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Wheelchairs – are answers to complex seating needs necessarily complex?

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INTRODUCTION

- Socio-cultural factors
 - Provider
 - User of wheelchair service
 - Effect on service provision

The location



Municipal map
uMkhanyakude district KZN
(www.ukdm.gov.za Accessed February
2015)

AIM

To explore the link between the providers, their abilities and understanding of local context to ensure the wheelchair users' rights and human dignity are considered within a culturally relevant service

The environment





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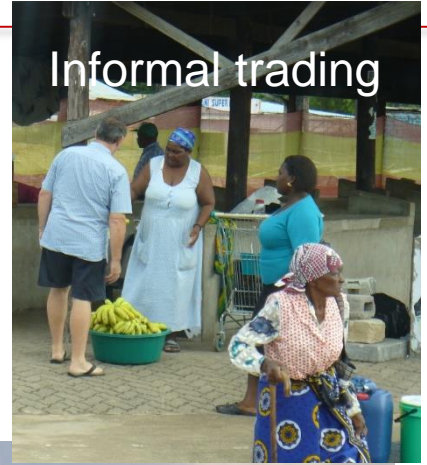
Local work opportunities



Tourism and game farms



Subsistence farming



Informal trading



Subsistence fishing

The person has simple needs

- A wheelchair
- To function within a specific environment
- A solution that works

Two responses to the needs

- I don't have appropriate equipment
- The clients are not cooperative
- The area is not conducive to using a wheelchair.....
- Those who “make a plan”

A single case



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- Independent at home in all ADL
 - Fetches water for washing (uses his foot plates to balance the 25L container)
 - Makes grass mats to supplement his DG
 - Catches taxi into town with relative ease

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- Getting to the taxi stop is a mission and he needs help as the sand is very thick
 - Financially supports the whole family – (siblings and his mother)

Current intervention:

- Kept him in his current chair (no alternative available).
- Unscrewed the first screws of the backrest and flipped it down (still inhibited by the frame needs a low back).

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- Added two Velcro strips to the back rest to take up some slack.
 - Added one 1cm thick full length strip of foam under right buttock and thigh.
 - Put on short footrests (left his adult footrests for when he has to fetch water).

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- Cannot adjust rear wheels or arm rests
 - Cannot take arm rests away as his balance is good but not brilliant, especially over rough terrain.

Result:

- He sits up straighter.
- He still pushes well and feels comfortable.
- His feet are well supported.

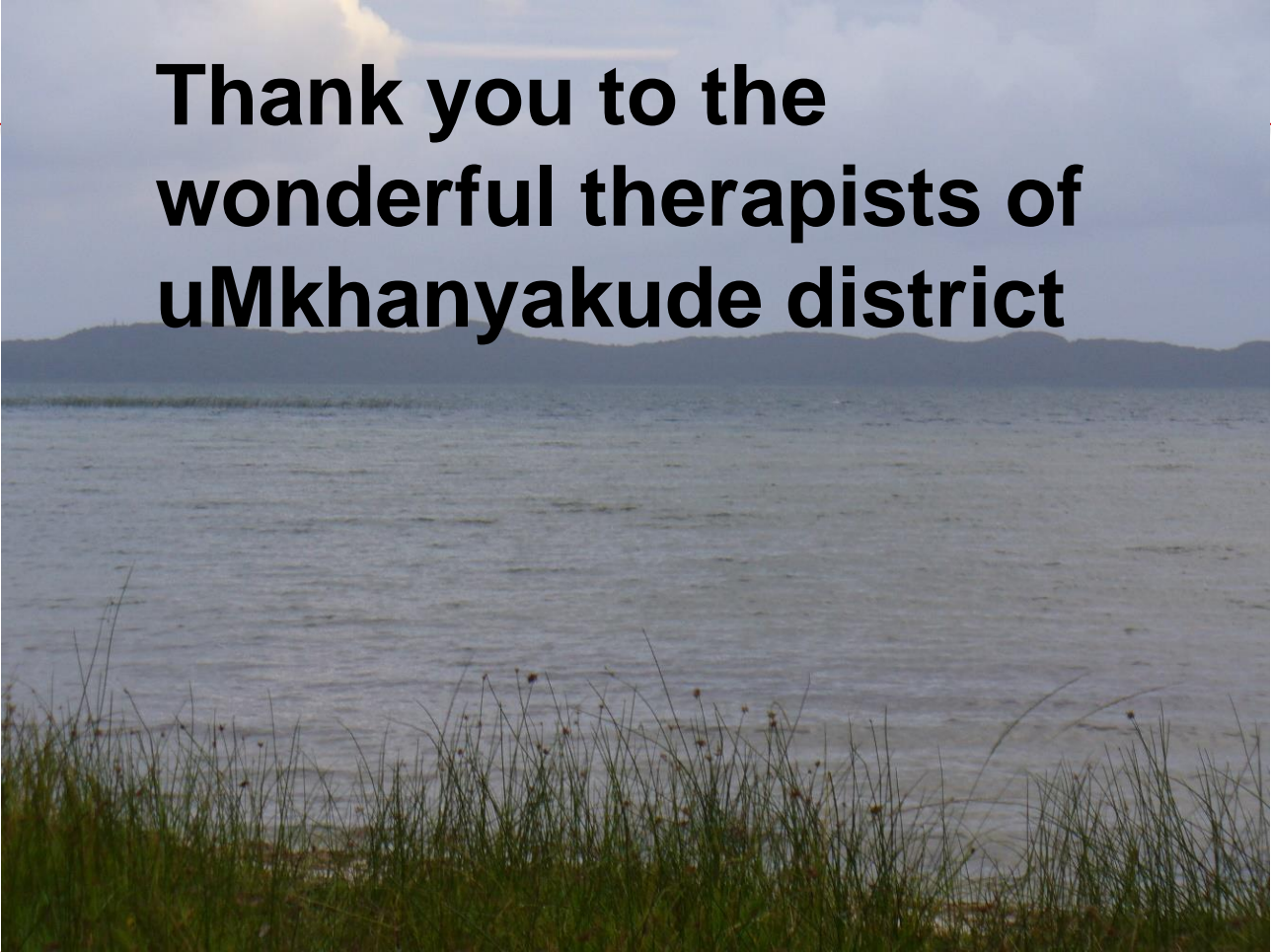
He was informed about

- The danger of leaving him in the same contracted position.
- Why we need to slowly and incrementally change things.
- The seating clinic. He is keen. (He also spoke to our wheelchair repair man who was a participant in the previous clinic!)

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- *“I think we could do better though, and I would like to custom make a cushion for him too”*

Conclusion

A caring service provider provided the best possible solution within the limitations of time and resources instead of waiting for “specialized” help or a “correct” seating solution – leaving a happy, functional user.



**Thank you to the
wonderful therapists of
uMkhanyakude district**