

KEEPING UP OUR PRESSURE TO CHANGE COPYRIGHT LAW

World Book Day to launch campaign ahead of Concourt hearing

“Don’t limit human rights – pass the Amendment Bill urgently!”

Excerpt from our statement on the submission:

In a few weeks’ time, Blind SA will attend a Concourt hearing to further promote its position that the country’s current copyright law limits human rights.

Leading up to the hearing will be an awareness campaign launching on World Book Day, 23 April. A webinar on the day will headline the start of the campaign, followed up with the distribution of a specially produced video and social media. Campaign activity will continue up until the day of our Concourt hearing.

Later this year, the Copyright Amendment Bill (CAB) is set to be placed on the agenda of the National Council of Provinces, paving the way to provincial engagements on this matter. It is crucial that the legislative process for the CAB be resolved urgently so that people with disabilities, learners and scholars can all access works under copyright immediately.

“ *In our court challenge to the current Copyright Act, we won an important victory for persons with visual disabilities: in September 2021, the High Court ordered that proposed section 19D of the CAB be “read in” to the current Act so that people with disabilities can access and convert works under copyright into accessible formats immediately.*

This order is set for a confirmation hearing at the Constitutional Court later this year. While this judgment was an important victory for persons with visual disabilities, including blind learners, broader reforms to the apartheid-era Copyright Act are still needed.

The Minister for Trade and Industry has already said that the process of copyright reform has undergone extensive public consultations – the time has now come to pass the Bill and effect substantive and wide-ranging copyright reform, which remains crucially necessary to promote and protect the rights to equality, dignity, culture, freedom of expression and education for all. ”

Our Concourt hearing is scheduled for Thursday 12 May 2022.



Nombuso Mtumba values the enhanced literacy that braille will give her, and remains focused on her dream of building a business around her passion for cooking.

GOLD MEDAL ATHLETE TRAINS ON

Braille course gives Nombuso a skillset she didn't have

As a gold medal winner at international level, self-improvement comes naturally to Nombuso Mtumba.

She went to the 2007 African Para Games in Algiers and brought home a silver medal. And then, in 2009 as an 18 year-old, she competed at the International Blind Sport Association Championships in Colorado USA. There she won the gold medal in the 100m sprint and the long jump silver.

Losing her parents meant that Nombuso had to use the pocket money she got from her athletics governing body to pay her school fees. Although only partially sighted, Nombuso got most of her education in normal schooling. And with just one year of special schooling, she'd had minimal exposure to braille by the time she matriculated.

Now, despite three years at college studying office administration, Nombuso remains unemployed.

"Its very hard to find a job if you're blind or even partially sighted," she says. "You need to have braille skills and a knowledge of assistive devices for blind people."

Having recently gained her certificate in Blind SA's Grade 1 basic braille course, Nombuso now has significantly bolstered her skillset, and primed herself to take on more advanced braille training.

Wanting to build an independent future for herself and her now 2 year-old daughter, Nombuso has a dream to join forces with other blind or partially sighted partners and start a catering or wedding décor business.



For Sanele Sikhakhane, brushing up on braille literacy is one of the building blocks of future independence – for himself and other visually impaired people.

SELF-IMPROVEMENT WITH BRAILLE

"Great teaching, very helpful to others who had no braille learning at all."

"Ireally needed this," was Sanele Sikhakhane's admission when we chatted to him during a recent six-day basic braille course in Durban.

"I did some braille at the Arthur Blaxall School years ago, but I dropped out. So when I heard about Blind SA's Grade 1 course, I got hold of another two visually impaired friends from Pietermaritzburg and we came along together."

Although blind and jobless, Sanele is not one to let the grass grow beneath his feet.

"Job opportunities are very few," he points out. "But you have to remain active."

One of Sanele's major projects was the co-founding of Liberation of Disabled People's Abilities, a non-profit organisation aimed at changing the 'helpless mind' status prevalent among so many disabled people, not only those with visual impairment.

"I said to them that we all have the same difficulties, but we don't have to stay at home. We must get together and look for ways to succeed. We can be what we want to be."

Among the key projects that Sanele wants to take on through his organisation is the teaching of braille, and Blind SA's course was a stepping-stone towards this. Literacy is a means for blind people to improve their employability.

Meanwhile, with a view to creating future income for himself, Sanele is working on starting a business dealing in aquaponics – a system of fish farming where nutrients from waste products are recycled to promote plant growth.

He deserves our full encouragement!



White cane in hand, Fanie Ndebele confidently takes to the gravel road near his rural home, an independent and dignified member of his community. He now shops for himself, and cooks and cleans.

'O&M' TRAINING STEPS UP A GEAR

After two years of Covid-induced interruption, our Orientation & Mobility practitioners are again fully reaching out with their life-changing training...

Fanie Ndebele faced a real problem after he and his girlfriend of five years recently separated. Blind from birth, Fanie suddenly found that tackling ordinary house activities like cooking and cleaning were a real challenge for him on his own. Shopping too was a difficulty – unable to walk to the shops, he'd pay neighbours to shop for him. An unwelcome extra expense.



Although having achieved two university degrees, Nosy Themba spent five years unemployed. Now, a welcome job offer means she's had to learn to walk to and from the bus stop each day on her own.

Independent mobility is a priceless, life-changing asset for blind folk – but it must be learnt. After training by our Orientation & Mobility team, Fanie can now safely negotiate the perils of hot stoves and boiling kettles, find items in cupboards, and correctly choose what he'd like to have for dinner.

Shopping is now a task that Fanie takes on himself since we



Under encouragement from O&M Practitioner Lebo Mdhluhi, trainee Hlengiwe Zulu uses her cane to familiarise herself with uneven ground during the final days of her eight weeks of instruction.

familiarised him with the key routes around his home and taught him to confidently handle money. With his 'magic stick', Fanie's now a visible and respected member of his community.

Praise to our expanding and dedicated O&M team who're making up for lost time with increased activity around the country.



Building confidence in a high-traffic urban setting at Mlazi, Sanele Mngoma walks repeatedly up and down the roadside pavement. Hazards include light poles and roadside vendors!

SHOPPING'S NOW A BREEZE FOR LOW-VISION MOM

"Magnificent magnifier... my new best friend!"

Registered blind single mother Thembi Davis regrets that she wasn't introduced to Blind SA earlier in life. She was born with a low vision condition that has always presented difficulties whenever she's had to perform activities that need sight.

"I think I could have gained a lot that would have helped my progress," says Thembi.

For example, although she did manage to achieve her Grade 12 school certificate, it was under very strenuous conditions. Teachers did not understand how to help her cope better with her studies.

Happily, Blind SA recently invited Thembi to join an independence training course, teaching her to cope better with the skills needed for daily life. A real breakthrough came when she was equipped with a special magnifying glass. Thembi can now manage to shop without any assistance – a simple solution with a sensational result.

"Thank you so, so much, Blind SA," says Thembi.



Checking products...



...checking prices...



...checking out.

OVER 60 000 PAGES OF BRAILLE IN GIANT SCHOOL BOOK ORDER



Happy learning, girls and boys!

Blind SA recently received a major order for braille text books from one of our schools for the blind. Filadelfia Secondary School in Soshanguve placed an order for thirteen Grade 9, 10 and 11 titles covering subjects from History, Life Orientation, Technology to Economics. In total, the job ran to 60 360 braille pages which were bound into 471 braille volumes, making it one of our largest-ever orders for school text books.