

# DISABILITY LESOTHO

## From the Editor

Dear Partner,

Welcome and good wishes for Easter Holidays once again to the ninth edition of Disability Lesotho, the monthly email newsletter from Lesotho National Federation of the Disabled. This newsletter will cover news for March 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.

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 5905 5406 or [pletsau@gmail.com](mailto:pletsau@gmail.com)

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

Best regards,  
The Editor



Chris Ranthithi, host of Chris' Corner

## News from LNFOD

On behalf of everyone at LNFOD, I'd like to wish readers a happy and safe Easter break. This month, several partners in the disability movement have had the pleasure of being visited by the Norwegian Association for Disability (NAD), one of the oldest supporters of the disability movement in Lesotho and the key international partner for the Community Based Rehabilitation Program.

For various reasons, the past eight years have seen little progress on CBR in Lesotho, despite huge leaps made in other African nations. NAD originally came with the intention of reviewing the viability of the program in Lesotho, which has in so many other countries delivered wonderful results.

Despite the lack of concrete program outcomes, NAD was heartened by the fact that there seems to be a genuine commitment to reviving the program, as well as the fact that government decision makers are beginning to take a greater interest in disability issues generally.

Now that the process of developing a Disability Equity Act is finally underway, NAD has urged the government and organizations within the disability movement to consider the CBR as a vehicle for achieving the domestication of the UNCRPD.

CBR has been given a second chance and this is an opportunity which we in the disability sector cannot afford to miss.

By: 'Marorisang Mafethe  
LNFOD Executive Director

## GENERAL NEWS

### The employment of persons with disabilities in the public sector

Unemployment is a huge issue facing persons with disability in Lesotho. According to the Living Conditions conducted by LNFOD and SINTEF in 2011, the unemployment rate amongst persons with disability is twice as high as the general community. People with disability were only one third as likely to be self employed as others. Lack of data and understanding of the challenges facing PWDs in the workplace is one of the key challenges to developing effective policies to enhance poverty alleviation amongst PWDs.

To address this issue, LNFOD invited ministries responsible for job creation to come to a dialogue meeting to discuss means to enhance inclusion of PWDs in employment law and human resource policies. The meeting took place at the Lehakoe Club on 13 March and was attended by representatives from the Ministries of Public Service and Employment & Labour as well as the National Volunteer Group responsible for creating volunteer employment opportunities. After in-depth discussion, the participants realized that a specific approach must be adopted to address employment of people with disability as the general approach does not reflect the progress made on disability issues. The participating Ministries agreed to follow the example set by the National Volunteer Group in including a question regarding disability in job application forms.

The group also debated the viability of affirmative action policies to address the disability employment gap. The Ministry of Public Service agreed to consider inclusion of this principle in their Human Resource Policy. The Ministry of Labour and Employment commented on the need to create a register of skilled PWDs which they could reference when appropriate job opportunities arise.

LNFOD is committed to following up with the participants to encourage the implementation of policies to increase employment of PWDs in the public sector.

### Norwegian Association of the Disabled visits Lesotho



Svein and Trine

Norwegian Association of the Disabled (NAD) visited Lesotho this month. Head of International Cooperation, Svein Brodtkorb and Trine Wengen, who has recently joined as NAD's Development Advisor, came to Lesotho from 20-22 March as part of a tour of disability associations in Southern Africa.

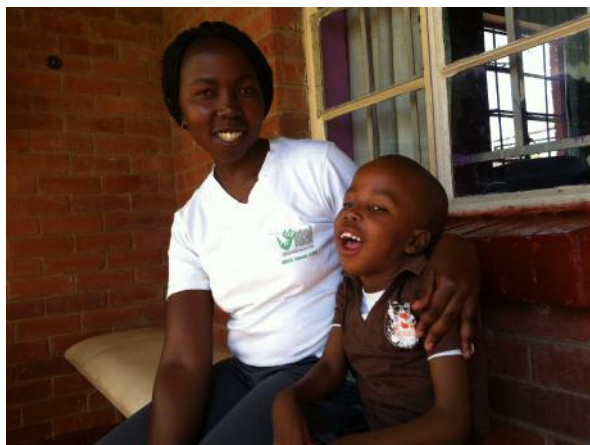
NAD has been a long term supporter of the disability movement in the region since 2003 and is the key donor partner for both the Community Based Rehabilitation Program (CBR) and the Organisational Development program (OD). During their stay, the Norwegians met with LNFOD's board and secretariat as well as the DPOs to get a better understanding of the struggle for inclusion in Lesotho. NAD also met with the Minister of Social Development, the Hon. 'M'e 'Matebatso Doti.

On her final day Ms. Trine was given the opportunity to visit two women with disability in Leribe, one small-business owner and one currently engaged in a community tree planting project.

NAD expressed optimism that a budget had been allocated towards the domestication of the UNCRPD and expressed hope that the CBR program could be the key vehicle to achieve domestication.

## GENERAL NEWS

### Lesotho celebrates Intellectual Disability Awareness month



This March, Lesotho celebrated intellectual disability awareness month for the first time. Intellectual Disability Awareness month is celebrated worldwide in March each year. It provides an opportunity to focus on issues of intellectual disability and to raise awareness of the achievements and capabilities of people with intellectual disability.

The Intellectual Disability Association of Lesotho (IDAL) chose to commemorate the occasion with a media campaign to communicate the hopes and challenges of people with intellectual disability. The campaign involved a number of activities including a public awareness video which aired on Lesotho TV, in Ster-Kinekor Cinemas (cinema 2) and also on YouTube.

The campaign also involved a number of media activities including a feature story in Public Eye.

In the same month, IDAL also participated in a global video event entitled Let Us In – We Want to Work.

Links to both videos may be found on the IDAL website ([www.idal.org.ls](http://www.idal.org.ls)).

### Path with life skills training



Itjareng trainees and instructors during training

The year 2013 welcomed about 35 new Itjareng trainees in total. Despite the difficulty of navigating to rural areas of the country, the centre managed to recruit trainees from each of the 10 districts of Lesotho. The objective of the centre is to provide people with disabilities who did not manage to go to mainstream schools with life skills and vocational skills so that they may be self-reliant.

Realising the challenges facing people with disability in rural areas, the centre started with a series of life skills trainings. The students were taught more about the area and community they are living in, hygiene and human rights. It provided a good opportunity for trainees and students to get to know each other. Instructors got to know each student on an individual basis and to understand the background to their conditions and behavioral patterns.

Learning the behavior of trainees will help Itjareng staff understand the best approach to deal with each student in order to serve their needs more effectively. Itjareng training covers practical as well as vocational skills. As a result of their first few weeks at the centre, trainees now know how to bath themselves and wash their clothes unassisted.

We appeal to all people who have children with disabilities to train them to do family chores while at home to learn things on their own. They don't have to feel pity or over – protect them. 'Teach them for their future' comments Moliehi Sejane.



## Itjareng follows – up its trainees



Senyaki Morena and Itjareng Instructors

The extension programme at Itjareng was established in order to find out the impact of training offered at the centre. Upon completion of their two year training, Itjareng trainees are expected to return to their communities and start their own small businesses.

This month, the extension team was able to visit Senyaki Morena, a man with a physical disability from Pitseng, Leribe. Morena was trained at Itjareng from 2011 – 2012. He stays with his father who is unemployed due to illness at Ha 'Miro village.

Whilst he chose to specialize in woodwork he also studied agriculture, sign language, computer studies. After his return home, he managed to use the knowledge he gained from the centre by starting a small stall selling airtime and snacks. He planted vegetables in his home garden which are now growing well.

Following his self-advocacy training, Senyaki approached the councilors for employment in community development activities such as soil erosion prevention and tape installations and was successful in obtaining work which allows him to support his father.

Although Senyaki, like many Itjareng graduates, was unable to pursue his trade speciality due to lack of start up funds, he has learned many useful skills which have helped him live independently and participate in his community.

## Using your talents – by 'Materene Khoabeng



'Materene in her salon

Like other women, I do everything in my power to achieve success. People in Pitseng and Mahobong did not think that as a woman with disability, I could bring up a child on my own. It was my aim to prove them wrong.

I began braiding other people's hair whilst I was still at school. I wasn't aware that in doing so, I was learning a practical skill which could help support myself and my daughter. After leaving school I continued to with hairdressing, and eventually opened my own shop so I could do my work properly.

Originally, I only did this so I could pay for my daughter's needs. I am now no longer ashamed of what I do and take pride in my work. People often ask me how I can braid with only one fully functional hand. My answer is that; 'God knew exactly how I was going to use this hand'.

My business started small and I only received one customer per day. I told myself that; I had to develop my business so I could be the only salon of choice for people seeking braiding.

My secret was to be smart, personable and to provide top quality customer service so people would come back to my shop again and again. I no longer doubt myself and my salon has become a great source of pride.

Now, I also teach hairdressing and beauty to a number of people in my community. My students pay money to learn from me and this has become an alternate revenue stream. I would like to encourage all my colleagues with disabilities especially women to use everything they know to achieve wealth and happiness. There is nothing that non-disabled people can do which we can't.



## Chris' Corner debuts on Lesotho TV

Chris' Corner, the hotly anticipated new TV mini-series, debuted on Lesotho TV last week. In this four episode lifestyle serial, Chris Ranthithi, a wheelchair bound 20-year old, takes to the streets of Maseru to explore its undiscovered secrets and give the public the opportunity to have their voices heard.

Each program focuses on a different topic or theme including fashion, politics, and entertainment and recycling.

Chris, who is currently studying at Phelisanong School in Leribe, filmed the episodes during his summer vacation.

"Because I'm in a wheelchair people often underestimate me and get surprised when I ask the tough questions. I want to show that people with disability are just like everyone else – we have opinions, hobbies and interests and also deserve to be seen and heard on TV." Chris Ranthithi comments

The show, produced by LNFOD in conjunction with Lesotho TV, aims to increase the visibility of people with disability in entertainment media.

"For many, having a person with disability in the family is still a source of shame. By placing people with disability in mainstream media we are seeking to de-stigmatize disability and to redefine what we think of as "normal"," commented Rabasotho Moeletsi, Communications Officer, LNFOD.

## CSOs sensitization session

LNFOD with the support from the Secretariat of African Decade of Persons with Disabilities, have started the Disability and Human Rights in Southern Africa (DHRSA) project. The purpose of this project is to ensure mainstreaming of human rights for people with disabilities into the development framework in Lesotho.

The objective of the two day session, which took place from 26-27 March at the Lehakoe Club, was to increase awareness of civil society organisations on disability related issues. This is in order to contribute to the full participation and enhancement of human rights of people with disabilities through mainstreaming into national human rights policies and the UNCRPD and for the benefit of persons with disabilities.

The first step was to flag up thematic issues on mainstreaming on already existing programs by the human rights organisations. The idea is to create effective alliances with CSOs to promote and protect human rights of persons with disabilities on equal opportunities to enjoy their rights.

The issue here is to tap into the strategic focus of the CSOs and make them reflect issues of disabilities without diverting the direction of those Organisations.

# OPINION PIECE

## Love and Disability

By Magic Nkhwashu

The month of February is characterised by a number of important events that have an impact on the lives of people with disabilities, as human beings and members of society. As we observe the month of love, it's important to look at people with disabilities and romance. This sector of the community experiences joys and sorrows, and has desires like any other person when it comes to matters of the heart and various situations in life.

Having a disability shouldn't prevent anyone from dating whomever they please, as they meet potential lovers whom they fall in love with and hope to live with happily ever after. When it comes to dating, we all experience the same loss, jealousy, and betrayal no matter our abilities or lack thereof.

What matters most is openness and honesty for any relationship to flourish, although I know most either love or dread relationships. Can there be true love when able-bodied and disabled people are involved in a relationship? Is there a possibility that an able-bodied individual in this equation might be interested in the material gain? Are people with various types of disabilities capable of loving and being loved? Do people with disabilities prefer "their own" or able-bodied partners? What difference does it make, for someone with continental or acquired disability when it comes to dating?

The 14th of February 2013 is a day we all want to forget in a hurry, as we were awoken by the sad news of the shooting of Reeva Steenkamp, allegedly by her boyfriend internationally acclaimed Oscar Pistorius. Although we should allow the law to take its course, there are unfortunately very serious repercussions to people with disabilities as observed in comments made in (social) media perpetuating continued prejudice, stigma and negative stereotyping attitudes.



The belief held by individuals and society about people with disability often has an effect in social problems faced, as they are often considered "different" from the rest

They are spoken to in terms of "them and us", as opposed to "seeing a person first before their disability". Comments attributed in the Pistorius' case are generally about people with disabilities being an angry and frustrated lot, promoting the continued discrimination that has a profound effect psychological repercussion.

Apparently such frustrations drive "them" to act irrationally, depending on the type of disability and/or whether they were born with or acquired disability later in life. This man-made repercussion has unfortunately become a daily sadness and impact negatively on the quality of life aspired for by people with disabilities.



## IN THE SPOTLIGHT

### **Jobo Qalang, Program Officer, IDAL, 42 years old**

#### **What does your job involve?**

I oversee project operations at a field level. I give training to parents, caregivers and siblings of children with intellectual disability and I make sure that services are delivered to the children on time.

#### **What is the best part of your job?**

The best part of my job is being able to identify children living in worst case conditions and to help them elevate their situation.

#### **What inspires you about working in the disability sector?**

I love working to empower people with disabilities by using positive approaches which focus on their strengths and abilities.

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

When people talk about you and not with you, ignore them. I follow this advice everyday and it has worked wonders in my life.

#### **If you had a trained monkey what would you do with it?**

If I had a trained monkey I would take it everywhere with me to keep me entertained. I would sit it on my desk at work and stroke it when I was feeling stressed. I'd even take it to workshops with me

#### **What do you do for fun?**

I love playing football and I read a lot. I especially like reading magazines and horror novels. My favourite book is "Catch me if you can" which is about horror stories

#### **How would you spend your last day on Earth?**

Praying

## Upcoming events

### AIDS Peer educators

On the 08th – 12th April, the week after Easter, LNFOD in partnership with the Ministry of Health through the Disease Control Unit will be conducting a 5-day training on for the disabled representatives to be AIDS Peer educators in Mafeteng. There will be about 19 people with disabilities from across the Mafeteng District that is expected to attend the training.

For more information please contact: Mr. Rabasotho Moeletsi to this number;

+266 58700925 or +266 22320345

Email: [moeletsi@live.com](mailto:moeletsi@live.com).

### World Autism Awareness Day

Every year on 2 April, autism organisations around the world celebrate World Autism Awareness Day with unique fundraising and awareness-raising events.

World Autism Awareness Day aims to increase people's awareness about people, especially children, with autism. The day often features educational events for teachers, health care workers and parents, as well as exhibitions showcasing work created by children with autism.