



INSIDE

Director's Corner
Disability PUBLIC FUND.
...page 3



page 1...
INCLUSION OF WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES
...page 5



page 6...



Morifi High School's Piggery Project.

MISSION STATEMENT

LNFOOD MISSION IS TO ADVOCATE, PROMOTE, AND DEFEND THE RIGHTS OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES AND THEIR FAMILIES THROUGH PROVISION OF TRAINING, MATERIAL AND EMOTIONAL SUPPORT, AND BY REPRESENTING THEIR NEEDS TO GOVERNMENT, DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS AND THE WIDER COMMUNITY.

Enhancing the Inclusion of Women with Disabilities Participation in Electoral Processes.



INCLUSION OF WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES. SOURCE: ELECTION ACCESS. BY 'MASENONO LETSIE.

An estimated one in five women have a disability. Historically, their equal participation and inclusion in society has been hindered by systematic marginalization and structural barriers, which often lead to less access to: education, information, justice as well as less participation in civic and political processes and decision-making. More than ten years (10) after adoption of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCPRD), significant gaps continue between commitments and action to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls with disabilities.

CONTINUES ON PAGE 5.....

EDITOR'S NOTE



Dear Valued Reader,

Welcome to another issue of Disability Lesotho, in this issue, we hear more on the Persons with Disability Equity Act of 2021, which is the law enacted to promote the enjoyment of human rights by persons with disabilities in Lesotho on equal basis with others.

We also get to hear more on Morifi disability Inclusive Education School Club, that has warmly welcomed a Piggery Production Project at their school.

Our Director's Corner explains what a disability public fund is and how it is expected to be established and perform its functions.

Our Gender & Disability Officer Ms. 'Masenono Letsie tells us about the importance of enhancing the inclusion of women with disabilities participation in electoral processes.

**Disability Lesotho E-Newsletter, Editor:
Teboho Khofu**

About Disability Lesotho E-newsletter

Disability Lesotho E-newsletter provides a platform for stakeholders to share news, views, best practices and resources and includes job advertisements, expressions of interest in volunteering, upcoming events and other practical items.

If you would like to make a submission to the next edition of Disability Lesotho, please send your information/images to the editor: **tebohokhofu@gmail.com**. Please also use the same email if you would like to be included in the mailing list and share your valuable feedback.



Lesotho National Federation for Organisations of the Disabled



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Naleli Opposite Maria 'Mabasotho
Catholic Church

Director's Corner

3

DISABILITY PUBLIC FUND.

This article seeks to explain what is a disability public fund and how it is expected to be established and perform its functions. Finally. The article makes recommendations which may be employed by government to realize the objectives of the Disability Public Fund.

Ever since the accession of the government of Lesotho to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities on the 2nd December 2008, significant strides have been achieved by government including design and adoption of the National Disability and Rehabilitation Policy in 2011, incorporation of disability as a cross cutting issue in the Lesotho national strategic plan (2012-2013-2016-2017) and the adoption of National Disability Mainstreaming Plan in 2015. All these policies and strategies highlight the importance of making disability integral part of design, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of government and other stakeholders programmes and interventions inclusive of persons with disabilities. Despite these developments, government of Lesotho has been grappling with the financing of these disability specific and inclusive policy and legal framework to address the needs and concerns of persons with disabilities. The implementation of these policies have been mostly hampered by serious lack of budget allocation to realize the objectives of this policies. Hence the Lesotho strategic development plan of 2(2018-2019-2022-2023) clearly stipulates that disability policy framework is not effective due to non allocation of funds for effective implementation.

Organisations of persons with disabilities wanted government to address this shortcoming through the enactment of Persons with disabilities. This Act of Parliament which came into force on the 12 March 2021 has a provision which requires government through its relevant Ministry to set up a Disability Public Fund. Section 43(1) of Persons with Disability Equity Act requires the Ministry of Finance to establish a Disability Public Fund to mobilise funds from the public and private national and international sources.



LNFOD, Executive Director, Adv. Nkhosi Setshaba

The funds will be used to support effective implementation of this Act. In other words, The Fund will be used to address the long standing funding gap for the effective implementation of disability specific and inclusive policies. LNFOD strongly believes that putting in place a resource mobilisation strategy such as this would intensify disability mainstreaming efforts as funding will be made available to support disability inclusion under the Act.

Lesotho National Federation of Organisations of the Disabled (LNFOD through its gender and disability in practice project has been advocating for the effective implementation of this Act through a series of lobbying and advocacy meetings with the Ministry of Social Development and Ministry of Finance to push for the establishment of this Fund.

However, the Disability Public fund has not yet been established by the Minister of Finance as per finance regulations despite that the proposal for the establishment of the fund has been presented to the Ministry of Finance. The Ministry of Social Development is yet to provide justification for the establishment of this Fund to the Minister of Finance notwithstanding the fact that Persons with Disability Equity Act has already provided for the establishment of the Fund.

From the foregoing, it is clear that slow progress has been realized in this regard and LNFOD should intensify its advocacy on this issue and government must set up the Fund as required by Persons with Disability Equity Act to ensure that financing mechanism is put in place to reducing the funding gap which hinder full and effective implementation of disability specific and inclusive policies.

-Ends

Enhancing the Inclusion of Women with Disabilities Participation in Electoral Processes.

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The Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) upholds women's right to public life, the Beijing Platform for Action and Sustainable Development Goals also call for removal of barriers to equal participation of women in national parliaments and local government.

Lesotho held its first local government elections in April 2005, and the participation of women and girls with disabilities was outstandingly low, due to various reasons which range from gender inequality, disability related barriers and lack of empowerment for women with disabilities to participate in key decision making processes. The above noted electoral outcomes occur against the backdrop of increased recognition of the importance of women's presence and gender equality in governance through gender mainstreaming in elections. The fourth round of Local Government Elections is scheduled for 29th September-2023, however, there are no visible measures implored to ensure representation of women with disabilities in politics/power. The Local Government Elections Act 1998, effectively promotes gender mainstreaming through provision and allocation of special seats for women, it does

however not have specific clauses that explicitly and specifically promote participation of persons with disabilities especially women and girls with disabilities in Local Government Elections. Gender and disability are two cross-cutting issues that cannot be addressed separately.

For meaningful participation of women with disabilities in political and electoral processes, affirmative measures with reference to women with disabilities must be adopted through:

- Building the capacity of women with disabilities to effectively participate in leadership, gender sensitivity and mentoring.
- Remove disability related barriers and support structures for women in decision making.
- Establish and strengthen structures to enhance gender mainstreaming.
- Addressing discriminatory attitudes and norms in decision making structures and lastly,
- Laws and policies be accompanied by public awareness campaigns to demonstrate link between
- Equal representation participation of men and women with disabilities to democracy, good governance and citizen participation.

-Ends.

Empowering Persons with Disabilities at the Community Level on the Right to Access Justice.



The Right to Access Justice. Source: Ratna Sagar Shrestha/THT.

BY LERATO MAKANANELO RAMOHOLI.

The Persons with Disability Equity Act of 2021 is the law enacted to promote the enjoyment of human rights by persons with disabilities in Lesotho on equal basis with others. This law has several provisions that seek to facilitate access to social services like health, education and justice to all persons with disabilities. It mainly advocates for the disability mainstreaming as a strategy to promote inclusion in all these sectors.

Section 32 of the Act provides for the right to access justice. Under section 32(1), the law provides that, “the Chief Justice shall make rules for the provision of accessible format methods and any other legal services and procedures which take into account the needs of a person with disability who attends court proceedings.” Pursuant to this section, the Disability and Equity (Procedure) Rules 2023 were adopted with the support of the Chief Justice of Lesotho. The Rules provide a practical guideline for the judicial officers and everyone who comes before court on the procedure to follow to facilitate effective participation of persons with disabilities in court processes or proceeding either as a witnesses or a perpetrators.

Over the years persons with disabilities have been excluded from the justice system purely on the basis of disability related barriers such as legal attitudinal, communication and environmental barriers. These barriers have been a common place, worsened by the rigidity of judicial system and its embedded technicality. As a result, there has been resistance to change to the extent that persons with disabilities, prior to these laws were confined to the traditional justice system, which inherently administers customary law. Unfortunately, the law in its plurality whether religious, customary or otherwise has never embraced the social model of disability but rather the charity and medical models which view persons with disability as objects without agency. This means that they hardly got justice even from these local law enforcing authorities. These laws therefore introduce a paradigm shift where the justice system, through law and procedure, is relaxed to accommodate disability in order to promote justice for all.

Lesotho National Federation of Organizations of the Disabled (LNFOD) with the support of OSISA, will therefore empower communities in the ten districts of Lesotho on the right to access justice by sensitizing them mainly on these laws and disseminating messages on accesses to justice for persons with disability. LNFOD in partnership with its four member organizations will hold a one-day sensitization workshop for 100 persons with disabilities in all, at the district level. Each member organization under LNFOD (Lesotho National League of the Visually Impaired Persons, National Association of the Deaf Lesotho, Lesotho National Association of the Physically Disabled and the Intellectual Disability and Autism Lesotho) will nominate 5 members to be trained per district. LNFOD anticipates that persons with disabilities will be encouraged to explore the courts as a possible avenue to legitimately claim their protected rights upon infringement. In order for one to have a right, he or she must be able to claim it. This sensitization workshops will resume in October 2023.

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Morifi Community High School Learners Grateful to have a Piggery Production Project.



Morifi Piggery Project.

BY RABASOTHO MOELETSI.

Morifi disability inclusive education school club has warmly welcomed a Piggery Production Project at their school. This is one of the projects supported by the Lesotho National Federation of Organisations of the Disabled (LNFOD). While many school clubs were inclined to vegetables Production and retail tuck-shop, Morifi club has opted to raise pigs. They school have purchased two (2) piglets, a male and a female with support they got from LNFOD. They also bought the meals and the swine medication. It has turned out that the learners are loving it.

The project is important for the learners who are members of the club as they gain experience in managing the piggery project.

"The project couldn't have come at the right moment and to right group of learners.

They are supposed to take turns on duty, but you find most of them coming to clean and feed the pigs even they are not on duty," said Thabo Rakubutu, a teacher responsible for the disability club.

On top of that, the learners have gained little experience in animal health. Teacher Rakubutu further elaborated that having spent a month at school premises, these pigs developed what looked like Mange disease, where the pigs had itchy skin and rubbing against the pen walls. They developed some bare patches on the back.

"The learners were called and applied medication on the skin of the pigs. The pigs were healed and that gave our learners so much pride," Rakubutu concluded.

Indeed, the project has offered some practical experiences to the learners which would benefit them even outside the school premises. This include carrying these skills to the farms at home since most Basotho families live on farming. Some of these might need to take Agriculture as their career paths going forward and these experiences is a good opportunity for them.

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Celebration of Inclusive ECCD centers and first Day of Deaf Awareness month.



children access pre-primary education through community and privately owned ECCD centres.

Due to these limited resources, the ECCD centres are often not inclusive and lack play and learning material leading to a limited number of children with disabilities enrolled in ECCD centres. As NECDOL we found it important to celebrate ECCD centres that are working towards ensuring that their centres are inclusive as a means to encourage others to be more inclusive.

The month of Deaf awareness which is September was marked to celebrate this achievement through selection of schools who have been found to be Inclusive by gifting them play and learn materials. We had approached our partners Roger Federer Foundation, Vodacom Lesotho, UNICEF, ECONET Lesotho, LNFOD and its members and Ministry of Education and Training to help us in ensuring that the event was a success. Activities on the day included signing of songs and learning to be guides to the visually impaired.



Celebration of Inclusive ECCD centers.

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Celebration of Inclusive ECCD centers.

By Shoeshoe Mofokeng - NECDOL coordinator.

Early childhood experiences from birth to age 8 affect the development of the brain's architecture, which provides the foundation for all future learning, behaviour and health. A strong foundation helps children develop the skills they need to become well-functioning adults. At the age of three years, children transition from home to school, this is a time in which developmental stages of a child are closely monitored and build through different activities offered in pre-primary education centres. It is therefore very important for us as a nation to understand how important pre- primary education is, therefore making the teachers and the environment of these centres equally important. Lesotho being a developing country with limited resources to spend on early childhood education, provides one year on inclusive pre-primary education to a limited number of children through 310 reception classes, while the rest of the

What is inclusive education and its goal?



Inclusive Education. Source: VSE.

By Teboho Khofu.

The term "inclusive education" refers to a system in which all students are supported to learn, participate, and contribute in all areas of the school's life while attending and being welcomed by the neighbourhood schools in age-appropriate, regular classes. The goal of inclusive education is to develop and plan schools, classrooms, activities, and programmes so that all students can learn and participate together. The goal of inclusive education is to ensure that all students have access to a high-quality education by successfully addressing their various needs in a manner that is flexible, accepting, respectful, and encouraging. With support to lessen and remove barriers and obstacles that could result in exclusion, students participate in the educational programme in a common learning environment.

The practise of inclusive education takes place in a common learning environment, or in a setting where students of various backgrounds and abilities come together to learn. For the majority of the students' regular class hours, common learning environments, such as classrooms, libraries, and playgrounds, are used. Students who have special needs or intellectual disabilities should not learn away from their peers in a common learning environment.

Effective common learning environments allow every student to participate fully in the learning

environment that is shared with peers in the chosen educational setting and is designed for all students. They create a welcoming environment, foster a sense of community, and monitor students' advancement towards sensible personal, social, emotional, and academic goals. By offering adequate levels of support and implementing student-centred teaching principles and practises, effective common learning environments are also sensitive to the learning needs of each individual. Last but not least, a common learning environment (CLE) is a welcoming setting where instruction is planned to be delivered to students of mixed ability and with their peer group in a public/private school, while being responsive to their individual needs as learners, and used for the majority of the students' instruction hours.



Illustration Source: MRM.

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