

Addressing disability

DISABLED: New SA enables everyone

Democracy has opened doors for all South Africans. Our democratic Constitution protects the rights of everyone.

Vuk'uzenzele spoke to Benny Palime from the Office on the Status of Disabled Persons (OSDP) in the Presidency, about disabled people's rights.

■ In the past

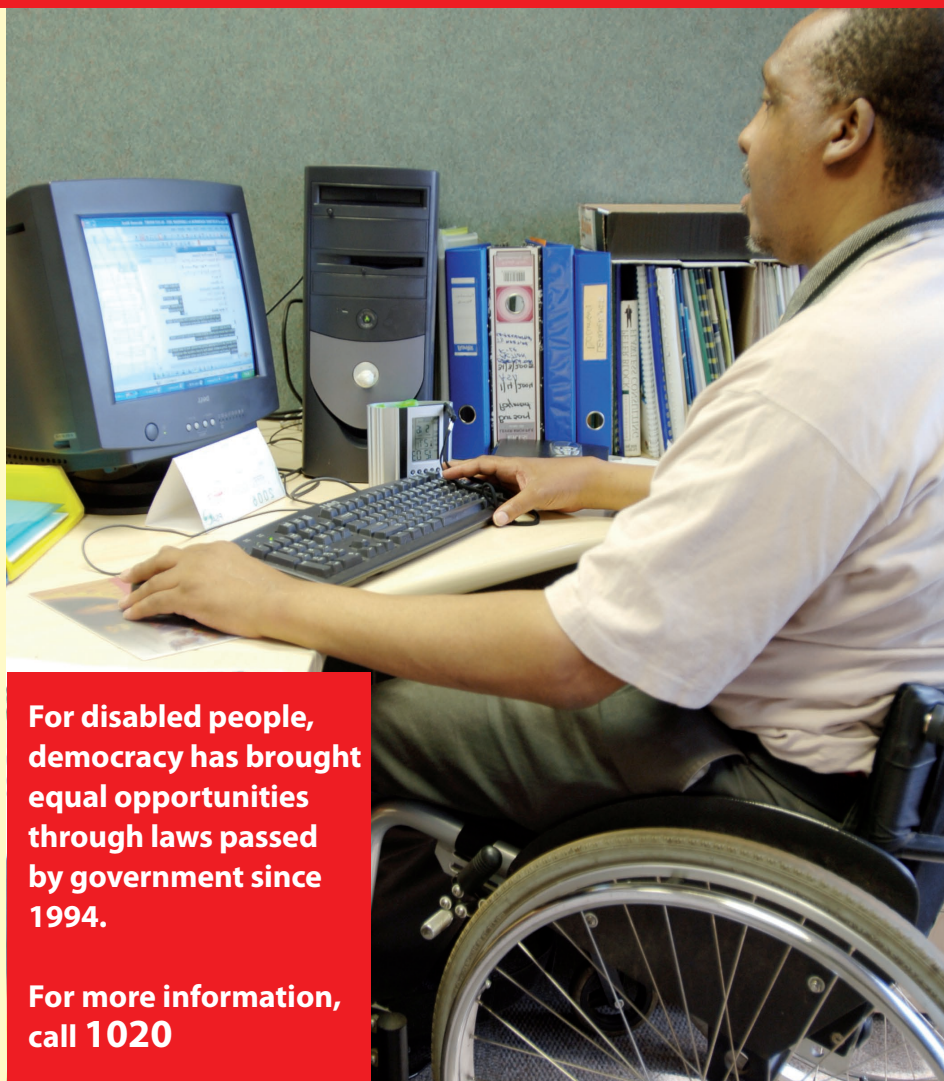
Palime said that in the past the majority of people with disabilities did not feel that they were part of society.

They did not have political, social and economic rights. This made it very difficult for most of them to find jobs. It had negative effects on them and their families.

■ Shortage of skills

Some of the things that have prevented disabled people from finding jobs, included:

- shortage of skills because of poor education;
- employers who would not employ people with disabilities;
- labour laws during apartheid that did not protect disabled people's rights;
- Public transport that was not easy for disabled people to use; and
- Poor ways of giving information to disabled people.



For disabled people, democracy has brought equal opportunities through laws passed by government since 1994.

For more information, call 1020

■ Basic services

Democracy brought happiness to many disabled people, Palime said. "In the past, it was difficult for disabled people to receive certain services. We now receive all basic services."

He said organisations working with disabled people were also happy. Disability has now been included in government's list of important matters to attend to. This has given many disabled people hope for a better life.

■ Protecting rights

There are now bodies such as the Equality Court, the Human Rights Commission and the Public Protector that ensure all people's rights are protected.

Laws that ensure disabled people's rights are protected, include

the Employment Equity Act and the Labour Relations Act.

Government's National Skills Development Strategy helps to ensure that disabled people get training in different skills. This makes it easier for them to find jobs and earn money.

■ Equal opportunities

In 1997, government approved the White Paper on an Integrated National Disability Strategy. It is a plan on how to make life better for disabled people. Among other things, it encourages government departments to give disabled people equal opportunities to get jobs.

Some of the services that disabled people now enjoy are health services, disability grants, housing subsidies and economic opportunities.

- Justice Mohale