

DISABILITY LESOTHO



From the Editor

Dear Partner,

Welcome once again to the tenth edition of Disability Lesotho, the monthly email newsletter from Lesotho National Federation of the Disabled. This newsletter will cover news for April, 2013.

This e-newsletter is a platform whereby partners in the disability sector share the good work they do and learn from the work of others. This includes news, events, updates, activities and all issues affecting people with disability in Lesotho. We therefore welcome contributions of any nature from all organizations working to improve the lives of people in Lesotho, including those with disability.

It is now winter time so let's all protect us from cold. Let's now put on more and warm clothes, remember to care for children this time and keep them aware from fire to avoid burn. Those who will be going out for field work from this month always watch the weather highlights so that we can all be safe.

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 Pascalina a Letsau on 5905 5406 or pletsau@gmail.com

We welcome any feedback which may improve the quality and content of this free service.

GENERAL NEWS

Access to public roads and buildings is a right, not a privilege



Mr. Lebohang Phooko Principal Secretary of Public works and Transport

Environmental accessibility for people with disability was the theme for the LNFOD advocacy coalition meeting which was held at Maseru Sun Cabanas on Monday the 22 April. The meeting was attended by Lebohang Phooko, the Principle Secretary of Public Works and Transport, as well as representatives from organisations in the LNFOD advocacy coalition.

During the meeting, stakeholders within the disability movement shared their concerns regarding the lack of public infrastructure catering to the needs of people with disability. Holes in the footpath, high curbsides and alleyways with little pedestrian visibility can all pose as serious safety hazards for people with physical and visual disabilities. Meanwhile, lack of building entrance ramps and lifts and traffic lights without audio queues can be a major inconvenience.

One teacher in a school for visually impaired students mentioned the case of a blind student who had fallen into an unmarked hole in the road and broke her back. No charges were brought forward in relation to this matter and the hole remains uncovered outside the school.

“We teach our children to walk around by themselves so that they may live independently and engage with the community. However, as soon as they step outside the school gates they are faced with so many safety hazards caused by cars, cracks in the pavement and holes in the roads. The result is that many are afraid to face the outside world and would prefer to stay at home.” Said Mojabeng

Jafeta, teacher at Saint Bernadettes Resource Centre for the Blind.

Ability to access the physical environment on an equal footing with others is a human right enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which states that signatories must “take appropriate measures to ensure to persons with disabilities access, on an equal basis with others”. The article refers to access in terms of communications, information and public facilities and services.

Nkhasi Sefuthi, Human Rights and Advocacy Officer, LNFOD: said “Access to the public buildings and roads is not a privilege, it is a human right. Currently, people with disabilities are being denied access to basic services such as healthcare and education because of the barriers to physical accessibility. We are asking the Ministry of Public Works and Transport to include the concept of disability access in their policy documents so that the needs of people with disability may be taken into account in all future infrastructure development projects.”

The Principle Secretary agreed that the Road Traffic Act (1981) needed to be updated to reflect the Ministry’s commitment to the principle of disability inclusion but stated that the 2006 Transport Policy document already adhered to this principle, citing the construction of wheelchair accessible pedestrian overpasses as an example of efforts made to improve disability access.

“The Ministry of Public Works and Transport in its 2006 transport policy document has indicated that disability issues will be mainstreamed in public buildings, transport, infrastructure and sanitation facilities. In this regard, all new facilities address the issues of disability.” Commented Lebohang Phooko.

LNFOD Human Rights and Advocacy Officer responded to this statement: “Whilst in principle the transport policy document addresses disability issues, the reality is that a number of buildings constructed after this time are not disability accessible.”

The Principle Secretary also invited LNFOD and other stakeholders in the disability movement to be involved in the development of a new Roads and Traffic Act and urged LNFOD to meet with his office once per year to offer input into the design of upcoming buildings. The follow-up meeting is set to take place in September this year.

GENERAL NEWS

DPOs TRAINING WORKSHOP ON MAINSTREAMING

Secretariat of African Decade of the Persons with Disabilities (SADPD) has awarded Lesotho National Federation of Organisations of the Disabled (LNFOD) a project that focuses on moving up disability issues on Lesotho's development agenda through mainstreaming and implementation of UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and other protocols which Lesotho is a party.

The emphasis here has been enhancing collaboration between Disability Peoples Organisations (DPOs) and other Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) dealing with human rights issues in Lesotho to put pressure on the duty bearers such as government officials and other service providers to provide services to Persons with Disabilities on equal basis with those without disabilities.

A research on living conditions among persons with disabilities done in 2010 by SINTEF and LNFOD had found that Persons with Disabilities do not access the services on equal basis with their non disabled counterparts. With this in mind, LNFOD set out to engage with human rights organisations dealing with wide ranging target population groups in Lesotho

It set out to do this first through administration of a questionnaire tool to the identified 7 human rights defenders to assess the status of their mainstreaming issues disabilities in their policies and programs. Data was collated and analysis was done. Then followed up DPOs capacity building workshop on the 21st – 22nd March 2013, where all four DPOs attended through their leadership as well as secretariat

The main purpose of the DPOs capacity building workshop was to enhance skills and forge collaboration with other human rights defenders to push for the mainstreaming of disability issues.

Objectives of the training were as follows;

- DPOs will have gained knowledge on mainstreaming disability issues and steps involved
- DPOs will have identified areas of gaps in their human rights and identified the most suited Civil Society Organisations (CSOs)
- DPOs will have developed ideas on how they believe issues should be taken up in collaboration with human rights defenders
- DPOs will have come up with a systematic framework of engaging CSOs

Global Action Week 2013



Lesotho Teachers Trade Association (LTTA) in collaboration with Itjareng Vocational Training Centre celebrated a Global Action Week together. The week started from the 21st – 27th April. To celebrate this week organized the campaign for Education to raise awareness of the importance of Education for All. Members of LTTA and Itjareng visited media trying to make people understand laws that are protecting children relating to education.

The theme for this year was “Every child needs a Teacher”, so people with disabilities attended this event with placards with messages. All these messages indicated the barriers affecting children with disabilities. Itjareng on behalf of disability sector in Lesotho had a speech whereby elaborated more on how Inclusive Education can be tackled in order to succeed. ‘We don’t need anything special but be treated like other children at schools, we need this from ECCD level up until High education level’ says Pascalina Letsau representing Itjareng.

The event itself was an eye opener to many people who attended it, students, parents and other teachers did not know exactly what are the barriers facing children with disabilities. It was a pleasant among that event where we met a small girl child by the name of Ofaane Mokhali who is 6yrs old from Mantloaneng ECCD Morija who is in need of crutches and shoes as her assistive devices.



Ofaane Mokhali with her teachers

Farewell and thank you!!



It is with mixed feelings of pleasure and regret that we announce that Palesa Mphohle, Chairperson of IDAL and Director at Touch Roots Africa, is moving on. Palesa will be joining the team of African Decade in Pretoria. Palesa is a founding member of IDAL and has played an instrumental role in promoting the rights of people with intellectual disability in Lesotho. IDAL was founded in 1992 when a small group of parents of children with intellectual disability joined forces to fight for the rights of their children.

We wish Palesa the best of luck in her new role and hope that she will continue in the fight for equal rights of people with disability.

Inclusive Education is what we talk.....



Students at Kopanang Primary School

Kopanang Primary School, which is situated on the outskirts of Maseru, held an awareness raising activity on Disability and Education Access on Wednesday the 17 April. Disability stakeholders namely, teachers, parents of children with disabilities, LNFOD, Ministry of Education and Training, and local Community Councillors and Chiefs were invited to participate in the activity which was hosted on school grounds.

The main reason for the meeting was to share information with the community living within the 'Mantsebo Council on the functions of the above mentioned stakeholders in the disability sector.

The activity informed parents and guardians of children with disabilities of the primary schools which accommodate children with disabilities. The gathering also made the community aware of financial packages available from the Ministry of the Social Development which could assist the poorest families living with children with disabilities.

It was said that, Kopanang primary admits children with mild disabilities, for example partially sighted pupils and some physically disabled pupils are schooling there. However given limited resources rurally and at the school, if a pupil is completely blind, the school refers the child to Resource Centre for the Blind situated (located in Maseru District, near Lesotho High School).

Participants were informed that, parents of children with disabilities must consult with social workers and education officers located in their district for any disability related matters to be addressed.

Local community councilors vowed to fight any form of violence perpetrated against people with disabilities in their council.

The Local Police Unit urged the community to report any crime committed against people with disabilities so as to fully promote and protect people with disabilities living in Mohlakeng council.

The chief called out to the community not to discriminate against people with disabilities but rather to accept them as equal members of the society who only have special needs.



Community members attending the public gathering

LRA wheelchair Marathon – 2013



The 20th April, Lesotho Revenue Authority (LRA) in partnership with Lesotho National Association of the Physically Disabled (LNAPD) had a wheelchair race whereby the idea was to fundraise so that can support people with physical disability. The support to LNAPD from LRA and other companies is 28 wheelchairs to help people with physical disabilities that are in need of them. This will go on mainly to the following assistive devices like crutches, wheelchairs and shoes to those in need of them. Companies participated in this event had to buy a wheelchair so that can be part of the race.

The aim of this is to continue even the following years to support other disabilities like deaf, visual and intellectual as all have different needs.

LNFOD HIV awareness workshop



District Health Management Team (DHMT) in the Mafeteng district in collaboration with LNFOD have conducted an intensive yet compelling 2 week

training which resulted in 20 individuals from different communities across the district completing HIV testing and counseling (HTC) training course.

This training was held ended on the 18th April 2013 in Mafeteng with the purpose of building capacity of PWDs representatives to provide quality HIV testing and counseling (HTC) services according to the national HTC guidelines.

While 12 of these peer counselors would start their counseling work after the completion of the training, 8 would be attached to clinics in their own areas where they would be. These 8 trainees would go further to be trained to perform HIV testing and would undergo a one month attachment at the clinics where they will be supervised by the management of the health centers in which they would be attached.

Speaking to the delight of the trainees, Mrs Sipiwe Machachamisa senior counselor for the Mafeteng district confirmed that as management, they have already made arrangements with the health centers which are nearby to the communities where the trainees come from and told them that the clinics are ready to supervise all the 8 of them during their attachment period of one (1) month.

On her closing remarks, Mrs Sipiwe Machachamisa thanked LNFOD, and welcomed the new set of peer counselors to the health sector. She remarked that the set of these peer counselors comes at 'this is a happy moment for us in health as we have been faced with a challenge of giving out services to clients with disabilities.

She then commended that the demand for peer education is high 'your addition to the peer counselors base that we have come at the opportune time when the demand for counseling is at highest when a lot of people are default from treatment leading earlier enrolment to the second line of treatment.' She added 'this is not only detrimental to their health but it also puts a lot of strain to the tax payers money as the government use a lot of moneys for treatment in this second line of treatment.'

Speaking on behalf of LNFOD, Mr Moeletsi commended DHMT in effort to train disabled healthcare professionals and said these trainees could now provide equal service to the individuals persons with disabilities on in need of HTC services. 'We (LNFOD) take this as a step to enhance communication to the disabled so that they too have access to information about treatment so that they know what treatment they are agreeing to.'

OPINION PIECE

Life on wheels

Mampoeake shares her experiences of life in a wheelchair



By: 'Mampoeakae Mosia

I am a 22 year lady who lives at Ha Lekhobanyane Mazenod in the district of Maseru. I am physically disabled and use wheelchair. I attended school at Itjareng Vocational Training Centre and was doing Sewing. At the moment I am staying at home doing nothing because I cannot be employed due to my disability and I cannot even start my own small tailoring business as I do not have the start-up capital.

I once approached Ministry of Social Development for support asking for social grant so that I can help myself to start a small business but was told that because my mother is working at the Textile Factories I cannot get such support. At my age, it's my mother's responsibility to buy me everything and to me it is not nice to see myself not in a position to do things on my own.

The only support that I was granted with is medical fees. As a wheelchair user, the environment is not conducive for me at all; I cannot go anywhere without being assisted. There is no accessibility even in my home premises around the yard.

When my siblings are at school and my mother at work, I have to wait even if I need to buy something from the café. Even if I need something that is without my reach, I have to wait for the children to arrive back from school.

When walking around the village with my wheelchair, people would be staring at me like it's their first time to see person with disability. They do not get used to my disability even though I was born and raised in this same village. When I fall from my wheelchair, I cannot pick up myself, I would need someone's assistance, and when children see me falling, they mock me. It does not affect me now because I have been taught to accept my disability and can now face the world and its challenges but what is hurting is the delay of improving our country especially buildings and roads around villages and towns of Lesotho by the government.

I'm a human being. I would like to have my own family one day just like any other girl dreams so. But, how am I going to get married when I'm trapped in my own disability? Who will see me when I cannot go out with friends and meet new faces? That's my wish to have my own children and husband but I know that it's just a dream. I'm not accusing anyone but the situation and environment I am living in; I wish things can be at my power so that I can see all these things as quick as tomorrow.



With the help from her former instructors

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Mokae Moepi

Social worker and wheelchair-user



Any comments on being a woman in a wheelchair?

Being a social worker by profession and a peer supporter has helped me to be a strong woman who believes in herself that she can bring change in our country. Despite my disability I still look at life in a normal way still dating like before and doing some house chores like cooking and cleaning like every other woman. So disability is not inability

What is the hardest part about being in a wheelchair?

It's very hard and sad if there are buildings that are not wheelchair friendly so with the absence of lifts it is a problem for us to reach some buildings, again, in the public transport have to pay double the normal price because the chair occupies some space so have to pay for the chair as well, so it's a problem if you cannot avoid as it well known that some of us are poor while others are rich.

What inspires you about being disabled?

I got disabled at the young age and became inspired when I see people on the same situation as mine living their lives normal like everyone else, being disabled helped me to look at life in a different and positive way and been able to meet with people from different parts of the world.

What is the best advice would you like to give young people?

I would advise youth to live their life wisely and be helpful to our country and help to decrease the spread of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases meaning they should either abstain or condomise. Moreover, they should take responsibilities of making sure that pregnancy rate declines. Lastly, they should know that Education is the key to success so they have to have a brighter future.

If you had a trained cat what would you do with it?

If I had a trained cat I will definitely teach it to play with the ball so that we can play together.

What do you enjoy most?

I enjoy reading books and going out with my peer supporters, peers supporters are people on wheels who provide emotional and social support to other people in the same situation, peer supporters should be the role models in the communities

If you had to date a celebrity online, whom would you date?

Hahahaaha!!...I will definitely date CHRIS BROWN, I love that guy.....

Upcoming events / Announcements

DisABILITY on display at Europe Week

DisABILITY will be on display at Europe Week from 3-5 May at Pioneer Shopping Centre. The Lesotho National Federation of Organisations of the Disabled (LNFOD), together with its partners the Lesotho National League of Visually Impaired Persons (LNLVIP), the Lesotho National Association of the Physically Disabled (LNAPD), National Association of the Deaf in Lesotho (NADL) and the Intellectual Disability Association of Lesotho (IDAL) will be hosting a display which showcases the talents of people with disability. LNFOD is a long time partner of SkillShare International; a UK based international volunteering and development organisation.

The display will include:

- A display of Breaking down the Barriers, a photographic display by Irish photographer Eileen O'Leary depicting the lives of people living with disability in Lesotho (First floor, in front of Foschini)
- A disABILITY stall with information about the work of disabled persons organisations (DPOs) in Lesotho. The stall will feature, amongst other things, items created by graduates and students from Itjareng Vocational Training Centre and Mohloli Bophelo Rehabilitation and Training Centre. Sign-language dictionaries and the popular T-shirts for Equal Education will be on sale at the stall. 100% of the proceeds from T-shirts for Equal Education will be used to purchase equipment for students in special education schools. Representatives from the DPOs will be available to answer any questions from visitors.
- A dynamic wheelchair obstacle course challenge – Visitors will attempt to beat the clock as they maneuver their wheelchair through a dynamic obstacle course (13.00-14.00 Saturday 4 May @ banking lobby, ground floor)
- The White Cane challenge – The white cane is used by blind or visually impaired people as a mobility tool. Visitors will be given the opportunity to experience navigation without sight as they make their way through a series of barriers blindfolded using only a white cane for support (15.00-16.00 Saturday 4 May @ banking lobby, ground floor)

NADL workshops on sign language

Sign language training will be conducted in both CBR districts. In Leribe, the training shall commence on 10th-12th May while in Mafeteng 17th-19th May.

The objective of this workshop is to enhance people with basic Sign Language skills as well as to allow Deaf people to communicate freely with each other, benefiting day to day activities, socialisation, and further training.

In addition there will be a Deaf tour to Thaba-Bosiu on the 4th May. The objective of the visit is for the Deaf to learn about the History of Basotho.

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2013 Disability Summit – Disability and HIV/AIDS

The summit will be held on the 21-24 May at Sandton Sun Hotel in Johannesburg. The summit will be on the best practice in the following; Policy Development and Integrating Disability & HIV/Aids Programmes in the workplace for private and public sectors.

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