

DISABILITY LESOTHO



Editor's note

Lesotho is a member state to the United Nations, declared as a nation to protect rights to persons with disabilities. Since the country has signed and ratified the UN convention on the rights of persons with disabilities, upto date persons with disabilities are still chained under poverty, lack of assistive devices, no social protection, no housing, still chained by the government.

We felt happy when we heard that the parliament release the law that protects rights of persons with disabilities, not knowing that it is just being passed for the sake that the World could applaud for this country as if they are doing what is right. I am saying this because it is not understandable if the whole parliament can pass the law and within that law established the Disability Advisory Council that has no budget to implement all duties assigned by the law.

I this we as persons with disabilities in this country our brains has been eroded with falses. Even the registration for disability Grant is not properly without the say of persons or organisations of the disabled, what a country one may ask. I plea for individuals with disabilities to work harder than before again.

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

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Editor

DIRECTOR'S CORNER

Press statement on the inauguration of Persons with Disability Advisory Council established under Section 4 of Persons with Disability Equity Act

By: Nkhasi Sefuthi

Persons with Disability Equity Act is the legislation passed by the Parliament with the object of establishing the Persons with Disability Advisory Council, provide for equal opportunities for persons with disabilities and recognise the rights of persons with disabilities in Lesotho.

Persons with Disability Equity Act entered into force on the 12 March 2021 when it was published through a notice on the gazette.

Though, the Persons with Disability Advisory Council has been established by this Act, it has not yet been inaugurated by the Minister of social Development as the law prescribes.

Considering the important role the council on the rights of persons with disabilities will be playing in advancing effective monitoring of human rights of persons with disabilities. Taking into account the need for full and effective participation of persons with disabilities in decision making processes affecting their lives in Lesotho.

Noting dire situation of the human rights of persons with disabilities in terms of access to infrastructure, mobility, communication, education, healthcare facilities and employment opportunities.

LNFOOD has initiated a campaign for the inauguration of the Persons with Disability Advisory Council. The campaign targets the Minister of Social Development since the law states that he/she is responsible for inaugurating the council. The campaign goes further to target the private sector and the public at large to raise awareness about the rights of persons with disabilities and means through which they can be promoted, respected, and protected by the community.

The campaign further advocates for the allocation of the adequate and sufficient budget for the council so that it may discharge its functions efficiently.

What LNFOOD has done so far

On the 30 September LNFOOD held a lobbying and advocacy meeting with the Ministry of Social Development, and the portfolio parliamentary committee on social cluster to ask the Acting Minister of Social Development to speed up the process of setting up the council by appointing the members nominated by the different sectors into the council.

The Honourable Minister, Keketso Sello a acknowledged the essence of inaugurating the council but, highlighted that his ministry did not budget for the inauguration of the council this fiscal year. He pledged that; the Persons with Disability Advisory council will be budgeted for this fiscal year so that it can be inaugurated in the next fiscal year. LNFOOD argues that the Ministry is legally bound to inaugurate the council because the law establishing the council is in force. Legally speaking, the Ministry of social development is not justified to say that it is unable to inaugurate the council due to budget constraints, yet it is the one which published the gazette putting the law in force.

Secondly, LNFOOD had a conversation with the private sector including LCCI, and different taxi transport association on how they can promote the enforcement and ensure inherent human dignity of.

persons with disabilities in accordance with the Act

In addition, LNFOD wrote to all sectors of the society represented in the council asking them to comply with section 5(1) of the Persons with Disability Equity Act by nominating and submitting the names of their representatives to the Minister of social development.

LNFOD has also submitted a list of the names nominated by member organisations and submitted them to the Minister. The expectation is that the Minister will consider given names and gazette such names as members of the disability council so that they can start their work in accordance with the law.

LNFOD has also built the capacity of its member organisations on articulating advocacy messages around the establishment of the council so that they can educate the public about the rights of persons with disabilities and self-advocate for the inauguration of the council on the rights of persons with disabilities.

From the Foregoing, LNFOD is calling upon the Minister of disability affairs to operationalise the Persons with Disability Advisory Council through the appointment of council members, and provision of budgetary and administrative support to the council.

LNFOD calls upon the Minister of social development to ensure that the Ministry allocate adequate and sufficient budget to the council which will ensure that it is best place to monitor the rights and provide directives and advice to all government ministries relating to all disability issues.

LNFOD calls upon the media sector to spread the advocacy message about the need to inaugurate council and allocate budget so as to operationalise the council for the sake of the vulnerable population of persons with disabilities living in Lesotho.



GENERAL NEWS

PISA programme take off

By: 'Mantsebo Leluma



PISA as one of the programmes run by LNFOD is yet to take off after a long wait due to Covid-19 pandemic and the responses taken to curb the further spread of the disease. The programme has been on hold as the Covid-19 restrictions demanded. There has been a 2days workshop more like a refresher meeting where by the two community facilitators were trained on the modules that will be in use to help the programme go through.

PISA is a programme through which the communities of the selected councils will be intensely skilled on their rights and responsibilities. The service providers as well are to benefit in the programme as they will be offered a platform to sensitise their communities and even easy information dissemination in relation to the development of the communities.

LNFOD as the supreme body in the fight and protection of the rights of People with disabilities

is an implementing partner of this programme will be seeing through the entire project, therefore people with disabilities are in the fore front of this programme. PISA program's specific objective is to contribute to a vibrant and open democracy in Lesotho, where citizens know, demand and exercise their right and responsibilities. Specific modules are going to be put in place, disability communities and the larger community sectors will also benefit as they will get the opportunity of observing the government representatives supplying accountability and transparency.

PISA will contribute to the objective of 'more efficient and cost effective provision of day to day service delivery.



GENERAL NEWS

PROMOTING THE RATIFICATION OF AFRICAN DISABILITY PROTOCOL IN LESOTHO

By: Keketso Mangope

The AU through Heads of States and Governments through Assembly Decision (Assembly/AU/Dec. 676 (XXX) of January 2018, adopted the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of PWDs in Africa so-called African Disability Protocol in short. The purpose of this protocol is to promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights by persons with disabilities in Africa and to ensure respect for their inherent dignity.

This Protocol is necessitated by pragmatic and Institutional realities in Africa coupled by high prevalence of disability on the African Continent and the historical marginalization of persons with disabilities. It is profusely essential to understand that African Disability Protocol is not contra to UNCRPD but reaffirms all the norms, principles and obligations as stipulated in it. The unique philosophy of this protocol as compared to UNCRPD is that it is developed to address and subsequently remove African views and believes about disability influenced by harmful traditional and cultural practices.

Although the Kingdom of Lesotho has ratified and domesticated the UNCRPD, there is still a vehement need to ratify other continental or regional agreements supplementary to United Nation conventions promoting the recognition of rights of PWDs like African Disability Protocol. Disability agenda is now one of the pressing issues that should be at the heart of the legislative institutions. The government of Lesotho should therefore find it absolutely prudent to enhance the standard of living for PWDs thereby formulating, enacting equity laws and ratifying international and/or regional treaties established to ensure the effective enjoyment of all human rights by PWDs.

The direct valid answers to those who hold questions of why is it necessary to consider this protocol are listed below.

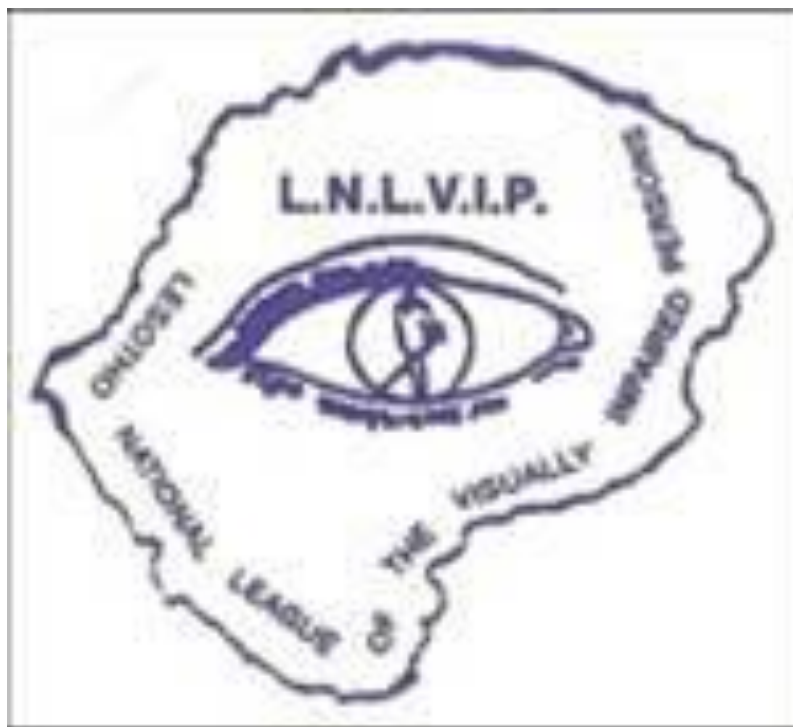
SALIENT FEATURES OF AFRICAN CHARTER ON HUMAN AND PEOPLES' RIGHTS ON THE RIGHTS OF PWDS IN AFRICA involve:

Ensure mainstreaming of disability in policies, legislations development plans, programs and activities.

- i). It outlaws discrimination of whatever kind
- ii) Outlines right to access to services, facilities and devices

- iii) Right to liberty and security and outlaws deprivation of liberty on the basis of disability or perceived disability
- iv) The charter outlaws harmful cultural practices (which are rampant in Africa).
- v) The right to self-representation
- vi) The charter flags out women and girls, children, older persons and youth as a special category of PWDs

Lesotho National League of the Visually Impaired Persons (LNLVIP) strongly recommends the government of Lesotho to be in support of PWDs by taking efficient measures to ratify this protocol. This initiative will ensue the improved standard of living for the disabled persons and the full enjoyment of their human rights in Lesotho. LNLVIP is working in collaboration with other CSOs in pursuit of disability agenda discourse to strengthen advocacy strategies for the ratification of African Disability Protocol.



GENERAL NEWS

Congradulations to Mamathe Police Station

By: Pascalina Letsau



Child sexual abuse is a social injustice that is happening almost everyday in many countries including Lesotho. Communities are giving the situation all the attention that distract amost everything.

The situation happened at Berea district, in various villages whereby Mamathe Police station is dealing with these reactions and helping children around those villages. It was very hard for the station as most of the cases were for children with disabilities. It is important to notify law enforcement if the child has been sexually abused. "It is the role of this station to protect rights of persons with disabilities. Berea district is among those districts that are at a high level abusing persons with disabilities sexually. Hopefully, someday more perpetrators will also be brought to justice." Said Insp. Sebili Tjokosela

Talking to Insp. Sebili Tjokosela who is the head at Mamathe Police station and L/SGT Rampai Sekhonyana, the newsletter discovered that the station understand clearly what to be done when making statements to be untaken before magistrate. The indicated that they liase with all Disabled People's Organisations including the unmbrella body for DPOs in this country known as LNFOD.

Insp. Tjokosela elaborated that they handles about 4 cases of sexual abuses to persons with different disabilities in the Berea, at Mamathe area. Among these people who have been sexually abuse 2 of the are now pregnant or by this time may have children.

The station held one case of a deaf girl who was also sexually abused, "We invited LNFOD with expertise on how to handle the case in a proper way. The station was provided with the sign language interpretor to help us as we do not know the language."

"We cannot rest until we find all perpetrators in jail. The fact that the increase of vulnerability amongst women and girls especially mental disabilities is at high rate, the societies are not protecting them, we as police officers from this station pledged to help with everything that we have to put all perpetrators before courts of law." Concluded L/SGT Rampai Sekhonyana

Informed that about 2 perpetrators are now in jail for 10 to 15 years. Insp. Tjokosela plead and would like thank LNFOD with all the assistance they always provide, when they are in need of Sign language assistance and with all the expectise related to different disabilities. We would also like to find training on sign language so that all police officers can help people with disabilities without consulting LNFOD.



GENERAL NEWS

Magnifying the Voice of Women and Girls with Disabilities in the Fight against GBV: A Call for Inclusion in GBV Response!

By: Mekananelo L. Ramoholi



The year 2021 marks the second year of the implementation phase of the Gender and Disability in Practice Project which will end in 2023. One of the greatest challenges facing persons with disabilities in Lesotho as revealed by the project is gender-based violence (GBV). Regrettably, the scourge of GBV continues to hit hard on women and girls with disabilities, now more than ever before. Due to their increased vulnerability in society, women and girls with mental disabilities are the hardest hit by sexual gender based violence. This is a reality that many have accepted as a norm firstly because the victim is usually blamed for any act of GBV she encounters and secondly there is usually no accountability whatsoever where the victim has mental disability. There is usually impunity for perpetrators whether relatives or a known community member. Since the inception of this project, LNFOD has supported several cases involving women and girls with disabilities, many of whom have encountered unplanned pregnancies, sexually transmitted infections and even unsafe abortions.

Unfortunately, some have had to undergo forced sterilization to avert the risk of pregnancy ensuing from the somewhat inevitable sexual abuses confronting them during their lifetime. Despite this horrible reality, not much is done by the country to support organizations of persons with disabilities, not to mention persons with disabilities themselves as equal citizens. Women and girls with disabilities who are disproportionately affected by gender and disability are not sufficiently empowered to exercise their rights on equal basis with others. In reality there is a huge gap between women and girls with disabilities and women without disabilities.

The latter are comparatively more empowered and there are support systems to protect them where they encounter GBV. Unfortunately, this is not the case for women and girls with disabilities. The social services like health, education and justice are still not inclusive as there are still many barriers that hinder effective access to these essential services. Outstandingly the communication barriers facing those with mental illness have not only made empowerment difficult but they have contributed to unwarranted exclusion especially in the justice system where these persons are regarded as incapacitated by the law. This piece is a call to the government to end impunity against sexual gender based violence against women and girls with disabilities, to magnify the voices of persons with disabilities through empowerment by investing in awareness raising programmes, capacity building amongst stakeholders among others, provision of accommodations in essential services and increased partnerships to prevent gbv against persons with disabilities in all its forms. The inclusion of persons with disabilities in the national gbv response programs should be visible in the design and implementation phases. LNFOD accordingly urges the national GBV response to mainstream disability so that it targets men and women in their intersectional identities, such as the disabled, to ensure no one is left behind.

ADVOCACY ASPECT

Big rivers began with the smallest drops of water...

By: Makatleho Molotsi

Under its project named 'Gender and Disability Rights in Practice LNFOD aspires to promote gender sensitive inclusive education. It pursuit of this objective, in partnership with the Ministry of Education (special Education Unit) LNFOD held the training workshops on inclusive education for in- service teachers. In this workshop, teachers were sensitized of the new social model of disability which is adopted by the Inclusive Education Policy 2018. They were sensitized that learners with impairments are disabled by a myriad of structural, attitudinal and physical barriers they face in schools. They were also equipped with disability identification skills and were encouraged to influence change and promote disability inclusion in schools. As one of the facilitators, owing to the technical nature of the workshop, I had a feeling that the duration of the workshop and concluded that the trainees have grasped very little therefore could not influence significant change.

Still in partnership with Special Education Unit under the Ministry of Education and Training, LNFOD is visiting schools in the project to set up inclusive education clubs. These are the clubs that are aimed at promoting and supporting the provision of inclusive education in their schools as well as encouraging enrollment and retention of the disabled students in schools. Alongside this, the partners are monitoring the impact of the previous training of inclusive education for teachers. So far 24 schools in the district of Mhale's Hoek have been visited.

Contrary to what my earlier observation and conclusion, we found that the workshop participants have successfully disseminated the workshop information's to their fellow teachers as well as students.

This was indicated by the fact that other teachers were able to respond so well to our

questions and in most schools, quite a number of teachers were eager to be part of the school's inclusive education clubs. Moreover, some schools have reported that post the workshop they were able to identify some learners with so not visible disabilities and have noted their interest to host school based workshops on disability identification, accommodations and referrals to strengthen their capacity in accommodating learners with disabilities.

Moreover, some schools have reported outstanding results. In addition to identifying learners with disabilities, Siloe High School in Siloe F01 has begun rehabilitating its physical environment. It has constructed a ramp at its administration block and is raising some funds for rehabilitation of the school environment. In addition, Naleli Primary school in Mashaeng F02 is in the process of establishing what is named 'school inclusion Committee which will lead and oversee the issues relation to inclusion in schools.

Noting these results it was clear that although the training workshop was very short, it yielded highly positive results. I was reminded of the fact that big rivers that we see today began with the drops of water.



UPCOMING EVENTS

INTERNATIONAL DISABILITY DAY

3RD DECEMBER, 2021

PLACE: BUTHA-BUTHE DISTRICT

Theme:

“Leadership and participation of persons with disabilities towards inclusive, accessible and sustainable post COVID-19-world”.



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LNFOOD

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