

CLEIMUN20

“Diplomacy in a Challenging Global Environment”

A Research Report

COMMITTEE: Human Rights Commission

QUESTION: The Question of the Rights of the Disabled

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Introduction and Background

Currently, about 15% of the world’s population, or 1 billion people, live with some form of disability. However, only 45 countries have anti-discrimination and other disability-specific laws written in their legislation.

The International Classification of Functioning, Disability, and Health (ICF), has defined disability as “an umbrella term for impairments, activity limitations and participation restrictions”. Disability is the connection between persons with a health condition and environmental factors. However, delegates should keep in mind that disability has more diversity among those who are disabled than other minorities. Some disabilities may not be caused by a genetic health condition, but external factors such as malnourishment or an accident. Similarly, not all genetic health conditions are experienced the same way by individuals who have them. It should also be noted that those with disabilities face their own unique set of challenges and discrimination in virtually all areas of daily life. But the most pressing of these is discrimination in the medical field. Many people with diabetes report they have their weight checked less often

than those who do not have diabetes. People with mental disorders and impairments report that they received no treatment the year prior to a study which showed these statistics at 35-50% for those in developed countries and 76-85% in developing countries. Often, people with disabilities report lower quality care and higher medical costs than people without disabilities do.

About Persons with Disabilities

Nearly 80% of those with disabilities live in developing countries. But, due to the economic, political, and social discord which often leave these countries wrecked, disabled people have little to no resources to accommodate their disabilities. For example, many children with special needs do not go to school (an estimated 90%), because their parents financial resources are already too strained to send them to schools which accommodate their needs. Even when they are sent to school, those with disabilities report lower educational attainment. This leaves the global literacy rate of adults with disabilities at 3% for men and 1% for women. Generally, children with disabilities suffer abandonment and stigmatization. This increases exponentially when combined with the highly traditional environments of developing countries. Infanticide is unfortunately very common, which leaves mortality rates much higher in children with disabilities.

As for the mothers of these children, they too may have a disability and passed it down to their child. Or, the lack of food, clean water, and chaotic environments leave families with generational scars. However, women with disabilities are considered even more disadvantaged and vulnerable due to their sex. Most women living with a disability report higher statistics of rape, abuse, and forced sterilizations.

How does a lack of physical access to areas outside and indoors affect the mobility of persons with disabilities?

Humanity is a social species, as it thrives on contact with each other. Therefore, when someone does not have access to social spaces and community events, their health diminishes. People with disabilities want to take part in their communities and have an active social life, but barriers such as no transportation, no extra money to spend, no ramps, etc. prevent them from doing so.

However, there are organizations that are run by the disabled for the disabled. For example, the People's Action Group for Inclusion and Rights in Ladakh, India, has had positive community outreach through the initiative of its president, Mohammed Iqbal. Mr. Iqbal created a community-managed garbage programme designed to employ disabled people like himself. Not only have they managed to employ the disabled in their community and reach out to their community, but they have also begun to dismantle the stereotype of being unable to work that Mr. Iqbal himself was influenced by. However, adults are not the only ones reaching out to their communities. Friendship Circle International is a Jewish organization for children with special needs. They have over 80 locations around the world and thousands of children and teenaged volunteers. Just like Youth Challenge in America, Friendship Circle International encourages children to participate in everyday activities, such as playing, going to parks, museums, and camps, providing support to their families, etc.

Why is it so difficult for those with disabilities to find employment and enjoy the same wages and benefits as their counterparts?

Nearly 386 million of the global population of working people are disabled. However, in some countries, those with disabilities can have an unemployment rate up to 80% or even higher. This is not due to any fault or failing of their own, rather their employers tend to have a bias against hiring those with disabilities. Often, the stereotypes of being lazy or unwilling to perform certain tasks against the disabled cloud the judgement of employers. It should be noted, though, that employers may simply be prejudiced against the disabled and are unwilling to support their disabled employees due to their bigotry.

Why do so Many Disabled People Live in Poverty?

Many people with disabilities live below the poverty line. Many others also live below the poverty line due to their family's lack of economic resources. For example, 90% of people whose vision is impaired live in low-income environments. This lack of economic stability may force them to forgo medications and treatments, live on the streets, rely upon welfare, etc. In fact, most disabilities are treatable and society could easily accommodate for them, but those in poverty will most likely live their whole life without any treatment at all. According to the World Health Organization, disabled people are 50% more likely to encounter disruptive health expenditures than abled people. Delegates should keep in mind that disability is a cause and consequence of poverty.

Should those with Disabilities be Allowed to Live on Their Own and have a Right to Privacy?

Many persons with mental and physical disabilities cannot live on their own. However, for the ones who are able to, this is not usually an option. Many governments require the disabled to live in facilities and hospitals in order to qualify for aid. Most of those with disabilities find this degrading, particularly since most disabled people live in poverty and are forced to choose between medical care and paying their bills. The World Health Organization states that “access to rehabilitation can decrease the consequences of disease or injury, improve health and quality of life and reduce the use of health services.” It is, therefore, vital that the disabled receive the care they need, especially since the disabled experience premature death without medical care. Furthermore, it has been observed that there is a distinct lack of qualified medical professionals in developing countries.

Past Efforts to Solve This Problem

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol monitors the implementation and enforcement of its Protocol in all nations that have ratified either the Convention itself or its Protocol. The Convention covers a far wider range of human rights for the disabled than any other international treaty. The Convention is operated by persons with disabilities, thereby ensuring those who traditionally have been pushed out of their own activism have full control over nearly all processes. They file reports, create solutions to various issues that afflict the disabled, and ensure these solutions are enforced to the fullest degree possible.

Possible Solutions

Delegates must use their own country's policy on disability to determine how they will create solutions to the diverse issues the disabled community face. However, the spirit of the conference is diplomacy in a challenging global environment and delegates must come to a consensus with each other. Therefore, the chair recommends that each delegate spend some time researching other countries' positions and policies on disability. Delegates may find that the similarities and differences for each country's policy and position may aid them in their writing and during debate in the conference.

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