

GHANA FEDERATION OF THE DISABLED (GFD)

BOX AC 40, ARTS CENTRE, ACCRA

TEL: 233-302240530

info@gfdgh.org

www.gfdgh.org

Contact person: Yaw Ofori Debra

Tel: 233-243242913

yawdebra@yahoo.com

The Ghana Federation of the Disabled (GFD) is a national umbrella disability organization, established in 1987 as a pressure group. It was initially made up of three disability organizations namely, the Ghana Association of the Blind, now Ghana Blind Union, (GBU), Ghana Society of the Physically Disabled (GSPD), and Ghana National Association of the Deaf (GNAD). Its membership has since grown to seven to include Ghana Association of Persons with Albinism (GAPA), Share Care (dealing with multiple disability), and Mental Health Society of Ghana (MEHSOG). GFD is recognized and accepted nationally and internationally as the face and voice of disability in Ghana. Core activities of GFD include advocating for the formulation of policies and promulgation of legislations for the promotion and protection of the rights of persons with disability, empowering and equipping them with advocacy skills to enable them advocate for equal opportunities in their communities, and showcasing the capabilities and capacities of persons with disability to enhance their chances for employment and participation in governance. GFD spearheaded the campaign and the demonstration which resulted in the passage of the persons with disability Act 715, the passage of the Mental Health Bill into the Mental Health Act, and the ratification of the UN convention on the rights of persons with disability and the optional protocol, among others.

UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW

Ghana, with a population of 24 million, is a constitutional democracy with a strong presidency and a unicameral 230-seat parliament. In 2008 the opposition National Democratic Congress (NDC) won both the presidency and a small majority in parliament in an election deemed generally free and fair by domestic and international observers; John Evans Atta Mills was inaugurated president in January 2009.

Human rights problems included the following: use of excessive force by police, which resulted in deaths and injuries; ethnic killings and vigilante violence; harsh and life-threatening prison conditions; police impunity; prolonged pretrial detention; arbitrary arrest of journalists; corruption in all branches of government; violence against women and children, including female genital mutilation (FGM); societal discrimination against women, persons with disabilities, gays and lesbians, and persons with HIV/AIDS; trafficking in women and children; ethnic discrimination and politically motivated violence; and child labor, including forced child labor.

So far as the disability movements, represented by the Ghana Federation of the Disabled, are concerned, the government of Ghana has introduced some interventions to ensure the promotion and protection of the human rights of Ghanaians including persons with disability. They include the passage of the persons with disability bill into the persons with disability Act 2006, Act 715, the passage of the mental health bill into the mental health Act, the ratification of the UN convention on the rights of persons with disability and the optional protocol, the 2% of the district assembly common funds allocated to persons with disability in each district in Ghana, the national health insurance scheme, the national youth employment programme, tactile balloting, the LEAP, and LESDEP, among others. These and others are interventions which should have ensured the promotion and protection of the rights of persons with disability in Ghana.

Regrettably, the lack of implementation of these interventions has left many persons with disability marginalized and discriminated against. Majority of persons with disability thus continue to languish and wallow in despondency at the peripheral of society. For instance, because the legislative instrument for Act 715 is not ready since 2006, most of the provisions of the Act are not being implemented. The national council on persons with disability which has oversight responsibility of ensuring compliance with the provisions of the Act is not staffed and resourced. The council is therefore nothing but a white elephant. The Act states that persons with disability are to enjoy free education, and those in self-employment special incentives. These remain problems because the legislative instrument is not ready and as such nobody can tell at what level they will enjoy or access free education and what will the free education cover. Or what the stated incentives are. Again the Act states that employers who employ persons with disability will enjoy annual tax rebate. The question is what percentage of tax rebate will employers enjoy?. This is not encouraging to motivate employers to employ persons with

disability. Despite these laudable provisions persons with disability continue to suffer discrimination in education, employment and health care.

It has taken so many year of advocacy by the Ghana Federation of the Disabled and other civil society organizations to have the mental health bill passed into the mental health Act which is still awaiting presidential ascent to make it operative. So far as the disability movements are concerned the lackadaisical approach to the passage of bills for the promotion and protection of the human rights of persons with disability is a violation of their human rights.

The 2% of the district assembly common funds allocated to persons with disability in each district has the potential of reducing unemployment and poverty among persons with disability. Unfortunately, the management and disbursement of the funds have derailed the intention of the intervention. The national health insurance scheme does not include the additional needs of persons with disability, such as crutches, calipers, prostheses, lenses, hearing aid etc.. The national youth employment does not actually include persons with disability in the districts. Government appointments exclude persons with disability. Not even a deputy minister or district chief executive is a person with disability. Though effort is being made by the electoral commission to include persons with disability in the electoral process, officers conducting registration of potential voters or national elections choose venues most of which are inaccessible, thus disenfranchising most persons with disability.

From the above it is conspicuous that though there are various interventions for the promotion and protection of the human rights of persons with disability, the unwillingness to implement these interventions effectively result in the violation of the human rights of persons with disability in Ghana.