

# ANNEXURE D

## Summary of Correspondence\*

### Orientation and Mobility (section V – staff provisioning)

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- + **November 2013:** The O&M Action Group wrote to the NDBE to request a meeting. This letter also detailed the benefits of orientation and mobility instruction and the O&M Action Group's concerns regarding the need for provision by the state of such training for learners with visual impairments. No substantive response was received to this letter or a follow up letter sent by the O&M Action Group on 28 November 2013.
- + **June 2014:** SECTION27 addressed a letter to the NDBE, again requesting a meeting and repeating the Orientation and Mobility Action Group's concerns. This letter stated firmly that orientation and mobility training forms part of the right to basic education, and "this training allows learners to realise their full potential, thus achieving the object of basic education". No substantive response was received to either this letter or a follow up letter sent later in June 2014.
- + **August 2014:** In a meeting between the O&M Action Group and Dr Moses Simelane, the National Director of Inclusive Education within the Department of Basic Education, Dr Simelane acknowledged the importance of O&M instruction, but indicated the Department was unable to employ O&M practitioners until they are registered with the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA). An application was made for the registration of registration of orientation and mobility practitioners by the Orientation and Mobility Association of South Africa (OMASA) as early as 27 October 2013.
- + **March 2015:** on the direction of the President of the Republic of South Africa, South Africa SABA, SANCB and SECTION27 met with the Minister of Social Development and other senior officials within the Department of Social Development. Department officials acknowledged the dearth of Orientation and Mobility instructors in South Africa and the failure of the government to employ them upon qualification. However, it is of concern that during this meeting a senior member of the Department of Social Development incorrectly suggested that that "auxiliary social workers" could act as Orientation and Mobility practitioners with little training.
- + **March – May 2015:** Given Dr Simelane's suggestion that orientation and mobility practitioners could only properly be employed by the Department of Education if the profession was registered with the HPCSA, several attempts were made by OMASA and the O&M Action Group to follow up with the HPCSA with regard to this process. Despite multiple attempts, a response was only received on 6 May 2015. The HPCSA noted that the application needed to be viewed by the other boards that fall under the HPCSA to ensure that there was no overlapping of scope. The Chairperson of OMASA's executive committee then wrote to the HPCSA to ask for a timeframe for this process. A representative of the Council then requested a meeting with OMASA's Chair and the Deputy Head of the College of Orientation and Mobility.
- + **June 2015:** In a meeting between OMASA and the O&M Action Group and the HPCSA, the HPCSA committed to completing the registration process of O&M practitioners by the end of 2015.
- + Braille training for educators (section VI – Inadequate Training of Teachers)
- + **September 2012:** The Department of Arts and Culture's response to SECTION27's letter dated 26 September 2012 indicated that it had initiated an investigation in partnership with SANCB to investigate, amongst other things, capacity of skilled braille instructors and training in specialised fields of braille education. Despite repeated requests this report has not been provided to SECTION27 by the Department. A draft copy of this report was sent to SECTION27 by the SANCB and is referenced in this report.
- + **October 2012:** The DBE's response dated 22 October 2012 indicated that a "comprehensive study conducted by the DBE in 2009, showed that there were 938 teachers employed at schools for visual impairment" of which "771 had received training in Grade 1 uncontracted Braille and 385 in Grade 2 contracted Braille" and "only 124 had received no training whatsoever".
- + **March 2013:** On March 6 2013, the DBE facilitated a

meeting which was attended by various members of the blind sector. At this meeting an allocation of trainers for grade 1 braille training to take place over “any three days” between 25 March and 17 May 2013 at all 22 schools for the visually impaired was made. The report from this meeting also indicates that this training would be followed up by grade 2 braille training which would amount to 150 hours worth of training per educator over a 12 week period. A report on “Quality Education and Support for Learners with Visual Impairment” presented at the SABA General Assembly on 16 May 2013 details progress on training in both grade 1 and grade 2 Braille. The report notes that it had already ensured the creation of both a facilitators’ and participants’ guide for braille training. The report also describes the March 6 meeting as having established a “national team for the co-ordination of Braille training” to facilitate this process and that – with three exceptions – all schools had provided the department with lists of educators who required braille training. English braille training was to be followed up with training in “Afrikaans and African languages”.

**+ May 2014:** On 30 May 2014, in response to a letter from SECTION27, the Acting Director General of the DBE noted that “the DBE has already embarked on a professional development programme where training teachers in braille is being conducted in collaboration with Provincial Departments of Education (PED) and stakeholder organisations for visual impairment”, and that “the target is to ensure that all teachers in schools for visual impairment will be fully proficient in Braille by March 2015”.

**+ October 2014:** On 17 October 2014, SECTION27 addressed separate letters to the NDBE and the Members of the Executive Council and Heads of Department of 9 PEDs inquiring about the progress and plans which have been made collectively and in each province towards the commitment that all educators at schools for the visually impaired would be braille literate by March 2015. This was in light of our instruction that “the DBE allocated funds to each of the nine provincial education departments to enable them to arrange braille training for teachers”. Particular concern was raised in our letter to the Eastern Cape Department of Education, in which we raised concerns about the appointment of Peakford Management Consultants by the ECDoE to provide educators with braille training. We noted that we were instructed that the two trainers appointed by Peakford to conduct the braille training between 6 and 10 October 2014 had no knowledge of braille whatsoever, nor did they have any brailled or braille-related training materials for educators participating in the workshop.

**+ May 2015:** On 29 May 2015, at the South African Braille Authority AGM, Mr Mkhuseleli Makhathala, who within the National Department of Education is tasked in ensuring braille training occurs in the provinces, presented a progress report on braille training of educators in South Africa. Mr Makhathala indicated that that several provinces have not responded to his requests and prompts for progress on this training at all and many of those who have been responsive do not provide sufficient basic detail on:

- » The list of attendees of the training;
- » The nature of training (eg. whether the training is in contracted or uncontracted braille); and
- » The qualitative outcomes of the training (whether educators left the training having sufficiently improved braille literacy which will equip them to read, write and teach braille).

**+ July 2015:** The Department of Basic Education published a progress report on the implementation of White Paper 6 for 2013-2015. The report acknowledges that as of 2014: there were 39 teachers “without braille qualification but with basic braille”; 124 teachers without any knowledge of braille; and 407 teachers who “require grade 2 braille training”.<sup>1</sup> It also indicates that “by 2016 all teachers in schools for visual impairment will have to have a Level 2 qualification in Braille and the Unified Braille Code and also be competent to produce teaching materials and tests in Braille”.<sup>2</sup>

**+ October 2014 – July 2015:** To date we have only received responses from four PEDs and the DBE. The DBE in its response dated 27 March 2015 noted that during 2014, as part of a set of interventions, that it requested Provincial Heads of Education Departments to “conduct grade 1 and grade 2 Unified Braille (UBC) training before March 2015”. In addition, the DBE noted that in response to SECTION27’s query it had sent letters to Provincial Heads of Education Departments requesting them to provide progress made on braille teacher training. Finally, the Acting Director General of the DBE noted that the Superintendent General of the Eastern Cape Department of Education had been requested to investigate the complaint about the process in that province. The following responses were received from provincial departments of education:

- » **November 2014 – Western Cape Department of Education (WCED):** The WCED, in its response dated 11

1. Department of Basic Education “Report on the Implementation of Education White Paper 6 on Inclusive Education: An Overview for the Period 2013-2015” (May 2015) at p 37-8.

2. Id.

November 2014, indicated that all teachers at schools for the visually impaired are braille literate. Although both schools for the visually impaired note that all teachers are braille literate to some extent as a result of in-service training provided by other educators, SECTION27's interviews reveal that educators at both schools require additional braille literacy training which is "properly and externally arranged".

- » **October 2014 – Gauteng Department of Education (GDoE):** The GDoE in its response dated 21 October 2014 noted that a tender process had been undertaken and a tender awarded for braille training during September and October 2014. The training was set to take place between January and March 2015. Educators have noted serious concerns about the ability of the successful tenderer – Matthew Goniwe School of Leadership – to teach braille effectively. One educator noted that when she questioned the methods and understanding of simple braille concepts, she was told that she was the only one who noticed and she should stop complaining. For example, she noted that instructors "don't know the

appropriate way to write the number 1 or difference between how to write BASA and SABA [SABA is the acronym for the South African Braille Authority]".

- » **November 2014 – Northern Cape Department of Education (NCDE):** The NCDE in its response dated 6 November 2014 indicated that the department had previously provided training in 2011 and 2012 through unaccredited service providers, and that training would be undertaken again in January 2015 depending on the availability of the service provider.
- » **January – Free State Department of Education (FSDE):** In its response dated 20 January 2015, the FSDE noted that 27 teachers and three occupational therapists at Bartimea Special School were trained on grade 1 braille between the 13<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> of October 2014, and that Grade 1 braille training at Thiboloha Special School was planned for January 2015. Christo De Klerk, of SABA, who himself gave the trainings in question can confirm that trainings in grade 1 were conducted at both Bartimea and Thiboloha in 2015 with more success at Bartimea than Thiboloha as has been detailed above.

## Braille textbooks (Section VII – Access to Learner Teacher Support Materials in Braille)

- + **July 2012:** The NDBE's minutes from a meeting held by the NDBE indicate that "the DBE is developing a plan for the procurement of brailled LTSM to schools for the blind" and that "in 2013 publishers will be asked to provide an electronic copy of the selected material to speed up the process of brailleing".
- + **October 2012:** In a comprehensive letter the DBE noted that it had placed orders for maths textbooks in Braille and large print in all languages for grades 10-12 "early in 2011" but explained that such production has not yet been completed "due to a lack of capacity for printing of Braille in the country". The DBE also noted that it had initiated an investigation into the possibility of "printing selected books selected textbooks in Australia, India and the United Kingdom". The DBE indicated that it had requested all schools for the visually impaired to submit their preferred selection of textbook from the catalogues from grades 4-6 and 11. This letter concludes that "all avenues are being ensured" to ensure delivery of textbooks "in the course of 2013".
- + **May 2013:** A report of the DBE to a South African Braille Authority AGM notes that prior to the closing date of the tender for braille textbooks "some of the bidders" expressed disquiet regarding the timeframes, and that the closing date and delivery timeframes were therefore extended. Despite repeated offers from the SANCB to explain the reason why the timeframes and expectations in the tender were irrational and unrealistic, the DBE has to date not taken the SANCB up on the offer to assist in reformulating this tender.
- + **May 2014:** The DBE indicated that, in an attempt to see the recommendations of the Department of Arts and Culture report on braille production capacity realised, the DBE had, with approval of the Minister for Basic Education, established a Task Team to "come up with recommendations on how best a national Braille production facility could be established in the medium to long term". Additionally, the DBE was, in the interim "equipping all 22 schools for visual impairment with Braille production facilities" in accordance with an audit completed in October and November 2013 to determine the capacity of schools to "produce their own braille".
- + **January 2015:** The DBE indicated that it had requested updates from all provincial departments, and "once reports have been received, renewed interventions will be made on the part of the DBE to ensure that ... *all books [are] delivered* as early as possible in 2015".

+ **May 2015:** At the AGM of the South African Authority, Mr Allan Subban, representing the Department of Basic Education noted that “all learners and I emphasise all should have learners materials” and that “Given the constitutional right [to basic education] we must find the means to provide braille textbooks”. Acknowledging the existing limitations in

braille production capacity and the NDBE’s failure to succeed in its previous tender process due to a lack of understanding, Mr Subban concluded that “more and more it is imperative that every learner has a textbook in braille” and to ensure that this takes place the NDBE intended to set up a task team including the South African Braille Authority.

## Braille Workbooks (Section VII – Access to Learner Teacher Support Materials in Braille)

+ **October 2012:** In a response to a letter written to NDBE by SECTION27 on 18 September 2012, the NDBE’s response dated 22 October 2012 notes that “adaptation of learner workbooks with their high level of graphic content *has been done* so that learners in Grade R to 9 will have the opportunity to do the same work that their sighted peers are doing.” Later in this same letter, the DBE noted that “learners will receive a substantial percentage of Book 1 of the Language and Mathematics Workbooks for Grade R-6 in all languages in Braille and large print ... at the commencement of the 2013 academic year.” Interviews at schools in 2014 and 2015 confirm that in many schools this has still not taken place to date.

+ **April 2013:** In April 2013, the Department of Women, Children and People with Disabilities reported that “[d]onor funding been made available to expedite the adaptation and printing of learner workbooks for grades R-9 in braille as well as textbooks and prescribed works.”<sup>3</sup>

+ **May 2013:** A Department of Basic Education report dated 16 May 2013 discussed above indicates that:

+ Volume 1 of Grade 6 mathematics workbooks in Braille had been delivered to all 22 schools for the blind;

+ grade 1-9 mathematics workbooks had been adapted and handed over to Pioneer printers;

+ grade 1-3 workbooks had been translated into “all languages” and grade 4-9 into Afrikaans and “translations into other languages are underway and will soon be completed”; and

+ grade 1-7 workbooks for English have been adapted; grade 1-3 Life Skills workbooks had been “handed over for translation”.

+ **January 2015:** A NDBE letter to SECTION27 dated 27 January 2015 notes that it was only as recently as 2015 that the DBE “has distributed workbooks in Mathematics

and Language in all official languages for Grades R to 6 to all 22 schools for learners with visual impairment” and that “[t]he grades 7 to 9 Mathematics Workbooks in braille will be made available early in 2015”.

+ **April 2015:** In April 2015, Minister Motshekga, reaffirmed this state of affairs and indicated that the process of adapting grade 7-9 mathematics workbooks was underway:

+ “To support learners with visual impairment in the absence of braille textbooks, the DBE also adapted workbooks to Braille. These have been printed and delivered to the 22 special schools. The Braille workbooks are for Grades 1 – 6 Mathematics and Mathematics toolkits, Home language in all 11 official languages, and Grades 1 – 3 Home language toolkits. The Department is currently adapting Grades 7 – 9 Mathematics workbooks to Braille.”<sup>4</sup>

+ **May 2015:** Minister Motshekga repeated this exact same statement made in April 2015 in a media briefing for the 2015/16 Education Budget Vote.<sup>5</sup>

*\*This summary of correspondence is not a comprehensive account of the interaction between SECTION27, the SANCB, Blind SA, SABA and the Orientation and Mobility Action with state institutions. It is intended to provide the reader with an understanding of the extent and subject matter of such correspondence. It has, where necessary, been supplemented by public and policy statements made by the government departments.*

3. Department of Women, Children & People with Disabilities, “Baseline Country Report to the United Nations on the Implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in South Africa”, (17 April 2013).

4. Minister of Basic Education, Angie Motshekga (April 2015) available at <http://www.education.gov.za/Newsroom/Speeches/tabid/298/ctl/Details/mid/1749/ItemID/3257/Default.aspx>.

5. Minister of Basic Education, Angie Motshekga (May 2015) available at <http://www.gov.za/speeches/minister-angie-motshekga-media-briefing-education-budget-vote-201516-6-may-2015-0000>.