

# DISABILITY LESOTHO



## Editor's note

It has been so many years that I am working as the volunteer to edit Disability Lesotho e-newsletter. I would like to inform all the supporters both locally and Worldwide that the issue of March, 2022 edition will my last to publish as the editor.

I would like in advance thank LNFOD current staff and the previous staff members and everyone who supported me in this demanding work. Above all would like to thank May Ng for the opportunity she gave me when she introduced me to this platform nine (9) years ago. Even though I am no longer going to work as the editor, I will not be lost to LNFOD as I will be there on different capacity.

I would like to wish everyone good luck for the work they are doing, I would like to wish my successor to this e-newsletter good luck too. I will always be there for the love of this newsletter. I just want to say to Basotho people with disabilities, the struggle continues. Let's buckleup and work even harder for the benefit of young and children with disabilities in this country.

If you would like to contribute to the next issue which will be my last edition 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)

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



Editor

## DIRECTOR'S CORNER

### Disability inclusive education and disability inclusive wash in schools for children with disabilities

By: Nkhasi Sefuthi

The Lesotho National Federation of Organisations of the Disabled (LNFOD) in collaboration with the UNICEF Lesotho, Ministry of Education and training (MOET) Together with four national organisations of persons with disabilities, Intellectual Disability and Otism Lesotho, (IDAL), Lesotho National Association of the Physically Disabled (LNAPD), Lesotho National League of the Visually Impaired Persons (LNLVIP), and the National Association of the Deaf Lesotho (NADL) has been implementing a project aimed at strengthening inclusive education for children with disabilities through provision of educational assistive technology devices in schools for teaching and learning.

Under this collaboration, UNICEF and LNFOD were promoting inclusive education and ensure children with disabilities have access to education by purchasing and adopting teaching and learning materials for learners with disabilities in schools as well as for their teachers. This initiative is intended to address the prevailing lack of accessible teaching and learning materials in schools which hinders effective learning for learners with disabilities. The initiative was also intended to promote WASH disability inclusion practices by enhancing accessibility for learners with disability to WASH infrastructure and services in schools.

Similarly, learners with disabilities are denied access to a school education when accessible

water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) facilities are unavailable or inadequate. Children with disabilities have the same rights as any other child, including the right to clean water, hygiene, and sanitation, but they may also have specific needs and it is the responsibility of the WASH sector to meet the needs of all children, including children with disabilities.

The project was later amended to cover production of learner packages for children with disabilities from grade 1, 2, 3, and 4 in accessible formats including in braille, and sign language.

Over the period of implementation, the following activities have been successfully implemented: rapid assessment study on teaching and learning needs of children and teachers of children with disabilities in 100 schools; procurement of educational assistive devices for children and teachers; adaptation of textbooks for teachers with disabilities; training of teachers on the use of teaching and learning technology devices for effective use and learning and disability inclusive wash activities.

The rapid needs assessment study has identified three thousand three hundred and sixty-seven thousand learners with disabilities in 102 schools who are taught and learn without effective support. This is due to lack of teaching and learning

materials which are inclusive of and accessible to learners with disabilities. The report therefore recommends procurement and distribution and development of accessible and inclusive teaching and learning materials for children with disabilities in all selected primary and secondary schools.

61 teachers have been trained on the use of educational assistive technology devices procured for teachers to support effective learning of children with disabilities in schools. 200 sign language dictionaries have been procured for six primary teaching sign language in order to support the growth of sign language vocabulary for the deaf learners in primary schools.

In terms of disability inclusive wash activities, 1600

copies of disability friendly wash materials have been produced in accessible formats and distributed in over 50 schools in the southern region.

The project further trained 149 key wash stakeholders on disability inclusive wash services including 89 teachers and 59 other stakeholders in ten (10) districts of Lesotho.

The educational assistive devices and other teaching and learning materials will be distributed to 22 schools as soon as the launch of E-learning passport and learner packages has been completed before the end of March.

LNFOOD expresses its deepest gratitude to the Ministry of Education and Training and UNICEF Lesotho for considering to deliver this project with LNFOOD.

## **COVID-19 challenges face by Person with disabilities**

**By: Pascalina Letsau**

National Association of the Deaf Lesotho (NADL) in collaboration with other stakeholders and development partners worked together to provide training to its members in 5 districts in selected community councils to curb the spread of COVID-19 among its members. NADL was providing knowledge about different COVID waves and its dangers. Currently NADL is working with British High Commission which have provided funding to conduct training about COVID-19 vaccine and encourage its members to voluntarily vaccinate. NADL is convincing its members with the importance of the vaccine as many deaf people were very confused by misinformation and myths

they got from social media. Many deaf people were saying negative things about COVID-19 and its vaccine. NADL managed to encourage 150 Deaf people to vaccinate within those community councils that NADL is working at in 5 districts. NADL again is working with the Ministry of Health through funding provided by the Global fund to train Sign Language interpreters.





## ADVOCACY ASPECT

### LNFOOD STATEMENT ON PREVENTION AND RESPONSE TO SEXUAL GENDER BASED VIOLENCE:

**By: Masekara Sekoankoetla**

On the 1<sup>st</sup> March, 2022 released the statement regarding the sexual abuse to a 11 years old girl by Retselisitsoe Stephen Thoahlane.

The Lesotho National Federation of Organizations of the Disabled (LNFOOD) promotes zero tolerance towards violence against women and girls irrespective of their status. Where gender-based violence occurs, LNFOOD fully supports equal access to justice by all persons with disabilities whether as perpetrators or as victims.

LNFOOD is dismayed and therefore condemns in strongest terms the horrendous sexual abuse of an 11-year-old girl child by Mr. Retselisitsoe Stephen Thoahlane, the Community Based Rehabilitation Manager, under the Ministry of Social Development, as pronounced by the judgment in the Children's Court by Her Ladyship Honourable Motebele on the 28th February 2022. Mr. Thoahlane was sentenced to 15 years imprisonment without any option of fine together with his son who was also found guilty by the same court for sexually abusing the same child who was vulnerable and under their care and protection. Mr. Thoahlane has served LNFOOD in the leadership role and is also a member of the Lesotho National Federation of the Physically Disabled (LNAPD). He has continued to work with LNFOOD through his esteemed position in the Ministry of Social Development.

We stand in solidarity to say "NO" to violence, "NO" to sexual gender-based violence. We pledge to continue to work hard to join national, regional, and international advocacy efforts towards gender-based violence prevention and response.



We accordingly call upon the nation and all stakeholders not to lose focus, Persons with disabilities are human beings and as such are equal to all of us, irrespective of gender. Therefore, let us all focus on the real monster, gender inequality, which has formed a strong base for gender-based violence prevalence in Lesotho. Let us, therefore, join each other to challenge gender stereotypes, harmful traditional practices, and discrimination against women and girls deeply embedded in our society. It is only by achieving absolute gender equality that violence against women can be prevented.

**ZERO TOLERANCE TOWARDS GBV  
AGAINST WOMEN & GIRLS!**

## GENERAL NEWS

### COVID-19 and its impact on Deaf community

By: Matsepo Mokhoromeng

Since the inception of COVID-19 outbreak in 2019, the deaf people in Lesotho have been left behind with all information regarding covid-19 and support rendered by the business fraternity and well-wishers. Therefore this posts a big challenge as to how to tackle the challenges brought forward by the covid-19 pandemic. This article will share with readers the challenges deaf people met, support they received so far and the way forward as covid-19 continues to rattle the world especially in Lesotho.

#### Challenges deaf people met during the covid-19 pandemic

1. The first National Address in 2020 by the Prime Minister in Lesotho was zero reception for deaf community in general, the reason being that there was no Sign Language interpreter on LTV, as a result the deaf community of Lesotho failed to comply with the National orders given by the Prime Minister for national protection e.g. the nation urged to use masks when going for public services and this post a big challenge when a deaf client requests a service provider to remove his/her mask as the majority of the deaf members depends on lip reading.

2. Supporting the above point, due to the tailored masks, Deaf people were unable to access public services efficiently and National Association of the Deaf Lesotho, initiated transport masks so that service providers can use and offer services needed by a deaf clients.
3. Providing that the deaf people were last people to know the information regarding covid-19 Pandemic, they failed to maintain social distancing, washing of hands with running water and soap. Also, information about opening and closing time of public shops was nightmare to them.
4. In the deafblind community, all the protective measures stated by the prime minister were difficult to maintain as the deafblind people depends on interpreter's guide throughout the day. Both the deafblind people and interpreter guide are at high risk of being infected as they are no Personal Protective Equipment provided for them. In addition, this is a challenge because deafblind person depends on tactile Sign Language interpreting which involves **close touching of hands**.

#### SUPPORT RECEIVED BY DEAF COMMUNITY IN LESOTHO

1. LNFOD made an effort to ensure that persons with disabilities in Lesotho are surviving during this time of Covid-19

Pandemic by giving away food parcels

were from Nthane Brothers and Mrs Majoro.

2. British High Commission in Lesotho supported the National Association of the Deaf Lesotho's proposal to develop accessible information regarding Covid-19 which was Deaf User friendly during the first round of the support. During the second round, they managed to fund us with funding's with the purpose of developing messages about the importance of vaccine and conducting trainings to deaf people about the same messages and urging them to volunteer to vaccinate.
3. Ministry of Health contributed financial support to train 10 Sign Language Interpreters who will intern despatched different local communities to train Deaf people and their families about the importance of vaccine and related issues as such this was a big impact from the ministry and we appeal for more support to cover remaining five districts.
4. New Zealand High Commission in Pretoria financial support was used as a backup support for the expanded project areas which were not coved by BHC Support. Also no forgetting Population Services International (PSI) Management

who supported NADL with provision of 200 transparent masks to be shared among services providers especially teachers at Deaf schools. This masks made learning to be easier for deaf learners.

## WAY FORWARD

Although NADL received huge support there were gaps here and there due to insufficient financial support was not able to conduct training in all districts of Lesotho and the food parcels as well were not received in 10 districts. NADL therefore appeal to develop partners and different ministries to include the Deaf community in its programmes for the eradication of Covid-19 pandemic and participation of Deaf people in ensuring that persons with disabilities are fully included.

NADL is looking forward to sustaining the partnerships beyond the project time.





## GENERAL NEWS

### STRATEGY FOR EQUITABLE ACCESS AND RESPONSE TO COVID-19 PANDEMIC:

By: Nkhasi Sefuthi

The Lesotho National Federation of Organisations of the Disabled (LNFOD) is implementing a strategy for equitable access and response to COVID-19 pandemic (SEAR). The strategy advocates for the participation and inclusion of persons with disabilities in the response to COVID-19 pandemic.

The project objectives are to challenge the government in Lesotho to review national COVID-19 response and recovery plans to ensure inclusion of disability and gender sensitivity which specifically addresses the needs of women and girls with disabilities; to advocate for zero budget cut in programmes of persons with disabilities, including for women and girls with disabilities; and to document experiences of persons with disabilities during COVID-19.

On its virtual COVID-19 meeting held on the 31st of January 2022, LNFOD shared the findings of its review on the National COVID-19 response and recovery plan.

The review was conducted in 2021 to determine the situation of persons with disabilities in terms of participation and inclusion in the COVID-19 decision-making processes; economic recovery, access to social protection, education, and access to public health COVID-19 information.

In terms of participation and inclusion of persons with disabilities in the COVID-19 decision-making processes, the review indicates that persons with disabilities neither participated nor included in the COVID-19 decision-making processes. This oversight resulted in the total exclusion of persons with disabilities in all economic, educational, and social protection measures undertaken to build community resilience against the coronavirus disease.

In order to recover from the negative effects of COVID-19, the ministry of development planning in consultation with other government ministries has been developing a COVID-19 economic recovery plan which will guide government intervention to ensure that Basotho are able to

recover from this pandemic, the review states that persons with disabilities through their representative organisations have not been closely consulted to provide their inputs on how the economic recovery plan can boost persons with disabilities to benefit out of the plan. This is highly likely to result into the economic recovery plan which is not disability and gender-sensitive to the needs of women and girls with disabilities. In terms of access to education, the review notes that the Ministry of Education and Training put in place education sector response plan for COVID-19. The plan guided the Ministry of Education to implement preventative health measures aimed at preventing and educating teachers and learners on how they could deal with COVID-19 in a safe manner.

Despite these efforts, the review states that learners with disabilities' situation worsened due to the pre-existing barriers to education for them. Learners with disabilities find it hard to participate in the remote distance teaching platforms because they were not accessible for learners with disabilities; some learners with disabilities could not listen to the radio lessons, due to poverty whilst others did not have televisions to watch lessons.

Children with disabilities did not only lose in the education but they also lost their daily meals provided at schools during the school closure which negatively affected their lives.

Regarding provision of social protection services provided during COVID-19, the review reveals that persons with disabilities were not specifically targeted by the temporary COVID-19 relief packages provided to the vulnerable sections of the Basotho society. This took place despite the fact that disability is considered as one of the vulnerability factors by the Lesotho government. Data was not disaggregated by data making it difficult to measure the inclusion and participation of persons with disabilities in the provision of the public health COVID-19 information made available to the public for their protection and use against COVID-19.

## Recommendations:

The review highlights the importance of enabling participation and inclusion of persons with disabilities in the decision-making processes which affect their lives such as COVID-19. Persons with disabilities are the experts of their own lives and can become resource persons in advising COVID-19 decision-making processes at all levels on how best persons with disabilities can be included in the ongoing COVID-19 decision-making processes.

Similarly, the COVID-19 economic recovery plan will affect persons with disabilities and should therefore be closely consulted to find best practices in which they can be included and benefit from the implementation of the plans aimed at improving Lesotho's situation from this deadly disease.

The Ministry of Education and Training is also encouraged to build on its work of inclusion by prioritising participation and inclusion of persons with disabilities in its COVID-19 programming so as to enhance protection and safety for learning of children with disabilities.

Online learning platforms are not yet accessible to learners with disabilities. Hence, LNFOD calls upon the Ministry of Education and Training to improve accessibility of online distance teaching and learning methods to accommodate persons with disabilities.

The review makes a strong recommendation directed at government social protection providers to ensure that persons with disabilities are able to access social protection services during emergencies such as COVID-19 meant to relieve the vulnerable groups including in the form of cash transfer which must reach even those who are not eligible for such grant.

Lastly, the review highlights that lack of the public health information in accessible formats continue to create social inequalities and deny persons with disabilities of their right to access information. It is therefore recommended that the public health information relating to COVID-19 should be produced in accessible formats including in Braille, large print, audio, easy to read, and sign language to enable all people to have access equally.





# LNFOOD

## PARTNERS in Advocacy Work

With funding from

