

DISABILITY LESOTHO



Editor's note

Dear Partners, On behalf of the disabled community of Lesotho, Disability Lesotho would like to announce to persons with disabilities that the Ministry of Social Development and Ministry of Health are in a process to develop all tools to be used when applying for disability grant.

I would advice all people with disabilities to buy the Disability Equity Act; 2021 and write so that can be ablet to know all articles of it. Let us help others to understand the Act and how can we utilize it in order to protect others' rights.

My plea to all Disabled People's Organisations is to go to all members at their banches and give all information regarding Disability Equity Act; 2021 and onhow they will apply according to the law.

Persons with disabilities still face attitudinal and environmental barriers which hinder them from fully participating in live and we strongly believes that the Disability Equity Act; 2021 will strengthen advocacy on inclusion and participation of persons with disabilities, and change lives of persons with disabilities in this country.

It is my plea to all people who will be responsible to help persons with disabilities regarding all processes indicated by this act. I would ask them to do what is right so that can feel the presence of the act.

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

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



DIRECTOR'S CORNER

Towards provision of disability grant for persons with disabilities

By Nkhasi Sefuthi

Introduction

Persons with disabilities have been excluded from benefiting from the Lesotho social protection system time due to lack of understanding on why persons with disabilities should be provided with a grant.

The majority of persons with disabilities have been receiving public assistance fund from the Ministry of Social Development which amounts to \$15 after every three months. Persons with disabilities have been given this grant despite its irrelevance to their disability related cost, as it is a poverty relief grant not a disability grant per se.

The Ministry of Social Development conducted a situational analysis study in 2019 for persons with disabilities which reveals that persons with disabilities are not satisfied at all with the absence of disability grant, and that the national information system for social protection (NISA) has not captured data on disability properly which may lead to misinterpretation of data relating to persons with disabilities.

In response to this challenge, LNFOD advocated for the enactment of Persons with disabilities Equity Act which has been published on the gazette on the 12 March 2021.

Through this Act the Ministry of Social Development seeks to implement three types of social protection grant for persons with disabilities and their families. The first one is the disability grant which will be provided for deserving people with disabilities. these persons are understood to be those who require highly intensive support to participate in the society. However, there are currently no guidelines or frameworks which can determine these people and the Ministry of Social Development is working together with the Ministry of Health to formulate the tools to be used without the active participation of persons with disabilities.

This practice of excluding persons with disabilities from participating in the decision-making processes which affect their lives is not in line with the principles of good governance and equality. It is further denying Lesotho to tap into the lived experiences of persons with disabilities in how initiatives such as this can better address the needs of persons with disabilities.

The second package is provision of dependency care grant. This grant has medical understanding of disability in which persons with disabilities are regarded as people who should be fixed because the understanding is that their impairments are hindering them from being equal and productive members of the society. It implies that persons with disabilities are dependent and should be cared for because they cannot do anything for themselves. This grant has been directly copied from the Republic of South Africa.



GENERAL NEWS

LNFOD builds the capacity of community councilors on gender and disability mainstreaming!

By: Makatleho Molotsi

Effective change has to begin from within radiating to the periphery that is why it is always that charity begins at home. This is a very important to remember now that after the domestication of the UNCRPD, Lesotho is moving towards practically changing the ordeal suffered by people with different disabilities through a human rights approach to disability issues. Whereas different stakeholders at both the national and the community level do under the Act bear different responsibilities towards realizing, protecting and promoting the rights of persons with disabilities, it is imperative that community duty bearers such as community councilors and chiefs be among the first carry out their duties in terms of the Act. This is because people with disabilities live in their communities on daily basis where they first need to feel included and accepted as equally contributing members.

On this basis LNFOD prioritized capacitating the community councilors and chiefs on gender and disability mainstreaming as an effective way of promoting the rights of people with disabilities under Persons with disability equity Act. Empowered with knowledge community councilors are in a better position to level the ground for inclusion of people with disabilities at first hand. LNFOD held 6 capacity building workshops for the community councilors from Maseru, Leribe, Berea, Mafeteng and Mohale's Hoek from 14 community councils where they were capacitated on practical strategies for gender and disability mainstreaming in their areas. They were given thorough understanding of disability and people with disabilities, the challenges of disability inclusion and the strategies to eliminate such challenges in their area.

From the workshops, it proved that the concepts of gender and disability equality was generally

a shock n beginning of the workshops. This is because participants shared that these concepts are taking them from the comfort zones of how they conceived and dealt with the issues of disability and equality between men and women. However, they shared that the workshop molded new, knowledgeable and capacitated community leaders who are then capable of protecting and serving their subjects equally despite their difference. The participants also shared that the workshop will inform plans, deliberations and the duties of their offices so that minorities will benefit equally. In addition, the participants pledged to work with the disability focal persons in their area to make sure that people with disabilities particularly females are not left behind.

GENERAL NEWS

Successful Implementation of assistive technology to promote access to curriculum and instruction for students with physical disabilities

By: Mojalefa Ntlatlapa

Students with physical disabilities often require assistive technology to access curriculum and instruction. This Column discusses some of the issues that impede successful implementation of assistive technology for students with physical disabilities and will eventually provide a checklist that, teachers and related services personnel may use when considering assistive technology for curriculum access. While the author does not claim to become exhaustive, the checklist will include utilitarian information on assistive technology services and needs that should be addressed as well as assistive technology devices that may be used by students with physical disabilities for curriculum access.

The physical disabilities that “orthopedic impairments” encompasses may be orthopedic in nature (e.g., arthrogryposis), may result from degenerative conditions that impact motor abilities (e.g., muscular dystrophy) or may be a result of neurological damage (e.g., cerebral palsy) (Heller, 2009). Often, students physical disabilities require curricular adaptations due to their physical limitations, concomitant disabilities (e.g., visual impairment), or functional impact of the disability (e.g., fatigue, limited communication ability)(Heller, 2009). One adaptation that can provide access to curriculum for students with these disabilities is assistive technology. As schools move toward more inclusive models and toward standards-based instruction to meet the requirements of the new Inclusive Education Policy, students with physical disabilities may rely on adaptations and assistive technology more than ever.

Assistive technology may be an important component of Inclusive Education for any student with a disability, but often proves more important for students with physical disabilities. As students

with physical disabilities move into adulthood, they may have a higher reliance on assistive technology than students with learning or cognitive disabilities to function more independently in home and community settings. Researchers have discovered that, for individuals with physical disabilities, **appropriately chosen and implemented assistive technology** is crucial for increasing the level of participation in education, employment, and independent living to levels similar to peers without disabilities. In order to increase independence and improve postsecondary outcomes for students with physical disabilities, assistive technology solutions must be fully explored during the students’ school years.

The purpose of this Column is to discuss issues and ideas surrounding the use of assistive technology for curriculum access for students with physical disabilities.

First, an overview of assistive technology (AT) will be provided for context. This will be followed by a discussion of the issues that impact the successful use of assistive technology for students with physical disabilities. Finally, a checklist will be provided that can be used by assistive technology teams when considering assistive technology services, needs, and devices for curriculum access by students with physical disabilities.

Overview of Assistive Technology for Students with Physical Disabilities

An assistive technology (AT) device, may be defined as: Any item, piece of equipment, or product system, whether acquired commercially off the shelf, modified, or customized, that is used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities of a child with a disability.

Simply stated, AT can be anything that helps a student with a disability perform a task that he or she otherwise would not be able to perform or to increase the efficiency with which the task is performed. Even simple, everyday items can be AT. For example, when a student who only has use of one hand uses a piece of scotch tape to hold a piece of paper, while writing, the tape becomes an assistive technological aid/device.

For students with physical disabilities, AT devices may include those which increase physical access as well as items which increase the capacity for communication or performance of academic tasks. Such devices range from low technology, which includes non-electronic items such as pencil grips or paper communication boards, to middle technology including battery operated devices such as calculators or hand-held spellcheckers, to high technology, which includes items which are electronic or mechanical in nature such as computers with assistive software.

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION also requires schools to provide assistive technology services. These services include any task performed by school personnel which assists a child with a disability with selection, acquisition, or use of an AT device. INCLUSIVE EDUCATION mandates that AT must be considered for every student who has an individualized education program; however, it does not stipulate how these services must be provided. Thus, assistive technology services may range greatly from country to country and even from school district to school district. In an ideal situation, the school system would have a team of AT specialists that assists with assessment, procurement, training, and implementation of the use of AT devices. However, many systems where hundreds of students receive special education services have only one or two AT specialists and some personnel may have a primary role (e.g., speech-language pathologist, occupational therapist) in addition to serving as the system's AT specialist. Therefore, it is imperative that teachers of students with physical disabilities are knowledgeable about AT and how to implement AT in a way that best meets the needs of their students.

Research shows that there is a high rate of abandonment and under use of assistive technology devices. Many of us may have seen AT devices sitting on shelves or stored in cabinets and have heard numerous reports from teachers and student teachers of devices that go unused or underused. It is important to be aware that the underuse of an AT device robs the user of meeting maximum potential for performing the task for which the device was acquired. AT devices, by definition, are intended to increase, improve, or maintain an individual's functional capabilities. When devices are underused or abandoned, students are left performing tasks less efficiently or less independently than the potential performance afforded by device use. There are several issues that may impact the successful use of assistive technology by students who have physical disabilities. Several of these issues that will be discussed are assessment; training; timeliness and consistency of implementation; psychosocial, cultural and environmental factors; and motivation and effort which impact the use of assistive technology.

GENERAL NEWS

The Establishment of the Gender and Disability Networking Forum



By: Lerato M. Ramoholi

The Gender and Disability in Practice Project is in its second year of implementation and the Lesotho National Federation of Organizations of the Disabled (LNFOOD) has recently launched the Gender and Disability Networking Forum. The Forum is a community of practice whose representatives were sourced from various gender and women's rights advocacy organizations such as Women and Law in Southern Africa, FIDA, She Hive Association, Lesotho Council of Non-governmental organizations (Women's Commission), Karabo ea Bophelo, The People's Matrix and Gender Links. The Ministry of Gender and Youth, Sports and Recreation through the Department of Gender, the Ministry of Police through the Child and Gender Protection Unit as well as the Ministry of Social Development through the Disability Unit are also key stakeholders represented with the primary responsibility to promote gender and disability mainstreaming under the Forum. International agencies like the UNFPA as a major supporter of the government of Lesotho to promote gender mainstreaming is also represented under the forum. The disabled people's organizations (DPOs) represented in the Forum were Lesotho National League of the Visually Impaired Persons, Intellectual Disability Association of Lesotho, Lesotho National Association of the Physically Disabled and National Association of the Deaf Lesotho. LNFOOD is not only represented under the Forum but it is also the main sponsor.

This community of practice is established with the aim to create a platform for learning and sharing on gender and disability, based on the lived realities signaling the experiences of disabled people's organizations (DPOs) and of gender and women's

rights institutions. The platform will be used for information exchange on gender and on disability and networking on gender and disability with the view to ultimately promote the inclusion of disability in these institutions, whilst also ensuring that DPOs acquire skills to effectively mainstream gender in their organizations.

In particular, the platform is established to ensure that women and girls with disabilities are ultimately mainstreamed in all developmental processes since previously, they had little recognition within the disability agenda and also within the women's rights agenda. As the disability sector, we believe that there is a lot to learn from these institutions on gender equality and gender mainstreaming as well as to build partnerships that have not existed before for a more meaningful impact. This includes through promoting the intersectional approach that is embraced by many international human rights instruments like the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women and the Sustainable Development Goals. In this way, gender equality and women's rights organizations will be encouraged to adopt gender and disability mainstreaming approach which embraces full empowerment and inclusion for the marginalized to ensure we reach the farthest behind. In this case, women and girls with disabilities.

The Forum will begin its activities through capacitating its members on disability rights and gender and disability mainstreaming through a two-day workshop to be held early June this year.

GENERAL NEWS

IDAL Centre official opened

By: Mafumane Makhele

Ha Buasono, Berea district on the 7 April 2021
The centre for Intellectual Disability Association of Lesotho officially opened bth the presence of the Minister of Social Development



The main purpose of this Skills Training Center for youth with intellectual disability, is to provide beneficiaries pherapy and sensory rooms. Services for people with intellectual disabilities and their families be provided with support to allow full inclusion in the community. Many different types of supports and services can help, such as: Early intervention (infants and toddlers) Special education. Family support (for example, emotional support).

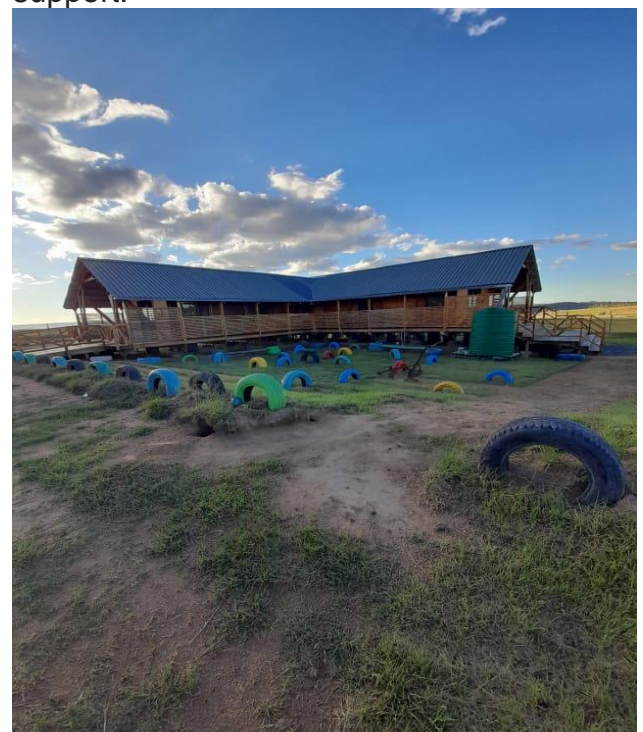
The centre will help intellectually disabled persons to have the same rights as other members of the community through advocacy

work to be done by the centre, that their needs best met by maximum inclusion in the community, that they will be entitled to exercise maximum control over every aspect of their life.

They will be provided with all services that all communities are receiving through the support done by the centre. The center will also be used as a multipurpose to fundraise for the organization.

The center will not only benefit IDAL members but even other DPOs amostly youth with life skill and children with activities on daily basis.

The centre has been supported by standard Lesotho Bank as the main donor, Metropolitan Lesotho, Vodacom Lesotho, Letseng Diamond, Minet and others. IDAL would like to thank everyone who helped in the process of designing of this centre and with different support especially financial support.



GENERAL NEWS

Advocating for enrollment of Trainees with disabilities in TVET Institutions.

By: Pule Mosili

As a means to ensure enrollment of youth with disabilities LNFOD and affiliates held a one-day lobby meeting to advocate for the enrollment and learning of the youth with disabilities in the special and some mainstream vocational schools of Lesotho. The majority of the identified have missed an opportunity to go to school due to a number of barriers they face.

Principals of the skills, technical and vocational institutions were invited to the lobby meeting whereby they were sensitized about the Lesotho inclusive education policy, what it means for TVET institutions as part of the education sector as well as issues of inclusion in general which were presented by LNFOD and its member organizations as well as the special education officer from the ministry of education.

Institutions presented a comprehensive presentation on the courses offered by their institutions, entry requirements; whether their institution admits trainees with disabilities, if so how do they identify disability and the needs of each student; the barriers they face or they may potentially face in enrolling trainees with disabilities and what needs to be done to facilitate full participation and inclusion of trainees with disabilities.

The institutions outlined some of the barriers that TWDs face in enrolling in their institutions to include but not limited to physically inaccessible environment which includes availability of steps that would hinder flexible movement to the workshops, lack of capacity of instructors, limited funds from the government, lack of resources including assistive devices, social and communication barriers for trainees in mainstream institutions, non-inclusive skills among instructors, non-disabled trainees, community and instructors' negative attitude towards TWDs.

Except for the special institutions focusing of TWDs, other institutions had no standard tool or means identifying TWDs. This results in these institutions treating any candidate admitted equally without necessarily responding to their needs. Also, this pose a danger of realizing when a trainee is already within the system that they have a disability, forcing such trainee to cope without provision of reasonable accommodation.

The institutions did not only list the challenges TWDs and the schools face in ensuring inclusion but also made recommendations and commitments that could assist in the implementation of the inclusive education policy. Some of the recommendations were that, instructors be capacitated so that they are able to interact with trainees with disabilities, the institutions that were initially established to provide skills without consideration of the TWDs be modified so as to accommodate various types of disabilities, also that LNFOD advocate for sufficient human resource so that TWDs' needs may be met.

With regard to non-accessible environment that seem to be a challenge to almost all the institution, one technical committed to help the other institutions using their trainees improve their physical environment with the guidance from the MoET and LNFOD. The institutions in addition committed to change attitude towards TWD while simultaneously widening opportunities for them.

This activity was financially supported by UNICEF Lesotho.

GENERAL NEWS

Interventions and support can enable them to meet success in their lives.

By: Pascalina Letsau

The move from one educational sector to the next reveals significant gaps in level of service. Moving a young child with disability from early childhood services to primary school is frequently a transition in which the programs and supports are not simulated in the new setting. The same applies at all transitional levels, equally from primary school to secondary school, the same happened to learners with disabilities in Mhahle'shoek District in Mashaleng Community Council.

There are still some challenges, met Reitumetse Chobokoane, young lady with intellectual disability who was born in 1999 due to her disability still in Grade 7



When all students regardless of their disabilities can be placed in age-appropriate education classes to receive quality education, interventions and support can enable them to meet success in their lives.

"Reitumetse a child who is really slow to understand, every time she is always behind with her school work so the teachers don't have patience to try and understand her situation, they just carry on or move forward with the fast learner's students. So, because of her condition I just wish she could find the teachers who can understand her and help her slowly." Said Mahlompho Mohakala with a sad heart.

She concluded by relating that; "Lemohang is physical disabled, her left-hand side does not function and this makes it hard for her to walk properly, this makes it hard for her to walk to school even when she is at school she is not being treated as a person who have sense or as a normal person. Her major problem is that when she is bought the new pair of shoes, they don't even last due to the left side being pulled against the ground."

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