

DISABILITY LESOTHO



From the Editor

Dear Partner,

The Disability Lesotho is the monthly email newsletter from Lesotho National Federation of the Disabled. This newsletter will cover news from February 2013. This e-newsletter is a platform which allows partners in the disability sector to share the good work they do and learn from the work of others. Content includes news, events, updates, activities and articles about all issues affecting people with disability in Lesotho. We therefore welcome contributions of any nature from organizations working to improve the livelihood of people with disability or individuals who have an interest in the disability.

On behalf of Disability Lesotho would like to thank all people who contribute to this newsletter. Articles will also be published on the LNFOD website. Anyone who would like to receive this newsletter or to be in a mailing list please contact Pascalina Letsau on 5905 5406 or pletsau@gmail.com

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

Best regards,
The Editor
Pascalina Letsau

News from LNFOD

We are looking at 2013 with renewed optimism and hope after the release of the 2013/14 national budget which is the first to address issues of disability. This is a sign that finally, our pleas have been heard and government is committing to fulfill the promises made in 2008, after the signing of the UNCRPD.

In addition to budget allocation towards providing legal protection for PWDs, the budget addresses the need for job creation for PWDs. Now is the time when the tide is high for all in Lesotho to join forces to boost its economy and we as persons with disabilities look forward to participating in the growth of the economy.

Our Government must respond to the needs of PWDs by capacitating and economically empowering them through such measures as working with financial institutions to enhance access to working capital, finance and credit facilities, promoting self-employment, allowing them to move from aid recipients to full participants in the economy.

Government must also support initiatives which aim to ensure PWDs receive education on par with their non-disabled counterparts which will enable them to obtain paid employment.

In order for true sustainable economic growth to take place, PWD'S must be allowed to participate fully in all aspects of society by removing the barriers that restrict them from taking part in national inclusive development.

Mrs. Bongiwe Buzi
Chairperson
LNFOD

GENERAL NEWS



Hon. Prime Minister Dr. Motsoahae Thabane

People with disability petition the Prime Minister for disability specific legislation

People with disabilities presented the Prime Minister with 5000 petition post cards, calling for the acceleration of the domestication of the UN Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities on the 18th February. The UNCRPD is the first legally binding international agreement among countries that protects the human rights of people with disabilities. Lesotho became the 42nd country to ratify the Convention on 2nd December 2008.

Since 2008 there have been no moves to take the next step in domesticating the treaty to offer specific legal protection for people with disability in Lesotho. The Lesotho National Federation of Organisations of the Disabled (LNFOD) is lobbying for the development of guidelines to implement the Convention as the first step in the process.

During the petition handover the Prime Minister, the Honourable Dr Thomas Thabane, acknowledged that Lesotho is behind in its obligations to implement disability specific legislation, in accordance with the direction of the UNCRPD. He encouraged people with disability to keep petitioning government and to play an active role in consulting government on decisions made about them.

LNFOD applauds government's efforts to protect people with disability

The Lesotho National Federation of Organisations of the Disabled (LNFOD) applauds the government's inclusion of disability issues in the National Budget on the 22 February 2013, Maseru. This is the first time a national budget has addressed the needs of people with disability.

In its 2013/2014 budget, the government has allocated about M187.1 million to address disability specific issues. Included in this allocation is development of guidelines for the National Disability and Rehabilitation Policy (2011) and the development of a Disability Equity Act, meant to domesticate the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability (UNCRPD) ratified by the Lesotho government in 2008.

Since 2008, the disability movement has been lobbying for the domestication of the UNCRPD and the introduction of disability specific legislation to protect the rights of people with disability.

"This is a day of celebration for people with disabilities. Finally, our prayers have been heard and we look forward to working closely with the government to develop the Disability Equity Act," commented Marorisang Mafethe, Executive Director, LNFOD.

"This is the first step to achieving our vision of a country in which people with disability may enjoy their fundamental human rights and have equal opportunities without prejudice of discrimination. We whole-heartedly applaud the government's efforts in promoting the participation and inclusion of people with disability in society."

The budget also accounts for measures to empower people with disabilities through creation of self-employment opportunities which will help them graduate from welfare recipients to full participants in the national economy.

This long awaited announcement comes a few days after LNFOD presented a petition from 5000 people with disability and their supporters calling for movement on the domestication of the UNCRPD.

GENERAL NEWS

World Down Syndrome Awareness Day

21 March 2013 marks the 8th anniversary of World Down Syndrome Day, a global awareness day which has been officially observed by the United Nations since 2012. Each year the voice of people with Down syndrome, and those who live and work with them, grows louder.

To celebrate WDSO 2013, Lesotho is participating in "I want to work", a Global Video Event organized by Down syndrome International. The videos for 2011 and 2012, "Let us in" and "Let us in – I want to learn" attracted over 60,000 views on YouTube.

IDAL youth member Sejabakela Diaho will star in Lesotho's contribution to the film. IDAL would like to offer special thanks to Danny from the Hillside Digital Trust for his assistance with filming and production.

The video will be available on YouTube and on the Down Syndrome International website on www.ds-int.org from 21 March.



Jabi goes bigger than Gangnam Style

To celebrate Intellectual Disability Awareness month (March 2013), IDAL has partnered with Kick4Life's Siyakhona program to create a viral awareness video celebrating the achievement of people with intellectual disability. The video stars Sejabakela Diaho otherwise known as 'Jabi', a 27 year-old performer with down syndrome. The video, filmed at Pioneer Shopping Centre on 23 February, will be available on YouTube and it is hoped it will "go viral" to show that disability is not inability. Watch out for an email with the link soon!

The clip will also be shown on Lesotho Television and at Ster-Kinekor Cinemas during the month of March.

ITJARENG STUDENTS GIVE BACK TO THE COMMUNITY

BLOOD DONATION

On the 28th February at United Nations House Lesotho, WHO Lesotho hosted their first national blood drive for 2013. 8 students from Itjareng Vocational Education and Training Village (IVTC) banded together to donate blood in the spirit of giving back to the community. IVTC is a residential training village for people with disabilities located in Matsianokeng on the outskirts of Maseru.

Students from the centre were enthusiastic and eager to donate since receiving word about the blood drive.

One of the students Tanki Setloboko who is 22 aged and studies Leatherworks states "even though we are disabled we have to give back to the community, there are many people who are sick out there and need our help, so I think we are doing this to rescue lives."

UN Lesotho understands the an adequate supply of safe blood can only be assured through regular donation by voluntary unpaid blood donors, and therefore plans to run blood donation drives every 4 months.

The 8 students joined a turnout of more than 30+ donors.

For each person that donates one pint of blood, 6 lives have the potential to be saved. So for the students of Itjareng, they were excited to learn that they would potentially be able to save the lives of 48 Basotho.

"It is important for the community to see, that people with disabilities can contribute meaningfully to society - that is why we donate" Advocate Nkhasi Sefuthi on why it is important to him to donate blood.

The Lesotho Blood Transfusion Service (LBTS) were thrilled at the response to the blood drive and the enthusiasm to donate from participants.



Blood reserves are frighteningly low and often completely non-existent for some blood types. This means blood must be sourced from South Africa, who also suffers from low blood reserves.

Often, for the time it takes to access blood, it can mean it is too late for the patient to receive the much needed life saving transfusion. Most blood donations in the country come from students who are over 16 with parental consent. Because of this dependence of students, in holiday seasons, when blood is needed most, there are fewer donations.

Blood donations in Lesotho are regularly needed for trauma related injuries, Pregnancy related complications and childhood illnesses.

Itjareng is a training facility for the disabled who focuses on vocational skills such as carpentry, sewing, metalwork, agriculture, leatherworks, literacy and numeracy. etc. Students from all over Lesotho come to attend the training facility, which is one of the only facilities of its kind in Lesotho.

Family members and individuals make many sacrifices to save money to attend Itjareng, in an effort to learn skills which they can bring back to their home community to start a small business or work with local businesses. Itjareng also works with LNFOD to raise awareness of disability issues and disability rights across all 10 districts of Lesotho.

If you would like to learn more about the students of Itjareng and their work – please visit their website at <http://itjareng.blogspot.com/>

Opinion

“Orphans with Intellectual Disability should become wards of the state”

The Intellectual Disability Association of Lesotho (IDAL) is calling for the human rights of children with intellectual disability, in support of Intellectual Disability Awareness month (March).

According to a study conducted by SINTEF and LNFOD in 2011, around two thirds of people with disability have an intellectual disability, meaning they have an IQ below 70 (where average is 100) and may lack social, cognitive or practical skills. Based on the Lesotho Bureau of Statistic's estimate that 3.7% of the population has a disability, there are around 49,000 people living with an intellectual disability, a large proportion of who are children. The majorities have mild disability and are able to lead relatively independent lives in the community, whilst others may have severe or multiple disabilities which prevent them from functioning without intense care and support.

Intellectual disability, unlike mental illness, is permanent and can only be managed rather than cured. It is widely accepted that the best form of management for intellectual disability is early childhood identification and intervention, meaning that cases are identified early and a system of different therapies is put in place to ensure the best outcome for a child with intellectual disability. Early childhood intervention encompasses things like peer to peer support for parents and children, regular physical, occupational and speech therapy, and development of an individualized support plan to be implemented by parents, doctors and teachers.

IDAL is lobbying for government to introduce a comprehensive national early childhood identification and intervention system. Currently, there are few support systems in place for parents of children with intellectual disability, once a child has been diagnosed.

IDAL applauds the efforts of a small group of volunteer medical practitioners and therapists operating a weekly disability clinic at Queen 'Mamohato Memorial Hospital but appeals to Government that this is not sufficient.

“Establishment of a comprehensive national system for early childhood identification and intervention should be the responsibility of government and not individual health practitioners. Although it is run by a team of very dedicated professionals, the clinic at Queen 'Mamohato Memorial Hospital is under-staffed and under-resourced and cannot cater for the needs of thousands of parents and children, particularly those in rural areas.” commented Mafumane Makhele, Program Officer, IDAL.

“We need to institute a comprehensive and sustainable system which incorporates primary, secondary and tertiary health facilities, district social workers and parents. District social workers should be trained in the identification and basic treatment of children with disability. They should then be able to refer parents and children to receive free professional care and assist parents in ongoing childhood stimulation and management techniques which will cut down ongoing pressure on the health system.” concluded Ms. Makhele.

Another key issue facing children with intellectual disability is the lack of orphanages and care facilities. Many children with intellectual disability are left orphaned and destitute due to the high incidence of HIV in the country. Whilst relatives and the community may foster other siblings, many are reluctant to take in a child with intellectual disability as they may be difficult, expensive and time consuming to raise. Hence, dozens are left to fend for themselves and become vulnerable to abuse.

Continued next page

“There are currently no orphanages or group homes which knowingly accept children with intellectual disability in Lesotho.” states Ms. Makhele.

“They understandably fear that the child will be forever dependent on them for support and are reluctant to make that commitment. There must be provisions for children with severe intellectual disability with no support network to become wards of the state once they reach adulthood. This will help alleviate the concerns of potential guardians and group homes and enable them to cater for children with intellectual disability.” Concludes Ms. Makhele.

Intellectual disability, or mental disability, is one of the least tangible and most difficult disabilities to understand. In about one third of diagnosed cases, the cause is not known. However, in many cases it may be preventable. Some of the leading preventable causes of intellectual disability in children include exposure to toxins before birth, for example if a pregnant woman takes alcohol or drugs, complications during pregnancy, such as oxygen deprivation and childhood disease or abuse.

Said Dr. Metsing, Pediatrician at Queen ‘Mamohato Memorial Hospital: “Measures to address issues of intellectual disability must look at prevention as well as management. Public education campaigns for women teaching them of the importance of taking care of their bodies during pregnancy, seeking professional birth care and ensuring that their children are fully vaccinated would greatly reduce the number of cases of intellectual disability.”

“Learning that your child has an intellectual disability and may never be able to live independently be one of the most heartbreaking things a parent can experience. It should not be up to parents to raise these children without the support of the state or community. We only ask that our children be afforded the human rights and social protection to which they are entitled.” states Palesa Mphohle, mother of a 27 year old man with severe intellectual disability.

This article is by the Intellectual Disability Association of Lesotho www.idal.org.ls

Q&A about Intellectual Disability

What Is an Intellectual Disability?

Intellectual disability, also known as mental disability, is a disability that occurs before age 18. People with this disability experience significant limitations in two main areas: 1) intellectual functioning and 2) adaptive behavior. These limitations are expressed in the person’s conceptual, social and practical everyday living skills. A number of people with intellectual disability are mildly affected, making the disability difficult to recognize without visual cues. Many adults with intellectual disabilities can live independent, productive lives in the community with support from family, friends and support groups like IDAL.

People with an IQ (intelligence quota) of below 70, where the average is 100, are thought to have an intellectual disability. They may also have difficulty understanding concepts such as money or lack the ability to respond to particular situations or environments.

How many people have intellectual disabilities in Lesotho?

There are few reliable statistics on the number of people with intellectual disability in Lesotho. However, according to a survey conducted in 2011 by LNFOD and SINTEF, approximately two-thirds of people with disability in Lesotho are affected by Intellectual disability, meaning there are thought to be around 49,000 people with intellectual disability in Lesotho. A large proportion of these are children.

What are the causes of intellectual disability?

Intellectual disability can be caused by any condition that impairs development of the brain before birth, during birth or in the childhood years. The three major known causes of intellectual disability are Down syndrome, Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) and Fragile X syndrome.

IN THE SPOTLIGHT



Zanele Hlongwane, senior reporter at Mountainstar newspaper

What is your favourite colour and why?

Blue gemstones, I love all it symbolizes, (Youth, spirituality, truth, peace)

If you could marry a celebrity who would it be?

None, I can't marry a celebrity

What are your hobbies?

Reading & cooking

If you were granted three wishes what would they be?

Be one of the youngest best journalists in Africa.

Making sure everyone understand the rights of people with disabilities

End all the conflicts & poverty worldwide.

How would you spend your last day on Earth?

Spend the day with all my loved ones & delete my facebook account

What is the best piece of advice you've been given and did you follow it?

Believe in yourself

If you could have any job in the world what would it be?

International news correspondence

If you could travel anywhere in the world where would it be?

Dubai

Is the glass half empty or half full?

Well it is full

What's your favourite book?

The power of a praying woman

What's your favourite movie?

Think like a man

What's your favourite type of music? –

International gospel

If you were given a super power what would it be?

Power to make everyone happy

If you were face to face with an angry lion, what would you do?

I would do my last prayer to God

Announcements & Events

Scholarships

Canon Collins Trust, a UK-based scholarships agency that provides a mixture of bursaries and full postgraduate scholarships to southern Africans studying in South Africa, Malawi and the UK. Canon Collins Trust has existed for more than 30 years and has supported in excess of 3000 students. We believe that southern Africa's development depends on strong leadership in key fields such as health, education, governance, human rights and biodiversity.

Our scholarships in South Africa and the UK are open to Lesotho but unfortunately we do not have a great deal of presence in Lesotho, and receive very few applications from the country. I hoped you would be willing to help us publicize this opportunity to your staff/ contacts, who may be interested in continuing their studies in South Africa or the UK.

We are current accepting applications for Masters Study in the UK.

To apply for a scholarship under this programme you must:

- Be a national of, or have refugee status, in one of the following countries: Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Zambia, Zimbabwe.
- Be normally resident in southern Africa
- Be in possession of a good first degree (minimum second class, upper division or equivalent) or about to graduate in the year of application
- Be applying for a full-time one-year taught master's course at one of the above named universities.
- Have at least 2 years work experience in a relevant field
- You can find out more information including how to apply on our website:

<http://www.canoncollins.org.uk/ukmasters.html>

Later this year we will be accepting applications for masters and doctoral studies in South Africa

To apply for a scholarship under this programme you must be:

- A national of, or have refugee status, in one of the following countries: Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Zambia, Zimbabwe
- Normally resident in one of the above countries
- In possession of a good first degree (minimum second class, upper division or equivalent) or about to graduate in the year of application
- Studying or applying to study at a South African university

You can find out more information including how to apply on our website:

<http://www.canoncollins.org.uk/postgraduatesa.html> .

For more information please contact Heath Thompson to the following;

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Disability and HIV/AIDS

Kasware Trade Conferences wishes to take this opportunity to officially extend this invitation to your high office to attend our Disability and HIV/Aids Summit 'Best Practice' Policy Development and Integrating Disability & HIV/Aids in the Workplace.

The event will take place from the 21 - 24 May 2013, at the Sandton Sun Hotel in Johannesburg South Africa.

To secure your seat/s at this summit, kindly complete the registration form and fax it back to + 27 (0) 11 791 4965 or + 27 (0) 86 588 1511