



From the Editor

Dear Partner,

Welcome once again to the edition of Disability Lesotho, the monthly e-newsletter from Lesotho National Federation of the Disabled. This newsletter will cover news for December, 2014.

In our attempt to systematically assemble previous, present and future issues of Disability Lesotho and to make research and reference easier, we have decided to publish our newsletter in volumes. All the previous issue publications of the newsletter will thus constitute the first volume, the current issue onwards until the next 30th will make the second volume. The third volume and other volumes will constitute of 30 issues apiece.

I would like to wish everybody a prosperous New Year. This season presents us with a once per annum opportunity to take stock of past actions in the previous year, review as different players both public and private; our thinking and actions with respect to persons with disabilities. We also should seek and act to building just, peaceful and developed societies inclusive of everyone. This as our motto says "Together as One".

In this manner let everyone of us raise awareness, educate, advocate and act for the betterment of our common good.

I would also like to congratulate learners with disabilities who passed their examinations and the teachers who worked hard to help them achieve their goals of passing.

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

If missed any edition please visit www.infod.org.ls

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

Best regards,



The Editor

Handwritten signature of the Editor.

DIRECTOR'S CORNER

Disability Equity Bill in place

By Nkhasi Sefuthi

LNFOOD is gladly announcing that, people with disabilities long awaited Disability Equity Bill is now in place. The Bill is an attempt by the government of Lesotho to domesticate the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities through the disability specific legislation. The purpose of the disability specific legislation is an endeavor by the government of Lesotho to ensure promotion, protection and respect of disability rights in our society. Although, the bill is in its draft form,

LNFOOD considers this step as very significant towards the promotion and protection of People with Disabilities in Lesotho. Undoubtedly, the 9th Parliament of Lesotho which will come into being in March 2015, should pass the disability equity act in fulfillment of the international obligations set out by the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

The draft bill is to undergo several scrutinies by both the government and the stakeholders including LNFOOD to make sure that, it responds to practical needs and rights of people with disabilities as outlined in the Convention before it is presented to the Parliament.

We sincerely hope that, the government will speed up the preliminary processes to enable the Parliament of Lesotho to deliberate upon the bill for adoption. The development of the regulations of the Disability Act also forms an integral part in the implementation of this act once it is adopted as such by the Parliament. After the passing of the act, our advocacy should turn into the design of the regulations that will crucially enable the implementation of the Act.

The Bill once adopted as the Act will provide protection of the rights of people with disabilities ranging from employment, access to inclusive education, access to information in the accessible formats to mention a few.

We convey our gratitude to the Ministry of Social Development for the commitment they demonstrated during the design of the Bill and we hope that, they will support the speedy presentation of the Bill in the next parliament so that people with disabilities can claim their rights individually and collectively as the case maybe from the Courts of Law.

GENERAL NEWS

Hundreds march in Qacha's Nek to celebrate International Day of Persons with Disabilities

By Rabasotho Moeletsi



Hundreds of persons with disabilities gathered in Qacha's Nek to on Wednesday, 03rd December 2014 to celebrate International Day of Persons with Disabilities. Since 1992, this event is recognized by the United Nations with the aim to promote an understanding of disability issues and mobilize support for the dignity, rights and well-being of persons with disabilities.

Around nine hundred (900) people participated in a march from District Administrator across the Qacha'snek town in support of equal opportunities for persons with various disabilities. Then followed the formal session in speeches from dignitaries who included Her Majesty Queen, `Masenate Mohato Seeiso, Minister of Social Development, Hon. `Matebatso Doti, Member of Parliament for Qacha'snek, Dr. `Matumelo Sekatle, Chairperson of the Lesotho National Federation of Organisations of the Disabled, Mrs. `Makananelo Regina Lephoi, and the US Embassy Representative.

Also present was Dr. Nthabiseng Makoe, who is the deputy minister of health.

The theme for this year celebration was "Sustainable development: the promise of technology". Making reference to the theme, Mrs. Regina Lephoi, Chairperson of LNFOD said that disability movement in Lesotho welcomes this theme as it comes when technology is seen as an advancement that has increasingly raised the standard of living for people and can be used play a role in bridging the access gap between the disabled and their non-disabled counterparts. So she pleaded with the government of Lesotho to show commitment in implementation of the ICT Policy of 2005 which provides the government shall ensure universal access to ICTs by paying attention to the special needs of the disabled.

Delivering her keynote address, Her Majesty Queen, `Masenate Mohato Seeiso, who is also the LNFOD's Patron pointed a few legislation gaps which renders individuals with disabilities vulnerable and emphasized that Lesotho need to act vastly to introspect the current laws and policies in terms of how we enable people with disabilities to participate in the development agenda of Lesotho.

Referring to the CRPD 2006, she remarks "Article 4 of the CRPD, calls upon the member states such as Lesotho to remove, modify and eliminate all laws and policies that discriminate against people with disabilities. However, we are not complying so well in this regard."

She continued, "Section 57 of the constitution

provides that, Deaf people are not eligible to be appointed as senators because they are not able to speak. In addition, National assembly electoral amendment act of 2011 prevents people with intellectual disabilities from participating in the general elections on the basis that, they are not able to make independent decision for themselves."

While the Queen acknowledged government for ongoing development of National disability plan and the Disability Equity Law, she emphasized the fact that these two documents can impact the lives of disabled people only if the government makes financial resources available for implementation of these instruments.

On behalf of the government, the minister of social development, Hon. `Matebatso Doti said that as the ministry responsible for disability issues they have started some projects for persons with disabilities to enable them to be self-employed as it is not every person who could be hired at government service.

The crowd was entertained by the healthy line up the featured the likes of the renowned Gospel singer with disabilities Mr. Majara Majara, the group formed by inmates of Qacha'snek district, not forgetting the local dancers of the 'Setapo dance' which is the style only found in Qacha'snek.

Self-accepted girl with physical disability



Mphonyane a girl who is in need of assistive device

Let me relate my story to you my beloved; I am Mphonyane Ntlaba. I am now 14 years old. I am a twin girl and my twin brother has passed away while we were 2 years old. In our family, we were the fifth children. My mother told me that I was born disabled. I have gone to so many healthcare centers like Queen Elizabeth II Maseru, even further in Pelonomi Hospital Bloemfontein South Africa. Despite efforts by the Doctors tried to help by doing some rehabilitative operations. The problem would be always immediately when discharged and returned from the hospital the situation remains the same. I am crawling; to this day, I cannot stand up and walk. I cannot use even some crutches to walk. I got the wheelchair but it is of no use to me, as the place where I am staying is not easily accessible due to physical terrain.

I started going to school alas later than my age-mates. I am a product of St. Helena Government Primary School. I did sit for Primary level examinations and got first class this year, to the amazement of many onlookers. I have applied to Butha-Buthe High School to do my Form A, which is a higher level. I did attend school through hardship but my mother and friends supported me. When going to school I had to cross the river, it was bad during when the rain falls because there will be a lot of water, so my body had to swim in water. I had to take the pants to change with as I was only allowed to wear the trouser not a school dress.

I had no problems to attend school with children that have no disability. They did not mock me or harass me. It happens when there are newcomers at school that they will look at me but when time goes, they all become my friends.

I have a dream when I grow up. I want to work hard such that I become the first girl with disability to be a pilot. I want to be a role model to other children with disabilities. What I need most is to see myself walking like 'me' Pascalina using a caliper. I wish all my friends a happy new year.

GENERAL NEWS

People with disabilities trained on elections



People with different disabilities have been trained on elections from the 22nd – 24th December. The Independent Electoral Commission held a series of training workshops for people with disabilities. The training venue for people with physical disabilities was at Itjareng Vocational Training Centre, where 32 participants were able to attend. The other training was at St. Angela Cheshire Home for Children with physical disabilities. At this place, the participants were 34 Deaf Persons. The last group was Visually Impaired Persons at their centre called Mohloli-oa-Bophelo Rehabilitation Centre.

The objective of these trainings was to equip people with disabilities about elections and their assertions. The training was also to increase the spirit to people with disabilities to participate in politics.

The training came at the right time when it is the first time in Lesotho history that a person with disability is contesting for elections. Fusi Sefuthi a male with physical disability stands for National Assembly Elections. Some participants had no knowledge that their participation in politics has been covered in the National Assemblies Electoral Act, 2011.

From the brief discussion held with some participants who went through the Electoral Act 2011 most of them found some sections that seem to be discriminatory to other group of

people. For instance; looking at Chapter 2 of the Act – dealing with Registration of Electors, Part 1 Section 5 (2) postulates that the person does not qualify to register if declared to be of unsound mind under the law of Lesotho, what does this mean? What do we mean by unsound mind? Particularly since Basotho, customs and norms are gray in differentiating between a mentally ill person and a person with intellectual disability

During the training a wide array of issues were covered; Topics that have been covered were;

1. Right to vote and obligation to register
 2. IEC Structure
 3. Duties of IEC
 4. Responsibilities of Voters
 5. Methods of Elections
 6. Allocation of seats in the parliament
 7. Consultative Committees
- Civil & Voter Education, Logistics and Secretary, Law, Data, Conflict Management, Media Liaison, Party Delegates, Monitoring, Leaders Forum and Election Coordination

Overall according to majority of trainees, It was a very and adequate pleasant training as to some of these participants was something new to them. There were some challenges somehow here and there, especially on the section dealing with the allocation of seats under the proportional representation section as most trainees did not understand clearly, as most did not go to school. it was however buttressed that even though the topic was difficult to comprehend, it is important to every Mosotho to understand how people are entering the parliament.

The major interest was on Voter's right as it was the first time to hear that it is the offense for a person without reasonable cause fails to register as an elector. The training was officially closed by representatives of disabled people organization leadership and that of IEC on a high note with participants evidently keen on passing information to other peers.

GENERAL NEWS

Experience sharing and report meeting



LNFOOD Project Coordinator facilitating the meeting at Berea

On the 12th–13th December at Berea District, people with disabilities that are working under the Project of Deepening Decentralization attended a meeting. The meeting was to Share experiences and report to their counterparts from 4 districts namely; Butha-Buthe, Berea, Maseru and Mohale'shoek.

When welcoming the participants Mr. Rabasotho the LNFOOD Projects Coordinator said; "I would like to welcome you to this 2day training workshop. Volunteerism is what we are doing but it is very scaring as we can see that many people are no longer willing to volunteer. We can see that many people are coming from abroad like in America, Asia, Australia and other countries, this is happening only to improve the volunteerism in this country. We have seen so many projects that have been flourishing but after the funding has gone away those projects are gone. We are expecting to see this project continuing. We have to think hard when doing this project, there are so many organizations that have been established in the 75 years back like church organizations but they are still running. Why cannot we strive hard to make sure that our project will continue even if there are no more funds from EU Commission? as PWDs we have to think for ourselves as people with disabilities and be the best on the work that we are doing.

People with disabilities should their interesting work as they have worked hard to approach services that PWDs need daily. In Butha-Buthe at

Likila Community council, children have been helped to have school bursaries. Some have been referred to Social Development Ministry.

The Southern part of Lesotho where Lesotho is working, which is Mochale'shoek, has also worked hard to find people with disabilities to participate in social activities. Some of these people have been elected in community committees to serve disability interests.

The participants were very grateful to realize that they have already changed lives of people with disabilities within the first year of the project, these shows that when the project get to the end will be impacting more to people with disabilities. Deepening Decentralization project is going to open more Basotho with disabilities to be leaders within their communities, as they learn how things done from other local authorities as they work together always.



Mr. Semanga who is visually impaired with his PA during the meeting

OPINION PIECE

My piece of good experience in the general elections of Lesotho

By: Thabiso Masenyetse

I am a visually impaired Mosotho youth who has at least participated twice in the National Assembly elections, first in 2007 and 2012 respectively. This was motivated by the fact that I had received electoral education on radio and also that I was at this time enlargeable to register with IEC since I had reached over 18 age, and as a result I could start voting anytime elections come. Through the same lesson I became aware of the value of my vote in enhancing stability and determining development of the country as a whole.

Moreover, in 2012 some few years after, I became strongly active in disability movement of Lesotho. I got enlighten on various important issues concerning elections such as electoral act of 2011 which directly acknowledges my disability for it has some of its clauses which stipulate that a visually impaired person has two options when voting fairly, using personal assistant and using voting template.

Consequent from this, I am of the view that this marks the milestone in trying to include people with disabilities in the National issues, which is also the direct product of the strong advocacy made by Disabled Persons Organisations of Lesotho.

However, I once tried to think critically weigh these two voting options against each other with an aim of concluding on which among them is more valid and consistent. As a result, I arrived at the conclusion that using voting template is the best format since with it I am able to do voting process myself. However, as for using a guide person a number of challenges are attached;

- It interferes with my voting confidentiality as a visually impaired voter.

- It is the format that treats people like a cell phones / machine whose failure to produce 5 on the screen right after pressing 5 button such device is said to be faulty or has problems and as a result, technician is required .But a human being is never programmed; new politics arise in his head anytime in any case.

The inference I want to make from these grounds is that a visually impaired voter can never be sure of the reality of his vote if he uses a personal guide no matter how much trust he has. Yet a guide behind the principle of being a human being can happen to change or have different interest and so can capitalize on the impairment of the assisted voter without him knowing.

This therefore means that this guide has illegal but confidential power to make a double voting at once. NB, the Independent Electoral Commission of Lesotho seems indeed recently ready to cooperate, influence and seriously encourage PWDs to participate in elections. This was observed when IEC employed a huge number of PWDs in Lesotho as electoral educators since 2002.

The implications attached here are;

- IEC plays a role in empowering PWDs since it gives to them a reward after work.

IEC wants to ensure that Basotho who are Visually Impaired Persons are able to participate and stands as candidate during elections and it acknowledges that such people are the real part of the nation with equal rights with their counterparts.

N.B The best interest for me is that I am engaged as part of those temporarily employed as Electoral Educators. It is at this point that I wish to convey my greatest gratitude to IEC for recognizing disability in Lesotho. Anyway I am personally expecting more cooperation and hence more recognition.

SPOTLIGHT



'Mat'sasane Mabesa – A visually impaired woman

Reflections on 2014 – the year that was

1. Whom would you invite as guest of honor at your congratulations party on your disability work and why?

- I would like to invite 'Mabataung Khetsi. I have been recruited by her to be involved in many activities of disabilities. She has supported me much for my empowerment, I have achieved because of her.

2. In your view what incident was the highlight of the year with regard to disability issues in 2014? Why is this so?

- Sexual abuses to women and girls with disabilities, I think these happened because people think that PWDs will not be able to report, tell who were the perpetrator and many more to courts of law.

3. Going into the next year what issues would you consider to do or priority issues and why?

- To have so many projects that can encourage more to people with disabilities to join different organisations especially DPOs, this can help them to be empowered and be self-reliant.

4. In anticipation of the upcoming 2015 National Assembly what is your view on;

a). The Disability Equity Bill to be passed to the National Assembly?

- I would like to see this Bill be passed forward into Act so that PWDs can be protected under laws.

b). Representation of PWDs among the members of the parliament?

- I wish to see this coming National Assembly facilitating the participation of PWDs within the parliament. I have seen many people that did not

Proliferation of DPOs

1) In light of the on-going Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) process globally, what is your opinion of the role of DPOs in the process?

- I think the role of DPOs globally is responsible to monitor and evaluate the process of SDGs, maybe to check if the targets are being met or what?

2). in the Africa continent especially locally, new DPOs are emerging which are parallel to old ones, what is your opinion about these relating to ideals of PWDs?

- I think newly DPOs emerging is not that bad, as long as they will be catering or trying to achieve needs of PWDs.

3). It's a recorded opinion that DPOs should be the watchdogs of public institutions, which public institute do you think DPOs in Lesotho can closely look at and why?

- I think we have to look them all but Ministry of Social Development is the top ministry as it is legally given responsibility to care for children, elderly and disabled people.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Signing ceremony between LNFOD and National University of Lesotho

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LNFOD will be engaging consultant to develop manual on reasonable accommodation for employees with disabilities in January,

For more information please conduct LNFOD office; +266 22320345

Or

Mr. Nkhasi Sefuthi; +266 63201783

Email; nkhasi@Infod.org.ls

Electoral education for PWDs and their families from January – February under auspices of IEC

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Or

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LNFOD and NAD will be conducting feasibility study on micro-finance for PWDs in the district of Leribe and Berea by the last week of January

For more information please conduct LNFOD office; +266 22320345

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NEWS IN PICTURE



Her Majesty Queen 'Masenate, Ministers and members of Parliament during Disability Day celebration



Deaf people singing during the training at Ka Pitseng Guest House



People with disabilities are doing farewell to the year 2014



IEC facilitators during Election training to people with physical disabilities



Deaf people trained on Election training at St. Angela Cheshire Home



Mr. Fusi Sefuthi contesting 2015 Elections under LCD party at Likhoele Constituency

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ADVOCACY WORK



LNFO

PARTNERS in Advocacy Work



Africa Disability Alliance

