



LNFOD

NEWSLETTER

DISABILITY LESOTHO



DECENTRALIZATION OF LNFOD

BY MOTHEBA MAKARA-MPOTA

Persons with disabilities (PWDs) in the Berea district have welcomed with open arms and joy the opening of the Lesotho National Federation for Organisations of the Disabled (LNFOD) office in their district.

At its sitting this month (May, 2024) an established association of all types of disabilities for PWDs in the district, applauded LNFOD for its effort to decentralise its services saying it is long overdue. One Mr Lefa Sheshe (physical disability) says they as PWDs in the district have been stranded for a long time but now that LNFOD is available full time in the district efforts they employ to be treated fairly as all citizens will be amplified.

A parent of a child with intellectual disability (Downs Syndrome) Mr Ts'olo Mosola reiterated the importance of having LNFOD in the district and being present to even mainstream disability issues within the government ministries and service providers. He emphasised the urgency of LNFOD's assistance in their livelihoods, that is creating a platform where PWDs and their families will sell arts, crafts, and agricultural

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products to fight dependency.

Ms Mapaseka Sakoane a parent of a child with speech and hearing disability says they need financial literacy programmes as she is producing traditional attire for girls (lithethana) but needs to expand her work to add onto the disability grant her child is already receiving from government to take care of her child and her family.

Mr Ts'eliso Mojakhomo with visual impairment strongly voiced out the need to work hard to strengthen disability advocacy and mainstreaming in the district and country at large. He says with LNFOD in the district things ought to be in the right track and more engagement needs to be done with different stakeholders to change their attitude and approach towards disability issues and PWDs.

LNFOD opened its Berea office in May this year to serve every PWD in the district. The office is found Teyateyaneng, Berea Thakaneng premises opposite Blue Mountain Inn.

DIRECTOR'S CORNER

BY: ADV. NKHASI SEFUTHI



Mainstreaming persons with disabilities in government ministries

This article is aimed at informing the readers of the new developments taking place regarding disability mainstreaming in Lesotho. It will highlight the milestones achieved today, gaps and opportunities for disability mainstreaming in the public sector of Lesotho. It will conclude with the recommendations in maintaining and strengthening disability mainstreaming.

On the 30 May 2024, the Ministry of Gender, Youth and Social Development alongside Lesotho National Federation of Organisations of the Disabled (LNFOD) and Clinton Health Access Initiative (CHAI) organised a half day meeting with the principal secretaries of the government of Lesotho including the government secretary. The objective of this meeting was to sensitise the principal secretaries of the government as chief accounting officers of the roles they should play in advancing disability mainstreaming within government ministries.

The sensitisation meeting was triggered by the ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) by Lesotho government on the 2nd December 2008. The Convention requires government of Lesotho to promote, protect and ensure equal enjoyment of human rights by all persons with disabilities and to promote respect of inherent dignity of persons with disabilities. The Convention further requires government to mainstream persons with disabilities in the provision of the public service to enable persons with disabilities to access services on an equal basis with others.

Since 2008, Lesotho enacted a policy on the rights of persons with disabilities in 2011, national strategic development plan (2012-2021-2016-2017) which addressed disability as a cross cutting issue; National disability mainstreaming plan in 2015 which was revised in 2020 for the next five years; inclusive education policy 2018 and Persons with Disability Equity Act.

Despite these remarkable policy and legislation progress, persons with disabilities continue to experience considerable barriers in terms of access to public service because of lack of effective coordination for disability inclusive services by the Ministry of Gender, Youth and Social Development; lack of accountability and political will by senior government officials on disability mainstreaming policies and poor planning leading to social and economic inequalities for persons with disabilities.

Lack of disability awareness amongst ministries and lack of modalities for the implementation of the Lesotho national disability mainstreaming plan remain huge barriers for social inclusion of persons with disabilities.

The sensitisation meeting addressed these barriers to ensure that disability is accounted for ; principal secretaries increased awareness of their roles on disability mainstreaming plan and they identify disability focal points within ministries to ensure disability mainstreaming effectively.

Agreed upon points:

In order to strengthen effective coordination of disability within public sector, ministries will appoint disability focal points in all government ministries. The appointed disability focal points will be directors of planning units within the ministries due to the strategic role they play in planning and implementation of government programs and services.

Disability focal points will be appraised on disability mainstreaming milestones and the Ministry of social Development will approach Ministry of Public Service to ensure that the performance appraisal system of the disability focal points include disability mainstreaming. This will ensure ownership of disability mainstreaming in each individual.

The disability focal points will be capacitated on disability mainstreaming and disability mainstreaming plan.

The focal points will develop annual ministerial plans on disability mainstreaming plans with resources including financial resources needed to achieve disability mainstreaming in each government ministry.

Ministry of Gender, Youth, and Social Development will conduct monitoring field visits for the collection of data for analysis, reporting and capacity development.

In agreeing on the above points, Lesotho has demonstrated political will to implement the Convention, but LNFOD will need to monitor the process closely to ensure government lives up to its promises.

“Sexual abuse is a serious crime.”



BY: PASCALINA LETSAU

The issue of sexual assault seems to be high these days to people with disabilities in this country. Sexual abuse involves unwanted sexual activity, with perpetrators often using force, making threats, or taking advantage of victims not being able to give consent or fight.

My opinion on this issue is that there are immediate reactions to a sexually assaulted person like shock or fear of seeing the perpetrator. Women and girls with disabilities for the past weeks experienced this abuse.

A woman with physical and intellectual disability has been killed in Mhales'hoek district in relation to sexual abuse. In the Butha-Butha district an intellectual disabled girl sexually abused by 10 men.

In the same district, another child with intellectual disability sexually abused by the person who is being trusted by those learners around them. It is sad because all those people cannot fight for themselves when such things are happening to them.

It is important to report sexual assault to local police, getting a physical exam at a hospital, and seeking therapy from therapists who specialize in addressing the trauma of sexual assault, but for persons with disabilities who do not have support all those things do not apply. If people are not killed after being raped, they are left without counselling and seeing doctors. They are left with long-term symptoms that includes anxiety, fear, or posttraumatic stress disorder.

I think our justice system is still failing people with disabilities convicted of sexual abuse. Sexual abuse is a serious crime, and it is essential to take action to prevent it and support survivors. I would like to take a plea to everyone that if you or someone you know has been sexually abused, report it to the police immediately, and we are expecting police officers to act with immediate effect.

Persons with disabilities with Albinism are welcome to join disability movement



BY: RABASOTHO MOELETSI

Albinism is a genetic disorder that results in decreased production of a pigment called melanin in the skin, hair, and eyes, resulting in light colour. In its latest Census report, Lesotho the Population and Housing Census (PHC) of April 2016 by the shows that persons with Albinism in Lesotho amount to 8,798 persons in the whole country. The report reveals that majority of them live in Maseru (2,583), followed by Leribe with (1428) and Berea with (1393) with the least proportion in the district of Qacha's Nek with two hundred and forty-eight (248). It is further revealed that there are four thousand, seven hundred and fifty-six (4756) male and four thousand and forty-two (4042) female persons with albinism.

While this can be seen as a means towards including persons with disabilities, there is still a long way to go for the Lesotho's Bureau of statistics to run a few indicators to find out how they affect persons with albinism.

According to the report by Amnesty International (2014), "We are not animals to be hunted or sold" violence and discrimination against people with albinism in Malawi, Malawi has seen a sharp increase in human rights abuses against people with albinism, including abductions, killings and grave robberies by individuals and criminal gangs. It is further reported that persons with albinism are being targeted for their body parts by those who believe that they contain magical powers and bring good luck. Fortunately, this is not the case in Lesotho.

Persons with albinism have not experienced any killings or abductions. However, like in any parts of developing countries of the world, persons with albinism have experienced prejudice and discrimination.

While there have been heated debates both locally and on international platforms on whether albinism should be regarded as disability, the correct response to this question lies with persons with albinism themselves as it is always appropriate for the people concerned to always be given a chance to pronounce themselves. This lies with an individual to exercise freedom of association to decide to belong to a certain group on their own discretion. It is therefore a welcome gesture when an association of persons with albinism applies for disability membership to be a member of the Lesotho National Federation of Organisations of the Disabled (LNFOD). Albinism fits modern definition of disability like a hand to glove; disability results from interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinders effective and meaningful participation in society on an equal basis with others.

Attitudinal and environmental barriers are ones which cause disability. These barriers may not be brought by persons with disabilities themselves but members of the society in which they live. This means if the society would put more effort on removing negative attitudes toward persons with impairments, then there would be no disability in the end. Unfortunately, some societies still see impairments as barriers and waste a lot of time thinking about correcting people while it would be easy and logical to correct their own attitudes and live with the persons with their impairments.

Impairments may include light-coloured eyes of individuals with albinism. There is actually no need to think of curing those eyes, all members of the society need is to help protect those eyes by giving a person with albinism a job where there is control over direct sunlight where ultraviolet radiation may easily damage eyes of an individual with albinism easier than a brown or hazel eyed person. Individuals with albinism are at a higher risk of developing skin cancers and sunburns due to increased sensitivity to the sun. Meaning the same protection against the ultraviolet radiation could come as a solution to the skin. Depending on the demands of the job, protective clothing and sunscreen may be a prerequisite for protection against the sun rays. Prescription eyeglasses and wide-brimmed hat can be used by an individual with albinism at workplace to protect against direct sun rays which could affect the eyes or skin.

Learners with albinism like fellow learners with physical or visual impairments may experience bullying at school due to their physical appearance. This bullying can easily lead to strong feelings of being unattractive or feeling left out. Here there is a need for school community to be proactive here. Bullying behaviours are normal to the kids who are not cultured to embrace one another.

No child who is born a bully, meaning parents, teachers and school management should be intentional, work together to create conducive learning environment to every learner at school despite their differences. This should be done as an orientation as soon as new learners arrive at school to create an environment of love to another where everyone is different and should be respected for that. This program should be designed as part of a schools' pronouncements as bully-free environment policy. This can be extended to nearby communities to the school whereby parents play their role to encourage their children to live and play together with their peers with albinism or any other impairments.

At classroom setting, learners with albinism like any other learners in modern education system need individualised educational plans. This includes the use of larger print size, preferential classroom seating, and computers for students with impaired vision. Also, participation in a peer support group can also help kids with albinism to improve their emotional health. It is important for everyone to realize that albinism is an important part of who these children are. This means there is no need for these children to have their own special school at the periphery of the town somewhere, they should be included in a regular school with requisite accommodations in place.

Even though their skin colour is different, and they might need some extra support in the classroom, these children are just like everyone else. Children with albinism have a normal range of intelligence, develop normally, and have a normal life expectancy. We should all do our part to help children with albinism to feel like they fit in.

It is okay to be different as long as everyone understands the need to embrace diversity, then every person will lead a fulfilling life where everyone is loved despite their albinism or impairments.



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