government communications
Department:
Government Communication and Information System
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

2026 DISABILITY RIGHTS AWARENESS MONTH

KEY MESSAGES

BRIEF:

Disability Rights Awareness Month (DRAM) is observed annually in South Africa from 3 November to 3 December to promote the rights, dignity, equality and social inclusion of people with disabilities. This period is also used to challenge discrimination and advance the full and equal participation of persons with disabilities.

The 2026 Disability Rights Awareness Month is observed under the theme, “Creating Multi-Sectoral Partnerships for a Disability-Inclusive Society” which seeks to promote coordinated action to advance the rights, dignity, equality and inclusion of persons with disabilities.

Led by the Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities (DWYPD), the campaign promotes accessibility, economic empowerment, inclusive education and skills development, meaningful participation and the removal of barriers faced by people with disabilities.

The Month culminates in the International Day of Persons with Disabilities on 3 December 2026 and is guided by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which recognises persons with disabilities as rights-holders entitled to participate fully and equally in social, economic, political and cultural life.

KEY MESSAGES	SUPPORTING STATEMENTS
The Disability Rights Awareness Month promote social inclusion of people with disabilities.	• The Disability Rights Awareness Month is observed annually in South Africa from 3 November to 3 December, to increase public awareness and protect the rights of people with disability. • The Disability Rights Awareness Month is used to reflect on the challenges faced by persons with disabilities, their achievements and their goals. • We want to strengthen partnership between government, business and civil society towards addressing the challenges faced by persons with disabilities. • The month is also used to promote positive attitudes and challenge discrimination faced by people with disabilities as well as highlight capabilities and contributions of persons with disabilities. • This includes highlighting opportunities for employment, entrepreneurship, skills development, education, procurement and access to markets for persons with disabilities.
Disability rights are human rights.	• Discrimination, stigma and harmful stereotypes deny people with disabilities equal opportunity and must be challenged wherever they occur.

KEY MESSAGES	SUPPORTING STATEMENTS
	• Persons with disabilities are protected by our Constitution and it ensures that every South African is treated equally. • South Africa also ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) and its Optional Protocol in 2007. • The UNCRPD is a legally binding document and ensures that all people with disability have equal rights and are treated with respect and dignity. • The White Paper on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities which was approved by Cabinet in 2025 and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities fulfils inclusion, integration and equality for persons with disabilities. • These frameworks call for the protection of the rights of people with disabilities and the creation of an inclusive society in which accessibility, reasonable accommodation, independent living and meaningful participation are upheld.
Government has made progress in addressing challenges faced by people with disabilities.	• Since 1994 representation of people with disabilities has increased in various decision-making positions including in government. • To assist indigent people with disabilities, government introduced a disability grant to support those who are unlikely to find employment and have limited sources of income. • We implemented a care dependency grant for caregivers taking care of persons with profound disabilities. • All children with disabilities under the age of six have access to free healthcare, including rehabilitation and assistive devices.

KEY MESSAGES	SUPPORTING STATEMENTS
	• The Presidential Working Group on Disability established in 2026 continues to work directly with the Presidency on guiding the implementation of policy to advance the rights of the disabled. • Government is also increasing the employment equity target for persons with disabilities in the Public Service to 7% by 2030 and introducing a 7% preferential procurement target across all government departments and public entities. • We have also called on South African employers to do more by delivering on the promise of inclusion for persons with disabilities by increasing their representation in workplaces. • The Commission for Employment Equity's 26th annual report, covering April 2025 to March 2026 shows that people with disabilities make up about 1.3 percent of reported employees in the private sector against the 3 percent national benchmark.
Disability inclusion demands respect and equal treatment.	• Government is through the Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities integrating findings of a study into the impact of climate-related emergencies, such as floods and extreme heat, on persons with disabilities into municipal disaster management master plans. • It is also working with the South African Local Government Association to address gaps in data on the geographical locations of persons with disabilities, which make it difficult to provide timely assistance during climate-related disasters. • Government is also working on a Rights of Persons with Disabilities Bill which aims to consolidate rights currently spread across multiple laws and policies and penalties for discrimination, with fines of up to R100,000 and possible imprisonment.

KEY MESSAGES	SUPPORTING STATEMENTS
	• In addition, work is underway to establish a Disability Nerve Centre of Excellence as part of the G20 Disability Inclusion Legacy Projects, with seed funding secured from the All-China Women's Federation. South Africa has submitted its report on measures taken to ensure that the rights guaranteed under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities are enjoyed by persons with disabilities in the country.

Content for infographics:

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