

DISABILITY LESOTHO



From the Editor

Dear Partner,

Welcome once again to the edition of Disability Lesotho, the monthly email newsletter from Lesotho National Federation of the Disabled. The edition will cover news for the Month of April, 2015. 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 and institutions working to improve the lives of people in Lesotho, including those with disability.

I wonder why the government is not listening to peoples' concerns. It is been a long time that in this country people with disabilities are crying about services that they are receiving from the government. Is it because we are not tax-payers? Is it because we are not doing our work of advocacy very well?

Going out to hear concerns of people with disabilities out there, the first thing that are complaining about is how we access services, how do they been treat at some certain ministries especially at social development as the ministry responsible to issues of disability. I would like to take this appeal to all responsible people to act and try as much as possible to protect people with disabilities as tax-payers of this country.

Lately, people with disabilities are the only ones left behind in everything, it can be in decisions made towards them, plans and programmes are made for them without their concerns, and the worse part of this is not getting services that are to be given to them. Most people are no longer getting social grant yet there is no disability grant to live with. The Lesotho government should report on the UN convention on the Rights of People with Disability. I think United Nations by this report will realize that Lesotho is doing nothing related to disability.

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 Letsau on (+266) 5905 5406 or pletsau@gmail.com

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

Best regards,



The Editor

DIRECTOR'S CORNER

Practices that undermine efforts of People with disabilities

By: Nkhasi Sefuthi

Why does disability remains behind in the development agenda of Lesotho despite the early ratification of the UN Convention on the rights of people with disabilities?

According to the living conditions study among people with disabilities 2010, ordinary people with disabilities experiences deep inequalities in terms of access to education, healthcare services, employment opportunities and basic social services to mention but a few. 50% of children aged between 5 and 10 are out of school despite the enactment of Education Act 2010 which provides compulsory Education to All.

Many parents of children with disabilities report to LNFOD that, their children are denied off to admission to regular schools on the basis that the schools are not accessible and inclusive of children with disabilities. The response of the government towards this denial of admission through the education officers is always that, no child should be denied admission to any school on the basis of disability. The truth of the matter is that children remain out of school on account of disability despite the positive response from the education officers. The main question is what we should do as parents, DPOs in these devastating circumstances? In the light of the situation described above, it is therefore easy for people with disabilities to accede to the argument which is to the effect that Lesotho ratified the UN Convention on the rights of people with disabilities solely on political reasons without the intention to protect the rights contained in the convention

LNFOD is therefore empowered by the ratification of the disability convention and other national legislations such as Education Act to fight for the rights of people with disabilities. The right to education is fundamental right which must be enforced in order to protect the affected children with disabilities. LNFOD is therefore embarking litigation which we hope might be a game changer

for our development work. In fact we want to make sure that the High Court of Lesotho develops the common law regarding the protection of disability rights which will be followed and enforced throughout. This is what is normally called strategic litigation. So far, we have been able to identify a strategic case in which violation of human rights is happening on the basis of disability. If the government does not take the matter into account, we are hoping to take the matter to court of law which will direct as to how the protection should be effected.

If the court decides in the favor of the victim of whom we hope it could, the court will be developing the law that will not only serve the interest of one individual whose rights have been violated, but, the decision will become the law on which to rely in the similar cases afterwards.

Lack of financing disability programmers remains a major challenge to address barriers facing children with disabilities in the schools. For example, blind, deaf and other underrepresented groups of children with disabilities do not receive disability education support despite the adoption of the integrated policy in 1989. I fully believe that international community does not pay much attention to the disability financing as there is not much international support given to the governments such as Lesotho to ensure the compliance of the domestication of the UN Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities. For example, after the adoption of the MDGs in 2000, we saw extensive support by the international community to the least developing countries through international cooperation on issues such as gender equality and HIV and AIDS although it was not specifically in the MDGs.

Currently the special education unit and the disability services department in the ministry of Education and Training and ministry of Social Development respectively receive the smallness portion of the national budget.

This factor alone hinders the appropriate interventions to reach even the darkest corners of Lesotho. Truly speaking, UN does not have disability focal persons in Lesotho. We only hear about the presence of disability focal persons in Geneva and New York. These practices undermine the efforts of including people with disabilities in countries such as Lesotho because there are no disabilities focal points at the national level which may assist our government on disability technical

issues like it is happening with other aspects of development.

We therefore calling upon the government to finance disability and seek national and international support on the promotion and protection of disability rights.

DPOs, government and the development partners should sit together to address barriers facing ordinary people with disabilities in Lesotho.

Why should we promise things that could not happen?



I, Fusi Ratolo remember the first time that I had a wheelchair, there was a meeting by LNFOD through the programme of CBR. I attended the meeting growling. I was not ashamed of how I walk but it was something not good to my life as my knees were dried up.

I took me a week and then got the wheelchair from LNFOD office. I encouraged to go to school, it was hard for me what does those people say as I was not able to write even my name. The rehabilitation officer from the ministry came also about the same thing. I was enrolling at Ithuseng Vocational and Rehabilitation Centre, institution for the government. I learned how to sew shoes and graduated. When leaving this institution, I was promised to have a start-up to start my business with.

I stayed home expecting to see one from the government but did not see any. I stayed home for those years and then decided to return to another institution for the NGO called LNAPD.

The institution is called Itjareng Vocational Training Centre. I did not tell the management of this institution that I have already taught to repair shoes. I thought they might not allow me to enroll. The reason was; a) the quality of the training was totally different. b) I was not doing anything at home and feel bored

The government is not doing anything for people with disabilities in this country. I think it is government's responsibility to support us but unfortunately not. Most people with disabilities continued with learning with Ithuseng just because they wanted to be supported with start-up kits. Even those studied there are not given support by the government.

I am a father of a boy child and have a family. The government is silent about my life and the rest of my family. I am now doing my job at Mafeteng market but just because I am using hand equipment to sew and repair shoes, I am not doing well for my customers. I ended having things like airtime, drinks and cigarettes to increase the income.

My question is; when will Lesotho understands that we all have to benefit from our tax as Basotho citizens? Why should we promise things that could not happen? Is there any budget for people with disabilities in this country? The ministry of Social Development is taking care for elderly, people with disabilities and children and vulnerable ones but nothing for people with disabilities. Why?

GENERAL NEWS

“Itjareng is moving ahead.....”

By: Pascalina Letsau

Itjareng has been established in 1989, it is a project of the Lesotho National Association of the Physically Disabled (LNAPD). Since this school established the association struggled to register with Ministry of Education, it is only the year 2012 that this school is registered. Each education institute that is registered with ministry must comply with policies, guidelines and Education Act, 2010. With these regards Itjareng is not exception to that, in order to meet these terms as it is under TVT had to follow procedures.

On the 25th April, Maseru Masianokeng, Itjareng held a meeting whereby parents of Itjareng current students gathered at the school to nominate 3 people to establish a school board. Mr. Khotso Petje, Acting Principal elaborated the objective of the meeting and then introduced himself in a way that can include issues of education and work experience. This was done to set an example; it would help parents to make a good nomination during the process of selection.

The school is going to be responsible to oversee of the school. Parents that will be elected to be members of school board are the parents of the current students. Education Act 2010 set this because parents of previous students might not have interest. The board will also help the trainees to have things that are here for. “According to the law of education and training the board will only sit 4 times a



Parents and guardians of students with disabilities at Itjareng during the meeting

year while parents will be called to get reports only 2 times a year. The board will be on duty for 3 years while the chairperson will be hosting the position for 4 years.” said Khotso Petje

It was in this meeting where stated that LNAPD as the owner of the school, will have to submit two members of the association. Among those 2 people, one will host the position of chairperson for the school board. So, the school is still waiting for the association to give those people, one name from the council to represent the community. Having all these names will submit names of school board to the Minister of Education.

Names that have been nominated among parents were as follows;

1. Mr. Thabang Tello
2. Mrs. ‘Manare Ramahlele
3. Mr. Ramosoanyane Ntlhoki

Mr. Ramosoanyane Ntlhoki was nominated to fill the position of vice chairperson of the school board.

There were some concerns raised by other parents; they showed that some of the parents do not give a full support to their children. Some of the scenarios came unexpected, but have to make some plans to conquer them. It is Itjareng’s expectations to see all stakeholders of this centre to support each other for the growth of the school.

Mrs. ‘Manare said, “I am happy to be elected as a school board member, because in most cases women are not elected in committees, even women themselves are afraid to take part in many activities. I see Itjareng as a potential school; we have to work hard to help. It is my wish to see it flourishing in my term in the committee.”

GENERAL NEWS

Fresher training for coordinators and animators



The LNFOD through the project of Deepening Decentralization held at Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village in the district of Maseru on the 27 – 28th April, 2015. Participants were from 4 districts where the project is working meaning; Butha-Buthe, Berea, Maseru and Mhale'shoek. The total roll of participants were 16 males and 12 females

The project of Deepening decentralization funded by European Union to LNFOD started in November 2013. District Coordinators and animators were selected and trained. All these people are expected to raise issues of disabilities in their communities. They have also trained on advocacy work within their communities; it can be on issues of education, healthcare facilities, assistive devices, social protection, and community development and to mainstream disability issues within the local community councils.

It came to LNFOD's intention that the coordinators and animators are not reaching many places within their work areas. The voter educators that worked in these areas showed the necessity for this project to pull-up their socks and visit many villages so that people are aware of disability. The programme has intended to intensify the work to spread issues of disabilities in our councils by engaging animators work harder.

The challenge and the matter that brought this project to this training was ways of reporting, which seems to be defaulting from areas of work by the animators

and coordinators, so with this training the aim is to strengthen ways of reporting both narrative and financial reports

The project has its own objectives and expected to report on it, every report should be inline with programme objectives. Coordinators and animators should work hard to see that everything that is affecting people with disabilities is settled and mainstreamed within other service providers.

There was a concern where coordinators and animators showed that most women are not participating fully in activities reasons are; they are taking care for their children and families so, if they have to take a day away from home it is difficult to leave their families. The other reason is that most deaf people are not participating either in the communities or national level. LNFOD has policies like financial and gender policy which is enforcing its member affiliates to follow them, if there will be training, all different types of disability should be represented and consider gender.

The participants were given training on how to do follow-ups on their voices in areas like; social grants, education, abuses, health and community Development Projects. The form will also include also gender. They were also trained on the registration form of PWDs Training register. One form that the coordinators and animators are going to use is when they are doing the trainings within their communities; this form will include among others names of the trainer, district and community council.

The participants were also encouraged to form self-help groups within their local areas. These groups will not focus on a certain disability but all types of disabilities; this means people with mobility, visual, deaf and intellectual impairment will form a group and start a business that will reduce the poverty among themselves. The expectation is to report about everything they are doing to District Coordinator and the said officer will report to LNFOD in order to measure the progress and impact.

OPINION PIECE

Message to the Cabinet and Social Development Minister.... By: Nketu

Issues of disability are many, difficult and hurt the way Lesotho government is handling them. In shorts is not caring for rights of people with disabilities in a proper way as they have signed the UN Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities in 2008. Like I said; these issues need a person who can listen and who can make decisions. If I may ask; "how comes that Disability and Rehabilitation Policy is not implemented yet is long time ago that has been finalized? What are reasons that; Lesotho parliament is not passing the Disability Act? If the country is not able to care for the minority groups within it, does that mean the same country can have success? To this my answer is **No!**

What I think can be done?

The Lesotho 9th parliament passes the Disability Bill and turned into Disability Act, as soon as yesterday. The government should take disability as their number one, first priority of the state. This will help Lesotho care people with disabilities by giving out Disability Grant. The government would make sure that the Lesotho Employment Policy be accessible to everyone including people with disabilities. At least 2% in every ministry is allocated for people with disabilities especially those who have skills, knowledge and experiences to do the work. This idea is not new as the ministries did get money in order to fight the HIV and AIDS epidemic. In the elections there were female constituencies, which were meant only for females not males. If we want to proceed as the country can handle issues of disability the same way. Those position/vacancies can be advertised and give PWDs the first priority to apply then if they fail can be open to everyone.

Laws that are discriminating PWDs

The Lesotho constitution section 57; prohibits a deaf person to be nominated in the Senate house of Lesotho. The question is; even the period technology and the available of Basotho people who are able to use sign language, Basotho that are deaf are still discriminated? The amended law of Elections does not say to what level people with intellectual are not going to vote their cast during the elections. How and when can people with visually impaired are going to vote for the candidate of their own during their voting?

I am saying this because the Lesotho ballot paper is not on Braille and in many polling stations there are no templates to be used by visual impaired people. The Act says; "people with visually impaired can choose among family members or a friend to help during voting. Section 219 of the Criminal Procedure and Evidence Act of 1981, should be reviewed and be amended as it shows that perpetrators can do what ever they want to PWDs, as in the courts of law evidence that deaf and visual impaired person are taken not valid and unreliable. With this reason sexual abuses are at high level to PWDs. The said person is abused both by law and the perpetrator.

Subsidy

Lesotho is known as the country that has white diamond, what does this mean to PWDs? Each and every party campaigned about it; saying they will give water and electricity to every Mosotho. They are not for free; we have to pay for that. Where do we get money as PWDs? I think for the basic needs like food, water and others Lesotho government should give PWDs discount as they are not getting anything from the government.

Transport

Wheelchair-users are doubling transport fee as they have to pay also for their wheelchairs. Even in transport it is government's responsibility to do arrangements. Maybe the government can buy its own transport to transport PWDs or tickets be made for people with disabilities to travel with and Lesotho Revenue Authority reduce tax for the owner.

Education and Training

Lesotho must respect laws and follow the Building Control Act, 1995, so that PWDs e accommodated in every school. There are no enough schools to accommodate PWDs especially vocational institutions. Lesotho will continue successful if it can mainstream issues of disability. If PWDs participate in dialogues, planning and even in the decision making processes. There are many things that are affecting people with disabilities just because they were not part of decisions. Example; if can go around Lesotho all pavements are inaccessible, they are not good even for someone that is non-disabled, so what about a person with visually and mobility impairment? **Bad!**

SPOTLIGHT

“The power is in me.....”

By: Mosili Khoabane

I struggled since my childhood and did not manage to go to school the way I wanted due to the difficulties I came across. I had to go a long distance to and from school, so my parents looked for school where I can wake in the same premises of school. I was enrolling at Morapeli Crippled Girls Home; the school was 10 feet from home.

I attended school there but only reached secondary level did not administer to reach matriculation due to difficulties of being staying with people who are not aware of disability issues. I had to leave school before I could finish. I stayed home while my parents were working somewhere far from home. I stayed there with my brother and my younger sister. I attempted to find something that I can keep myself busy with but it was difficult.

My parents both die the same year and then left with my siblings. We then started to be more vulnerable to everything. I find someone to help with a box of apples to sell next to my home so that we can earn the living and my sister. At that time my brother was hired somewhere to work as a salesperson in one retail shop. There was no profit from that income as we had to buy family needs every day after working hours.



Ms. Mosili Khoabane at her market place - Mafeteng

I then thought deeper to look for a place to use as my market. I went to town and then tried to find a shark to use it as my shop but failed. I talked to my cousin who was also selling fruits at the market to look space for me. I got the advice that if I can look for old materials it could be better as I will be able to have a double-dealer. I did speak with my brother to help me with money so that I can buy used roofing materials and he promised. I fortunately got money from my brother and bought used roofing materials.

I started selling sweets, pop-corns and cigarettes at my shark as a start-up stock. The business grow then I managed to buy more stock like; apples until I could buy a public phone which worked well indeed. This time I had responsibility to look after my girl child with school needs. I had to pay almost everything for this child from this business. I did try to look for support from ministry of social development but failed. The year my child is at grade 11, she started having support from the government to continue with her studies.

I can now call myself a success woman as I am now having enough money to build a house for me and my child. If we all could get support from our government I think we can do better as people with disabilities instead of struggling. People with disabilities are hard working people in the world but denied everything by our governments. I wonder what reasons that PWDs are the last people that the Lesotho government is thinking about us are. I am doing what is best for my family but the worse thing is the stock that is not good enough to cover my customers

I cannot allow people to think me as a shame thing. I am participating in every activity within the community. Sports people within the Mafeteng area where I am working are consulting to me, if they need to know when and where the district club Bantu is going to play. I am a well known person in the district and I am proud of that. Disability to me means nothing, I cannot allow myself be vulnerable to extend that I seek everything from people in terms of support. I am what I am because I did not be ashamed at the streets of the town.

UPCOMING EVENTS/ANNOUNCEMENT

Introduction to self-help groups formations

For more information please conduct LNFOD office; +266 22320345

Or

Mr. Rabasotho Moeletsi; +266 58700925

Email; moeletsi@infod.org.ls

Seattle, WA: Behavior Management strategies for Students with Disabilities

7- 8 May 2015

For more information conduct;

Tel; (800) 545-5736

or

Fax; (503) 982-7910

EU Delegation's 2015 Discussion on Women as Drivers of Development

The event will take place at Lesotho Sun Hotel on the 6th May, 2015

For more information please conduct;

Press and Information Officer

Telephone: (266)22272200

Email; Liatile.Putsoa@eeas.europa.eu

NEWS IN PICTURE



Rabasotho the project coordinator presenting the objective of the meeting – Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village



Districts Disability Coordinators after sharing the challenges at field work



LNFOD staff members relaxing after hard work at Thaba- Bosiu Cultural Village



Coordinators and Animators are discussing issues to affecting their work



Fusi Ratolo's business as a sample of businesses run by people with disabilities in Lesotho



Itjareng Staff during the nominations of parents to fill positions of school board

ADVOCACY WORK



LNFOD

PARTNERS in Advocacy Work

