

Speaking Notes for Mrs Thamo Mzobe, Chief Executive Officer of National Development Agency, for Cape Town Society for the Blind Low Vision Clinic on Wednesday, 14 October 2020 (webinar from 11h00 – 12h00).

The Chief Executive Officer of Cape Town Society for the Blind, Ms Lizelle de Wet

Representative of the Jannie Mouton Foundation and other funders

Civil Society Organisations and leadership

All those who will benefit from the service

The media and all guests joining us

A very good morning to you all.

1. The NDA is pleased to be part of an initiative designed to improve the quality of life for blind and visually impaired persons.
2. May I take a second please to pass on the apologies from the Social Development Ministry ... The Deputy Minister has passed on her apologies for her absence and wishes the Low Vision Clinic prosperity and the department's continuous support.
3. Led by Minister Lindiwe Zulu, the Department of Social Development, is engaged in ongoing work in the disability sector to realise the rights contained in the *White Paper on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*. These rights include safety, personal mobility and access to healthcare, rehabilitation, education and employment for persons with disabilities.
4. We are pleased to be associated with the Cape Town Society of the Blind, and particularly this Low Vision Clinic, as it contributes to the development and improvement of lives and livelihoods in our less advantaged communities – a big focus of the National Development Agency.

5. Our mandate within government is contributing towards the eradication of poverty and its causes. In implementing our mandate, we must empower and enhance the capacity of civil society. This will ensure that the NDA helps to build more cohesive communities that are able to tackle the triple challenges of poverty, unemployment and inequality.
6. Despite some successes in legislation, many persons with disabilities are still marginalised and do not access basic services, including healthcare and employment opportunities. There is a shortage of Low Vision Clinics that specifically cater for the visually impaired, we have to applaud this Clinic for the much needed work that will benefit the needy.
7. Government alone is not able to respond to all the needs of the country, the Covid-19 pandemic made it clear that active citizenry is necessary, that government must provide conducive environments for civil society organisations and communities to actively take the wellbeing of communities they operate in into their own hands.
8. CTSB must be congratulated for the good work they are doing to train and provide skills to persons who are visually impaired and in trying to link the students to sustainable jobs and job creation opportunities.
9. To assist with the critical shortage of Low Vision Assessment services in Cape Town, the NDA has granted R558 748, 03 for training of staff, purchase of assistive, sensory and visual devices (including playing and learning equipment) that will be used for specialised blindness intervention therapies. CTSB had already raised 50% of the funds needed to establish the Clinic when they applied for assistance, we matched the 50% of funds needed.
10. According to the International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness (IAPB), approximately 285 million people worldwide live with low vision and blindness. Of these, 39 million people are blind and 246 million have moderate or severe visual impairment. 90% of blind people live in low-income countries. 80% of visual impairment is avoidable, being readily treatable and/or preventable.
11. The link between poverty and the need for Low Vision Clinics is clear. The NDA is proud to be partners and to be associated with this Clinic – we look forward to many successful cases that we hope to hear of in the near future.

12. Before I conclude, I noticed with interest that the CTSB is celebrating 91 years this year - serving the visually impaired; and it is in this spirit that I would like to offer my congratulations!

13. Thank you for the opportunity to give a word of support.