

# Ncedo Ludada is improving the lives of the disabled

By [Terrena Rathnall](#)

6 Feb 2020

Disabled people living in rural areas do not have easy access to prosthetics compared to their counterparts living in urban areas. That is why they feel hopeless and become prisoners in their own homes; isolated, dependent, immobile and excluded from society.



Ncedo Ludada, founder of Ludada and Associates Orthopaedic Services

One man is working tirelessly to change that. Ncedo Ludada started Ludada and Associates Orthopaedic Services in 2016 to improve the quality of life of people living with disabilities. The company is headquartered in Mthatha and services the greater Transkei and surrounding areas.

Ludada was never interested in a career in prosthetics. He wanted to be a civil engineer, but the lack of funds meant that he had to settle for any degree that came with a full scholarship. He took advantage of an opportunity from the Eastern Cape Department of Health to study Prosthetics and Orthotics in Tanzania and graduated in 2009.

Ncedo says he knew nothing about prosthetics and orthotics, so this profession found him. He fell in love with it when he realised the impact prosthetics would have in his community and the lives it would change.

The former Transkei is the most densely populated region in the Eastern Cape, yet it is one of the least serviced in terms of mobility assistive technology. The area is also characterised primarily by rural dwellings and towns which is an additional barrier to access to medical services.

In South Africa, the unemployment rate among disabled people is 68%, says Therina Wentzel-Du Toit, director of National Council of People with Disabilities (NCPD), and while statistics from the Department of Education revealed that 70% of children with disabilities at school-going age were not attending school.

## **Making a difference**

Ludada saw an opportunity to improve these statistics and make a difference in three areas during his tenure at a government hospital in East London.

“Firstly, most people living with physical impairments in rural areas did not have access to mobility assistive devices because all functional prosthetic and orthotic service centres in the Eastern Cape were at hospitals in the big cities of East London and Port Elizabeth. Patients had to travel 200km to get help.

“Secondly, because of the high demand for these services, approved candidates had to wait 3-5 years for a prosthetic device. Thirdly, the quality of service and mobility assistive devices was poor. I felt the entire rehab process was not improving the mobility of the disabled person and their quality of life. Some patients would reject poorly-made devices, claiming that they were more crippling than enabling.”

He knew something had to change; so, he did. He decided to upskill himself in Australia and when he returned, he lectured at the Walter Sisulu University in Mthatha and eventually opened his business.

## **Addressing social challenges**

“Ludada and Associates is the first private company that provides services to low-income and high-income patients, we support training and education of university students, and we are involved in innovation and research within the industry.”

But running his own business that addresses important societal challenges also gives him a sense of fulfilment: “I can provide employment to people which helps them take care of their families, to be of service to a marginalised group of people, discover cutting-edge innovation in the field, and make a difference and inspire young people.”

There is more on the horizon. The company has been accepted by a business programme which provides seed funding to social enterprises to address social ills in their communities.

Furthermore, Ncedo is in talks to partner with the Eastern Cape Department of Health to manufacture quality and affordable prosthetics. In addition, the company working on a memorandum of understanding to provide Walter University students with practical expertise in this field.

Ludada is positive about the future.

“This business is about so much more than making money for me; it’s given me a deep sense of meaning and purpose. When one of my clients told me we gave him his life back when we fitted his prosthetic leg, and when I see a 65-year-old woman become mobile and resume her position in the community because we made her a prosthetic limb, I realised we are in the business of hope. Hope that life is waiting to be enjoyed and lived to the fullest.”

According to the United Nations, access to assistive technology is a precondition for equalisation of opportunities for people living with disabilities.

“We are capacitating physically impaired people, thereby giving hope to the marginalised and enabling them to live a dignified life. We are helping to build a nation,” said Ludada.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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