

THE PUBLIC POLICY HUB

Policy Brief 4

Employing People with Disability in Egypt

2018

Why do people with disabilities seem to be unemployable?

In Egypt, people with disabilities (PwDs) face obstacles in accessing basic services including health, public transportation, and education. These limitations have lasting implications for their future life opportunities. This situation is aggravated by social stigma regarding certain disabilities. A common initial perception about PwDs is that they are less productive. The associated cost of investment required to build the capacities of PwDs and to re-integrate them into society is hindered by uncertain results and lack of highlighted successful case studies. Also, the adoption of a universal approach to improve their inclusion as if they are a homogenous group has resulted in policies that do not address their particular needs and potentials. Furthermore, there is insufficient data about the reasons for exclusion and actual challenges faced by PwDs and by their employing businesses.

Magnitude of the problem:

Almost 10% of the Egyptian population has a disability⁽¹⁾. Of that population, 74% have a mental disability, 15% a mobility impairment, 7% a visual impairment, and 4% a hearing impairment. However, disability figures in Egypt are not very accurate as people usually underreport disability due to social stigma.

Why does the problem continue to grow?

The family of PwDs suffer the first burden especially in the case of low-income and illiterate families. Care and money are shifted towards the expenses of healthy siblings as they are considered worthier. For PwDs themselves, accessibility is a daily challenge, both in the workplace and in the regular commute to work. Public transportation is a major obstacle and most buildings in Egypt were not designed with the accessibility needs of PwDs in mind. Consequently, even if a PwD passes the barrier of accessing health and education, he/she won't be able to access the job market.

(1) Country Profile on Disability Arab Republic of Egypt. (2002, March 1), retrieved from http://siteresources.worldbank.org/DISABILITY/Resources/Regions/MENA/JICA_Egypt.pdf

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The government adopted the quota system to ensure inclusion of PwDs. However, implementation of the system has had many flaws that produced “ghost PwDs” who only appear on payrolls, instead of enabling their real integration into the workforce. On the other hand, the private sector does not bear the social responsibility of providing disability-friendly work places or hiring PwDs. The foggy vision of governmental bodies underlies this marginalization, especially as inadequate funds are allocated to disability affairs. This is evident in the lack of supervision or a structured approach to comprehensively include PwDs in society, as it has been long misidentified the disability itself as the barrier to inclusion, instead of the laws and regulations. The social-welfare approach reflected the mindset of policymakers for ages before Egypt signed the convention of human rights in 2007. The old vision was from a charity perspective, thus public policy aimed at treating the results of marginalization rather than promoting inclusion. Estimates of the number of PwDs vary dramatically, from one million to eighteen million. This wide discrepancy is due to the absence of a legal definition of PwDs before the adoption of a new law (10/2018), in addition to dependence on unreliable self-reporting.



Recommendations:

1. **Public Awareness:** Raise public awareness about PwDs through a national media campaign to generate tolerance and empathy, and develop early interventions for inclusion.
2. **Workplace Accommodations:** Create PwD-friendly workplaces that respond to their physical and transportation needs. This effort can be implemented through pilot projects with the help of donors and NGOs then replicating the model in new workplaces.
3. **Enabling an Entrepreneurial Environment for PwDs:** A shift from dependence to managerial roles in creative startups is possible with investment in the capacities of PwDs. Coaching and financial incentives will encourage partnerships with them under continuous mentorship support.
4. **Data Collection and Analysis:** Create a unit inside CAPMAS responsible for reliable studies about the numbers of PwDs, their needs, their potentials and barriers they face. These data and information will help to formulate better evidence-based policies.
5. **Presidential Attention:** Separate the National Council for Disability and the Ministry of Social Solidarity to relieve a current conflict of interest. Direct reporting to the President may empower PwDs as a group of citizens with political power and needs instead of the subjects of charitable activity.
6. **National Fund for PwDs:** Establish one umbrella for all the allocated national funds to PwDs within the Ministry of Finance. A single structure will promote transparency and ease the analysis of expenditure on disability-related items.



Conclusion

The promulgation of Egypt's law 10/2018 marked a departure from a social-welfare framing for policies addressing people with disabilities to usher in a new approach that addresses the notions of equality, discrimination, equal opportunity, and government responsibility. It includes clear definitions of these concepts, with emphasis on rehabilitation and awareness about prevention of disability. This vision may be supported with strategies implemented by government and the private sector to enhance a rights-based approach.

In order to effectively include PwDs at a national level, the government should listen to employers and handle their fears. Working on community rehabilitation to understand disability together with affirmative policies can create more opportunities and a better workplace environment. Microfinance and self-employment can also be key factors to promote employment among PwDs. Regulations and laws should ease the process of giving loans with simple procedures, along with consulting services and mentorship for start-ups. Data availability is a crucial factor for better policies and strategies. Additionally, creating a national fund may better utilize all allocated funds to promote the employment of PwDs.

The Public Policy HUB Where Rigour Meets Creativity

The Public Policy HUB is an initiative that was developed at the School of Global Affairs and Public Policy (GAPP) in October 2017. It was designed to fill in the policy research gap. It provides the mechanism by which the good ideas, plausible answers, and meaningful solutions to Egypt's chronic and acute policy dilemmas can be nurtured, discussed, debated, refined, tested and presented to policymakers in a format that is systematic, highly-visible and most likely to have a lasting impact.

The Public Policy HUB provides a processing unit where policy teams are formed on a regular basis, combining experienced policy scholars/mentors with young creative policy analysts, provide them with the needed resources, training, exposure, space, tools, networks, knowledge and contacts, to enable them to come up with sound, rigorous and yet creative policy solutions that have a greater potential to be effectively advocated and communicated to the relevant policy makers and to the general public.

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