A young woman with dark hair is seated in a wheelchair, looking directly at the camera. She is wearing a light-colored, possibly white, button-down shirt. The background is dark and out of focus, suggesting an indoor setting with some architectural elements.

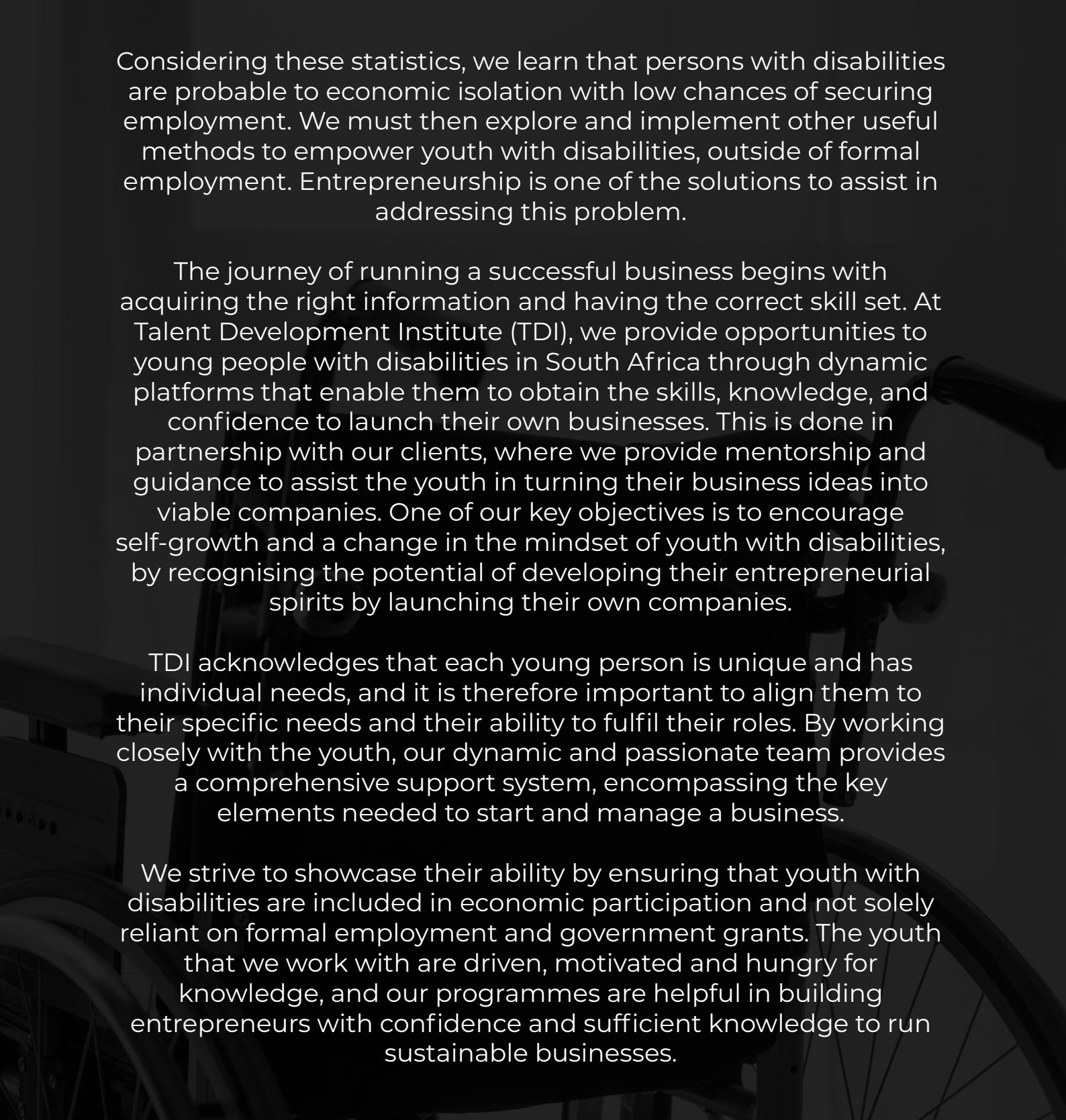
# **LIMITED FORMAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES: *EXPLORING OTHER OPTIONS***



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With the unemployment rate moderately improving, it continues to hamper the country's advancement. This has a negative impact on the South African youth, specifically youth with disabilities. According to Statistics South Africa, accessing education and employment opportunities for persons with disabilities are substantially limited. Persons with disabilities heading up households were found to have less access to basic services compared to households headed by persons without disabilities.

Based on a 2011 census and 2014 report, Stats SA also stated that the national disability prevalence rate is 7.5%, and that disability is more prevalent among females compared to males. Other studies have shown that over recent years, the rate of employment for people with disabilities is slightly above 1%, and persons without disabilities earn a higher income than persons with disabilities. One's earning potential is directly linked to the severity and type of disability that they have.



Considering these statistics, we learn that persons with disabilities are probable to economic isolation with low chances of securing employment. We must then explore and implement other useful methods to empower youth with disabilities, outside of formal employment. Entrepreneurship is one of the solutions to assist in addressing this problem.

The journey of running a successful business begins with acquiring the right information and having the correct skill set. At Talent Development Institute (TDI), we provide opportunities to young people with disabilities in South Africa through dynamic platforms that enable them to obtain the skills, knowledge, and confidence to launch their own businesses. This is done in partnership with our clients, where we provide mentorship and guidance to assist the youth in turning their business ideas into viable companies. One of our key objectives is to encourage self-growth and a change in the mindset of youth with disabilities, by recognising the potential of developing their entrepreneurial spirits by launching their own companies.

TDI acknowledges that each young person is unique and has individual needs, and it is therefore important to align them to their specific needs and their ability to fulfil their roles. By working closely with the youth, our dynamic and passionate team provides a comprehensive support system, encompassing the key elements needed to start and manage a business.

We strive to showcase their ability by ensuring that youth with disabilities are included in economic participation and not solely reliant on formal employment and government grants. The youth that we work with are driven, motivated and hungry for knowledge, and our programmes are helpful in building entrepreneurs with confidence and sufficient knowledge to run sustainable businesses.

The South African Human Rights Commission says that “everyone should have equal access to opportunities, services, participation, inclusion, and development.” The statistics that have been highlighted above show that there is still a lot of work to be done with regards to inclusion, participation, and equal opportunities.

Our focus is to ensure that young people with disabilities get the appropriate entrepreneurial education, mentorship, and the right set of skills and guidance, because we understand that they share equal rights with all South Africans. Our focus remains on the long-term growth and development of youth with disabilities, by laying a solid foundation for them to fulfil their entrepreneurial dreams and build lifelong and successful careers.



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