

# DISABILITY LESOTHO



## Editor's note

The Government has taken a creditable step in enacting the Disability Equity Act; 2021.

The Kingdom of Lesotho suffers from chronic lack of implementation, delaying disability service delivery and development, that is what we all know.

To mention few things; the National Disability Mainstreaming Plan 2016 has not enjoyed budget support for implementation since its been adopted. The country under the ministry of Social development developed the National Disability and Rehabilitation Policy which has become an white elephant.

The Disability Grant that was envisaged in the National Social Protection Strategy 2015 for persons with disabilities was never implemented until today. Now we are talking of Disability Equity Act; 2021

Disability Lesotho is now working hard to ensure that Persons with Disabilities Equity Act 2021 does not suffer the same fate. The Government of Lesotho through the ministry of Social Development is unlikely to implement the provisions of the Disability Equity Act; 2021 without some sort of pressure form persons with disabilities and

their organizations so that can speed up all the processes.

I plea to all people with disabilities to build a strong advocacy pressure to the ministry for implementation of Disability Equity Act; 2021

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](mailto:pletsau@gmail.com)

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## DIRECTOR'S CORNER

### Inauguration of Persons with Disability Advisory Council, and provision of disability grant

By Nkhasi Sefuthi

This article updates the readers of the developments towards the inauguration of Persons with Disability Advisory Council, and provision of disability grant for persons with disabilities as provided for in the law.

The article further advocates for the speedy implementation of Persons with disability Equity Act.



The Lesotho National Federation of Organisations of the Disabled, through its 'gender and disability programme in practice in Lesotho' is advocating for the implementation of the Persons with Disability Equity Act No. 24 of 2021. The law provides for equal opportunities and recognition of the rights of persons with disabilities in Lesotho.

LNFOOD considers this Act to be one of the great milestones achieved by both government and persons with disabilities living in Lesotho.

In order to ensure that Persons with Disability Equity Act is operationalized effectively, LNFOOD has approached the Ministry of Social Development to ensure that the preparation for the inauguration of Persons with disabilities are under way.

On the 19 May 2021, LNFOOD had a meeting with the Honourable Minister of Social Development and the Principal Secretary on the preparation for the establishment of this council, provision of disability grant and other disability related inclusive development agenda.

What transpired in this meeting is that, the Ministry did not budget for the operationalization of the council this fiscal year. However, they will ensure that the budget is made available for the next fiscal year whilst, they are implementing the quick wins which may not require huge funding to implement within the Act.

The action point of LNFOOD is to ensure that the Ministry budget for the operationalization of the council as soon as the budget process starts this year.



What is equally important is the provision of the disability grant to persons with disabilities who deserve it. The Honourable Minister pledged that the grant will start to be provided in the second quarter, which is July 2021 since the Ministry has been developing the tools to be used in the administration of the disability.

The Ministry budgeted for almost eleven million Maloti for disability grant for 2021-2022.

However, we should not forget that the same amount of money was budgeted for in the previous fiscal year. However, it could not be used since the Ministry did not use the money.

LNFOOD is in the process of developing its comprehensive advocacy strategy to ensure effective implementation and reaching out to people with disabilities to sensitize them about their rights contained by the Act.



LNFOOD commends government of Lesotho for enacting Disability act and urge government to ensure effective implementation through establishment of the council and undertaking of sensitization of disability rights among the nation. We are calling upon government to provide budget for effective implementation.



Although, persons with disabilities have greater insight about their lives, they were not included in the design of this grant thereby perpetuating the status core of persons with disabilities in development. Persons with disabilities are always left behind in development.

## GENERAL NEWS

### Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights for Adolescent Girls with Disabilities

By: Lerato M. Ramoholi

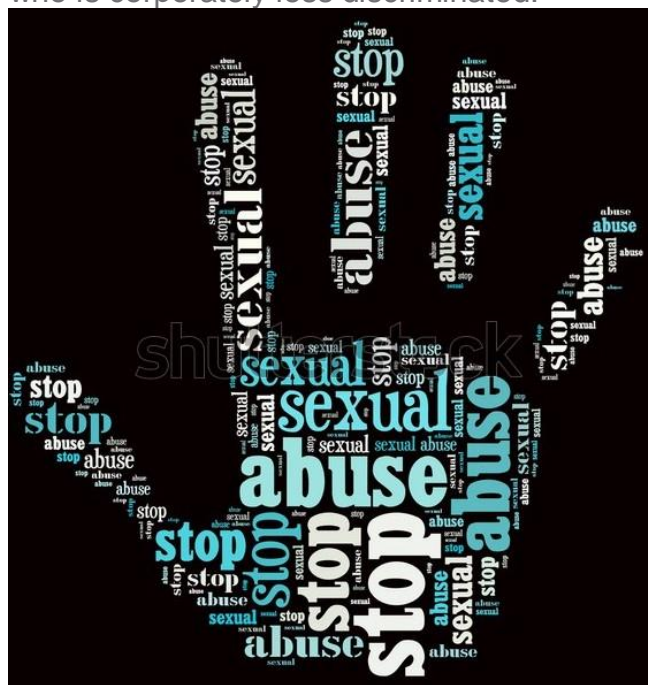
The Gender Analysis Report 20201 by LNFOD highlighted the situation of women and girls with disabilities in relation to sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) in the three areas. These areas were access to education, access to employment and gender-based violence.

With respect to access to education, it has been discovered that over and above disability related challenges, girls with disabilities drop-out of school due to unplanned pregnancies. Unfortunately, learners with disabilities hardly receive comprehensive information on SRHR whether in school or at home as the assumption is that they are asexual. This means that comparatively adolescent girls with disabilities are unlikely in the position to exercise healthier SRHR decisions based on informed choice. Consequently, adolescent girls are not only disadvantaged when it comes to accessing information on contraception, but they are unlikely in the position to use contraception or worst still to voluntarily agree to use contraception, including to choose the method. This is mostly due to stereotypes based on sexuality and gender in the context of disability. Lack of sanitary wear, wash hygiene facilities specifically targeting adolescent girls with disabilities in schools further disproportionately disadvantages the girl child with disability who is on her puberty stage and is menstruating.

Moreover, over and above the fact that girls with disabilities drop-out of school as a result of lack of comprehensive, accessible SRHR commodities including information, they are comparatively unlikely to secure employment whether formal or informal. The fact that they cannot decide when and how many children they need, which is something very key to SRHR, they are often victims of sexual abuse or forced contraception including forced sterilization and abortion. This means that where they do become pregnant,

domestic- work and child-rearing responsibilities unfairly subject them to unfair competition thereby hindering equal and effective participation with their male counterparts in the labour market.

Finally, in relation to gender-based violence, especially sexual gender-based violence which in most cases according to the report affects women and girls with mental disability, SRHR is directly implicated. Yet unfortunately, girls with disabilities are unlikely to obtain related SRHR services like emergency contraception and treatment for sexually transmitted infections. In order to access these services adolescent girls with disabilities require support from the caregiver whom in most cases she would be reluctant to report to. This means that she is comparatively more likely to conceal pregnancy than her non-disabled counterpart who is corporately less discriminated.





## GENERAL NEWS

**“Persons with disabilities are not treated as important players in the economy.....”**

**By: Pascalina Letsau**

“ I am Matsepiiso Morake, I am a woman with physical disabled, in the village of Ha Likupa Mafeteng. My disability started at the early stage when I was 3 years of age. During those years it was very challenging for me to go to school, as schools were extremely far and the terrain of the country itself is the problem”.

As a woman just like other women had 2 children even thought did not got married. I struggled to raise those children, in order to put food on table, I started a business as street vendor. I started by selling apples around Mafeteng Town, it was very difficult to make profit as I had to use money everyday for transport from work to home. I am also expected to buy food for the family. My children need more things like school needs, medication to cater for their health.

“COVID – 19 and Lockdowns brought more miserable among people especially disabled people. We had a lot of stock those ended rotted as there were no people to buy them. like thousands of other street vendors in other countrie, I think I am now a bitter person, because before lockdown I had a lot of stock but now have nothing.”

Following the statement made by the prime minister, i thought that we are going to be okay even if there is covid-19, but i think i was stupid to think “this government can do better things for us especially disabled people, or the poor”.

“This clearly indicates that we are not considered to be important players in the economy.”

I am among the people who are not receiving the public assistance fund provided by the ministry of social development.

“The problem that I am now facing is that; I wonder who is going to lend me some money when banks are not in the business of lending to people like us. I just want to know whether other street vendors are going through the same problems that I am facing?”

“Even those food parcels that people were given did not have, the reason being I already getting money from minister of social development as I am disabled.



## GENERAL NEWS

### **A beginning of twin- track approach to gender and disability: collaboration between Civil Society Organizations and government.**

**By: Makatleho Molotsi**

In January this year, LNFOD, the DPOs in collaboration with other civil society organizations working on women's rights as well as the Ministry of Gender, Youth, Sports and Recreation and the Lesotho Mounted Police formed gender and disability networking forum. This was formed in order to ensure close cooperation on civil society organizations and government entities working on the rights of women and people with disabilities in ensuring a holistic multidimensional approach ensuring that no one is left behind.



This was done after the realization that gender and disability are the cutting issues, which the promotion of other needs the covering of another. With this forum, the representatives of the organizations and government Ministries pledged to learn from each other and find a common ground of working together to avoid parallel promotion of gender and disability mainstreaming. Pursuant to the purpose of the forum, it held its first 2- day training workshop on gender and disability mainstreaming 8th June at Cyaara guest house.

In this workshop, members increased their knowledge on disability and gender as concepts, they also learned on how these concepts intersect. Members also learned on how they can simultaneously promote both gender and disabilities in their area of work.

These topics were identified by members as topics of common interest by the members and they all expressed that the training came at the very opportune time. The forum shall have other subsequent meetings as agreed by the members where they shall discuss other topics of common interest.

## GENERAL NEWS

### Women Disabilities Relishing the New Economic Empowerment Project:

**By: Rabasotho Moeletsi**

Women with disabilities could not hide their happiness when LNFOOD officially announced that they can start sending their applications on starting their small business enterprises. The proposals can be sent to the offices of council secretary in the communities starting from the beginning of June ending 09th of July 2021.

"We are very much excited now that we have a call in our hands which means we can start preparing our proposals for submission to bid for the support to start our businesses. This is the moment we have been anxiously waiting for when we learnt on the plan it has a revolving loan arrangement where we would apply for funding our businesses," Makhaushelo Tšiu, a focal person from Mashaleng Community council in a meeting in Mphahle'shoek.

The Gender and Disability in Practice programme (GADIP) in Lesotho has an economic empowerment component which targets women with disabilities within the program area. LNFOOD will support women with disabilities in establishing their businesses through the provision of revolving loans.

The focal persons highlighted the difference of this project from the previous arrangement. This time around the project issues loans to a group of people and not to the individual. This is important as it is easily managed and one other important aspect is that the groups are supported with equipment and materials rather than the previous project whereby, they were sent the money.

"We like this new arrangement very much, the fact that we are going to apply in groups means there is a chance for a group of women from the same area to benefit unlike the previous one where we benefited and our neighbors were very bitter that they could not get the money. again, working together will help us to share knowledge better, guaranteeing success," said Materene Khoabeng, who was a beneficiary in the previous project.

Groups within one council will be competing to see the best proposal being awarded funding to start their project. Having supported to start their small business enterprise, the group will be given six (6) to implement and on the seventh month they will be expected to pay-up half of the money while the other half is the grant. Once all the groups have repaid the money, it will be

loaned out to 6 more beneficiaries who also will be given 6 months and implementation period after which they will be expected to pay-up half of the money which will be loaned to 3 more groups. The maximum amount group can apply for is 30,000 maloti while the minimum amount is 20,000 maloti.

For his part Mr. Rabasotho Moeletsi, LNFOOD projects coordinator pleaded with the community leaders and disability rights focal in the meetings work hand in glove to popularize the call for proposals far and wide within the councils in order to make sure that women with disabilities know about the opportunity and put together applications for funding support.

"Research have shown that persons with disabilities especially women suffer a lot of exclusion from economic opportunities including employment opportunities regardless of their qualifications. The exclusion is either by design, attitudes of policy makers, or fellow members of the communities," said Moeletsi.

"So, our people should make sure opportunities like these ones of the project targeting women with disabilities are grabbed with both hands," Moeletsi concluded, encouraging lots of proposals from women with disabilities in the communities.

Beneficiaries for this economic empowerment component are drawn from the twelve (12) community councils of Leribe District: Maoamafubelu C04 Community Council; Berea District: Tebe-Tebe D04 Community Council and Senekane D06 Community Council; Maseru District: Qiloane A01 Community Council, Ratau A02 Community Council and Mazenod A06 Community Council; Mafeteng District: Ramoetsana E02 Community Council and Makoabating E06 Community Council; Mphahle'shoek District: Siloe F01 Community Council, Mashaleng F02 Community Council, Khoelenya F03 Community Council and Thaba-Mokhele F05 Community Council.





## GENERAL NEWS

### High Tech AT refers to the most complex devices or equipment

By: Mojalefa Ntlatlapa

Assistive Technology (AT) is any item or piece of equipment that is used to increase, maintain or improve the functional capabilities of individuals with disabilities in all aspects of life, including at school, at work, at home and in the community. Assistive Technology ranges from low tech to high tech devices or equipment.



Low tech AT are devices or equipment that don't require much training, may be less expensive and do not have complex or mechanical features. For example:

- handheld magnifiers
- large print text
- using paper and pen to communicate
- canes and walkers
- reachers/grabbers
- specialized pen or pencil grips and much more

AT devices or equipment that range in the middle of the continuum may have some complex features, may be electronic or battery operated, may require some training to learn how to use and are more expensive than the low-tech devices. Some examples include:

- talking spell checkers
- manual wheelchairs
- electronic organizers

- amplifiers
- books on CD
- environmental control units (ECU)
- alternate mouse or keyboard for the computer and much more

High Tech AT refers to the most complex devices or equipment, that have digital or electronic components, may be computerized, will likely require training and effort to learn how to use and cost the most. Examples include:

- power wheelchairs and scooters
- digital hearing aids
- computers with specialized software such as voice recognition or magnification software
- electronic aids to daily living
- digital hands-free headsets
- voice activated telephones
- communication devices with voices
- bluetooth integration
- digi-drive technology (operating a vehicle with a joystick)

With its current strategic plan, LNAPD strives to improve access to and the acquisition of Assistive Technology (AT) in the areas of: Education, Employment, Community Living, Information Technology & Telecommunications.





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# LNFO

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