

DISABILITY LESOTHO

From the Editor

Dear Partner,

Welcome once again to the eleventh edition of Disability Lesotho, the monthly email newsletter from Lesotho National Federation of the Disabled. This newsletter will cover news for May, 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 everyone who contributed to this newsletter. We are very excited to be receiving so many valuable and insightful contributions from different sectors of the community.

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



The Hon. Minister Social Development, 'M'e Dotib "ratifies" the drawing of a perfect world by children from St Angela's Cheshire Home for Physically Disabled Children

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

Best regards,
The Editor

ADVOCACY ASPECT

Youth with disabilities must watch out



Nkhasi Sefuthi – Human Rights and Advocacy Officer

By Nkhasi Sefuthi

The disability movement in Lesotho has been calling out to the government, private sector and civil society organisations for practical mainstreaming of people with disabilities in the programs, policies and laws of their institutions, since the inception of the movement.

Let's roll into the practical living example of where and how disability has been mainstreamed into the activities and programs of the Ministry of Gender, Youth Sports, and Recreation.

LNFOOD would like to applaud and acknowledge the efforts of the Ministry because it was one of the first government Ministries to take into consideration the needs of people with disability back in 2008. Section 5 of the Youth Council Act stipulates that youth with disabilities shall be represented in the youth council so that the needs of young people with disabilities may be acknowledged.

In response to this marvelous and long awaited opportunity, the disability movement did not hesitate to take advantage of this platform to promote inclusion of young people with disability in the social and cultural life of the nation.

However, despite being given this opportunity, the nominated candidates did not take full advantage of their position to create lasting change for all youth with disabilities. The candidates were effectively answerable to the people who they were appointed to represent.

The situation begs me to pose the question, do young people with disabilities simply not care enough about their issues to take action when they have been given the opportunity?

I think youth with disabilities should be vocal and straightforward when it comes to the issues affecting their lives. They are the future of our nation and the engine for affecting change. The path to a better world for people with disabilities starts today.

GENERAL NEWS

LNFOOD and UNICEF collaborate to launch the 2013 State of the World's Children report

The Lesotho National Federation of Organisations of the Disabled (LNFOOD) and UNICEF hosted the launch of this year's State of the World's Children report which takes on the theme of Children with Disability. The launch event took place at the Lehakoe Club on 30th May.

The report focuses on the issues faced by children with disability and the barriers preventing them from accessing their human rights on an equal basis with other children. Through the launch event, LNFOOD and UNICEF wish to give a voice to children to encourage their position as agents of change and to engage them in dialogue leading towards equal treatment of all children regardless of disability. The objective of the launch is to rally partners and government to implement policies for the realization of a fully inclusive society.

The launch attended by representatives from the Ministry of Social Development, Ministry of Education and Training and various other organisations involved in the disability movement. Festivities included speeches and presentations from stakeholders and young people with disability, performances by the students from St Bernadettes Resource Centre for the Blind and the symbolic signing of a mural created by children from St Angela's Cheshire Home for Physically Disabled Children.

The launch also saw the introduction of a public awareness campaign to promote the rights of children with disability. Advertisements from the campaign broadcasted on Lesotho TV, Radio Lesotho and Ultimate Radio.

"Despite the fact that Lesotho signed the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability in 2008, people with disability are amongst the poorest and most marginalized groups in Lesotho. The cycle of poverty and disadvantage starts early in life as children with disability are denied access to services such as education, healthcare and public transport," comments Nkhasi Sefuthi, Human Rights and Advocacy Officer, LNFOOD.

"Studies shows that children with disability aged 5-10 are only half as likely to be enrolled in school as other children. Families of children with disability have lower than average incomes and a higher dependency ratio because there is no disability specific social protection. There are no services for early childhood interventions or identification of disability. It is our responsibility as a nation to ensure that ALL children can access their basic human rights." Concluded Mr. Sefuthi.



Thabelo Majara from St Angela's Cheshire Home for Physically Disabled Children describes his perfect world at the launch of SOWC report 2013

GENERAL NEWS

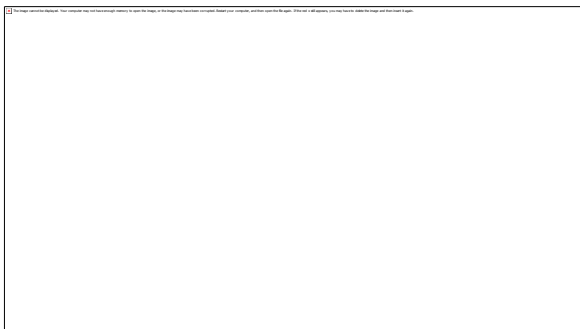
Phelisanong introduces new vocational courses



Trainees with disabilities at Phelisanong

Phelisanong Vocational commenced operation in March 2013. Phelisanong now offers courses for children with disability in baking, brick production, beauty and hairdressing and music.

All these courses are meant to benefit youth with disabilities in their future. The trainees will graduate after two years. The Ministry of Education and Training is currently processing Phelisanong's application as a vocational training school.



For more information related to Phelisanong Vocational please contact: Eric Thejane

Email: phelisanong@yahoo.com

'Everything is in your hands'

I am 'Malebohang Malakane, staying at Bofihla's Thabana – Morena in the district of Mafeteng. I am a physically disabled woman; In 1996, I had one leg amputated.

I managed to reach COSC but due to my disability could not find a job so I decided to create a job for myself by opening a saloon. The question was; 'can I make a decent living being a hairdresser?' I then took a decision saying; 'Atleast I will make money to pay for a few of my bills without putting very much effort and time in.'

To my surprise, the salon was a huge success and currently many people travel a long way to reach my salon in Thabana – Morena, trusting only my hands to braid their hair.

I can assure many people especially people with disabilities that we have to use our hands to work for ourselves. 'Let's think more of what we can do for our future, whatever we know; we should triple it for perfection as many people doubt our performance.

I am aware that even though Thabana – Morena is very rural, I am making money to help my family survive. It is now easy for me to maintain not only my needs but also the needs of my daughter, my husband and even other people with disabilities.

GENERAL NEWS

REPORT ON SIGN LANGUAGE WORKSHOP

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF THE DEAF LESOTHO held a workshop for Deaf the Deaf people in Leribe and Mafeteng from 10th-12th May, 2013 for Leribe and 20th - 22nd May, 2013 for Mafeteng.

The purpose of the workshop was to enable Deaf people to know their language as well as Deaf awareness in order to allow them to communicate freely with each other and benefiting from day-to-day activities, socialization and enhancing their basic skills- Sign Language both Leribe and Mafeteng had 15 participants each.

Topics in this workshop covered areas like greetings in Sign Language, Deaf awareness and Sign Language. Initiatives of a Deaf aware person, Deaf culture and practical on commonly used words at home and school.

This workshop has impacted a lot of Deaf people especially the newcomers to the Sign Language world (Mostly from Mafeteng). The facilitators persuaded the participants to list few words and show how they are signed. The signs in Mafeteng were very natural, and as a result the Deaf people from this district were very interested in learning new signs. In Leribe most participants were of school going age. The workshop was made possible by the funding from Organizational Development Programme (ODP) through LNFOD.

Information given by 'M'e Likopo

Representing Disability



Mr. Vithi and Ms. Letsau at Sinxondo village holding public gathering

My name is Makhembe Vithi and I am a wheelchair – user staying at Sinxondo village in Quthing. I have two daughters and three boys and my wife has passed away. My disability was caused by a mining accident but I continued to work in the same mine after the accident.

Even after becoming disabled, I played many sports like indoor games and rugby. I represented South Africa in sports in England, France, West Germany and Switzerland.

When I was retrenched, I returned home to Lesotho. I then started a completely different life. I was lonely as I was no longer playing those games I used to play. I tried to start a club whereby we can play as people with disabilities. I failed due to the terrain of environment of Lesotho especially the place that I am living in which is Sinxondo.

Through encouragement from the people of Sinxondo, I contended as a councilor in 2005 and was elected. I again campaigned to be elected in 2011 and was re-elected, so I am now a councilor at Mtjanyane GO1. "I am proud to be what I am, as I proved that 'disability is not inability' and have earned the support of my community. I try to represent the best interests of people with disabilities in my area but it is very difficult."

Two hours in a wheelchair

By Mohau Serabele

On a cold rainy Sunday morning Molefi Phapho (27), walked towards a waiting wheelchair and seat on it. He looked a bit restless as he pushed his wheelchair to join a group of other 25 athletes waiting to take part in Lesotho's first ever wheelchair race.

Comfortably placed within the group, Molefi smiled and shared jokes with other wheelchair bound athletes as they waited for the race to begin. These people were about to take part in a 10 kilometer long wheelchair race. What made this race different however is that the competing athletes were able bodied men and women.

When all was set all the athletes appeared all ready to, for the first time in their lives tackle the 10 kilometer route riding on a wheel chair with little assistance.

The race codenamed join the cause and change a life was the first of its kind in Lesotho and was organized by the Lesotho Revenue Authority(LRA) as part of festivities meant to mark the ten year anniversary of the mountain Kingdom's tax man.

The start of the race was a chaotic scene as the athletes on their wheelchairs banged onto each other while others got toppled from their vehicles.

The Public Relations officer at LRA Mr Phello Mphana said this was a good start to the race.

"We want all the athletes here to have a taste of how it feels to go around in a wheelchair," he said. He also added that the aim was to help the participating athletes to learn to understand the special needs of the people with disabilities in Lesotho.

According to Mr Mphana, this unique race was organized to mark the ten year history of the revenue authority in Lesotho.

He said the race was also meant to help Lesotho's physically challenged citizens with supportive devices as well as wheelchairs.

"Each of the teams and individuals taking part in this race is expected to bring a new wheelchair. The collected wheel chairs will then be distributed to the physically challenged people around the country who will be found to need such assistance," Mphana said. Mphana said the race was organized by the LRA together with Lesotho National Association for the Physically Disabled (LNAPD). "We have also joined forces with the business community in Lesotho. The teams participating in the race come from the various businesses operating in Lesotho," Mphana said.

He also expressed his hope that the athletes would find the race enriching and challenging enough. "What we are hoping to achieve here is to contribute meaningfully to the improvement of the live of people with disabilities in Lesotho. We are also hoping to instill understanding on the part of the athletes who are taking part in the race," he said.

About two hours after the start of the race a little rain began to fall but the waiting crowd did not move an inch.

As soon as it poured the first athlete came charging to the finish line. He raised his hands as he cut across the finish lined. This was Molefi Phapho representing the LRA racing team. He was followed by Limpho Mpoka representing Metropolitan Lesotho racing team. On the women's race Nteboheng Kele emerged victorious.

In an interview Phapho he found the race both challenging and enriching. "As a rode around the track I found some places hard to ride on. The steep areas and the hilly areas which I had to climb were mostly difficult on me," he said.

"I got tired and there was no one to assist me so I had to fight on all the way. I worked so hard that my arm muscles," he said. On the other hand LimphoMpoka said that the race helped him to realize the difficulties faced by people with disabilities in Lesotho.

"I felt sad and happy at the same time. When I came to difficult parts of the track I felt sad when I saw people just looking at me and giving me no assistance at all. This was hard on me, it felt sad."

He said he was happy because the race had helped him to better understand the needs of the people with disabilities. "I think people without disabilities should regard themselves as lucky. We should also learn to appreciate people with disabilities because they have need just like any other human being."

Meanwhile the Minister of Social Development 'Matebatso Doti said the race was a noble initiative.

"This will go a long way in improving the lives of the people with disabilities. The collected wheelchair will be very useful to many poor people who are in need but can hardly effort to buy a wheelchair." She said.

In all 23 Wheelchair were collected at the race and all of them were due to be donated to people who needed them most.

Ministry of Trade and Industry holds Training Workshop for Ithuseng Vocational Rehabilitation Center Trainees

An article by the Ministry of Social Development

There are intense challenges worldwide that people in various societies face in life, but people with disability face their own particular challenges. Some of the major challenges they face include unemployment, exclusion in decision making, an education system that does not cater to their needs and infrastructures which are inaccessible.

As a Ministry, we need to create a society that values the diversity and inclusion of people with disability in all sectors to pave the way to a better life. With the objective of eliminating these challenges, the Ministry of Social Development is in the process of collaborating with other key stakeholders towards improving the lives of people with disability.

The MOSD held a two-week workshop in collaboration with the Ministry of Trade and Industry on the 22nd April to 3rd May 2013 at Ithuseng Rehabilitation Training Center for fifty – five trainees.

Vocational Guidance Officer 'Malehlohonolo' says, 'the main purpose of the training was to inform the trainees on the necessity of business management and marketing strategy, promotions, pricing and packaging of goods.'

This initiative was created after the Ministry realized that former trainees had never had this type of workshop before and when they have tried to start their own businesses, they were not well equipped to face challenges of the business sector.



Since some of the Trainees did not attend school, they faced challenges in market search and pricing of goods. Hence the workshop served as a baseline at which they will be able to respond to market challenges after their two years training at IVRC.

Mrs. Mamojalefa Letsapo, an Assistant Marketing Officer from the Ministry of Trade and Industry, clearly indicated that it is crucial to have a strong foundation in Business Management because it adds to the wealth of the business. The responsibility of the marketing department is to ensure that all Basotho products are being actively promoted and are known in the market.

OPINION PIECE

Challenges faced with deaf people

By Likopo Lesoetsa

There are thousands of Deaf people living in every single country on our planet. Many of them exist in a community that, at the very least, lacks understanding of their special needs and requirements. At the worst they face prejudices and intolerance every single day.

We hope to explore some of the challenges that Deaf people face on a day-to-day level in terms of basic living skills and communication with the outside world, and to educate service providers with some basic skills to assist deaf people with their needs and requirements in every-day situations.

We also hope to promote the idea that Sign Language should be recognized as the third official language in our country which everyone should learn and be able to communicate with Deaf people in addition to the spoken languages.

Unemployment is threatening the whole society, but it is worth noting that to Deaf community the unemployment rate is even worse.

This is mainly because of the highest illiteracy rate among the Deaf and inaccessible education system which fails to cater for Sign Language Interpreting so that Deaf students are on the same path as their hearing counterparts.

The society in general is not yet aware of what it means to be deaf; therefore there are no clear policies or laws that protect the Human Rights of Deaf people inclusive of including them in community activities.



Likopo Lesoetsa

Unless NADL advocates and influence the most important persons in authority for the inclusion and adoption of Sign Language as an official third language of Lesotho, Deaf people will always remain in isolation.

“In a room full of deaf people, it is the hearing person who is ‘disabled’!”

IN THE SPOTLIGHT



Lehlohonolo L. Makhebesela
Chairperson at National Association of
the Deaf Lesotho – Age 32

What does your job involve?

I am the Assistant teacher at St. John's Primary

What is the best or interest part of your job?

The best interest part is helping Deaf pupil in class

What inspires you being disabled or working in the disability sector?

To understanding more about my disability and know what it means to be Deaf.

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

No advice

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

I would use it to become my interpreter as I think it will keep all my secrets

What do you do for fun?

I watch soccer, Television and chill with family and friends

How would you spend your last day on Earth?

Having lunch with President Barrack Obama in USA white House