

DISABILITY LESOTHO



From the Editor

Dear Partner,

Welcome once again to the edition of Disability Lesotho. Disability Lesotho is a platform whereby persons with disabilities, Disabled People's Organisations and Individuals are sharing their views on issues of disability. This edition is covering news for the Month of February, 2019

Health is the most important factor in a person's life. Most of persons with disabilities are living in remote areas of Lesotho. For them to reach health facilities cost them and travel long distances. Due to the terrain of Lesotho there is no safe pedestrian infrastructure, no wheelchair access, everything is very difficult. There is no production for assistive devices.

I am very worried about how persons with disabilities in this country are accessing health facilities especially in terms of mobility. I plea to any organization or company that is willing to help Basotho people with disability about assistive device to come and work with us in Lesotho.

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

You can also Tweet us [@Infod_lesotho](https://twitter.com/Infod_lesotho)

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

DIRECTOR'S CORNER

KEEPING THE PROMISE FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

By: Sefuthi Nkhasi

The government of Lesotho should keep the long standing pledge of enacting the Disability Equity bill which has been pending for the last 7 years.

As the Parliament resumes its functions from the 1st March 2019, we are expecting the pledge to be fulfilled by enacting the Disability Equity bill into Law which will strengthen the protection of the rights of people with disabilities in Lesotho.



We are hoping that, the Chairperson of the Parliamentary portfolio committee on social cluster has completed its work on the Bill paving a way for its enactment by the Parliament.

The Chairperson pledged before hundreds and hundreds of people with disabilities in various platforms that, they will work tirelessly to ensure the Disability rights bill is enacted into law in 2018. However, that did not materialise since the public consultations were delayed which culminated in the delay.

This time the government of Lesotho should not have excuses of protecting Basotho with disabilities and fulfilling its international obligation of protecting people with disabilities living in Lesotho by an Act of parliament.

In fact, the delays and reasons why this Bill has not yet turned into law are no longer convincing to consultations people with disabilities. It is therefore imperative that, the government of Lesotho listen to its citizens with disabilities and be in charge of the Bill by preventing people with no disabilities to preside over the disability affairs.

GENERAL NEWS

Lesotho Education Quality for Equality Project visit schools

By: Puleng Mosili

Fulfilling its monitoring mandate, Lesotho National Federation of Organisations of the Disabled visited schools that were bought equipment by the Lesotho Education Quality for Equality Project (LEQEP) for the Visually Impaired learners. The purpose was to find out if the equipment is been helpful to the learners. The findings were that it is indeed very handy both for the students and teachers. The equipment made examinations much easier for the students and have made work bearable for the teachers as they needed not to transcribe no more. Teachers confirmed that the equipment have most importantly help learners perform better and be among the best performing learners. LNFOD considers extending hand for the visually impaired learner's best practice in this project and strongly recommend same deed for other learner with disabilities.

The LEQEP is a five year project implemented by the Ministry of Education and Training. The project started in 2016 and will soon be coming to an end in 2021. The Lesotho National Federation of Organisations of the Disabled is a watchdog for the project to make sure that the marginalised children are included and that the project serve its purpose.

Another visit was in the Quthing district at Jobo Primary school. The purpose of the visit was to find out why the school has shut down though it was part of the LEQEP.

Before closure the school had about 30 learners who were taught in a multi grading setting by one teacher (Grade 1 to 6). The

community of that area was interviewed to find out the cause of the closure of the school. LNFOD discovered the school that was closed in 2017 January was the result of parents taking their children out of school as some felt the old building that was not in the good condition would harm their children while the others took their children out because others including the teacher himself had done so. Some further complained that their children were not being taught they went to school to play all day. The community claimed to have tried a lot of mending to the falling building but to no success.



GENERAL NEWS

THE SITUATION OF THE DISABILITY RIGHTS IN LESOTHO

By: Sefuthi Nkhasi

The Lesotho National Federation of Organisations of the Disabled (LNFOD) is introducing an article on its advocacy newsletters which will outline and shed light on the situation of the rights of people with disabilities in Lesotho. The situation of the disability rights in Lesotho is mainly produced to inform the stakeholders on the challenges and solutions towards the meaningful inclusion of people with disabilities in the Basotho society.

Background

The Lesotho (Sintef Study 2011) indicates that, most adults and children with disabilities find their chances of participating in community development, going to school, working for a living, enjoying family life and participating as equals in social life severely restricted, not only because of their impairments but also due to attitudes, discrimination and exclusion.

Recent estimates on the extent of disability in Lesotho range from 2.5 to 3.5 per cent (Census 2016 and 2006) although it is recognized that data collected by census has failed to accurately report on the true range of disabilities and impairments suffered by respondents and there is a need for a better understanding of the needs of people with disabilities.

UN Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities

The government of Lesotho ratified the UN Convention on the rights of people with disabilities on the 2nd December 2008.

Ever since the ratification of the (CRPD), Lesotho has been struggling to domesticate the Convention through a piece of legislation till to date.

Disability Equity bill

The Disability Equity Bill has been drafted to domesticate the content of the CRPD, however, the progress towards its enactment is very slow leaving people with disabilities with the little hope that it will be passed soon.



Lack of political will by the government of Lesotho to domesticate the UN Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities (CRPD) continue to marginalize people with disabilities in terms of access to employment, economic empowerment, self-representation in decision making processes and service delivery.

National Disability and Rehabilitation policy 2011

The government of Lesotho adopted the disability policy in 2011 which was to guide the government in finding and addressing the social, economic and political barriers faced by the disabled population of Lesotho on daily basis.

Since the adoption of the policy in 2011, the government of Lesotho never allocated budget for the effective implementation of the policy and as such people with disabilities did not benefit anything from the policy.

National disability mainstreaming plan 2015

In 2015, the government of Lesotho adopted the plan on disability mainstreaming which the government was convinced they would use it to implement the policy of disability. Nevertheless, the plan was never allocated budget by the government of Lesotho till to date.

Ownership

The disability agenda remains that of people with disabilities and their representative organisations. This situation has been prevailing over some years in which the government of Lesotho does not put in place effective protection of the rights of people with disabilities including the empowerment programs which could change the situation on the ground.



I therefore appeal to the government of Lesotho and its partners to finance disability inclusive and specific policy, legislation and plans promoting social inclusion of people with disabilities.

Disabled peoples organisations advocacy should be recognized and financed to change the lives of the marginalized men and women with disabilities.

Disability agenda is only funded by one or two donors in Lesotho making it hard to change the situation on the ground.



GENERAL NEWS

MEETING LNFOD CHANGED MY LIFE:

By: Retšelisitsoe Mangoele

I am Retšelisitsoe Mangoele who lives in the Mohale'shoek district. I am a married man aged 54 who has two children. I am one of the disability focal person from the Disabled People's Organisations (DPOs) which falls under Thaba-Mokhele community council. I knew Lesotho National Federation of Organisations of Disabled (LNFOD) the first time when the organisation came to our council to mobilise us to form DPOs branches and raised awareness among persons with disabilities. Then they trained our community whereby they advised us on how to be entrepreneurs. LNFOD came up with an idea of giving out a certain amount of money which would be given to individuals depending on what kind of business one wants to start. I happened benefit from that arrangement as my proposal came out top from out of persons with disabilities who had applied for loan in my council. I used that loan to start a petroleum jelly and lotion small business as I was trained to manufacture it. Not long after the money was sent through, in a month duration, I managed to pay a little amount that I owed after some gain within first month since I went from one place to another trying to advertise my products.

During the second month, there was a lot of change in my business. During year-end, December, as a diversity, I recruited one of the villagers who did not know that he make something big out of something. There we contributed one hundred maloti (M100.00) as a start. Then we was selling pills and we generated about one thousand, two hundred maloti (M1200.00) as our income. After such income, we decided to work together and I taught him how to manufacture petroleum jelly and cream products. Along the way we encountered some challenges, and those included having to sell to people with credit purchase and they could not pay us back.



Some of the customers were complaining that our products were too expensive since they are used to buying other lotions which are also manufactured locally so I needed to work hard in trying to convince them on why they should buy my products regardless the slightly higher price. One other problem was that, I was struggling to get stickers and bottles for packaging and this delayed my business as I could not sell without branded packages.

Nevertheless, we soldiered on running the business. There are so many changes that the business brought in my life. I managed to have an investment. This business has changed my lifestyle so much. I am a busy man in the village today. I am able to save money and buy things which I may need daily. The business is able to generate two hundred maloti (M200.00) to three hundred maloti (M300) or more every day and this shows that there is a lot of change. What I wish for is to have my own space to sell my products and be independent. I wish one day that I will bring change in people's lives and bring change economically in my village. I am also a pastor and I wish to help disabled children and also the orphans. I also want to encourage disabled people to start their own businesses. I wish one day I will help my children too to further their studies.

Having to start your own business is not easy as people may think, but one thing that I know is that, when one is determined to do something and has passion for something, he will strive for a better future. There is nothing that comes easily but if one works hard in achieving his goals, he will end up having what he had not even wished for.

OPINION PIECE

Right to health means access to universal health coverage.

By: Pascalina Letsau

Sometimes it is hard for me to understand how our leaders in Lesotho do things. I am always asking myself whether politicians in different countries of the World are the same as Lesotho. Lesotho is one of those countries which are quick in international conventions and treaties, which is a very good thing to do. However, signing alone is not enough as it does not change people's lives. Implementation of these treaties are meant for changing lives of the citizens not for the leaders to fly all around to attend these meetings and seminars and then do nothing to implement those treaties afterwards. In fact it is not only bad but it turns into a misleading international community as people view Lesotho as one of the responsive countries whereas in most instances that is not the case.

Lesotho has been a member of the United Nations Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, CRPD for more than ten years now, but it pains me to witness how sluggish implementation of this important instrument is. Looking into issues of Health especially relating to disability, there is no effort that Lesotho is taking at all. In fact here we are going backwards when we were supposed to make a progress. There was an orthopedic workshop at the Queen Elizabeth the 2nd Hospital in the Maseru city center which is intended to manufacture Assistive Devices to Persons with Disabilities. The facility has now been closed down government is not saying anything about it. Remember how important an assistive device is to a person with a disability!

Denying a child who needs an orthopedic boot is equal to denying the right to education to a poor child. Persons with Disabilities are suffering, we are humiliated as we are moving around the streets of Maseru with proper assistive. We are leaving a shameful life, the little dignity which we had is gone and there is nothing bothering the minister of health and his principal secretaries and the directors.

I know LNFOD had talks with former minister Hon. Kaya and the then principal secretary, Mr. Maraka sometime last year. Maraka fully understood the need to urgently resuscitate the facility but here we are nobody coughs that now yet people continue to suffer and Lesotho remains part of the convention that was meant to ensure respect for inherent dignity of persons with disabilities.

What DIGNITY when people, who are taxpayers in your country crawl just because you are unable to provide them with a simple walking crutch!



ADVOCACY WORK



PARTNERS in Advocacy Work

