

**SIXTH  
EDITION**

**WHY NOT *YOU?* WHY NOT *NOW?***

# SPARK

**CHANGEMAKER NETWORK MAGAZINE**

**08** Myths about  
**Disabilities**

**15** Learn about  
**Sign Language**

**CHANGE  
MAKER  
NETWORK**



## Masifunde's Changemaker Network

With the Changemaker Network, Masifunde aims to capacitate learners with knowledge on relevant social topics such as leadership, prevention of gender-based-violence, community safety, bullying or holistic health.

Through the network, the participating learners are empowered to spark change in their schools and communities.

Firstly, Masifunde runs activation workshops in all Grade 9 classes. In these workshops, the learners nominate and select suitable changemakers within their class. The selected learners then join a one-week training. In this training they learn tools and methods on how to run campaigns and share knowledge with their peers.

Afterwards, on a quarterly basis, the now trained changemakers share the knowledge they have learnt through advocacy school campaigns.

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More on Masifunde  
[www.masifunde.org](http://www.masifunde.org)

More on the Changemaker Network  
[www.Changemaker-Network.org](http://www.Changemaker-Network.org)

 Masifunde's  
**CHANGE  
MAKER**  
NETWORK

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# FOREWORD



*"I am not my disability. My disability is just one small part of who I am – it is just an aspect of me, like a characteristic or a feature. It describes me, not defines me. It is up to me to determine how it impacts my life. Disability does not mean inability.*

*All too often, people underestimate what someone is capable of because they only see their disability & not the person with all their abilities, strengths, attributes and characteristics." ~ Anonymous*

Do not fear a disability. There are so many mistruths and stereotypes about disability and living with a disability. You have access to so much information, thanks to technology – use it! Be critical- and question the ideas or beliefs you may have about disability. Follow people with disabilities on socials, learn more about the reality of living with a disability & empower yourself with the knowledge to be an ally.

**Robyn Clark**  
Bona uBuntu Coordinator



**BONA uBUNTU PROGRAMME**  
See Humanity





# Participating **Schools**

## & progress made

**Status:** **45** participating schools in Nelson Mandela Bay



The inclusion of people with disabilities is a topic that is important to everyone, regardless of ability. It's about creating a world where everyone has equal opportunities and is treated with dignity and respect.

While we've come a long way in terms of disability rights and inclusion, there is still work to be done. Many people with disabilities still face barriers to accessing education, employment, and social activities, and discrimination and stigma continue to be pervasive in our society.

But the good news is that we can all play a role in promoting awareness and inclusion. By learning about different disabilities, advocating for accessibility and accommodation, and treating people with disabilities as equals, we can help create a more inclusive and just society.

Let's make sure that everyone feels valued and included, regardless of ability. By doing so, we can create a brighter and more inclusive future for all.



Douglas Mbopa SSS hosting a conflict management dialogue event, together with Vulumzi HS, Masiphathisane HS, and Mfesane HS.



Mzontsundu learners at KwaZakhele High School leading conversations about the importance of being Changemakers as young people



# MCN IN ACTION

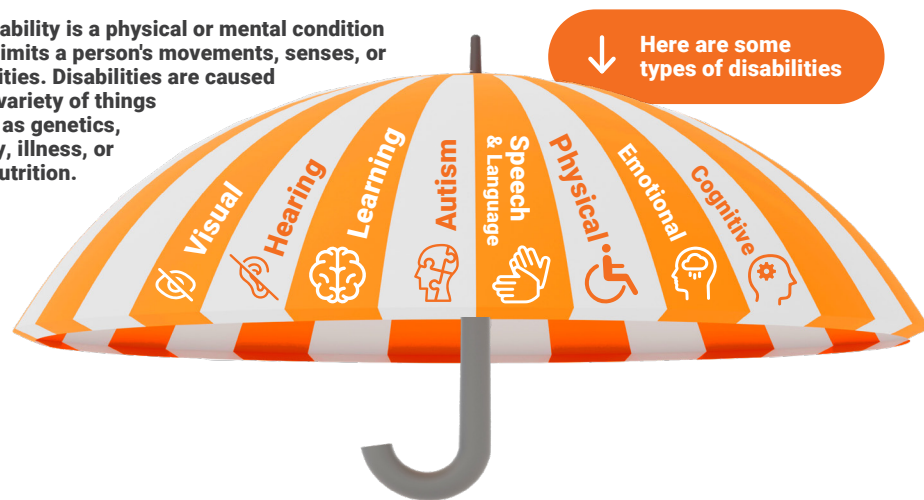
New trained Changemakers from Sophakama High School facilitating their first workshop on School Safety



Mfesane High School Changemakers in their 3rd workshop on finding strategies to resolve conflict together with their peers.



A disability is a physical or mental condition that limits a person's movements, senses, or activities. Disabilities are caused by a variety of things such as genetics, injury, illness, or malnutrition.



### Common myths about disabilities in Africa

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <p><b>Myth</b> ❌</p> <p>Disabilities are a result of witchcraft or curses.</p>                                   | <p><b>Fact</b> ✅</p> <p>Disabilities are not caused by supernatural forces. They can result from various factors, including genetics, accidents, illnesses, or malnutrition.</p>  |
| <p><b>Myth</b> ❌</p> <p>All disabilities are visible or obvious.</p>   | <p><b>Fact</b> ✅</p> <p>Many disabilities are not visible, such as mental health conditions or chronic illnesses. It is important to recognize and provide support for all types of disabilities.</p>   |
| <p><b>Myth</b> ❌</p> <p>People with disabilities cannot lead fulfilling lives or contribute to society.</p>      | <p><b>Fact</b> ✅</p> <p>People with disabilities can lead fulfilling lives and make significant contributions to their communities. Many individuals with disabilities have successful careers, artistic talents, and are active participants in their communities.</p>   |
| <p><b>Myth</b> ❌</p> <p>People with disabilities are entirely dependent on charity and cannot be employed.</p>   | <p><b>Fact</b> ✅</p> <p>People with disabilities can and should have opportunities for meaningful employment. With the right support and accommodations, they can be successful in the workforce and fully independent.</p>   |
| <p><b>Myth</b> ❌</p> <p>People with disabilities in Africa are totally dependent on their families for care.</p> | <p><b>Fact</b> ✅</p> <p>While family support is vital, people with disabilities are increasingly benefiting from community-based services, vocational training, and social inclusion programs. With appropriate accommodations and support networks, they can actively contribute to their families and society at large.</p> |



## Physical impairments

People with physical impairments may face unique challenges in their daily lives. A physical impairment can be any condition that affects a person's ability to move or use their body in the way they want to.

People with physical impairments may have difficulty with things like walking, standing, or using their hands, which can make it harder for them to do everyday activities like getting dressed, eating, or playing with friends. However, just like everyone else, people with physical impairments have interests, personalities, and talents.

Despite the challenges they may face, many people with physical impairments find ways to adapt and thrive. They may use mobility aids like wheelchairs or crutches, or work with therapists to develop new ways of doing things. With the right support and resources, people with physical impairments can live full and happy lives, pursuing their goals and dreams like everyone else.



**Anam Nevelline Makana**

Matriculant, Northern Lights School

- 1 What do you think is the biggest challenge you face as a physically impaired teenager?  
**It has to be dealing with my insecurities.**
- 2 How has your disability affected your relationships with your friends and family?  
**In my family, we already had someone who has a disability, with me it was not something new. But with friendships it was hard because most people did not easily accept or understood me but after I had accepted myself the world accepted me too.**
- 3 Do you feel like people treat you differently because of your disability?  
**Yes, sometimes I can tell that people feel pity for me unnecessarily.**
- 4 What are some things you wish people understood better about your disability?  
**I wish people understood that just because I am living with a disability, it doesn't mean I cannot do anything by myself, just like everyone, there are certain things I cannot do and things I can do.**
- 5 What are some of your biggest accomplishments that you're proud of, despite any challenges you've faced?  
**Telling my story and building my confidence**
- 6 What advice would you give to other teenagers with physical disabilities?  
**Accept yourself in order for the world to accept you.**
- 7 Do you feel like you have enough access to resources and support to help you manage your disability?  
**No, many places and people are not accommodative of my disability and many other disabilities.**
- 8 What are some ways that you advocate for yourself and others with disabilities?  
**By asking for the same opportunities that able-bodied people are granted to be also granted to differently able people.**
- 9 What are your goals for the future, and how do you plan on working towards them despite any challenges you may face?  
**A. I want to be a social worker and a motivational speaker. I aspire to work towards helping others build their confidence.**



## Madison Ryan

16, Low Vision

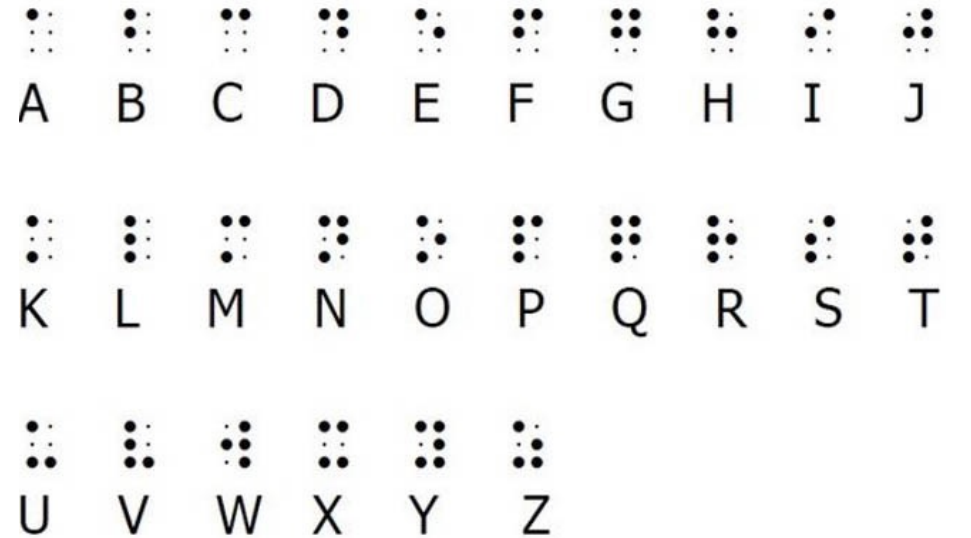
- 1 How do you navigate around your school and other environments that you are not familiar with?  
**It depends on who I'm with. When I'm with my mom I normally get guided by her. Friends do help at school sometimes.**
- 2 What kind of tools or technology do you use to help you with daily activities?  
**I use my iPad to zoom in and see the board in class.**
- 3 What are your favourite hobbies and interests, and how do you pursue them?  
**I play hockey and ballroom dance. Sometimes I struggle to see the ball, but I usually play without hassle**

- 4 What kind of challenges do you face when it comes to social interactions, and how do you overcome them?  
**I can't really see people's facial expressions, and I overcome that by listening to their tone of voice.**
- 5 Have you ever travelled to new places? What was your experience like, and how did you navigate unfamiliar environments?  
**I went to Disney Land in Orlando, America. I realized that people with disabilities have more rights in America.**
- 6 What kind of career or future goals do you have, and how do you see your blindness impacting them?  
**I would like to become an animator or a film director.**
- 7 What kind of support or resources do you feel would be helpful for you as a teenager with low vision?  
**There should be more activities out there that it shouldn't matter if you are disabled or not, you can still participate.**
- 8 What advice would you give to someone who is sighted about how to be a good friend to someone who is visually impaired?  
**Treat us fairly and as normal people.**

# ABOUT BRAILLE

Braille is a system of reading and writing that is used by people who are blind or visually impaired. It uses a combination of raised dots on a flat surface to represent letters, numbers, and other symbols. The dots are arranged in patterns that can be felt with the fingertips, allowing someone who is blind to read by touch.

Braille enables people who cannot use their sight to read and write; giving them access to written materials, learning, and a world of books.



## Visual Impairment

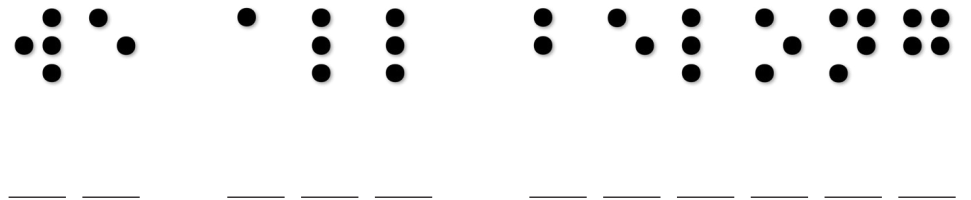
**For people with visual impairment, the world can be a very different place. Visual impairment refers to a range of conditions that affect a person's ability to see, from partial vision loss to blindness. Vision loss is a spectrum and affects each person differently.**

Living with visual impairment can affect many aspects of daily life. People with a visual impairment need the right assistive devices and accommodations to be able to be independent; such as a white cane to navigate a new environment or talk-back settings on their phones.

Equipped with the right tools and knowledge to use them properly, there are very few things that a visually impaired person can't do! Remember:

- Always introduce yourself when speaking to someone with a visual impairment.
- Never just grab or touch a visually impaired person; even if you think you are helping.
- If you see someone who you think may need help, always ask first if they want or need help, before trying to lead or guide them.
- Don't be afraid or shy to talk to people with disabilities. They're just like you and me!

### DECODE THIS SENTENCE





## Siyanda Zitshu

Visually and physically impaired  
KwaZakhele, Gqeberha

*I was born partially blind and when I was young it was challenging living life not being able to see properly. I enjoyed playing soccer and being with friends. When I was still in primary school, I got very ill and ended up being physically impaired.*

*Due to being ill for a long time, I had to stay home for about 3 years and when I eventually got better, I struggled to find a high school that would accept me. This was very difficult for me to accept as I was not born physically disabled so I had to adapt and accept that I cannot do some of the activities I enjoyed like playing sports.*

*This was very challenging as I was treated differently by others and wished that they can understand that I am still able to do things for myself. My family has been emotionally supportive to me which helped me to deal with this life change.*

*As a young person, do not look down on yourself. Be confident and most importantly, love yourself and learn to accept a situation you can't change. I was very happy and proud to be able to go and finish initiation school as it is an important rite of passage in my culture. It's a challenge for me to get a job or a learnership currently, I really hope to get an opportunity to go back to school or start my own business.*



## Ross Dakin

Graduate,  
Nelson Mandela  
University

*Hi, my name is Ross. I am a graduate of Nelson Mandela University and have an advanced diploma in Public Relations, cum laude.*

*I was born with cerebral palsy and am in an electric wheelchair, so I had to work very hard and put in extra effort to achieve this goal. Studying took me longer than the average person but I did not let this stand in my way.*

*The youth of today must embrace a positive outlook and a volunteer mindset. Whether this is volunteering in your local community or a workplace environment, this initiative will be rewarded in many ways. It could be as simple as forging friendships and new relationships, or it could be future job opportunities. This will open doors for people with disabilities that would perhaps have stayed closed. We do have to work a bit harder to achieve the success we desire.*

*As a person with a disability, I know that my disability does not define who I am, and once people get to know ME our relationship will be a positive one. My character is not my disability!*

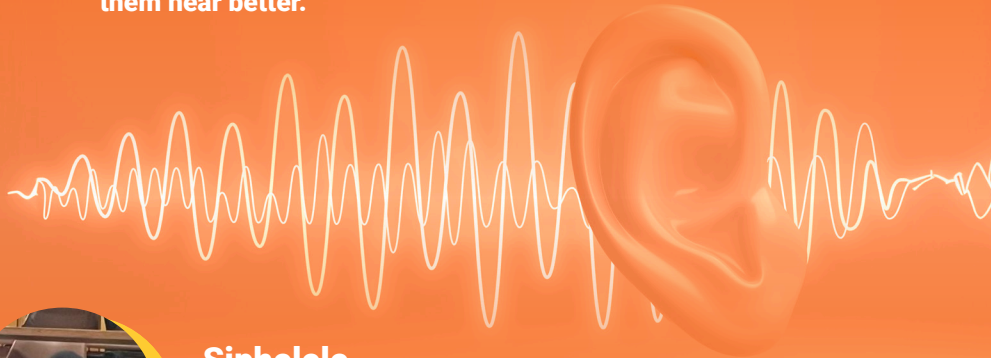
*The goal for a person with a disability should be inclusion in every aspect of life. My motto is to mix and interact with people and achieve ambitions, just the same as the able-bodied.*

*Don't hold yourself back and take part in your glorious life.*



# Hearing Impairment

Living with a hearing impairment can present unique challenges for people of all ages. Hearing impairment means that someone has difficulty hearing or cannot hear at all. People with a hearing impairment may need to use hearing aids or other devices to help them hear better.



**Sipehele Neti**

Grade 9 Reubin Birin School for Hearing Impaired

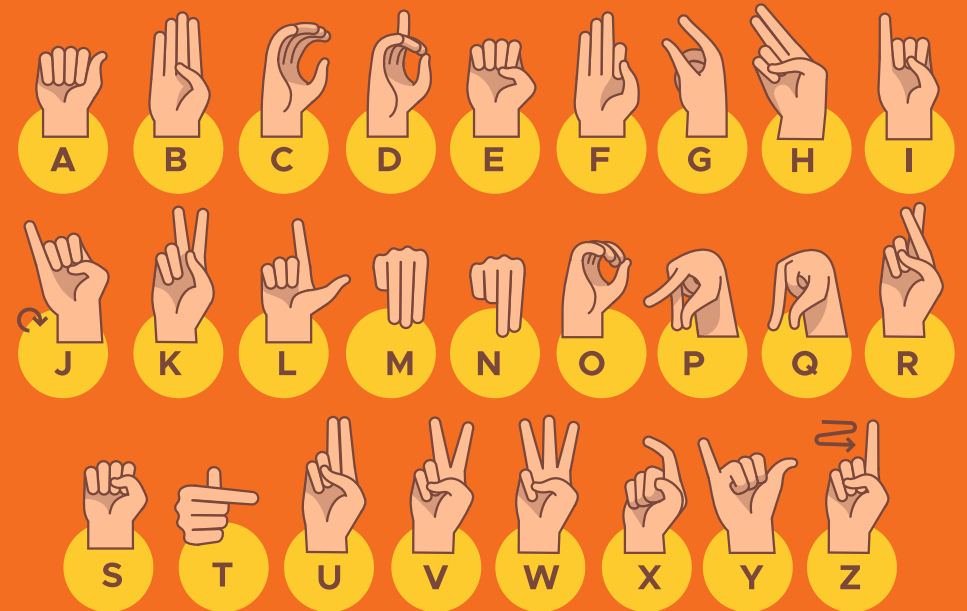
- 1 What is your favourite way to communicate with others?  
**Communicating with respect and understanding. If someone misunderstands me, I enjoy trying different scenarios to fix the misunderstanding.**
- 2 What is your favourite thing about yourself?  
**My favourite thing about myself is my caring nature and how much I love creating peaceful engagements**
- 3 Have you ever faced any challenges or discrimination because of your deafness?  
**Yes, it is challenging when there's a group of people who are able to hear at home, I want to join in the conversation but the language barrier always restricts me and I feel left out.**
- 4 What kind of music or videos do you enjoy watching that are accessible to you?  
**I enjoy watching and dancing to Amapiano songs and videos.**

- 5 Do you think deafness has influenced your identity in any way?  
**Yes, I am part of the deaf community and I am proud. My hands are my voice.**
- 6 What are some things that hearing people often misunderstand about deaf culture?  
**People always misunderstand how to get a deaf person's attention, waving in their face or speaking without trying to make signs, it's very disrespectful.**
- 7 What is your dream job, and do you think your deafness will affect your ability to achieve it?  
**My dream is to be a professional soccer player. However, I am not sure if being deaf won't limit my dream. I will also apply my skill and be a mechanic.**
- 8 If you could change one thing about the way society treats deaf people, what would it be?  
**Society needs to treat us as equals and change the mindset of associating a deaf person to be dumb or stupid.**
- 9 What are you currently proud of?  
**I am proud of being my class representative and being elected as one of the top achievers for sport at my school.**

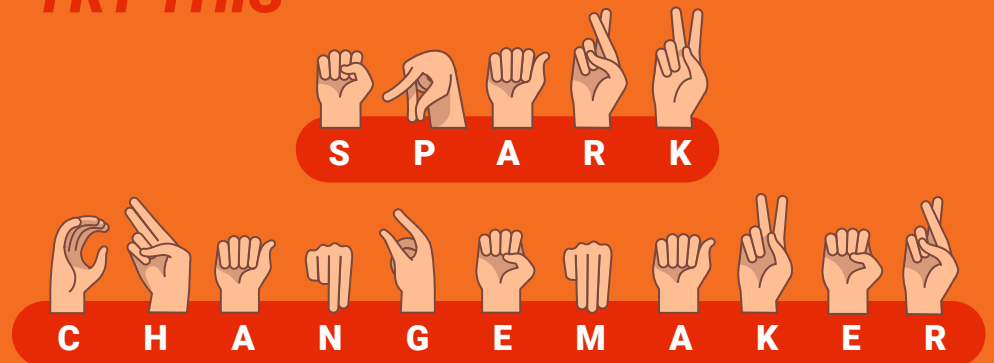
## ABOUT SIGN LANGUAGE

Sign language is a way of communicating using hand gestures and body movements instead of spoken words. It is used by people who are with hearing impairments, as well as by people who can hear but want to communicate with people with a hearing impairment. Sign language has its vocabulary and grammar, just like spoken languages do. Different countries and regions have their own sign languages. Signs can represent words, phrases, or even concepts or emotions.

Sign language is a visual language, so it relies on facial expressions, body language, and other visual cues in addition to hand gestures. People who use sign language can communicate just as effectively as people who use spoken language, and it is an important tool for promoting inclusion and accessibility for people who are deaf or hard of hearing.



## TRY THIS





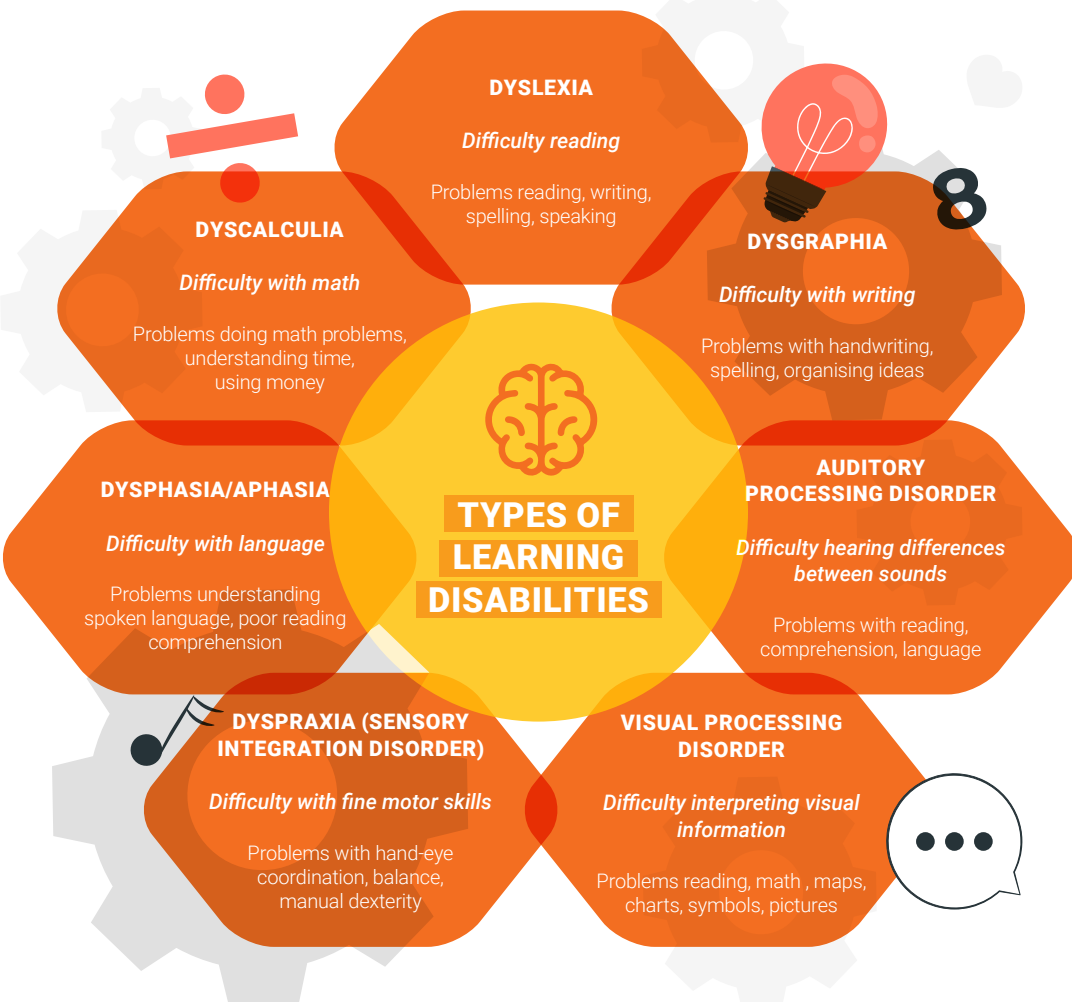


# Cognitive Impairment

Cognitive impairment is a term used to describe difficulties with thinking, learning, and remembering. It can affect people of all ages and can be caused by a variety of factors, such as brain injuries, developmental disabilities, or illnesses like dementia.

People with cognitive impairment may face unique challenges in their daily lives. They may have trouble with things like remembering important information, following directions, or understanding complex concepts. This can make it harder for them to do things like go to school or work.

Despite these challenges, people with cognitive impairments are just like anyone else. They have unique personalities, interests, and strengths. With support and understanding from others, they can achieve their goals and lead fulfilling lives.



# Autism

Autism is a condition that affects how some people's brains work. It can make it hard for them to communicate and understand social situations, like making friends or knowing how to behave in different settings.

Autism is a spectrum disorder, which means that it affects people differently. Some people with autism may be affected mildly and be able to do things like go to school and make friends, while others may need more help and support.

It's important to be understanding and patient with people who have autism and to try to find ways to communicate and interact with them in a way that works for them.



# Emotional Disabilities

An emotional or behavioural disability is a disability that impacts a person's ability to effectively recognize, interpret, control, and express emotions; which affects the way they participate in daily activities. These disorders are diagnosed and managed by a professional doctor.

Emotional disturbance may include, but is not limited to: ANXIETY DISORDER > BIPOLAR DISORDERS > CONDUCT DISORDERS > EATING DISORDERS > OBSSIVE-COMPULSIVE DISORDER (OCD) > PSYCHOTIC DISORDERS.

**!** Please note: This magazine highlights basic information about some disabilities, please do further research to know more about the different disabilities on credible sites and from recognised organisations.

The words we use show our attitudes toward people and situations. We should ensure that our language is positive and describes people with disabilities as people first.

- Do not use offensive language**
  - Do not say:** Slow, defective, dumb, special person, abnormal, etc
  - Instead say:** Person with an intellectual, cognitive, or developmental disability
- Do not use language that suggests the lack of something.**
  - Do not say:** Crippled, lame, deformed,
  - Instead say:** Person living with a physical disability
- Do not use language that suggests the lack of something.**
  - Do not say:** Handicapped, midget or albino
  - Instead say:** A person living with a disability, a person of short stature or a person with albinism
- Emphasize abilities, not what they cannot do**
  - Do not say:** They are mute
  - Instead say:** A person who uses a device to speak or who cannot speak
- Emphasize abilities, not what they cannot do**
  - Do not say:** wheelchair bound or confined to a wheelchair
  - Instead say:** A person who uses a wheelchair



Changemaker Training group work



Activation workshop for Grade 9 learners from Reuben Birin School for Hearing Impaired



Siyema Tayi

*"People living with disabilities may be different but not less. It is very important that we treat everyone with the respect that they deserve at all times."*





MEET SOME OF YOUR CHANGEMAKERS



masifunde's **CHANGE  
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