



PRESS RELEASE

Hundreds set to march in Mokhotlong to celebrate equal rights for people with disability

International Day of Persons with Disability focuses on Breaking down the Barriers to achieve equal access to education

19th November 2012: Hundreds of people with disability are set to take to the streets of Mokhotlong to celebrate International Day of Persons with Disability on 3 December 2012. IDPD is celebrated each year to draw attention to issues affecting people with disability and to influence policy initiatives aimed at closing the gap between people with disability and the rest of society.

Last year's IDPD celebrations, which took place in Quthing attracted over 1000 people. This year, the march will start at 7.00am at the Mokhotlong Pitso Grounds and will be followed by speeches and lunch. As the patron of the Lesotho National Federation of Organisations of the Disabled (LNFOD), the peak body for disability, Her Majesty Queen 'Masenate Mohato Seeiso, is expected to open the event.

"Last year was the largest disability day yet. This year, we are set to raise the bar even higher. This is not just a celebration for people with disability. We invite our brothers and sisters without disability to join in the march in solidarity for our cause." States Nkhasi Sefuthi, Human Rights and Advocacy Officer, LNFOD.

The theme for this year's IDPD is: Removing the Barriers to Create an Inclusive and Accessible Society for all. LNFOD and the Ministry of Social Development, the organizers of IDPD celebrations in Lesotho, have chosen to focus specifically on the barriers facing children in education.

According to a study conducted by SINTEF in conjunction with LNFOD in 2009, 40% of children with disability aged 5-10 are not enrolled in school. Illiteracy and unemployment rates amongst adults with disability are twice as high as the general population, placing people with disability amongst the most disadvantaged in the country.

"Many parents of children with disability are not aware that their children are also eligible for free primary education which is available to all children in Lesotho. Others may believe that their child cannot excel academically due to their disability. What they fail to see is that school is one of the primary socialization agents for children aged 6-12 and it is incredibly important for them to develop a peer group so that they may grow up to be well-balanced and independent," commented Marorisang Mafethe, Executive Director of LNFOD.

To tackle this issue, LNFOD has partnered with Lesotho National Broadcasting Services and the Ministry of Education and Training to facilitate a public awareness campaign aimed at encouraging parents of children with disability to enroll them in school. The public awareness messages will be broadcast on TV and radio until Christmas.

"As the Minister for Education and Training in Lesotho, I implore parents of children with disability to enroll their children in school. They also have the right to reach their full potential. This is the best possible Christmas present a parent can give," commented 'Makabelo Mosothoane, the Hon. Minister Education and Training.

In an effort to raise money to enhance education for children with disability, LNFOD has produced a series of awareness T-shirts for sale. The T-shirts have been funded by Australian Volunteers International so 100% of the proceeds will go towards purchasing educational equipment for children attending St Bernadettes Resource Centre for the Blind, Phelisanong Village and Thuso e Tla Tsoa Kae. People are encouraged to wear their t-shirts on 3 December in a show of support for equal rights for people with disability.

T-shirts retail for M100 and are available at the LNFOD office in Old Europa, Maseru. Special arrangements can be made to deliver T-shirts outside of Maseru.

People with disability wishing to join the celebrations in Mokhotlong should purchase their tickets at the LNFOD office in Old Europa. Tickets are available for M20, including return bus transfer, basic accommodation and some meals.

Buses will depart from 10.00am on 2nd December from the Catholic Church in Maseru.

For further information, please contact LNFOD on 2232 0345 or www.lnfod.org.ls.

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About LNFOD

Established in 1991, the Lesotho National Federation of Organisations of the Disabled (LNFOD) is an umbrella body of organizations dealing with disability in Lesotho. Its mission is to protect the rights of people with disabilities in Lesotho by providing support for disabled people's organizations and empowering their members with life-skills, financial and material resources and representing their needs to the government, development partners and wider society. Its membership consists of the Lesotho National Association of Physically Disabled Persons (LNAPD) Lesotho Society of Mentally Handicapped Persons (LSMHP), Lesotho National League of the

Visually Impaired Persons (LNLVIP) and National Association of the Deaf in Lesotho (NADL).

For further information, please visit www.infod.org.ls