

DISABILITY LESOTHO

From the Editor

Dear Partner,

Welcome to the fifth edition of Disability Lesotho, the monthly email newsletter from Lesotho National Federation of the Disabled. This e-newsletter is a platform for all partners in the disability sector to share the good work they are doing and to learn from the work of others. It includes news of the key events and activities taking place within the world of disability in Lesotho and updates on the issues affecting people with disability. We welcome contributions of any nature from organizations working to improve the livelihood of people with disability or individuals who have an interest in the disability sector. 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 5905 5406 or pletsau@gmail.com.

This is a new initiative and your feedback is very much appreciated. Please help us improve the quality of the content of this publication by letting us know what you would like to read about.

Best regards,
The Editor

News from LNFOD

September 23 marked the completion of the coalition government's first 100 days in office. Despite the fanfare made of 100 days of major change, this occasion was swept under the rug and largely ignored by all involved. In fact, politicians and civil rights organizations are still referring to the 100 day period as something which is ongoing.

From a disabilities perspective, this 100 day period has taken us a few steps in the right direction. The newly created Ministry of Social Development has shown more initiative and interest in issues of disability and shown some willingness to work with key players and interest groups in the disability sector to determine the way forward. The government has so far at least shown an inclination towards domestication of the UN CRPD and



Wheelchair race in Tokyo, one of the world's most disability accessible cities

enshrining those principles outlined by the convention in law.

However, we have not seen the major ground breaking changes to government policy which some of us in the movement were hoping to see. In practical terms, people with disability have not benefited from any improvement in standard of living or greater inclusion in society. We have still not seen any government funding released for the Community Based Rehabilitation program, which is cost-shared by the Norwegian Association of the Disabled and the government of Lesotho.

We are not by any means saying that creating a disability inclusive environment is an easy task but neither is it an impossible one. Particularly after Sefuthi, our Human Rights and Advocacy Officer, had the opportunity to spend four weeks in Japan and Thailand, we can see that inclusion can be achieved provided there is the right inclination from policy-makers.

Now that this 100 day period of evaluation is over we hope to see a continuation of the positive attitude by government ministries towards the disability movement.

Best regards,
Mokome Marorisang Mafethe (Mrs.)
Executive Director, Lesotho National Federation of Organisations of the Disabled

NEWS HIGHLIGHTS



“Be An Everyday Hero! - Buy a t-shirt today and directly contribute to the education of learners with disabilities in Lesotho”

Lesotho National Federation of Organisations of the Disabled (LNFOD), with support from Australian Volunteers for International Development (AVID) and AusAid, has launched a campaign to promote inclusive education for all in the lead up to the International Day of Persons with Disabilities on the 3rd December 2012.

This year’s Disability Day theme is, “Removing the Barriers to Create an Inclusive and Accessible Society for All: the rights of children with disabilities in education”. Through the funds raised in the selling of ‘T-shirts for Equal Education’, LNFOD will be able to directly purchase (with 100 per cent of the profits!), classroom assistive aids and devices for learners with disabilities.

Students from Thuso e Tla Tsoa Kae in Butha-Buthe, Phelisanong Village in Leribe and St Bernadette’s Resource Centre for the Blind in Maseru are set to benefit from assistive devices purchased through this activity, with the purchase of Braille slates and stylus’ for the visually impaired, mobility aids, and communication devices such as a Boardmaker for the intellectually disabled.

The campaign was launched at the Morija festival, held last weekend (26-30 September). The fashion forward T-shirts were received with great enthusiasm, raising over M2500 in profit for special education schools.

“The popularity of these T-shirts is testament to the change in public attitudes towards people with disability. Even today, people with disability are sometimes regarded with fear and thought to be cursed. Through this campaign we wanted to give the public a chance to show that there is no shame in disability – we are all born different. We urge everyone who has purchased a T-shirt to wear it in a show of support on the 3rd of December.” Commented Pascalina Letsau one of the project coordinators.

Two different T-shirt designs are available in a selection of colours in men’s, women’s and children’s sizes. The T-shirts retail of M100 per piece with 100 per cent of profits going towards the purchase of educational assistive devices for children with disability.

Designs may be viewed on the LNFOD website www.lnfod.org.ls/tshirts. If you would like to purchase or try on a T-shirt, please contact LNFOD on 2232 0345 or email mayng1@gmail.com.

To see how far your Maloti will stretch, check out the “wishlist” developed by the schools also available on the LNFOD website.



Child Protection briefing for community leaders

LSMHP convened briefing meetings with community leaders, parents of children with disabilities and support groups to discuss and resolve issues of child protection in LSMHP operational areas.

The meeting held in Thaba-Tseka resulted in very effective decisions such as: writing of letters to administrative units at all levels in the district by the District Council Secretary, to instruct them to work collaboratively to ensure that all children are registered and attain birth certificates and death certificates for those who have lost either one or both parents. Letters were written to Community Councilors, Community Council Secretaries, Chiefs, Church Leaders, Teachers and Support Groups.

LSMHP also learned that the whole district is formulating the children's committees by Electoral Divisions, Community Councils and District Council levels all geared towards a well managed and all encompassing approach towards issues involving children with their full involvement and participation

With regard to issues of child abuse, Social Development pleaded with the parents and support groups to report to their offices within 72 hours, all cases of child abuse especially sexual abuse so that they can extend essential assistance in terms of Psychosocial Support to the victims and their families and provide food, clothing and or social grants where there is need.

Magistrate and Public Prosecution pledged to fast track the justice process in cases of child abuse to not extend the pain and agony to victims during the court proceedings (Child Friendly courts encouraged)

Social Workers are to represent children before the courts of Law as provided for in the Child Protection and Welfare Act of 2011.

Justice stakeholder discussion aims to decrease gender based violence against children with disability in Mokhotlong

Influenced by escalating incidences of unreported cases of gender based violence against children with disability, the Lesotho Society of Mentally Handicapped Persons held a 2-day stakeholder meeting in Mokhotlong to examine the process of justice in cases involving victims with disability.

Held at the Mokhotlong Hotel from 28-29 August, the meeting brought together police, prosecutors, magistrates, parents of children with intellectual disability and youth with intellectual disability to discuss the barriers preventing justice from taking place.

The workshop sought to sensitize key players in the justice system to issues of disability and to promote a common understanding to reduce the possibility of cases failing due to negligence or ignorance on how to communicate effectively with individuals with intellectual disability.

The agenda included discussions on how agents in the justice process should interact with people with disability to extract the most relevant information to assist legal investigations.

There were also general training sessions to raise awareness of disability as a whole, and promote children rights, human rights and implementation of the principles outlined by the UNCRPD.

The workshop provided an opportunity to lobby the legal fraternity, particularly police to include disability as a component in their community education programs.

Ministry of Social Development visits Itjareng Vocational Training Centre

On 17 September, the Minister of Social Development Honourable 'Matoti visited Itjareng as part of her general tour of orphanage homes and training institutions for people with disabilities. This visit comes in the final phase of the 100 day period which the Coalition Government has given itself to implement significant changes for the betterment of society.

Speaking to media Mrs. Toti said; 'My task immediately when I get Maseru is to speak to the Minister of Education, as the centre is registered legally under TVD, to request grants for employees at Itjareng. We also hope to give all trainees start-up packages to start their businesses when they graduate. Lastly we will try to help the centre so that it can increase the number of trainees accommodated as demand for placements is very high.'

The centre looks forward to seeing these changes being implemented as a result of the Minister's visit. People with disabilities who did not have chance to go to school are many but due to lack of resources we fail to help more who need help.



'Disability and First AID'



Itjareng trainees and instructors received training in First Aid from the Lesotho Red Cross Society on 7 September. The theme for the Red Cross was; 'Disability and First Aid'. A total of 38 people attended the training session which took place at Itjareng.

The course was found to be very relevant and useful as many of the problems and issues addressed applied to Itjareng trainees. For example, several Itjareng trainees have epilepsy, so trainees and instructors were offered training on how to manage epileptic attacks. This was a training session which the centre had long been wanting but had no funding to implement. The centre was extremely gratified when the Lesotho Red Cross offered to conduct this course for free.

All attendees received certificates of Community Based First AID that will be valid for two years.

We would like to thank the Lesotho Red Cross for remembering people with disabilities and for an enlightening and useful training session.

LCS celebrates African Prison Week with Itjareng

Lesotho Correctional Services (LCS) celebrated African Prison Week (24th – 29th September) with a visit to Itjareng. The trainees and IVTC staff learned more about the justice and rehabilitation system and the work of LCS. Itjareng also shared information related to disability and the terminology used in disability sector.

The LCS delegation also included two youths who were arrested for drug use who offered their personal testimonials. Students found this a useful example which reinforced the lessons taught at Itjareng about the dangers of drug usage and its potential consequences.

Itjareng is looking forward to forming a lasting partnership with LCS which could involve a number of exchange visits, trainings and joint activities



Mr. Molise Foso, IVTC Administer shakes hands with representatives from Lesotho Correctional Services

NADL celebrates International Deaf Day

The National Association of the Deaf Lesotho (NALD) celebrated International Day of the Deaf on 30th September. The celebration took place at Emmanuel Hostel in Maseru and was attended by over 100 deaf and hearing impaired people.

The theme for this year's celebration was "Sign Bi-lingualism: A Human Right for the Deaf".

International Day of the Deaf is celebrated worldwide on the last Sunday in September, a date decided by the World Federation of the Deaf and adopted by the UN General Assembly.

The purpose of IWD is to draw the attention of politicians, authorities and the general public to the achievements of Deaf people and the concerns of the Deaf community.

Activities at the Lesotho celebration included singing in sign language, speeches and socializing over refreshments. Guests of honour included Mr. L Mokone, P.A. to the Hon. Ministry of Social Development who represented the Minister whilst she was out of the country, and Mr. Tebatso Molapo from Qhoku Ea Basotho Association. The speeches discussed the successes and challenges faced by NADL and the way forward for deaf and hearing impaired people in Lesotho.

The celebration was also honored by the presence of Blood Transfusion Services personnel who deliberated the challenges of communicating in sign language in their service delivery in order to attract more deaf blood donors as there is currently a severe shortage of donors.

OPINION

Tokyo – A Dream Come True for People with Disability

By Nkhasi Sefuthi

Last month, I was privileged to attend a 3-week training course on mainstreaming of persons with disabilities which took place in Tokyo and Bangkok. The course was attended by a number of disability rights advocates from different parts of Africa including Lesotho, Swaziland, Malawi, Republic of South Africa, Kenya, Namibia and Uganda.

This was an incredible opportunity for me to explore one of the world's most disability accessible cities, Tokyo. I found out that the Japanese with disabilities practice what is called the independent living model, which enables people with disabilities to dictate how disability should be handled by other authorities in Japan. Most importantly, the model gives people with severe disabilities the opportunity to participate in the community through a government funded professional personal assistance service.

The government and DPOS have established independent living centers all over the country. Their function is to provide all necessary support to people with disabilities in the community. I found Tokyo to be extremely accessible for people with almost all types disabilities.

For the visually impaired, the pavements by the roads have guide blocks which assist the visually impaired to walk alone or independently in the streets of the bustling city. A visually impaired person puts his white cane in the guide blocks and goes wherever he wants to go. The trains are equipped with a speech synthesizer which speaks out the names of the station so that a visually impaired passenger can know where he is and the name of the next station.

The public buildings have the light alarm system which could indicate to a deaf person when there is an emergency. Wheelchair users do not need anybody to push their wheelchair as their chairs are electronic. Pedestrian traffic robots emit a noise when it is safe to cross the road, enabling visually impaired pedestrians to safely navigate in traffic.

The roads have fine flat gutters rather than curbs which can prevent the wheelchair users from crossing roads independently.

Congenitally deaf People are provided with note takers to enhance their understanding of what is taught at meetings or workshops. Sign language is also provided as just one of the modes of communication among the Deaf community. There is also a form of deaf/blind sign language known as finger Braille.

Finger braille enables visually impaired deaf people who have lost the ability to read Braille to communicate and access written information through the help of a Braille translator. The translator will convey the message to the recipient by using Braille touch signals to their hands or arms – a breakthrough for people who might otherwise not have access to any external information.

The secret behind this marvelous accessibility is the willingness of the Japanese government to listen to the needs of persons with disabilities. The government does not dictate how the needs of people with disabilities should be addressed. However, the government consults with the people with disabilities on how best disability issues can be resolved.

In Bangkok, the accessibility is in the process of developing as speech synthesizers are being introduced on trains and independent living centers are emerging especially in the cities.

Most importantly, the government of Thailand is willing to provide for people with disabilities as they are now passing laws and policies which protect and promote the rights of persons with disabilities.

It was like a dream come true to me to be in Tokyo, especially because of the excellent access to the shops hotels training centers and community centers for people with disabilities.

I wish Lesotho could follow the footsteps of Japanese government by involving people with disabilities in the decision making processes affecting people with disabilities in Lesotho.

“Work with us, not for us”

By Rethabile Letsoela



Through the Organisational Development Program funded by the Norwegian Association of the Disabled (NAD), LNAPD visited two CBR districts to mobilize membership through public gatherings as well as home visits. The main objective of this activity was to increase membership to LNAPD.

The target group for this activity was 20 young people and women per district. In Mafateng we managed to recruit eight young people and in Leribe 17 who registered as new members of LNAPD. The total number of new people who joined was 25 falling, short of our target of 40.

Through our visits, we found that there were vast challenges and problems facing people with disabilities in these two districts. In Mafateng, the major problem was that PWDs were not aware of their rights and had a lot of difficulty obtaining jobs. For example, Mamoruti Faki is a woman with physical disability living in Mafateng who holds a certificate as a teacher for Early Childhood Care and Development. However she has failed to obtain a job. She was told that because she was unable to jump with the children she was unfit as a teacher.

LNAPD also spoke to Ts'otleho Tsietsi, a graduate of Itjareng who has been unable to put his leatherwork skills to practice due to lack of equipment. Ts'otleho has lost the use of his legs but is currently unable to use a wheelchair where he is living because there are no wheelchair accessible paths close to his home.

Issues such as these prevent people with physical disability from accessing their rights to education, freedom and good health. Members of the public still consider people with disabilities as sick or diseased.

In these two districts we also met people whose partners had taken their children and left after they were disabled. In Mafateng, Mr. Bokang recounted that he was disabled in a mining accident

After the doctor told his family that he would be disabled forever, his wife took his children and left him. The same thing happened in Leribe to Lineo, a teacher of accounts. After developing a disability she was abandoned by her husband who also took their child.

I think NGOs and government offices working on disability issues should consider disability as a cross cutting issue and ensure that disability is budgeted for through relevant government ministry activities. As people with disabilities we need our organizations as well as government ministries to work with us not for us.

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Puseletso Moeti, Agriculture Instructor at Itjareng, 28 years old



Can you tell us about yourself?

I am Puseletso Moeti, a female employee at Itjareng Vocational Training Centre. I am a non – disabled person.

What are you doing at Itjareng, your position?

I was trained as a Nutritionist at St. Elizabeth Mohale'shoek but I am now at Itjareng employed as an Agricultural Instructor

What is the best piece of advice you've ever received and did you follow it?

Listen and understand before any response and this is my path to achieve better

What is your favourite part about working at Itjareng?

To talk to trainees as part of counseling for youth with disabilities and different problems that needs to be resolved with immediate effect. Talking to them regularly gives them courage.

What is your vision for people with disability in Lesotho?

Most families of people with disabilities are poor; to prevent this cycle of poverty people with disability should be given greater opportunity for education.

If you had one day left on Earth, how would you spend it?

I would like to be with everyone who knows me best. Being with people with intellectual disabilities makes me happy, as they are always happy in life.

What would you do with a trained monkey?

I have a lot of work in my garden but lack of labour so it might help if I can have it. Normally the monkey is known as an animal that imitates people. In the fields it harvests where it does not plant. It must plant first so that it can harvest after.

What do you like to do in your spare time?

I like reading, generally

What does your job involve?

To instruct youth with disabilities in agriculture studies, small agric projects and individual counseling

What is the greatest change you can suggest to improve the lives of young people with disability?

I think they have to work together hard to form self – help groups in their communities on agriculture and crafts projects to reduce poverty among their families.

SEPTEMBER 2012

UPCOMING EVENTS



Graduation Ceremony

2012 is the second year in which people with disabilities who trained at Itjareng Vocational Training Centre will graduate. This year, about 28 people will graduate from their Itjareng after completing their 2 year vocational skills course. The graduation ceremony will be held on the 30th November, 2012

We appeal to any institution or individuals to offer support of any kind to the ceremony or to the trainees to start their businesses. It is in this ceremony where people would see our work as PWDs.



For more information contact the office at
+226 28 350 279
Email: ltjareng@gmail.com



Assessments/ interviews

To all people with disabilities who have applied to Itjareng Vocational Training Centre, there will be assessments. The assessments are only meant to assess their disability and help the applicants and their parents understand the importance of guiding their children to select the appropriate course that will suit the disability. Assessments will be held on 15th October 2012. Itjareng will accept new application forms until the last day before assessment.

Itjareng appeals to all parents, guardians and friends to take a major role in encouraging PWDs in their village to apply for Itjareng as the centre is meant to equip them with life skills.

For more information related to assessments and recruitment at Itjareng please contact:

Pascalina Letsau – Extension Officer
Tel; +266 28 350 279
Cell: +266 59 055 406

Email: ltjareng@gmail.com
pletsau@gmail.com

UPCOMING EVENTS AND GENERAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

LSMHP announces plans for 10th Anniversary Celebrations

The Lesotho Society of Mentally Handicapped Persons (LSMHP) has announced initial plans for the celebration of its 10th anniversary.

An invitation only gala dinner will be held at Lehakoe Club on Thursday 1 November 2012. A public celebration for youth and children with intellectual disability will be held at Lehakoe Club on Saturday 3 November.

There will be dancing, games and entertainment for children. As part of its plans for the 10th anniversary celebration, LSMHP will also announce its new name.

Further details will be provided closer to the date on the LNFOD website.

LNFOD 2013 Disability Awareness Calendar

LNFOD is currently producing its annual disability awareness calendar for 2013. Next year's calendar will take on the theme "Dare to Hope". The calendar will feature photographs of children with different disabilities and their hopes and dreams for the future. The calendar will be distributed to various LNFOD partners and stakeholders as a reminder that all have a key role to play in helping these children achieve their hopes and dreams.

International Day of Persons with Disability

IDPD takes place on 3 December every year and is the biggest event on the disability calendar in Lesotho. Last year, the disability awareness march in Quthing attracted over 1,600 able bodied and persons with disabilities.

This year's IDPD will take place in Mokhotlong and we're looking forward to an even better celebration this year.

Further details of the 2012 IDPD activities will be announced shortly.