

DISABILITY LESOTHO



From the Editor

Dear Partner,

Welcome once again to the edition of Disability Lesotho, the monthly email newsletter from Lesotho National Federation of the Disabled. The edition will cover news for the Month of September, 2020

I remember Her Majesty Queen 'Masenate Mohato Bereng Seeiso speaking at the commemoration of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities held in Teyateyaneng on Tuesday. She said this the World focused on raising public awareness that persons with disabilities should be involved in all areas of life so that Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's) can be easily achievable. She commended Lesotho for passing Equity Bill in Parliament, said that will be a step towards promoting equal opportunities for persons with disabilities in this country, but until today there is no change, instead everything is going backwards, I real wonder when will Basotho with disabilities will get peace in this country.

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

Best regards,



The Editor

DIRECTOR'S CORNER

Disability mainstreaming

By: Nkhasi Sefuthi

This article assesses the progress made by the Ministry of Social Development (MOSD) and Lesotho National Federation of Organisations of the Disabled (LNFOD) in implementing a joint project, 'Lesotho Disability Mainstreaming Project'. This project started in March 2020 and is expected to phase out in February 2021 in which government of Lesotho through MOSD will be expected to take over and coordinate effective implementation of disability mainstreaming programme within all government ministries whilst LNFOD will be expected to continue advocacy for the effective coordination and implementation of the National Disability Mainstreaming Plan currently under review.

The objective of this initiative is to strengthen coordination of disability mainstreaming across all government, private and civil society spheres so that persons with disabilities may enjoy their social, economic, cultural, and political rights in the Basotho society.

This is intended to be achieved through the review of the National Disability Mainstreaming Plan (NDMP adopted by MOSD in 2015. The plan is implemented by various government ministries through facilitation of the Ministerial Disability Focal Persons who are assigned to influence and advocate for the disability mainstreaming in which each ministry should design and budget for the disability inclusive activities aimed at ensuring that the projects, programmes and services intended

for the general public also reaches persons with disabilities upon review, it was discovered that over the past 5 years, little progress has been made to coordinate and implement the NDMP due to a number of factors including weak coordination by the MOSD, lack of budgetary support to support effective implementation of the NDMP within the Ministries coupled with lack of capacity by the ministerial focal persons in understanding and pursuing disability inclusive planning. The absence of the monitoring and evaluation system for this plan contributed towards lack of effective implementation.

In order to correct this situation, MOSD and LNFOD revive the disability mainstreaming programme by engaging a consultant to lead a participatory review of the NDMP.

the process started with the successful appointment of the ministerial disability focal persons in 9 ministries including, Ministry of Education and Training, Ministry of Social Development, Ministry of Small business cooperatives and Marketing, Ministry of Trade and Industry, Ministry of agriculture and food Security, Ministry of Water Affairs, Ministry of Development Planning, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Sports, youth, Gender and Recreation, Ministry of Labour and Employment, Ministry of Public Works, and Ministry of Communication, Science and Technology. The focal persons are strategically selected as planners since they are at the central planning of each ministry in which they are charged with

planning and monitoring all ministerial projects, programmes and services. They are therefore strategically based to support the disability mainstreaming working together with their human resource offices to mainstream disability within their ministerial plans.

In order to turn them into real ministerial focal persons, they have been participating in the consultations of the review and have been undergoing a 2-day training on disability mainstreaming in order to increase their capacity in disability mainstreaming so that they may be in the best position to participate meaningfully in the review of the NDMP. The plan is at the advanced stage in which the consultant is consolidating the inputs from the ministerial disability focal persons so as to make the plan ready for the validation by all the stakeholders involved in the drawing of the NDMP.

In order to ensure effective coordination of the implementation of NDMP, MOSD will provide technical support to all the ministries with disability focal persons and organize quarterly meetings to check the progress, capacity gaps and take corrective measures to support them. This should be a continuous process which will enable ordinary persons with disabilities to access public services on an equal basis with others. This will be facilitated through the disability mainstreaming capacity development workshops which will be trickled down to the District Administrators. The disability mainstreaming training of trainers workshops will be held in six districts for the Heads of departments in the districts so as to enable them to reach out to the community councils where people with disabilities are living with the disability mainstreaming messages.

ADVOCACY ASPECT

WHERE IS THE PERSONS WITH DISABILITY EQUITY BILL?

By: Nkhasi Sefuthi

The Lesotho National Federation of Organisations of the Disabled (LNFOD) is advocating for the enactment of the Persons with Disability Equity Bill to promote the respect and to ensure the fulfillment of the human rights of persons with disabilities in accordance with the UN Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities (CRPD). LNFOD has been working with the Ministry of Social Development to draft the Persons with Disability Equity Bill in which LNFOD has been serving as the technical agency for the MOSD with the aim of assisting the Ministry to understand and domesticate the human rights standards set out by the CRPD correctly into the domestic legislation which Lesotho wants to put in place. The role of the Ministry of Social Development has been to review the drafting instructions and making the Bill through their internal procedure and structures.

In November 2019, the Parliament passed the Bill to Senate to deliberate, amend and enact the Bill into law as soon as they are done with the issues which they wanted to address on the Bill. Recognizing gender and disability gaps which still reflected on the Bill despite the collaboration between MOSD and LNFOD in the development of the Bill. LNFOD submitted the proposed amendments to the Senate asking Senate to review and amend the Bill with the proposed amendments so that the Bill may come out as comprehensive as possible in terms of the protection of gender and disability rights. Examples of the amendments proposed by LNFOD include the strengthening of the employment section in which LNFOD is of the view that the section should prohibit discrimination on the basis of disability in employment issues in all its forms since persons with disabilities have been historically been facing greater barriers in employment including lack of reasonable accommodation. LNFOD further proposes that, the state should have employment quota for persons with disabilities so as to ensure that persons with disabilities are being employed and the state is able to measure the progress in this regard. The council should be given the power to institute legal proceedings on behalf of persons with disabilities whose rights are threatened or violated; the law

should protect women and girls with disabilities by providing for the explicit protection of these groups against gender based violence; and persons with psychosocial disability should be included in the definition of mental disability. However, the MOSD has been arguing that the Bill should be passed as it stands because LNFOD has been participating in the consultations and has not raised the issues it is raising now. The MOSD argues that, all the proposed amendments should be discarded because they have not been raised in time. LNFOD has been given enough time to raise its concerns and did not do so at the appropriate time. Though it is surprising that the ministry which has been designated to deal with the disability rights was standing against them, the truth of the matter is that LNFOD has been participating in the consultations in which it provided inputs. However, the problem was that the LNFOD Inputs were not always considered and reflected on the Bill. As a result, LNFOD always had the duty to go back to the MOSD to notify the MOSD of the critical inputs which had not been addressed.

On the 1st October, the MOSD and LNFOD had an opportunity to address the Senate legislative committee regarding the proposed amendments as indicated above. The discussions mentioned above were debated before the Senate legislative committee in which the committee wanted to reconcile the views and inputs of the two sides so that they can make informed decision about what should be taken in or out of the Bill before it is enacted into law. The Bill should be enacted into law before the end of October.

LNFOD strongly believes that the proposed amendments if adopted can strengthen gender and disability rights of persons with disabilities particularly women and girls with disabilities which the LNFOD gender analysis (2020) has indicated that they are experiencing intersectional discrimination on the basis of gender and disability.

GENERAL NEWS

UPDATE ON INCLUSIVE EDUCATION PROJECT

By: Puleng Mosili

With the help of funds from the United Nations International Save the Children Fund (UNICEF), LNFOD will continue promoting the inclusive education. The project seeks to achieve quality education and skills training for children and youth with disabilities further it aims to provide information and support Children with disabilities during the COVID-19 pandemic.



This time around LNFOD will expand to other program areas to execute initiatives such as: teacher training on inclusive education which is aimed at providing regular classroom teachers with inclusive strategies to apply in schools so as to support learners with disabilities, Identification of children and adolescents in communities to enroll in regular schools and vocational training institutes. Also because of the Covid 19 pandemic, the project will address the obliviousness among persons with disabilities with regard to the covid 19 health crisis. Moreover, a study will be conducted to determine the impact of covid 19 on education of learners with disabilities.

The initiatives will be executed with LNFOD's member organizations: Lesotho national association of the physically disabled (LNAPD), Intellectual disability association Lesotho (IDAL), National association of the deaf Lesotho (NADL) and the Lesotho national league of the visually impaired person (LNLVIP).

In addition to the Quthing district, the initiative will be directed to other areas in Mphahle's hoek, Mafeteng, Maseru, Leribe and Berea.



LNFOOD

GENERAL NEWS

Persons with Disabilities in Majapereng Cry Foul:

By: Rabasotho Moeletsi

During these difficult times when everyone in the whole world is suffering from predicament of the adverse effects of Covid-19 persons with disabilities suffer a doubled effect due discriminatory practices endured to them by authorities. This was announced earlier this month at the quarterly meeting by Majapereng disability rights focal person, the representative of persons with disabilities in the electoral division. This happened when government of Lesotho decided to return community development projects as they were halted by the Covid-19 lockdown regulations. Local authorities called members of the public to gather. Every member of the community in the electoral division stood a chance to be hired, but persons with disabilities were unceremoniously send back home.

"We felt very bad when we were expelled and as a leader of persons with disabilities I confronted the officers there to lay my dissatisfaction, I complained that persons with disabilities deserved to be hired as they were tax payers like everyone else." lamented Makhauhelo Tšiu, who is disability rights focal person in the electoral division.

"These officers from the ministry of forestry and land reclamation responded that their hands were tied as they were working with community councilor who have told them to stop hiring persons with disabilities, said Makhauhelo with dismayed for a shocking turn of events during this period."

"Contacted the councilor said unfortunately persons with disabilities could not be hired anymore as it was announced at the workshop held at district level by the minister responsible for forestry and land reclamation that his counterpart, the minister of social development told him to stop engaging persons with disabilities as they were now going to get disability grand from her ministry, so that would be benefiting twice from same government purse, continued Makhauhelo who was shocked by the news as that was not the case.



Disability grand has not seen light of the day, the said ministry of social development has failed to provide disability grand despite Dr. Majoro's announcement during budget speech that he has allocated budget for disability grand for this fiscal year ending in March next year.

The news that persons with disabilities were left out of the hiring at in this Majapereng electoral division left everyone in the meeting disappointed. The community council was represented by Council chairperson, Mr. Vincent Mokhethi and community council secretary, Mrs. Lineo Mohale - Mokhantšo in the meeting. They both agreed that in said workshop the minister of forestry and land reclamation ordered persons with disabilities should not be hired in the development projects. The whole house was now dismayed for they that the news was not true.

LNFOOD projects coordinator, Mr. Rabasotho Moeletsi commended the news was not only inaccurate but also unfortunate as it undermines the gains of advocacy efforts which took years to accomplish this milestone. He further updated those in the meeting there is no person with a disability who has got a disability grand in Lesotho and even the process of initiating the grand has been stagnant in the ministry of social development.

However, the council chairperson said there was another meeting where the officers from the ministry of forestry and land reclamation came and erased those unfounded news that persons with disabilities were getting the disability grand and should not be hired and therefore pleaded with the council to continue hiring persons with disabilities.

He further said he would personally deal with councilor representing Majapereng electoral division. He apologized to Makhauhelo Tšiu, and asked that she passes his apologies to persons with disabilities she is representing, and said that the councilor should have known about the new development and should not have made the mistake.

It is with ill-informed statements like this one which the authorities make and the end they leave persons with disabilities at the periphery of the development agenda. So our leaders should be critical and make some research before they make statements to avoid taking everything which the officers feed them.



GENERAL NEWS

Engendering the Persons with Disabilities Equity Bill; Leaving No One Behind.



By: Lerato M. Ramoholi
(Gender and Disability Program Officer)

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCPRD) which Lesotho ratified in 2008 is a very comprehensive international human rights instrument that is both gender responsive and disability inclusive. The instrument is very unique in that it expressly recognizes the concept of intersectionality by expressly highlighting that disability can intersect with other factors such as gender and age resulting in multiple discrimination. Article 6 of the Convention is expressly dedicated to women and girls with disabilities. It highlights the fact that women and girls with disabilities are subject to multiple discrimination and urges state parties to take measures to ensure the full and equal enjoyment by them of all human rights and fundamental freedoms. These

include measures to ensure full development, advancement and empowerment of women. This is the reality that has been revealed by LNFOG Gender Analysis Report 2020 which amongst others reiterated the fact that women and girls with disabilities are disproportionately affected by gender based violence and that like anywhere in the world women and girls are excessively marginalized when it comes to access to livelihoods, decision making and access to justice. For example, our experience with gender based violence and access to justice has been a very difficult one especially where the victims are women and girls with intellectual and psychosocial disabilities. Due to the stereotyping based on the intersection of gender and disability, women with disabilities face barriers when reporting violence, such as disbelief and dismissal by the police, prosecutors and courts. Lesotho as a state party is therefore guided by this Article amongst others to promote, protect and fulfil the human rights of women and girls with disabilities, from a human rights-based approach and a development perspective. As rightly stated in General Comment No. 3 of the UNCPRD under Article 6,

“The cross-cutting nature of article 6 inextricably links it to all other substantive provisions of the Convention. In addition to being related to those articles that include an explicit reference to sex and/or gender, article 6 is particularly interrelated with the provisions dealing with violence against women with disabilities (art. 16) and with sexual and reproductive health and rights, including respect for home and the family (arts. 23 and 25); and spheres of discrimination against women with disabilities in other relevant articles.”

The Disability Equity Bill is in its final stages before the Senate. However, LNFOG has addressed the Senate on the need to amongst others engender the Bill in the already existing provisions to ensure that gender is visible throughout the document. Critical areas such as violence, exploitation

and abuse have not been addressed in the Bill yet these are very common to persons with disabilities. This is notwithstanding the fact that issues relating to abuse especially sexual abuse are not adequately addressed within the existing legislation like the Sexual Offences Act 2003. The incorporation gender and gender based violence in the Bill is crucial to ensure that women and girls with disabilities are not left behind but are able to benefit and participate equally after the Bill is enacted into law. During these critical time of COVID 19 where the scourge gender based violence has traumatically increased throughout the world, women and girls with disabilities in Lesotho have not been an exception as they are an easy target to both sexual and physical violence over and above the economic and emotional abuse that have become a norm. This calls for strong legal protection

measures which expressly acknowledge gender as a major barrier to equal enjoyment of rights for women and girls with disabilities, who are confronted by stereotypical notions of womanhood which are further compounded by impairments. That is, gender and disability. The pending Persons with Disabilities Equity Bill therefore needs to be progressive and take into account expressly, factors such as gender to ensure equality in developmental outcomes for both men and women with disabilities. Mainstreaming gender alongside disability is not optional hence any legal instrument purporting to advance the rights of persons with disabilities and that which seeks to promote gender equality must ensure that it is gender responsive and disability inclusive.

GENERAL NEWS

Lesotho disability movement bids 'Mokose a farewell - labeling him a great man:

By: Rabasotho Moeletsi

When we learned about the death of His Excellency Mr. Ralechate 'Mokose from the press release of the ministry of home affairs, we were left in shock. However, when we looked back we believed it was fitting to give praises to God for sending this great man who touched lives of persons with disabilities. He might have gone but his legacy will live for years. The best we can do for his soul is follow what he stood for.

When the Lesotho National Federation of Organisations of the Disabled (LNFOD) engaged 'Mokose in 2012, little did we know that he was good listener. It was his ministry's policy not to hire persons with disabilities in the community development projects. This is a poverty alleviation project by the ministry of forestry and land reclamation where by ordinary Basotho people are temporarily hired to perform a developmental works in their own local areas. So LNFOD saw it as a discriminatory practice to leave persons with disabilities out of those projects.

LNFOD engaged the then minister of forestry and land reclamation, hon. 'Mokose and lobbied him to change that policy as is not only discriminating but also perpetuating social exclusion on persons with disabilities.

The officials from the ministry who were part of the meeting argued that persons with disabilities were considered sick and would not cope with the demanding work expected in the projects.

LNFOD advocacy task team countered with advances stemming from the human rights model. Mokose felt persons with disabilities had a right to work, and announced right in the meeting he was going to change that policy to allow persons with disabilities to work like anyone else in the community. He then thanked LNFOD for opening their eyes as the ministry.

He committed that he would not only change but he is going to be an ambassador to see that persons with disabilities enjoy their right to employment.

This became a land marking policy change which benefited persons with disabilities as they began to be hired and changed situations in their families.

"Ntate 'Mokose became a firm believer disability-inclusive development practice is possible, and that would eventually result in more effective poverty alleviation and bring greater impact amongst the lives of Persons with disabilities. He was always applying the fundamental principle for the inclusion

of people with disabilities in every sphere. It was not by mistake when LNFOD offered him an award for his role in Disability Inclusive Society for his excellence, and I'm always humbled that I was the one handing that prize," recalled Ms. Bongiwe Buzi, who was the first LNFOD woman Chairperson at the time.

After some months, he was further invited to launch LNFOD site in Rothe in the district of Maseru where he provided over three thousand trees which were planted by persons with disabilities. He did not help to commend how persons with disabilities are capable as they planted more than three thousand (3,000) trees in one day.

"Ntate 'Mokose was always a different from other politicians in that he was a good listener and a fast learner. Persons with disabilities engaged him once and he changed everything, first as a minister and also as a politician who influenced his party to produce their manifesto in Braille while he was still in the leadership of Democratic Congress to accommodate voters with disabilities. Indeed he carried an important principle of 'leaving no one behind' echoing inclusive development," commended Mrs. Mabataung Khetsi, who is the current Chairperson of LNFOD.

GENERAL NEWS

When Disability could not Defy Ability: The Story of Rabasotho Moeletsi

By: Pascalina Letsau

As Lesotho National Association of the Physically Disabled, LNAPD, we have known Rabasotho since 2002 when joined the organisations as a varsity student and we had no doubt that he would make a good leader he is today. His humility and passion to help others is what is getting him going since those early years. So it did not surprise us when he chose celebrate his 40th birthday by sharing food parcels to the persons who are in need last month.

Last month on the 03rd September 2020, Rabasotho Moeletsi a Mosotho man with hemiplegic physical disability was turning forty (40) and decided to celebrate his birthday with persons with disabilities and the needy who reside in his village at Sefikaneng Ha Moeketsi, in the Berea District.

When asked about his decision, Rabasotho was always modest about issue saying it was just a small gesture whereby he remembered people who helped in his upbringing since in the rural area a child is raised by the community.



"When I visited my father in my village, I realized that there are a few people who have not been called back to their work places due to COVID-19 Lockdown regulations, mainly due to the closed borders between Lesotho and South Africa. So I thought their families might need help during this difficult time, that's when I decided to buy them food parcels that would help them have meals for a few weeks and to have soap so that they could be able to wash their hands regularly so as to prevent contracting the virus easily," said Rabasotho.

When he thought he did a small the feedback from the beneficiaries suggested otherwise. The response from people was so overwhelming, those who received food parcels and those who did not receive them. They labeled it a noble gesture by one of their own, praying God to continue blessing him as he grows. They thought that it had a bearing to change lives and attitude of people in the community as it is an example for others to follow especially.

Rabasotho also took a chance to give a lesson to the people who gathered on how to protect themselves against COVID-19 and encouraged parents of children with disabilities to embrace them and take them to school learning from his own parents who did not despair when became disabled in the village at the age of 8.

"I'm very happy my family agreed supported me to celebrate in this fashion. I realised afterwards how this small moment can change attitudes on how they viewed persons with disabilities as recipients of charity to viewing as leaders who could engineer change to other people's lives even to those without disabilities. To me that was fulfilling," commended Rabasotho, when asked to reflect on the whole development by LNAPD staff.

As LNAPD we can only say we are proud of him that he continued to spread who we stand for, that is social inclusion and preaching that disability is not inability.

NEWS IN PICTURES



Good Governance workshop by LNFOOD to its Member affiliates



Disability stakeholders on National Disability Mainstream Plan meeting



Rabasotho and Mahali Moeletsi's birthday Party



Rabasotho celebrates his birthday by giving out food packages to vulnerable people in his village.



LNAPD doing home visit at Ha Masana to children with physical disabilities



People with physical disabilities during this hard time

UPCOMING EVENTS

Development and distribution of covid 19 health information messages for persons with disabilities

For more incormation please conduct Infod office on this number +266 22320345 or email: pmosili@Infod.org.ls

Identification of children and youth with disabilities: Leribe, Berea, Maseru and Mafeteng

For more incormation please conduct Infod office on this number +266 22320345 or email: pmosili@Infod.org.ls

Teacher trainings: Maseru, Mafeteng, Leribe, Berea and Mohale's hoek

For more incormation please conduct Infod office on this number +266 22320345 or email: pmosili@Infod.org.ls

Advocacy meeting with vocational Institutions

For more incormation please conduct Infod office on this number +266 22320345 or email: pmosili@Infod.org.ls

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ADVOCACY WORK



LNFOOD

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