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Employment Opportunities of and Discrimination against Persons with
Disabilities: The Case of the Blind and the Physically Impaired

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Abstract

Persons with disabilities do not equally and fully participate in the life of their society. They are denied of equal opportunities in the areas of education and employment. Thus, this research is aimed at studying the employment opportunity and work conditions of persons with disabilities. This research used both secondary and primary methods of gathering information. Various literature and research studies have been reviewed so as to use them as secondary sources of information. Focus group discussion and in-depth interviews were employed in this research. Ten visually impaired and five physically disabled employees in different agencies were interviewed. It has been found through this research that the blind and physically impaired studied had been discriminated during application and competition for jobs. Some had been discriminated on training and promotion. Special tools and needs were not fulfilled and addressed in their workplaces. The cause for the discrimination is mainly lack of awareness and attitudinal problems on the part of employers. This results in adverse psychological, social and economic effects in the lives of the disabled. Therefore, awareness-raising programs, policy and legislative measures, advocacy and other initiatives by associations of persons with disabilities are needed to curb this problem.

INTRODUCTION

Disabilities exist everywhere in the world. They are of various kinds and have different effects on different persons in that some may be temporary or permanent, partial or total, fixed or changeable, have profound or no apparent effect on the working life of a person [ILO, 1985: 5]. They can be classified on the basis of their causes, nature or other factors. Based on the cause or origin of the disability, it can be classified as: congenital or early childhood disability; war disability; industrial disability or occupational disease; accident in street, at home, at play; illness and disease [ILO, 1985: 5].

On the basis of clinical or nature, disability is classified as: orthopedic cases; blind; deaf; those with speech defects; those suffering from nervous disorders; the tuberculosis; paralyzed; and, the mentally retarded [Ibid]. Terusew [1993: 69] listed seven types of disability groups based on the “international classification of diseases and injuries”: the visual [the blind and the weak sighted], the oral [the deaf and hard of hearing], the intellectual [mild, moderate and profound retardation], the motorical [neurological, musculo-skeletal and crippling, chronic health conditions], the lingual [oral and/or graphic], behavioral [emotional and social] and the multiple disabilities. Thus, this classification is made on the basis of the nature of the disabilities. However, among these, as Terusew [1993: 69] put, only those with obvious impairments like the visually impaired, the hearing impaired, the severely mentally retarded and those with motor disorders seem to be the most recognized in Ethiopia even though there are a number of persons with hidden disabilities [mild sensory, physical, intellectual, communicative and behavioral difficulties] whose problems are not easily detectable.

Because of different socio-economic circumstances and provisions that each society makes for the wellbeing of its members, the etiologies of impairment and the prevalence and consequences of disabilities vary throughout the world [Ibid]. Disability in the developed countries relates with aging. Terusew [2005: 5] cites an example from Canada where disability among children aged 0-14 constitutes 3.3% and nearly 10% among the youth and adults aged 15-64 while raises to more than 40% among persons aged 65 and above. Whereas, disability in developing countries, for example in Ethiopia, confounded with the absence of early primary and secondary preventive services, the presence of diversified disabling factors during pre, peri and posy-natal periods like the health of prospective mothers, difficulties contingent to delivery, childhood infectious diseases, lack of proper child management, traditional harmful practices, under/malnutrition, lack of clean water and environmental sanitations, inadequate immunization services, inaccessible medical care, civil strife and periodic episodes of drought and famine increase the rate of disability since early stages of life [Terusew, 1993: 73; Terusew, 2000: 1; Terusew, 2005: 2]. All these factors prove the relationship exists between disability and poverty and thus, the risk and incidence of disability in poverty stricken areas is much greater. What is more is that the absence and/or shortage of medical and other services in these countries depict the fact that disability is detected too late and hence, is often, irreversible [ILO, 1998: 29].

From statistical point of view, there is no a universally agreed upon rate of prevalence of disability in the world. As a number of literatures cite WHO's estimation, about 10% of any population is disabled as a result of physical, sensory and mental impairments and at least 25% of a population is adversely affected by the presence of

disability. In some of the developing countries, where about 80% of persons with disabilities [PWDs] live, the proportion of the population suffering from disability is as high as 20% and the lives of 50% of the general public are affected by disability [ILO, 1998: 28]. However, if we look at surveys and censuses conducted in various occasions in Ethiopia, they portray a totally different picture of the prevalence of disability in the country.

The 1994 Population and Housing Census revealed that the number of people with disabilities (PWDs) constitutes to be 988,849 [1.85%] [excluding the homeless] among a total population of 53,477,265 [ILO, 2004: 3; Terusew, 2005: 2]. While the Baseline Survey, conducted by Terusew and his colleagues in 1995, indicated that the proportion of PWDs in Ethiopia was to be 2.95% [Terusew et al. 1995]. This survey further elaborated the distribution of type of disabilities: 41.2% persons with motor disorders [conventionally referred as physically disabled], 30.4% persons with visual impairment [the blind and the weak or partially sighted], 14.9% persons with hearing impairment [the deaf and hard of hearing], 6.5% persons with intellectual disability [conventionally known as mentally retarded], 2.4% persons with speech and language disorders, 2.4% persons with multiple disabilities and 2.2% persons with behavioral difficulties. Thus, the physically disabled and the visually impaired constitute the highest population of PWDs in Ethiopia followed by the hearing impaired. Moreover, according to this survey, the highest incidence of disability is found in Addis Ababa where 17.7% of the families, included in the survey reported as they a disabled member in their family. However, this may be attributed to, as the survey further explains, the high rate of rural urban migration of the poor in which PWDs are part and parcel and the transparency of

families to discuss and disclose disability issues which shows their level of awareness to the issue. Another earlier population census held in 1984 in Ethiopia depicted that 1626400 [3.8%] persons were found disabled among the total population of 42.8 million [ILO, 2002: 6].

All of these reports were against whose estimation, which raises the prevalence rate of disability over 10% in developing countries. Terusew [2005: 2-3] discusses the explanations given for the cause of the difference between WHO's estimation and the survey and censuses conducted in Ethiopia, in terms of variation in scope or definition of disabilities and other socio-cultural factors. He displayed that, for example, the coverage of the 1995 Baseline Survey was limited to obvious disabilities by excluding minor, less obvious or hidden disabilities, which may have imposed limitations on daily activities of individuals and are inherent in WHO's estimation. From a socio-cultural point of view, unwillingness of families for the disclosure of their child's disability in fear of stigmatization and other negative consequences, and being unable to recognize mild impairments of their children particularly in rural areas where those persons with mild impairments lead an independent life and perform daily activities with no restriction; have been the causes for the difference between WHO's estimation and the survey. Furthermore, recently, there have come arguments that suggest the percentage given by WHO is overestimated and the prevalence rate is lower in developing countries due to the lower level of survival of multiply and severely disabled children [Savolainen, undated: 9].

Statement of the Problem

“Throughout the world, people with disabilities are participating and contributing in the world of work at all levels. However, many PWDs who want to work do not have the opportunity to work due to many barriers. Unemployment, among the World’s 386 million disabled people of working age is far higher than for working age individuals” [ILO, 2002: V] without disabilities. For the majority of PWDs, either there is no possibility of finding a job or the job, which they often obtain is remunerated, poorly paid, low-skilled, low-status jobs, which are both unrewarding and undemanding [a type of work, which has been termed as “under-employment” [Neufeldt and Albright, 1998: 10; ILO, 1998: 29].

For a variety of reasons, according to Neufeldt and Albright [1998: 5], “disabled people have found it inordinately difficult to participate in the economic benefits of their countries to the same extent as those with no disabilities. This has been true in both low and high-income countries, though citizens of low-income countries often face the greater disadvantage”, which shows the universality of the problem. For example, in Ethiopia, a study conducted by Terusew and his colleagues [1995] revealed that 60% of PWDs were unemployed and among those who were said to be employed, 64% were living in rural areas engaged in their own small agricultural, animal husbandry and forestry activities. Only 3.1% were working on professional and technical jobs, and at the time of the study, no disabled person was reported to have been employed on administration and management positions.

Because of such simple reasons like: lack of access to building or transportation, or the inability to communicate orally for the hearing and speech impaired and in writing

for the visually impaired, PWDs are often excluded from society's activities and prevented from participating in it [ILO, 1998: 29]. Neufeldt and Albright [1998: 12] stresses however, on discrimination to be the clear and the major for the increasing unemployment rate of the disabled and the discrepancy in employment rate and economic participation between the disabled and non-disabled. Often, disability goes hand in hand with discrimination and denial of equal opportunities in education, training and employment; and even if one's disability relates only to one faculty such as, sight, hearing, use of arms or legs, "there is a tendency for others to believe that they cannot do anything at all, or at least as well as those who are not disadvantaged in the same way" [Harper and Momm, 1989: 12]. In most societies, they are regarded as only "consumers" who do not contribute to the well-being and development of their society [Abreham and Woldesenbet, 2005: 5]. This is also a deep-rooted problem in Ethiopia, where PWDs are denied equal opportunities in various fields: education, training and employment, because of mainly resource limitation, overall poverty, ignorance and attitudinal problems [Terusew, 1993; Metasebia, 2001; Terusew, 2005; Abreham and Woldesenbet, 2005].

But evidences suggest that the great majority of PWDs can perform a large range of tasks in accordance with prevailing work norms, if appropriate training and placement services are provided for them [ILO, 1998: 29]. Besides, it is increasingly apparent that, as ILO [2002: V-VI] notes, disabled people not only have a valuable contribution to make to the national economy, but with their employment also reduces poverty rooted in a society.

Thus, this study tries to address the following seven questions in the field:

1. Did the visually impaired and the physically disabled face discrimination because of their disability when applying for a job?
2. What specific problems did they encounter in the application process?
3. Do the visually impaired and the physically disabled face discrimination because of their disability for promotion, transfer, training and development at the work place?
4. What does their accommodation in the work place look like?
5. What possible sources could be mentioned for the discrimination made against the visually impaired and the physically disabled in employment?
6. What kind of psychological, social and economic problems do the physically impaired and the visually disabled encounter in their life as a result of the discrimination made against them in employment?
7. What specific measures can be taken to reduce/eliminate the discrimination made against the physically impaired and the visually disabled in employment?

Objectives of the Study

General Objective of the Study

The general objective of this research is to study the employment opportunities and work conditions of the visually impaired and the physically disabled.

Specific Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives of this study include:

1. Assessing the problems encountered by and discrimination made against the visually impaired and the physically disabled when applying for a job and advancement and

development in employment and assessing the accommodation of the physically disabled and the visually impaired in the work place;

2. Examining the possible sources of the discrimination made against the visually disabled and the physically impaired in employment;
3. Understanding the psychological, social and economic effects of the discrimination made against the physically impaired and the visually disabled; and,
4. Recommending possible interventions that can be undertaken to reduce/eliminate the problem based on the findings.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant in that most PWDs suffer from discrimination in employment even if they have the required qualification. Thus, this study makes effort to investigate the magnitude of the problem with particular reference to the physically disabled and the visually impaired. In addition, this study tries to understand the possible sources and consequences of the discrimination made against the physically disabled and the visually impaired; because, the causes and consequences of the discrimination might vary based on the type of disability even though both groups experience it.

The physically disabled and the visually impaired, according to some studies, constitute the first and second largest proportion of disability groups in Ethiopia. Hence, this study is significant in that it addresses the issue of the large group of people in the society in general and among those PWDs in particular. Furthermore, the study can also be seen as one contribution in the area, where scanty information is available on.

This study is also significant in forwarding possible responses for the problem in terms of policy formulation, laws and their enforcement, program and projects development and social work practice etc.

Delimitation of the Study

This study is delimited to the visually impaired and the physically disabled among the disability groups. Furthermore, among the physically disabled, it only focuses on those who have problems related to mobility. It is delimited to those persons who are only employed in various government agencies and does not include those who are hired in private profit making organizations or those who are self-employed and who work in sheltered workshops, which have been established to serve mainly the disabled. The study only consists of those who are graduates of higher educational institutions. It is also delimited to the area of Addis Ababa.

Limitations of This Study

Resources and time were the very limitations of this study when being carried out. Because of this, it has been for this research to include the opinions of employers from government, non-government and private sectors. This made the research to consist of only the view of persons with visual or physical disabilities and hence, it included data gathered from only one side. In addition, this research could not find equal number of the visually and the physically impaired. Here, it is also important to mention the fact that some individuals were not willing to be interviewed, which limits the study.

The other limitation of this study can be mentioned is associated with the methodology employed by the research. Firstly, this study cannot be generalized for the

whole population of PWDs. Secondly, there is no way to detect what all the respondents said is true.

The scarcity of data on the issue of disability in general, and employment opportunity and work conditions of PWDs in particular is also the other limitation that can be cited. This scarcity of information on the matter of disability has also been proved by various researches like that of Terusew [2000: 2] and says data pertaining to disability in Ethiopia, is fragmentary, incomplete and some times misleading.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Definition of Terms

Different terms and definitions, such as abnormal, atypical, handicap, impairment, disability, exceptional children, etc. have been and still are used interchangeably both by professionals and non-professionals in referring to disabilities. Some terms are more linked to specific disciplines like abnormal to biology, atypical to psychology, etc [Savolainen, undated: 9]. However, the most commonly used definition of disabilities is given by WHO, which differentiates impairment, disability and handicap.

“Impairment” is “any loss or abnormality of psychological, physiological or anatomical structure or function.” Terusew [2000: 9] also defines “impairment” in such a way as “objective and lasting organic loss or deformities in any part of the body.” WHO then defines “disability” as to be “any restriction or lack [resulting from an impairment] of ability to perform an activity in the manner or within the range considered normal for a human being” whereas the term “handicap” refers to “a disadvantage for a given individual resulting from an impairment or disability that limits or prevents the

fulfillment of a role that is normal [depending on age, sex and social and cultural factors] for that individual.” The United Nations [1993], on the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Persons with Disabilities, defines “handicap” to be “the loss or limitation of opportunities to take part in the life of the community on an equal level with others.” According to the United Nations [1982] World Program of Action Concerning Disabled Persons, a handicap occurs when PWDs encounter cultural, physical or social barriers which prevent their access to various systems of society that are available to others. Therefore, a handicap occurs, as Terusew [2000: 9] points out, as a result of the interaction between the individual characteristics resulting from his/her disability and eco-social factors [the ecological and socio-cultural factors which hinder and limit the development and the performance of the individual].

The assumption behind this distinction among the three terms [impairment, disability and handicap] was based on the etiology of disability. Savolainen [undated: 1] exclaims that a disease may result in some kind of intellectual, language, sensory or motor impairment that lead to lack power or ability to act, communicate or take care of oneself [disability], as a result of which, a person can face problem like: dependency on others, neglect by others, low status and feelings of inferiority or low self-esteem and being socially marginalized [handicap]. Then, this leads us to the issue of discrimination.

ILO convention No. 111 [1958] defines discrimination as “any distinction, exclusion or preference made on the basis of race, color, sex, religion, political opinion, national extraction or social origin which has the effect of nullifying or impairing equality of opportunity or treatment in employment or occupation.” This definition covers access to training, employment or occupation and terms and conditions of work

[Richards, 2001: 11]. In addition to the aforementioned basis of discrimination in the definition, family responsibility, disability, state of health, age, trade-union membership and sexual orientations are grounds of discriminations in employment [ILO, 1996]. Art 4 convention No. 159 [1983] states “special positive measure aimed at effective equality of opportunity and treatment between disabled workers and others workers shall not be regarded as discriminating against other workers.” Here, this point also leads as to the issue of equalization of opportunities.

“Equalization of opportunities”, as defined by United Nations World Program of Action Concerning Disabled Persons, [1982] is “the process through which the general system of society, such as the physical and cultural environment, housing and transportation, social and health services, educational and work opportunities, cultural and social life, including sports and recreational facilities, are made accessible to all.” The United Nations Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons With Disabilities [1993] also defines this term as “the process through which the various systems of society and the environment, such as services, activities, information, and documentation, are made available to all, particularly to persons with disabilities.” Equalization of opportunities for PWDs implies that the obstacles to their social and occupational integration, which are inherent in an environment and education and training systems, are registered and appropriate measures taken to eliminate them [ILO, 1998: 28].

Visual impairment and blindness: the term “visual impairments refers to all degrees of vision loses” to include “people with low visual functioning [partially sighted] as well as those who have only light perception or those who are totally with out the

sense of vision” [Ysseldyke and Algozzine, 1995: 476-377]. Definition of visual impairment/blindness “relies usually on measurement of visual acuity, which is the ability to clearly distinguish forms or discriminate details as a specific distance. Most frequently, visual acuity is measured by reading letters numbers or other symbols from a chart 20 feet away” [Terusew 2000: 66]. Hence, “blind/blindness” is “a descriptive term referring to a lack of sufficient vision for the daily activities of life” [ibid].

Physical disabilities: “are problems that result from injuries or conditions affecting the central nervous system or other body systems and their related functions” [Ysseldyke and Algozzine, 1995:422]. They elaborate that among physical disabilities, orthopedic impairments are the most common which include “impairments caused by congenital anomalies [such as club foot and absence of some member], impairments caused by diseases [such as poliomyelitis and bone tuberculosis] and impairments from other causes [such as neurological problems, cerebral palsy, amputations...”

Employment of Persons with Disabilities

Employment is closely related to independence and enhanced self-esteem and it is the “first step” to curb poverty and is the key to create and distribute wealth equitably [ILO, 2000, as cited by Abreham and Woldesenbet, 2005: 12]. It is also a means to develop positive social identity and to get acceptance by the community [ibid]. This is particularly important point for PWDs who constitute the poorest segment of a population.

In reviewing the historical development of vocational rehabilitation services and employment opportunity of PWDs, ILO [1985: 2-3], illustrates that in the 19th century, care and welfare were the services provided for PWDs and their gradually followed the

realization that these were not enough by themselves and employment was of equal importance which led to the development of sheltered work-shops, often for especial groups. However, the WWI brought about the need to cater for large number of disabled ex-service men in the belligerent countries that led to the adoption of different schemes in several countries aimed at providing employment for these disabled persons. The WWII also produced large number of disabled ex-service men and disabled civilians, and this time much more extensive legislation were enacted in the belligerent countries for vocational rehabilitation leading up to resettlement. The shortage of man power during the war years which continued in to the post-war period, provided opportunities for employment of civilian disabled persons in replacement of persons taken in to the armed forces, in occupations which had never been previously considered suitable for them and which it had never been imagined they could perform. During this period, it had been also realized that full physical fitness is not required for the majority of occupations.

There are a number of international and national legislation which have been formulated in order to protect the rights of PWDs in various areas: education and training, rehabilitation, employment, recreation and so on. Various international and national campaigns have been conducted to raise the awareness of governments and other members of society with regard to disability and the rights and needs of PWDs. The International Year of Disabled Persons [IYDP], the international decade of disabled persons [1983-1992], the African Decade of Disabled Persons] 1999-2009] are some instances to show the due consideration which the international community gives to PWDs.

However, the fact remains that still, PWDs are denied equal opportunities in different aspects because of a variety of reasons. “The principle of equal rights for the disabled and none-disabled implies that the needs of each and every individual are of equal importance, that these needs must be made the base for the planning of societies, and that all resources must be employed in such a way as to ensure, for every individual, equal opportunity for participation” [U.N. 1982: 8]. Although this principle is adopted and advocated by a number of legal instruments and activists, PWDs too often are handicapped because of physical and social barriers in the society, which hamper their full participation in it. As Lindquist stated and Metasebia [2001: 19] quoted, “the ideas and concepts of equality and full participation for PWDs have been developed very far on paper, but not in reality. In all countries, in all types of living conditions, the consequences of disability interfere in the lives of disabled persons ... many of the existing obstacles and limitations occur in areas of fundamental importance to our situations as citizens of our societies.” One area in such condition is thus, equality of opportunity in employment.

Persons with physical or mental disabilities often face difficulties in taking part in social life like: access to vocational training and employment on equal footing with others [ILO, 1996: 20]. For a variety of reasons, PWDs have found it inordinately difficult to participate in the economic benefits of their countries to the same extent as those with no disabilities. This has been true in both low and high-income countries, though citizens of low-income countries often face the greater disadvantage. According to studies, in developed countries, disabled people are employed at a rate roughly one half that of non-disabled people; and at least twice as many disabled as compared with

non-disabled people are not in the labor-force. Furthermore, when employed, there is a great tendency for disabled people to be under-employed relative to their level of training. A report from the USA, examining the period 1981-1988 revealed that PWDs had only a 31.6% participation rate in the labor-force compared with 78.9% for non-disabled people [Neufeldt and Albright, 1998: 4-10]. It may be possible to estimate how PWDs' labor force participation seems in developing countries where unemployment is deep-rooted problem in the general public. Particularly, what is more is that in times of unemployment and economic distress, PWDs are usually the first to be discharged and the last to be hired [UN, 1982]. This source further notes that the actual number of workers with disabilities hired in regular or special settings is far below the number of employable disabled workers.

Sheltered workshops are provided for an increasing number of PWDs as centers of employment for those who wish to work [ILO, 1998: 60]. Sheltered employment is available in some countries of East Africa like Ethiopia, Uganda and Seychelles to PWDs who wish to work but for whom access to open employment is not practicable and are more vulnerable [ILO, 2002: 22].

Causes and Effects of Denial of Equal Opportunities for PWDs in Employment

A variety of reasons might explain the cause why PWDs' labor force participation is low when compared with their non-disabled counterparts. For instances, " it can be argued that they have a lesser degree of education and, therefore, are not as likely to be hired. Neither this nor other similar explanations stands up to careful scrutiny. ... It is true that, on average, disabled people receive less education and are likely to leave school with fewer qualifications than others. ... However, this does not by itself explain the

differences in labor force participation” [Neufeldt and Albright, 1998: 12]. For example, in Canada, PWDs with less than grade nine had an employment rate of less than 17% and it was 55% for the non-disabled, while those with university degrees constitute 50% and 87% for PWDs and the non-disabled respectively [Ibid].

Organizations of PWDs routinely report barriers that prevail in both developing and developed countries, which “most, if not all, of these could be removed or prevented with a modest amount of conscious planning” [Neufeldt and Albright, 1998: 12-13]. Transportation to and from work places particularly for mobility or visually impaired, physical inaccessibility of work sites for persons with mobility impairments, less opportunity to train in appropriate work skills and attitudes of people in market places, neighborhoods and amongst family members which consider PWDs as incapable of making a livelihood, are some of the most common barriers reported by such organizations.

But these and other barriers found in most literatures are related to and traced their root mainly only on attitudinal barriers in one or another way. If, for instance, work sites are built being inaccessible for persons with mobility impairments, it is the failure of the designers, which is a result of their ignorance or attitudinal problem. Therefore, this seems the reason that is why PWDs usually say, “ the social environment is more disabling and limiting than the disability” [Terusew, 2000: 9]. If the environment is rejecting, degrading, hostile type, that will not only complicate the adjustment of PWDs but also thwarts their development and affects their self-esteem, confidence [Ibid]. The stereotyped and unfavorable attitude of the public and its orientation about the inabilities rather than the abilities of PWDs make their whole situation complex. As studies reveal,

“PWDs must fight two battles: the battle to the limitation imposed by their physical conditions and the battle to be accepted by others” [Terusew, 1993: 69].

In Ethiopia, PWDs are thought as weak, hopeless, dependent and unable to learn and subject of charity [Terusew, 2005: 7]. The misconceptions about the causes of Disability and the misunderstandings of the capabilities of PWDs have resulted in general negative attitude, marginalized inter-personal relationship, limited provision of public services and special programs for PWDs and discriminatory practices in employment opportunities [Ibid]. Accordingly, PWDs in Ethiopia, as the study of Terusew [2005: 176] reveals, face serious challenges in getting employment opportunities even when they have the required training and qualifications because of the overarching reluctance of employers to hire candidates with disabilities. He further notes that an applicant is commonly disqualified when his/her disability is discovered by employing agency regardless of eligibility for the job.

From all of these facts, “one is forced to conclude that discrimination is a cause” for denial of equal opportunity for PWDs in employment [Neufeldt and Albright, 1998: 12]. A variety of researches reiterate, both in developed and developing countries, “disabled people face implicit if not explicit discrimination in seeking wage employment: they have less education than none-disabled people; they have less experience in business related areas including knowledge on how to develop a sound business plan, how to market etc and they have difficulty in accessing funding to capitalize their ideas” [Neufeldt and Albright, 1998: 288]. In general, inaccessibility of work places, failure of employers to understand what a disability may or may not involve and their unwillingness to hire PWDs, biased and rigid criteria of employment, ignorance of

employers about the potential of PWDs, mismatch between interests and job assignments were some of the reasons for the violation of the rights of PWDs even in the existence of a law that prohibits discrimination on the bases of disability [Terusew, 1998, as cited by Metasebia, 2001: 37].

Although both men and women with disabilities suffer from discrimination, women with disabilities are doubly discriminated because of their sex and disability status. This discrimination is severe and quite pervasive and affects all aspects of their lives as to education, employment, economic status, and marriage and family, health care and rehabilitation [ILO, 1996: 64; ILO, 1998:34]. As literatures show, men with disabilities are almost twice as likely to have jobs as disabled women. Even in sheltered workshops, prepared for training and employment of PWDs, the participation rate of women with disabilities is too low. Hence, women with disabilities are more likely than their male counterparts to be poor or destitute, illiterate or without vocational skills and most of them are unemployed [ILO, 1998: 34-35].

Neufeldt and Albright [1998: 14-15] point out two possible ways, which a disabled person, who is not participating in the labor force, is affected by discrimination. Firstly, having a job is a significant definer of adulthood in most societies. Not working means that a person might have great difficulty in defining his/her social role for others in response to the simple question often asked during introductions: "what do You do?" secondly, not working is usually accompanied by economic dependence, loss of self identity and self esteem. Working means that one is contributing to the development of his/her society while not working means that he/she is taking away from it. In addition, a very high proportion of PWDs, as compared to others, lead their lives in poverty in most countries

of the world, and most often, alternatively, they pursue begging as a means of livelihood [“a form of self-employment generally frowned up on in many societies”] [Neufeldt and Albright, 1998: 5]. And, this is more serious problem in the developing world.

Discrimination of PWDs in Employment

There are positive and negative types of discrimination made for and against PWDs. Positive discrimination is a kind of “preferential or differential treatment of a certain group of people in order to remedy the injurious effects of historical unfair treatments or practices” [Abreham and Woldesenbet, 2005: 17]. Positive discrimination thus, can be understood and properly practiced in relation to PWDs within the context of proper concept of disability and sound legislative grounds.

Abreham and Woldesenbet [2005: 15-17] discuss three variants of negative discrimination: discrimination in law [direct discrimination], discrimination in practice and indirect discrimination. Direct discrimination is the first type of negative discrimination, existing “when unequal treatment stems directly from laws, rules or practices making an explicit difference on one particular ground.” On the other hand, discrimination in practice is “the specific attitude of a public authority or a private individual that treats unequally, persons or members of a group on a prohibited ground ...” Indirect discrimination presupposes “apparently neutral situations, regulations or practices which in fact result in unequal treatment of persons with certain characteristics.”

Direct discrimination is revealed through available laws that establish distinctions based on certain characteristics of a group, for example, prohibiting those who have mental problem not to vote during elections of leaders. Treating PWDs in specialized

segregated establishments rather than in integrated settings, erroneous presumption of assuming that the limitations of some PWDs are characteristic features of all the disabled and judging them on the basis of one's good or bad experience are taken as discrimination in practice. As Abreham and Woldeesenbet [2005: 16] further clarified, PWDs are individuals having difference in behavioral and other traits among them. No two PWDs are identical in their behavioral traits and judging them based on one's good or bad experience and such generalizations are inappropriate. According to ILO [1996: 13], indirect discrimination in employment occurs when "the same condition, treatment or criterion is applied to everyone, but results in a disproportionately harsh impact on some persons on the basis of characteristics such as race, color, sex or religion and is not closely related to the inherent requirements of the job." The "same treatment", which does not recognize or accommodate differences based on various characteristics, has adverse effects on PWDs and other individuals as a group of people [Abreham and Woldeesenbet, 2005: 16]. The "same treatment", which disregards differences may not prove to be truly equal treatment for certain groups who cannot meet the eligibility norms and standards used.

The Americans with Disabilities Act [ADA], as Player [1999: 242-243] notes, establishes specific components of discrimination in employment to include:

- A. Participating in contractual arrangements that have the effect of subjecting the covered entity's [whose jurisdiction falls under the Act and covered by the Act [applicants or employees to discrimination;

- B. Utilizing standards or criteria that have the effect of discriminating on the basis of disability that are not justified in terms of job relatedness and business necessity;
- C. Excluding or denying equal job benefits because of a known disability of an individual with whom the qualified individual is known to have a relationship or association;
- D. Not making reasonable accommodations to known limitations of individuals with disabilities unless the covered entity by the Act can demonstrate that the accommodation would impose an undue hardship on the operation of the business;
- E. Denying opportunities to a qualified individual if such denial is based on the need of the covered entity by the Act to make reasonable accommodations; and,
- F. Failing to select and administer tests in the most effective manner.

Policy Issues in Employment of PWDs

PWDs usually want to choose what kind of work, the way how they work and lead their lives and how they support themselves and their families. For many, however, tight labor market, inaccessible work places and discrimination hamper them from fulfilling their desires and needs. Thus, political and social action is required in the first place to secure the right of PWDs to equal opportunity [ILO, 1998: 30]. This includes, among other things, formulating and implementing appropriate policies that promote equal opportunity for employment in the open labor market.

Policies are influenced by prevailing attitudes and understanding among the public in general and the concerned bodies in particular. Where disability is associated with shame, guilt and other similar attitudes, understandings and practices, the policy response is generally directed towards that of care by families or religious institutions and solutions under this tendency often involve charity. Murray [2002: 7] cites that “the legal approach associated with this understanding of disability has been described as “charity law” ... aims to alleviate complete destitution and provides for basic services in segregated settings, which are often stigmatized.” In contrast, where disability is seen to be socially constructed being, the policy response emphasizes on integration or inclusion or mainstreaming and solutions involve removal of social barriers in the built environment, in laws and policies [Ibid]. The approach, mainly prevailed in the world today, is the latter type to which policy responses to disability issues have been shifted. Policies and legislation in this approach focus on tackling structural inequalities and social exclusion treat disability as a human right issue seeing PWDs as citizens having citizenship rights and require reasonable accommodation to any establishments which they may involve in. According to ILO [1998], Murray [2002] and Abreham and Woldeesenbet [2005], laws promoting employment opportunities of people with disabilities may include: quota schemes, employment equity/non-discrimination laws and laws on job retention.

Quota schemes involve “an obligation on companies of a certain size to employ a specified percentage of people with disabilities in their work force” [Murray, 2002: 5]. If employers fail to do so, many countries require them to pay contribution that may be used to promote accessibility of work places, to finance different activities in order to prepare

disabled people for better access to employment or enable them to retain their jobs in the financial incentives and subsidies to offset the real or estimated costs of hiring a disabled person [ILO, 1998: 63; Murray, 2002: 5]. The quotas required that employing companies need to fulfill vary from country to country and according to the size of enterprises. In addition, some countries adopted legislation for compulsory placement of PWDs [ILO, 1998: 63-64]. However, employers prefer to pay the fine and in many countries, quotas are not met and this results again in unemployment of a large number of, particularly, persons with severe disabilities [Abreham and Woldesenbet, 2005: 30]. Lower level of educational qualification of PWDs and employers resistance to hire disabled people put the quota system in trouble [Ibid]. The enforcement of the quota in poor countries has also been proved to be costly and challenging [Perry, 2003: 174].

Moreover, Murray [2002: 7] points out the considerable debates raised on quota systems. Some argue that quota schemes portray workers with disabilities as having lower productive capacity than workers without disabilities who cannot be hired through merit. However, most argue that affirmative action is needed in recruiting, hiring, training and promoting individuals from groups that have traditionally been discriminated on the basis of race, color, sex, disability or other grounds [Abreham and Woldesenbet, 2005: 22].

According to Murray [2002: 6] equity/non-discrimination laws make unlawful discriminating against people based on their disability in recruitment, promotion, dismissal, training programs and other aspects of employment; and, “require employers and service providers to make reasonable accommodation for any specific requirements they may have and in some cases to develop affirmative action plans.” Abreham and

Woldesenbet [2005] the case of France to the only successful country in meeting its objectives of equal opportunities for PWDs in employment, by adopting both approaches: the quota scheme and the non-discrimination law in its legal system.

The United Nations, in its program of action concerning disabled persons [1982] calls for member States to promote employment of PWDs in the open labor market through a wide range of measures such as quota schemes, reserved or designated employment, loans or grants for small enterprises and cooperatives, exclusive contracts or priority production rights, tax concessions and others as appropriate according to national conditions. Now days, it is widely recognized that employment of PWDs should be mainstreamed in to the national employment policies in order to adequately deal with the issue. Therefore, ILO [1998: 64-65] suggests that “efforts should be directed at designing and organizing easier access to the open labor market for PWDs. Special forms of work organization such as sheltered workshops, ... should be limited to persons whose disability is too severe for them to be integrated in ordinary work setting.” This requires encouraging employers and incentives given for them. Among other things, as ILO [1998: 65-70] discusses, the encouragements may include subsidies for the adaptation of work places and equipment, financial incentives to encourage employers offer jobs to disabled workers, various forms of tax incentives [tax reduction or exemptions] etc.

Ethiopian Policies and Legislation Adopted to Promote Employment Opportunity of PWDs

“The effectiveness of laws in improving employment opportunities for disabled persons whether they are vocational rehabilitation laws, quota legislation or antidiscrimination legislation is central not only in terms of the economic rights of

disabled people but also their broader social and political rights which are closely linked to economic empowerment” [ILO, 2004: 1]. Ethiopia ratified the ILO Convention Concerning Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment [Disabled Persons] No. 159 [1983] in 1991. Since that time, the Ethiopian government has introduced different legislative and policy measures in relation to PWDs’ employment opportunities. Ethiopia included the issue of disability in its general laws and policies and specific laws that focus on promotion of employment of PWDs [ILO, 2002: 11]. Ethiopia included the issue of disability in its constitution of 1995, Developmental Social Welfare Policy of 1996 and the Federal Civil Servants Proclamation Proc. No. 262/2002.

Unlike previous constitutions of the past regimes, the Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia includes a provision, which tries to address the concern of PWDs in Ethiopia. Article 41 [5] of the constitution sets out the State’s responsibility for the provision of the necessary rehabilitation and support services for people with disabilities. In addition, according to Article 9 of the constitution, international legislation, which Ethiopia has ratified, have equal rank and acceptance as national laws. Thus, Convention No. 159 [1983], which pays due attention for the vocational rehabilitation and employment of PWDs, and which Ethiopia ratified has become part of the country’s law through this article.

The 1996 Developmental Social Welfare Policy of Ethiopia pays due attention for the issue of disability as one of the social problems in the country. It stresses on the significance of education, skill training, gainful employment opportunities and other services for PWDs, which are believed help them develop a sense of self-confidence and

self-reliance. The policy also takes into account the importance of taking appropriate legislative measures to ensure the welfare of PWDs.

In 1999, Ethiopia adopted a National Program of Action for Rehabilitation of Persons with Disabilities. This program embodies issues on educational, medical and vocational rehabilitation and other services that can be extended to PWDs to protect their rights and enable them be self-reliant. The objectives of the vocational rehabilitation of the action program include:

”To enable persons with disabilities get vocational training which help them improve their prospective life”;

”To improve capabilities and self-confidence of persons with disabilities”;

”To enable persons with disabilities engage in income generating jobs and support themselves and their country”;

”To enable persons with disabilities have equal opportunity in all fields of job”;

”To reduce the number of unemployed persons with disabilities”;

”To promote participation of women with disabilities in vocational rehabilitation and employment” [MOLSA, 1999: 26].

To achieve these objectives, the action program develops strategies and activities that are followed and undertaken. Among the various strategies developed by the program, the two are the following:

”provide incentives for organizations that employ persons with disabilities”

”implement Proc. No. 101/1994, which regulates employment of persons with disabilities” [MOLSA, 1999: 27]. The activities also include:

”provide appropriate support and incentives such as exemption from income tax and duty free etc for employers as per the number of persons with disabilities employed”
”issue and follow up the implementation of regulations and directives for Proc. No. 101/1994 providing employment for persons with disabilities” [MOLSA, 1999: 28].

The Rights of Disabled Persons to Employment Proclamation, Proc. No. 101/1994 is the only legislation in Ethiopia, which specifically addresses concerns of PWDs and provides for equal opportunity in employment for them. This proclamation aims at protecting the rights of PWDs to appropriate training, employment opportunities and salary, and preventing any discrimination at the work place. The proclamation issues: any individual with disability has the right to compete and be selected for any vacancy and training unless the nature of the work demands otherwise; selection criteria shall not be based on the disability of the candidate; reservation of certain jobs for PWDs; the right of disabled persons to get the necessary materials and equipments to perform their job; etc. Art 6 then, provides for grievance procedures and says “any disabled person, whose rights are affected because of non-compliance with the provisions of this proclamation and regulations and directives issued herein under, may lodge his grievance to the organ empowered by law to hear the labor dispute.”

While Proc. No. 101/1994 bans discrimination that is made on the basis of disability, the Federal Civil Servants Proclamation, Proc. No. 262/2002 goes further and provides for affirmative action for PWDs in recruitment for employment. It prescribes on Article 13 [4] that meeting the minimum passing score is sufficient for applicants with disabilities competing for vacancies and that those, meeting this score get preference to be hired. However, this proclamation works only in the government sector.

The labor Proclamation, Proc. No. 377/2003, which governs the private sector, bans discrimination and make it unlawful activity for an employer to make distinction “between workers on the basis of nationality, sex, religion, political outlook or any other conditions” under its Art 14 [1] [f]. Thus, it does not expressly prohibit discrimination based on disability, but the phrase “any other conditions” may be taken to include disability even though it remains ambiguous.

The 1995 Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, Proc. No. 101/1994, the 1996 Developmental Social Welfare Policy, and the 1999 National Program of Action for Rehabilitation of Persons with Disabilities, the Federal Civil Servants Proclamation Proc. No. 262/2002, are the general and specific laws and policies that deal with concerns of PWDs in Ethiopia. However, it is not uncommon to hear from PWDs and their organizations saying that the major government documents like that of the “Poverty Reduction Strategy” and others ignored their concerns. In addition, the enforcement and implementation of the available laws, policies and programs remains the challenge for PWDs in Ethiopia to full participation and equal opportunity.

In General, PWDs are found throughout the world and according to studies, at least 10% of any population is affected by disability and about 25% of any population is adversely affected by the presence of disability. They are denied equal and full participation in social life in general and employment in particular. The major cause of this is discrimination, which is attributed to attitudinal problem and lack of awareness of the public in general and employers in particular. In this regard, endeavors have been made at international and national levels to respect rights of PWDs in employment and other fields through legislative and policy measures. The United Nations and ILO have

played important role in these efforts. Ethiopia has also included to some extent disability issues in its general policy and legal documents and specific legislation that dealt with concerns of disabled persons. The reality shows that the rights of PWDs have very far developed on paper yet in practice; their rights are still being deprived in different fields including employment. This is true both in developed and developing countries and in Ethiopia to.

METHODS OF THE STUDY

This study used both primary and secondary sources of data to gather information on the subject matter discussed in this paper. The research entirely depends upon qualitative methods when collecting data. Focus group discussion [FGD] and in-depth interview were the two major methods employed by this research as primary sources of data. These methods were selected by the research because, they have been found to be more appropriate to gather deep information on the subject and allow flexibility when running different sessions of interviews, which help to clarify unclear questions and pick important cases needed for the research.

The FGD was held with leaders of organizations of and for PWDs and knowledgeable persons on the issue of disability in general and employment of PWDs in particular. In addition to their being leaders of organizations of and for PWDs and experts in the field, participants of the FGD were themselves disabled [four were visually impaired and two were physically disabled]. The discussants in the group were six: chairman of the board of the Federation of Persons with Disabilities, the manager of Ethiopian National Association of the Blind [ENAB], the public relations officer of the Ethiopian National Association of the Physically Handicapped [ENAPH], Director of

Cheshire Foundation Ethiopia [an organization working on disability] and the remaining two were those persons who conducted research on the employment of PWDs in the Civil Service of Ethiopia. In the discussion, the researcher tried to explore the views of the participants on the employment opportunities and work conditions of PWDs in general and used the following topics to guide the discussion:

- A. Discrimination made against the blind and the physically impaired,
- B. Specific areas or occasions where and when PWDs face discrimination,
- C. possible sources and consequences of the discrimination made against the physically disabled and the visually impaired,
- D. the policies and legal system of Ethiopia related to disability,
- E. the role played and should be played by organizations of and for PWDs,
- F. steps need to be taken by various bodies [including PWDs themselves and governmental and non-governmental organizations], etc.

The in-depth interviews were held with the visually impaired and the physically disabled persons who were selected to be respondents for this study. From the in-depth interviews, this research tried to explore the experience and views of the respondents in relation to: discrimination they might face during application for a job, promotion, transfer, training and development in their present or other job in the past [if there was any]; their relationship with their coworkers and bosses; fulfillment of their special and necessary materials and equipments needed to perform their job; steps they take when they encounter discrimination; possible sources and consequences of the discrimination made against them; steps various bodies should take; etc.

Two different checklists [one for the FGD and the other for the in-depth interview] were prepared, which the research was guided by during running the FGD and the interview sessions. The checklists consist of questions that were believed help the research explore the aforementioned issues. The FGD and the interviews made with the respondents were recorded by cassettes through their permission. The researcher first used to ask their willingness to be interviewed and when they agreed, then informed them about the research and its objectives and then asked whether they are volunteer to be recorded or not. Then, when they expressed their consent, the sessions started to be run.

The sampling procedure, which this research followed, was purposive. Ten persons with visual impairments and five persons with physical disabilities were selected for the interview based on their willingness to be interviewed, year of work experience and availability. No interviewee has less than five years work experience in one or more agencies. This was done to be able to gather deep information from those who have more experience and might encounter various problems in different aspects of employment. The analysis of the findings will be descriptive and analytic in approach.

Different books [published and unpublished] have been reviewed in order to use them as secondary sources of data and gather information from literature available and written on the issue of disability in general, and employment opportunities of PWDs in particular. In this regard, ILO publications, Conventions and recommendations have been good sources. Journal articles have also been used as important secondary sources of data. In addition, proclamations and policy documents have been visited to get information on the steps, which Eth

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Background Information about Respondents

Respondents of the in-depth interview were fifteen in number among whom the ten were visually impaired and the remaining five were physically disabled employees. Regarding their educational level, two of the physically disabled were diploma holders while all the remaining 13 had their first degree in various fields. Four of the visually impaired and two of the physically disabled were females and six of the visually impaired and three of the physically disabled were males. Totally, nine of the respondents were males and the remaining six were females. Their age ranges from 27-49. Eight of the respondents reported to be unmarried while the remaining seven responded to be married.

The range of their years of work experience also varies, the minimum being five and the maximum 23. Six of the respondents worked for 5-10 years while seven of them served for 11-17 years in one or more agencies. The remaining two had work experience of 22 and 23 years in various organizations. Regarding their first employment, the five were directly placed in work settings immediately after graduation by the government and the two became hired in their first trial. The remaining eight, as they reported, succeeded in gaining employment after repetitive trials among which some denials of the chance to be employed were based on their disability. Among the ten who reported to work in two or more agencies, the two came in to their present occupation and work place through promotion and the other five held their present occupation through transfer initiated by them. The remaining three reported as they left their previous work place and came to their present one because of repetitive undue hardships imposed on and discrimination made against them by their bosses on the basis of their disability.

When we come to the background of participants of the FGD, all were males. One of the participants had 12+2 and another one had 12+4 level of education. One of them had his first degree in Sociology and Social Administration and another one had first degrees in two fields: in law and in Sociology and Social Administration. The one had post-graduate diploma and the other had his second degree. Four of the discussants had leadership positions in organizations working on disabilities and the remaining two had conducted research on the employment situation of PWDs in the Civil Service of Ethiopia. All of them had disability [two were physically disabled and four were visually impaired].

Discrimination Made Against Persons with Visual or Physical Impairments When Competing For A Job

The first question of the study was did visually impaired and physically disabled persons face discrimination because of their disability when applying for a job? And the second question was what specific problems did they encounter in the application process?

In this regard, the majority of the respondents with visual or physical impairments reported to have been discriminated against during application and competition for jobs in various occasions based on their disabilities. They reported as either they had been screened out before approaching for tests or denied the opportunity to be hired after they passed the tests. One physically disabled woman reported “my disability is mild. Once I competed in Airlines and worked well in the test. I was told as I won the competition and went to report. However, when the authorities of the Agency saw me and discovered my disability, they asked me that how the committee, which had given the test, reported me

won on the competition. Because, as they said, I might need special additional expenses from the agency and refused me for admission.” Another respondent with visual impairment expressed that “12 vacancies were once announced through news-letter called “Addis-Zemen”. Totally, 18 persons, who fulfilled the criteria, were called for a test. Among the 18, I was the one and there were three other blind individuals called for the test. The test was too simple and I did it well. However, in contrast to the vacancy announcement, they admitted only five persons and none of the blind competitors was among the five. Did all of us work poorly on the test? I don’t think so. We were discriminated because of our disability.” Another respondent with visual disability also mentioned his experience in an interview test. “It was in correctional administration. In the interview test, I was asked how I could escape if gun is fired on me. I replied that if it happened, I would try to run and escape. I do not know why they asked me this question. They might have reason. But in my opinion, they wanted me to be out of the competition.” Another women with visual impairment responded to this research saying that, “I tried in a number of places to be employed. Some did not call me at all for tests. Some used to tell me I could not work on the job since the jobs required fieldwork and computer skill after I had been told won on the competitions.”

In addition, the participants of the FGD revealed that as they knew many cases that had been denied employment opportunity because of their disability. They also discussed their own experiences which they encountered when looking for jobs. One of the discussants reported that he was refused to get hired in a non-governmental organization because of his blindness and he added that one individual, among the committee members for the hiring, had told him as he couldn’t work on the post because

of his impairment even though the job had been related to counseling. Another discussant also pointed out his being refused employment in government organization because of his disability.

All the participants of the focus group discussion and the interview respondents believe there is a serious and deep-rooted problem in obtaining job for PWDs. According to them, persons without disabilities are able to find some kind of job in accordance with their level of education or type of training. Those persons without disabilities whether they completed elementary, secondary or tertiary education, can find job which fits their educational level. But, PWDs have no option other than begging if they have not graduated from higher educational institutions. In fact, some are seen when working on streets peddling, selling lottery tickets, etc. In addition, as they stressed, it is not uncommon to be discriminated against on the basis disability even among the graduates. Besides, they pointed out that the private sector has totally ignored the employment opportunity of PWDs.

Even among those who were directly placed in agencies by government, one reported that he had been denied admission and sat for three months idle until another placement had been found him. One also raised the same experience among the participants of the FGD. Both cases were during the Derg regime when all graduates of higher institutions were directly placed in government agencies.

Some respondents in the interview also reported that organizations of and for PWDs themselves discriminate among persons in employment based on disability. One interviewee with visual impairment reported to this research that he had encountered discrimination by Ethiopian National Association of the Blind [ENAB] and a

psychologist had been hired in contrast to the vacancy announcement, which demanded sociologist or economist.

In contrast, two of the respondents of in the interviews, who were directly placed in schools by the Ministry of Education immediately after their graduation, reported that they were favored to be placed based on their choice; and, the remoteness of their location from Addis Ababa and the availability of infrastructures and facilities were taken in to consideration for them.

Treatment, Accommodation and Opportunity of PWDs to Training and Advancement in Employment

The third question of the study was did the visually impaired and the physically disabled face discrimination because of their disability for promotion, transfer, training and development at work place? And the fourth question of the study was what does their accommodation in the work place look like?

Respondents in the interview sessions were asked whether their special needs, including materials and equipment are fulfilled in their work place or not. Among the ten visually impaired employees, eight reported as they had readers hired by their agencies. But they reported, as there had been hard times of work before these readers had been hired for them. As one of the respondents told to this research, “I had no one to read for me, hired by the agency, in the first year of my employment. I used to take documents to my house usually on Saturday and Sundays to read them with my family members. And, this had its own effects on my daily activities and efficiency. A document that came I to my office on Monday had to wait until weekends to be read by me.” However, the other two, who are both teachers in their profession, reported that they had no one to read and

write through ink for them and thus, were obliged to use their colleagues, family members or sometimes pay for some one from their pocket to find a reader and/or writer.

All of the ten blind workers cited the unavailability/scarcity of Braille materials in their work places provided by their employing agencies. But one reported to have Braille machine, which costed him 1900 Eth. Birr out of his own pocket. This respondent was obliged to buy the Braille machine, as he said, when he had been refused a computer with screen reading software [JAWS] by his agency. One of the teachers had some part of the textbook in Braille bought by the school while she was obliged to look for somebody to read for her the remaining parts of the text. The other visually impaired teacher in a high school reported that she had the texts in Braille copy but purchased by her own expense. Particularly, both of the teachers noted that they usually faced difficulty in finding Braille copies of texts, when textbooks are reformed or when they are assigned to teach new grade levels to which they have no prepared Braille texts. As they pointed out, when new textbooks are distributed to schools, the concerned bodies do not take in to consideration that there are blind teachers who need Braille copies. In addition, there are no Braille publications in the libraries of the schools where both of the teachers teach and also no special arrangements if they come with a reader.

In all of the agencies where the physically disabled respondents work, there was no ramp to facilitate to them to up and down stairs. However, two of them reported to work on the ground floor and thus, faced no difficulty on daily activities of their jobs. The other two had to up and down stairs using their crutches and the remaining one used lift that existed in his agency.

The participants of the FGD also discussed on this point and informed this researcher about the unavailability of special necessary materials and equipments in work places for PWDs in general and for persons with visual or physical impairments in particular. Braille materials are not provided for the blind at work places partly because it is not easy to find these materials in the market and partly because of ignorance or negligence of employers. As the discussants also raised, buildings are not constructed considering persons with physical disability, and as a result, any locations where they need to go to get services in general, and work sites in particular are inaccessible for them. They also pointed out that hiring readers for the blind is being encouraged by government, however, there are some employers who looked at this as extra expense for their agencies or resisted hiring disabled as expected and because of this they reject candidates with visual impairments for employment.

Notices are posted on boards through ink, which the blind workers do not read unless their colleagues tell them what is noticed. There is no any other arrangement in any of the agencies, where respondents of this research work, to enable workers with visual impairments see available notices. In fact, all of them reported, they lost no opportunities because of the inaccessibility of the posted notices.

Regarding their experience in gaining training opportunities, the majority of respondents expressed that they had not been refused the chances because of their disabilities. But as they reported, the problem is that the training materials were not prepared in Braille copies and places where the training given were sometimes far from Addis Ababa and inaccessible to the physically disabled. The trainings might be arranged, as one participant of the FGD showed for example, “to be given in Nazareth, in

the third floor of a hotel. The inconveniences of training places for the physically disabled exclude or creates problem on them to take part in the trainings.” In addition, one physically impaired woman reported her experience with regard to training in her previous job. She had been denied training opportunities, but once she had got the opportunity to train in computers through an exhaustive push from foreigners who had been participating in the management of the agency at that time. But then, they had left the country and she had not been made to apply her training in her work place and others had been assigned to work in her place. She then, added the point that “the very sad thing is that this is done by an organization, which works on the rehabilitation of persons with physical disabilities. Even in times of exams, when I was learning in AAU, they did not volunteer to cooperate with me in giving permission, which they used to do for others. But I was obliged to carry out other tasks in the organization which were out of my duty.” Among the visually impaired respondents, one mentioned he had been denied an educational opportunity for a Masters degree, given abroad, after he had won in the competition. He told to this researcher that, “after I have been told by my immediate boss I won the competition, the Head of the Administrative and Finance Service vividly said to me that he would be blamed if he sent me for masters education abroad in the presence of other sighted competitors. Because of my impairment then, I lost the opportunity.”

Again, the majority of respondents expressed, that they had not been discriminated on the basis of their disabilities with regard to promotion. Two of the respondents, however, reported they to have been rejected for opportunities to be permanent workers because of their disability when they had been working as contract employees in their previous organizations. In addition, one discussant with physical

impairment in the FGD noted “My first organization of employment, prohibited me from being a permanent employee because of my disability. The authorities of the organization rejected my application by saying that I could not go up and down stairs in the ship, but I used to work there on the fourth floor where I most often went up and down stairs on foot because of the problem associated with the lift of the organization. My disability is mild. They knew this but rejected me.” He also added “my next place to work was Ministry of Agriculture. I competed to be promoted to the rank of Head of Administrative and Finance Service. I was told that the job required movement in the field and this was inconvenient to me.” The participants of the FGD further pointed out the difficulty for the visually impaired employees to be promoted to higher government posts because it is believed that they could not keep high government secrets since they need someone to read messages they received. Besides, according to the available laws of Ethiopia, blind people are not able to sign on bank checks. Thus, higher posts, where signing on bank checks is common, are not given to the visually impaired workers. Moreover, as they clarified, the unfulfillment of necessary materials, loss of training opportunities due to various reasons and inaccessibility of work sites might affect the efficiency of PWDs, which is the basis for promotion.

All of the interviewees reported to have good relationships with their coworkers. The majority of them also believed that their bosses were satisfied by their performance. However, two of them replied, as they did not know about feelings of their bosses about their performance. All of the respondents also reported as their type of qualifications and jobs matched.

Steps Taken By the Persons with Visual or Physical Impairment When Facing Discrimination in Employment

The majority of respondents reported that face discrimination when searching for jobs. Some have reported to be discriminated against to get training in their employment and some others have expressed they had been denied promotion because of their disability. But only a few of them reported to take measures during these occasions. One respondent with a physical disability expressed to this search that he had applied to the board of the organization when he worked and to the institution of ombudsman, and finally, he was successful in gaining the promotion to which he had competed. Another interviewee with visual impairment expressed that he applied to the then Civil Personnel Agency and the Council of Addis Ababa Administrative Region. Two of the respondents used to usually submit their grievances to their bosses. But the majority of the interviewees had not taken any action in response to the discrimination that had been made against them in various occasions.

Sources of Discrimination Made Against Persons with Physical or Visual Impairments in Employment

The fifth question of the research what possible sources could be mentioned for the discrimination made against the visually impaired and physically disabled employment?

Various reasons were given by respondents to be causes of discrimination made against them and other PWDs. They were asked to reflect on their beliefs about the possible sources of discrimination made against them and other PWDs in employment. Unavailability of clear and well detailed legislative measures that penalizes employers

who fail to hire PWDs and to fulfill their special needs, materials and equipments is the major cause for the deprivation of rights of PWDs to equal opportunity in employment. The absence of regulations and directives, which might have been good legal instruments to enforce Proc. 101/1994 left adequate space for employers to discriminate between workers or applicants for a job based on disability. In addition, some employers do not know even the available laws regarding the rights of PWDs to equal employment opportunity.

Some employers consider the fulfillment of the special needs, materials and equipment as imposing additional burden on and expense for their organization, and as a result, prefer not to hire applicants with disabilities. As respondents further added, employers assume that PWDs cannot perform fieldwork, or if they believe that they could do so, some consider sending PWDs to fieldwork as unfair act. Besides, particularly persons with physical disabilities, as the representative of ENAPH on the FGD noted, “are deprived of equal employment opportunity simply for protocol reasons.” Some interviewees also raised employers’ tendency to make generalizations about efficiency of PWDs based on their previous experience with a certain individual with certain type of disability. If they had hired a disabled person who was inefficient in his/her performance due to his/her very personal capacity or behavior, employers usually make a generalization as this is the typical characteristic of the disabled as a whole. They often fail to understand that PWDs are individuals having differences among them in capacities, potentials and behavior. Thus, this also serves as a good cause for employers to make discrimination between workers based on disability.

The unfulfillment of the needs and materials of PWDs in the work place has adverse effects on their efficiency and this again affects their promotion and advancement in employment. Some bosses of PWDs also hesitate, as some respondents explained, to give tasks for them, which they believe PWDs could not perform and this also affects their efficiency and advancement in employment. In addition, particularly as participants of the FGD pointed out, the available laws, which prohibit persons with visual impairments to sign on bank checks, also serves as grounds not to promote the blind to higher government posts in employment.

The focus group discussants also noted that lack of educational opportunity for PWDs has adversely affected their employment. Particularly, the chance to be educated is very minimal for the physically disabled when compared with those of the visually impaired. Schools are inaccessible for the physically impaired and hence, do not join schools or drop out at certain grade level because of the problems they encounter due to the inaccessibility of the schools. They pointed out that blind persons have the opportunity to learn in boarding schools, which is relatively better than what is available for the physically disabled. In addition, the required Grade point Average (GPA) to join higher educational institutions is usually lowered for students with visual impairments than the sighted ones. This widened the opportunity of the blind to join higher educational centers, and as a result, improved their employment opportunity. But the physically disabled have not been taken into consideration in this regard.

The majority of respondents also believed as PWDs themselves contributed to the denial of equal employment opportunity for PWDs. As they stressed, PWDs often prefer silence when their rights to employment are denied. They do not appeal to the concerned

bodies in their agencies or to courts or elsewhere. They further noted that some PWDs do not carry out their duty well in employment and some times they inappropriately tend to associate their inefficiency with their disability. Thus, employers misunderstand about the abilities and potentials of PWDs and make generalization that all PWDs could not perform their jobs efficiently.

According to respondents and participants of the FGD, associations of PWDs also had not shown much effort to advocate for the rights of PWDs in general and to employment in particular. As especially the participants of the FGD explained, this is partly because these associations have their own internal problems and partly, they have scarcity of capable and committed human resources. But the representative of ENAB reminded the role ENAB played in the formulation and promulgation of Proc. No. 101/1994. As he stated, it was because of ENAB's letter to the then Prime Minister Tamirat Laynie that the proclamation had been issued. The letter described the discrimination made against PWDs in employment and the then Prime Minister paid due attention to the issue and later, the proclamation came into being. But since the proclamation has no regulation and directive, the provisions of the proclamation have remained only on paper according to the say of the participants in the FGD. The associations of PWDs have not made coordinated and consistent effort for the formulation of the regulation except raising the issue on the Day of Disability celebrated on Dec. 3 on yearly basis.

However, as both groups [participants of the FGD and the interviewees] repetitively noted, the major cause of the denial of equal employment opportunity for PWDs is the lack of awareness and ignorance of the public in general and employers in

particular about the potentials and abilities of PWDs. According to the respondents, PWDs are looked as unproductive, unable to learn and work, dependent, etc. In addition, participants of the FGD further explained that it is only lack of awareness or ignorance about the abilities of the PWDs that cause PWDs' unequal employment opportunity, but there is also lack of good faith from employer's side. As one of them said, "Persons who worked and learned with the disabled and those who know more about them are the ones that mainly deprive their right to employment. This is not lack of awareness, but it is deep rooted attitudinal problems and not having good faith, which cannot be overcome and solved easily through awareness raising campaigns and workshops and programs and so on. This needs its own further research to understand why these people deprive the right of PWDs to employment." Thus, lack of awareness and attitudinal problems, coupled with other factors, are the major causes for the prevailing unequal employment opportunity for PWDs. The attitudinal problem could also serve as grounds for other causes of the inequality existed in employment opportunity between the disabled and the non-disabled.

Consequences of the Discrimination Made Against the Persons with Visual or Physical Disabilities in Employment

The sixth question of the study was what kind of psychological, social and economic problems do the physically impaired and the visually disabled encountered in their life as a result of the discrimination made against them in employment?

As the discrimination against persons with visual or physical impairments has a variety of reasons, it has also a variety of adverse effects on the psychological, social and economic well-being of the disabled.

Psychologically, they might develop low self-esteem, hopelessness, lack of trust on others and look other members of the society who are non-disabled suspiciously, etc. One respondent with visual impairment stated that “I was graduated with good GPA from AAU. But I could not find job for three years. At that time, I was very much depressed; I started to think that what is the value of my education unless I obtain job through it? I started to isolate myself from people not to be asked whether I found a job or not. In this situation, even, you do not want to have any relation or communication with your batches in the University; because they are employed and your are not.” One visual impaired interviewee said that “when I understood that I was denied the employment opportunity because of my blindness, I had started to hate others and look them suspiciously and developed feeling inferiority.” Two of respondents who reported as they had been discriminated against by organizations whose concerns were disability issues, noted as they lacked trust on such associations. But one respondent with visual impairment replied that he had initiated to struggle for his right to employed when he had been discriminated to be hired and it was through his continuous appeal to the then Civil Personnel Agency and the council of Addis Ababa administrative region that he obtained his present occupation.

The experience of most respondents tends to show that being unemployed or discriminated also affects inter-personal relations. As a result, one’s social participation is affected by the discrimination made against him/her. He/she might develop negative attitudes towards the society in response to the discrimination made against him/her. Respondents also pointed out loss of social status to be the other negative impact of discrimination. They further noted families would consequently be suspicious about

potentials and abilities of the disabled, because they do not see their disabled members participate in the work life.

PWDs become dependent on the others for their survival when they are denied equal employment opportunity. In times of unemployment, they relied on their families and other relatives for their very survival. PWDs also develop a sense of that their final destiny is being a low level worker and do not make much effort to advance further in their employment. In addition, as respondents who were teachers in their profession expressed, they were forced to pay on some occasion from their pocket to find some one to read textbooks and exam sheets for them. The teachers and others professionals also were obliged to purchase Braille materials through their own expense which its own negative impact in their economic situation.

One interviewee with visual disability expressed that “the discrimination by itself is a great problem to you and has a variety of adverse effects on life. If you do not protest the discrimination made against you, it will persist through out your life and degenerate you. If you act in some way for the respect of your rights or ask your bosses to fulfill your special needs and materials, they consider you as aggressive and naughty who always nags in vain.”

The FGD participants illustrated discrimination to create a vicious circle of poverty on the life of disabled person. The discrimination made against some one results in hopelessness and having low esteem; the low self-esteem also needs some one to poorly perform at his/her job. This again affects his/her opportunity to advance in employment which also affects some one’s economic well being. PWDs then compare theirs and their counterparts’ economic situation, which varied as a result of the

discrimination and other factors, and this again leads them to develop low-esteem. This low-esteem again affects some one's performance and efficiency at his/her work, which restricts his/her advancement and other opportunities in employment.

These participants also raised that the effects of discrimination is not only on the life of the individual concerned, but it also affects his/her family and country. The family might develop hopelessness about its disabled member and the disabled might become dependent on his/her family for his/her very survival. The society also loses productive manpower to whom the country has invested too much money in order to educate and enable him/her be self-reliant.

In general, the majority of the respondents had faced with discrimination when competing for jobs. They were either screened out before tests, or asked irrelevant questions that were not related to the jobs during interviews or disqualified after they won competitions. In the work places, they were not provided with the necessary materials and equipments that help them perform their duties effectively. Getting training and promotion had been difficult, if not impossible, for some respondents. Among other things, attitudinal problem and lack of awareness regarding the abilities and potentials of PWDs have been the major sources of the discrimination. Because of the discrimination, they developed feeling of hopelessness, inferiority suspicion on others and also became dependent on their families or relatives for their survival in times of unemployment or to get support to perform their work well that should have been provided for them in their work place. Their interpersonal relation was also affected because of the discrimination made against them.

DISCUSSION

Based on the findings, the area where the majority of the respondents faced discrimination is when they compete for jobs. They either were screened out before tests, or encountered distinction or preference during tests or denied employment after they win competitions. In addition, obtaining jobs in the private sector and non-governmental organizations was difficult, if not impossible, for those who have tried to get there. The government sector seems the place where they have a relatively better opportunity for employment. Some have ever experienced discrimination in organizations working on disability related matters. These findings are consistent with Terusew [2005: 176-177] who demonstrated proved that PWDs encountered serious challenges in obtaining jobs even though they were equipped with the necessary skills through training and education. According to his findings, employing agencies disqualified candidates with disabilities regardless of eligibility for the job. Terusew [2005: 177] added the point that “the employers always raise issues which are irrelevant for the job at the time of interview.” Researches elsewhere reiterate the presence of implicit or explicit discrimination made against PWDs [Neufeldt and Albright, 1998].

Even if they become successful in gaining employment, their necessary materials and equipment are not fulfilled at the work places. A professional is hired in any agency because his skills are needed by that specific agency for specified tasks. Here, it is only his skill that a professional with/without disabilities takes with him to the work place when he/she joins an organization. Other materials and facilities are provided for employees by employing agencies. But this does not hold true for employees with disabilities who responded to this research. An organization that provides tools and

equipment for its workers without disabilities must do the same for its disabled workers. If not, it is discrimination. Neufeldt and Albright [1993: 12] take to be discrimination by failing to take reasonable steps to remove barriers in the social environment that prevent disabled people participating equally.” Not only in their jobs, but in trainings prepared for employees, efforts are not made to include and address the needs of PWDs responded to this research, where their equal participation is neglected. These issues have repercussions on the overall efficiency and advancement of the disabled in employment.

Abreham and Woldesenbet [2005:35] stated that “obviously, it is difficult for disabled persons to get employment in the open labor market. Yet it is even more difficult for them to advance in their jobs.” Based on the findings of this research, some respondents reported they had encountered discrimination based on their disability for advancement in their employment. Two of the participants in the FGD expressed that discrimination was more serious for PWDs to be advanced in their employment than to obtain job. They argued that if an individual was denied employment in one agency, he could be hired in another agency. In contrast, if he/she was discriminated against in an agency to advance in employment, what alternative did he/she have to do? The four argued on the contrary and noted as the discrimination was more serious in getting job than to be promoted. Because a disabled person could have the chance here to show his/her abilities and potentials and be able to upgrade.

This researcher tends also to believe that the more serious challenge that PWDs are faced with is during searching for jobs. In the research, the majority of respondents explained that they had been discriminated against in seeking jobs but only few reported to be discriminated on advancement in their employment. In fact, the placement of

Ministry of Education for graduates of higher educational institutions, trained in teaching, has contributed more for teachers with disabilities not to be discriminated in obtaining employment. Rather, both teachers in this research stated that they had been favored during placements. The 1995 survey conducted by Terusew and his colleagues revealed that no one was employed in administrative positions. But Abreham and Woldesenbet [2005: 6] stated as very few PWDs might find working currently on these positions. Besides, two of the respondents of this research were heads of departments while one of them was a team leader in their agencies.

A variety of reasons were mentioned by interviewees and participants of the FGD for the discrimination made against PWDs and their bleak employment opportunities. Absence of clear and well detailed legislation concerning the right of PWDs to employment, ignorance of employers about even available laws, the inefficiency of some PWDs in their performance and the resultant hasty generalization made by employers, less attention and effort made by PWDs and their associations to stand for the respect of their right to employment, employers' fear of additional expenses, low participation rate of PWDs in education, etc were some of the reasons cited by subjects of this study. Neufeldt and Albright [1998: 12] state "anyone with an elementary education was at a disadvantage when seeking employment as compared to university degree holders. However, disabled people were at much greater disadvantage even with a university degree, there continues to be a large discrepancy in employment rates between disabled and non-disabled persons." They further note, "the differences in economic participation between disabled and others are so universal and so systematic, one is forced to conclude that discrimination is a cause."

Metasebia [2001: 37] cited inaccessibility of work places particularly for the severely disabled, failure of employers to understand what disability may/may not involve, the long lasted charity model approach in provision of services for PWDs, unwillingness of employers to hire disabled workers, ignorance of employers about abilities and potentials of the disabled, to be factors affecting equal employment opportunity for PWDs. However, the root cause for the unwillingness or ignorance of employers, constructing education, work and other sites inaccessibly for the disabled, etc is lack of awareness and attitudinal problems of the public in general and the concerned parties in particular who are involved in decision making on various issues that might affect the employment and other opportunities of PWDs. Terusew [2000: 8] states that the negative attributes for the causes and consequences of disability and PWDs adversely affect the available provision of services and the nature of policies. This affects the psychological, social, developmental aspects of the life of PWDs and their overall performance and role in the society. Employers either do not have the needed awareness about the rights, abilities and potentials of PWDs or if they know about their rights and abilities, have no good faith to employ them.

When the disabled are denied opportunities, they become handicapped. When a disability becomes a real handicap to employment, it makes problems on the individual concerned, his family and the society at large. ILO [1985: 6-7] listed some of the problems that are created when disability becomes a real handicap in employment. For the individual concerned, a handicap results in loss of earning power, loss of skill and experience, loss of status and dependency. For the family, it brings about loss or reduction of income, loss of status, increased dependency on others, burden of caring for

the disabled member, etc. For the society as a whole, it also brings about loss of disabled workers' former contribution in skill and earnings, loss of manpower unit, assumption of financial charges for care of the disabled and his/her family, or increased number of non-productive or dependent persons. In this situation, therefore, disability is not only the matter of an individual, but it is also the concern and a matter, which affects a significant number of populations in a country.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

Various literatures and researches confirm that discrimination can be made among workers based on a variety of characteristics of workers among which disability is the one. PWDs face discrimination throughout various aspects and stages of employment. However, the majority of the respondents of this research encountered discrimination during application and competitions for jobs. Some had been discriminated against in obtaining training and advancement opportunities in their employment. Their accommodation is at the very minimal level whereby their needs are not adequately considered and addressed in their workplaces. Braille materials are hardly available for the visually impaired in schools and other agencies. Libraries of the schools where the respondents of this research teach have no Braille publications or other arrangements for the teachers with visual impairments. The teachers should look for somebody by themselves whether through payment, friendship or some other means to read texts and correct and mark exam sheets. Here, it is good to remember the encouraging endeavor made by the government to hire readers for visually impaired workers in agencies except for those of teachers. Training materials and places also often are prepared out of

recognizing the presence or needs of workers with disabilities. Work sites are inaccessible for the physically disabled and have no ramps.

The causes for the discrimination made against the PWDs vary. However, lack of awareness and attitudinal problems of the general public and employers are the root causes even for other factors, which affect the employment opportunity and work conditions of the disabled. There is no adequate legislation in the country, which has been issued to respect the rights of PWDs in general and to employment in particular. The available law, issued in respect to the rights of PWDs to employment has no regulation that might help to enforce it. Work sites are inaccessible for the physically disabled. The visually impaired need to be provided with Braille materials and reader. Hence, employers consider adjusting the work environment for the physically disabled and the blind as extra burden for their agency. Employers do not know what the disabled could and could not perform. They make generalizations about the whole population of the disabled based on their bad experience with an individual with a certain type of disability. Thus, they become unwilling to hire PWDs in their agencies.

This discrimination has a number of negative impacts on psychological, social and economic well-being of the individual concerned in particular and his/her family and the society in general. They become suspicious, consider themselves as inferior to others, develop hopelessness, low self-esteem, etc as a result of the discrimination made against them. As a result, their interpersonal relationship and work efficiency is affected, which also have repercussions on their further advancement in employment and participation in the lives of the society. They become dependent on their families for their survival.

Hence, the family becomes obliged to care for its disabled member. Moreover, both the families and the country lose their productive member.

Recommendations

The findings of the study show that measures at various levels aiming at reducing/eliminating the discrimination made against PWDs, must be taken. Here, then, some recommendations are made based on the findings. This research uses as important sources the suggestions of its subjects of study, various literatures: UN [1993], ILO [1998], Terusew [2005], Abreham and Woldesenbet [2005] etc as well as the view of the researcher, for its different recommendations.

1. Awareness raising programs. Various forms of awareness raising programs should be extended through mass media, workshops, counseling, etc. Both electronic media and press are appropriate instruments since they can address a number of people throughout the country. Associations of PWDs can also prepare their publications and utilize them to raise awareness of the public and employers about the rights, needs, abilities and potentials of PWDs. Workshops and counseling services can be organized and extended by concerned bodies to those who need the programs. In all forms of the programs, the target populations that need to be addressed include: governmental officials of various sectors and at various levels, potential employers from the government, non-government and private sectors, job seekers and other citizens with disabilities and the general public at large. All of the programs should aim at raising the awareness of and sensitizing the target population about the rights, needs, abilities and potentials of PWDs.

Government officials of various sectors [various Ministries, commissions, bureaus of regional States, zones, woreda and kebeles, the legislative bodies of the Federal

government and the Regional States, the judiciary from the Federal to woreda levels] require being aware of the rights, abilities and potentials of PWDs. These entities have the influential power on the formulation and/or enforcement and implementation of legislation and policies. This is more significant because, the issue of PWDs need to be mainstreamed in to the available general policies, and to the particular case, in general employment policies. Thus, this program is important to make public officials aware of on the need of mainstreaming the concerns of PWDs in their policies and enforce and implement them accordingly. Awareness raising for potential employers is vital in that it enables employers to understand about the abilities and rights of PWDs and enables them to improve work conditions for PWDs and respect the equal right of the disabled to employment. PWDs are the major target population on these programs so it is important to be aware of their rights, available legislative provisions about the rights of PWDs to employment. These programs can also be said to be empowering PWDs since they are made equipped with the necessary knowledge how, when and where to appeal when their rights are violated. Thus, they themselves will become the prior advocates of their rights. Besides, since the root cause of the discrimination made against PWDs is traced to the lack of awareness and attitudinal problems of the public, awareness-raising programs are really important for the society as a whole. In addition, it is from the society that those government officials or employers who deprive or respect the rights of the disabled come.

The major activists of these programs may include: government sectors [Ministries or regional or zonal bureaux of labor and social affairs, Ministries and regional or woreda bureaux of trade and industry, Civil Service Agency etc], the

Ethiopian and the Addis Ababa Chambers of Commerce, the Confederation of the Ethiopian Labor Associations, organizations of and for PWDs, etc.

2. Policy and legislative measures. Proc. No. 101/1994 was passed about 12 years ago. However, it has not come into enforcement because of the unavailability of regulation or directive for it. Thus, the regulation consisting of detailed provisions about the rights of PWDs to employment should be issued and come in to force. In addition, the incentives and encouragements stated on the National Action Program for rehabilitation of PWDs of MOLSA [1999] should be implemented. Yet to curb deprivation of the rights of PWDs to employment and other fields on sustainable basis, a disability act, as made in some other countries, to which referred when policies and legislation are formulated, should be enacted. Then, when general policies and laws are formulated in the country, by referring to this act, it will be possible to mainstream the concerns and issues of the disabled in the being formulated general policies. Mainstreaming issues of disabilities only requires adopting an open and inclusive system which accommodates differences and appreciates diversities and incorporates PWDs in the already available policies, institutions or agencies. The enforcement and implementation of laws and policies should be given as equal attention as formulation of policies and laws. To this end, a neutral government body, which is authorized only for concerns of disability, has to be set up.

The policies should also concentrate on taking affirmative action that can be made for PWDs not only to remedy historical erroneous practices, but also to show practically to the public and employers about the abilities and potentials of PWDs.

Others who believe PWDs to be unable to work can understand about their abilities if they can see when PWDs are working. Thus, placement of PWDs to work through affirmative action is also more important to aware the society about potentials of the disabled.

In this process, employers, the Ethiopian and the Addis Ababa Chambers of Commerce, the Confederation of the Ethiopian Labor Associations, organizations of and for PWDs should take part so as to ease the implementation of policies. Because, if employers and other concerned bodies participate in the formulation of a policy, it may be helpful in bringing it in to practice. Employers, the government and other concerned bodies may also then cooperate to ensure equitable recruitment and promotion policies, reasonable accommodation of PWDs in work places, facilitated work conditions, accessible design of work places and work premises to persons with various types of disabilities, provision of assistive devices and tools needed by PWDs to perform their jobs and so on.

3. Advocacy, lobbying and other initiatives by associations and Federation of PWDs and other organizations for PWDs. The lobbying and advocacy activities are more or less similar or can be part of that of awareness raising programs. But the researcher wants them to discuss these separately because of the purpose of giving more emphasis for the issues and partly because of that particularly, advocacy may further include handling court cases when the rights of PWDs to employment are denied, or resolving the problem through negotiation with the violators of their rights. The lobbying activity may mainly be extended to those policy and decision makers and to those who enforce them.

The advocacy requires close relationship with members who bring cases of violation of rights to employment to their respective associations. Thus, associations, to undertake their advocacy and other activities, need to solve their own internal problems and build their human resource capacity. Not only building their capacity, but the personnel in these associations should be highly committed to issues of disability. In addition, the endeavors they make should be coordinated and consistent. The requests they submit to the government should not be questions of only one day [Dec. 3].

Associations of PWDs can also assist employers who hire disabled persons by providing counseling services and some kind of incentives and extending trial employment schemes. To show this in an example, an organization called Japan Association for Employment of Persons with Disabilities [JAED] gives counseling services to employers in the areas of: what the law says about the employment of PWDs, how employers can make any needed adjustment to the work place or jobs to accommodate the specific needs of disabled workers, enabling them understand different types of disabilities and associated assistive measures, etc [Perry, 2003: 170-171]. The trial employment scheme can be extended for those employers who owing to lack of knowledge or experience hesitate to hire workers with disabilities. Through this scheme, employers are encouraged to try out a worker with disability for certain months. In this scheme, government also may take part. Associations can also assist agencies that employ PWDs in fulfilling specialized tools and equipments or providing them through low price.

In General, awareness-raising programs are required to be developed since the very source of the discrimination made against PWDs in employment is related to lack of awareness. The target populations of these programs are government officials of various sectors and at different levels, employers, the general public and the disabled themselves. Policy and legislative measures, which mainstream issues of PWDs, need to be considered and taken. A disability act, to which is referred when general laws and policies are formulated, should be enacted. The implementation of policies and laws must get as equal emphasis as their formulation. In addition, Affirmative action, at all levels of employment, is needed so as to remedy past erroneous practices and show practically abilities and potentials of disabled persons. Associations of and for PWDs should solve their internal problems and carry out their advocacy role to their respective members. Their lobbying, advocacy and other initiatives have to persistent and coordinated.

Implication for Social Work Practice

Denial of equal employment opportunity for PWDs is universal problem that prevail both in developed and developing countries. It affects the various aspects of life of the disabled. Hence, this problem calls for some kind of intervention and social work practice. Awareness-raising programs and campaigns for different segments of population are needed to overcome the denial of equal employment opportunities for PWDs. Then, this program requires social work intervention whereby a social worker can play a variety of roles. Social workers are the major activists in promoting the awareness of the public and employers towards the abilities and potentials of the disabled. Since

denial of equal opportunity goes contrary to human rights issues, social work intervention is needed to promote the rights of PWDs to various fields including employment and advocate to them.

Counseling is also an area of social work intervention, whereby both the disabled and employers get service. Social workers can also participate in policy formulations and conducting researches. Through their participation in policy formulation, they take the necessary knowledge and expertise with them that help to consider the needs and rights of the disabled and mainstream concerns of PWDs in policies. Social work intervention is also needed in empowering PWDs to be productive and aware their rights and stand for them. All these show that Social work practice, both directly and indirectly, is vital to promote equal employment opportunity for PWDs.

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ANNEXES

Annex I

Verbal Consent Form for Participants of the Study

Introduction

My name is Mindahun Gebretesadik. I am from graduate school of social work at AAU. I am currently collecting data regarding the employment opportunities of and discrimination against persons with disabilities (the case of the blind and the physically impaired). As part of my assessment, I am talking to a wide cross section of people in this area. I would use the information for fulfill my thesis requirement and to present information to help those concerned bodies to plan activities that will address the identified needs of the impaired and the blind.

Confidentiality and consent

I may ask some personal questions that some people find difficult to answer. I am not going to talk to any one about what you tell me. Your answers are completely confidential. Your name will not be written on this form and will ever be used in connection with any of the information you tell me. You don't have to answer any question that you don't want to answer, and you may end this interview at any time you want. However, your honest answer to these questions will help me better understand the problems of physically impaired and the blind in the area employment opportunities. I would greatly appreciate your help in responding to this study. The interview will take 45minutes to an hour. Would you be willing to participate?

Signature if interviewer_____

(Respondents have given certifying that informed consent verbally)

Annex II

Checklist for the In-depth Interview Held with the Persons with Disabilities

Sex

age

type of disability

Educational level

occupation

marital status

family size

when were you employed in this organization

before your employment of in this organization, did you have another occupation?

If you had another occupation, why have you left it?

In what way have you been employed? Is it through competition or personal application or other means?

How did you hear about the vacancy of your present occupation?

Do you believe that you had encountered any kind of discrimination based on your disability at the time of application for job and interviews and other forms of competitive mechanisms? If you had encountered, what was that

had special measures been taken for you when you compete for the job? If it had been taken, could you mention it?

What practical situations have you experienced after being employed? Do you believe that your organization has met your special needs on the job? If so, what specific measures has the organization taken to meet your needs?

Have you ever got in your organization the chance of training, promotion or other opportunities in your present occupation? If so, what the chance you got and how did you get it?

Do you want to stay in your present occupation? Why/why not?

Do you believe that the administrative body in your organization has the needed awareness about disability and persons with disabilities? Why/why not?

Does your occupation match with your type of qualification? If not, what is the reason of the mismatch between your type of qualification and occupation?

Do you encounter any kind of mobility or communication problem in your work place? If so, in your opinion, what is the possible source of the problem? Have you ever requested your organization to look for solutions what was the response? Or, how do you cope up with them?

Do you believe that your bosses are satisfied in your performance on the job? Why/why not?

How is your relationship with coworkers?

What are the available laws in Ethiopia, that you know, formulated to protect the rights of persons with disabilities to employment?

Do you believe that there are sufficient legal instruments to protect the rights of persons with disabilities to employment in Ethiopia?

Do you believe that yours and other employers know the laws in Ethiopia formulated to protect the rights of persons with disabilities to employment? If not, in your opinion, what measures should be taken?

What possible consequences do you suffer from as a result of the discrimination [if any] made against you during application and and/or on the job?

If you have faced any discrimination during application or on the job, what measures have you taken?

What do you do when you encounter any grievance on the job?

If you have encountered any or believe that persons with disabilities face discrimination at the work place, what do you suggest to eliminate the discrimination made against persons with disabilities? In your opinion, what is expected from the government, professionals, and non-governmental organizations, organizations of and for persons with disabilities, persons with disabilities, employers, community and others to reduce/eliminate the problem?

Annex III

Checklist for the Focus Group Discussion Held with Experts and Leaders of Organizations of and for Persons with Disabilities

Name

Educational qualification

Position in your agency

How do you look at the employment situation of persons with disabilities in Ethiopia?

How do you look at the employment situation of the blind and the physically impaired in Ethiopia?

Do you believe that they encounter discrimination at the work place? If so, in what specific areas do they face the problem?

In your opinion, what are the possible sources of the discrimination made against persons with disabilities in general and the blind and physically impaired in particular?

What psychological, social and economic problems do the blind and the physically impaired encounter as a result of the discrimination made against them?

In your opinion, does the legal system of Ethiopia pay due attention to protect the right of persons with disabilities to employment? Why/why not?

In your opinion, does the Ethiopian government adequately address the right of persons with disabilities to employment in its specific disability related and/or general policies?

What have the organizations of and for PWDs done to avoid the problem? Do you believe that they have paid adequate attention for the problem? What should they do for the future to reduce/eliminate the problem?

According to your opinion, if persons with disabilities encounter discrimination in employment, what steps should the government, professionals, non-governmental organizations, organizations of and for persons with disabilities, individuals with disabilities; employers and the community and others take?

Declaration

This thesis is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other university, and that all sources of material used for this thesis have been acknowledged.

Name of student: Mindahun Gebretsadik

Signature _____

Date July 03, 2006

Advisor: Professor Nathan L.Linsk

Signature _____

Date _____