

DISABILITY LESOTHO



From the Editor

Dear Partner,

Welcome again to the fourteenth edition of Disability Lesotho, the monthly email newsletter from disability sector will cover news for July, 2013.

This e-newsletter is a platform whereby partners in the disability sector share the good work they do and learn from the work of others. This includes news, events, updates, activities and all issues affecting people with disability in Lesotho. We therefore welcome contributions of any nature from all organizations working to improve the lives of people in Lesotho, including those with disability.

I would like to take the opportunity to pass my condolences to all readers and people interested to disability issues in Lesotho and abroad. July month has been a mourning month to disability in Lesotho. May Ms. Kgomoco's soul rest in peace!

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 a Letsau on 5905 5406 or

pletsau@gmail.com

Your feedback is very much appreciated within the Disability Lesotho. Please help us improve the quality of the content of this publication by letting us know what you would like to read about.

Best regards,
The Editor

ADVOCACY ASPECTS

By Nkhasi Sefuthi

One of our key messages in our advocacy is meaningful and full participation of people with disabilities in all decision making processes affecting their lives. One may ask as how the government can know what people with disabilities are after during planning and designing of government programmes and projects.

The answer is simple; consultation with the representatives of the people with disabilities is available freely for any government and private institution willing to incorporate disability into its programmes.

Enactment of disability equity act is one of the major objectives which LNFOD and the DPOS would like to see in place by the end of 2014. The act; I am referring to in this paper should be facilitated by the ministry of Social Development on behalf of all people with disabilities in Lesotho. Unfortunately, the processes leading towards enactment of disability equity act are moving at the tortoise's pace. In fact the terms of reference for the consultant who will develop the bill were completed in the beginning of April 2013.

The plan of the Ministry of Social Development was that, the post of the consultant would one newspaper any the end of April, given the fact that, the funds were to be released to the Ministry around April 2013.

Nevertheless, the processes leading to the enactment of this law have gently come to an end in April. This is evident by the fact that, The ministry of social development has been providing the same answer to LNFOD to the effect that they are awaiting release of funds from Ministry of Finance till up-to-date

As a matter of fact, people with disabilities should not be given excuses such as this, because they have been denied of opportunities on the basis of their disability for quite a long time in Lesotho. People with disabilities need the protection of the disability specific law.

However the Ministry of Social Development does not recognize the importance of speeding up the enactment of disability equity act for reasons best known to them.

Worst of all, the budget of the income generating activities for people with disabilities have been cut to the extent that, they can now accommodate the trainees at Ithuseng. In this juncture, we must all remember that, it was proudly announced by the ministry that, people with disabilities should just form the self-help groups and the money will be given to them to start up their small businesses.

Unfortunately, the hopes and dreams of the potential self employed have been shattered down by the current resolution of the social development which states that, the funds for the income generating activities are solely for Ithuseng ex trainees, what about other people with disabilities have skills but not trained at Ithuseng?

Indeed, Social Development is not doing justice to people with disabilities by breaking the promises during the course of the implementation.

GENERAL NEWS

Holding a meeting with chief justice of Lesotho

Lesotho National Federation of the Organisations of the disabled held a meeting at Lancer's Inn yesterday in which Ministry of Justice and Chief Justice of the Courts of Lesotho were the key invitees in that meeting. The purpose for which the meeting was convened is to determine the existing level of disability in the justice system of Lesotho. It was also intended to increase the participation of PWDs in this area by ensuring that their PWDs' rights are protected by the courts of Law.

The high Court of Lesotho stated that, people with disabilities are protected from being discriminated against by the section 18 and 19 of the constitution of Lesotho. She further indicated that, PWDs are also entitled to equal protection of the law because their impairments do not make them less of a human being.

She stated that, the high court of Lesotho as well as the Maseru magistrate's courts has the ramps which enable the wheelchair – users' access into the Courts. However, she indicated that, the provision of these ramps should not be enough because the courts of law are available in 10 districts of Lesotho in which PWDs also leaves.

She said that, in her courtroom, people with disabilities are never denied access to justice on the basis of disability because if a witness or complainant is a person with disability and that person cannot reach the second floor in which her courtroom is based, she always rules that the case should be conducted in the lower ground so that such a person with disabilities can access the court easily. However, she admitted that, some judges and magistrates might not be following her footsteps due to lack of knowledge towards handling people with disabilities.



Sefuthi Nkhasi presenting issues of disability

She sent a strong message to the lawyers, magistrates and to the public at large that, people with disabilities should be treated with care and respect for their rights are protected by the constitution of Lesotho.

LNFOOD asked the Judge who was representing the Chief Justice 'Maseforo Mahase, that people with disabilities should be meaningfully mainstreamed in the criminal justice system of Lesotho through the employment of sign language interpreters.

The main role of the interpreters is to interpret the communication between the Deaf and the Court officers. People with disabilities should be protected against the lawyers who are not disability aware by the ridiculous questions they ask PWDs during the course of the cross-examination. LNFOOD also highly recommend disability training for the magistrates, lawyers and judges of Lesotho.

Physical access is also the challenge for people with disabilities to access the courts in the districts.

GENERAL NEWS

Farewell to a hero of the disability movement



The late Ms. Kgomoco Motsamai – Executive Director of IDAL

It gives us great sorrow to inform of the passing of 'M'e Kgomoco Motsamai, Executive Director of IDAL, on 6 July 2013. Kgomoco was attacked in her home in Mabote, Maseru in what appears to be a car theft.

M'e Kgomoco Motsamai served the Intellectual Disability Association of Lesotho (formerly Lesotho Society of Mentally Handicapped Persons) on and off from 1997–2013. She was appointed Executive Director of IDAL in 2004, a position which she held until her death.

She was a passionate advocate of equal rights for children with severe or multiple disabilities and adults with intellectual disability. She fought hard to achieve structures and support networks for families of children/youth with disability.

Kgomoco's persistence, fortitude and faith kept IDAL afloat when international funding was cut as a result of the global recession. Her strong leadership and determination helped the organisation adapt to the new situation and steered IDAL through the crisis.

She will be fondly remembered by IDAL staff as a maternal figure, always willing to offer sound advice or a shoulder to cry on in times of personal or professional need. She handled the most stressful situations with grace and dignity and always maintained a positive outlook.

She served as an inspiration for her staff, working diligently and humbly and treating everybody with respect. She focused on developing and nurturing employees, working patiently to address each individual's needs.

Kgomoco Motsamai—your legacy will never be forgotten.

IDAL is determined to honor her legacy and continue her work in empowering individuals with intellectual disability and parents of children with disabilities.

Mr. Qalang Jobo has been appointed Acting Executive Director of IDAL until 21 October 2013. Mr Jobo joined IDAL in April 2012 as a Programs Officer for the PACT/IDAL program. He has over 10 years experience working in the not-for-profit sector.

IDAL would like to thank its partners for their support during this very difficult time.

GENERAL NEWS

The peer group training camp

By: Sherwin Charles Gerwell



Rea Ikamohela peer group members attending a camp

Training peers in developing countries is always what it wanted to do. The dream came true as it is not the first time that people with disabilities attended the peer group training in Maseru. The training was conducted at Itjareng Masianokeng starting from the 22nd – 26th July, 2013. The camp had to carry on the work with people that pitch for five days training. The training focused on Spinal Cord Injury (SCI), amputation and polio.

The first day, the training started off with the objective and introductions of the participants. The introductions were all about how they got the disability and in which areas they come from. The participants showed their comfort being around one another. They then realized that the problems caused by disability are not only to one person but many. Most of the participants were not aware that their disability is called SCI.

The trainer did ask some questions to find out what kind of disability they have; only one person had polio while the rest were spinal cord injury. The agenda focused on the spinal cord and how in works for people with spinal cord injury.

During this week, the training focused on the affected parts of the body besides SCI. The training was important to have as people deceive to have the information around them. New information can change the quality of their life as they will know better. Peer Supporters are trained to make a positive change in the lives as people with mobility disabilities in their community. The training focused on SCI, and various other topics contributing to the lives of people with disabilities. The topics covered were as follows; Mobility Transfers, Wheelchair Skills, Health e.g bladder care, bowel care, games and sport, disability awareness assistance, case studies, wheelchair checks and maintenance, UNCRPD and relationships and sexuality.

The camp was successful as participants changed styles of doing things before they got the training e.g. how they used the wheelchairs and how they supported each other. Lesotho started a peer group for wheelchair users called 'Rea Ikamohela Peer Group', the group is the peer supporters.

For further information please conduct;

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GENERAL NEWS

People with disability receives gifts from Sun International

Itjareng Vocational Training Centre received gifts from Sun International on the 18th July, 2013 at 1400 hrs. Sun International was celebrating Mandela's Legacy, the day declared as an International Day.

The day called upon all people to give just 67 minutes of our lives to improve the lives of humanity as a whole. The day has been declared as giving day to vulnerable groups.

The Sun International hotels celebrated the day by handover some gifts like 50 big and hand towels, 50 sheets and 50 pillowcases and floor mats for two rooms to the centre.

The event was succeeded by the presence of the Director of Disability Services ministry of social development Ms. Mahlapane Makakole and the Executive board of LNAPD.

"We real appreciate the effort took by sun international that it always hear people with disabilities by the time of seeking an assistance. I think this is not the first time because when disability movements were voicing out about the accessible infrastructure sun international was the first to respond to that as all their buildings are accessible.

We are pleading to other companies to do the same." Said Lehlohonolo Molisana – LNAPD chairperson

On behalf of Social development Ministry Ms. Mahlapane said "I would like to thank Sun International hotels for the good work done. I hope as staff from these hotels will be our advocates, like you have heard about some challenges facing people with disabilities. The ministry is working hard to improve lives of PWDs in Lesotho and I think that can be done smoothly if we can work together on this. I will provide the company with a policy that I think if your company can follow will help PWDs and the company will benefit from following it.



On behalf of Itjareng Ms. Mahlapane receives gifts

GENERAL NEWS

By Likopo Lesoetsa

On behalf of women with disabilities would like to greet the readers of Disability Lesotho. The LNFOD women's forum is focusing more on issues of women, girls and children with disabilities in Lesotho. It is worth noting that women with disabilities over the decade ago have excelled in their leadership positions and as a result have had a huge influence in mainstreaming gender issues in the broader community.

Next Month is recognized as Women's month, what does this mean to us as disabled women?

It means looking back into our achieved, challenges and a wayforward as well as to unleash a new talent among the younger generation.

We have had a number of achievements among them includes management positions held by different women in our DPOs and their secretariats, remarkable community were and growth in membership and empowerment trainings for women.

However, there are challenges though. Lack of funding for gender or women activities has been going for a long time and it is my plea to the international donor community to help fund our projects so that our empowerment efforts are visible and that all PWDs contribute to the economic growth of their country. HIV and AIDS pandemic continue to kill our people because not all PWDs are able to access the Right to information on protection and positive living.

Something has to be done to ensure that women in rural areas who continue to bear children are well informed and keen to continue knowing their HIV status, and are trained on prevention of mother to mother transmission.

I wish all women a blessed and fruitful women's month, let's rejoice for our achievements

Last but not least, let's remember those women who fought for the well – being of children and women with disabilities, in this respect I confer my last respects to the late Ms. Kgomoco Motsamai who was the Director at intellectual Disability Association of Lesotho (IDAL). May her soul rest in peace

GENERAL NEWS

Sign language Graduates



The National Association of the Deaf Lesotho on Saturday 27th July 2013 awarded Sign Language certificates to 30 trainees who had undergone sign language training for the duration of six months. The graduates were from two training centers namely: Leribe and Maseru.

These graduates are people of different profession e.g. teachers, police, social workers etc and pursued this training because of the interest they had as well as becoming part of the Deaf community by being able to communicate with them and making sure that they receive information through interpreting service.

The event was graced with the presence of Social Development Chief Rehabilitation Officer Mrs. Mahlapane Boliba Makakole, Mrs. Sebongile Cekwane from Special Education Unit, Assistant police Commissioner Mr. Tseliso Moerane, Mrs. Tankiso Motjope from the National University of Lesotho and Mr. Rabasotho Moeletsi from Lesotho National Federation of Organizations of the Disabled (LNFOD) and great number of guest including Deaf people.

The main objective of the ceremony was to create awareness to the entire Basotho community about the importance of sign language as NADL is at the helm of advocating for sign language to be adopted as the third official language in Lesotho.

Therefore by training as many as possible interpreters, we want to use them as our lobbying tools for strengthening sign language status and increasing the participation of Deaf people at all spheres.

On behalf of Lesotho government, the Ministry of Social Development through the Minister's speech stated its commitment of ensuring that sign language interpreters are placed at different service provision centers so that Deaf community also access appropriate information and services in an equal basis just like their hearing counterparts.

All the speakers of the day expressed their views about the importance of learning sign language as communication barriers will be no more between the deaf and hearing people, and that the trainees must not only learn sign language for the benefit of job seeking but for creating inclusiveness of the deaf community in the society and also foster a true understanding of societal roles and responsibilities of the Deaf in the Basotho nation where information will be received through their own language.

GENERAL NEWS

Why a WIPO Treaty for Persons with Print Disabilities can change lives

The dream for visually impaired students in Lesotho could become a reality EIFL supports the conclusion of an effective treaty for the benefit of print disabled people at the Diplomatic Conference in Marrakesh, 17-28 June 2013. By 'effective' we mean an international copyright framework that will make a real difference to the lives of blind, visually impaired and print disabled people around the world.

The WIPO study on copyright limitations and exceptions for visually impaired people highlighted the work of the National University of Lesotho (NUL) that started taking blind students some years ago. A room for Visually Impaired Persons (VIPs) equipped with a Braille and a computer with JAWS screen-reading software was set up in the library, where books are transcribed into Braille. Despite the best efforts of the Special Educational Needs Unit and library staff, there was never enough material available in accessible formats for the students.

The process of requesting printed books from libraries in neighbouring South Africa and making them accessible could take up to two months, too long to complete an assignment. "I studied at NUL since 2005 and graduated in 2010 as a lawyer with a bachelor of Law degree", said Nkhasi Sefuthi, Human Rights and Advocacy Officer, Lesotho National Federation of Organisations of the Disabled (LNFOD). "With regard to accessing materials, it was a disaster, and I had to mainly rely on my friends to read out for me.

Visually impaired students were marginalized because we could not access materials in the same way as sighted students, especially in electronic form. I am very excited about the treaty being negotiated in Marrakesh. Imagine being able to easily get accessible materials from other countries, that would be a dream. It would spur other students in Lesotho to study and lead fulfilled lives.

It will assist the real efforts of the government of Lesotho to promote the participation of people with disability in society", said Nkhasi. Supported by the Lesotho Library Consortium (LELICO)

OPINION PIECE



Rev. Father Charles Phoofolo O.M.I

I deem it highly crucial to share my fantastic experiences with Deaf people. But before that, let me share with you how I landed on the Deaf community.

My involvement with sign language and the Deaf community was made possible by the encouragement of the former Provincial Superior of Oblates of Mary Immaculate, Right Reverend Fr. Augustinus Tumaole Bane OMI, who is the present Bishop of the Leribe Diocese. He obligated me to do sign language, despite my desire to do Braille, during my year of regency. I had wished to go for Braille because I had a visually impaired friend from home, which aroused my awareness of needs and challenges faced by people with disabilities, particularly those with visual impairment.

Well! Then how did I eventually become part of the fraternity of the deaf? I eventually found myself in the midst of the Deaf community to learn sign language at St. Paul School for the Deaf.

My first encounter with sign language and the signing community was also an occasion for me to marvel at the wonders of God. At first I thought that Sign Language was too difficult and I was even doubtful whether it was really a language in the strict sense of the word.

It was only later that I noticed that the difference between a spoken language and a signed language is that; the former is verbal-audible and the latter is visual-gestural. The rest of all what constitutes a language is almost the same. I also discovered that, there are almost as many sign languages as there are many spoken languages. There is no single international sign language. I really found these truths amazing.

Towards the end of February 2006, I started my interaction with Deaf Children. This was also an occasion for me to learn their language. It was emotionally taxing at the beginning. This was because Deaf students seemed to have had a lot to tell me, but I could not understand due to my sign language illiteracy. They would also get exasperated due to my failure to understand them. However, this situation pushed me to learn the language faster. After eight months, I had started being involved with tasks of sign language interpreting, which was to continue even after my return to the Oblate Scholasticate (Roma) up until now.

I interpreted in various settings and occasions which included Church services, funerals, marriages, workshops, meetings, health services, public gatherings, interviews, police hearings and many more. The scarcity of sign language interpreters was extremely high at that time. My sign language literacy took me into the sign language interpreting service despite my low competence level in sign language.

In addition to that, my proximity to people with disabilities qualified me to participate in two important studies ever conducted in Lesotho, in the field of disability.

The first was focusing on the living conditions of people with disabilities in general, while the second was on people with disabilities and HIV and AIDS. These studies shed more light on the troubles of People with disabilities in Lesotho, especially Deaf people.

OPINION PIECE

In one of the villages we met a deaf lady who did not know standard sign language, she relied on simple gestures.

Her clothes were all torn as though for a special purpose. In fact, she looked like she came from a different planet altogether. The family members and the rest of the villagers had concluded that she had mental disability. Upon our arrival at her place, she noticed immediately that there was something common between her and those members of our group who were Deaf. The noise she had always made stopped all at once and she looked surprised.

However the little information we got from the poor lady was that she had a child. Then we tried to find more information about the father from the family members, who thought that we were asking too much.

They told us that there was no father and that the lady never had a child. But the deaf lady insisted she had one. When the little boy finally came home, the two seemed to have a bond between them. We suspected that the lady had been abused to have had that child.

Some members of the community subscribed to our suspicion. The final resolution was to take the deaf lady to a deaf family for domestic work. The head of the targeted family was the member of our team. The rationale behind this decision was to help her learn sign language and become deaf aware.

IN THE SPOTLIGHT



Sherwin Charles Gerwell – Cape Town
Type of disability: T12 Paraplegic Complete
A Peer trainer at Motivation Africa
Age 24

What does your job involve?

It's to make a positive change in the life's of people living with spinal cord injuries in developing countries e.g. Lesotho and also to give ongoing support to my peers to change their quality of thru educating them knowledge concerning their disability and that their lives after disability.

What is the best or interest part of your job?

I get to go places I never dreamed of and most of all, I like to see how people living with SCI change after attending a PEER GROUP TRAINING camp (PGT) because information being given to them is all part of their new life.

What inspires you being disabled?

Being disabled made a huge turn in my life prior to my injury i didn't have any plans for the future was just working and going with the time.

But now I've got dreams to live for and goals I want to achieve and working in the disability sector takes a lot of pressure of me cause it feels good being around people that's going thru what you are going and we all ways learn from each other doesn't matter your race and nationality.

What is the best advice you have ever been given and did you follow it?

The best advice was after my SCI so my social worker at the rehabilitation center invited me to a introduction session of what peer training is and all of us that where attending the session was advised to come for the training and man I'm telling you I believe that decision is what still keeping me alive cause I could feel it in me that this is what I want to do and I am.

If you had a trained dog what would you do with it?

I will treat him as a friend and as you know human friends they change from time to time but I believe a dog will remain faithful.

What do you do for fun?

I love clubbing and camp it relaxes me and other wise i like to hang out with my friends on wheels because we always have something to laugh about.....kwaaaaksss

How would you spend your last day on Earth?

My last day on earth wow I think will spend that day with close family and my girl friend chilling with jack on rocks and some meat on the fire with a nice view maybe one the seven wonderers of the world then I can go in peace see yah!

UPCOMING EVENTS

General Assembly

On the 3rd – 4th August 2013 Lesotho National Federation of Organisations of the Disabled (LNFOD) will hold its General Assembly at Institute of Extra Mural Studies (IEMS) Maseru.

The assembly will give its members reports both financially and progress; there will be elections of Executive committee and other structures that are constitutional.

Disability Studies 10th Year Celebration Symposium

Disability Studies 10th Year Celebration Symposium scheduled to be held on the 1st September 2013

The Symposium will be a celebration of our achievements over the past 10 years, sharing current activities and fostering collaborations across Higher Education and Training Institutions, Government, Non-Governmental Organisations, Private Sector and Communities.

The programme will consist of music and interactive presentations on the following focus areas: Teaching, Learning, Research, Social Responsiveness and Vision Casting, with ample time being given for Q&A and discussion.

For further information if you are interested in celebrating with us. Please conduct dominique.adams@uct.ac.za

Or

Contact her on 021 4047677.