

DISABILITY LESOTHO



Editor's note

In these difficult times Disabled people are still suffering in many aspects of life. Basotho people with disabilities are awaiting and asking about when will the country provide Disability Grant as the Persons with Disabilities Equity Act; 2021 has passed.

The highlights from ministry of Social Development indicated that will pilot Disability Grant in five (5) district of Lesotho namely; Butha-Buthe, Leribe, Thaba-Tseka, Mhale'shoek and Quthing. I am saying these so that DPOs and individual with disabilities can be equipped and attend all public gatherings that may be engaged in their places.

It will be important to PWDs to know exactly what Ministry of Social Development has planned to handle the issue of Disability Grant. I would like to take this opportunity to plea to all Lesotho DPOs to help their members with everything to track all requirements and guidelines.

I would like to wish every Mosotho with disability a very blessed time, that everyone should take care against COVID-19

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.infod.org.ls

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



Editor

DIRECTOR'S CORNER

LESOTHO NATIONAL FEDERATION OF ORGANISATIONS OF THE DISABLED GENERAL ASSEMBLY

By Nkhasi Sefuthi

The Lesotho National Federation of Organisations of the Disabled (LNFOD) is a democratic nongovernmental organisation which holds the General Assembly every four years to report progress made toward realising LNFOD's goals and objectives.

The General Assembly is the highest decision-making body vested with the powers to amend the Constitution, set the membership fees; and elect the executive committee and its subcommittees to run the organisation for every four years.

The General Assembly provides an opportunity for the delegates of the General Assembly coming from LNFOD members to review the progress and financial statements of the organisation and provide their inputs as well in terms of how the organisation can advance its mandate better.

The current executive committee decided to organise the General Assembly to be from the 14-15 August 2021 at the venue to be communicated soon.

The notice of the assembly has been circulated to the members informing them of the dates of the General Assembly.



LNFOD

In this Assembly, each full member organisation is required to send 12 delegates, six of whom will constitute a council which will then elect a board or an executive committee.

The members will also make resolutions directing the new executive committee on the priorities strategic goals which the incoming board should pursue during their tenor.

LNFOD extends its sincere gratitude to its long term partner Diakonie Austria for its generous support to making this activity a success.

The last General Assembly was successfully held on the 13th August 2017



GENERAL NEWS

Overprotecting a Child can affect the child's life

By: Pascalina Letsau

Lesotho's Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) introduced free primary education, many students with disabilities were excluded from education. The ministry released their goals that would advocate for integrating people with disabilities. They include special education programs to help train teachers to particular set of students, we now talking about inclusive education in order to cater every learner in this country to education.

There are still children with disabilities that are not in schools, it can be because parent do not see the importance of education to their children. In Tsifalimali in Leribe district, Mme 'Matalimo Mothetsi who is visually disabled is working hard to see that around those villages rights of disabled people are not denied. She said; "I use to go house to house to help disabled people and their parents about human rights. I found a girl with physical disabled aged 12 years by the name of Ntsoaki Pebane who has not attended school since birth."

"As a qualified activist, after being trained at Mohloli- oa-Bophelo Rehabilitation center approached the mother. It is true that Ntsoaki's wheelchair is no longer good for her health, but the mother is over-protecting the child, she indicate so many thing that hinder to take a child to school.

On top of those things is that the wheelchair is small. The mother has a difficult to take a child to the school every day as do not have a wheelchair, she says it will be very difficult to transport the child everyday. We came up with so many solutions that we thought would help her and the child so that can get education like her peers, but failed." Said 'Matalimo.

It was unfortunately that did not manage to meet the parent. It is our plea to all DPO members where they are to help parents understand the importance of a child to go to school. If the wheelchair is very small to help a child can also change with someone or approach the ministry of Social development through Auxiliary social workers to help.

When she concluded Mme 'Matalimo indicated that it will be good to the government to use the available Persons with Disabilities Act; 2021 in order to make things be well to PWDs, there is a need to have a workshop that will fix all assistive devices, as it seems that the country do not have orthopaedic workshop. I think it will be problem for Ntsoaki to go to school if the ministry of Social Development do not protect rights of PWDs.



GENERAL NEWS

Disability in Covid – 19 era.

By: 'Mantsebo Leluma

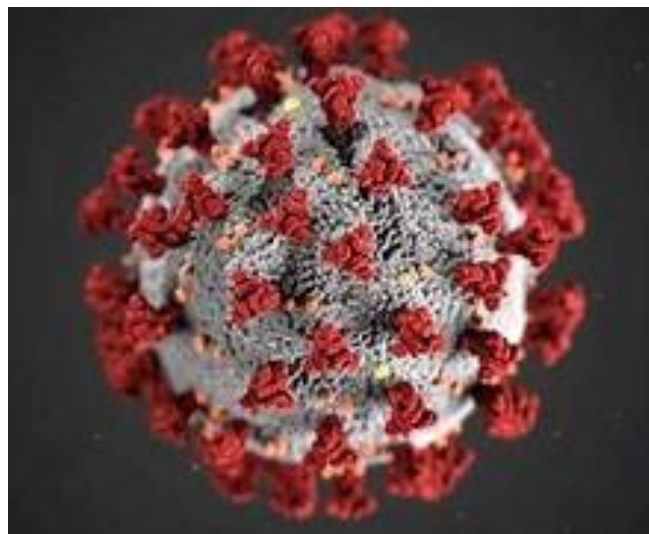
Disability is any condition of the body or mind (impairment) that makes it more difficult for the person with the condition to do certain activities (activity limitation) and interact with the World around them (participation restrictions). Disability generally according to the above explanation hinders the overall participation and exacerbate the already overwhelming restrictions there are to most day to day activities in terms of persons with disabilities.

The issue of restrictions is brought about by a number of circumstances surrounding the persons with disabilities. It is an understandable fact that people with disabilities are used to their factual situation of being restricted wholeheartedly to perform the desired and mandatory activities in their lives.

Covid – 19 has excelled the inevitable, as it has deprived persons with disabilities even more chance and or privileges to full enjoyment of human rights. Covid – 19 has in its own put to light the shortages or rather the gaps facing the Lesotho State. It is a known fact that everybody has been affected directly and indirectly in terms of financial stability and economic sustenance, so the vulnerable groups especially persons with disabilities have now shifted to the worst position of poverty and uncertainty of tomorrow combined.

It is undeniable truth that persons with disabilities are mostly affected by changes let alone hazards. They are now struggling to survive in a world where resources are very scarce, mostly persons with disabilities come from marginalised families where poverty knows no manners as a result they are forced into a much tighter corner (double jeopardy) in an environment not friendly to them.

Countries have put in place restrictions that will help in down or controlled spread of the virus and our country has not been an exception, the only problem is that they are not disability inclusive. It therefore makes it impossible to cater for the needs when you don't include them. There has been a long time slogan "nothing about us without us", Covid – 19 has affected everybody in their different forms of lives, disability and without so the responses also should cater for all of us. Inclusion in decision making could better solve the problems faced by persons with disability to deal better with the virus. NACOSEC as the body initiating restrictions should pave way for disability opinions and allow representation from different organisations of persons with disability.



GENERAL NEWS

DISABILITY: A DEVELOPMENT AND HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE

By: Mojalefa Ntlatlapa

Challenges

Challenges for the disability sector are many and varied. They are a consequence of both domestic and international factors. Disability itself is not the major obstacle but rather it is the environmental, institutional, attitudinal and economic challenges that prevent persons with disabilities from participating fully and being excluded from the mainstream of society. Sometimes, these challenges are the result of deep-seated prejudice. As we have seen earlier, most barriers are very often a result of decisions to follow the “old paradigm” of considering people with disabilities as “defective” and in need of “fixing.” At other times, these barriers could be a result of thoughtlessness, indifference, or lack of understanding. It is often difficult, if not impossible, to ascertain precisely why the barriers exist. The following challenges were identified as the roots of barriers preventing the facing the Lesotho disability sector to achieve its ultimate vision:

Attitudinal Problems and Negative Beliefs

Society has historically imposed environmental, institutional, attitudinal and economic barriers that subject persons with disabilities to lives of unjust dependency, segregation, isolation, and exclusion.

Environmental Barriers:

These include inaccessible public and private

buildings, such as schools, offices, factories, shops, transport as well as information and communication systems. These shut the persons with disabilities out and restrict their movements and freedom of association. That is:

- Most public buildings are not easily accessible for persons with disabilities; for example, there are no ramps in most buildings.
- The educational, social, health, transport and residential arrangements made by local and central governments or voluntary organisations are often inadequate and uncoordinated. They also do not meet the actual needs of persons with disabilities. As a result persons with disabilities are not empowered and remain dependent.
- As a group, persons with disabilities do not have equal access to services and facilities available to the rest of the society. Consequently, they are among the least nourished, healthy, educated and employed. They are subjected to a long history of neglect, isolation, segregation, poverty, deprivation, charity and pity.

To continue.....

OPINION PIECE

Obliviousness of the media to disability issues

By: Motheba Makara-Mpota



Disability issues are critical in the world today as we live in a democratic world with rights to every living being. It is also a pertinent 'subject' in development issues with specific emphasis on inclusion and mainstreaming, as even highlighted in the United Nations programmes which Lesotho as a country is a member.

It is worrying as the Lesotho media has turned a blind eye to peculiar developments with regard to disability issues and this says the media is ignoring the disability population despite the efforts the movement is employing to improve livelihoods of people with disabilities. The Lesotho National Federation of Organisations of the Disabled (LNFOD) hosts a press conference reporting on a study on the Impact of Covid-19 and people with disabilities, as usual, the national television (Lesotho Television-LTV) when the newsroom is dry there are no news items to flight, a filler is the recording of the press conference. People with disabilities like any other citizens and residents of Lesotho are hit by the pandemic but the urgency is diverted to other news other than the report on the impact of covid-19 and people

with disabilities.

It goes without saying that the media in Lesotho is yet to learn more on disability as a concept and its impact on the economy, politics and societal construction of our nation and that it affects every sector of society in Lesotho. One even wonders what news is good news. If the media does not conceive adjustments to the laws, policies and milestones reached by people with disabilities in their struggle fighting for inclusion in society as a "Scoop", "Breaking news", then there is a serious challenge facing the media as an industry.

News flash to the media industry, writing feature stories for the entire nation to know that disability is not applied for, but one is born or may accidentally have any form of disabilities in life; today it is me, tomorrow it is one of them; I bet adjustments and strides taken by the disability movement if and when reported well, will sell publications and news like hot fat cakes.

A tremendous job well done with the long awaited Disability Equity Act (2021) which will help to make things fall in place for the livelihoods and rights of people with disabilities. Disability mainstreaming plan which really says every sector including the media should have this plan in their daily running of their newsrooms will assist and guide editors in the newsrooms to appreciate the importance of reporting on disability issues and giving them priority.

Gender based violence (GBV) is rife nowadays and people with disabilities are no exception to this situation yet reported GBV cases of people with disabilities in the media are very few compared to political stories. The Gender policy (2015) has helped a lot and this, if the media follows its contribution to the rights of people with disabilities, the public will refrain from violating the rights of persons with disabilities.

Inclusion of people with disabilities in mainstream schools as the Inclusive education policy (2018) stipulates what ought to be done in schools for inclusion of all learners including those with disabilities, calls for coverage of the progress made in schools since the approval and launch of this policy.

News tips may be scoped and not limited to challenges faced by mainstream schools regarding the implementation of this policy, challenges faced by learners with and without disabilities with the inclusion in schools. How are the communities affected by the inclusion in schools? This goes for parents, leaders, politicians, service providers etc. the list of stakeholders is endless to get views and opinions on the impact of all the legal instruments in place to protect and improve the lives of people with disabilities.

A saying “whose news is good news? Whose views is good news” is appropriate at this juncture as there is a lot that the Lesotho National Federation of organisations of the Disabled (LNFOD) has done to date, which through publicity people with disabilities and the nation at large will know, celebrate and adapt to changes to make life better for everyone.

Be that as it may, some media houses must be applauded for efforts to source news from disabled person's organisations (DPOs) and individuals as it brings the thinking that change in mind-sets is not an immediate thing but a process, as a result sooner or later, disability issues will make front page (s) headlines and news scoops for reporters to run for as developmental news pieces.

ANNOUNCEMENTS/UPCOMING EVENTS



BACKGROUND

The United Nations in Lesotho has commissioned an impact assessment on the impact of COVID-19 on people with disabilities. People with disabilities and representatives of disabled people's organisations were interviewed, whilst group discussions were held to investigate topics in more depth. The assessment concluded that people with disabilities have been uniquely impacted by the pandemic and their vulnerability has been exacerbated in the following ways:

EMPLOYMENT



People with disabilities are more likely to be employed in the informal sector, and thus have no insurance against the shock of COVID-19.



People with disabilities have experienced rising unemployment amongst their households, who provide the majority of household income.

FOOD SECURITY



People with disabilities have become increasingly food insecure during COVID-19.

ACCESS TO INFORMATION



COVID-19 related information has not been disseminated to people with disabilities in accessible formats.

SOCIAL PROTECTION



People with disabilities have become increasingly dependent on social protection during COVID-19, despite a lack of social protection programmes specifically for people with disabilities.

Further, social protection programmes have not always been continuous.

EDUCATION



Learners with disabilities were left behind in the online teaching options that were introduced due to COVID-19.

INCLUSIVE PARTICIPATION



People with disabilities were neither represented nor actively participated in the development of the COVID-19 national response.

OTHER IMPACTS:



People with disabilities suffered increasing expenditures due to COVID-19.



COVID-19 regulations were frequently exclusionary to people with disabilities, who could not wear masks, needed to lip-read, or could not social distance.



People with disabilities experienced rising anxiety and depression during COVID-19, particularly during lockdowns.

For more information, please contact
Ms Bryony Steyn, Economist
Office of the UN Resident Coordinator | Maseru, Lesotho
bryony.steyn@un.org | +266 2222 8000 | +266 62499210



Popularization of Persons with Disability Equity ACT no 24 of 2021 and inclusion of persons with disabilities in the ongoing security reforms in Lesotho

Starting from July, 2021 to December, 2021

For more information please contact
LNAPD office on this number +266
22320366 or send an email;
lesothophysicaldisability@gmail.com

**LESOTHO NATIONAL FEDERATION
OF ORGANISATIONS OF THE
DISABLED GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

Dates: 13th – 15th August, 2021

Place: Mohale Lodge

For more information please contact
LNFOD office on this number +266
22320345 or send an email;
Nkhasi@Infod.org.ls

JUNE, 2021

ISSUE 7 VOL. 8



LN FOD

PARTNERS in Advocacy Work

With funding from

 Austrian
Development
Cooperation


CHIESA VALDESE
UNIONE DELLE CHIESE METODISTE E VALDESI

 **OSISA**
Open Society Initiative
for Southern Africa

