

EDITOR'S NOTE

Please allow me to introduce myself to you dear partners and readers. My name is Molula Dorcas Mofosi, and I am a newly appointed Communication Officer at the Lesotho National Federation of Disabled Organizations (LNFOD).

I am a dynamic strategic communication professional who excels at writing, presenting, and interpersonal communication. With a background in journalism and research, my work focuses on community development and the empowerment of vulnerable groups such as the rare disease community, people with disabilities, women, and children.



EDITOR

On that note, if you would like to contribute to the next issue or have received this newsletter from a third party and wish to be included on the mailing list, please contact Molula Mofosi at mofosidorcas@gmail.com or call +266 58020181

Best Regards

The Editor

I am pleased to be a part of the LNFOD team as a communication officer because I will gain a thorough understanding of the difficulties that people with disabilities face. Furthermore, I am humbled to have been given this opportunity because it will allow me to grow not only professionally, but also in my activism for equal rights for women. For example, since working with LNFOD, I've developed a personal interest in sexual and reproductive rights for women with disabilities, which is a newly obtained perspective in which I intend to invest heavily on. This is a humbling opportunity to which I owe nothing but hard work to LNFOD and the entire community of the disabled persons

VOTING BARRIERS FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES IN LESOTHO

This article is aimed at discussing the barriers faced by people with disabilities in the Lesotho's elections. It articulates on the legal and policy barriers faced by people with disabilities trying to participate in the election and recommend ways in which such barriers can be overcome.

Background

The Living conditions study report and other research indicate that, persons with disabilities are normally discriminated, isolated, and excluded from participating in the Lesotho politics as equal actors with others.

They are regarded as objects of charity and pity and not necessarily considered as subjects of human rights in their countries.

Persons with disabilities living in Lesotho will be voting by the end of 2022 for the new government expected to rule the country for the next five years.

Lesotho acceded to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) on the 2nd of December 2008.

The purpose of this convention is to promote, protect and ensure full and equal enjoyment of all human rights by all persons with disabilities and to restore inherent dignity of persons with disabilities.



DIRECTOR'S CORNER_ NKHASI SEEFUTHI

Data

Data of persons with disabilities is not collected in the election register. The voter register does not disaggregate data based on disability save on gender. This simply means that the independent electoral commission does not know how many people with disabilities are eligible for voting in Lesotho.

CRPD requires the state parties to collect appropriate and credible data on persons with disabilities which may be used to inform policies, programmes and services targeted at persons with disabilities in Lesotho.

If the independent electoral commission of Lesotho does not collect data based on disability, it will still be difficult to think about meaningful participation of persons with disabilities in the Lesotho politics because there will be no information about them. The commission will not be placed at the best position to tackle barriers faced by people with disabilities trying to participate in the Lesotho election.

Election accessibility

Persons with disabilities still face accessibility barriers in terms of the distance to polling stations and the fact that most of the polling stations are located at schools where it is still difficult for voters with disabilities to access.

Despite several reports made by both international and national election observers about this problem, I.E.C continues to locate polling stations at inaccessible areas thereby hindering full and effective participation of voters with disabilities.

Recommendations

The independent electoral commission wants to build credible election in which all people must be respected and protected to exercise their human and democracy rights. For I.E.C to build disability inclusive elections. It must do the following:

Remove discrimination against persons with intellectual disabilities as contained by section 5 of the National Assembly Electoral Amendment Act of 2011 and allow persons with mental disabilities to participate in the election by way of registration.

Disaggregate data on persons with disabilities in order to ensure the accurate number of persons with disabilities and tackle the barriers which they face in the election.

I.E.C must consult closely with organisations of persons with disabilities in order to ensure physical accessibility of polling stations and other logistics.

In terms of the political rights of persons with disabilities, the Convention requires the state parties to enable full and equal participation of persons with disabilities by collecting appropriate data for persons with disabilities; register eligible persons with disabilities for voting; allow them to become party representatives and vote during the election date without any obstacles.

In March 2021, government promulgated Persons with Disability Equity Act as a means through which the CRPD has been domesticated in Lesotho. The Act requires authorities to create enabling environment which will promote participation and ensure the respect of the voting rights for persons with disabilities.

Despite all these developments, the National Assembly electoral amendment Act of 2011 is not yet harmonised with the CRPD.

Firstly, the Act discriminates against persons with intellectual and psychosocial disabilities in that it does not allow them to register for the election based on disability.

Section 5 of the National assembly electoral amendment Act prohibits in explicit terms registration of persons with mental disabilities declared as such to participate in the elections.

Secondly, section 30 of the National Assembly electoral amendment Act is promoting participation of persons with disabilities in the party politics. It states that political parties shall facilitate full and effective participation of persons with disabilities. However, this provision does not guide the political parties and persons with disabilities on how this progressive provision may be achieved for persons with disabilities. To ensure meaningful participation of persons with disabilities in the Lesotho party politics, the law should clearly provide for the full and equal participation of persons with disabilities and sanction political parties which do not comply with the law.

FOKOTHI'S FIRST STEP TOWARD IMPLEMENTING INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

The National Association of the Deaf Lesotho has reached another milestone in its advocacy for deaf people. Lerotholi Polytechnic has admitted two deaf students, marking the first time the school has done so.

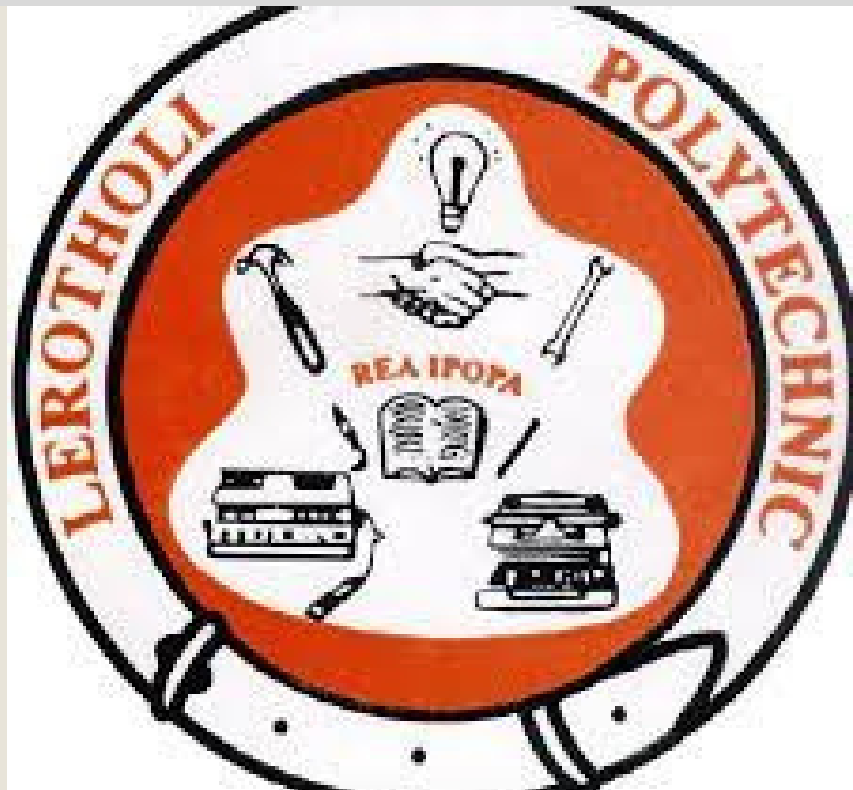
According to NADL, this is a huge success because they approached the school between 2018 and 2019 by writing a letter expressing their interest in enrolling deaf people in their institute. The institute then stated that it would look into it. Which is why NADL is pleased to announce that two of their members have been accepted into the institute's diploma programs in business management and office administration.

Among the students Mpone Chale, a 24-year-old woman who is one of the students enrolling and a member of NADL, expressed her joy because this is positive feedback from the organization's advocacy.

"I am yet to demonstrate to the rest of the world that advocacy worked for me; after waiting for three years to pursue higher education, I am finally going to study hard and achieve my dreams."

Mpone Chale went on to say that deaf students face many communication barriers at school, and that some students drop out because they sometimes fail their studies despite the presence of an interpreter, saying,

"I am not going to rely solely on the interpreter because there are books and the internet to help me learn, and I am not willing to let any social challenge interfere with my studies," Chale said in response to a question about motivating young people with hearing impairment.



ADVOCACY- MOLULA MOFOSI

This is a major leap forward for fokothi, which is catching up with other institutes that accept students with disabilities, such as IBC College, National University of Lesotho (NUL), and Institute of Extra Mural Studies (IEMS). The institute promised to pay the two interpreters and will continue to work with NADL to fund two more interpreters, as four are needed (two interpreters for each students). Finally, NADL chairperson Letsékha Ntlale stated that this is a breakthrough because there are many students with disabilities in high schools, and it demonstrates significant progress in the implementation of inclusive education policy.

INCLUSIVE LABOUR MARKET

Persons with disabilities face a slew of obstacles that can begin early in life and, when combined, have a significant impact on their ability to find decent work. Education is one of the most significant barriers. Persons with disabilities are still not effectively included in mainstream education in many countries. (VIP) With the Ministry of Labour's recently published skills gap assessment in collaboration with the IOM on July 2022. The disabled community voiced their concerns about the assessment of disabled people's inclusion in the labour market.

The assessment's goal is to present statistics on skill supply and skill shortage in Lesotho's labour market. The goal is to recommend skills that are in high demand in the labour market. This assessment can help people determine what skills or careers they want to pursue in the future. This is especially important for the youth to consider because they are the future of the labour market. And this does not exclude people or youth with disabilities of any kind. According to available statistics, a larger proportion of persons with disabilities in employment are self-employed, which in many countries, including Lesotho, is an involuntary outcome that reflects a lack of opportunities in other types of employment and leads to informal employment.



GENERAL NEWS- MOLULA MOFOSI

Inclusive skills development policies that ensure equal access to the labour market for men and women with disabilities are less expensive and more effective in terms of results than specialized approaches. People with severe disabilities appear to have a particularly difficult time gaining access to mainstream primary and secondary education. For others, it is more difficult to gain access to higher education. This results in lower levels of education than the general population.

Furthermore, mainstream national education and vocational training are frequently unsuitable for the inclusion of people with disabilities. Existing training facilities for people who have been disabled since birth or at a young age frequently lack a vocational component or focus on competencies that are not in line with labour market demands

In Lesotho, the average level of education for people with disabilities is LGCSE, with LGCSE being the highest for those who complete school. This is a common outcome of a non-inclusive school environment and other access barriers, particularly for those who are born with the disability as opposed to those who acquire them later in childhood. The majority of Basotho develop their skills through formal education, which in this case, inclusive education policy, which strives to accommodate disabled people in the labour market, it is critical for schools to adopt this policy

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MY IMPRESSION WORKING WITH PERSONS WITH DISABILITY

Like they always say; “disability is not inability” In my observation, it has been a quite astounding journey to see people cooperate and work beyond what they are labelled to be. Above all the ability to create a positive working environment is which is quite friendly and thrive in work no matter the type of disability.

Work has been quite engaging and progress was quite great as well as the coordination amongst colleagues

My first impression was that the ones I came across looked more alive than any other person I'd ever seen. My impression was that everyone was treating them in a respectful manner. In my years of studying it has been of advantage to learn about people living with disabilities and working with them has been a great experience as I learned a lot from them and other has been fun.

I came across people living with different disabilities but they never behaved unable or wanted to be pitied for or always shown sympathy but instead they excelled beyond major expectations. They made me understand disabilities in an exceptional way and made me believe more in my passion of working with people with disabilities.



GENERAL NEWS- 'MANALELI MOHLOMI

Some disabilities may not be seen but observed when one has some knowledge but they can be quite challenging if one is working with people with disabilities. At my observation a year ago at *Mohloli oa bophelo Centre* I came across a learner with multiple disabilities, though one outstanding one visually and physically but later discovered that intellectually there was a challenge; however, I won at the end and had positive results.

My impression is that all human beings are God's special creatures and are unique in their being and all must be treated with love and respect. Daily we learn different things with working with people with disability and we grow in experience than when just reading or surfing the Internet. We discover more approaches in working with people disabled than just being told stories; above all it cultivates my passion in ministry and work.

MY IMPRESSION WORKING WITH PERSONS WITH DISABILITY

As a special education student, working with persons with disability has been quite an amazing experience because I am not just exposed to the theories of inclusion, I am also taking part in putting those theories into practice. There is this saying that disability is not inability, it is a matter of perception.

Through my education in the faculty of inclusive education, I've learned not to judge disability by its visibility and being around, working with people with special needs has indeed proven that disability does not label a person unable.

That relate to my academic and career goals altogether. It was through interactions and engaging in daily activities that I got to educate myself more on inclusion, disability and all the related issues.

Working with people with disability is no different to working with people who are referred to as normal people; everyone has their unique skills and abilities. Having positive abilities and colleagues who are skilled about inclusion in a working environment is very necessary in order the environment to be congenial.



GENERAL NEWS- LIPOLELO PHANYAKE

Working with persons with have taught me of the proper approaches when addressing them; how to guide them and address them. I have also acquired some communication skills that include sign language, using clear instruction when communicating.

Above all, I have learned and seen that a person is disabled if he\she does not have or is unable to do his\her daily activities. When a disabled person is provided with proper assistive devices and is able to do daily activities, he/she is no longer regarded as a disabled person.

GENDER AND DISABILITY IN PRACTICE PROGRAM

LNFOOD has released layers chickens for the first time for Thaba-Khupa women through the Gender and Disability In Practice program. These women, who have various disabilities, have been empowered not only economically but also socially.

Bonang Leseli Basali (BLB), as they are known, is a group of ten women ranging in age from seven to fifty. With varying ages and impairments, these women learn to rely on one another for the project's success. From physical disabilities to hearing impairments, the women work together to improve their project.



BONANG LESELI BASALI MEMBERS

With this revolving loan economic empowerment for women, the ladies stated that the program forces them to work harder to ensure that the projects run smoothly, as their goal is to produce at least four trays per day while covering all costs.

As in any social setting with two or more people working together, challenges will always arise, and how they are overcome depends on a number of factors, including cooperation and resources. The ladies mentioned their main challenges as learning how to hold each other accountable for the tasks they assign themselves, which leaves a lot of room for improvement.

"With such challenges, skills such as management, bookkeeping, and general business skills will be obligated for every member to learn, so this project has provided opportunities for growth." Boitumelo Mapekechane stated.

"I have lived with visual impairment my entire life and have accepted myself as I am, but this project has rekindled my interest in being an active member of society and assisting where I can." My social significance has been enhanced by this project, as I have become more self-aware and self-confident." Neheng Sebetsa, the group's Chair Lady said.

Nkutoana Marupelo, Deputy Chairperson of BLB, stated that the project has increased the meaning of her daily life because she now wakes up with a plan. "Because I can plan my day, I have a sense of purpose and a routine." I am now a busy woman, like any other woman. This project has increased food security in most of us because we buy these eggs ourselves rather than going to stores where the prices are a little higher."



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