

## Background on **HEARING** **LOSS** in SA | towards 2030

According to the World Report on Hearing, there are approximately 12 million people who have varying degrees of hearing loss in South Africa (20% of the SA population). The degree of hearing loss varies from mild to total hearing loss. Almost 5 million people in this group of 12 million have a hearing disability. 600,000 members of this group are Deaf and use SA Sign Language as a primary form of communication. About 4 million people in this group are hearing impaired and therefore do not use Sign Language. This group identifies with the hearing world and represents various cultures in South Africa. They mainly use hearing aids, hearing technology, cochlear implants, speech reading, subtitles, captions, and other forms of alternative methods of communication.

However, what is shocking is that about 1 million of these 4 million people can or want to use hearing aids and technology. This means that approximately 3 million people with hearing disabilities in South Africa receive little to no formal support.

### Open question

What does the future hold for the approximately 3 million South Africans who are hearing impaired but who cannot or do not want to use hearing aids, hearing technology, or SASL? I am specifically referring here to millions of people with a hearing disability who use alternate and supplementary forms of communication and the like. South Africa has approximately 3 658 000 older people (5.9% of the total population), with 1 829 000 having a hearing disability (approximately 50%).

### What is the way forward?

Any person who has hearing loss, regardless of whether he or she uses devices, alternate methods of communication, or Sign Language, or a combination of these methods, is entitled to reasonable accommodation. The good news for us today, after so many years of fighting and negotiating, is that diversity in the field of hearing loss must now be respected in line with Para 6.1.1.4 of the White Paper on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The White Paper was signed by the SA Cabinet on December 9, 2015.

*"Persons who are hearing impaired and/or acquire deafness later in life might, however, never use SASL as their language of choice. They require access to lip speakers, note-takers, loop systems, captioning, and sub-texting for access to information and communication."*

This human right looks good on paper, but what happens in real life?

Our experience is that certain employers consider hearing aids or the use of Sign Language as a prerequisite for the employment of people who have hearing loss. This is based on complete ignorance about the impact of hearing loss as well as a lack of expertise to apply legislation correctly. This amounts to direct discrimination.

All people who have a hearing impairment must therefore be empowered regarding the functional impact of their own hearing loss. Therefore, the provision of a functional report by a health expert is essential.

in the field of audiology is of great importance and a source of support. The report of the health expert must partially set out the reasonable accommodation possibilities as determined by legislation. Legislation expects that those who have a less visible impairment must be able to provide additional information (for example, a functional report) about their limitations. Experts in the field of audiology must therefore work together with experts in the field of disability rights to make such a report available to the client.

Remember, the relevant employee who has a hearing impairment must still be able to meet the minimum requirements of the job level for which he or she wants to be eligible, with or without reasonable accommodation. If we, as experts, do not make the much-needed information available to our clients, we are failing those whom we are supposed to empower.

In practice, persons who have a hearing impairment or deafness must empower themselves to the maximum regarding every possible communication technique, assistive technology, and forms of alternative forms of communication. The method of communication they choose is a human right and may not be used selectively as a criterion for equal opportunities.

Sources:

Do your reports comply?

<https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1QFq5LZdNum5W3oH/?mibextid=oFDknk>

What is functional reporting?

What is the difference between an audiology report and a functional report?

<https://youtu.be/aCSKDzusFWs?feature=shared>

## Available training

We present two training programs in the fields of hearing impairment, disability rights, and functional reporting namely:

- Live to the full despite hearing loss (2 hours). Target groups: persons with hearing loss, their families, friends, places of worship, education and training institutions, employers, HR managers, and more.
- Disability Rights Awareness, Functional Reporting for Dialogue, and Mediation (3 hours, 2 Ethics CPD points at HPCSA). Target groups: health professionals, social workers, psychologists, and more.

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