

DISABILITY LESOTHO



From the Editor

Dear Partner,

Welcome once again to the edition of Disability Lesotho, the monthly email newsletter from Lesotho National Federation of the Disabled. The edition will cover news for the Month of March, 2016.

The 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, concerns, events, updates activities and all issues affecting people with disability in Lesotho.

We therefore welcome contributions of any nature from all organisations and institutions working to improve the lives of people in Lesotho, including those with disability.

Our issue this month comes at back of LNFOD signing two important agreements, the first one being the support from the Norwegian association of the disabled (NAD) intensifying the ongoing relationship and renewed commitment towards

promotion and protection of rights of the Basotho with disabilities through advocacy. The second one is the Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR) Program in partnership with Southern African Federation of Organisation of the disabled under the support of Open Initiative of Southern Africa (OSISA). We are grateful and will rise to greater heights in our quest for an accessible and inclusive society.

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 **Morongoe Thatho** on mthatho@gmail.com

If you missed the previous editions please visit www.lnfod.org.ls

Best Regard



DIRECTOR'S CORNER

At the tortoise's pace:

By: Nkhasi Sefuthi

Even though Lesotho became a signatory to the UN Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities as early as 2008, it is struggling to domesticate the Convention on the rights of people with disabilities through the enactment of the legislation which will promote and protect the rights of people with disabilities and ensure the respect of their rights in the society. It is evidenced that, Lesotho was purely ratifying this Convention for political reasons. The Ministry responsible for passing the Disability rights specific legislation is moving the process of completing the bill very slowly despite the serious inequalities encountered by people with disabilities.

This is evidenced by the very slow movement and lack of interest demonstrated during the development of the draft bill by the officials. For instance, UN Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities was ratified by the government of Lesotho in 2008. Meaning that, the process of domesticating the Convention through the disability specific legislation could have started and completed very long time ago. However, due to the attitudinal and environmental barriers facing people with disabilities and their representative organisations within our society, the disability legislation is not yet passed to date.

The main stakeholders in the design of this first ever disability law in Lesotho are feeling very much disconnected to this law. Hence, they take a very long time before they could provide their input to the development of this law. Some of them have already rejected the strategies to intend to ensure the employment of people with disabilities on the basis that would constitutes unfair discrimination against their non-disabled counterparts. Article 27 of the Convention on the rights of people with disabilities obliges Lesotho to employ people with disabilities and provide incentives for the private sector which employ people with disabilities. The state is obliged to employ affirmative action principles towards the employment of people with disabilities in order to equalise the opportunities and increase the economic activities among people with disabilities. In fact, it is our argument

that, by virtue of disability, many people with disabilities are legally prohibited to become soldiers and police officers because of their physical conditions to mention a few. It is still difficult if not impossible for a wheelchair user to go in the streets of Maseru looking for a job. Let alone the blind and the Deaf who cannot access information on an equal basis with others due to communication barriers.

In the effort to agitate the enactment of this long awaited legislation for persons with disabilities, LNFOD held a meeting with the Minister of Social Development in which he agreed that, the law should be completed within a short period of time so that it may be presented in parliament. However, this was not the first time which LNFOD held a lobbying meeting with the Minister regarding the passing of the Disability Equity bill into law. It was also not the first time that, LNFOD applauded the Honourable Minister for demonstrating the intention to pass the law. In fact, the Minister pledged to present the law in Parliament before the end of 2015. Nevertheless, the promise to people with disabilities was not fulfilled due to the prolonged consultations with the so called main stakeholders. Surprisingly, one would consider that, the key stakeholders in this process would be persons with disabilities.

But, practically the key stakeholders are the government Ministries which are not well equipped with disabilities issues yet. I think the Minister has the very important aspect in order for the law to pass, which is the political will. However, the political will to pass disability specific legislation should be backed up by the commitment of the top officials to materialise. Otherwise, the dream of passing the disability bill into law will not come true. Most importantly, other stakeholders like the Parliament through its Social Cluster must come into play by exercising its oversight function on the Ministry of Social Development to promote and protect the rights of people with disabilities by calling upon the

Minister of Social Development to present the bill into the Parliament. The coalition government agreement indicates the commitment of the current government to improving services to people with disabilities and working with their representative organisations in finding the solutions of their challenges. It is therefore one of our arguments that, one of the efficient means of protecting the rights of people with disabilities is to pass a legislation which they can enforce to claim their rights in the Courts of law. LNFOD is appealing to the government of Lesotho to reconsider the manner in which the Disability Equity bill is handled and give it the seriousness it requires in light of the local and international commitments towards people with disabilities. As a matter of fact, the reason why the

disability equity bill is not yet passed into law is very light taking into account the inequalities existing between people with disabilities and their counterparts.

LNFOD is appealing to the Minister of Social Development to monitor the finalisation of this bill and ensure that, everyone is doing his assignment at the given time. Failing which, the Bill will remain a bill forever and people with disabilities will be subjected to discrimination and social inequalities consistently. Like justice, equality delayed is equality denied. Meaning that, failure to pass the Disability Equity bill into law with immediate effect is tantamount to the denial of their rights.



GENERAL NEWS

Basotho women pledge to be active in advancing gender parity

By: Masekara Sekoankoetla



On 23rd March Action Aid hosted the celebration of the international women's day at Lehakoe Recreational Club in the District of Maseru. The celebration was under the theme 'pledging for gender parity'.

Invited at this celebration were the Honourable Minister of Agriculture Mrs 'Mamosa Molapo, Honourable women members of the National Assembly, representatives of women societies from all the ten districts of Lesotho and males and female representatives of the civil society organization including the Lesotho National Federation of the Organizations of the Disabled (LNFOD).

Women representatives from all the districts of Lesotho presented the challenges they encounter as women at the community level, which are hurdles to them being treated equally and equitably with men. According to their presentation, women face common inequality challenges in all the districts. Among the challenges, is the fact that married women are still denied the right to dispose of the property from the joined estate without the authorization of their husbands or male relatives. In addition, women are commonly denied ownership of the stock. From the presentation, it transpired also those reproductive rights of women especially

those with disability are significantly trampled on mostly by family members. Another thread to gender parity as mentioned by women, is the refine of gender based violence despite the counter legal, policy and institutional framework in place. Looking deeply into the root cause of gender disparity, women collectively identified that women have been passive in advancing gender parity. They strongly and unanimously agreed that the activeness of women in this regard can change the traditional attitudes towards women, eliminate the stereotypes or prejudices against women and ultimately change the society in favour of women. In addition women agreed that the active role of women in leadership will accelerate the institutional, policy and legal mainstreaming of gender parity. Adv Limpho Maema, advised that gender parity shall see the light of the day only if women empower each other and join efforts in fighting gender equality.

All women invitees there pledged to play part wherever they are to fight gender inequality. They came up with the strategies and tactics they could jointly and individually employ to set Lesotho free of gender inequality and advance the respect of women's rights.



GENERAL NEWS

A fitting farewell for Malecheko

By Makotoko Matsolo



LNAPD Delegation having landed in Kubake

Kubake community witnessed the burial of one of the star performers in music industry in Lesotho in an emotional ceremony. 'Malecheko Lecheko died on the February 2016 in South Africa, after short illness. She was a seasoned musician who used her music to convey messages to her fellow disabled colleagues to accept themselves and love themselves and trust to God and as if they were not disabled. Everyone was in tears who knew who Malecheko was to the disabled movement.

A well-attended funeral which started in the morning hours of the day opened with speeches from all categories being people from neighboring villages, friends, local authorities, and the organisations of the disabled. All the speakers there praised the young lady who they pointed out that she was a catalyst of change to whichever community she had lived in.

Lesotho National Association of the Physical Disabled took opportunity to thank all people who attended the funeral and all those who helped for the funeral to happen in respectable manor. Particularly people from far distances who made effort to overcome difficult mountainous, irregular terrains to pay tribute the hero.

"The Lesotho National Association of the Physically Disabled (LNAPD), would like to thank everybody who helped and supported us when we were mourning for our, friend, sister and colleague in the disability movements, 'Malecheko Lecheko who was buried at Kubake in the Mafeteng district on the 12th March, 2016.

Respectively, I would like to thank Lesotho Defense Force for assisting us to reach that difficult place by transporting us by the Helicopter, if it wasn't for them we couldn't have made it due to irregular terrain," said Makotoko Matsolo, Publicity Secretary of the Lesotho National Association of the Physical Disabled.

'She was really a good woman'



**'MALECHEKO'S LAST PERFORMANCE IN 2015
RIP MALECHEKO**

My first experience in Ethiopia:

By: Thabiso Masenyetse

Dear reader this article is aimed at shearing with you the good experience I had in Addis Ababa in the Federation of Ethiopian National Associations of Persons of the Disabled (FENAPD). The trip commenced on the 1st until 20th March. This trip came following my application that I had send during the youth internship invitation of such invitations from the African Disability Forum (ADF) in November 2015. The internship was basically on leadership skills and introducing youths with disabilities to advocacy skills towards the inclusion of disability issues in all developmental programs in Africa as a whole.

Dear reader I believe it is also imperative to give you a brief introduction of ADF:

ADF is an African continental and membership DPO formed in 2012 by National, sub-regional and continental organisations of persons with disabilities; the rationale is to create the a platform on which to join voices together in advocating for inclusion of the disabled persons needs in all developmental processes.

Consequent from this ADF designed this 2016 internship program as the first step for young people with the above said objective as well as to work with them as ADF focal persons in their respective regions

There were five interns in all from various regions namely: Mr. T Masenyetse from Southern Africa, Mrs. B Najjemba from East Africa, Mr. S Mamadou from West Africa as well Ms. E Tchotchom from Central Africa.

In Addis Ababa the four interns were placed in offices of the Federation of Ethiopian National Associations of Persons with Disabilities'. I was particularly placed in the Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation office where I learnt various activities and coordination of all offices.

FENAPD seems to be working very well with its DPOs because all their common statement has that they collaborate very well with Ethiopian government towards the inclusion of Ethiopians with disabilities. There no specific laws on disability but the level of commitment of government are very high and I believe it sees a very good trend for its fellow

African governments. "we now do not exert a lot of energy in advocating to the government but the government itself voluntarily comes to us for consultation for the purposes of including the needs of the disabled.", this is simply the statement from FENAPD during my interview with them as a way of emphasizing their relatively better success in convincing their government.

Moreover, apart from the four member DPOs common to LNFOD, FENAPD has other different members namely: Disabled Women Association, National Association of Deaf Blind and Ethiopian National Association of Persons Affected by Leprosy. This means that FENAPD has seven members in all and what is common with them is that they all have training centres whose objective is to provide rehabilitation, vocational education, find market from finished products as well as preparing some of them for academic education. All DPO s work very well with families of persons with disabilities.

And what impressed me the most is the fact that all DPOs employed a high number of people with disabilities.

In a nut shell< in Ethiopia there are organizations working for the development of disabled but not DPOs such as Ethiopian Centre for the development of the Disabled (ECDD; it has about five projects which focuses specifically on the employment and education of the disabled in Ethiopia. There is also African Child Policy Forum (ACPF) which focuses mainly on right of a child in Africa, and in this case it's relevant in that it has disability unit in it. It is worth noting that all these organisations have a way of collaborating with mainstream organisation such as UNDP, AU etc.

In conclusion, Ethiopia seems indeed established in terms of advocating for the right of the disabled persons except for the challenge that there is a very big population of persons with disabilities in Ethiopia which is estimated to about 17% and yet the economic status of the whole country is very low.

OPINION PIECE

Disability and Politics:

By: Mphonea Nketu



Hon. Mothejoa Metsing, Deputy Prime Minister

Lesotho like other countries that have democracy, human rights should be seen to be respected by everybody. Section 4 of the Lesotho constitution is elaborating more about human rights; we believe it does not leave persons with disabilities behind as they are human beings. When a person is to compare the matter with Lesotho politics, there is something amazing.

Government of Lesotho is always one of the first countries to accede to International Treaties; however the government turned a blind eye on the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2006. Human rights defenders and Disability activists lead by LNFOD worked tirelessly to push Lesotho government for the ratification of UNCRPD. Finally Lesotho government ratified the UNCRPD on the 02nd December 2008. Everybody applauded the government for show of commitment towards promotion and protection of rights of the disabled Basotho citizens. The next step now was domestication of the treaty. The government again was not willing to domesticate until Disability movements worked hard to see to it, birth of Disability Equity bill in 2014, so that at the end it will be passed before the parliament and approved as the Law. As we speak there is nothing touchable, nobody is talking about it. No politicians that are making any noise about the Disability Equity bill, be it the opposition or government MPs.

There comes the elections, it can be national or local government elections, that is when we will start hearing all politicians talking about disability issues. They will be talking in a way that we as people with disabilities would like our issues to be handled. On the Election Day, those people who did not talk about our issues in parliament

return to us, they will use their cars to collect people with disabilities from their families to the polling stations. The intention is to hook them to elect them again to the parliament. They will be soft until a person with disability can enter the polling station after that they will be nowhere to be seen; the victim will make his plan to return home. Another thing surprising is; if a person with disability is willing to participate in politics not to elect but to be elected (as s/he has that right), the non-disabled will work hard to see that such a person is not contesting due to his disability.

People who will be canvassing against the disability electioneer; they won't even look at their strengths in politics. The only thing will be done is to criticize the person and mock about the disability nothing else. The only question that I can ask is that; in Lesotho a person with disability can be taken as a person who has the right to life, who can only elect others but not be elected? My understanding is that a person with disability is entitled to be elected without discrimination or any stigmatization that relates to disability. It is worse to see a leader of a political party not knowing his political ideology especially at his/her constituency.

A politician who doesn't know her/his political ideology thinks that s/he is better than a person with disability. Another thing is that Lesotho is now under a dangerous drought. The entire nation is running short of food, prices are increasing every day especially maize meal. The Lesotho government pleaded to other countries to support Lesotho, countries responded to that call. My question is; the government, parliament and all politicians are all quite on how people with disabilities are going to benefit from all those donations. When are they going to talk about issues like these? What type of politicians do we have in this country? I am asking because when talking about people who are vulnerable, people with disabilities are the most vulnerable segment of the population. Our politicians do not know what people with disabilities are doing to earn their living in their constituencies. They don't even know that people with disabilities do exist except during the elections. Like we used to say; "There is no application for disability" I think it's high time that our politicians put themselves into the shoes of people with disabilities, create an enabling environment, empower them because when you do that you plan for the nation.

Announcements/Upcoming Events

The 2nd Global CBR Congress will be held in Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur from 27th – 29th September 2016

Theme is; “Empowering & Enabling”

For more information visit;

www.2ndcbrcongress.com

National Paralympic Committee of Lesotho in collaboration with Miss Lesotho Beauty Pageant Association will hold Miss Disability Lesotho 2016

For more information please conduct:
63052415 or 58773676

LNFOOD shall be represented on the upcoming DPI world general assembly organized in new- DELHI India from the 10th – 13th April, 2016

Email: admin@lnfod.org.ls

Intellectual Disability Association of Lesotho (IDA) is holding on-going training for Youth in Maseru on Advocacy HIV and related issues every week on Wednesday.

For more information please conduct: the office 28337818

makhelemafumane@yahoo.com

LNFOOD will be represented at the Training of Trainers (TOT) workshop on Community Based Rehabilitation / ECCD under the project of Building DPO Capacity in promoting Inclusion in Early Childhood Development and Education within CBR programs in Southern Africa

For more information please conduct:
+267317075 / +2675965992

Email: programs@safot.net

Ministry of Education and Training established a task team whereby LNFOOD will be working with CRS and Special Education Unit, We have a briefing with MoET in which Early Grade Assessment Tool for the Visually Impaired Learners. (EGRA) in which EGRA baseline will be shared

For more information please conduct: LNFOOD office: +266 22320345

Email: admin@lnfod.org.ls

Intellectual Disability Association of Lesotho (IDA) is collecting data as to build the data base for the organisation in four Districts, Mochale's Hoek, Quthing and Mafeteng:

For more information please conduct: the office 28337818

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NEWS IN PICTURE



Masekara – LNFOD Human Rights and Advocacy Officer is presenting issues of Women with disabilities to other women



Basotho Women entertaining during the meeting at Lehakoe Recreational Club



Marrakesh Treaty Workshop held on 23th February, 2016



Paralympics Team, Lesotho at Freestate Stadium: SASAPD Championship



Thabiso Masenyetse at Ethiopia Federation in Communication office



Participants at Ethiopia attending a meeting under ADF program

MAR, 2016

ISSUE 4 VOL 3

ADVOCACY WORK



LNFOD

PARTNERS in Advocacy Work



*equal rights and
full participation*

