

## **Budget vote on Women, Children and People with Disabilities**

**UCDP : Hon IC Ditshetelo**

**May 2012**

**3 minutes**

The Department has obviously undergone strenuous and perhaps painful journey in trying to set itself up, acquire a distinct personality and identity whilst at the same time needing to maintain visibility so as to entrench hopes of those that must be served by it. This journey has sometimes appeared too slow and many are times when the architects themselves have appeared daunted and confused by the tasks laying ahead. There is still so much that needs to be done, that must be done if this department is to be relevant and make a difference to livelihoods of women, children and people with disabilities. As a woman, a mother, a grandmother and a passionate citizen, I am hopeful and perhaps even confident that we shall see the light at the end of the tunnel, and as I speak here today, let it be known that any hopeful comments and compliments come from a deep place of womanhood within me, a place that wants to see the status quo changed; and any criticism I pass will be from the same place fuelled by passion and compassion for our women, our children and our people living with disabilities.

Legislative and policy initiatives form an integral part of what must inform the department's mandate, it is therefore pleasing that the Department will in this fiscal year, ensure that the Gender Equality Bill is drafted. Many of us are hopeful that this Bill and its subsequent passing will accelerate the cause of gender equality, that as a society we shall have to come face to face with the scourge of gender inequality and be forced to talk and come up with workable binding solutions. Similarly, the finalisation of National Disability Policy is an

important step towards ensuring our compliance with international instruments.

The department in its strategic document identifies role players towards attainment of gender equality and elimination of discrimination as being within the department, in government and in civil society. I however would like to assert that there is so much gender inequality in the workplace for instance women are reportedly earning a fraction of what their male counterparts earn in similar positions, the question therefore is how does the department, plan on influencing and persuading the private sector towards a commitment to gender equality? Of course legislation will play its part but more often it has failed and partnerships seem to deliver steady results, but has the department considered benefits from partnering with private businesses towards attainment of same goals?

It is understandably and acceptable that the department is responsible for coordination of special key dates in the sector, however it completely unacceptable that its visibility in our communities is only seen and felt during special days like the 16 days of activism. If the Department aims at influencing mind sets and leading a revolution towards full attainment and enjoyment of the Bill of Rights, then its advocacy programmes and tools must be visible throughout. Its messages must be known by the society.

The Department was established in May 2009 and therefore this month sees its 3<sup>rd</sup> anniversary, the department has spent the three years establishing itself, but its reference to public-private partnerships is that they are still ad hoc, this is disappointing. Other than the fact that the private sector has resources that government more often lacks, they also have proven able to reach masses with messages; the department's messages if it has at all, need momentum and speed; if the Minister condemns gang rape in Soweto, that message must reach everyone, not only those that have access to newspapers. The need to restore women's dignity, to stop discrimination and the need to protect our children from harm, those messages must be daily national messages.

UCDP supports the budget vote.