**DISAB ILITY MAINSTREAMING IN ICT**

Stated in the articles of the UNCRPD, State parties have the responsibility to take appropriate measures to ensure to persons with disabilities access, on an equal basis with others, to the physical environment, to transportation, to information and communications, including information and communications technologies and systems, and to other facilities and services open or provided to the public, both in urban and in rural areas. This is highlighted in Article 9: Accessibility. However, promoting the lives of persons with disabilities to enjoy equality, inclusion and integration, access to information, communication and technology either directly or indirectly cuts across all the articles within the UNCRPD. Considering the barriers and challenges they experience, information, communication and technology is critical to ensure empowerment, development and their full integration into society. The Department of Social Development is engaging in a number of programmes and activities to enhance the quality of life of persons with disabilities within our society. Accessibility, reasonable accommodation making ICT available is a critical factor:

* **National disability mainstreaming programmes** have been conducted in all provinces which highlight accessibility, reasonable accommodation to the provision of ICT namely proper signage/electronic signage, adaptive accessible technology, transport, buildings, information through alternate or adaptive format are all essential means and mechanisms within ICT. The training has highlighted the enjoyment of equal opportunity through the advancement of ICT. The department facilitates and promotes development, empowerment and reasonable accommodation through the process of ICT.

Following the national training on disability mainstreaming, ongoing collaboration is being maintained with the provinces to monitor and evaluate progress and to develop best practice models in respect of the above. Collaboration is also being maintained with international countries namely: JICA /Japan to support development and technical support in the promotion of full inclusion and integration in the empowerment of persons with disabilities. Collaboration is also being maintained with African neighbouring countries in the sharing of information and development of good practice models.

The department has also in the application and implementation of employment equity recruited persons with disabilities and promotes the employment of persons with disabilities in public and private sectors. Hence the development and provision of ICT is being promoted within the department for persons with disabilities. Provision of technological devices have been made available to employees, some members of the community, to schools, NGO’s, DPO’s etc. It is also a requirement to make information and communication in different formats to address the needs of persons with disabilities within our community namely, information in electronic format, brail, sign language interpretation etc. Training on disability mainstreaming was conducted with more than 600 people nationally including various stakeholders, state departments, NGO’s, NPO’s, local municipalities and persons with disabilities. The training is an ongoing process to ensure development in the field of disability.