

DISABILITY LESOTHO



From the Editor

Dear Partner,

Welcome once again to the tenth edition of Disability Lesotho, the monthly email newsletter from Lesotho National Federation of the Disabled. This newsletter will cover news for November 2017.

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.

Persons with disabilities have been crying for the Disability Equity Bill to be passed before the parliament. The Minister of Social Development Mrs. 'Matebatso Doti promised Basotho with disabilities that the Disability Equity Bill will be tabled before the parliament before the end of this year, 2017. We had a great expectation, as the same minister is the one that all Basotho are cheering her that she is doing her work properly whereas I have been suspicious about that due to the officers she is working with. I am very disappointed to hear that the same minister turned down the table saying there will be no tabling of the Bill before the parliament this year with any clear excuses. I wonder if this country will ever be able to protect rights of persons with disabilities.

I am also worried and disappointed to the current government because it has no interest of inclusion strategy, there is no way they can do better when it

comes to issues of disability unless we are part of them. We have cried for a long time in this country but nobody is ready to listen to us. Basotho with disabilities are paying tax in this country but it seems as if there is nothing we are paying. Other people who are not disabled are benefiting from their taxes but persons with disabilities are left behind everything, it can be employment, education, health, justice, information, infrastructure accessibility and many more that we can mention. Most of PWDs are member's political parties in this country but we are very disappointed and ashamed to join them. I think it is sometimes good to realize that one is discriminating you as it help such a person to think deeper than before, it's up to us persons with disabilities to make decision.

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

Best regards,



The Editor

Director's Corner

PRESENTATION OF THE DISABILITY EQUITY BILL IN PARLIAMENT

By: Nkhasi Sefuthi

The Lesotho National Federation Organisations of the Disabled (LNFOD) is implementing a three year program with the financial aid from the Austrian Development Agency (ADA) through a local Austrian NGO namely, Diakonie Austria.

The program seeks to promote and protect the rights of Basotho with disabilities through the domestication of the UN Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities (CRPD) through an act of parliament, which is currently in the draft form waiting to be adopted by the parliament.



In the recent advocacy activities organized by LNFOD on this issue, the Honourable Minister of Social Development kept the hopes of Basotho with disabilities high by reiterating that the bill will be presented in Parliament before the end of 2017 no matter what.

At that moment, the Minister seemed to be rising above the storm and remained optimistic that she would ensure the presentation of the bill.

However, it was only on the 20th November during the Development for Peace Education 100 days activity when the Minister of Social Development turndown her pledge she made several times in many occasions to people with disabilities that the Bill will be tabled in parliament before the end of 2017.

The reason for not presenting the Bill in parliament relates to the fact that the Bill is still in the drafting section.

What is interesting in this announcement is that the time at which the presentation of the Bill is being postponed was never mentioned.

Reading from the statement of the Honourable Minister, it sounds like the reason why the Bill is still in the drafting section relates to the study tour that was undertaken by the Ministry, in exclusion of the representatives of persons with disabilities on the pretext that the funds were not permitting in the Republic of South Africa regarding the incorporation of the disability grant in the law.

If my readings are correct, this is completely unfair to the taxpayers with disabilities living in Lesotho because the study tour was long completed in September and the changes proposed were worked upon immediately after the tour.

LNFOD therefore appeals to the Minister of Social Development to fulfill his pledge of tabling the Disability Equity Bill before the parliament before the end of 2017 as she previously committed.



GENERAL NEWS

VOTE OF THANKS TO THE COMMISSION

By: Nkhasi Sefuthi

The Lesotho National Federation of Organisations of the Disabled got funding to implement a two months project on electoral education intended to prepare the electorates for the 2017 local government election.

LNFOOD was specifically imparting electoral knowledge on electorates with disabilities, as it is well experienced in dealing with various types of disabilities in Lesotho.

The Lesotho National Federation of Organisations of the Disabled (LNFOOD) wishes to extend its sincere thanks to the management of the Independent Electoral Commission of Lesotho for awarding LNFOOD a grant to provide electoral education among electorates with disabilities in preparation of the local government election conducted on 30 September 2017.



The financial assistance from the IEC did not only assist the commission to reach over sixteen thousand people with disabilities plus their family, but, it has played a critical role of strengthening the organizational capacity to extend its advocacy work to people with disabilities living in the hard to reach areas.

It has also benefited the work of LNFOOD in democracy and human rights issues for

persons with disabilities.



Most importantly, the project brought smiles on the faces of many beneficiaries as they became confident as they heard that the program was specifically meant for them.

Some of them alluded to the fact that they would only vote because they are being asked by their organization to do so. Otherwise, they would not vote, as they believed politicians are not trustworthy.

In addition, the program provided temporary job opportunities for the marginalized group of people who experience serious inequalities on a daily basis in terms of access to jobs.

83 Electoral educators including those with disabilities and their personal assistants from various disabilities worked as Electoral educators imparting knowledge to their fellow people with disabilities.

The Commission has demonstrated maturity and an understanding of disability as a human right issue by allowing organisations of persons with disabilities through LNFOOD to participate in the implementation of the local government electoral education.

GENERAL NEWS

AGRICULTURE IS MY THING.....

By: Sefako Ralebitso



Sefako Ralebitso who was born in Likhakeng in the Butha- Buthe district is now staying at Pulane in the district of Berea. A man with physically challenged. I got the disability when I was 21 years old due to fighting with other boys.

We, Basotho migrate from one place to another just because we are looking for what we can live on. I am physically disabled and I am interested in agriculture. I was hired in this village looking after cattle. It took me three years working in the family of Letsoalo's. A cow paid me at the end of the year. What Mr. Letsoalo did was a good thing, as he did not deny me to care for my cow with his. When finishing the third year, I announced myself that I am now living the job.

I approached the chief of the nearby village, asking him to give a house to stay in. He gave me a house whose owner passed away and there was nobody staying there. I then sold one cow so that I can buy things like; blankets, the mattress, food to live with and then stock to sell. I came into partnership with one family in terms of taking care of those two cows left and planting fields together. We pushed that way, while during the day I was selling snacks, sweets

and airtime to villagers. They were supportive as they were the ones to tell me what to sell. I am now having my own site to build my house because of selling small things and my savings.

It is easy for me to save money because I am living only with crops that I am cultivating. I think it is hard for a businessperson to live on the money that he / she is getting from the business. Most of the people seem to be careless about their businesses but the true is; if there is something beside the businesses to live in it is easy to do business. I am saying this because when it comes to persons with disabilities, they seem to be careless yet they need a huge financial support.

I really think if I can get trainings and motivations from other businesspersons; it could be easy for me to do my own business better. If our government could help us with everything we need to do us money, we have ability to everything. I am also happy because I have heard that there are companies that are going to be licensed to our natural plant that we can make money with, we will be able to plant more and sell it to them.



GENERAL NEWS

BIC VISITS LESOTHO

By: 'Malehlohonolo Molelengoane

The representative of Bank Information Centre (BIC) Rachel Burton visited LNFOD earlier this month to meet with the Lesotho Quality Education for Equality monitoring team in Lesotho. BIC is an NGO based in Washington DC in the United States of America; it is essentially a watchdog for all World Bank's projects worldwide. LNFOD received funding from this NGO to monitor and report on the Ministry of Education and Training implemented project.

retention and pass rates. The stakeholders included principals, students, board members and parents of students.

Although the project is going to buy computers for the schools it covers, this introduction of new technology is not going to solve the low retention and pass rates. This is because these schools have excessively many problems that cannot be solved by introduction of computers. It is our observation that both teachers and parents connect low pass rates with teacher-student ratio, multi-grading, teacher and student absenteeism, teacher competency and lack of commitment. Some students miss school to run errands which parents can still do, some are forced into marriage for their parents gain; the list goes on.

Unlike in the project document where boys are said to be at more risk of leaving school, these visits have shown that both genders are at the same risk of leaving school for different reasons and challenges. The ministry of education and training should work on access to schools and education before considering introduction of new technologies.



During her visit, she was able to meet the officials of the ministry to discuss findings from the LNFOD's monitoring team and to discuss best ways to ensure that vulnerable children benefit from this project. Three schools were also visited during Rachel's visit where all stakeholders were interviewed on access,

GENERAL NEWS

VALIDATION OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION POLICY

By: 'Masekara Sekoankoetla

The Ministry of Education and Training achieved one of its key milestones by successfully holding a validation workshop of the inclusive education policy on the 28 November 2017.

The policy seeks to move the education system of Lesotho from the integration education in which learners with disabilities are just enrolled in schools without provision of proper arrangements for accommodations to the state of full inclusion where learners with disabilities are provided with the adequate support they need to realize their full potential in life.

The stakeholders from various education institutions including Lesotho college of education, UNICEF, Evangelical school secretariat, DPOS and other agencies came together to validate the final draft of the policy.

The Lesotho National Federation of Organizations of the Disabled wishes to extend its sincere thanks to the Ministry of Education and Training, particularly the Special education unit for leading this crucial process of domesticating article 24 of the UN convention on the rights of persons with disabilities which requires the member states to put in place inclusive education policy which facilitate the effective inclusion of all learners with disabilities in the general education system.

LNFOOD also extends its gratitude to its long term partner Diakonie Austria for funding LNFOOD to continue its advocacy on inclusive education and OSISA for providing financial support for the actual drafting of the policy, Japan international cooperation agency and UNICEF for providing technical support during the planning and drafting stages of this important policy for learners with disabilities.

The inputs of all the stakeholders will be incorporated into the policy. After which the policy will be edited and presented to the management of the Ministry of Education and Training for adoption.

According to the Ministry of Education and Training, the policy should be adopted and disseminated to the stakeholders in the early months of 2018. After which the Ministry and partners again will develop the strategic action plan to ensure systematic implementation.



GENERAL NEWS

HOW DO THE CONSTITUTIONAL, PUBLIC SECTOR, SECURITY JUDICIARY AND PARLIAMENTARY REFORMS AFFECT PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES?

By: Rabasotho Moeletsi

Lesotho is bound by the political security and constitutional challenges presented by the new model of coalition governance adopted in 2012 to reform its constitution, public sector, judiciary, security and parliamentary laws to accommodate new developments in order to maintain peace, stability and economic growth in Lesotho.

Considering the marginalization of persons with disabilities brought about by the institutionalized discrimination against persons with disabilities, LNFOD considers the reform agenda a blessing in disguise for persons with disabilities, as the agenda will enable persons with disabilities to advocate for the concrete inclusion of people with disabilities in the national development agenda of Lesotho.

As a result, LNFOD has received financial support from the Open Initiative Society for Southern Africa (OSISA) to enable the organization to ensure full and effective participation of persons with disabilities in the reform agenda from its inception up to the end.

LNFOD envisages the outcomes of this program to include; self-representation of persons with disabilities in the reformed parliament;

articulation of disability rights by the Constitution and provision of reasonable accommodation in the justice sector for persons with disabilities and clear mechanisms for the employment of people with disabilities in the reformed public sector.

LNFOD is therefore calling upon the government of Lesotho and its partners to ensure inclusiveness in the upcoming reforms in which persons with disabilities will be able to voice their concerns and address them accordingly.

In the stakeholder meeting LNFOD takes the view that the Basotho nation should commit to end discrimination against persons with disabilities by removing institutionalized discrimination and start building inclusive society in which persons with disabilities are represented in all decision making bodies and enjoy their human rights on an equal basis with others.

The project will also support the participation of persons with disabilities in the body to be established to lead the reform process so that we make sure persons with disabilities become the integral part of the reform agenda.

GENERAL NEWS

PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES ARE EMPLOYABLE

By: Rabasotho Moeletsi

The issue of unemployment has been a hot topic in Lesotho and the rest of the world in recent years; therefore, it was not a surprise to have it explicitly in the Sustainable development goals agenda 2030. The challenge which is marked to be a threatening to stability of governments of the world can be over looked have far-reaching implications among persons with disabilities as the country have over the years failed to come up with strategies to enable persons with disabilities to participate in the labour market. The Lesotho National Federation of Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (LNFOD) under project supported by the Austrian Development Corporation (ADA) have a goal improve livelihoods of persons with disabilities in Lesotho, which is premised on the firm, believe that *'persons with disabilities are employable'*. LNFOD engaged with the skills training centers found in the districts of Leribe, Berea, Maseru, Mafeteng and Mochale'shoek.

Sensitization of the skills training centers on the potential of persons with disabilities to education and training which is offered in their training centers was an important step to start the journey. Now since they understand that persons with disabilities are equal Basotho men and women who should be afforded equal opportunity to access education and training of the highest quality possible. It was not a smooth sailing process as staff from these centers had a perception that persons with disabilities have their own special centers where they could be trained in isolation.

They also thought the in-accessibility to their premises was a valid reason, which made denial to entry to their training centers excusable, and for them it was a normalized situation. These kinds of discussions are normally heated, and deliberated to at length but it is always pleasing when all that is changed and duty bearers begin to embracing disability as a normal part of human diversity and make every effort to mainstream disability in order to have inclusive training centers which implement universal designed for everyone in the services they offer as institutions for all.

Having succeeded to bring training centers on board worked as a catalyst as they play both roles as they now acknowledge to adapt their facilities and programs to accommodate learners with disabilities as well as mobilizing persons with disabilities to access education and training which is a right. This means the number of disability activists now grow. This was evident in the public gatherings, which LNFOD organized along with the training centers in the councils where centers were given a platform to present programs they offered and encourage persons with disabilities to apply for entry into the centers. Persons with disabilities on the other hand showed a lot of interest to enroll in the skills training centers.

This process of enrolment to training, training to employment for persons with disabilities opens doors for them able to earn their own living through wage or self-employment, is the lack of relevant skills in competitive job markets. This is very critical in this age of many employment opportunities with high competitiveness. Having persons with different types disabilities in both skills training center and employment alone works as a tool that root out prejudice and misperceptions about disability, and promote a culture that values diversity, as humanity's an asset. That will be helpful to achieve universal employment, and therefore economic growth, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment and decent work for all. Then at the end of it all, we will all be singing the same tune that **"PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES ARE EMPLOYABLE"**.

It only when we are united on this one that we will realize 'sustainable and resilient society for all'.

UPCOMING EVENTS

INTERNATIONAL DISABILITY DAY – 3RD DECEMBER

Disability Lesotho will celebrate
this day on the 4th December,
At Leribe district.

The celebration will commence
with
the procession from District
Administration offices
at 0700hrs to Pitso house

For more information, please
conduct;

LNFOOD office + 266 22320345

ADVOCACY WORK



LNFOD

PARTNERS in Advocacy Work



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