

DISABILITY LESOTHO



From the Editor

Dear Partner,

Welcome once again to the edition of Disability Lesotho. The edition will cover news for the Month of January 2018.

Lesotho government is working hard to implement list of recommendations made by SADC Commission of enquiry in the reforms agenda of 2018. I will be anxiously looking to see representation of persons with disabilities in the commission to run all the reforms.

It is been a while that persons with disabilities are left behind in participating in developing laws in this country. I think doing so will help Lesotho not to do discriminatory laws like it did for long.

I would like to plea to all persons with disabilities to participate fully in this important process. We have to stand tall and walk every step to see that disability is meaningfully represented in the reforms in all facets. Those in charge of this land marking process include participation of persons with disabilities at every level starting from the community, district and national level. Let us present ourselves in all the seminars within our areas, let us not panic to raise our issues.

I know we have that capacity as many of us has been trained in advocacy skills. PWDs knows what is good for them in this country.

At national level, positives steps have been started where LNFOD has been given a chance to make its submission on the bill by the Lesotho parliament in future.

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

If missed any edition please visit www.lnfod.org.ls
We welcome any feedback that may improve the quality and content of this free service.

Best regards,



The Editor

DIRECTOR'S CORNER

BASELINE FOR 2018 DISABILITY RIGHTS ADVOCACY

By: **Nkhasi Sefuthi**

The Lesotho National Federation of Organisations of the Disabled (LNFOD) is implementing a program, "Capacity Development for the Promotion of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities" with the financial aid from the Austrian Development agency through Diakonie Austria (ADA).

The key objectives of the program is to increase protection of the rights of people with disabilities living in Lesotho through the enactment of the Disability Equity bill into law by the Parliament of Lesotho.

LNFOD noted with appreciation the Christmas remarks made by the Right Honourable the Prime Minister in which he publicly announced over the national radio that the Disability Equity bill is one of the bills which would be tabled in Parliament as soon as it reopens in January. LNFOD considered the statement of the Right Honourable the Prime Minister to be the policy statement and the directive to all the officials involved in this process to comply with his words.

However, LNFOD witnessed the reopening of the parliament on the 17 January 2018 in which the Reforms Bill was tabled in parliament instead of the Disability Equity bill as pledged by the head of the government of Lesotho in his Christmas remarks.

The fact that Disability Equity Bill has not been tabled in parliament during this session is a clear indication that Disability remains a less priority of the government of Lesotho and as such persons with disabilities will remain marginalized and vulnerable due to the absence of legal instruments which they may use to protect their human rights.

Surprisingly, LNFOD has been informed by the officials of the Ministry of Social Development that the bill has been approved and has been taken to the next step. However, the Honourable Minister of Social Development speaking at the commemoration of the International Braille day

on the 24 January announced that the Bill is still in the Parliamentary council office and will be presented in the parliament before the end of March 2018.

There are two different conflicting statements about the tabling of the Disability Bill from the same Ministry which may lead to a serious confusion as to what is exactly taking place pertaining to the stage at which the Disability Equity Bill is at the present moment.

The current situation is that the Disability Equity Bill was not tabled in Parliament as it was highly expected by people with disabilities acting in accordance with the pledge made by the government of Lesotho in December 2017.

LNFOD will continue to hold the government accountable to ensure the adoption of the Disability Equity Bill by the Parliament.

Apart from that, LNFOD is awaiting the Ministry of Education and Training to present the inclusive education policy to the Cabinet. The policy is aiming at providing for effective implementation of inclusive education in Lesotho in which all the schools will be obliged to support the learners with disabilities and other special needs without discrimination.



ADVOCACY ASPECTS

LNFOOD IS MAKING ORAL SUBMISSION BEFORE THE PARLIAMENTARY PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON REFORMS BILL TO ENSURE SELF REPRESENTATION OF PWDS

By: Advocacy Task Team

The Lesotho National Federation of Organisations of the Disabled (LNFOOD) is actively involved in the Constitutional, Judiciary, Parliamentary and public sector reforms to ensure full and effective participation of people with disabilities as soon as the reforms commence after the adoption of the National Reforms Bill 2018 into law by the parliament.

In order to facilitate self-representation of people with disabilities in this crucial process, LNFOOD addressed the Parliamentary portfolio committee on 26 January 2018 on Law and Public Safety on how the National Reforms Commission Act should incorporate disability issues as indicated below;

Recommendation # 1

Section 5

LNFOOD recommends one of the commissioners to be a representative of persons with disability to be recommended by LNFOOD to the Minister.

The functions of the representative commissioner of persons with disability knowledgeable and experienced in disability rights will be to support other commissioners on mainstreaming of disability rights in the Constitution, Parliament, and Judiciary and Public sector reforms.

Recommendation # 2

Section 7(1) (a) LNFOOD proposes that human rights should be incorporated in this list to ensure human rights based approach of the reforms so as to facilitate the full and effective participation of human rights organisations such as LNFOOD in the reforms.

Recommendation # 3

Section 5(1)) (b) LNFOOD proposes that organisations of persons with disabilities should be explicitly mentioned in the list of those which will be consulted and participate in this process to facilitate inclusion of people with disabilities and avoid confusion which may be caused by the interpretation of the civil society organisations which may ultimately lead to non-participation of persons with disabilities.

Recommendation # 4

Section 10(1) (a) LNFOOD proposes that the issue of physical and mental incapacity should be defined in so that it may not be physical and mental incapacity caused by disability as that will amount to unfair discrimination on the basis of disability as per the UN Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities to which Lesotho is a state party with no reservation.

Recommendation # 5

Section 13 LNFOOD proposes that the secretariat of the commission should include professionals with disabilities to ensure equality and inclusion.

Experienced professionals with disabilities will assist the secretariat to take into account the needs and concerns of people with disabilities and contextualize them in the different sectors of the reforms.

The committee has pledged to look into the submissions by LNFOOD in order to facilitate full and effective participation of people with disabilities in the upcoming reforms.



GENERAL NEWS

LNFOOD present reforms demands

By: Limpho Sello

The Lesotho National Federation of Organisations of the Disabled (LNFOOD) has demanded the inclusion of organisations for the disabled among the list of participants to be consulted on the reforms process to ensure that the envisaged multi-sector reforms fully cater for the concerns and welfare of the disabled.

Since its advent to power in June 2017, the Thomas Thabane-led four party coalition government has embarked on consultations with various stakeholders including political parties, business organisations and non-governmental organisations as part of efforts to build consensus on the multi-sectoral reforms the country needs to implement.

The constitutional, security sector, public service, governance and media reforms were part of the recommendations made by the regional Southern African Development Community (SADC) in 2016 to ensure lasting peace and stability which is crucial to the country's socio-economic development.

LNFOOD Executive Director, Nkhasi Sefuthi, told the Lesotho Times that LNFOOD submitted its recommendations to the parliamentary portfolio committee on law and public safety, calling on the government to ensure that people with or organisations of people with disabilities are included in the commission that is proposed in the National Reforms Commission Bill of 2018.

Advocate Sefuthi said they proposed that organisations of persons with disabilities should be explicitly mentioned in the Reforms Commission Bill among those to be consulted and they should participate in the reforms process to facilitate the inclusion of the concerns of people with disabilities.

Adv Sefuthi stated that persons with the disabilities should be not be considered under

the civil society organisations, saying the separation was necessary to ensure the former fully participated in the reforms process.

The National Reforms Commission Bill was tabled before parliament on 17 January, 2017. The bill seeks to provide for the establishment of the National Reforms Commission whose mandate is to facilitate a national dialogue on the constitution and other related issues with the purpose of ensuring integrated constitutional, parliamentary, judicial, security and public service reforms.

The envisaged commission, which shall be composed of six commissioners and led by a chairperson who shall be a retired judge or eminent person, will operate for an initial period of 18 months and this can be extended for another 12 months to enable it to complete its mandate.

Adv Sefuthi said LNFOOD had also recommended that one of the commissioners for the proposed Reforms Commission should be a representative of persons with disabilities.

"The functions of the commissioner who is a representative of persons with disability and knowledgeable and experienced in disability rights, will be to support other commissioners on the mainstreaming of disability rights in the reforms.

"We want one of the commissioners to be assigned to work specifically on issues of disability.

"We have important issues that we would like to be incorporated because we have realised that we are always left behind whenever government is working on enhancing democracy and human rights simply because no one understands our concerns very well," Adv Sefuthi said.

GENERAL NEWS

People with disabilities up for reforms

By: Makatleho Sekoankoetla `Molotsi

The current situation of people with disabilities is a consequence of long standing exclusion of inclusion people with disabilities from crucial decision making processes. The reform process that Lesotho is undergoing has brought the greatest opportunity for inclusion of people with disabilities by enduring that people with disabilities participate meaning fully in the reforms process.



With the support from OSISA, LNFOD is implementing the project titled 'Securing Self-representation and fostering inclusive education'. This project is aimed at supporting representation of people with disabilities in the reforms processes that Lesotho is undergoing in or to order ensure that the reforms process shall equally benefit people with disabilities. Under this program LNFOD and its affiliates have built up a Task Force on reforms. This is the team of 15 people with different types of disabilities and have expertise in law, politics, and disability rights. Moreover, The Task Team shall represent the voices of people with disabilities in the reform processes.

The Task Team met from 17th to 19th January where they were equipped with advocacy skills as well as the knowledge of the reform process and its importance with disabilities. To ensure that the Task Team shall be representative of the disability community during the reforms process, it shall starting from mid-February have visits in five districts where they shall record the interests of people with disabilities about the reforms so that the team shall share such with the Reforms Commission.

In the same manner the team shall revisit such districts quarterly to give account of the reform process to people with disabilities therein.



Announcement / upcoming events

South African AT Database



This Assistive Technology (AT) Database is one key component of the Assistive Technology Information Mapping project (AT-INFO-Map). The AT – Info – Map is funded by the Google Impact Challenge to make the World more accessible for persons with disabilities by increasing access to assistive technologies. AT includes a wide range of technology products that are used to support persons with disabilities as they work, play and live in their communities.

Some examples of AT include crutches, wheelchairs, ramps, hearing aids, braille printers, adaptive software, communication devices, just to mention a few. This project serves to map the current availability of different types of AT in ten countries in Southern Africa, and works with local disability organisations to address gaps in AT availability.

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You can also call or WhatsApp 'Mathabang Maqocha on this number +266 59005185 or email: maqoachaa@gmail.com

Meeting with Disability Focal Persons in districts

The Task Force on Reforms to hold a meeting where they shall sensitize them about the reforms and note the desires, preferences and interests of PWDs about the reforms.

For more information please contact LNFOD office on +266 22320345

ADVOCACY WORK



LNFOD

PARTNERS in Advocacy Work



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