

PRESS STATEMENT BY THE COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND ADMINISTRATIVE JUSTICE (CHRAJ) ON THE COMMEMORATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES, 3RD DECEMBER 2020 UNDER THE THEME: “NOT ALL DISABILITIES ARE VISIBLE”.

The Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice, joins hands with persons living with disabilities, globally and nationally to celebrate this year’s International Day of Persons with Disabilities.

The United Nations in 1992 through General Assembly Resolution 47/3, instituted this day with the aim of promoting the rights and well-being of persons with disabilities in all spheres of society and development and to increase awareness of the situation of persons with disabilities in every aspect of political, social, economic and cultural life¹.

In 2006, the United Nations went a step further and adopted the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and its optional protocol² at the United Nations Headquarters in New York. The Convention had the highest number of signatures in the history of the UN on its opening day and it has helped advance the rights and well-being of persons with disabilities in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and other international development frameworks. These include the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the Charter on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action, the New Urban Agenda and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development.

The 2020 global theme ‘**Not all Disabilities Are Visible**’, focus on spreading awareness and understanding of disabilities that are not immediately apparent, such as mental illness, chronic pain or fatigue, sight or hearing impairments, brain

¹ <https://www.un.org/en/observances/day-of-persons-with-disabilities>

² A/RES/61/106

injuries, neurological disorders, learning differences, cognitive dysfunctions, and others.

According to a World Health Organization Report on Disabilities, 15% of the world's population, or more than 1 billion people are living with disabilities³ of this number, it is estimated that 450 million are living with mental or neurological conditions and two-thirds of these people do not seek professional medical help, largely due to stigma and neglect. Sixty-nine (69) million individuals are also estimated to sustain traumatic brain injuries around the world each year, while one in 160 children are identified as being on the autism spectrum.

The COVID-19 pandemic, with the various restrictions put in place by Governments have brought about isolation, disrupted routines and diminished services which have greatly impacted the lives and mental well-being of persons with disabilities around the world. There is the need to spread awareness of the various forms of invisible disabilities, challenges faced and the impact of COVID-19 on the general wellbeing of persons living with disabilities.

Ghana is a signatory to several international instruments and conventions that seek to protect the rights of persons with disabilities including the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Also, the supreme law of Ghana,⁴ the Constitution (1992) enjoins the State to enact appropriate legislation to ensure the protection and promotion of all other basic human rights and freedoms, including the disabled.⁵ In addition, Ghana in 2006 enacted the Disability Act 2006, (Act 715) which makes specific provisions for the rights of persons with disabilities.⁶

Unfortunately, persons with disabilities are one of the largest oppressed groups in Ghana, making up an estimated 3% of the Ghanaian population.⁷ Persons with disabilities in Ghana continue to experience various forms of discrimination and social exclusion. Children who are born disabled or deformed are assumed to be possessed by evil spirits.

³ <https://www.who.int/news-room/events/detail/2020/12/03/default-calendar/international-day-of-persons-with-disabilities>

⁴ Article 1(2) of the 1992 Constitution of the Republic of Ghana

⁵ Ibid: Article 37(2)(b)

⁶ Government of Ghana: Persons with Disability Act 2006, Act 715


⁷ Ghana Statistical Service 2012; picton 201

Additionally, traditional and religious beliefs and harmful stereotypes which often characterize interpretations of disabilities lead to the creation and reinforcement of repressive conceptualizations of disability.⁸ These occur despite the fact that there are several anti-discriminatory laws that are meant to protect the rights of persons with disabilities and facilitate their participation in mainstream social, political and economic activities. As it is, the laws have not completely eroded the discrimination and in some instances it appears to even institutionalize the discrimination that persons with disabilities experience.

The Commission acknowledges the positive work of the government of Ghana for certain interventions made to promote and protect the rights and welfare of persons with disabilities in Ghana. These include, increasing the District Assemblies' Common Fund for persons with disabilities from 2% to 3%,⁹ initiating an inclusive procurement policy that would promote the economic well-being of persons with disabilities and the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the Nation Builders Corps (NABCO) scheme to promote employment opportunities for persons with disabilities among others.

As we celebrate this day, the Commission encourages all to recognize and value the diversity of our community and to cherish the role we all play, regardless of our abilities. It is a day to understand and learn from the experiences of persons living with disabilities, to look towards the future and create a world where a person is not characterized by their disabilities, but by their abilities.

The Commission calls on government, organizations, agencies and individuals not only to show their support on the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, but take on a commitment to create a world characterized by equal human rights for all persons, provide opportunities for supported education, training or volunteerism and employment for people living with disabilities that are either visible or invisible.



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COMMISSIONER

⁸ kassah 2008

⁹ Ghana Federation of Disability Organization