitoring and evaluation system.

#### **5.6 The role of the OSDP and Portfolio Committees**

The OSDP, Portfolio Committee on Public Service and Administration and the Joint Monitoring Committee on the Improvement of Quality of Life, and Status of Children, Youth and Disabled Persons should utilize the findings of this report within their respective domains to advance progress with disability equity. The OSDP should play an active role in enabling departments to reach the set targets, and this role should be more clearly stipulated. The Portfolio Committees should call on departments to account, with a view to assisting in the achievement of targets.

### **6. Conclusion**

This investigation achieved what it set out to do. It is now incumbent upon departments to address disability equity vigorously. It is also necessary that closer monitoring of the attainment of targets takes place, and that the Heads of Departments and Provincial Administrations adopt a more proactive role in this regard.