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Department:
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**LANGUAGE POLICY OF THE
DEPARTMENT OF HOME AFFAIRS**

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1. DEFINITIONS

Term	Definition
Act	The Use of Official Languages Act, 2012 (Act No. 12 of 2012)
Constitution	The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996
DHA	Department of Home Affairs
DG	Director-General of the Department of Home Affairs
Minister	The Minister of Home Affairs
PanSALB	The Pan South African Language Board, established in terms of the Pan South African Language Board Act, 1995 (Act No. 59 of 1995)
Policy	The Language Policy of the Department of Home Affairs
Regulations	The Regulations in terms of the Act
Republic	The Republic of South Africa

2. LEGISLATIVE INSTRUMENTS

- 2.1 The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996;
- 2.2 The Use of Official Languages Act, 2012;
- 2.3 Regulations in terms of section 13 of the Use of Official Languages Act, 2012.

3. PURPOSE AND REGULATORY CONTEXT OF THIS POLICY

This Policy is required by section 4 of the Act, as follows:

- 3.1 Section 4(1) provides that every national department, national public entity and national public enterprise must adopt a language policy on its use of official languages.
- 3.2 Section 4(2) provides that a language policy adopted in terms of subsection (1) must:
 - 3.2.1 Identify at least three official languages that the national department, national public entity or national public enterprise will use for government purposes;

- 3.2.2 Stipulate how official languages will be used in effectively communicating with the public, official notices, government publications, and inter and intra-government communication;
- 3.2.3 Describe how the national department, national public entity or national public enterprise will effectively communicate with members of the public whose language of choice is not one of its chosen official languages, or South African Sign Language;
- 3.2.4 Describe how members of the public can access the language policy, and
- 3.2.5 Provide a complaints mechanism to enable members of the public to lodge complaints regarding the use of official languages by a national department, national public entity or national public enterprise.

4. PRINCIPLES

The principles underpinning this Policy are:

- 4.1 Commitment to the promotion of all languages in the Republic in order to ensure constitutional language equity and language rights as required by a democratic dispensation;
- 4.2 Recognition of multilingualism as a resource to maximize collaborative partnerships in nation building, economic development and social cohesion;
- 4.3 Promotion of good language management by the DHA to ensure efficient public service administration that meets the needs of the public and ensures equitable access to the services and information of the DHA;
- 4.4 Prevention of the use of any language(s) for the purposes of exploitation, domination and discrimination within the DHA;
- 4.5 Enhancement of people-centeredness by addressing the interests, needs and aspirations of language communities through on-going dialogue and debate;
- 4.6 Recognition of a community-based approach, this is, a decentralised and participatory approach to language planning and policy implementation in which each government structure is given the power to identify its own working languages, as the most viable manner in which to promote multilingualism given South Africa's highly pluralistic society; and
- 4.7 Support for special redress programmes for previously marginalised official indigenous languages, and the learning and teaching of all the official languages of the Republic at all levels of schooling.

5. THE WORK OF THE DHA

The work of the DHA includes:

- 5.1 Determining and recording the identity and status of all people living in South Africa and issuing documents that affirm this;
- 5.2 Serving as the custodian of the National Population Register which contains the records of all citizens and permanent residents, including changes in status such as marriage and death;
- 5.3 Rendering a verification of identity service to all government institutions, banks and other private sector institutions;
- 5.4 Regulating immigration through the permitting and movement control systems and providing consular services outside South Africa;
- 5.5 Enforcing, through the Inspectorate, the Immigration Act and Regulations; and
- 5.6 Processing and determining the status of asylum seekers and refugees as well as operating centres nationally in this regard.

6. THE DHA LANGUAGE UNIT

The DHA Language Unit will support this Policy. The functions of the Language Unit will be to:

- 6.1 Advise the DG on the development, adoption and implementation of this Policy;
- 6.2 Monitor and assess the use of official languages by the DHA;
- 6.3 Monitor and assess compliance with this Policy;
- 6.4 Compile and submit a report to the Minister and to the Pan South African Language Board in terms of section 9 of the Act;
- 6.5 Promote parity of esteem and equitable treatment of the official languages of the Republic;
- 6.6 Facilitate equitable access to the services and information of the DHA;
- 6.7 Promote good language management; and
- 6.8 Perform any other functions that the Minister may prescribe.

7. TRAINING AND CAPACITY BUILDING

In order to achieve the professional and efficient implementation of this Policy, the DHA Language Unit will advise on training and capacity building.

8. OFFICIAL LANGUAGES OF THE DHA

The DHA has adopted all 11 official languages of the Republic as its official languages for the purposes of this Policy.

9. USE OF OFFICIAL LANGUAGES BY THE DHA

9.1 The following factors will be taken into account in arriving at the choice of official language(s) the DHA will use in each context/situation:

9.1.1 Usage;

9.1.2 Practicality;

9.1.3 Expense;

9.1.4 Regional circumstances;

9.1.5 The balance of the needs and preferences of the public it serves.

9.2 The table below indicates how the DAC will use the official languages:

DHA PURPOSE	LANGUAGE(S)
Inter and intra-government communication	English
Communicating with members of the public (written and verbal communication)	Official languages of the Republic with due regard to the criteria in 9.1 above
Official publications for public distribution (notices on DHA website, advertisements, forms, and signage on buildings)	Official languages of the Republic with due regard to the criteria in 9.1 above
Public hearings (Izimbizo) and other official proceedings	Official languages of the Republic with due regard to the criteria in 9.1 above
Communication with customers with hearing or sight impairment	The DHA Language Unit will facilitate Sign Language interpreting and conversion of text into Braille or alternatively audio on request.
International communication	English and/or preferred language of the country concerned.

10. COMMUNICATION WITH MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC WHOSE LANGUAGE OF CHOICE IS NOT ONE OF THE OFFICIAL LANGUAGES OF THE REPUBLIC

- 10.1 A member of the public who wishes to communicate with the DHA in a language that is not one of the official languages of the Republic must notify the DHA in writing.
- 10.2 The DHA will arrange for appropriate translation or interpreting within 20 working days of the date of the request having been received by the DHA.

11. COMMUNICATION WITH MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC WHOSE LANGUAGE OF CHOICE IS SOUTH AFRICAN SIGN LANGUAGE

- 11.1 A member of the public who wishes to communicate with the DHA in South African Sign Language must notify the DHA in writing.
- 11.2 The DHA will arrange for appropriate interpreting within 20 working days of the date of the request having been received by the DHA.

12. PUBLICATION OF AND ACCESS TO THIS POLICY

- 12.1 This Policy will be published in all the official languages of the Republic.
- 12.2 It will be available on the DHA's website (www.dha.gov.za).
- 12.3 It will be available in Braille on request or alternatively in audio on the DHA's website (www.dha.gov.za).
- 12.4 It will be displayed at all DHA offices in such a manner and place that it can be read by the public.

13. COMPLAINTS MECHANISM

- 13.1 Any person who is dissatisfied with a decision of the DHA regarding its use of official languages may lodge a complaint in writing to the DG.
- 13.2 Any complaint must be lodged:
- 13.2.1 In writing, and
- 13.2.2 Within three months of the complaint arising.
- 13.3 Any complaint lodged must state the name, address, and contact information of the person lodging it.

- 13.4 Any complaint lodged must provide a full and detailed description of the complaint.
- 13.5 The DG may request a complainant to supply any additional information necessary to consider the complaint and to attend a meeting for the purpose of making an oral enquiry into the complaint.
- 13.6 The DG will consider the complaint and respond in writing, not later than three months after the complaint was lodged, informing the complainant of the decision.

14. REVIEW OF POLICY

This Policy will be reviewed whenever necessary but at least within 10 years.