Breaking Barriers for the Inclusion of Persons with Disability in National Development

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Abstract People with disabilities (PWD) have the same rights as everyone else in the community. Most people with disabilities have limited access to education and skills training due to a combination of factors including: the lack of a coherent national policy and technical support system to address their particular learning/education/ employment/empowerment needs. Particular needs and issues affecting people with disabilities generally are ignored in the national development agenda and their well-being is often treated as a matter of welfare rather than as a fundamental human right. On the other hand, people with disabilities lack the means to advocate for and claim their rights as citizens. As such, little formal effort has been made to effectively address their basic needs with regards to access to basic social services including education, skills training and sustainable livelihood opportunities. In light of this and recognising that education is a fundamental human right for all, as well as a key instrument of development and social empowerment, The Breaking Barriers For Inclusion Of People With Disability In National Development aims to assist people with disabilities to gain access to quality education, government services, natural resources and to raise people with disabilities' consciousness about their fundamental human rights. In order to address the challenges faced by people with disabilities and in particular, to enable and include them in national development, there is the need to empower them by removing socioeconomic and cultural barriers to their development as well as by creating an environment supportive of inclusive social progress.

Keywords: people with disability, barriers, inclusion

1. Introduction

People with disabilities all over the world face a multitude of attitudinal, institutional and environmental barriers to education, employment, health care, housing and other services.

More than one billion people worldwide experience some form of disability, the United Nations and the World Bank said in a report that calls for the elimination of barriers that often force the people with disabilities to "the margins of society." The World Report on Disability, developed by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Bank, with contributions from over 380 experts, urges governments to "to step up efforts to enable access to mainstream services and to invest in specialized programmes to unlock the vast potential of people with disabilities."

The World report on disability, mandated by the World Health Assembly and jointly published by WHO and the World Bank, summarizes the best available scientific evidence on disability and makes recommendations for action in support of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006). About 80% of people with disabilities worldwide live in low-income countries. People with disabilities are often among the most socially and economically disadvantaged and their rights are denied in many countries. Despite the enormity of the problem, scientific information on disability is lacking. There is no agreement on definitions and little internationally comparable information on the incidence, distribution and trends of disability.

2. Inclusion for People with Disability (PWD)

Inclusion for People with Disability (PWD) is an effort to make sure all with disabilities go along with their 'regular' colleagues and neighbours while also receiving whatever, "specially designed instruction and support" they need to achieve high standards and succeed as human beings.

Inclusion is a sense of belonging: feeling respected, valued for who you are; feeling a level of supportive energy and commitment from others so that you can do your best work (Miller and Katz 2002).

It is not a onetime process but rather a routine process. The process of inclusion engages each individual and makes people feeling valued essential to the success of the society.

Is a sense of belonging, meaning and purpose, or happiness for everyone? Is the foundation of our country, the pursuit of life, liberty and justice for "some"? If inclusion is not for everyone, is exclusion for some? Who

decides who is to be excluded and on what basis, religion, race, sex, skin colour, beliefs, abilities?

Inclusion for PWD is not a matter of just being there or just because they are there? Are there no requirements of being an active participant or being considered as a member who belongs?

People tend to feel good when they have a greater capacity to function to their potential in every aspect of their lives. Everyone with disability has the same basic needs of health and physical fitness; social and a sense of belonging; mental challenges and stimulation; spiritual and a sense of meaning and purpose, as any other human being. When all these needs are met in an integrated way, PWD function better in every area of their lives. Unmet needs affect PWD overall well-being and their potential to function and learn.

Meeting all PWD needs should not be conditional upon placement. Being physically placed in the 'regular' institution should never mean that any needs are sacrificed. Additional needs cannot be met in an excluded setting.

People with disabilities (PWD) have the same rights as everyone else in the community. Most people with disabilities have limited access to education and skills training due to a combination of factors including: the lack of a coherent national policy and technical support system to address their particular learning/education/employment/ empowerment needs.

Particular needs and issues affecting people with disabilities generally are ignored in the national development agenda and their well-being is often treated as a matter of welfare rather than as a fundamental human right. On the other hand, people with disabilities lack the means to advocate for and claim their rights as citizens. As such, little formal effort has been made to effectively address their basic needs with regards to access to basic social services including education, skills training and sustainable livelihood opportunities.

In light of this and recognising that education is a fundamental human right for all, as well as a key instrument of development and social empowerment, The Breaking Barriers For Inclusion Of People With Disability In National Development aims to assist people with disabilities to gain access to quality education, government services, natural resources and to raise people with disabilities' consciousness about their fundamental human rights.

3. Improving Usability and Broadening PWD Participation In National Development

3.1. Equal Opportunities, Rebuilding Livelihoods

Poverty, stereotyping, difficulties in finding jobs, lack of self-confidence - landmine victims and other people with disabilities often face exclusion and an increased vulnerability, even though access to work is a fundamental human right.

Like all of us, people with disabilities need employment to earn a living, contribute to supporting their families and improve their self-esteem. Yet less than 20% of them are currently employed.

Employment enables people with disabilities to participate and contribute to community life, through the following;

- Entrepreneurship: a key opportunity to rise out of poverty
- Improving or developing skills: a prerequisite for sustainable livelihoods
- Access to Inclusive Microfinance: a step out of poverty
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3.2. Key Facts and Figures

People with disabilities, along with the majority of poor people, do not have access to financial services

- Only 3% get access to financial services (HI study on Good Practices for economic inclusion)
  However, there are a number of barriers that job-seekers with disabilities commonly encounter when trying to obtain waged employment:
- Their own lack of knowledge about their inherent right to work
- A lack of employment services

Prejudice and discrimination by employers, often due to their lack of awareness of the abilities and potential of disabled workers.

3.3. Accessible Environment

Creating barrier-free environments is an ongoing process that requires input from many people. Designers, builders, and equipment suppliers do not set policies and are not taught to design for or accommodate the full range of human needs and abilities. Building codes and laws cannot correct for this deficiency, so it is important for all to become active team members in planning for any program.

Involving people with a variety of disabilities as part of a team for assessing accessibility and recommending additional accommodations is essential. The lived experience of disability is an excellent resource. Local disability organizations or advocates can provide information on a broad range of disabilities including mobility, cognitive, vision, and hearing and are excellent sources for planning advice.

3.4. Social Inclusion

Social inclusion for people with disability means working to help them gain equal rights in society. It also means helping society understand their needs, and respect those rights.

Social inclusion means providing training and opportunities for people affected by blindness, and making sure that education does not discriminate against or exclude them. Social inclusion covers two key issues:

- Rehabilitation: we work with local partners to provide people who are blind with the skills they need to lead independent lives. These include daily living skills and vocational training to earn a living.
- Inclusive education: we believe that no child who is blind should be at home when they could be at school. Inclusive education means enabling mainstream schools to cater fully for such children, and training teachers to cater properly for their special needs.

People with disability can easily become isolated from their community. This is because they generally find it

harder to get employment, to attend school, or to take part in day-to-day community activities.

Lack of income, education and access to appropriate basic needs makes people with disability vulnerable to abuse, poverty and even early death. The risk of this can be reduced if governments and society adopt socially inclusive policies and practices.

4. Conclusion

In order to address the challenges faced by people with disabilities and in particular, to enable and include them in national development, there is the need to empower them by removing socio-economic and cultural barriers to their development as well as by creating an environment supportive of inclusive social progress. PWD should be encouraged to *actively* participate in activities as a member of the societies so as to build the capacity of disabled people's organisations and to bring about equal opportunities by removing barriers to inclusion to strengthen their skills, a unity of purpose and a combined voice at the national level thus addressing of disability in government policies and social protection programmes.

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