



health

Department:
Health
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

NATIONAL DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH: LANGUAGE POLICY

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1 Definitions

“Act”	The Use of Official Languages Act, 2012 (Act No. 12 of 2012)
“Constitution”	The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996
“DG”	Director-General of the National Department of Health
“Minister”	The Minister of Health
“NDOH”	The National Department of Health
“PanSALB”	The Pan South African Language Board, established in terms of the Pan South African Language Board Act, 1995 (Act No. 59 of 1995)
“Policy”	The Language Policy of the National Department of Health
“Regulations”	The Regulations in terms of the Act
“Republic”	The Republic of South Africa

2 Legislative Instruments

- 2.1 The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996
- 2.2 The Use of Official Languages Act, 2012
- 2.3 Regulations in terms of section 13 of the Use of Official Languages Act, 2012

3 Scope

- 3.1 This Policy is applicable to:
- 3.2 all employees of the NDOH
- 3.3 documents published and printed by the NDOH

4 Purpose and regulatory context of this Policy

- 4.1 This policy is required by section 4 of the Act, as follows:
 - 4.1.1 section 4(1) provides that every national department, national public entity and national public enterprise must adopt a language policy on its use of official languages; and
 - 4.1.2 section 4(2) provides that a language policy adopted in terms of subsection (1) must:
 - 4.1.2.1 identify at least three languages that the national department, national public entity or national public enterprise will use for government purposes,
 - 4.1.2.2 stipulate how official languages will be used in effectively communicating with the public, official notices, government publications, and inter and intra-government communication,
 - 4.1.2.3 describe how the national department, national public entity or national public enterprise will effectively communicate with the members of the public whose language of choice is not one of its chosen official languages, or South African Sign Language,
 - 4.1.2.4 describe how members of the public can access the language policy, and

- 4.1.2.5 provide a complaints mechanism to enable members of the public to lodge complaints regarding the use of official languages by a national department, national public entity or national public enterprise.

5 Principles

5.1 The principles of this Policy are:

- 5.1.1 commitment to the promotion of official languages in the NDOH in order to ensure constitutional language equity and language rights as required by a democratic dispensation;
- 5.1.2 facilitate equitable treatment of official languages of the Republic and ensure equitable access to the services and information of the NDOH;
- 5.1.3 promotion of good language management by the NDOH to ensure efficient and effective public service administration that meets the needs of the public; and
- 5.1.4 prevention of use of any language(s) for the purposes of exploitation, dominant and discrimination within the NDOH.

6 The work of the NDOH

6.1 Section 21 of the National Health Act, 2004 outlines the functions of the NDOH as follows:

- 6.1.1 implementation of national health policy;
- 6.1.2 issue guidelines for the implementation of health policy; and
- 6.1.3 issue and promote adherence to, norms and standards on health matters.

6.2 According to the National Development Plan, the strategic targets of NDOH include:

- 6.2.1 a life expectancy rate of at least 70 years for men and women;
- 6.2.2 a generation of under-20s that is largely free of HIV;
- 6.2.3 a radical reduction to the quadruple burden of disease compared to the two previous decades;
- 6.2.4 an infant mortality rate of less than 20 deaths per 1 000 live births and an under-five mortality rate of less than 30 per 1 000;
- 6.2.5 a significant shift in equity, efficiency, effectiveness and quality of health care provision
- 6.2.6 universal coverage available; and
- 6.2.7 the risk posed by social determinants of disease and adverse ecological factors reduced significantly.

7 NDOH Language Unit

7.1 Once established, the NDOH Language Unit will support this policy. The functions of the language unit will be to:

- 7.1.1 advise the DG on the development, adoption and implementation of this policy;
- 7.1.2 monitor and assess the use of official languages by the NDOH;
- 7.1.3 monitor and assess compliance with this policy;
- 7.1.4 compile and submit a report to the Minister of Arts and Culture and to PanSALB in terms of Section 9 of the Act;

- 7.1.5 promote parity of esteem and equitable treatment of the official languages of the Republic;
- 7.1.6 facilitate equitable access to the services and information of the NDOH
- 7.1.7 promote good language management; and
- 7.1.8 perform any other functions that the Minister of Arts and Culture may prescribe.

8 Training and capacity building

- 8.1 In order to achieve the professional and efficient implementation of this policy, the NDOH Language Unit will advise on training and capacity building.

9 Official languages of the NDOH

- 9.1 South Africa is a multilingual country with approximately 25 different languages spoken, of which 11 have been granted official status in terms of Section 6 of the Constitution (Act No. 108 of 1996), on the grounds that their usage includes 98% of the total population. The official languages are: isiNdebele, isiXhosa, isiZulu and isiSwati (referred to as the Nguni language group); Sesotho, Sepedi and Setswana (referred to as the Sotho languages group); Tshivenda, Xitsonga, English and Afrikaans.
- 9.2 Language distribution in South Africa:

South African Languages		
Language	Number of speakers*	% of total
IsiZulu	10 677 315	23.82
IsiXhosa	7 907 149	17.64
Afrikaans	5 983 420	13.5
Sesotho sa Leboa	4 208 974	9.39
Setswana	3 677 010	8.2
English	3 673 206	8.2
Sesotho	3 555 192	7.93
Xitsonga	1 992 010	4.44
SiSwati	1 194 433	2.66
Tshivenda	1 021 761	2.28
IsiNdebele	711 825	1.59
Other	217 291	0.48
TOTAL	44 819 777	100

*Spoken as a home language

Source: Census 2011

- 9.3 Based on the above distribution of languages and taking into account the usage, practicality, expense, regional circumstances and balancing the needs and preferences of the public it serves, the NDOH adopts the following languages of the Republic as its official languages for purposes of this policy:
 - 9.2.1 IsiZulu
 - 9.2.2 Sesotho sa Leboa
 - 9.2.3 English

10 Use of official languages by the NDOH

10.1 The Table below depicts how the NDOH will use the selected official languages:

Communication purpose and target audience	Language(s)
International communication	English
Inter- and intra-government communication	English
Electronic communication (website, social media)	English Enquiries received through social media will be answered in the official language preferred by the client
Corporate publications of the NDOH	isiZulu Sesotho sa Leboa English
Communication with members of the public (official written communication)	isiZulu Sesotho sa Leboa English (Taking into account the usage, practicality and expense)
Communication with members of the public (oral communication)	The 11 official languages of the Republic (Taking into account the usage, practicality and expense)
Public hearings (Izimbizo, road shows)	The 11 official languages of the Republic (Taking into account regional circumstances)
Educational material for health promotion and outbreaks	The 11 official languages of the Republic (Taking into account regional circumstances)
Communication with the hearing or sight impaired	The NDOH will facilitate South African sign language interpreting and conversion of text into Braille or alternatively audio on request.

11 Communication with members of the public whose language of choice is not one of the official languages of Republic

11.1 A member of the public who wishes to communicate with the NDOH in a language that is not one of the official languages of the Republic must notify the NDOH in writing.

11.2 Due consideration will be given per subject/context, usage, practicality and availability of funds for translation.

12 Communication with members of the public whose language of choice is South African Sign Language

- 12.1 A member of the public who wishes to communicate with the NDOH in South African Sign Language must notify the NDOH in writing.
- 12.2 Due consideration will be given per subject/ context, usage, practicality and availability of funds for translation.

13 Publication of and access to this Policy

- 13.1 This Policy will be published in the three languages selected by the NDOH as per section 4(2) (b) of the Act.
- 13.2 The Policy will be available on the NDOH website (<http://www.health.gov.za>)
- 13.3 It will also be made available at the visitors' reception area in all NDOH offices.

14 Complaints mechanism

- 14.1 Any person who is dissatisfied with a decision of the NDOH regarding its use of official languages may lodge a complaint in writing to the DG.
- 14.2 Any complaint must be lodged:
 - 14.2.1 in writing, and
 - 14.2.2 within three months of the complaint arising.
- 14.3 Any complaint lodged must state the name, address, and contact information of the person lodging it.
- 14.4 Any complaint lodged must provide a full and detailed description of the complaint.
- 14.5 The DG may request a complainant to supply any addition information necessary to consider the complaint and to attend a meeting for the purpose of making an oral inquiry into the complaint.
- 14.6 The DG will consider the complaint and respond in writing, not later than three months after the complaint was lodged, informing the complainant of the decision.
- 14.7 If the complainant is dissatisfied with the decision of the DG, he or she may lodge an appeal to the Minister in writing.

15 Review of Policy

This policy will be reviewed whenever deemed necessary within five years.

POLICY APPROVAL

Compiled by	Directorate: Internal Communication
Custodian	Chief Directorate: Communication and Stakeholder Engagement
Approval	Minister of Health
Effective date for implementation	Contents contained in this policy will take effect from the date approved by the Minister, unless otherwise indicated.

Approved:

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized initial 'A' followed by a series of vertical strokes and a wavy line at the end.

**DR A MOTSOLEDI
MINISTER OF HEALTH**

Date: 05/08/2015