

EDITOR'S NOTE

August was a very busy month as the nation celebrated International Youth Day and African Women's Month. There was also much to notice and identify on the triumphs and difficulties that women and young people with disabilities encounter. In a nutshell, all nations are working to improve their economies without leaving anyone behind (women, young people, or LGBTQ+ people), but there is no indication of what the public, private, or nonprofit sectors or organizations in Lesotho are doing. To encourage diversity, we highlight success stories in different sectors of individuals in this newsletter.



EDITOR- MOLULA MOFOSI

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

BUDGET ADVOCACY FOR INCLUSION OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES IN THE LESOTHO DEVELOPMENT AGENDA

This article aims at advocating for the budget allocation to implement disability specific and inclusive laws for the protection of the rights of persons with disabilities. It is demonstrating the good policy and legal framework rendered impossible due to lack of funding support to disability institution including the ministry of social development.

It is finally recommending actions which must be undertaken by the duty bearers to realise human rights of persons with disabilities through the allocation of budget.

Lesotho has made great strides in terms of law and policy framework for the protection of the rights of persons with disabilities. Following the ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) by government on the 2nd of December 2008, Lesotho has been working hard to domesticate the disability convention including by adoption of the National Disability and Rehabilitation policy by the Cabinet of Ministers of the kingdom of Lesotho in 2011.

In 2012, the Ministry of Development Planning for the first time in its history explicitly incorporated disability as a cross cutting issue in the national strategic development plan (2012-2013-2016-2017). This was welcomed by organisations of persons with disabilities as a strategic move of considering disability as a development issue which must be tackled by every ministry.

The national disability mainstreaming plan was designed and put in place by government under the coordination of the Ministry of social development as an implementation plan for the National Disability policy (2011). The ministry of social development went ahead to launch disability focal points in most of the ministries to ensure accountability for disability mainstreaming for all ministries.

Recently, government went ahead to develop the disability inclusive education policy in 2018 directing the country to practise inclusive education and provide measures which will enable learners with disabilities to participate without barriers in the education system.



DIRECTOR'S CORNER_ NKHASI SEEFUTHI

.However, research indicates that most of these instruments have not yet benefited persons with disabilities. Persons with disabilities continue to find it hard to access education, employment, healthcare and other social services because of the lack of funding to support effective implementation.

It is evident that budget should be an integral part of disability advocacy since critical milestones achieved in the disability sector fail to translate into action due to lack of funding.

Lesotho planners have not yet considered disability as a human right issue which must be prioritised in the budget making.

It remains difficult if not impossible to secure funding for disability inclusive development including the Ministry of social development. The recent example relates to the situation where the ministry informed LNFOD that the persons with disability advisory council has not been formed owing to lack of funding to initiate the council established by law.

Lack of funding to implement these good human rights instruments render the efforts aimed at securing disability rights useless.

Persons with disabilities are left behind despite the saying that no one should be left behind. Based on the foregoing: I highly encourage organisations of persons with disabilities to start thinking about budget advocacy to ensure that the good policies translate into action for the benefit of persons with disabilities.

We should find a way of advocating for the allocation of budget which will lead to effective implementation of all laws and policies promoting and protecting the rights of persons with disabilities.

The capacity of the Ministry of finance should be enhanced to understand the situation under which persons with disabilities are living to allocate funding.

Ministry of social development must increase its advocacy capacity to grab funding for disability as a social and development issue.

I am also calling upon the development partners to consider funding disability as a human right issue.

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Mamello School and Special Needs Center has already had a successful first seven months. If you were to ask the director of Mamello School and Special Needs Center, Kefuoe Nkuatsana, a Special Needs Education Graduate from the National University of Lesotho, she would say that she had not necessarily planned on running a special needs school two years ago. But she knew at the back of her mind that her destiny is along the lines of children and education as she was since 2017 a teacher at Busy Bee pre-school.. She only started after her employer in 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic informed them that they might not be paid.

She later started teaching part-time, and her first two students were two kids who had disabilities. Then, as a result of word-of-mouth advertising, her clientele began to expand, and she made the decision to open the Mamello School and Special Needs Center in Naleli, Ha ra Setimela, where she had also grown up. Nearly 100 students attend the school so far, with learning disabilities and autism being the most prevalent disabilities



ADVOCACY- MOLULA MOFOSI

. The Mamello School and Special Needs Center is an inclusive school because it provides accommodations for all children with and without impairments. Nkuatsana explains, "Mamello School and Special Needs Center is a newly founded school with grade 1 to 6 and a special needs section. The school was funded by my personal pocket so the school does not take pupils with severe impairments as well as visual impairments because technologies like brailing machines are too expensive for us. We however not give up because our goal is to work toward inclusive education, where all children, regardless of their abilities, receive quality education, as well as the sluggish growth of special education legislation and inadequate development of educational resources to enable inclusive education.

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LNFOOD PRESS STATEMENT ON THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES AS OF AUGUST 2022

Historically, persons with disabilities have been subjected to discrimination, stigma and isolation. persons with disabilities find it hard to participate in society on an equal basis with others due to existing barriers in societal attitudes, education, employment, human rights protection and others.

Persons with Disability Equity Act

On the 12 March 2021, government promulgated Persons with Disability Equity Act whose purpose is to establish Persons with Disability Advisory Council, provide for equalization of opportunities amongst persons with disabilities and for other related matters.

Persons with Disability advisory council is an independent body established by this Act whose function is to monitor the implementation of this act.

On the 30 September 2021 -2021 fiscal year, government through the Acting Minister of social development made a pledge to allocate budget for the inauguration of the council in the 2022-2023 fiscal year as the Ministry would have budgeted for its launch.



GENERAL NEWS

Similarly, the prime minister of Lesotho made the similar pledge during the commemoration of the International Day of Persons with disabilities held on the 3rd of December 2021 in the district of Butha-Butha. However, both pledges have not been fulfilled and the ministry of social development reported that the ministry of Finance did not accept the budget proposed for the inauguration of the council for the fiscal budget 2022-2023. Meaning that the council will not start its functions this year as per the pledges and agreements reached.

The absence of the Persons with Disability advisory council means that the rights of persons with disabilities are not properly monitored, accessibility issues for the movement of persons with disabilities are not promoted, access to information is compromised and any other right enshrined in the Act is under threat due to the absence of the monitoring body.

LNFOOD notes with great concern that disability is not yet prioritised and lack of allocation of budget for the effective implementation of disability legal and policy framework continue to create social inequalities amongst persons with disabilities. To address these systematic and structural barriers hindering meaningful inclusion and participation of persons with disabilities, LNFOOD urges government through the ministry of social development and finance to do the following:

Inaugurate the council as required by the law

- A. Put in place a monitoring plan for the inauguration of the council
- B. Allocate a budget for the functioning of the council
- C. Ask the development partners to support the inauguration of the council

Disability grant and its implementation modalities Government of Lesotho has started providing disability grant to eligible persons with disabilities in accordance with the Act from the last fiscal year in which Butha-Buthe and Leribe have been the first districts to benefit from this scheme.

LNFOOD has recently learned that out of the 5 pilot districts for the provision of disability grant only Butha-Buthe and Leribe have started to receive grant.

LNFOOD observed that, the Ministry of social development did not put in place robust communication strategy for the provision of disability grant because many people with disabilities are not aware of the eligibility criteria. This has led into underrepresentation of persons with disabilities in the provision of the grant since many people eligible did not get the messages for registration.

Information is not produced in accessible formats to ensure that it reach out to all persons with disabilities who may need it.

Some persons with disabilities in the district of Leribe and mohale's hoek were denied an opportunity to register for the grant on the basis that they do not qualify.



LNFOOD GENERAL NEWS

The Act requires persons with disabilities to be allowed to register and undergo assessments stipulated by the law and no one is allowed to pre assess eligibility at the registration stage.

There are no clear and independent internal individual complaints mechanisms for those who may feel aggrieved by the decision of the MINISTRY OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT about the provision of a grant.

It is not clear when the disability grant roll out will be completed due to the shortage of medical practitioners trained on identification of a disability.

LNFOOD urges MINISTRY OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT to do the following:

- A. Produce disability grant related information in accessible formats including in Braille, large print, plain language, sign language and any other communication aids as required by the law. Establish a clear internal individual complaints mechanism for the disability grant applicant who are not satisfied with the outcome of their application.
- B. Make available disability grant application forms available at the community councils to allow registration
- C. Consider provision of disability as a right to social protection for persons with disabilities and speed up the process of enrolment across the country

Accountability for the implementation of the National disability mainstreaming plan MINISTRY OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT has revised the national disability mainstreaming plan (2020-2025) in partnership with other ministries to promote disability inclusion in other ministries. This has been achieved through appointment of disability focal points.

YOUTH MONTH- GENERAL NEWS

As young people continue to raise their challenges, the month of August is significant because August 12th is International Youth Day. This month, youth speak louder, or at least the mainstream media focuses on what the youth say over time, which in most cases is about employment, LGBTQ+ rights, and so on.

LNFOOD had a conversation with Rets'ilisitsoe Ranthithi, an unemployed Mosotho youngster just like many with a bachelor's degree, about issues involving youth, specifically youth with disabilities, as he is physically disabled.

"Usually, when youth issues are addressed, youth with disabilities are sidelined, and perhaps there is a lack of representation of youth with disabilities," says Ranthithi. Ranthithi goes on to highlight politicians' betrayal of disabled youth. "From my experience, the chief submits names of people with disabilities to the responsible ministry every year for what we call 'fato-fato' (ministry of forestry community projects). He goes on to say that every name is submitted with a proxy, or the person who will be working while the person with disability awarded the job is at home.



"The disadvantage of this is that even when the wages arrive, they are given to the person with the assumption that this is not the case. "My identity and disability have only been used for publicity purposes. My identity and disability have only been used to benefit politicians' public relations. The point is that disabled people are used as a prop by politicians, which gives us false hope. I am a literate man with a degree, but I am unable to find work because of my wheelchair, and employers, both public and private, are not inclusive. While we as youth call for policy changes, inclusive employment should be prioritized.



PEOPLE YOU MAY KNOW

Meet - Christine Chama, on 27 June 2022 she was sworn-in as Human Rights Commissioner of the Republic of Zambia.

She is a disability advocate, development specialist and social worker.

She holds a Bachelor of Arts (BA) in Development Studies with Sociology from the University of Zambia.

Christine is a former President of the University of Zambia Development Studies Association (UNZADESA) and former Student Representative for Learners with Disabilities.

On 27 June 2022, she was sworn in as Human Rights Commissioner by the Zambian President Hakainde Hichilema.

"I'm passionate about seeing positive change more especially in lives of persons with special needs. Therefore, I believe for me to see that change I should first be the change," said Christine Chama.

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