

DISABILITY LESOTHO



From the Editor

Dear Partner,

Welcome again to the twelfth edition of Disability Lesotho, the monthly email newsletter from Lesotho National Federation of the Disabled. This newsletter will cover news for June, 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 thank people that are contributing to this newsletter. Like we indicated the platform is for all people who have interest in disability issue, it can be private company, individuals with disabilities, organizations of people with disabilities and ministries in general we accept your contributions.

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

We welcome any feedback which may improve the quality and content of this free service.

Best regards,
The Editor

ADVOCACY ASPECT

Finding our place on the agenda

By: LNFOD Advocacy desk



The aim of this article is to offer a general overview of the current progress of disability issues in Lesotho. For many years the issue of disability has been set aside, overshadowed by other seemingly more pressing issues such as the HIV epidemic. Little by little, through the efforts of many brave and vocal self advocates and the support of international partners, issues of disability are creeping on to the development agenda.

First and foremost, I must admit there is a keen lack of data and statistics on the disability sector in Lesotho. This lack of data negatively impacts the initiatives undertaken by the government, development partners and disabled people's organisation that are geared towards improving the lives of people with disabilities. That is why article 31 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) calls upon member states to collect data and statistics on disability in all aspects of development. However, prior to the adoption of the convention, the Lesotho Bureau of Statistics' Census Report of 2006 for the first time included statistics related to disability, claiming that 3.7% of Lesotho's 1.8 million population have some form of disability. However, the census report does not include a more detailed breakdown of numbers of people with different types of disability. Lesotho ratified UNCRPD on 2nd December 2008. The purpose of the convention is to promote and protect people with disabilities and to ensure that all people with disabilities enjoy their human rights on par with other members of society.

Ever since Lesotho ratified the Convention, disabled peoples' organisations (DPOS) of Lesotho have made it their mission to remind the government of its international obligations to apply the Convention. Despite the fact that this has been a long and cumbersome process, DPOs have not stopped advocating for the full participation and meaningful inclusion of people with disabilities in all issues affecting them in society.

In 2011, the Parliament of Lesotho adopted the National Disability and Rehabilitation policy as a working document of the government of Lesotho with the purpose of mainstreaming disability issues all government ministries. It is intended to be used as a blue print for designing, planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating disability inclusive laws, policies and annual action plans. However, LNFOD discovered in March 2013 that the Ministry of Social Development has not yet sensitised or disseminated the Policy to the other relevant Ministries as originally promised.

In addition to that, the regulations of the policy have not yet been developed. The regulations will help government Ministries facilitate mainstreaming in their annual action plans. During the development of this paper, it was not clear when the process of making regulations for the policy will begin.

In 2012, the government of Lesotho established the Ministry of Social Development which has now become the entry point by which disability issues can be coordinated among all government ministries. Contrary to popular belief, the Ministry of Social Development does not deal with disability alone. Rather, the role of Social Development is to coordinate all disability related activities implemented by other ministries.

Since the inception of this ministry, LNFOD has liaised with the Ministry to achieve a cabinet memo authorising the Social Development to draw up disability specific legislation to domesticate the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

At the time of writing the Ministry of Social Development is in the process of advertising for a consultant to develop the law. Whilst LNFOOD congratulates the Ministry for taking this step, we urge the Ministry of Social Development to speed up the process of developing disability specific legislation.

There exists some confusion amongst the public regarding the issue of a disability grant with some people mistakenly believing that the public assistance scheme offered by the Ministry of Social Development is a disability grant. After clarifying with the Ministry, LNFOOD can now confirm that Lesotho does not offer any disability specific social welfare. The public assistance scheme offered by Social Development is eligible to every Mosotho who qualifies, regardless of disability. As PWDs are amongst the poorest in society, the public has come to associate the social welfare scheme with people with disability.

The reasons behind the demand for a disability specific social safety net are clear. The government does not currently have a functioning disability specific development programs to close the gap between people with disabilities and the rest of society. Although in theory the Community Based Rehabilitation Program was established in 2005 and piloted in two districts, it has essentially collapsed due to lack of human resources and commitment from the government. The pilot project has languished for 7 years without prospects of extension.

Supporters of the disability movement, as you can see, our battle is by no means over. However, we can take comfort in the fact that after years of fighting we have cemented our place on the development agenda. And it is here that we will stay until we achieve our goal of equal rights and opportunities for all Mosotho, regardless of disability.



Basotho people at public gathering on education of disabled child



General News

“Better Health Care to people with disabilities”



Ministry of Health in collaboration with ICAP and Itjareng Vocational Training Center (IVTC) will launch a campaign on mainstreaming Health services for people with disabilities. The launch took place at Itjareng Masianokeng on the 20th June, 2013

On behalf of Health services, Dr. 'Nyane Letsie said; 'the objective of the campaign is to bring services by providing better health care to people with disabilities, this campaign has been implemented to other groups like elderly, orphanage homes and communities that needs the same services, so it is now time that we give these services to people with disabilities.

People with disabilities cried for quality services for a long time and did not receive the health care they need as their counterparts who are not disabled and continued to have poorer health. People with disabilities are more than twice as likely to find healthcare providers' skills and facilities inadequate; nearly three times more likely to be denied health care; and four times more likely to be treated badly, e.g. deaf people do not access health care services as health care workers do not know sign language, therefore they denied to their right to health right.

During this event; people with disabilities have been checked for sugar diabetes and high blood pressure,

as well as being offered council and optional tests for HIV/AIDS and other diseases. They also tested for TB and checked on problems of eyes and teeth and many more.

“People with disability struggle to access health services on an equal basis with others, despite the fact it is a human right. People with disabilities are being denied access to basic services such as healthcare.”

“We are pleading the Ministry of Health to include the concept of disability access in their policy document so that the needs of people with disability may be taken into account in all future infrastructure development projects, in order for people with disabilities to access quality services. The majority of community and district health facilities are not equipped with wheelchair access and as a result, physically disabled patients are compelled to seek medical assistance at the national hospital in Maseru which raises the cost of healthcare considerably.” said Pascalina Letsau, the Extension officer, Itjareng.

The chief Rehabilitation Officer from the Ministry of Social Development, Ms. Mahlapane Makhakhole – Adiba, was invited but unfortunately apologized due to the meeting she was not expecting to take long time. LNFOD and other member affiliates participated in this and knew about their health as people with disabilities and secretariat for offices.

The follow – ups will be taken by the Extension officer and District HIV / AIDS officer Ms. 'Mamokonyana Chaolane to ensure quality health to people with disabilities.



General News

By Likopo Lesoetsa

HIV & AIDS Awareness Campaign and Deaf people

On the 23rd May, NADL was invited to participate in a march held in Hlotse Leribe to raise awareness of the challenges facing the deaf community in accessing information on HIV & AIDS.

The event was organized and sponsored by Help Lesotho, an organisation which focuses on HIV & AIDS prevention through education, gender equity and youth leadership development. Deaf people are often inadvertently excluded from HIV & AIDS awareness communications due to the fact that much of the communication is verbal.

The event kicked off from the District Administrator's office (DAs), where the District Administrator addressed the public about the importance of including people with disability in community activities. In his remarks Mr. Morahanye thanked Help Lesotho for their efforts to include people with disability in their activities, in particular helping deaf people to access information on HIV & AIDS through sign language. He further encouraged other organizations to follow this good example and officially opened the event.

The crowd marched from the DA's office to the Help Lesotho campus where they were greeted by the sounds of a brass band and performances by various schools in Leribe. In his welcome speech, the Director of Help Lesotho commented on the importance of including deaf people in Help Lesotho programs, particularly given the close proximity of Help Lesotho to deaf schools.

The speech was followed by a presentation in sign language by a Help Lesotho program officer currently studying sign language who assured the audience that their services and activities would now be available in deaf accessible formats.



Nkhasi Sefuthi, LNFOD Human Rights and Advocacy Officer also spoke about issues facing the disability movement in Lesotho, specifically pointing out challenges faced by deaf people in accessing equal education.

He commented that the Ministry of Education and Training were being unrealistic in their wish to hire interpreters who are also qualified teachers, when the work of an interpreter is to help deaf learners' access information on equal basis with others, not to teach. Having said this he further argued that unless the Special Education unit succeeds in convincing the Ministry of Education and Training to employ Sign Language Interpreters in school, the education system will continue to fail deaf learners.

In response, the Special Education Unit Inspector in Leribe, Mrs. M. Lehloenya said her office will ensure that it convinces the Ministry and Teaching Service Department (TSD) to employ more Sign Language Interpreters based on the performance of students with access to interpreting services compared to those without.

'M'e Regina Lephoi, an openly HIV positive deaf woman, spoke to encourage the audience to know their status in order to live a long and healthy life.

General News

Ms. Likopo Lesoetsa, Programmes Manager at the National Association of the Deaf Lesotho (NADL) presented about the challenges faced by Deaf people in accessing health services such as counseling and testing.

She noted with concern that while there is a call for all people to know their status, having a third party sign language translator facilitate communication between HIV counselors and deaf client's compromises their right to confidentiality. She urged service providers in this area to learn basic sign language to better service the deaf community.

She also commented on the need for more accurate information regarding HIV infection rates amongst the deaf community in order to enable NADL to lobby for better support in this area. She concluded by commending Help Lesotho on their success at mainstreaming disability issues urging other organisations to follow in their example.

Deaf pupils of St. Paul's` School for the Deaf entertained the audience with a dance by following their instructor as they did not hear the lyrics. After the National Anthem all were invited for Lunch.

Throughout the event counseling and testing services were being carried by PSI.

Capacity building to DPO officers



Palesa Mphohle a staff member of Secretariat of African Decade during her presentation

Lesotho National Federation of Organisations of the Disabled (LNFOD) in partnership with the secretariat of African Decade for persons with disabilities held a training on management and running of federation mainstreaming at Lancers inn on the 11th – 12th June. LNFOD staff members and other Disabled People's Organization's (DPOs) Directors and programme officers were equipped on the mainstreaming disability issues in the programmes, policies and laws of the government.

The national strategic development plan was found to be the significant document as it contains disability issues on education, employment and other social services for people with disabilities. The indicators which will enable DPOs to see whether the issues are taken care of were identified.

This workshop was held under the new programme of LNFOD namely, Communities of practice for disability advocacy and mainstreaming. The aim of the program is to develop the mainstreaming action plan for the government of Lesotho, Award the government of Lesotho what is called ambadossorial award country status.

Opinion piece

Right to Education……Is it real to PWDs?



Ernestina Ramathinyane, a Teacher by profession

I completed COSC and in the year 2007, I applied to Lesotho College of Education and was admitted. Hearing about my admission, I went to the college to find out whether the infrastructure will accommodate me. I was very concerned about the residential houses, I also want to hear from the management whether can be allowed to stay with my personal assistant in the campus or what?

I started going up and down looking for the right person to talk to. I ended up getting to the Deputy Registrar but failed to get the decision explaining that I am the first person on a wheelchair – user to be admitted at the college and he referred me to the Registrar.

Reaching the Registrar's office they apologized for admitting me to the college, saying that the college was not aware that I stated that I have disability in my application. The college would not have admitted me as all infrastructures are inaccessible and I should reapply after four years as the college would have included special

There were some questions asked by this officer like; "why did you choose LEC instead of Itjareng as this centre is an Institution for people with disability? How would you teach sitting in a wheelchair unless you opt for more advanced schools where you will use computers?"

"As much as Itjareng is an Institution for people with disability; I do not want to do vocational skills myself, I want to do something different. On the issues of how I would teach sitting in a wheelchair, I will cross the bridge when I got to it." That was my reply to the officer.

I got hard times going to many people whom I think would help me, relatives, friends and disabled people's organizations. There were many meetings trying to make the management of this college to understand how they could help me but I was denied to stay in the campus. I stayed outside just because I wanted what is best for my life. I did ask myself a stupid question likes, "Right to Education is a real to people with disability?" I know it is a right to everyone but people with disability to get to that college was a difficult as I was not the first person. One of my friends who are also disabled was not admitted some years ago due to the status of disability.

I graduated in 2011 but still unemployed. I applied to many schools and private companies for a job but only regrets.

"I am pleading to our government especially the Ministry of Education and Training to take issues of disability into consideration. I am aware that there are some changes within the Ministry but it is not enough as long as the infrastructure is inaccessible. I think the best thing to get a solution is to familiarize with the Building Control Act: 1985, so learners with disability from the nursery schools to colleges can access quality education just like their counterparts that are non – disabled." I would like to wish for the best to learners with disabled as the Ministry has introduced a new programme to benefit them.

Opinion piece



Liteboho Mahase

The Secretary General at National Association of the Deaf Lesotho

I am 25 years

Can you tell us about who are you?

I am Liteboho Mahase, I am a humble young man who strives for better things in life

What inspires you being disabled?

I am inspired by the fact that I am disabled because it creates awareness to the nation that Disability does not mean Inability

What is your favorite sport?

Taekwondo and I have won fourteen medals

When do you think can have the great day and what?

In October this year, the Taekwondo tournament that will be held in Pretoria to select Southern Africa representatives in Croatia

What do you wish in your life?

I want to prove myself and become the World's best Taekwondo player

Do you have any plans for this year?

Yes I do. I want to get a permanent job and start my own company.

What do you do for fun?

I spent most of the time with my family; I go to gym and later hangout with friends

Do you have friends?

Yes I do, but I wouldn't call them close friends since I am always busy with Taekwondo training

What is your marital status?

No I have a tight relationship with the mother of my child and have a boy child. I mean my beautiful boy.

What do you do for a living?

I am unemployed but usually do part-time jobs to help provide for my family and also doing some savings that will help start my own business

Upcoming events / Announcements

EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE

**The conference will be held on the 7
August, 2013 at Indaba Hotel, Fourways
in Johannesburg**

Objectives of the conference

- To identify effective literacy strategies in early childhood development
- To seek possible solutions to early childhood development challenges
- To acquire knowledge on how to build & implement programmes for young children
- Networking opportunities between industry players

**To register or seek any information
conducts these;**

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