



WELCOME TO NTSOE-LENG

Welcome to the fifth edition of Ntsoe-Leng, the bi-annual newsletter produced by the Lesotho National Federation of Organisations of the Disabled (LNFOD). This newsletter contains news and views from a range of stakeholders in Lesotho's disability

sector spanning the past 6 months.

If you are interested in learning more about LNFOD, our partners or disability in Lesotho, please visit our website www.lnfod.org.ls or sign up to our monthly e-newsletter *Disability Lesotho* by e-mailing pletsau@gmail.com.

Please feel free to offer any feedback, suggestions or contributions

by contacting the LNFOD Communications team on mayng1@gmail.com or moeletsi@live.com.

Alternatively, call us on +266 2232 0345 or come visit us at the LNFOD office on Mabile Rd, Old Europa, Maseru.

Best regards,

May Ng and Rabasotho Moeletsi

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Bongive Buzi
LNFOD Chairperson

This is a very special edition of the *Ntsoe-Leng* newsletter for me as it is the last one in my tenure as Chairperson of LNFOD.

Hence, I would like to take this opportunity:

- 1.To acknowledge and applaud LNFOD staff and all Disabled Persons' Organizations for their tireless work and commitment to improving the lives of people with disability over the past four years of my Chairing.
- 2.To thank our current and past partners, specifically the Norwegian Association of the Disabled, for their financial and strategic support which has enabled LNFOD to carry on with its goal to have a country in which people with disabilities can enjoy fundamental human rights and have equal opportunities without prejudice or discrimination. Above all,
- 3.To thank the Executive board for the collective decisions made.

In the past four years LNFOD and the DPOs have achieved outstanding success in their advocacy strategies to create awareness on the need for mainstreaming of disability

issues and in achieving their humanitarian mandate.

However, there is still a yawning gap between people with disability and the rest of society. People with disability are still not fully represented in the state's agenda. I therefore call on other sectors and different Ministries to do more in catering for PWD'S in all programmes and projects in the national response to issues such as education, HIV, employment and healthcare. There are still enormous barriers barring Lesotho's disabled community from accessing these services and programmes, and further widening the gap.

"It is only through working together that we can bring about meaningful change to the lives of people with disabilities."

Nonetheless, let me express my gratitude to the Ministry of Social Development for their ongoing partnership and their assistance in LNFOD's lobbying and advocacy work. Sadly, there is still an unfortunate belief that all disability-related issues fall solely within the mandate of the Ministry of Social Development, which places on them an unfair burden and unrealistic expectations. It should not be the burden of one ministry to close this massive gap, but ALL ministries should affirm and protect all Basotho's human rights equally. That is their shared responsibility.

It is only through working together that we can bring about meaningful change to the lives of people with disabilities.

Since 2005, LNFOD has been an implementing partner in the Community Based Rehabilitation Program coordinated by the Ministry of Social Development. The programme was to be implemented countrywide, but unfortunately, for various reasons, it has not fulfilled its potential. Therefore LNFOD is hopeful of different ministries' support in carrying out its tasks to empower PWD's to strive for the betterment of their lives.

In my last month as LNFOD Chairperson, I urge all stakeholders to unite to ensure that legislation is passed by the government for equalization of opportunities for PWD's and to constantly strive for more for inclusive policies and legislation which protects PWDs, and lastly to push government to make effort to domesticate the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability.

**WE DEMAND FULL
INCLUSION. LET'S STEM THE
TIDE.**

"TOGETHER AS ONE"

EMPOWERMENT OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Honourable 'Matebatso Doti - Minister of Social Development

On the 8th of May, 2013 I had a breakfast meeting with the Business Community to have a discussion on how they can contribute towards empowerment of persons with disabilities. Amongst the attendees were owners and/or representatives from companies such as Maseru Toyota, LCCC, BMI & Nthane Brothers, ASHCOR, Matekane Transport, Lephema Transport, Storm Transport, Metropolitan Lesotho, large textile companies and various banks. The purpose of the meeting was to request the Private Sector to 'sow back' into the community by creating employment for or employing persons with disabilities (PWDs) in their businesses.

In my briefing, I highlighted to the meeting that Lesotho is a signatory on the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN-CRPD), thus committing to empower persons with disabilities and to uplift their standard of living.

I further indicated that this convention defines disability as part of human diversity which must be addressed by development of laws and policies which promote, protect and actualize the rights of PWDs as required by the national and



Hon. 'Matebatso Doti - Minister of Social Development

international standards set up by the UN-CRPD. The issue of disability is nationwide and the Private Sector should also contribute towards uplifting PWDs.

To address problems facing PWDs, the government has established the Ministry of Social Development so that disability can be properly addressed as a normal social issue. The Ministry is therefore lobbying for empowerment of PWDs by forming collaborations with relevant Government Ministries and the

"The Ministry is planning on bringing together PWDs who have acquired vocational skills..., then help them start some businesses."

Private Sector.

The Ministry is currently working on drafting a Disability Equity Act that will include, among others, equality for PWDs, non-discrimination on the basis of disability, the right to employment & education for PWDs, legal recognition of PWDs, the right to adequate standard of living for PWDs, social protection of PWDs, and access to transport, public buildings, information & communication and so forth.

In trying to find sustainable solutions for PWDs, the Ministry is also forming collaboration with the Basotho Entrepreneurship Development Corporation (BEDCO) to assist in helping PWDs establish small businesses to enable them to care for themselves and their families. The Ministry is planning on bringing together PWDs who have acquired vocational skills like Carpentry, Metal Works, Leather Works, Sewing and Knitting from Ithuseng Vocational Training Center (IVRC) and other institutions such as Itjareng; then help them start some businesses. For those who have not acquired such skills, they will be encouraged to come together and work on some income-generating activities (IGAs).

CHALLENGES FACED BY DEAF PEOPLE

Likopo Lesoetsa — Programs Manager, National Association of the Deaf in Lesotho

There are thousands of Deaf people living in every single country on our planet. Many of them exist in communities that, at the very least, lack understanding of their special needs and requirements. At the worst they face prejudices and intolerance every single day.

We hope to explore some of the challenges that Deaf people face on a day-to-day level in terms of basic living skills and communication with the outside world, and to equip service providers with some basic skills on how to assist deaf people with their everyday needs and requirements.

We also hope to promote the idea that Sign Language should be recognized as the third official language in our country, which everybody should learn in addition to



spoken languages, and be able to communicate with Deaf people.

Unemployment is threatening the whole society, but it is worth noting that to the Deaf community unemployment rate is even worse.

This is mainly because of the highest illiteracy rate among the Deaf due to the non-inclusive education system that renders education inaccessible to the deaf. The system

fails to cater for the deaf by not offering Sign Language Interpretation at school so that Deaf students can be on the same plane as their hearing counterparts.

The society in general is not yet aware of what it means to be deaf; therefore there are no clear policies or laws that protect the Human Rights of Deaf people inclusive of including them in community activities.

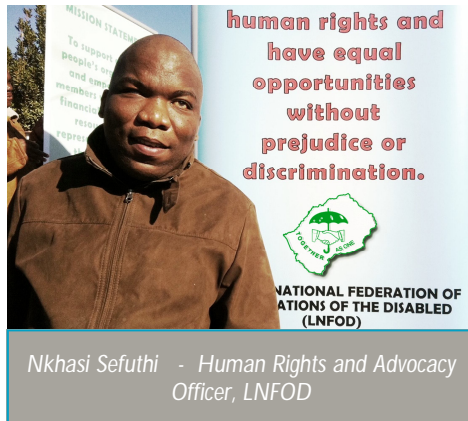
Unless NADL advocates and influences the most important persons in authority for the inclusion and adoption of Sign Language as an official third language of Lesotho, Deaf people will always remain in isolation.

"In a room full of deaf people, it is the hearing person who is 'disabled'!"

FINDING OUR PLACE ON THE DEVELOPMENT AGENDA

LNFOOD Advocacy Desk

The aim of this article is to offer a general overview of the current progress on disability issues in Lesotho. For many years the issue of disability has been set aside and overshadowed by other seemingly more pressing issues such as the HIV epidemic. Little by little, through the efforts of many brave and vocal self advocates and the support of international partners, issues of disability are creeping into the development agenda.



First and foremost, I must admit there is a keen lack of data and statistics on the disability sector in Lesotho. This lack of data negatively impacts the initiatives undertaken by the government, development partners and disabled people's organisations that are geared towards improving the lives of people with disabilities. That is why article 31 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) calls upon member states to collect data and statistics on disability in all aspects of development. However, prior to the adoption of the convention, the Lesotho Bureau of Statistics' Census Report of 2006 for the first time included statistics related to disability, claiming that 3.7% of Lesotho's 1.8 million population have some form of disability. However, the census report does not include a more detailed breakdown of numbers of people with different types of disability.

Lesotho ratified UNCRPD on 2nd December 2008. The purpose of the convention is to promote and protect people with disabilities and to ensure that all people with disabilities enjoy their human rights on par with other members of society.

Ever since Lesotho ratified the Convention, disabled peoples' organisations (DPOs) of Lesotho have

made it their mission to remind the government of its international obligations to apply the Convention. Despite the fact that this has been a long and cumbersome process, DPOs have not stopped advocating for the full participation and meaningful inclusion of people with disabilities in all issues affecting them in society.

In 2011, the Parliament of Lesotho adopted the National Disability and Rehabilitation policy as a working document of the government of Lesotho with the purpose of mainstreaming disability issues in all government ministries. It is intended to be used as a blue print for designing, planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating disability inclusive laws, policies and annual action plans. However, LNFOOD discovered in March 2013 that the Ministry of Social Development has not yet sensitised or disseminated the Policy to the other relevant Ministries as originally promised.

In addition to that, the regulations of the policy have not yet been developed. The regulations will help government Ministries facilitate mainstreaming in their annual action plans. During the development of this paper, it was not clear when the process of making regulations for the policy will begin.

In 2012, the government of Lesotho established the Ministry of Social

"The government does not currently have functioning disability specific development programs to close the gap between people with disabilities and the rest of society."

Development which has now become the entry point by which disability issues can be coordinated among all government ministries. Contrary to popular belief, the Ministry of Social Development does not deal with disability alone. Rather, the role of Social Development is to coordinate all disability related activities implemented by other ministries.

Since the inception of this ministry, LNFOOD has liaised with the Ministry to achieve a cabinet memo authorising the Social Development to draw up disability specific legislation

to domesticate the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. At the time of writing the Ministry of Social Development is in the process of advertising for a consultant to develop the law. Whilst LNFOOD congratulates the Ministry for taking this step, we urge the Ministry of Social Development to speed up the process of developing disability specific legislation.

"However, we can take comfort in the fact that after years of fighting we have cemented our place on the development agenda."

There exists some confusion amongst the public regarding the issue of a disability grant with some people mistakenly believing that the public assistance scheme offered by the Ministry of Social Development is a disability grant. After clarifying with the Ministry, LNFOOD can now confirm that Lesotho does not offer any disability specific social welfare. The public assistance scheme offered by Social Development is eligible to every Mosotho who qualifies, regardless of disability. As PWDs are amongst the poorest in society, the public has come to associate the social welfare scheme with people with disability.

The reasons behind the demand for a disability specific social safety net are clear. The government does not currently have functioning disability specific development programs to close the gap between people with disabilities and the rest of society. Although in theory the Community Based Rehabilitation Program was established in 2005 and piloted in two districts, it has essentially collapsed due to lack of human resources and commitment from the government. The pilot project has languished for 7 years without prospects of extension.

Supporters of the disability movement, as you can see, our battle is by no means over. However, we can take comfort in the fact that after years of fighting we have cemented our place on the development agenda. And it is here that we will stay until we achieve our goal of equal rights and opportunities for all Basotho, regardless of disability.

EARLY CHILDHOOD INTERVENTION – THE KEY TO MAXIMIZING THE NATION'S POTENTIAL

By Dr. Robert M. Ricketts (M.D.)

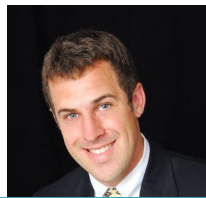
Childhood disability is a grab bag term that can mean many things. Although many children are born with disability, sadly a large percentage acquires the condition via severe illness, trauma, HIV infection, and malnourishment. Although the causes of childhood disability are many, the end result is universally the same; a devastated family and a child with the odds stacked against them.

“Not a day goes by where I do not treat a disabled child in Lesotho.”

It is difficult to estimate how many disabled children there are in Lesotho. Western countries like the United States, Australia, and Great Britain routinely report rates of 3-4 children per 1,000 as having some form of disability. Given Lesotho's high rates of HIV infection, traffic accidents, and malnutrition, it is safe to say that this country's incidence of childhood disability is much higher.

My personal experience practicing medicine in this country supports a high rate of childhood disability. Routinely I see patients with conditions like cerebral palsy (CP), disability from HIV infection, and developmental delay from malnutrition. Not a day goes by where I do not treat a disabled child in Lesotho.

In my home country of the United States, all these patients would be referred to Early Childhood Intervention (ECI). Infants and children at risk are identified, closely followed for signs of delay or disability, and promptly placed into aggressive and personalized therapy. Such early identification and



Dr Robert Ricketts - Global Child Health Resident at Baylor College of Medicine Children's Clinical Centre of Excellence, Maseru

treatment can be life changing for all involved. Families are happy and content knowing their children are getting optimal care. Physicians are satisfied knowing their patients are receiving every possible chance. But, most importantly, patients do very well.

As disabled children are assisted in developing and honing some of life's earliest skills, they build the foundation on which they base their subsequent development, education, and success in life. How can a child do well in school and develop their intellect when they cannot speak, walk, or grip a pencil? How can

“In my home country of the United States, all these patients would be referred to Early Childhood Intervention (ECI).”

children make friends and develop social skills when they cannot run around and kick a ball? Although these simple motor and verbal skills seem mundane to me and you, they are critical and essential to every young child. I cannot stress enough how important early identification and treatment of childhood disability is, as this early intervention keeps children on the right track reaps very high rewards.

The face of a Basotho family with

a disabled child is one of frustration. And when treating disabled children in Lesotho, I often share in this sentiment. In Lesotho there are few behavioral specialists, occupational therapists, and physical therapists to help with these complicated but important children. With such limited resources, disabled children do not get the best or prompt care. They are left behind in school, cannot make friends, have difficulties in contributing to household chores and tasks, and ultimately cannot contribute to Basotho society as an adult. Such end results represent a vast waste of potential.

Much needs to be done for these vulnerable children. Parents and physicians can only do so much on their own. Fortunately, organizations like the Lesotho National Federation of Organization of the Disabled (LNFOD) and Intellectual Disability Association of Lesotho (IDAL) are currently engaged in aiding disabled children. These organizations provide invaluable social support and advocacy for the disabled children of Lesotho.

In the years ahead, I hope we can all work together to build a system that identifies these children, places them into good care, and fosters their growth and development. It will take the work of many people from many different fields. It will not be easy, but it is an investment that we must make. Our children, no matter their condition or abilities, are our future.

“I cannot stress enough how important early identification and treatment of childhood disability is...”

SEE THE CHILD BEFORE THE DISABILITY Inclusion of children with disabilities benefits society as a whole

Children with disabilities and their communities would both benefit if society focused on what those children can achieve, rather than what they cannot do, according to UNICEF's annual *State of the World's Children* report.

Concentrating on the abilities and potential of children with disabilities would create benefits for society as a whole, says the report.

"When you see the disability before the child, it is not only wrong for the child, but it deprives society of all that child has to offer," said UNICEF Executive Director Anthony Lake. "Their loss is society's loss; their gain is society's gain."

The report lays out how societies can include children with disabilities because when they play a full part in society, everyone benefits. For

instance, inclusive education broadens the horizons of all children even as it presents opportunities for children with disabilities to fulfill their ambitions.

More efforts to support integration of children with disabilities would help tackle the discrimination that pushes them further into the margins of society.

"In Lesotho, children with disability are disadvantaged at an early age, being denied access to basic services such as healthcare, education and participation in community life," said Nkhasi Sefuthi, Human Rights and Advocacy Officer, LNFO. "Despite the fact that Lesotho signed

"In Lesotho, children with disability are disadvantaged at an early age..."

the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability in 2008, people with disability are amongst the poorest and most marginalized groups in Lesotho. Studies show that children with disability aged 5-10 are only half as likely to be enrolled in school as other children. Families of children with disability have lower than average incomes and a higher dependency ratio because there is no disability specific social protection. There are no services for early childhood interventions or identification of disability."

"The community based rehabilitation program offers an opportunity to close the gap between people with disability and the rest of society. We appeal to the Ministry of Social Development to speed up the implementation of the program which has lagged for eight years already. It is our responsibility as a nation to ensure that ALL children can access their basic human rights," concluded Mr Sefuthi.

For many children with disabilities, exclusion begins in the

first days of life with their birth going unregistered. Lacking official recognition, they are cut off from the social services and legal protections that are crucial to their survival and prospects. Their marginalization only increases with discrimination.

"For children with disabilities to count, they must be counted – at birth, at school and in life," said Mr. Lake.

The State of the World's Children 2013: Children with Disabilities says that children with disabilities are the least likely to receive health care or go to school. They are among the most vulnerable to violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect, particularly if they are hidden or put in institutions as many are because of social stigma or the economic cost of raising them.

"The combined result is that children with disabilities are among the most marginalized people in the world."

children with disabilities are among the most marginalized people in the world. Children living in poverty are among the least likely to attend their local school or clinic but those who live in poverty and also have a disability are even less likely to do so.

Gender is a key factor, as girls with disabilities are less likely than boys to receive food and care.

"Discrimination on the grounds of disability is a form of oppression," the report says, noting that multiple deprivations lead to even greater exclusion for many children with disabilities.

There is little accurate data on the number of children with disabilities, what disabilities these children have and how disabilities affect their lives. As a result, few governments have a dependable guide for allocating resources to support and assist children with disabilities and their families.

About one third of the world's countries have so far failed to ratify

the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The report urges all governments to keep their promises to guarantee the equal rights of all their citizens – including their most excluded and vulnerable children.

Progress is being made toward the inclusion of children with disabilities, albeit unevenly, and *The State of the World's Children 2013* sets out an agenda for further action.



The report urges governments to ratify and implement the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and to support families so that they can meet the higher costs of caring for children with disabilities.

It calls for measures to fight discrimination among the general public, decision-makers and providers of such essential services as schooling and health care.

International agencies should make sure the advice and assistance they provide to countries is consistent with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. They should promote a concerted global research agenda on disability to generate data and analysis that will guide planning and resource allocation, the report says.

It emphasizes the importance of involving children and adolescents with disabilities by consulting them on the design and evaluation of programmes and services for them.

And everyone benefits when inclusive approaches include accessibility and universal design of environments to be used by all to the greatest extent possible without the need for adaptation.



BEING A PARENT TO A CHILD WITH SEVERE DISABILITY

By Kgomoco Motsamai - Former Executive Director, Intellectual Disability Association of Lesotho

A child with severe disability often has multiple disabilities, that is, he/she may have intellectual and profound physical disabilities. Such a child becomes fully dependent on his/her parent, particularly the mother. Such a child often lacks ability to engage fully or even partially in activities of daily living, that is, not being able to sit or walk, eat, go to the toilet independently and express feelings. He/she has to be assisted in whatever, he/she does. This means there is need for a 24hr support for such a person.

“Peer to peer support is one of the core elements of IDAL’s philosophy.”

Intellectual Disability Association of Lesotho (IDAL) saw the need to provide parents/caregivers of children with severe disability with skills to enable them to provide the best support and outcomes for their children. Several training workshops have been held so far where over 200 parents/caregivers were trained.

IDAL recently held another training workshop attended by 26 mothers of children with severe disability. Participants included young mothers as well as more experienced mothers. Topics included understanding the issues related to disability such as (1) causes of disability, (2) prevention of disability, (3) different types of disability and different types of intellectual disability, different individualized child rehabilitation programs, (4) how to advocate for services for children with disabilities, (5) introduction to PSS and finally (6) the role of IDAL towards children with disabilities and their families.

The purpose of integrating the two groups was so that more experienced mothers could share their experiences and skills with mothers whose children have only recently been diagnosed with disability. Peer to peer support is one of the core elements of IDAL’s philosophy.

“Even in my maiden family, my mother was and is still afraid of my child... My biggest challenge is that the community highly discriminates against my child.”

After the training parents shared their stories as follows:

A new parent: “After I got married I had a child whom the doctor said he had Cerebral Palsy (CP). I never understood what CP meant. I totally had no support from the family and my husband. Even in

my maiden family, my mother was and is still afraid of my child; my father tries to provide emotional support and nothing more. My biggest challenge is that the community highly discriminates against my child.”

An older parent: She stated that she was ignorant at first, she only learnt after her child was 3 months old that she had a disability. Her in-laws were not at all supportive and she left her marriage and returned to her maiden home. She then fled to South Africa running away from the situation and stayed there for 5 years as she was told her child would not live long. Apparently her mother heard about IDAL and referred her to solicit advice. She then participated in training workshops, and became part of the parent-to-parent support network. “Now it is easy to live with my child as I have been given the necessary skills”

After sharing stories with older parents, this parent indicated that she felt relieved, as she thought her child’s disability was the result of not following cultural practices during her pregnancy and as a result she thought it was a punishment. Through



One of the training components for parents of children with severe disability is to empower them to develop assistive devices using easily available materials such as home made walking frames.

dialogue with other parents she came to understand the different causes of disability. She stated that parent-to-parent support meetings could help further her understanding of disability issues and become more confident.

“In loving memory of Kgomoco Motsamai who dedicated her life to improving the lives of people with intellectual disability”

HIV AWARENESS CAMPAIGN AND DEAF PEOPLE



Deaf pupils of St. Paul's School for the Deaf performing a dance

On the 23rd May, NADL was invited to participate in a march held in Hlotse Leribe to raise awareness of the challenges facing the Deaf community in accessing information on HIV & AIDS. The event was organized and sponsored by Help Lesotho, an organisation which focuses on HIV & AIDS prevention through education, gender equity and youth leadership development. Deaf people are often inadvertently excluded from HIV & AIDS awareness communications due to the fact that much of the communication is verbal.

The event kicked off at the DA's Offices where the District Administrator addressed the public about the importance of including Persons with disability in community activities. In his remarks Mr. Morahanye thanked Help Lesotho for their efforts to include persons with disability in their activities, in particular helping Deaf people to access information on HIV & AIDS through Sign Language. He further encouraged other organizations to follow this good example and officially opened the event.

The crowd marched from the DA's office to the Help Lesotho campus where they were greeted by the sounds of a brass band and performances by various schools in Leribe. In his welcome speech, the Director of Help Lesotho commented on the importance of including Deaf people in Help Lesotho programs, particularly given the close proximity of Help

Lesotho to schools for the deaf.

The speech was followed by a presentation in sign language by the Help Lesotho program officer, currently studying sign language, who assured the audience that their services and activities would now be available in Deaf accessible formats.

Nkhasi Sefuthi, LNFOD Human Rights and Advocacy Officer also spoke about issues facing the disability movement in Lesotho, specifically pointing out challenges faced by Deaf people in accessing equal education. He commented that the Ministry of Education and Training were being unrealistic in their wish to hire interpreters who

"... having a third party sign language interpreter facilitates communication between HIV counselors and Deaf clients breaches their right to confidentiality."

are also qualified teachers, when the work of an interpreter is to help Deaf learners access information on equal basis with others, not to teach. Having said this he further argued that unless the Special Education unit succeeds in convincing the Ministry of Education and Training to employ Sign Language Interpreters in school, the education system will continue to fail Deaf students.

In response, the Special Education Unit Inspector in Leribe, Mrs. M. Lehloenyia said her office will ensure that it convinces the Ministry and Teaching Service Department (TSD) to employ more

Sign Language Interpreters based on the performance of students with access to interpreting services compared to those without.

'M'e Regina Lemphoi, an openly HIV positive Deaf woman, spoke to encourage the audience to know their status in order to live a long and healthy life.

Ms. Likopo Lesoetsa, Programmes Manager at the National Association of the Deaf Lesotho (NADL) presented about the challenges faced by the Deaf in accessing health services such as counseling and testing. She noted with concern that while there is a call for all people to know their status, having a third party sign language interpreter facilitate communication between HIV counselors and Deaf clients breaches their right to confidentiality. She urged service providers in this area to learn basic sign language to better service the Deaf community.

She also commented on the need for more accurate information regarding HIV infection rates amongst the Deaf community in order to enable NADL to lobby for better support in this area. She

concluded by commending Help Lesotho on their success at mainstreaming Disability issues urging other organisations to follow in their example.

Deaf pupils of St. Paul's School for the Deaf entertained the audience with a dance by following their instructor as they did not hear the lyrics. After the National Anthem all were invited for Lunch.

Throughout the event Counseling and Testing services were being conducted by PSI.

LRA EXTENDS A HELPING HAND TO PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

THE WHEELCHAIR MARATHON

In a move geared to extend a helping hand to physically disabled persons, the Lesotho Revenue Authority (LRA) hosted the first ever Wheel Chair Marathon at the Maseru Club on Saturday, April 20th, 2013. The marathon which brought together 14 local companies and organizations as well as media partners forms part of the *Join the Cause and Change a Life Campaign*.

The Organisations and companies that joined this cause through participating in the wheelchair marathon are namely: Econet Telecom Lesotho, Lesotho Land Administration Authority, Matekane Group of Companies, Metropolitan Lesotho, Lesotho Flour Mills, CTM Orthopedics, Standard Lesotho Bank, Nthane



Brothers, Voodoo Media, Public Eye and Mosotho Newspapers, Informative Newspaper, Lesotho Times, Harvest FM and People's Choice FM.

The campaign, spearheaded by



the LRA, is a Corporate Social Investment (CSI) initiative aimed to raise funds that will assist the physically disabled persons with assistive devices and equipment. This initiative is held in collaboration with the Lesotho National Association of Physically Disabled Persons (LNAPD).

The *Join the Cause and Change a Life Campaign* was put in place following the LRA's pledge, through Commissioner General Mr. Thabo Letjama, that the organization will implement programmes aimed at empowering vulnerable and disadvantaged members of the society during the course of celebrating its 10th Year Anniversary.

In order to support this noble cause the public and LRA staff members are encouraged to send the word help through the Short Message System (SMS) to 32008 or subscriber's name and district or the name of a person who needs help and is known by the subscriber to 32001.

During the marathon, Maseru Club was the START and FINISH point. From the start point, the route took to Mpilo road, then to Moshoeshoe road, then went past the Maseru Central Charge Office back to Maseru Club.



In her remarks, Minister of Social Development Mrs. 'Matebatso Doti said she respects LRA's vision to integrate assistance to physically disabled people into its mandate as it celebrates its tenth anniversary. She said the initiative is in line with her ministry's policy to solicit support from all walks of life to empower disadvantaged people.

Minister Doti commended all sponsors who made the event a success, urging stakeholders to see it as the beginning of an ongoing commitment to improve the lives of people with disability.

The LRA Commissioner General, Mr. Thabo Letjama specially commended all sponsors for a job well done in making the event a success. He said the success of the marathon was a clear indication that the corporate world can go a long way changing people's lives through similar partnerships. Proceeds from the *Join the Cause and Change Life*



Campaign will be used to purchase assistive devices for physically disabled persons. A presentation on the success of the campaign will be made during the main LRA 10th Anniversary celebrations.

KOPANANG PRIMARY SCHOOL PROMOTES INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Kopanang Primary School, situated on the outskirts of Maseru, held an awareness raising activity on Disability and Education Access on Wednesday the 17 April. Disability stakeholders namely, teachers, parents of children with disabilities, LNFOD, Ministry of Education and Training, and local Community Councillors and Chiefs were invited to participate in the activity which was hosted on school grounds.

The main reason for the meeting was to share information with the community living within the 'Mantsebo Council on the functions of the above mentioned stakeholders in the disability sector.

The activity informed parents and guardians of children with disabilities of the primary schools



which accommodate children with disabilities. The gathering also made the community aware of financial packages available from the Ministry of the Social Development which could assist the poorest families living with children with disabilities.

Kopanang primary admits children with mild



disabilities, for example partially sighted pupils and some physically disabled pupils. However given limited resources rurally and at the school, if a pupil is completely blind, the school refers the child to the Resource Centre for the Blind situated (located in Maseru District, near Lesotho High School).

Participants were informed that, parents of children with disabilities must consult with social workers and education officers located in their district for any disability related matters to be addressed.

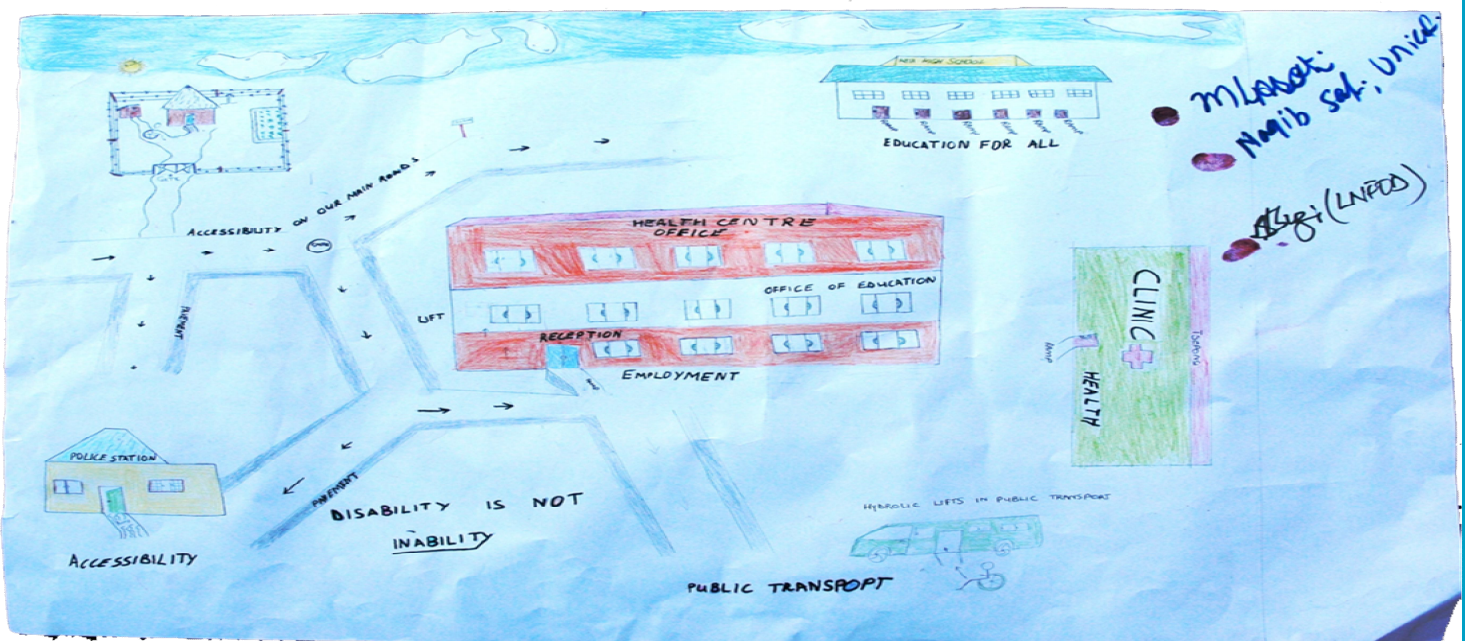
Local community councilors vowed to fight any form of violence perpetrated against people with disabilities in their council.

The Local Police Unit urged the community to report any crime committed against people with disabilities so as to fully promote and protect people with disabilities living in Mohlakeng council.

The chief called out to the community not to discriminate against people with disabilities but rather to accept them as equal members of the society who only have special needs.

"A World We'd Like to Live in!"

Drawing by children of St Angela's Cheshire Home for Physically Disabled Children



disABILITY ON SHOW AT EUROPE WEEK

disABILITY went on show at Europe Week from 3-5 May at Pioneer Mall. LNFOD, together with its partners LNLVIP, LNAPD, NADL and IDAL hosted a series of activities designed to showcase the talents of people with disability. This opportunity was made possible by SkillShare International.

The display included:

A disABILITY stall with information about the work of Disabled Persons Organisations (DPOs) in Lesotho. It also featured items created by graduates and students from Itjareng Vocational Training Centre and Mohloli oa Bophelo Rehabilitation and Training Centre, sign-language dictionaries and the popular T-shirts for Equal Education. DPOs' representatives entertained visitors' questions.

A display of *Breaking down the Barriers*, a

photographic display by Irish photographer Eileen O'Leary depicting the lives of people living with disability in Lesotho.

A dynamic wheelchair obstacle course challenge – Visitors were forced to put their mobility skills to the ultimate test, wheeling their way through a time-based obstacle course involving three point turns, chicanes and reverse parking.

The White Cane challenge – The white cane is used by blind or visually impaired people as a mobility tool. Members of the public were forced to step outside their comfort zone, donning a blindfold and navigating their way through a tricky series of barriers using only a white cane for support.

Those who beat the time challenge were offered prizes from the European Union.



The Wheelchair challenge



The White Cane challenge



"THE TWO OF US..." - Learning to Trust My Son

When Portia Diaho, a former Police Woman, learned that her son, Sejabakela (Jabi) had been diagnosed with down's syndrome, she realized his life would never be like that of his older brother and sister. Throughout his childhood, Portia was extremely protective of Jabi, plagued by doctors' predictions that he would not survive beyond the age of 7. Despite the gloomy prophecies, Jabi grew to be a healthy and energetic young man.

When Jabi was 14, he began attending IDAL youth group sessions alongside other young adults with intellectual disability. Despite initial misgivings about leaving Jabi alone in an unfamiliar environment, after a few weeks Portia noticed a positive change in Jabi.

"He was so much more confident and independent. I used to drive him everywhere because I could not trust him to find his own way home. After his ninth session with

IDAL, he insisted on going there himself by public transport. I was convinced that the taxi driver would cheat him and he would end up somewhere far from home. But he returned safely and from that day onwards he has never needed my help to go anywhere," recounts 'M'e Portia.



'Mé Portia and her son, Jabi

Amongst other things, the IDAL youth group sessions taught Jabi skills like assertiveness, money management and navigating public transport.

Portia attends the IDAL parent sessions where she has developed friendships with other parents. "It was wonderful to speak to other people who had gone through the same things I had. I think the most important thing I learned was that Jabi has ambitions, dreams and talents like any

other child and that I needed to offer him the same support as his brother and sister. How you see your own child will determine the way the rest of the world sees them."

"CHRIS' CORNER" - Awaken the Sleeping Giant!

Chris Ranthithi

There are a lot of things that we need in life but they say the best things in life are free. I used to believe that but not anymore. When I look at the current situation that the world is facing and the lack of cooperation and action from world leaders, I fear for the future because it's not only the heads of states and governments of developed countries who are to blame.

Everyone has their fair share of the blame but rich countries have to be held accountable for their part in the creation of global warming and their continued ignorance about this disaster we are now facing.

It is a well known fact that for the most part, the problem has been caused by the actions of developed nations but that the brunt of the impact is being faced by people in developing countries such as Lesotho where we are expecting a harsh and hungry winter due to crop failure and loss of livestock.

Then when we ask for aid they say



Chris Ranthithi is a 20 year old "wheelchair" commentator who loves cars, Lesotho and the environment

it's not their fault or in some cases deny the very existence of global warming. It's like having your doctor prescribe you medication which you've told her you're allergic to and then having her deny responsibility when you come back sicker.

With that said Africans must be extremely careful how they conduct their business because there is a new rush for Africa and her resources and the high potential for development

coupled with the hunger for wealth suffered by all Africans can make us easy prey for the development trap.

In the current economic climate there is still a small ray of hope left in the world. The prime of Western nations has come and gone. Tomorrow, the ray of hope will come from the one place people do not expect - The same place that has suffered the most from globalisation and modernisation. That place is Africa. It's hard to believe now but if we play our cards right we can have the best of both worlds combining the benefits of development with a healthy respect for nature.

Remember Lesotho you are a sleeping giant, so awaken and take your rightful place and lead us to the promised land.

LONG LIVE THE KINGDOM OF LESOTHO

Two Minutes With Liteboho Mahase

Who is Liteboho Mahase?

Iyoh..... I am a humble young man who strives for better things in life.

What inspires you?

I am inspired by the fact that I am disabled because it creates awareness to the nation that **Disability does not mean Inability!**

How many medals have you won?

I have won 14 medals from different competitions held in Lesotho and internationally. These include 7 gold medals, 5 silver medals and 2 bronze.

When is the next Taekwondo tournament?

In October. The Competition will be held in Pretoria to select Southern Africa representatives in Croatia.



Liteboho Mahase, 25 years old, Competitive Taekwondo player and Vice Secretary General, National Association of the Deaf in Lesotho

What do you hope for out of this tournament?

I want to prove myself and become the world's best Taekwondo player.

Do you have any plans for this year?

Yes I do. I want to get a permanent job and start my own company.

What do you do for fun?

I spent most of the time with my family, I go to gym and later hang out with friends.

Do you have friends?

Yes I do, but I wouldn't call them close friends since I am always busy with Taekwondo training.

Are you single?

No I have a tight relationship with the mother of my child.

Is your child a Girl or Boy?

(BAFANA-BAFANA) I mean my beautiful boy.

What do you do for a living?

I am unemployed but usually do part-time jobs to help provide for my family and also doing some savings that will help start my own business.



Contact Information:

22 Mabilile Road,
Old Europa
Maseru Lesotho

P. O. Box 9988
Maseru 100
Lesotho

Phone: +266 22 32 0345
Fax: +266 22 32 6196
E-mail: mafethem@Infod.org.ls

About LNFOD—A Brief History

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) the Intellectual Disability Association of Lesotho (IDAL), 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