

PRESS STATEMENT

COMMEMORATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES 2024

The Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ) joins the International Community to commemorate 2024 International Day of Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) under the theme **“Amplifying the leadership of persons with disabilities for an inclusive and sustainable future”** by encouraging Government and all relevant stakeholders to address the various barriers that limit the participation of PWDs in decision-making processes that affect their basic rights in order to enable the amplification of leadership potentials of persons with disabilities.

The 2021 Population and Housing Census undertaken by the Ghana Statistical Service indicates that there is an estimated number of 2.09 million people in Ghana with disabilities, representing approximately 8% of the population. In 2023, seventy-three and sixty-seven PWDs were elected as Assembly and Unit Committee Members respectively across the 216 municipal, metropolitan and district assemblies in Ghana. While this marks a significant improvement in the political participation of PWDs, more can be done to increase their inclusion in key decision-making roles in Ghana. This is crucial as there are no PWDs Presidential and Parliamentary aspirants in the 2024 general elections in Ghana.

Some cultural/traditional beliefs also stigmatize and discriminate against PWDs, leading to social, economic and political exclusion. Disability is socio-culturally constructed as a curse inflicted by the gods or ancestors due to some abomination committed by a PWD or their relative. The fact that PWDs are not allowed to assume traditional and most times community leadership roles due to some of these cultural beliefs is a major human rights violation of PWDs that needs to be addressed.

The discrimination and abuse against persons with psychosocial disabilities is another crucial matter that needs immediate attention. According to the Mental Health Authority, more than 5000 prayer camps and traditional healing centres exist

across the country. Most of these prayer camps house mentally challenged individuals who are held against their will, shackled and starved in insanitary conditions. Thus, Government and the Mental Health Authority need to urgently resource and develop the capacity of members of the Visiting Committees across the 16 regions of Ghana to inspect and monitor the rights of people with psychosocial disabilities.

CHRAJ recognises the various regulations and policies implemented to promote and protect the rights of PWDs. These include the 25% reduction in filing fees for women and PWDs presidential and parliamentary aspirants, mainstreaming special education into the regular school system¹, the Ghana Accessibility Standard for the built environment to ensure quality and non-discriminatory services in the built environment and the PWD Enterprise Support Grant.

Regardless of the above efforts put in place, government and relevant institutions need to do more to ensure the protection of the rights of PWDs and Ghana's compliance with the dictates of the 1992 Constitution, the African Charter on Human and People's Rights and the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (CRPD).

The Persons with Disability Act 2006, (Act 715) passed before Ghana's ratification of the UN CRPD is out of step with Ghana's CRPD obligations as it relates to women, children, right to information, and the conditions of persons with disabilities in disaster situations as well as political participation.

Thus, the Commission encourages government to expedite the review and amendment of the Persons with Disabilities Act 2006, (Act 715) to conform to the UN CRPD, and to also fast-track the ratification of the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. In addition, government through the Mental Health Authority is entreated to adequately resource visiting Committees and Tribunals across all the regions of Ghana to ensure the effective monitoring of psychiatric hospitals and prayer/traditional healing centres to ensure the respect of the rights of mentally ill individuals. There is also the need for a comprehensive public awareness campaign

¹ Currently being piloted in 379 schools in 70 districts. See <https://www.ohchr.org/en/news/2024/08/experts-committee-rights-persons-disabilities-commend-ghana-participation-ghanaian>

by the NCCE and the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection and CHRAJ to dispel harmful cultural beliefs associated with disabilities towards the eradication of stigma and discrimination that hinder the full participation of PWDs in all facets of life including leadership positions in the country.

The United Nations in 1992 through General Assembly Resolution 47/3 instituted the International Day for Persons with Disability to promote the rights and well-being of PWDs in all spheres of society and development and to increase the awareness of the situation of PWDs in every aspect of political, social, economic and cultural life. The theme for 2024, “*Amplifying the leadership of persons with disabilities for an inclusive and sustainable future*” recognizes the important role PWDs play in creating a more inclusive and sustainable world for all.



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