

Inclusion of People with Disabilities in Ethiopia



International
Labour
Organization



FACT SHEET

Women and men with disabilities can and want to be productive members of society. In both developed and developing countries, promoting more inclusive societies and employment opportunities for people with disabilities requires improved access to basic education, vocational training relevant to labour market needs and jobs suited to their skills, interests and abilities, with adaptations as needed. Many societies are also recognizing the need to dismantle other barriers - making the physical environment more accessible, providing information in a variety of formats, and challenging attitudes and mistaken assumptions about people with disabilities.

Current Situation

Some five to eight million women and men in Ethiopia, or 7 to 10 per cent of the population, have a disability¹.

A vast majority of people with disabilities live in rural areas where access to basic services is limited. A survey on disability in Ethiopia reported that 60 per cent of persons with disabilities of working age were unemployed in 1995, of whom some two-thirds were self-employed in rural areas in occupations such as agriculture, animal husbandry or forest activities². Begging is often a prevalent means of survival in urban centres, in addition to assistance from religious institutions and charities.

Governmental support for people with disabilities

The Government of Ethiopia has adopted and implemented a number of laws, policies and standards pertaining to people with disabilities, including their right to productive and decent work. The main ones are listed below.

¹ UNICEF Ethiopia Disability Programme, Fact Sheet, http://www.unicef.org/ethiopia/ET_Disability_fact_sheet_Nov_06.pdf, (accessed on 23 April 2009).

² ILO, 2004: Ethiopia country profile. Employment of people with disabilities: The impact of legislation (East Africa), p. 3.

- **Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia**, adopted in 1995. Article 41(5) of the Constitution sets out the State's responsibility for the provision of necessary rehabilitation and support services for people with disabilities.
- **Proclamation concerning the Rights to Employment for Persons with Disabilities, No. 568/2008**, makes null and void any law, practice, custom, attitude and other discriminatory situations that limit equal opportunities for persons with disabilities. It also requires employers to provide appropriate working and training conditions; take all reasonable accommodation measures and affirmative actions, particularly when employing women with disabilities; and assign an assistant to enable a person with disability to perform their work or follow training.
- **The Federal Civil Servant Proclamation No. 515/2007**, provides for special preference in the recruitment, promotion, and deployment, among others, of qualified candidates with disabilities. This provision is applicable to government offices only.
- **Labour Proclamation, No. 377/2003, amended by Labour Proclamation No. 494/2006.**
- **Developmental Social Welfare Policy 1997**, specifically targets people with disabilities and sets out to safeguard their rights and to promote opportunities for vocational rehabilitation.
- **National Programme of Action for Rehabilitation of Persons with Disabilities, 1999.** Aims to take disability preventive measures by promoting community participation; enable persons with disabilities and promote a better standard of living by building their capacity; and ensure their equal rights and full participation in society.
- **National Plan for Accelerated and Sustained Development to End Poverty (PASDEP)**, provides the framework for national poverty-reduction programmes for 2006-2010 and includes the provision of a safety net for persons in vulnerable situations who cannot work, including persons with disabilities.

Key ministries responsible for people with disabilities

At the federal level, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MoLSA) is the main governmental organ responsible for the provision of social and vocational rehabilitation of people with disabilities. Operating within MoLSA is the Department of Rehabilitation Affairs which coordinates disability issues at the federal level as part of its wider brief to deal with employment and social issues. Within each of the eleven regional states, there is a regional council, each with a Bureau for Labour and Social Affairs (BoLSA). BoLSAs handle all social matters, including disability-related issues, under the policy framework established by MoLSA.

Other ministries are expected to take responsibility for mainstreaming disability into their respective areas of work.

Key international standards on disability and their status

- International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention concerning Discrimination in Respect of Employment and Occupation, 1958, (No. 111). *Status: ratified, 11 June 1966.*
- ILO Convention concerning Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (Disabled Persons), 1983, (No. 159). *Status: ratified, 28 January 1991.*
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006) and Optional Protocol. *Status: signed on 30 March 2007, not yet ratified. Optional Protocol not ratified.*

Ethiopia also works to implement the Action Plan established for the African Decade of Persons with Disabilities, extended to December 2019.

Organizations of persons with disabilities

People with disabilities have formed six national associations under the umbrella of a Federation:

- Federation of Ethiopian National Associations of People with Disabilities (FENAPD)
- Ethiopian National Association of the Blind
- Ethiopian National Association of the Physically Handicapped
- Ethiopian National Association of the Deaf
- Ethiopian National Association for the Deaf-Blind
- Ethiopian National Association of Persons Affected by Leprosy
- Ethiopian National Association for Intellectual Disability

Other disability associations playing a key role in the disability equality movement:

- Ethiopian National Disability Action Network (ENDAN)
- Ethiopian Women with Disabilities National Association
- Tigray Disabled Veterans Association

The role of the ILO

The primary goal of the ILO today is to promote opportunities for everyone, including people with disabilities, to obtain decent and productive work, based on the principles of freedom, equity, security and human dignity. The ILO works to achieve its goals of decent work for all through promoting labour standards, advocacy, knowledge building and technical cooperation services and partnerships, both within the ILO and externally. The Ethiopia Decent Work Country Programme establishes the framework for delivery of ILO action.

In Ethiopia, current ILO technical cooperation projects on disability are:

the Project “Promoting the Employability and Employment of People with Disabilities through Effective Legislation” (PEPDEL). Earlier phases of PEPDEL included the compilation of country reports on legislation, policy and implementation mechanisms on the training and employment of persons with disabilities to build a knowledge base on people with disabilities; support to the establishment of ENDAN; identification of priority and needs in consultation with government, representatives of workers’ and employers’ groups and disabled persons’ organizations; support to the development of the Proclamation concerning the Rights to Employment for Persons with Disabilities, No. 568/2008; and, pilot testing of a training curriculum on disability legislation and policies in collaboration with Addis Ababa University and FENAPD.

the Project “Promoting Decent Work for Persons with Disabilities through a Disability Inclusion Support Service” (INCLUDE). The Project builds capacity at regional and national levels to effectively support the full participation of persons with disabilities in mainstream programmes and services focussing on vocational training, entrepreneurship development, employment, and micro-finance. INCLUDE also involves advocacy and awareness-raising activities to promote decent work for persons with disabilities.

The way forward

Productive and decent work enables people with disabilities to realize their aspirations, improve their living conditions and participate more actively in society.

Ensuring a disability perspective in all aspects of policy and labour legislation, effective implementation and enforcement of existing disability laws and policies and providing for equal employment opportunities and training are among the factors that contribute to the reduction of poverty and to the social and economic inclusion of people with disabilities in Ethiopia.

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