



**POLYTECHNIC OF NAMIBIA**

**WELCOMING REMARKS**

**BY**

**PROF TJAMA TJIVIKUA**

***RECTOR OF THE POLYTECHNIC OF NAMIBIA***

**AT**

**THE LAUNCH OF THE NATIONAL DISABILITY COUNCIL OF NAMIBIA  
CAPACITY BUILDING PROGRAMME**

**13 FEBRUARY 2014**

**POLYTECHNIC OF NAMIBIA**

**HOTEL AND TOURISM SCHOOL**

**WINDHOEK**

Director of Ceremonies

Honourable Deputy Minister of Health and Social Services, Ms Petrina

Haingura

Deputy Director of Research and Development at the National Disability

Council of Namibia, Mr Tjiueza Tjombumbi

Developmental Partners

Senior Management and Staff of the Polytechnic

Esteemed Invited Guests

Members of the Media

Ladies and Gentlemen

A good morning to all and welcome to the Polytechnic. Allow me at the onset to offer an apology on behalf of our Rector, Prof Tjama Tjivikua who unfortunately cannot do the welcoming of this very important launch because of other commitments. It is indeed a great privilege and honour for me to be welcoming you to this important event of the Launch of the Capacity Building Programme for People with Disabilities. I would like to particularly welcome the Deputy Minister of Health and Social Services, Honourable Ms Petrina Haingura, who will be delivering the keynote address this morning. Thank you for gracing this occasion.

In July last year, we as stakeholders congregated in this same venue to deliberate on training needs and subsequent training programmes that would make a significant difference in the lives of people with disabilities. This launch marks the initial efforts to mount the much needed capacity building interventions outlined in the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that we signed in May 2012.

This event is evidence of the progress we are making toward realising the objectives of this collaboration and therefore another milestone in the relationship between the Polytechnic and National Disability Council of Namibia (NDCN).

In his statement on the International Disability Day last year Mr Gerson Mutendere, Secretary General of the **National Federation of People with Disability in Namibia (NFPDN)**, an advocacy group for the right of people with disability, stated that “It still pains me to see people with disabilities that are still unemployed and are still begging on street corners for coins to feed them and their families.” He substantiated this claim on the basis of the 2010/2011 Action Report of the Employment Equity Commission of Namibia which had reported that out of 35 781 people who have gained employment across all sectors of the economy only 96, representing about 0,2%, were people with disability. Surely, this cannot be all attributed to intellectual ineptitude. This affirms the view that prejudice and discrimination against people with disabilities are real issues. Everyone deserves an equal opportunity and a decent life, and we all have a duty to ensure these basic tenets of life.

Just a few months before, the Conference of FES Namibia and Partnererson “Social justice and decent employment for people with disabilities” had been held here in Windhoek, which is another event that helps to contextualise why we strongly believe that this programme on entrepreneurship we are embarking on is an important step in addressing some of the key challenges facing people with disabilities. Diverse views emerged from the different stakeholders.

In a statement read on behalf of the Minister of Labour and Social Welfare, government conveyed its commitment to inclusivity and urged Namibians to access services available through the NDCN, while at the same time requesting

the corporate world to join in the quest for social justice and decent employment of people with disabilities.

The NFPDN, on the other hand, espoused the view government had unveiled, the ambitious plan on social community rehabilitation, which competed with huge social and basic needs of the general population and consequently disability issues have been relegated to a low priority in the government's agenda and therefore continued to be under-resourced.

Despite these different views on how the country is handling issues of people with disability, the inputs of the four commissions at the Conference that dealt with different issues were quite valuable. The commission that paid attention to SME development is of particular interest to us this morning. They recommended that much would be gained by adopting best practices from East Africa where SME associations have mainstreamed disability support; providing inclusive training; and linked up entrepreneurs with disabilities with those without in activities such as capacity building, trade fairs and presentation of recognition awards.

Another important recommendation was that perhaps a government agency should assist entrepreneurs with disabilities with business planning, business advice, and linkages to business opportunities. It is no surprise that the stakeholder consultations on what programmes were to be offered under this agreement with the NDCN decided on entrepreneurship as one of the first training programmes.

It therefore gives me great joy to welcome the 14 business people who will be undergoing training in entrepreneurship. The Polytechnic will be using the Centre for Enterprise Development, one of its many institutes that provide a

variety of specialised services to our communities to provide the training. The CED boasts of extensive experience in providing training and research services to different sectors of business and at this point over 15 000 persons across the country have received training from the CED. I have no doubt that the knowledge and skills you will acquire during this training period will prove useful and help you improve the running and management of your businesses. By running businesses that will show sustainable growth you will not only be providing employment to our people, but will also be making a contribution to the economic development of our country.

Finally, I would like to extend a word of appreciation to the Ministry of Health and Social Service for their steadfast effort and support to issues of people with disabilities. We are also grateful to our partner, the NDCN, who have been so committed to this project and would like to say as the Polytechnic, you would see us collaborating in many such projects. Again, welcome to this Launch and wish the project great success.

I thank you all for your kind attention.

END