

`Maitumeleng Letšoara, a Change Agent:



`Maitumeleng Letšoara a member of the intellectual association of Lesotho, IDAL is the agent of change toward children with disabilities who facing daunting barriers to their right to education. She is a parent of a child with disability who serves as a disability focal person in the Maoamafubelu community council in Leribe. Her role includes community mobilisation among persons with disabilities in her community empowering them to stand for their rights in different spheres of life. She also represents persons with disabilities who are denied their rights by the local authorities at different service points within the community council.

For a year now after she received a training on Human Rights Advocacy at Grassroots level, `Maitumeleng has been working very hard to see that rights of persons with disabilities are respected. However, recently `Maitumeleng shot above her height when she takes back (2) children with disabilities to school. She acted upon realisation that one the partially sighted boy, Motatela Mathafeng (13 years old) had dropped out of school at the Holy Trinity Primary.

“It pained me when I saw him remaining at home during the day while his age mates are in classes enjoying their education. From my training I knew something was wrong, the boy was denied his right. Then I approached his family to get to the bottom of it,” Maitumeleng said.

“The boy told me that he had stopped going to school because of intimidation that he received from his schoolmates. He complained they were laughing at him and even beating him at times. Then he said he could not stand that bully environment and decided to quit,” she continued.

“I took the matter to the school principal. I asked why the Motatela was no longer in school. The school management and class teacher responded that they did not know reasons why the boy left the school.”

`Maitumeleng felt the school did not do enough to protect the Motatela against other boys. She then took him to meet the school management so that he could get a chance to explain himself.

“When I took him back to school he was reluctant, but I talked the importance of education to him and finally he agreed because I could tell he loved his education. He then met with his teachers and explained his case. The teachers were so disappointed that failed to protect the poor boy. They pleaded with the boy to come back to school and promised to be vigilant to see that the boy and other kids are protected against the intimidation of any kind. The boy agreed and we were all very happy with the outcome of the meeting. I asked them to also sensitise all students about disability and to accept one another as everybody looks different.”

“It’s been more than a month now and the boy is well received at school and he has never missed a single day at school. He is very happy, his miserable boring life is gone,” she concluded.

`Maitumeleng did not end it there, she went on to help another boy, Tololi Mofo, (17 year old boy) who is Deaf to get back to school. Mofo was suffering a similar setback from his peers in Makhethisa

high school which led him to drop out of school. The boys in his class were always laughing at his ears, making fun of him that he cannot hear with those 'big' ears. `Maitumeleng followed the path she had took with Motatela and helped Tololi back into school. Later on Tololi got back to school and became a happy student.

Indeed `Maitumeleng played a sterling role to change life for this poor kids. She was supported by Austrian Development Agency, ADA funded project which is implemented by LNFOD with its Diakonie Austria.