

# DISABILITY LESOTHO



## From the Editor

Dear Partner,

It is under normal circumstances that persons with disabilities are less likely to access health care, education, employment and to participate in the community. With that reasons they live in poverty, experiences high rates of violences, neglect and abuses, and marginalized in any crisis affected in the community. COVID-19 has added multiplied situation and challenges to persons with disabilities in this country.

As the government of Lesotho has promised to help with relief funds to needy and persons with disabilities, wish can do as promised. The pandemic is very dangerous and kills, we also have to take care of ourselves but there must be a huge awareness to everybody by persons with disabilities as it affects us differently to our counterparts who are not disabled.

Disability community would like to thank everyone who helped persons with disabilities with food packages as they are in need of food especially during lockdown. We thank you all.

If you wish to be included on the mailing list please contact Pascalina Letsau on (+266) 5905 5406 or [pletsau@gmail.com](mailto:pletsau@gmail.com)

If missed any edition please visit [www.infod.org.ls](http://www.infod.org.ls)  
We welcome any feedback that may improve the quality and content of this free service.

Best regards,



The Editor

## DIRECTOR'S CORNER

### Impact of COVID-19 on the Lesotho general education system for persons with disabilities

By Sefuthi Nkhasi

The research shows that, persons with disabilities are disproportionately affected by the Coronavirus pandemic and states are taking emergency measures across the world. 1As the Ministry of Education and training hasten to respond to the negative effects brought by this pandemic, it is important for the government to ensure that the measures undertaken remain inclusive of learners with disabilities and are respecting all human rights including the right to inclusive education for learners with disabilities.

This paper examines the extent to which the Lesotho's Ministry of training and Education COVID-19 measures are considering the right to inclusive education for learners with disabilities, arguing that the current measures are leaving learners with disabilities including the poor behind.

This is achieved through the evaluation of the international obligations imposed on Lesotho towards the realisation of education for all and the national legal and policy framework regulating provision of education to the Basotho nation. The paper looks into the current practices of the Ministry of Education

and Training to assess the extent to which learners with disabilities are being considered through the ongoing COVID-19 measures.

The paper finally recommends inclusive actions which may be undertaken to bring learners with disabilities on board during this trying time.

Lesotho is a state party to a number of international and regional human rights instruments which obliges her to provide education to all on the basis of equality and non-discrimination including the Universal Declaration on Human rights, International Covenant on civil and political rights and International Covenant on Economic, social, and cultural rights just to mention a few.

The above instruments underscore the four pillars of education which dictates that, education must be available, acceptable, accessible, and, adaptable to all regardless of status.

In addition, Lesotho became a state party to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) on 2nd December 2008 with the aim of promoting, protecting and ensuring enjoyment of all human rights by persons with disabilities and respect for the human dignity.

Article 24 of this Convention requires Ministry of education to make its 'general education system' accessible and inclusive of learners with disabilities by adopting inclusive education, employing teachers with disabilities, providing pre and in service training for all teachers on inclusive education; creating accessible curriculum to all learners with disabilities without any kind of discrimination.

At the national level, the Lesotho's Constitution provides for education under the principles of states and states that, the provision of education shall be directed towards the development, human rights and potential of its citizens.

This simply means that education is not a constitutional right upon which one can enforce in court but it is just the policy of the state which is to be realised progressively subject to the availability of resources.

In realising the right to primary education for children, government enacted Education Act in 2010 which made primary education free and compulsory for all. This act has a specific provision on education of children with disabilities which requires the education service providers to accommodate children with disabilities in the general education system and provide support which may be needed to children with disabilities within the school system.

In 2018, the Ministry of Education and Training adopted Inclusive Education Policy in line with the CRPD requirements which is meant to guide the inclusive interventions facilitating inclusion and participation of children with disabilities into

the general education system amongst other groups.

The policy specifically obliges Ministry of Education and Training to ensure that, education is delivered in the modes accessible and inclusive of all learners at all levels of education without any kind of discrimination.

On the 18 of March 2020, Ministry of Education and Training issued a circular informing proprietors and principals of all schools of the decision of the Ministry to suspend classes and close all schools at all levels on 19 March 2020 in order to contain the potential spread of COVID-19 among learners in schools.

Ever since this announcement, Ministry of Education and Training along with its stakeholders has been working hard to continue education through other platforms such as radio and television modes.

However, the reality is that learners with disabilities have been left behind with the multimedia radio and television modules which are currently running on Lesotho television since they are implemented without provision of subtitles, captioning services, sign language and other disability inclusive teaching methods which may accommodate visually impaired learners.

The pace at which the lessons are delivered is very high making it difficult for learners with learning disabilities to understand and follow properly including learners from the rural areas who may find it hard to listen to the English programs throughout.

The online lessons remain completely inaccessible to children with disabilities since some of them require teachers to direct them physically in order to take instructions; some need easy-to read materials to understand while others require tactile communication, Braille services and sign language services in order to learn effectively.

In the light of the ongoing government efforts towards implementation of education for all during the COVID-19 period, I argue that Ministry of Education and Training COVID-19 response is not adequately responding to the barriers facing education of learners with disabilities arising from COVID-19.

In conclusion, I strongly recommend the Ministry of Education and Training to develop education sector COVID-19 response plan which budget and provide for COVID-19 awareness raising messages in accessible formats such as braille, sign language, easy-to read materials for learners with intellectual disabilities; design and implement online modules accessible to learners with disabilities; hand over educational assistive devices which may enable learners with disabilities to learn from home; and engage special education teachers to advise and participate in the COVID-19 education measures for learners with disabilities.

# GENERAL NEWS

## LNFOOD to Undertake a Gender Analysis Baseline Study

By Makananelo L. Ramoholi

In order to kick start the project on Gender and Disability in Practice, the Lesotho National Federation of Organizations of the Disabled (LNFOOD) will undertake a gender analysis baseline study in order to understand and identify underlying causes of gender inequalities and gender-based barriers faced by persons with disabilities in the local community this year. This is necessary in order to adequately address the different needs and challenges of women and men with disabilities through the project. Although the available data shows that there has been a lot done on the ground to advance gender equality, there is hardly data on gender and disability in Lesotho. However, much points to the gender disparities in areas such as education, employment and gender-based violence (GBV).

The overall objectives of the study will be to;

- Provide qualitative and quantitative field data on gender disparities in access to education, access to economic opportunities as well as data on gender-based violence against persons with disabilities within the programme areas with specific focus on the situation of women and girls with disabilities.

- Identify gaps in the organizational capacities of LNFOOD and its affiliate Disabled Peoples Organizations (DPOs) to implement initiatives that

are disability and gender transformative.

Identify the role of women (with disabilities) in management at the local and national levels in these sectors

- Inform and recommend future possible steps to be taken by LNFOOD, its affiliate DPOs as well as the government of Lesotho in order to bridge the gender gaps among people with disabilities regarding their in access to education, access to economic opportunities as well as to adequately address gender-based violence to ensure that developmental initiatives leave no one behind in line with SDGs 2030 agenda and international human rights standards.

Through addressing critical questions that touch on the national and international legal frameworks, education, employment, GBV and the organizational capacities of DPOs as well as other women's rights organizations to implement gender and disability inclusive initiatives, LNFOOD will among others be in the position to provide recommendations for gender and disability inclusion including through gender and disability sensitive indicators to measure the steps taken towards more equality and inclusion in our society.

## GENERAL NEWS

### Scores of Persons with Disabilities across Lesotho benefit from Nthane Holdings COVID-19 Response Movement:



Nthane Holdings extends a helping hand to individual persons with disabilities during lockdown. Thousands of Basotho with disabilities were provided with food packages; 12.5 kg of maize meal, 5 litres sugar beans, 750 mL bottle of cooking oil and 700g packet of salt for cooking. Nthane Holdings established Nthane Brothers Holdings Movement against COVID-19 (NMC) team to assist affected sections of the society. This campaign runs in all the ten (10) districts of Lesotho. The company is targeting the persons with disabilities, street vendors, and destitute families.

For the event in capital city, Maseru, Nthane

Holdings engaged LNFOOD Office to nominate persons with disabilities who qualify for food packages. LNFOOD prepared a list of one thousand five hundred individual persons with disabilities to Nthane Holdings office. However, on the day the numbers were slightly more than that.

On behalf of the Nthane Holdings, communications manager Mrs. `Mamokhethi Nthane said as the company they felt it was their responsibility to share the small food they have with the vulnerable people due to the effects of COVID-19 Lockdown. "We felt it was

important for people to observe the lockdown in order to save lives of Basotho. However, for people to stay in houses, they should have something to eat, so we have prepared these packages for you," she said.

"This outbreak has negatively impacted the economic situations all around the world," concluded Nthane.

Chairperson of the Lesotho National Federation of Organisations of the Disabled, (LNFOD) Mrs. Mabataung Khetsi thanked Nthane Holdings for the noble gesture.

"Ntate Tšeliso Nthane, we thank you for your team for remembering persons with disabilities who are always invisible to policy makers in this country. We note with pleasure that this is not the first time that you to include disability inclusion meaningfully, continue to do that ntate," remarked Khetsi.

"As persons with disabilities, we have a much higher risk to infection than members of the general public. Imagine a person with visual disability whose personal guide is used to hold them at the flex of an elbow, where WHO guidelines advise as safe area to use for coughing," continued Khetsi.

She concluded by appealing to government national command center to avail information education materials in accessible formats and to fellow persons with disabilities to stay safe as the country remains under threat of the dreadful disease.

Deputy Minister of Local Government and Chieftainship, Hon. Mokherane Tsatsanyane MP registered his excitement to the Nthane Holdings. He said he is happy that ntate Nthane remembered people of Maseru whom he is representing as a member of parliament.

"This is our responsibility as Lesotho government and you are directly supporting us. We feel we owe you a lot as government. Here in Maseru alone, I'm told there are well over four thousand people waiting for food packages here," he said.

I feel I need to convince the cabinet to give your company opportunity to choose the best tender to cover the costs used here," he said jokingly.

On the other hand, the government of Lesotho has reiterated that persons with disabilities fall within the population group which will be issued grants from the relief fund which will run for 3 months.

The other dignitaries who graced the event include:

Maseru District Administrator - Mr. Mpane Nthunya

Reserve Chief of Matlama - Chief Lerotholi Seeiso

Chairperson of Khathang-tema Street Vendors Association - Mr. Tšolo Lebitsa

The fight against this pandemic now takes a direction of social behavioural change than case management by the health frontline staff. So persons with disabilities now need to adapt to that and lead save lives, and beat the Virus.

Together we will overcome this pandemic.

## GENERAL NEWS

### HEALTH FOR DEAF PEOPLE AND COVID-19

**By: Bongiwe Buzi**

Inclusion of persons with disabilities in COVID-19 response needs to be deliberate and purposeful. If not explicitly included in planning from the start, including in budgeting and resource allocation, there is a risk that persons with disabilities will be excluded from prevention and response measures, despite facing heightened risk. National Association of the Deaf Lesotho (NADL) raise a grave concern due to lack of participation in the covid-19 outbreak preparedness as to take precautionary measures. The heartbreaking point is our Deaf-Blind members who are extremely isolated.

WHO declared covid-19 a global disaster, therefore it is a global problem and the single largest catastrophe facing everybody including Basotho Deaf People being a minority group. Consequently, the concern involves everyone including Deaf people who possibly are not receiving information due to language barrier. Deaf People are often amongst the most marginalized members of the community, due to communication barriers between them and the hearing People, which can lead them to be the most hit hardest by this lethal epidemic.

The recent coronavirus (Covid 19) outbreak is of concern for healthcare authorities and citizens alike. Governments' responses to this outbreak must be inclusive of all members of the public, including deaf people who use sign languages. NADL remind governments on the Convention on the Rights of Peoples with Disabilities (CRPD) to ensure full access to information and accessibility to all services under CRPD Articles 9 and 21. It is vital that all public health announcements made by government officials are also done in the national sign language(s) of that country.

It is vital that all public health announcements made by government officials are also done in the national sign language(s) of that country. The decision made should be fully inclusive and accessible to all people. Another challenge is that there is no Sign Language interpreter placed all the time during public address and during press announcement regarding the issue of covid-19, furthermore the information by national health organizations and government entities to the public is not distributed in the Language fully understood by the hearing impaired persons (national sign languages). health organizations and government entities to the public is not distributed in the Language fully understood by the hearing impaired persons (national sign languages). As per best practices under CRPD Article 21, governments have an obligation to provide information directly in sign languages and not solely via translation. Global health entities should also make their global information and public education materials directly accessible and inclusive to all People, if working in specific national settings. The coronavirus situation reminds us of the need to safety of the Deaf community as integral parts of health care systems around the world. NADL can work together with sign language Interpreters to find solutions that ensures accurate access to information and healthcare. Most importantly the IEC materials are not user-friendly for Deaf community as most of the time we understand better through picture messages, because the terminologies used are not understood by majority of Deaf community.



## EDUCATION FOR DEAF CHILDREN DURING COVID-19

**By: Bongwe Buzi**

Education has been hit particularly hard by the COVID-19 pandemic, and deaf learners are the most hit hardest due to lack of information dissemination they encountered during covid-19 lockdown. The misinformation gained from the social media has a negative impact to their well-being and can also affect them psychologically. Education of Deaf people is not accessible to Deaf community.

The technologies applied isolate deaf children, for example LTV teaching is only done through spoken languages, which restricts and excludes participation of deaf learners, as they need to access education through sign language interpretation. Additionally, with the little time to prepare and cover the syllabus for this year is not sufficient for deaf learner to learn in a fast pace like their hearing peers.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### Data Collection on the Gender Analysis Study on Persons with Disabilities

For more information please contact LNFOD office to this number +266 22320345 or email [moeletsi@Infod.org.ls](mailto:moeletsi@Infod.org.ls)



# ADVOCACY WORK



## LNFOD

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