

# DISABILITY LESOTHO



## Editor's note

As year draws nearer, it is an opportune moment to look back and see the strides that were made during the year.

The situation gone from bad to worse as persons with disabilities remain the hardest hit segment of the population by the adverse effects of COVID-19. There is no hope for countries like Lesotho where the response strategies have continued to leave persons with disabilities or their organisations aside in the response to the pandemic. While this maybe disturbing, it's an opportune moment for LNFOD and partners to fight all injustices and push duty-bearers to start implementing the law.

I would like to wish everyone a very blessed and prosperous new year even though we are facing a very difficult time of Covid-19

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](mailto:pletsau@gmail.com)

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Editor

## DIRECTOR'S CORNER

### LNFOOD Executive Director thanksgiving article to partners and the community at large

**By: Nkhasi Sefuthi**

As we are moving towards the end of the year, I wish to note with great appreciation the support which LNFOOD got from different partners including government, development partners, private sector and the community at large in making LNFOOD objectives come true.

In 2021, LNFOOD has been able to complete its new office building at Naleli through provision of financial support from Sedlaak construction company, and Diakonie Act Austria.

Diakonie Act Austria is over and above supporting LNFOOD financially to implement 'Gender and disability in practice project' aimed at promoting gender equality within organisations of persons with disabilities and disability mainstreaming within women's rights associations in Lesotho.

With the funding from UNICEF Lesotho, LNFOOD reached ten districts of Lesotho with the disability inclusive water and sanitation training in which the schoolteachers and water and sanitation stakeholders participated in the trainings. The purpose of the project was to capacitate schools on how they can make their water and sanitation facilities accessible to children with disabilities.

127 stakeholders participated in which 89 teachers and 38 stakeholders from government departments benefited.

The office of the UN resident coordinator commissioned a study on the impact of COVID-19 on persons with disabilities and supported LNFOOD to develop issue papers on social protection,

health, and education alongside communication materials. The issue papers were meant to promote participation of persons with disabilities in the COVID-19 decision making processes.

The Ministry of social development published a disability situational analysis report highlighting the living conditions of persons with disabilities and government and non-state actor's roles in tackling the problems and gaps identified by the study.

A special word of thanks goes to the United Nations department of economic and social affairs (UNDESA) under the disability voluntary fund for their support in assisting LNFOOD to promote public disability mainstreaming through the revision of the national disability mainstreaming plan and appointment of the ministerial disability focal persons.

Vodacom Lesotho installed a digital library for the blind and partially sighted people at the Lesotho national library and supported the 2021 commemoration of the International Day of Persons with disabilities.

I cannot leave out the Basotho nation who have been supporting LNFOOD advocacy for the social inclusion of persons with disabilities throughout the year.

Lastly, I wish to register my sincere thanks to LNFOOD, board members, staff, and the member organisations for working hard to make disability visible in the Lesotho national development agenda.

## ADVOCACY ASPECT

### Advocacy on inauguration of Persons with Disability Advisory council

By: Nkhasi Sefuthi

With the funding from British High commission to the Kingdom of Lesotho, the Lesotho National Federation of Organisations of the Disabled (LNFOD) has been implementing a project, 'Accelerating inauguration of the independent council on the rights of persons with disabilities and awareness raising.'

The action was implemented following the enactment of Persons with Disability Equity Act by the parliament in March 2021. The Act establishes a council on the rights of persons with disabilities whose function is to monitor effective implementation of the Act. Nevertheless, the council is not yet operational, and the Ministry of social development has not prioritised its establishment.

Hence the action was intended to influence government of Lesotho through the Ministry of social Development to fast tract the inauguration of the disability council through advocacy and raise awareness about the rights contained by the Act to the community including persons with disabilities, the private sector and government departments at the district level.

The project objective was to advocate for the inauguration of the council through allocation of budget and sensitise private sector and the community about the rights of persons with disabilities.

The advocacy has been emphasizing on the need for the Ministry of social Development to allocate budget which would enable operationalisation of the



council in the next fiscal year.

The action began in September 2021 and is anticipated to phase out by the end of January 2022.

Through the implementation of its activities including lobbying and advocacy meeting with the parliamentary portfolio committee on social cluster, minister of social development and other actors, the project brought to the attention of government the essence of providing a budget for the setting up of the council in the next fiscal year. The parliamentary portfolio committee on social clustered is also aware of the situation regarding the council and should hold government to account to establish the council as per the law.

During the commemoration of the 2021 International Day of Persons with disabilities (IDPD), the Right Honourable the Prime Minister confirmed the intention of government to inaugurate the council in the 2022-2023 fiscal year and instructed the ministry of social development through its management to facilitate this by budgeting for the council in 2021-2022.



# GENERAL NEWS

## Sensitization meeting to public and private sector on inauguration of Disability Advisory Council

By: Letsekha Ntlale

### Introduction

The United Nations developed the convention on the rights of persons with disabilities in order to protect, promote and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and their fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities, and to promote respect for their inherent dignity. So, Lesotho as the member to United Nations ratified and signed the UN Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities in 2008. It was not enough to do so, the government of Lesotho had to domesticate the Convention to Lesotho Law, this means Basotho had to look their wealth, resources and country as large then come up with the law that will be specifically talking and protect the rights of Basotho persons with disabilities. Therefore, in 12th March, 2021 Lesotho government through the parliament tabled and adopted the persons with Disabilities Equity Act # 24 of 2021

### Background

It is normal in this country that many laws are being tabled before the parliament, then no one cares about adoption and the implementation of the law. Thus, Lesotho National Federation of Organisations of the Disabled (LNFOD) seek funding to push the act # 24 of 2021 to be implemented. Fortunately, The British High Commission supported LNFOD to accelerate the inauguration of the disability advisory council that has been established by the act # 24 of 2021. Unfortunately, since March till then the inauguration is still in limbo. The project that is supported by The British high commission was supposed to work in 4 Lesotho districts; namely Quthing, Mhale'shoek, Mafeteng and Maseru.

### Objectives of the project:

1. Sensitize the public and private sector on inauguration of the disability advisory council through meetings and media.
2. To accelerate the inauguration the disability advisory council by the government through meetings looking at;

a). Looking at the terrible situation of the human rights of persons with disabilities in terms of access to infrastructure, mobility, communication, education, healthcare facilities and employment opportunities.

b). Following the important role, the council on the rights of persons with disabilities will be playing in forward effective monitoring of human rights of persons with disabilities.

c). Considering the need for full and effective participation of persons with disabilities in decision making processes affecting their lives in the country.

On the 14th December, 2021 hold a sensitization meeting heads of departments in the government of Lesotho in Quthing district. The participants were 14, 8 females and 6 males. Among this group persons with disabilities were represented by 1 male and 1 female from Lesotho National Association of the Disabled (LNAPD). All members of the DPOs were invited to attend. The district administrator who is the head in the district was also participated in this meeting. They were all introduced themselves and the ministry they came from. The brief and the background of disability rights in Lesotho and a brief situation or context of the rights of persons with disabilities in Lesotho and the gaps that are filled by the Persons with Disabilities equity Act No 24 of 2021, shared by Letsekha. He elaborated more to tell all participants what does the disability mean versus impairment. The exercise was also delivered using examples so that participants can be able to understand. He then elaborated to participants about all National DPOs in this country those affiliated to LNFOD.

Then Pascalina shared the nature of the Council that appears on Section 4 of the act. She indicated that the council is established by the act and shall be the advisory body to the government on issues of disability.

And the act says the council is an autonomous body. Then stated on how the council is composed; that Section 5 (1) The council consists of members who shall be nominated by organisations and submitted to the minister and will be appointed by notice published in the gazette.

Read the list of organisations that appears on the act to build the disability advisory council as follows; Director of Disability in the Ministry of social Development, One representative of Special Education in the ministry of education, One representative from each DPO nominated by LNFOD, One representative of civil society nominated by LCN, One representative of the private sector who shall be nominated by Chamber of Commerce and the private sector foundation, One representative of the legal cadre nominated by the law society of Lesotho, One representative of nurses, nominated by Nurses Association of Lesotho, One representative of medical practitioners nominated by medical, dental and Pharmacy Council, One representative of Principal Chiefs and nominated by the council of chiefs. She also highlighted the participants that the above-mentioned members shall choose from themselves the chairperson and the deputy chairperson. They shall also regulate their own procedures on how the council is going to work.

#### **Functions of the council are;**

Stated again that the council mandated to monitor and evaluate issues concerning disability in Lesotho. The council will also advise issues concerning disability issues. E.g. made an example of grants that were supposed to be released but still not up-to-the-minute. If the council was inaugurated the procedure of identifying qualified people would be clear not the ones are being put on place by the ministry of social development.

The council is instructed to monitor the implementation and ensure compliance of this Act. It is with this task that Pascalina explained more to the participants by examples like inaccessible infrastructure. She explained to them that everyone should understand how difficult it is for a person on a wheelchair who needs a service but cannot access the building.

Then the District Administrator agreed with that statement and pointed her office that it is one of those offices which cannot be accessed by all types of people with physical disabilities. The District Administrator was very delighted after being assisted on how can such office be re-structured in order to accommodate everyone. The issue of re-restricting offices was the thread to many offices, saying it is going to be costly to the government, looking at the way the government is functioning.

The disability advisory council given task to monitor the situation of rights of persons with disability in Lesotho. That is where the facilitator asked the participants how do they see the situation of persons with disabilities in this country. They all mentioned that people with disabilities are the most vulnerable people that they use to give them some coins when they pass them. They were not even aware that they can work in order to earn money. So, the presenter then indicated that the disability advisory council's role is to look to such situations and provide advice in expertise on disability rights where necessary and to the Commission of human rights.

Lastly the highlight was on Qualification for membership of the council, the act indicates that a member shall not qualify if not a citizen of Lesotho, if has been convicted of a criminal offence without a fine and if is an unrehabilitated insolvent. The duration of the disability advisory council is 3 years.

There were so many examples made by the presentation team in order to make it clear to everyone. They were all happy and said the meeting is an eye-opener to all.

Human rights to persons with disabilities – this topic was facilitated by Mr. Letsekha. He indicated that some of the rights have been touched in the previous topic but will start again from the beginning of those rights. He touched them all with examples, questions and answers. The team in that meeting used picture messages designed by the team. The messages that we were to leave them in this district played a very huge role for us because we somewhere need not to elaborate.



The last topic was the issue of grants which was facilitated by Pascalina. Elaborated about the age of each person to qualify for disability grant and all types of grants which are; Disability grant which is given from 18 years old to 69yrs, Child Dependency grant, this grant is given to children from 0 years – 17years old and the Grand-in-Aid which is a top-up grant to a qualified disabled person who is severely disabled between the age of 18 and 69. The facilitator said more about how disability sector worldwide is saying about the impaired person and the severity of the disability.

So, it is whereby the representative from social development stated that as the ministry differ from what DPOs are expanding the “severe disability”. She explained that the ministry is now going in villages to check families of persons with disabilities. She said they review the wealth of the family; they also find out if such person (the disabled person) is working or not. If in the family, there is one working, they don’t help such family. She continued by saying after assessing the family, the doctor also will further those investigation, if the doctor confirms that the person with impairment can work but at the moment not working will not get the grant. For a while the ministry will try to find how can such a person can get job or do a plan to give a person something to start a project for a living.

There followed some discussions and questions from participants on how the act can help the government and private sector taking into consideration their responsibilities as prescribed by Persons with disabilities Equity Act; 2021

## Lessons learnt

1. Government officials are not aware of disability in general. They still have a think that they are persons to be cared for always, not supposed to work at all.
2. Learnt that persons with disabilities are aware of their needs and how they can help ministries in districts on how to re-structure offices. All those tips were from those people who are living in the districts not participants and they were able to help them in a correct way with examples.
3. Learnt again that offices from social development do not know about Persons with disabilities Equity Act; 2021 and documents related to disabilities.

## Conclusion

The meeting helped many civil servants attended; this came up during the closure of the meeting whereby 2 people from the participants were asked to make vote of thanks. So, as the team realized that if the disability advisory council not inaugurated soon, persons with disabilities will still face serious consequences as it seems most of them do not understand and did not know about the availability of the act at all.

## Recommendation

The recommendation from the team is that all DPOs should push harder to make the government through ministry of social development inaugurate the Disability Advisory council even before the financial ending year of the government.

Based on the knowledge of head of departments of the government, the project supposed to go over 10 districts not 4 districts.

We found it not enough because within the governments most officers are not aware of the existence of the act, this means there is a lot to do.



## GENERAL NEWS

### “We can grow in business cooperatively”

**By: Materene Khoabane**

“It is our aim to start a cosmetic and hairpiece business. It is almost of every town that cosmetics are needed in Lesotho societies. Cosmetics have been in use in our societies for a very long time. So, in the same manner Pitseng is not the exception in this, that is why we 5 women with disabilities thought of starting this business in the same area.”



The group has been supported by LNFOD and its development partners, in order to empower young women and girls with disabilities in economic right. The name of the business is Sweet Mama's Cosmetics.

“The business will sell hairpieces, hair products, products that are applied to the body especially the face to improve its appearance. We want to see it growing, so that can have its site. As for now we are renting a place.”



The support we got from LNFOD is to build a shelter to work as a shop. It is factual that we still have to continue here and there but we almost about to finish. We need to do some shelves where we will display all the products that are going to be sold. The business we have do not affect what we still doing for our families. We are now doing mouth telling advertisement, we are working hard to see it growing until it is well known over the country.

We need it to help our childrens, families, communities, above all to provide other people with jobs. For now the communities are supportive, they buy a lot. We hope during festive seasons and by the time people are having events will get more customers.

We really like to thank LNFOD and its development partners as they realized that women with disabilities can change the world. It is our plea to both our supporters to help others, so that the world can realize the power we have as women with disabilities. With the support we got would like to promise that we will change Pitseng as the village we are working in.



## NEWS IN PICTURE



Sensitization meeting to public and private sector on inauguration of Disability Advisory Council in Mafeteng district



LNFOD President Mr. Makotoko Matsolo is giving the speech during the commemoration of disability day



Hon Dr. Majoro Lesotho Prime Minister giving shoes to PWDs Butha-Buthe during Disability Day Celebration



LNFOD and other Human Rights organisations during the commemoration of Human Right day



On a wheelchair is the musician that entertained the event, the next person is the Prime Minister Dr. Moeketsi Majoro



Three members of the organising team for the commemoration of disability day at Butha-Buthe





# LNFOD

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