

Youth Day – Don't forget youth with disabilities

As South Africa prepares to honour its youth in commemoration of the Soweto uprising of 1976, particular focus should be directed at one group of youth that continues to suffer unrelenting discrimination – those with disabilities.

That's the call from South African Employers for Disability (SAE4D), a non-profit employers' organisation that was set up to promote the recruitment, retention and development of people with disabilities in the workplace.

According to SAE4D chairman Dr Jerry Gule, South Africa has among the most progressive regimes relating to people with disabilities with laws and policy documents such as the *Employment Equity Act*, the *Revised Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (BBBEE) Act* and its Codes of Practice; the Department of Labour's *Code of Good Practice and Technical Assistance Guidelines on Employment of Persons with Disabilities*; and the Department of Higher Education's *Draft Social Inclusion Policy Framework for Public Post School Education and Training Institutions* all intended to ensure people with disabilities are able to take their rightful place as contributing members of society.

Yet vast numbers of children and youth with disabilities will never be able to take advantage of all this because of the inadequate educational opportunities afforded them.

"This is ironic when one considers that the Soweto uprising was in response to the Bantu Education Act and the inferior education it meted on black children under Apartheid," Dr Gule says.

With the National Youth Development Agency having adopted the theme "Youth is it 'youth or 'young' Africans? for Economic Freedom in Our Lifetime" to mark the 39th anniversary of the Soweto uprisings, the SAE4D believes the spotlight should be focused strongly on young people with disabilities.

"The shortage of quality educational opportunities for children and young people with disabilities hampers their ability to enter the job market as equal participants. Without equal access to education from pre-primary level through tertiary, the

majority of young people with disabilities will be condemned to a lifetime of dependency on social grants and the kindness of others,” Dr Gule says.

“This is a huge waste of resources and talent that this country cannot afford. People with disabilities are the largest minority group in our society yet they still remain an untapped labour source that can contribute meaningfully to our economy.

“One of our experiences at SAE4D is that people with disabilities have immense potential to contribute meaningfully to our economy – provided they are given equal opportunities. This has to start with access to quality education for all children with disabilities,” Dr Gule concludes.

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About SAE4D

South African Employers for Disability (SAE4D) is a body constituted by employers who are committed to addressing issues confronting the integration of people with disabilities in the workplace. The organisation was set up to share experience, develop best practices, confront and tackle prejudices that act as barriers to the integration of people with disabilities in the workplace, and form a common understanding of the challenges and solutions required to fully develop the potential of people with disabilities to contribute meaningfully to society and business.

SAE4D members are South African companies who are signatories to the Constitution of the SAE4D, its principles and values.

Current SAE4D members include: ABB; ABSA; AccelorMittal, AngloAmerican; AON, Barloworld; Bowman Gilfillan; Edcon; EY; Eskom; KPMG; Lorimar; Nedbank; PPC; SABMiller, Standard Bank, and Total.

For more information, please view the [SAE4D video](#), visit the [SAE4D Facebook page](#); or go to the SAE4D website at www.sae4d.co.za

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