

# 'School for disabled kids'

## Zuma promises that all disabled children in South Africa will be getting an education by 2021

ZODIDI MHLANA

PRESIDENT Jacob Zuma has said the government will ensure that every disabled child will be in school by 2021.

Addressing delegates at the three-day Disability Rights Summit in Pretoria, Zuma said that while disabled children were able to go to school, access was still a challenge.

"Our goal as government is to ensure that by 2021 no children with disabilities will be out of school," he said.

"They should all be able to attend their local neighbouring schools and receive the necessary support."

Zuma said 83% of five-year-old disabled children and 93% of seven to 15-year-old children with disabilities were attending educational institutions.

A Human Rights Watch report released last year revealed that about 500 000 children with disabilities in South Africa were not attending school.

Zuma also said that progress had been made in the higher education sector.

Minister of Social Development Bathabile Dlamini said 14 stimulation schools for disabled children were recently opened and more schools were set to open this year.

Jennie Hoff, CEO of Parents for Children with Special Education Needs, said many parents with disabled children were still struggling to access



**PROGRESS:** President Jacob Zuma hands over a copy of the white paper on the rights of people with disabilities to Prof Bongani Khumalo.

education for their children.

"Despite issues of lack of funding, personnel and infrastructure that we are still faced with in the education sector, parents don't get the support they need when it comes to their children's education," Hoff said.

"For parents in the rural areas, it's worse. Some parents have to hide their

children at home because of stigma."

The summit takes place following the Cabinet approval of a white paper regarding the rights of people with disabilities.

A group of disabled people who protested against the "shifting" of the unit that caters for disabled people from the Presidency to the

Department of Social Development were barred from entering the conference venue yesterday.

"The shift of our unit to the Social Development Ministry shows that we are being reduced to charity cases. We want jobs and not grants," Looks Matoto from Disabled People of South Africa said.

He said many disabled people were still marginalised, living in abject poverty and faced with high levels of unemployment.

Responding to the protesters, Zuma said the Department of Social Development had the capacity, personnel and infrastructure to fulfil the function.

[zodidm@thenewage.co.za](mailto:zodidm@thenewage.co.za)

### Fact box

- » 83% of five-year-old children with disabilities are attending educational institutions
- » 93% of seven to 15-year-old children with disabilities are also getting education
- » 6 850 students with disabilities have been enrolled at higher education institutions
- » 2 800 have been enrolled at TVET Colleges in 2014
- » December 9, 2015 – Cabinet approved the White Paper on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities