

# **Report on study tour to the United Kingdom and Spain: Improved access to employment opportunities for disabled people**

**Thabo Mbeki Development Trust for Disabled People**



**November 2009**

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## 1. Introduction

This document reports on a study tour undertaken under the auspices of the Thabo Mbeki Development Trust for Disabled People to the United Kingdom and Spain from 21 September to 1 October 2009. Besides representatives of the Trust itself, delegates were also drawn from Wholesale and Retail SETA, South Africa Employer's Forum for Disability, Disabled People South Africa, Disability Empowerment Concerns Trust, and academic institutions<sup>1</sup>. It is intended to inform the Department of Labour as the funder of the initiative and other central roleplayers about the organizations and programmes visited and to share insights on what was learnt by the delegates. These insights draw attention to those findings from the tour that have meaning for our own context and to the purpose and objectives of the tour. They are followed by the recommendations emerging from the tour and which the team would regard as immediate priorities that must be taken forward to begin to shift the status quo and reduce the high levels of poverty experienced by the majority of disabled people in South Africa

The purpose of the tour was to investigate and deepen our understanding of various programmes and initiatives in place which in different ways operate to support the creation of greater employment opportunities for disabled people in the two countries. In the United Kingdom, while this overarching objective was common to all the places we visited and people we met, we were exposed to a range of different organizations and interventions – from direct government services and funded initiatives to a self-sustaining employers' organization that works towards improved employment practices for disabled employees and customers. In Spain we spent two days with ONCE<sup>2</sup>, the seventy year old Spanish Organisation of the Blind and arguably the central role player in that country in the creation of employment opportunities for disabled people. Of particular importance to this visit was our exposure to a number of the companies owned and run by ONCE which generate value for their shareholders in a number of different industrial sectors and promote the integration of disabled people into the labour market.

While differences were apparent in the two countries and the contexts different to our own in many ways, a central finding which emerged from the entire tour was the dominance of models of practice and cross sectoral partnerships which are collectively orientated to reducing dependency and marginalization through the creation of sustainable and productive work

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<sup>1</sup> A list of the members of the delegation is provided in Appendix A.

<sup>2</sup> Organizacion Nacional de Ciegos Espanoles (ONCE – National Organization of the Spanish Blind)

opportunities for disabled people. Similarly, they are premised on the recognition that direct and indirect intervention is needed to leverage change within the labour market, address the barriers that undermine disabled peoples' participation and provide ongoing support to sustain the change processes. In a context such as our own, taken the severe levels of poverty and economic marginalization experienced by the majority of disabled people, such forms of intervention premised on a desire to reduce dependency and stimulate productive economic activity become even more important as priorities for the developmental state.

## **2. Context and background**

The development of a disability policy framework in South Africa over the last fifteen years has introduced new policy imperatives and associated interventions for disabled people. The disability sector and the country have had to implement these, which, taken the nature and depth of past inequalities, have created many challenges. Central to these has been the paradigm shift from understanding and responding to disability as a welfare concern to its location as a development and human rights issue and thus an integral part of the government's transformation and development agenda. This has particular implications for the employment of disabled people, which is recognized as key to their integration into society and to the economic wellbeing of the country as a whole. However, such imperatives can only be achieved through new approaches to employment creation for disabled people and opportunities for sustained skills development to meet this need.

Unfortunately, despite the progressive intentions of the new policy framework, the employment equity quota of 2% in the public sector and the registration of employment equity programmes by larger employers in the private sector have not succeeded in increasing the number of disabled people in employment significantly. An important contributing factor is that at least 70% of disabled people in the country are unskilled, while the SETAs have fallen far short of allocating 4% of learnerships to disabled people as provided for in the National Skills Development Strategy (YEAR).

The Thabo Mbeki Development Trust for Disabled People (TMDT)<sup>3</sup> and Disability Empowerment Concerns (DEC), including Disabled People South Africa (DPSA) are continuously seeking new

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<sup>3</sup> Thabo Mbeki Development Trust for Disabled People and the disability sector organised in South Africa are involved in programmes that are geared to increase the economic participation and provide social services for disabled people. These are provided through programmes such as :

- Protective or sheltered workshops and self help centres through Poverty Alleviation Programmes, Income Generation and Co-operatives Schemes
- Assistive Devices for Employed Disabled People

models of intervention that will be able to address these concerns and change the status quo. The study tour reported on here takes forward specific recommendations made in a 2005 DEC report, "Employment Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities. It was recommended here that the TMDT should focus its attention on initiatives towards skills development and the employment of disabled people, and building further knowledge on international models of intervention and capturing the insights of disabled individuals involved in these initiatives was a necessary and important part of this focus. To this end, the Department of Labour, which includes among its key competencies, employment creation and associated skills development for disabled people, was approached to support a study tour to the UK and Spain. These two countries were chosen because they have particularly innovative and exciting initiatives already in place from which much could be learned.

At the time of undertaking the tour the following policy and legislative provisions in place in South Africa were regarded as especially important in informing the focus and intentions of the tour.

- ▶ The South African policy and legislative framework
  - The non-discrimination provisions of the Constitution and associated equality legislation, especially those provisions in the latter that speak to equitable access for disabled people to job creation initiatives and the integration of disability into the state's development agenda
  - The imperatives of equity and redress provided for in the Constitution and associated pieces of legislation which provide for specific measures to redress inequalities in different sectors (e.g. The Employment Equity Act).
- ▶ The United Nation's Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
  - The South African government's ratification of the Convention which imposes legal obligations on states to provide, among other things,
  - The importance that the Convention places on the creation of equal opportunities, non-discrimination and state responsibilities such as reasonable

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- Employment Services Programmes
  - Skills Development and Capacity Building Schemes
  - Advocacy, Awareness and Policy Development Programmes

accommodation in the promotion and protection of the rights outlined in the Convention.

### **3. Brief overview of visit**

#### **3.1 United Kingdom**

In considering the context in which the organizations we visited operate, two factors appeared to be especially important in influencing their work and the lives of disabled people in the UK. Firstly, following the promulgation of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) in 1995 and the addition of further amendments in 2005, a strong anti-discrimination legislative framework is now in place to protect disabled people from discrimination and promote equal opportunities, including in the workplace. Secondly, the legislative framework is supported by a wide-range of social welfare provisions which appear to be extremely important in the lives of disabled people and their ability to participate equitably in society. In addition to specific disability related benefits, assistance is also available in the event of unemployment, or any other areas of need covered by the social security net.

While this comprehensive social security system still appears to be very important, especially in the context of the global economic recession, the emphasis under the New Labour Government in the UK has been on facilitating movement, through a comprehensive range of measures, of people dependent on social security benefits into sustainable employment. Disabled people have been one of the main groups of citizens targeted to benefit from these initiatives – captured as the “New Deal for Disabled People”<sup>4</sup>. From an employment perspective, the emphasis is on bringing about changes in the open labour market and creating opportunities for viable economic activity. This approach was captured in a number of the policy documents we came across, both in and outside government.

However, despite these important initiatives and evidence that the employment situation for disabled people is changing, we were constantly made aware that important barriers still remain. Many of these appear to be at the attitudinal level and confronting the legacy of a strong, ‘medical’ and ‘social welfare’ approach to disability, where disabled people are seen as individuals in need of care rather than productive citizens. The creation of equal employment opportunities for disabled people and their active participation in viable economic activity is recognized as an ongoing struggle requiring sustained attention.

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<sup>4</sup> Reference

The United Kingdom has also ratified the United Nation's Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2007) and is part of the European Union where some collaboration in this area is evident.

The tour began with a visit to the Employer's Forum on Disability, an employers' organization that works towards the equalization of employment opportunities for disabled people by assisting employers to employ disabled people and improve services to disabled customers. They presently have a membership of 400 major employers representing approximately 10% of the UK workforce and making them the world's largest employer's organization working towards these objectives. We then moved on to REMPLOY, who describe themselves as "an essential social business and the UK's leading provider of sustainable employment opportunities for disabled people and those experiencing complex barriers to work"<sup>5</sup>. At the moment they are funded through a government grant from the Department of Works and Pensions (DWP) which is in place until 2013. There are two interdependent arms to the organization, what are described as employment services and business enterprises. One of the most important companies that they have been working with over the last few years, and the next place we visited, is Royal Mail, the UK's postal services, operating in a similar way to a parastatal. The processes and initiatives that have taken place in Royal Mail over the last few years towards improving the recruitment and employment of disabled people is seen as a successful model that can be reproduced in other companies and across other sectors. We then went on to visit the Access to Work Programme, a programme of the DWP that supports, through a range of measures, including reasonable accommodation, the integration of disabled people into the workforce. The programme is implemented according to a decentralized model of operation through the local "Job Centres" scattered throughout the UK that provide unemployment assistance. We then went on to meet directly with the officials in the DWP who are responsible for the disability related employment programmes and to hear about the strategic framework that guides these programmes and initiatives. Finally, on the last day of the tour we met with SERCO, a private company that is contracted by the government to provide services to support the movement of people dependent on social security benefits into sustainable employment – what they refer to as "Welfare to Work". Their services include those targeting disabled people.

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<sup>5</sup> Reference

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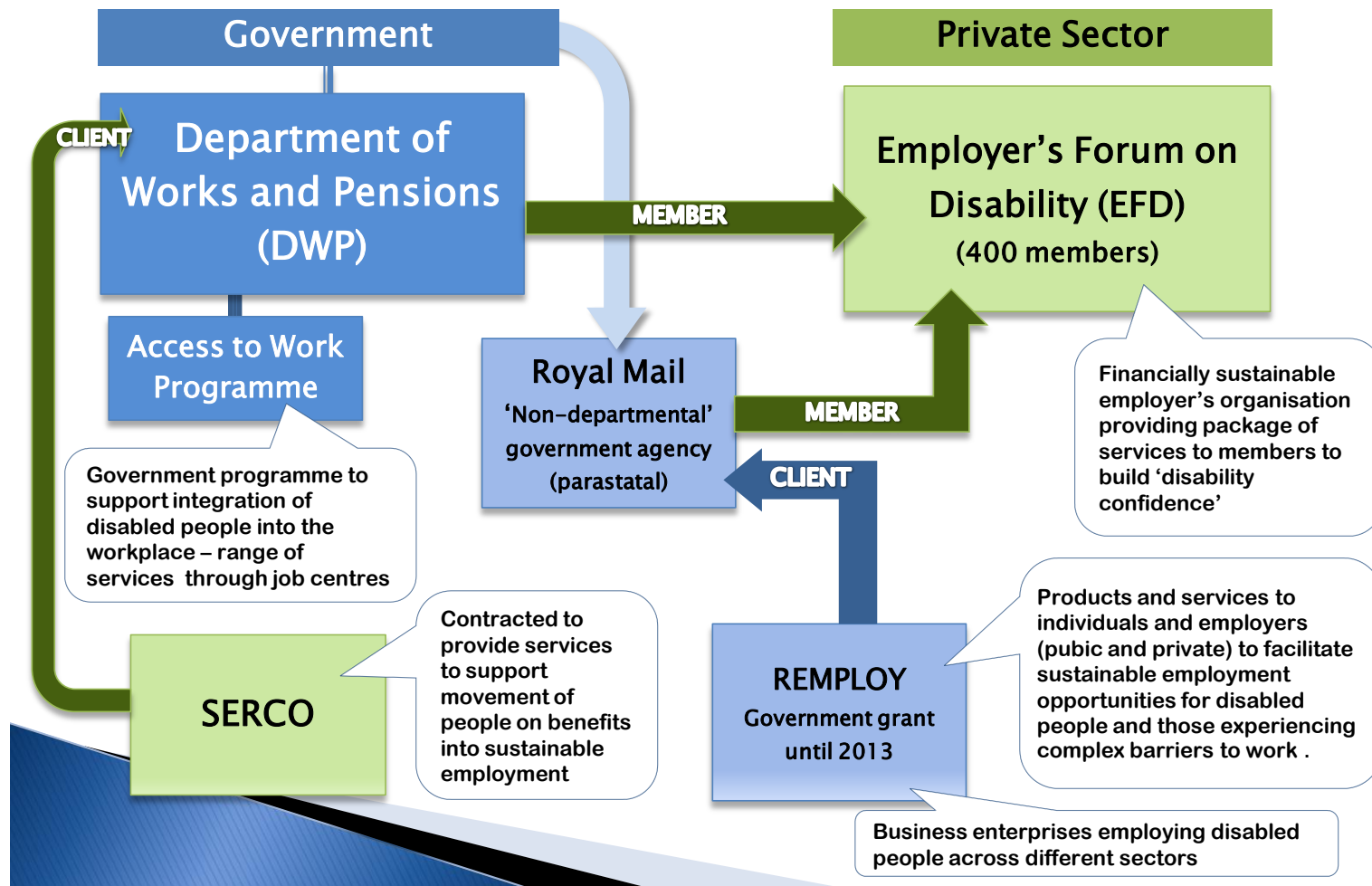
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The diagram that follows provides a bird's eye view of the organisations and programmes visited<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> A more detailed overview of the study tour programme and organisations visited is provided in Appendix B.

# UK Study Tour



### 3.2 Spain

The study tour to Spain was focused on meeting with ONCE, the Spanish Organisation of the Blind, a central role player in the disability movement in the country. They have a very interesting history as they were started in 1938 under the regime of General Franco making the organization seventy years old, with a strong presence in Spanish society and in the international disability rights movement. While it was initially started to address the needs of blind people, in 1988 the ONCE Foundation was created “to channel the co-operation and solidarity of the blind towards other disabled groups and to help improve their day-to-day lives”<sup>7</sup>. The ONCE Foundation now forms an additional organizational arm of ONCE and sees as its main priority as the creation of sustainable employment opportunities for disabled people.

One of the most interesting elements to ONCE is the historical concession which it secured from the State for a national lottery. This concession, which the organization has managed to retain until today, involves the generation of income by ONCE from managing and running a national lottery. In return for this concession from the state they provide all benefits, services and programmes for blind people in Spain. 90% of the income generated through the lottery goes back into the organization to fund their services and manage their business operations.

The latter element to ONCE’s functioning was perhaps the most interesting and valuable for the South African delegates. A key feature of ONCE’s work has been the building up of a range of corporate holdings in different sectors of the Spanish economy. In 1993 the management of these business entities were brought together under a “specialized executive area” called Corporacion Empresarial ONCE S.A or CEOSA. The organization sees the objective of CEOSA as “the sustained and long-term generation of value for the shareholder, through the development of profitable companies that allow it to focus on the rendering of social services and also contribute towards the integration of the ONCE’s members in the job market and the creation of employment for other disabled groups, in a firm bid for social profitability”<sup>8</sup>. A similar structure is in place to take forward the companies set up by the ONCE Foundation as part of its Training and Employment Plan. Together these companies linked to ONCE operate in a range of different sectors of the Spanish economy with new opportunities also being initiated within the broader European economic community. They employ both disabled and non-disabled people.

During the visit we were able to meet with the leadership of all these organizational divisions and to visit some of the companies. These provided real insights into an approach which is premised on the value that disabled people can offer to a country’s economic development and

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<sup>7</sup> <http://www.once.es>

<sup>8</sup> Ibid

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on the competitive potential of companies that employ disabled people. Similarly, it reflects a partnership model between government and organisations of disabled people that contributes to equalising opportunities and economic development.

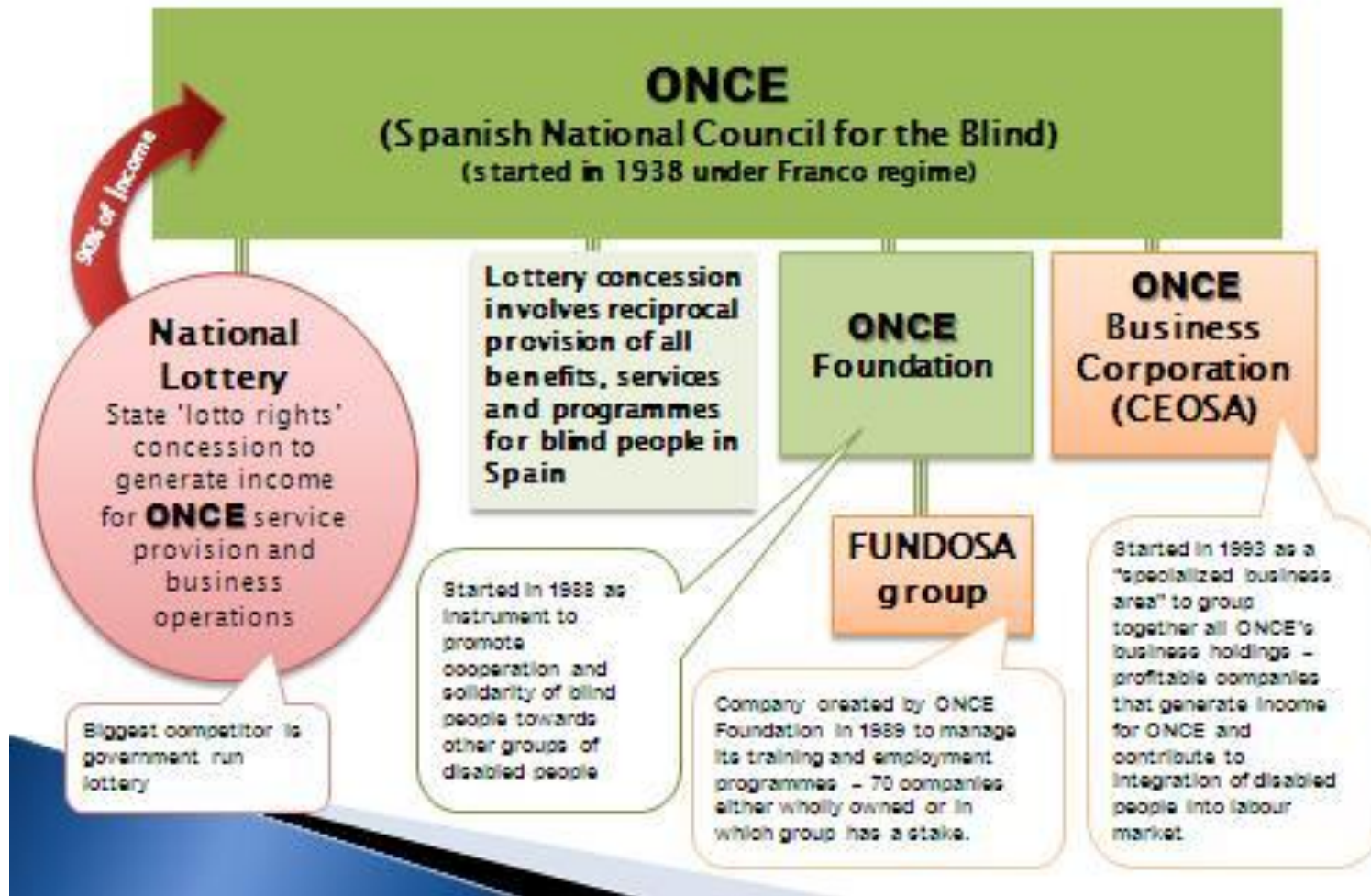
Once again, while there are many exciting and innovative initiatives taking place which we were privileged to see, we were also made aware of the myriad of barriers which disabled people continue to experience in the workplace and within the broader society. While, as was the case in the UK, a broad anti-discrimination legislative framework is in place, Spain has also ratified the United Nation's Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and disabled citizens are supported by a comprehensive social security system, it is recognized that much still needs to be done to equalize opportunities.

The diagram that follows captures the organizational structures and roles described above<sup>9</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> A more detailed overview of the study tour programme and organisations visited is provided in Appendix B.

# Spain Study Tour



## **4. Insights gained for South Africa**

The discussion that follows captures those findings and insights that may be regarded as having most relevance for South Africa. It is important to note, however, that these findings and insights are premised on the recognition that South Africa already has a strong legislative and policy framework in place to protect disabled people and implement measures to redress past inequalities. This holds true in the area of employment where, as already noted in Section 1, a strong policy and legislative framework is in place to prevent discrimination and promote equal opportunities. What was especially evident, however, in the countries visited, is that a progressive policy and legislative framework has very little meaning for disabled people if it is not strongly supported by designated responsibilities as well as active and sustained measures aimed at translating policy imperatives into practice. To this end the insights captured below aim to draw attention to the strategies, programmes, initiatives and organizational structures in place to create equitable and sustainable employment opportunities for disabled people.

### **4.1 Building and strengthening the business case for increased diversity in the workplace**

It was very clear from the organizations and programmes visited that all the interventions aimed at improving employment opportunities for disabled people are premised on a “moving beyond compliance” model or, put another way, moving beyond an approach which, as one colleague in the United Kingdom put it, views the equalization of opportunities as essentially being about dealing with “bad employers” and “underskilled disabled people”. It was consistently argued and demonstrated to us in both countries that the overarching intention is to develop and promote a business case for increased diversity in the workplace which would include the employment of disabled people. It would appear that two issues have been especially important to strengthening the arguments underpinning such an approach. The first, has to do with a growing recognition, in both the public and private sectors, of the changing nature of work within a globalised, knowledge driven world order and an associated need for greater flexibility in organizational forms and workplace practices. Such changes signaled a greater awareness and interest by employers of the value that a more diverse workforce can add to the success of their business. Similarly, employers appear to be recognising the growing value of more flexible workplace practices around time, physical location and dissemination of information - practices that are increasingly made possible through developments in ICT and which often extremely beneficial for people with mobility impairments or requiring high levels of sustained support. These arguments were then obviously linked to the associated benefits of increasingly diversified workforce for the economic benefit of the country as a whole, especially in areas of scarce skill and where large groups within the population, such as disabled people,

have been excluded from sustainable work opportunities and therefore strongly dependent on social welfare benefits and associated state support.

In the UK it would appear that these arguments together with the “new deal” approach of the government mentioned earlier has contributed to the move away from a quota system for the employment of disabled people – a statutory obligation done away with in the UK in 2000. In the UK and increasingly in other European countries with extensive social security benefits in place, the move away from quotas appears to be the trend. While it may be premature in a developing context such as ours, with high unemployment and severe resource constraints where the most marginalized are especially vulnerable, to move away from quotas and targets, the insights gained from the visit do suggest that more focused attention needs to be given to building awareness around the value of diversity in the workplace and as central to a trajectory of economic development.

#### **4.2 A holistic, integrated and collaborative approach to increasing access to employment for disabled people**

Throughout the visit we were consistently reminded and made aware of the necessity of responding to the employment of disabled people in a holistic and integrated way. From a government perspective, and a finding that emerged particularly from the visit to the United Kingdom, this means that successful government initiatives to promote employment opportunities for disabled people are strongly dependent on intersectoral collaboration across government divisions of responsibility and supported partnerships between different role players. We were able to see such collaboration in practice and to recognise how important it was to successful government employment initiatives and thus to address past inequalities. Closely linked to the value of intersectoral collaboration and viable partnerships was the centrality of accessible public transport to sustainable employment opportunities for disabled people in both countries. Put simply, the existence of a safe, accessible, reliable and affordable public transport system is critical to the success of any initiatives which aim to link disabled people with employment opportunities, support their integration into the workplace and continue to build their skills and experience, and thus their capacity to remain gainfully employed. The initiatives which we visited would not have achieved the successes that they have in the absence of the public transport systems both countries presently have in place.

#### **4.3 Government supported initiatives to facilitate entry into the open labour market (employment services)**

Perhaps the most valuable aspect of our visit to the United Kingdom was the exposure we got and discussions we participated in around the various government initiatives that are in place to proactively support the integration of disabled people into the open labour market. In Spain, we were made aware of a similar array of programmes and services provided for by ONCE. Looking collectively at the two countries the following stand out as key activities, services or strategic interventions that are presently in place or are being pursued that appeared to be especially important.

- *Skills development and vocational training programmes and interventions for adults with disabilities (including graduates) and school leavers orientated to sustainable employment through the development of work-place knowledge and life skills.* It is important to note here that the training initiatives we were exposed to appeared to be orientated to adding further value to general education and training provision already in place. There appeared to be a strong emphasis therefore on re-skilling to adapt to more sustainable employment opportunities, orientation to work place conditions and the requirements of sustaining a job, including personal skills such as time management etc. Of the programmes we visited there was a strong emphasis on orientating training to the needs of the workplace (such as specific job related skills, as well as the needs of an individual disabled person (involving for example, assessment of previous experience, levels of skill, talents and interests etc). This differs strongly from an approach orientated to the provision of various generic skills for a 'particular kind of disability'.
- *Reasonable accommodation* – It is recognized that reasonable accommodation is central to the successful employment of disabled people and key to creating the conditions necessary for them to perform to their full potential. However, like South Africa, the costs (actual and perceived) associated with necessary adjustments are often used as a basis to exclude disabled people and justify ongoing discrimination. In the UK, in particular, financial assistance from government is in place to support employers and to reduce the burden of cost on the employer and the disabled person. While this acts as an important incentive towards employing disabled people, it would seem that reciprocal responsibility is promoted, often through the sharing of the costs of any adjustments by the employer and by government. In both the UK and Spain, with the latter happening through ONCE, services offered include technical assistance and advice.

- *Career advice and placement services*-services are also in place which link disabled people with employment opportunities and support employers in finding and employing suitably qualified disabled people. The provision of such services is seen as especially important in overcoming employer prejudices and redressing distortions in the job market that keep disabled people out. It was especially interesting to note in the UK how these services may be undertaken by service providers contracted by government. However, once again, as with the training services discussed above, specialist knowledge provided to employers and disabled people is linked to the nature of the work (for example, specialist knowledge of a specific employment sector and associated barriers for disabled people) rather than the nature of the person's disability.
- *Piloting and integration into national initiatives* - in addition to the kinds of services and interventions discussed above, a strong emphasis was placed on the use of piloting, for later system wide application. It was argued that piloting of initiatives, where opportunities are built in for reflection and adaptation, provide extremely valuable ways of challenging prejudices, raising awareness and testing the appropriateness and viability of various strategies and practices. Closely linked to this was a recognised need to consistently integrate disability into national initiatives where employment creation played a key part. This was most obvious in the UK where the employment of disabled able is a key feature of the development that is taking place towards the 2012 London Olympics.
- *Decentralised models of operation* – one of the most important features of the initiatives which we were exposed to in the United Kingdom was the dominance of a decentralized approach to the organization and delivery of the services offered or programmes in place. It was clear that the intention was to both facilitate access at the local level for disabled people and, equally importantly, to influence the local employment environment and create sustainable employment opportunities for disabled people in or near their local communities. This dominant model of service delivery for disabled people mirrors other local government services in the United Kingdom and are thus intended to form an integral part of the suite of employment services across the country that are aimed at reducing dependency on the social welfare system and supporting people into gainful employment.

#### **4.4 An Employer's Forum on Disability**

As already described, the tour included a visit to the Employer's Forum on Disability in the United Kingdom. It was clear from this visit and subsequent discussions on the tour that the forum has been an extremely successful initiative impacting on employers in both the private and public sectors. Of central importance has been the impact which it has been able to make on challenging perceptions, creating awareness and building a business case for employing disabled people. While, as already described, the latter appears to be key to moving away from a compliance only model, what is equally important is the emphasis that is created through the forum on employer responsibility in equalizing opportunities. Through its reliance on membership fees, the forum provides a sustainable model of support for the business community, from multinationals to SMMEs, through education, specialized information, sharing of 'good practice', networking and incentives. It was apparent that the forum had recognized the value of attracting large scale businesses, especially multinational corporations, and worked towards this as a key strategy. It was argued that drawing key sector players into the forum had a direct impact on the market place when the "best practices" of these companies started to influence employment practices across the sector and gave them a competitive edge which other companies within the sector came to recognize and emulate. It is important to note here that similar sentiments were echoed by ONCE around their movement into the broader European economy. They argued that they had been able to reproduce the 'good practices' of their Spanish companies into newly established divisions in other parts of Europe and in parts of Spanish speaking South America as well. These practices in turn influenced broader employment practices in these other countries.

#### **4.5 Rethinking the role and functioning of 'sheltered workshops' – supporting the development of viable business enterprises**

It also became clear to the team that in both the UK and Spain there has been a strong paradigm shift away from 'protected employment' enterprises such as 'sheltered workshops' sustained through the social welfare net. The emphasis has moved to support the start up of viable, profitable businesses that are able to compete in the mainstream economy. This was especially evident in ONCE's companies in Spain which operate in a range of sectors across the company, and, in some of them appear to be leading players in the sector. Similarly, they offer employment to disabled and non-disabled people and thus create employment opportunities beyond the disability community. Profits generated from these enterprises go back into the development of the business and into ONCE to support its other services and ventures. At the time of the visit we noted that in operation were business enterprises that were still strongly dependent on support from ONCE and others that now operated as independent, self-

sustaining enterprises. We were also made aware that employment practices in all of such business ventures were fully compliant with existing labour legislation and the workers in these businesses therefore enjoyed the same conditions of employment and protection from exploitation as any other citizen.

In the UK it was clear that a similar approach is in place with, for example, a number of 'REMPLOY factories' operating in different sectors. It is important to note here that government support in the UK and ONCE support in Spain includes direct and indirect support through start-up funds, management expertise, preferential procurement policies around public sector contracts and initiatives to open up and stimulate market opportunities for the business enterprises. This emphasis on moving away from employment ventures for disabled people that are completely dependent on social welfare support parallels the intentions discussed above towards building a business case for increased diversity in the workplace. Put simply, it reflects a critical step away from dependency on the social welfare system and towards the building of sustainable employment opportunities for disabled people.

#### **4.6 Research and development through partnerships involving disability sector, government and higher education institutions**

Throughout our discussions with the colleagues at ONCE and the associated visits to their business enterprises our attention was drawn to the emphasis that is placed on research and development as key to their endeavours and a fundamental element of their business philosophy. It was argued that while this focus was not only necessary to remain competitive and in touch with market trends, it was critical to the creation of a barrier free and inclusive society. All the successful business enterprises we visited had strong research and development divisions in place which are involved in research and innovation towards improving their products and services and deepening their knowledge about new opportunities. In a number of cases these divisions are involved in funded research and innovative partnerships between the government, other businesses in areas of common concern and with various universities. We were also made aware of partnerships in place between ONCE and Spanish universities to integrate disability concerns into undergraduate and post-graduate academic programmes. Closely linked to the latter were initiatives in place to facilitate employment opportunities for disabled graduates.

#### **4.7 Monitoring and benchmarking good practice**

In addition to the research and development focus that was apparent, we were aware in both the United Kingdom and Spain that emphasis is also placed on sharing of 'good practice' across business sectors and benchmarking towards greater excellence and ongoing improvement. The Employers Forum on Disability is centrally involved in facilitating such collaboration especially between companies working in the same sector and in the development of monitoring and evaluation frameworks to facilitate self-assessment and improve practice. It was also apparent that the emphasis on ongoing monitoring and evaluation was central to the functioning and implementation of the various government supported initiatives we were exposed to in the United Kingdom, ranging from once-off surveys and evaluations to feed-back mechanisms such as call-centres. Another key feature of this emphasis on monitoring and evaluation was the role of disabled peoples' organizations as recognized partners with government in sustained attempts to improve services and ensure relevance. It is also important to note that various European Union policies and the United Nation's Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities provide strong frameworks that are used to guide practice and monitor progress.

### **5. Recommendations and Conclusions**

#### **5.1 A comprehensive and integrated package of government employment services**

As outlined in the previous section, possibly the most important finding of the study tour, especially in the United Kingdom, was the importance and value of government measures established to promote sustainable employment opportunities for disabled people. Such measures are critical to reducing dependency on the social welfare system and to promoting the integration of disabled people into the labour force. Similar measures could bring with them a range of benefits for the economic development of our country and help to redress past inequalities, including attitudinal barriers and prejudices. While it may be argued that the highly industrialized context of the United Kingdom creates a very different environment to our own, the importance of reducing dependency and creating sustainable employment opportunities, becomes even more important in our own context with limited resources and competing priorities. With this imperative in mind the following are recommended as minimum steps that must be taken towards a paradigm shift away from the status quo and to reduce the high levels of poverty experienced by the majority of disabled people in South Africa.

## **5.2 Establishment of a government supported agency responsible for the co-ordination and delivery of employment services**

It is recommended that immediate steps be taken to set up a government supported agency which would be responsible for the development, co-ordination and implementation of a suite of integrated employment services aimed at integrating disabled people into the labour market and creating opportunities for sustainable income generation and productivity. As part of the process towards the setting up of such an agency, it is further recommended that colleagues from relevant government departments, led by the Department of Labour, undertake follow up visits to the United Kingdom and ONCE in Spain to investigate in depth the organizational structures and types of services in place there and to reflect on the operationalisation of similar provisions in South Africa. Arising from the study tour, the following are regarded as especially important considerations or services that ought to inform the setting up of the agency and which would be essential to its operations:

- **A decentralized, integrated model of service delivery** that provides a framework for the provision of all services and programmes at local level and which is sufficiently comprehensive to ensure that work opportunities and income generating initiatives are created and sustained for disabled people in their local communities;
- The assumption of government responsibility, including financial support and incentives, to ensure that **reasonable accommodation in the workplace** is implemented and becomes an integral part of employment practice, thereby equalizing opportunities;
- The provision of services and programmes which aim to **build the capacity of disabled people** to sustain employment and which are orientated to building **workplace skills and knowledge** through vocational rehabilitation, skills development and learnership training;
- The provision of services and programmes that proactively seek to **work with employers to open up opportunities** for disabled people, including the development of specialist knowledge of different sectors, and to **link disabled people with job opportunities** (including job matching and the ring fencing of specific jobs) through recruitment and placement services;
- A comprehensive programme to support **SMME development** and facilitate the **transformation of existing sheltered and protective workshops as well as self help centers** into viable business enterprises;

- The development of a **preferential procurement policy and the ‘ring fencing’ of certain products and services** required by government and associated public sector entities to stimulate disability enterprise development; **and**
- Ongoing engagement and collaboration with **broader areas of service delivery**, such as transport, health services and social security to ensure that such services are able to support the employment measures that are implemented.

### **5.3 A sustainable revenue base**

The above initiatives and others aimed at fundamentally transforming the employment situation for disabled people and equalizing opportunities are strongly dependent on dedicated, sustainable resources to give real meaning to government commitments and state responsibilities. To this end it is recommended that immediate attention be given to establishing a dedicated resource base to fund the initiatives recommended in this report. Bearing in mind the level of redress that is required and acknowledging that overcoming physical and attitudinal barriers in the workplace is something that will require long-term support it is strongly recommended that attention is given to the development of a funding framework that is able to consistently generate funds and attract new sources of income. In this regard it is suggested that consideration be given to the establishment of a “Disability Fund” that can be used to comprehensively fund all economic development initiatives aimed at disabled people across government and leverage change in areas where the greatest barriers exist, such as in the public transport system. The earmarking of a percentage of national lottery funds for disability would yield significant additional funding for the sector without putting new demands on the fiscus. Similar systems are applied in Scandinavian countries to great effect. Such a system was envisaged in the Integrated National Disability Strategy (INDS) adopted by government in the 1990’s but never implemented.

### **5.4 A government supported Employer’s Forum on Disability**

This report has emphasized the enormous value that the Employer’s Forum on Disability has for disabled people in the United Kingdom and the impact that it has had on changing the ethos in the workplace and in building employer confidence in employing disabled people. It is therefore recommended that government play its full part as employer by participating on an equal basis in the recently established SA Employer’s Forum for Disability. It is further recommended that a similar model is used for the Forum as is presently in place in the UK so that it becomes a self-sustaining entity, accountable to its members and not dependent on government resources.

### **5.5 Promotion of research and development**

It is recommended that greater attention is given by government to building partnerships involving government, the private sector, organisations of disabled people, higher education institutions, and the international donor community to promote research and encourage entrepreneurial thinking around disability in South Africa, especially towards improving in service delivery and breaking down barriers that restrict participation. This must include the integration of disability into key research and development initiatives already under way within the country and the targeting of funds to stimulate research partnerships and knowledge creation in this area.

### **5.6 Benchmarking**

Disabled persons in the UK and Spain benefit from quality services that are professional and highly efficient in their operation. Government is urged to promote the benchmarking of services and programmes in South Africa in terms of international standards.

### **5.7 Conclusions**

In order to translate the information and findings in this report into practical action, the following next steps are proposed:

- i) Presentation of the study tour report to the Minister of Labour in person;
- ii) Sharing of the study tour report with all relevant government departments and selected SETAs; and
- iii) Convening of a joint workshop of government and the disability sector to deliberate on the key findings and recommendations of this report and to agree on measures for the remodeling and transformation of the employment services of government and the establishment of a comprehensive employment strategy inclusive of government, disabled people's organisations and employers in key sectors of the economy.

## **6. Acknowledgements**

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We are indebted to several individuals and authorities, companies and organizations for sponsorship and logistical support given to the study visit to the UK and Spain of the TMDT delegation.

During the tour we were generously received everywhere and received gracious hospitality from our hosts. Below are recorded our primary acknowledgements at home and abroad.

## **A. South Africa**

- The Honourable Minister of Labour: Membathisi Mdladlana
- Deputy Director General – Department of Labour: Sam Morotoba
- Executive Manager- National Skills Fund – Department of Labour: Eubert Mashabane
- W&RSETA: Joel Dikgole, CEO; Dr. Hennie Zwarts, COO and W&RSETA Board
- Thabo Mbeki Development Trust for Disabled People: Thulani Tshabalala – CEO, Dr William Rowland, Portia Loyilane – TMDT Chairperson and TMDT Board of Trustees
- Disabled People South Africa: Mzolisi Ka Toni – Executive Director
- Disability Empowerment Concerns: Mike Du Toit – CEO; Versha Rowjee – Investment Executive and South African Employer Forum Representative
- Disability Expert- Dr Colleen Howell
- The Personnel Attendants that supported the disabled delegates

## **B. United Kingdom**

- UK Employers' Forum on Disability: Susan Scott-Parker, Chief Executive
- Remploy: Beth Carruthers, Director of Employment Services; Stephen Dunn, Head of Strategic Partnerships; Karen Ferguson, Sales Executive
- Royal Mail: David Vaughan – Head of Diversity & Inclusion; Kate Farrell - Disability Programme Manager
- Access to Work: Basil Rodrigues – External Relations Manager
- Serco: Richard Johnson - Managing Director Serco Welfare to Work
- Department of Work and Pensions: Brian Parfett – Policy Advisor

**C. ONCE**

- ONCE: Enrique Perez – Official host to delegation and programme facilitator ; Rafael González Millán – Executive Director International Relations
- ONCE Foundation: Pepa Torres - Director of Vocational Training and Employment,
- FSC INSERTA: Francisco Botía, General Director; Ana Pilar Cruz, Programs Director
- Via Libre: Almudena Gómez García - Assistant General Director
- Private interpreter

# Appendix A

## TMDT Delegation to the UK and Spain

Thulani Tshabalala	-	CEO of Thabo Mbeki Development Trust
Dr William Rowland	-	Public Relations and Fund Mobilisation Manager and Tour Coordinator
Portia Loyilane	-	Chairperson of Thabo Mbeki Development Trust
Mzolisi Ka Toni	-	TMDT Trustee and CEO of Disabled People South Africa
Mike du Toit	-	TMDT Trustee and CEO of Disability Empowerment Concerns
Versha Rowjee	-	TMDT Trustee and Executive Director Investments for Disability Empowerment Concerns
Dr Hennie Zwarts	-	COO of Wholesale and Retail SETA
Dr Colleen Howell	-	Report Writer and academic at University of the Western Cape

# Appendix B

## Overview of Programme in the UK and Spain

### Wednesday, 23 September

#### **Employers' Forum on Disability (EFD)**

EFD is the world's leading employers' organisation focused on disability as it affects business. It has a membership of 400 major employers in the public and private sectors in the UK. Its mission is to enable companies to become “disability confident” by making it easier to recruit and retain disabled employees and to serve disabled customers. Regular self-assessment by employers enables them to comply with the “disability standard”.

Website: <http://www.efd.org.uk/>

#### **Remploy**

Remploy provides a wide range of world class products and services through its extensive factory network across the UK. From protective clothing for emergency services and military personnel to components for leading car manufacturers. Public bodies can make use of public contract regulations to restrict the tendering process for goods or services to supported businesses only.

Website: <http://www.remploy.co.uk>

### Thursday, 24 September

#### **Royal Mail**

Royal Mail has introduced an innovative and effective recruitment programme for disabled job applicants. The programme provides support to both Royal Mail managers and disabled employees and has been developed in partnership with Remploy and Jobcentre Plus. More than 200 disabled people have been recruited using this model and occupy a variety of positions throughout the company.

Website: <http://www.royalmail.com>

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### **Access to Work**

The Access to Work programme provides disabled people with the funds to pay for any adjustments that may be necessary, to enable them to either gain or remain in employment. This covers a wide range of equipment, adaptations to premises, support workers at places of employment, and assistance with transport.

Website:

[http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/DisabledPeople/Employmentsupport/WorkSchemesAndProgrammes/DG\\_4000347](http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/DisabledPeople/Employmentsupport/WorkSchemesAndProgrammes/DG_4000347)

### **Friday, 25 September**

#### **Serco**

Serco has recently been awarded a number of Welfare to Work contracts by the UK government, these are to be phased in as from October 2009 and are intended to enable disabled persons, dependant on government grants, to obtain independent employment.

Website: <http://www.serco.com>

#### **Department of Work and Pensions**

The Department of Work and Pensions is the biggest public service delivery department in the UK and serves over 20 million customers. DWP are responsible for administration and delivery of the government's Welfare to Work programme and a variety of grants are available to disabled persons to meet their needs, ranging from social allowances to personal mobility support.

Website: <http://www.dwp.gov.uk>

### **Monday, 28 September**

#### **Organizacion Nacional de Ciegos Espanoles (ONCE – National Organization of the Spanish Blind): *Introduction to ONCE, ONCE Foundation, and CEOSA (ONCE's group of business enterprises)***

ONCE is the world leader in job creation for persons with disabilities. Its network of business enterprises employs an integrated workforce of tens thousands of disabled and non-disabled workers in a variety of commercial companies encompassing:

- Computing services and technology;
- Insurance and reassurance;

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- Human resource management;
- Security services;
- Food processing;
- Waste disposal;
- Publishing;
- Laundries;
- Textiles;
- Orthopedic manufacture;
- Home-help for the elderly;
- Telemarketing; and
- E-business.

## ***Visit to ONCE Foundation and FSC INSERTA.***

ONCE Foundation: General information on mission, aims and goals, action programs and results obtained, likewise information concerning the Spanish legal context related to the employment of persons with disabilities.

Website: [www.fundaciononce.es](http://www.fundaciononce.es)

FSC INSERTA: Activity of mediation services and itineraries of labour integration, disabled and non-disabled workers.

Website: [www.fsc-inserta.es](http://www.fsc-inserta.es) and [www.portalento.es](http://www.portalento.es)

## **Visit to “VIA LIBRE” (Free Way)**

Enterprise and Technical Aids exhibition shop. Information on employment creation, technical aids and elimination of barriers.

## **Tuesday, 29 September**

Visit to **Technosite** and the technological exhibition for persons with disabilities.

## **Visit to Industrial Laundry FLISA.**

An industrial laundry employing a mixed labour force of disabled and non-disabled workers most notably workers with intellectual disabilities. The enterprise has clients in various parts of Spain, particularly in the hotel sector.

## **Farewell Luncheon**

Final briefings, questions and answers, and exchange of information between ONCE and TMDT