

# 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



Based on the World Report on Disability jointly issued by the World Bank and World Health Organisation<sup>1</sup>, there are an estimated 15 million children, adults and elderly persons with disabilities in Ethiopia, representing 17.6 per cent of the population.

A vast majority of people with disabilities live in rural areas where access to basic services is limited. In Ethiopia, 95 per cent of all persons with disabilities are estimated to live in poverty<sup>2</sup>. Many depend on family support

and begging for their livelihoods. A study in Oromia region, for instance, found that 55 per cent of the surveyed persons with disabilities depend on family, neighbours and friends for their living, while the rest generate meagre income through self-employment, begging and providing house maid services<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> World Bank and World Health Organization: World Report on Disability, Washington, D. C., 2011.

<sup>2</sup> Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MOLSA) 2010.

<sup>3</sup> CARDOS (2007) Research report on the General Conditions of People with Disabilities in Ethiopia, Addis Ababa.



## 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:

- **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



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- requires employers to provide appropriate working and training conditions; take all reasonable accommodation measures and affirm active 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**, makes it unlawful for an employer to discriminate against workers on the basis of nationality, sex, religion, political outlook or on any other conditions.
- **Proclamation on Definition of Powers of Duties of the Executive Organs of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, No. 691/2010**, provides for conditions of equal opportunities and full participation of persons with disabilities and those living with HIV/AIDS.
- **Building Proclamation, No. 624/2009**, provides for accessibility in the design and construction of any building to ensure suitability for physically impaired persons.
- **Proclamation No. 676/2010 on the Ratification of the "UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities" (UN CRPD) by Ethiopia.**
- **Framework Document 2009**, provides for Special Needs Education (SNE) in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET).
- **Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP) 2010-2015**, establishes disability as a cross cutting sector of development where focus is given to preventing disability and to providing education and training, rehabilitation and equal access and opportunities to persons with disabilities.
- **National Plan of Action of Persons with Disabilities (2012-2021)** aims at making Ethiopia an inclusive society. It addresses the needs of persons with disabilities in Ethiopia for comprehensive rehabilitation services, equal opportunities for education, skills training and work, as well as full participation in the life of their families, communities and the nation.

## 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 Social Welfare Development Promotion Directorate which coordinates disability issues at the federal level as part of its wider mandate to deal with employment and social issues. In the eleven regional states in Ethiopia, there are regional Bureaus for Labour and Social Affairs (BoLSAs). 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 as stated under Proclamation No. 691/2010 on “Definitions of Power of the Executive Organs of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia.”

## 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: ratified, 7 July 2010.*



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## 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 of the Blind-Deaf
- Ethiopian National Association of Persons Affected by Leprosy
- Ethiopian National Association on 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 Ethiopian Centre for Disability and Development (ECDD)

## 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 this country.

*In Ethiopia, a current ILO technical cooperation project “Promoting Rights and Opportunities of Persons with disabilities in Employment through Legislation” (PROPEL) aims at capacitating the Ethiopian Government, social partners and disability advocates to be actively engaged in the implementation of ILO C159 and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). It also enables them to share the Ethiopian experiences in disability rights legislation, inclusion and CRPD implementation with other African countries as an example of good practice of the process of moving towards a disability-inclusive society. Starting with a systematic examination of laws in place to promote employment and training opportunities for people with disabilities in the selected countries of each region, the project sets out to examine the operation of such legislation, identify and strengthen the implementation mechanisms in place and suggest further improvements.*

## The way forward



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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 and training opportunities 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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