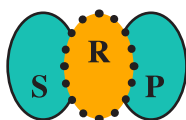


# PROMOTING EDUCATION & TRAINING OF DISABLED PEOPLE (IN SOUTH AFRICA AND LESOTHO)

July, 2008

**SAFOD**  
Southern African Federation of the Disabled



**DFID** Department for  
International  
Development

**Prepared by:** Mr A R Gwitimah  
Zimbabwe Open University  
Faculty Of Social Sciences  
Matabeleland North Region  
P O Box 3997, Bulawayo

W Khupe  
Muscular Dystrophy Ass. of Zimbabwe  
(MDAZ)  
Bulawayo

**Commisioned by:** SAFOD

This report is an output from a project funded by the **UK Department For International Development (DFID)** for the project of developing countries. However, the views expressed and information contained in it are not necessarily those of or endorsed by DFID, which can accept no responsibility for such views or information or for any reliance placed on them.



# Table of Contents

## Acknowledgements and Abbreviations

<b>Executive Summary</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Section 1</b>	<b>2</b>
1.0 Introduction	2
1.1 Promoting Education And Training Of Disabled People	2
1.2 Problem Statement	2
1.3 Purpose Of Study	2
1.4 Methodology	3
1.4.1 Design	3
1.4.2 Population	3
1.4.3 Descriptions of the Sample	3
<b>Section 2</b>	<b>4</b>
2.0 Literature (Review) on Promoting Education and Training of Disabled People	4
2.1 Introduction	4
2.2 Predicament of Disabled People	4
<b>Section 3: Key Findings and Observations</b>	<b>6</b>
3.0 Field Experiences	6
3.1 Detailed Lived Experiences From Different Disabled People	7
3.1.1 The Physically Disabled	7
3.1.2 Visually Impaired	7
3.1.3 Mentally Retarded	7
3.1.4 Disabled People's Organisations	8
3.1.5 Dpsa – Effective?	8
3.1.6 Non - Effective?	9
3.1.7 Lenford - Effective?	9
3.1.8 Non – Effective?	9
3.1.9 Other Stakeholders	9
3.1.9.1 Parents Of The Disabled Children	9
3.1.9.2 Governments	9
3.1.9.3 Teachers	10
3.2 Policies on Education and Training	10
3.2.1 Education	10
3.2.2 Training	10
3.2.3 What Is The Status Quo?	11
<b>Section 4: Conclusions</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Section 5: Recommendations and the Way Forward</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Section 6</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>6.1 References</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>6.2 Apprentices</b>	<b>14</b>
6.2.1 Interviews	14
6.2.2 The Questionnaire	14
<b>7.0 Anotated Notes</b>	<b>15</b>

# Acknowledgements

Consultancy would like to express their gratitude to the following colleagues whose help made this research possible:

- a) The Safod colleagues, especially the Director General, Mr Phiri and his team. Sadly Mr Gumbo will be thanked posthumously.
- b) We also extend our gratitude to the different DPOs which we visited and shared experiences with especially the DPSA and LINFOD and NADL, notably Mrs Lephoi and Mrs Lekopo in Lesotho.
- c) We are also thankful to all members who provided technical and management support in this worthwhile process.

## **A R Gwitimah**

Lecturer And Regional Programme Co-Ordinator:  
Special Education, Counselling And Psychology  
Zimbabwe Open University  
Faculty Of Social Sciences  
Matabeleland North Region  
P O Box 3997  
Bulawayo

## **W Khupe**

Muscular Dystrophy Association Of Zimbabwe (MDAZ)  
P O Box  
Bulawayo

*July, 2008*

## List of Abbreviations

DRT	District Resource Teacher
EFA	Education For All
H/I	Hearing Impairment/Impaired
DPO	Disabled People's Organisations
SAFOD	Southern Africa Federation of the Disabled
SRP	Safod Research Programme
MDGS	Millenium Development Goals
DPSA	Disabled People South Africa
LINFOD	Lesotho National Federation of Disabled
NADL	National Association of the Deaf in Lesotho
UN	United Nations
V/H	Visually Handicapped
V/I	Visually Impaired

## Executive Summary

Article 24 of the U.N. Convention recognizes the rights of persons with disabilities to education – so thus this piece of research focused on analyzing and understanding the constraints and opportunities for disabled people to access primary, secondary and tertiary training in institutions. All Governments are signatories to the United Nations Convention on the rights of all children i.e. children’s rights to education, health, shelter, etc.

This research investigation was carried out in Lesotho and South Africa’s 3 provinces – i.e. Gauteng, Mpumalanga and KwaZulu Natal. From Lesotho and the 3 provinces the population used came to 250 persons and some parents of disabled children. Within this population too, there were a few teachers and administrators as well.

The qualitative type of design was used as the interview was the instrument for data collection. To give the exercise a participant stakeholders’ perspective – interviews were held with some teachers, administrators, parents of disabled children and the different disability categories, physically disabled, visually impaired, and the mentally retarded.

The literature reviewed was focused on specific and mostly experiential and from some few similar reports done in these countries. Also to note is that most of the literature also came from the U. N. Conventions and Standard Rules etc. The most recent Convention used was signed in March 2007 and became international law on 3 May 2008.

The findings focused on DPOs and whether they were effective or not. From the lived field experiences, some DPOs need to work hard and spruce their images since some have seized to represent the disabled persons’ needs in education, and other social issues. There is need for capacity building to help growth of some of the DPOs. On education, serious policy implications need to be looked into. DPOs have to lobby and do a lot of advocacy in order to help in the promotion of education and training of disabled people. Awareness programmes and campaigns by both Governments and DPOs have to be done and carried out.

In the recommendations, some serious issues were raised on employment of the disabled, early education facilities and training of manpower to help the disabled people. If all the Governments and DPOs “*walk the talk*” then needs of the disabled will be satisfied.

# Section One

## 1.0 Introduction

The United Nations Declaration on Human Rights declared that, “every child has a right to education – to ensure their growth and development, to fulfill their individual potential”. From this background, SAFOD which is a regional network of disabled people’s organizations (DPOs) mandated itself to find out whether disabled people are accorded that right to education and training, hence this study was promoted. It is in fact fulfilling its number one objective of “changing lives of disabled people” at the same time recognizing the value of advocacy and embarking on research activities in order to improve the lives of disabled people.

This study therefore does endeavour to find out whether disabled people of whatever category access education and training in the two countries on focus – South Africa and Lesotho. In a way, the study as already stated should unfold the notion that, “education is directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms”. Thus fulfilled would be satisfying the United Nations Millenium Development Goals of the year 2000.

## 1.1 Promoting Education And Training Of Disabled People

UNESCO’s Global Monitoring Report on Education for All (EFA) published in 2007 estimated that 77 million children (aged 6 – 11 years) do not attend school and that approximately one-third of these out-of-school children are disabled. The other two thirds are said to be children from poor families who live in poor households and whose mothers have no

education. The above assertion follows up the World Summit for Children in 1990 and the adoption of the UN Convention on the rights of the child which states that more than 155 countries have developed National Programmes of Action. But despite all this international activity, few of the necessary changes in promoting education and training of disabled people have been made. Of importance to note has been the failure to address the barriers that make it difficult for children to access education and training easily. Policies enacted by Governments remained on paper and were never implemented. Despite the concern that education should be accorded to all – still that continued to be ignored.

If ever good education is to be promoted, there should be deliberate foci on relevant policies that concern themselves with “right to access an inclusive, quality, free primary and secondary education on an equal basis with others in the communities in which they live” (UN Convention on Human Rights Article 24).

## 1.2 Problem Statement

Both Governments of Lesotho and South Africa have favourably responded to the United Nations Conventions on need for; observance of children’s rights and provision for Education for All (EFA) inclusive of integration and mainstreaming of children with disabilities. In the two countries there are white paper Policy Statements which cater for placement of children with disabilities into schools. The good intentions illustrated in these white papers are never or partially implemented. One parent of the disabled in KwaZulu Natal said; “*Good ideas from these white papers remain in offices and never taken down to the grassroots – Us parents as implementers*”. This research project, therefore, will aim to conscientise the policy makers on the gap between what they say and what should be done on the ground.

## 1.3 Purpose Of This Study

A number of studies, complemented by interesting evidence gathered during the research, demonstrated that disabled people are less likely to complete basic primary education than their non-disabled counterparts. This lack of basic education reinforces their social exclusion and marginalization thus leading to lack of life requisite skills making it more difficult for them to secure long term sustainable employment. This study therefore tried to find out whether basic education was accessible to disabled people and whether that basic education was adequate to help disabled people get training in the learnership/vocational programmes

offered in South Africa and Lesotho. Respondent anecdotal evidence indicated that basic primary education without high school education was **inadequate and insufficient** to help anybody enter into vocational and learnership programmes – so only a small number of disabled children access training to enhance their skills and independent living. This dire dearth is there despite the good white papers produced by both Governments – South Africa and Lesotho that; For example, the South African white paper on Integrated National Disability Strategy with a vision commitment of a “*better life for all persons with disabilities through excellence in governing*” and a mission which “*ensures the equalization of opportunities for persons with disabilities in leading, developing and managing the strategic agenda of Government*”. All these good ideas are mere pronouncements without implementation.

## **1.4 Methodology**

### **1.4.1 Design**

The qualitative and situational analysis type of design was used – with an integrated participatory approach. This approach is a generic research approach in which the point of departure is the “*insider perspective*” on social action so that attempts are made to study human actions from the *perspective of social actors themselves* (Monton 2001:125). This participatory approach used brought a stance of openness and discovery. Also this participatory approach is about, “*stories from the field*” and allows novices and scholars to see how critical, interpretive research is actually conducted. This approach used in this research is in fact reflective, respecting the openness to other views and perspectives and did not only include explanatory hypothesis but other people’s ways of thinking and valuing.

The employed qualitative design in this investigation assisted the researchers to study the reactions of respondents – physically disabled, the blind, the deaf and the slow learners (mentally retarded). The use of in depth interviews helped researchers in two ways; a). to exchange real experiences with the different categories of disabilities. B). to live the lives of disabled people “*as they narrated their live, real stories*”. The researchers co-participated in the lives of the respondents; that is learning “*life by life*” (Elphick 2002).

### **1.4.2 Population**

In both South Africa and Lesotho over 250 respondents formed part of the population of study. The population could have been bigger as planned

but unfortunately after working on the ground the quantitative instrument (the questionnaire) could not be used due to illiteracy. Researchers after visiting two institutions found the respondents not literate enough to understand the questionnaire so the researchers quickly switched on to the interviews which worked well.

In sampling, the researchers purposely chose learning institutions – three in Gauteng, one in Mpumalanga, one in KwaZulu Natal and one in Lesotho. Two of those institutions were vocationally oriented.

### **1.4.3 Descriptions of the Sample (Population)**

The researchers deliberately chose the different disability categories : Of the three institutions in Gauteng – one was a centre for slow learners, one was a rehabilitation centre whereas the other one was a Cheshire Home. The Mpumalanga Institution was a sheltered Workshop but mostly community run – also with a bigger population of respondents from age 11 to almost 65. In Maseru – Lesotho, the institution visited was a Catholic rehab centre with all types of disabilities. The KwaZulu Natal population was quite big and consisted of parents of disabled children. All categories of disabilities were there.

Almost 65% of the respondents in both countries were disabled young men and women within the age ranges of 18 and 25. 15% were disabled adults, 10% were parents of disabled people, 5% were teachers and those who directly helped the disabled people and 5% were DPOs representatives including DPSA president and LINFOD president in Maseru – Lesotho who at the same time is the Chairman of SAFOD regionally. It is clear that the sample did not include the education officials due to political gimmicks which may have influenced our sampling. But sadly some officials bulldozed their way in and we had fruitful interviews in Mpumalanga.

## **Section Two**

### **2.0 Literature (Review) on Promoting Education and Training of Disabled People**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

In recent years, volumes of different types of reports have been produced on disability issues. Seminars, workshops and conferences have been held to discuss the positive way forward on how to improve education and training for the benefit of disabled people. In some of the countries in Southern Africa; Ministries of Education created departments or units of special education to cater for the needs of disabled students. Even some of the church based organizations established schools for specialized education for disabled children. In fact one of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) is Education for All by 2015.

Despite all the above ambitions to afford education to disabled people; it is still extremely difficult for disabled people to access education in many developing countries, including South Africa and Lesotho. As was discovered during this research; in South Africa and Lesotho, a lot of work still needs to be done so as to make education accessible to the disabled people. Yet, in deed it is also important to note that Article 29 in the UN Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities, education is defined as a right not a privilege.

#### **2.2 Predicament of Disabled People**

It has never been denied that disabled people are permanently vulnerable, marginalized and poor particularly in the developing countries like South Africa and Lesotho. Various myths about disability fuel discrimination against the disabled people. Since time immemorial, in Southern Africa disability has been associated with such things as witchcraft, bad spirit or bad luck. In fact even up to today some communities in South Africa and Lesotho still believe that a disabled child is not a good specimen of humanity. Disabled people are considered as sub-human beings. They are identified with a permanent illness whose cure has failed, and therefore must be removed from the “normal” society and put into institutions. While in those institutions, disabled people are continually viewed as a tragedy hence objects of obligatory sympathy and charity who must live on handouts.

In South Africa and Lesotho for instance there is free primary education for disabled children. In fact there are policies and legislations to that effect. [However, this research discovered that in practice there is no free education for disabled children at all levels]. Disabled children face many impediments that thwart their quest for education let alone training. In Lesotho there are few qualified teachers to teach the deaf children. According to a research done by the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) and the National Association of the Deaf in Lesotho (NADL) in 2006; there are still a lot of things to be done to make education accessible to the deaf. Deaf children are made to repeat classes several times and finally drop out of school. Effectively; they never reach secondary and tertiary education. Teachers do not know sign language therefore deaf children become frustrated when they are called upon to repeat classes. Eventually they are said to have failed when they are not taught. It is therefore argued that there is nothing called free education if the proper methods to teach are not in place or not implemented for the benefit of the students. In South Africa, the disabled people said that at times they are required to use the monthly disability grant to pay for their tuition and boarding during their stay in institutions.

In South Africa, those who have some average access to education are the ones who stay in big cities like Johannesburg, Durban, Nelspruit and Bloemfontein. Although there are many educational facilities in big cities, few disabled people especially those from rich families access education. For many poor families, free



education is still a pipe dream because transport to and from school has to be paid for by the parents of a disabled child. For those who are lucky to have completed primary or secondary education, advancing to tertiary education is also a struggle. Yet in addition to abovementioned problems, the South African National Education Policy Act number 27 of 1996 is also silent of disabled children's education.

## Section Three: Key Findings And Observations

### 3.0 Field Experiences

Work in the field revealed a lot of issues. From the outside, in both countries, Lesotho and South Africa, it may seem that there is a lot of early special needs education going on. Yet our findings in South Africa especially, very little of early special needs education is promoted. In Lesotho, little is done in established special schools (e.g. at Special Schools for the Deaf where children are enrolled early). White papers in South Africa state categorically that there should be access to special education for all children – yet it remains on paper. In the interview with the President of DPSA – he admitted that there will not be meaningful promotion of education and training *if this early element of education is not promoted*. His sentiments were well supported by almost 75% of the interviewed respondents in the provinces visited.

In KwaZulu Natal almost 25 parents of disabled children *indicated non-existence of early special needs education and thus their children went to school late*. In Gauteng there is some element of early special needs education for the *“protected” few*. In one centre visited, teachers indicated that *it is a privilege for parents who can afford to pay teachers*. This also contradicts the Government white papers which stress *“free primary education”* or free education or free access to education. The President of DPSA spoke of need for education to be *“highly politicized”* for it to be *“highly promoted”* otherwise from his words, *“white papers will remain white papers”* non-implementable. So despite all these white paper policies, well supported by the Government, promotion of education and training is still a long way to go.

In the field, there is the experience that some parents of disabled children are not aware of where to access education for their children and as a result some disabled children grow to adulthood without education. This is a trend even in big cities like Johannesburg and Durban. In Johannesburg the team interviewed five adults from the ages of 25 to 36 years who have never been to school but fortunately now they are at an institution where they are *just kept*, no school but *“just being fed”*. The feelings of these disabled people is that they are bitter and they expressed lack of independence and lack of productivity. These feelings were experienced in KwaZulu Natal – Durban, where parents were struggling with their disabled children who have never been to school and cannot do any productive work. The 25 parents interviewed spoke of their children being unemployable. When the idea of Learnership Programmes was presented to them, they professed ignorance.

A member of DPSA in Durban when interviewed and asked on awareness programmes in the province – the indication was that *very little of that is done*. In comparison, the province of Mpumalanga does a lot of awareness programmes on education and training. One important observation in Mpumalanga is that due to awareness campaigns, the community is heavily involved in promoting education and training for the disabled. At one centre, there was a range of skills training for different categories of disabled. From the respondents, whatever is used was donated by the community, including transport to and from the centre in KwaNyamazana.

As for the Lesotho experience, as already pointed out, only the Deaf seem to be benefiting from the early special needs programmes. In the interview with blind members of LINFOD which is the umbrella body of the disabled in Lesotho, early special needs education is for those children whose parents are rich. Due to lack of or shortage of teachers, most of the blind students go to South Africa for studies, in primary, secondary and tertiary education. Most of the blind respondents were products of some South African institutions. In Lesotho itself, there seems to be no tertiary institutions for the disabled. From the National Association of

the Deaf in Lesotho (NADL) most disabled students drop out of school immediately after primary education, (Report of October 2006).

From the field, the situation in the two countries is surely not rosy. Promotion of education and training despite the policies enacted takes long to come out of the ground. This fact actually addresses what James Wolfensohm (2002) former President of the World Bank stated that, “the UN Millennium Development Goals on disability issues would not be met unless deliberate effort is made by all Governments to seriously implement the white paper policies. Wolfensohm (2002) seemed to echo indirectly what has been stated by Bengt Lindqvist, the UN Special Rapporteur (1999) who said the condition of persons with disabilities is all about “exclusion”. He quipped that disabled people’s *‘human rights’* seem to be *‘human wrongs’* – thus every time a disabled child is denied the opportunity to go to school, he or she is excluded.

### **3.1 Detailed Lived Experiences From Different Disabled People**

#### **3.1.1 The Physically Disabled**

In both South Africa and Lesotho, physically disabled children do not receive the support required within the general education system to facilitate their effective education. For instance in Durban this research team was informed during a mass meeting of the respondents, that many disabled children drop out of school mainly because of the daily transport cost to and from school. Some disabled children need regular services of a personal assistant even during class sessions. Failure to have the personal assistant means that a child has to drop out of school. Children who have multiple disability and those who have a severe type of muscular dystrophy fall within the category that never complete the early stages of primary education. For instance, unless the school is within walking distance, it is also frustrating to wait for public transport to go to school. Respondents narrated the agony they come across when waiting to board buses to school. They said very few drivers are keen to allow those on wheelchairs to board their motor vehicles. Very few schools offer boarding facilities for the disabled.

#### **3.1.2 Visually Impaired**

It was discovered during the research that the visually impaired also do not adequately access education and training both in South Africa and Lesotho. In Lesotho there are very few teachers trained in special education. Primary education is offered at schools that are usually far away from homes. This put the blind students and their parents in a difficult position. Very few schools offer some reasonable accommodation that suit the blind student’s individual’s requirements. Parents of visually handicapped children spoke of the primary school openly discriminating against their children. In Durban, South Africa, school authorities were said to be reluctant to enroll blind children. In fact the majority of schools are not yet ready to have blind children because of lack of training in the use of the Braille. Therefore without secondary education it becomes impossible for the blind people to access tertiary education. Surprisingly, in both South Africa and Lesotho, the research team met and talked to six blind people between the ages of eleven to forty two years who could not even write their names – totally illiterate.

#### **3.1.3 Mentally Retarded**

This group of people is also finding it difficult to access education and training in both South Africa and Lesotho. In South Africa the research team discovered that up to fifty-five mentally retarded trainees were being taught by a single teacher. The teacher also worked as a social worker for the institution. This particular teacher confessed that she was not trained as a special education teacher. The school/day centre has a shortage of educational equipment like chairs, tables and other assistive devices. It was revealed that parents of those trainees (some trainees are as old as fifty-two years) were expected to pay the transport cost of sending

trainees to school/day centres. In fact the school is a mixture of sheltered workshop, study group and care centre. No certificates are issued to those who finally terminate going to school. Mentally retarded children are usually slow learners. Although there is what is called learnership programme in South Africa, this group of people find it difficult to benefit from it. The training at these learnership programmes are conducted in English language. A big majority of retarded people never attained matriculation level of education, hence they are not able to communicate in English. It was observed, however, that residents of big cities are not even better off when it comes to education and training accessibility to mentally disabled children.

The Adult Basic Education and Training Act of South Africa, that was enacted in 2000 is a good Act on paper. But on the ground it appears there is no deliberate action to make it benefit the mentally retarded citizens.

### **3.1.4 Disabled People's Organisations**

In an endeavour to speak for themselves and also to achieve self representation, disabled people in South Africa and Lesotho formed their organizations. A number of disabled people's organizations (DPOs) are in existence in South Africa and Lesotho. In order to create a strong movement of the disabled, these individual (DPOs) formed umbrella organizations. In South Africa the umbrella organization is called Disabled People South Africa (DPSA). The umbrella organization of the disabled in Lesotho is called Lesotho National Federation of the Disabled (LNFOD). The above movements are generally considered to be legal and genuine representatives of persons with disabilities in their respective countries. Both LNFOD and DPSA played an important role in the formation of Southern Africa Federation of the Disabled (SAFOD). They are influential members within SAFOD even today. The National Chairperson of LNFOD is the current chairperson of SAFOD. These umbrella organizations are grassroots and cross-disability network with member organizations within the countries. The leadership of these movements consist of both male and female.

### **3.1.5 Dpsa – Effective ?**

According to the POCKET GUIDE ON DISABILITY EQUITY, produced by DPSA, the organization came about "as a direct result of the double-discrimination disabled black South Africans were facing under the Apartheid Regime and was therefore part of the broader liberation struggle since the organization was born. DPSA is highly regarded by the government of South Africa because it is accepted as the legitimate voice of disabled people in the country. The organization, according to its National Chairperson Mr Muzi Nkosi, is well known and well represented in all provinces of the country. It has a well equipped and well staffed secretariate in Cape Town.

DPSA organizes workshops, meetings and leadership seminars on regular basis for its members within the country. The organization has a strong link with the ruling African National Congress (ANC) party. This good working relationship with the ANC gives the advantage of being privy to the future policy and development plans of the government. Therefore disability mainstreaming can be taken advantage of because of such relationship.

In fact many disabled Member of Parliament in South Africa are associated with DPSA in one way or another. Above all DPSA is represented in the Office of the Presidency and the offices of the Provincial Premiers. It was also observed that the website of DPSA contains complains on the lack of education facilities for disabled people. Information in the website gives details and the examples of barriers to education and training for disabled people.

### **3.1.6 Non Effective?**

The majority of disabled people interviewed did not speak good about the organization DPSA. In Gauteng Province disabled people said that they heard about DPSA but had never seen or met anyone from the organization. Some said they heard about the organization through radios and televisions. In KwaZulu Natal and Free State, ordinary disabled people complained about the non-accessibility of DPSA structures. They expressed the view that DPSA was for the highly educated. They felt that if the organization was really “Pro-disabled people in words and action” some steps could have been taken to ensure that education and training to disabled children was assessable.

In contrast to the above views, the majority among disabled persons in Mpumalanga province felt part and parcel of DPSA. The Provincial Organisation was praised by DPSA President for having raised issues on disability and developed them with various government departments. However, the provincial membership of DPSA in Mpumalanga expressed the view that education and training for disabled people was still lagging behind and much needed to be done by both DPSA and government especially the Government Sponsored Learnership Programme.

### **3.1.7 Lenfod – Effective?**

LENFOD was said to be a respected organization in the country. Some of its members felt that the organization could do better in advocating for better education and training for the disabled if it was to “walk the talk”. Government and other stake holders were keen to accommodate the views of the umbrella organization if they are approached.

### **3.1.8 Non-Effective?**

The current leadership of LENFOD was blamed for talking much but doing less. From the findings, it was expressed that this organisation’s leadership was incapable of “taking simple decisions” on way forward. Some visually handicapped people felt that they achieve more in terms of advocacy if they do not involve LENFOD. They also expressed that there was need for the leadership of LENFOD to be given a longer training in capacity building. It was observed that there was a lot of mistrust among members of LENFOD. For instance a senior member of the staff of one of the member organizations of LENFOD openly told this research team (she asked us to put it on record) that staff at the LENFOD secretariate were stealing funds and no action was being done to them. This, she said was one of the weaknesses contributing to the non-effectiveness of the umbrella organization.

### **3.1.9 Other Stakeholders**

#### ***3.1.9.1 Parents Of The Disabled Children***

Most parents of the disabled children in both South Africa and Lesotho felt the government was not doing enough to enable their children to go to school. They expressed the view that only the rich could afford to send their disabled children to school. The majority especially in KwaZulu Natal felt that it was the government (not Disabled People’s Organization) which must see to it that education and training is easily accessible to disabled children.

#### ***3.1.9.2 Governments***

Governments of both countries have a high respect – according to various statutes – for disabled people. In many statutory boards especially in South Africa, disabled people are represented. But, however, such disability representation was said to be benefiting only the few elite among the disabled. Some told the research team that the disabled people who sit on government boards are no longer giving feed back to

DPSA. The question of accountability was raised by many i.e. if a member of DPSA is nominated to sit on the Statutory Board, he/she ceases to represent the organization. But the individual(s) never come back to present reports to their other members.

### **3.1.9.3 Teachers**

Very few teachers are trained to teach children with special needs. This was found to be a common challenge for both South Africa and Lesotho. Therefore the delivery of education to those with special needs e.g. the deaf, blind and those with multiple disabilities was said to be a present challenge.

Some teachers were said to have openly told parents of disabled children that they were not able to teach their children. As a result in Natal, this research team had the opportunity to meet with at least seven blind people over the age of sixteen who had (never) not yet started primary education. In the outskirts of Johannesburg, Gauteng Province, the research team met a thirty-six year old disabled man who had never been to school. In Lesotho, a prominent deaf rights activist expressed the fear that not much is being done by government, to have deaf people access education. She said *“it is like government has become deaf”* because no matter how the disabled people shout, there is no improvement in the training of teachers for the deaf in the country.

## **3.2. Policies on (1) Education and (2) Training**

### **3.2.1. Education**

On paper, the policies on education are commendable. For instance, the preamble for Adult Basic Education and Training Act, 2000, seeks to “REDRESS” past discrimination and ensure representativity and equal access to education. Both the South African Qualifications Authority Act, 1995 and the National Education Policy Act 1996 say a lot in terms of improving education to South Africans. Yet evidence on the ground shows a different picture.

In Lesotho the situation is also the same. Disabled people complained of being sidelined when it comes to the allocation of state funds to education departments. Ironically, the government pays individual disability grant on monthly basis. This is not education grant but up-keep grant.

### **3.2.2. Training**

Policies on education have a bearing on training the world over. There is always a symbiosis between education and training. When one is educated then one is a candidate for training. Policies on education and training are available though they are considered, and have proved to be theoretical documents by many disabled people in South Africa and Lesotho. Because of lack of enough education, the majority of disabled people could not access training.

It was observed that in Johannesburg, South Africa, the government introduced a learnership scheme to enable disabled people to access training in different skills. However, a very small number of disabled people was benefiting from this initiative. In fact only those who are residents in Johannesburg are benefiting from the scheme.

Disabled people interviewed wished that such a scheme be introduced in the whole of the country. Some felt that the learnership programme though good and empowering, it was discriminatory because only those with minor disabilities were benefiting.

### 3.2.3 What Is The Status Quo?

This research discovered that challenges faced by disabled people in South Africa and Lesotho were in the final analysis the same. Disabled people have serious challenges in as far as accessing education and training is concerned. The research also discovered that *some of the highly educated and trained disabled persons actually become disabled after they had attained their qualifications.*

There also appears to be a blame game or a negative social distance between the “elite” disabled people occupying leadership positions within DPSA and ordinary disabled people. For instance the ordinary disabled people said DPSA is only for the rich. They said that they are neither invited to the meetings nor informed of the activities of the organization. Some ordinary disabled believed that DPSA was abusing funds they assumed was being donated by the state. In Gauteng Province some former disabled members of DPSA expressed the fear that the organization was declining in strength because it lost active members who joined government departments as employees or parliamentarians.

The general opinion was that DPSA was not as strong as it used to be during the period leading to the year 2000. It was said DPSA was not, at its present state, capable of engaging government in order to radically bring about practical change that will make education accessible to disabled. They felt that DPSA has to adopt a more deliberate effort to market itself among disabled people so as to take new latent talents among the grassroots. The fear was that DPSA was slowly developing into a passive and static quasi welfare organization for the disabled. There were some who felt that DPSA has done a wonderful job over the years. It was their feeling it was government not DPSA that must make sure that all its citizens access education.

LENFOD expressed their gratitude to SAFOD for having assisted them in capacity building workshops. They felt that there was need for further training so that the leadership could be able to realize their potential.

## Section Four: Conclusion

This research looked at a variety of declarations and agreements to which these two countries are signatories. What has been observed in the field is that disabled people themselves, parents of disabled children and those who work with disabled people are not aware of the conventions documents and agreements here listed below, yet they are important in the development of appropriate services for people with disabilities.

- The Convention on the Rights of the Child
- The World Declaration on Education For All
- The Salamanca Statement and Framework for ACTION on Special Needs Education
- The Standard Rules on Equalisation of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities.

Once people are aware of these agreements, the researchers believed that synergies could be created through the development of collaborative relationships across levels, from National to Province, District to Community and to parents. In the research findings, it was realized that families have a right to full information about their disabled child and any choices that are posed. Help, support and training should be available to facilitate their decision making and to enable families to enter a full partnership with professionals. Also the research team realized that due to lack of professionalism in some disabilities issues, professionals need to be trained to take on the roles of facilitator, supporter, counselor and mediator in their work with parents. All in all, the research team found out that, there is need to re-examine values, beliefs and attitudes. That could only be done if a number of promotion programme activities could be developed. These activities are :

- Identification
- Outreach
- Parent education and empowerment
- Home-based services
- Development of classroom programmes and
- Transition plans.



## Section Five: Recommendations and the Way Forward

### *How should education for the Disabled be promoted?*

- First things first; parents of disabled children should be made aware that disabled children are educable – so parents should make concerted efforts to seek for information about education of their children. Notwithstanding the fact that DPOs should also be in the forefront in disseminating information on disability issues and rights.
- There should also be training institutions of specialist teachers for streamlined Special Schools and Mainstream classrooms. Teachers, especially specialist teachers are important if promotion of education and training for the disabled people is to be realized.
- Deliberate screening exercises countrywide in order to have a range of disabilities to be catered for.
- Resources have to be availed to the disabled in order to empower them subsequently developing independent living skills. This could be fulfilling the goals of the learnership programmes mentioned in the Policy White Papers. These learnership programmes if handled properly can surely help the disabled people to be self-reliant and not dependent.
- The Rules and Regulations passed by Parliaments (of the relevant countries) should help the disabled to be employed. This suggests the quota system of employment in companies. For example the South African White Paper on an Integrated National Disability Strategy with a vision commitment of a “better life for all persons with disabilities through excellence in governing and a mission which ”ensures the equalization of opportunities for persons with disabilities in leading, developing and managing the strategic agenda of Government.”
- DPOs should choose leaders on merit not as a serving duty which is rotated. This was a strong point mentioned by the blind people in Lesotho and some few parents of disabled people in KwaZulu Natal. *Leaders given responsibilities through rotation lacked commitment, so are ineffective in their leadership.*
- Institutions which rehabilitate the disabled like the Cheshire Homes should encourage some skills of the disabled. In most of the homes the researchers visited – the residents in these homes sounded that they wanted to be productive and *not to live and be fed doing nothing*. Almost 75% expressed a wish to be productive. So learnership programmes in these institutions could be very helpful and can promote skills training in a big way.
- In all DPOs there should be a training officer or an Education Officer to help monitor that issues to do with education are well catered for. This Officer will be an Advocate for disability issues all awareness programmes and parents’ networking should be under his jurisdiction.
- Despite all that which has been recommended, there are challenges – translating policies, guidelines and recommendations into ACTION.

# Section Six

## 6.1 References

AThe U.N. Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities March 2007.  
[Learnard Cheshire Disability].

The World Disability Report : Disability '99 : International Disability Foundation.

The Case of the Sign Language Interpretation Project of the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) and the National Association of the Deaf in Lesotho (NADL) in Mafeteng and Zeribe.  
Government of Lesotho (Printers).

National Education Policy Act 1996 : No. 27 of 1996.

E E NET : Issue 6 April 2002.

E E NET : Issue 11 August 2007

## 6.2 Appendices

(A) Interview Schedule (Questions)

(B) Questionnaire

### 6.2.1 Interviews

The following Interview Questions directed this research study on Promoting Education and Training of Disabled People:

I. Who should? How?

II. What type of Education ?

- Inclusive
- Special
- Integrated

III. Do Governments have policies focused on the three aspects above?

IV. What type of Training ?

- Vocational – What Level?
- Skills Training
- in Institutions?
- in Polytechnics?
- in Technicoms?
- Schools based?

V. Do Governments have policies on skills development for the disabled?

VI. Any deliberate Programmes to enhance the promotion of education and training of the disabled people?

*N.B. The above questions were used as Interview questions as well, since the questionnaire instrument could not be used due to some illiteracy. Most of the respondents could not literary understand the questions as noted on the very first day of fieldwork. Thus, researchers resorted to the interview techniques which worked very well.*

## Section Seven

### 7.0. *Annotated Notes (Knowledge)*

This research technique used by SAFOD now empowered the disabled in that:

- a) The disabled themselves researched on disability issues and this was a double credit to both the researchers and the respondents. The researchers felt they 'owned' the research – so question of “ownership” was achieved whereas the respondents also felt that they participated to build their own thing. So the question of “Nothing about Us without Us” was completely answered.
- b) The disabled were very pleased to be asked questions by one of theirs, also in a wheelchair – indeed for the researcher and the respondents, it was sharing “life by life”. The bi-polar insider perspective was completely fulfilled.

Also of importance is that the Empowerment workshop held in Botswana on research should be replicated but now giving research knowledge to many disabled people. That will help build a bigger pool of researchers and research assistants. As knowledge is power, the disabled will do whatever they want with that knowledge.

We would recommend that whatever methodology is used in disability issues should be participatory for that makes the disabled persons be part of whatever is taking place. It also makes them feel involved.



# SAFOD

Southern African Federation of the Disabled

POBox 2247  
19 Lobengula Street  
Bulawayo, Zimbabwe  
Tel: (267-9) 69356  
Fax: (267-9) 74398  
Email: safod@netconnect.co.zw  
info@safod.org  
www.safod.org



---

**PROMOTING EDUCATION &  
TRAINING OF DISABLED PEOPLE**  
(IN SOUTH AFRICA AND LESOTHO)