Exclusion of People with Disabilities in Public Service Provision: The Case of Wolkite Town, Guraghe Zone, SNNPR, Ethiopia

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Abstract

In Ethiopia disabled people are among the most disadvantaged and most vulnerable groups of the society. They have been not only unable to participate in national developments efforts but also are not the beneficiaries of the results. The major concern of this study was to identify the causes of exclusion for disabled people in public sector service provision and to identify the major challenges of mainstreaming disability in development programs. For the purpose of the study primary data were collected from disabled sample individuals and concerned organizations. A total of 86 individuals were selected randomly from the total disabled population in the town and descriptive statistics was employed to analyze the data. The result of the study revealed that absence of the services designed for those people, economic problems and discrimination are major causes of exclusion. Moreover lack of political commitment; the attitude of the society towards disability; resource limitation; and invisibility of the issue are the challenges of mainstreaming disability in Wolkite town. Awareness creations, political commitment, enforcement of laws, mobilizing resources are important to mainstream disability.

Keywords: Disability, Exclusion, Mainstreaming

1.   Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

Disabled people are estimated to make up approximately 10% of any population and a higher proportion of those live in chronic poverty (Yeo, 2001). Accordingly, now the population with disability in the world is estimated to 700 million and that of Ethiopia is about 8.3 million. Despite the significant size of this social group and the eventual potential it has in the development efforts of the nation, it is excluded from the process of national economic and social development, and still unjustly labeled as charity case. Disability and poverty related challenges are not only similar, but also disability and poverty are inextricably linked (Mulumba, 2011). According to Oliver (1999), disabled persons frequently lived in deplorable conditions owing to the presence of physical and social barriers which prevent their integration and full participation in the community. In many countries disabled children are not required to go to school and, even if they want to enroll, their specific needs are unlikely to be met by schools (Bonnel, 2004). Katsui (2005) argued that full participation in a community is central to the realization of every person's human rights. Yet for many people with disability; social, economic, political and cultural participation in daily life is limited by society's systemic preferential bias towards the majority.

Even though, the degree differs, discrimination towards people with disability occurs in every society. Attitudinal, political, social and cultural barriers result in a continuum of subtle to overt marginalization of over 650 million people living with disability, the majority of whom living in developing countries(Kathryn, 2009). Different authors argued that disability is both the cause and a consequence of poverty and disability issues cannot be resolved without an increasing in committed action because the number of people with disability is predicted to rise due to population growth, aging, disease, accidents, conflict and others. Throughout the world, children with disabilities and many others who experience difficulties in learning are often marginalized within or, indeed, even excluded from school systems (Ainscow, 1998). The barriers to their inclusion may be physical such as inaccessible buildings and transport; institutional such as discriminatory legislation; and attitudinal for example stigma. According to Kathryn (2009), to successfully alleviate poverty and progress the realization of human rights and equality, development must therefore include disability issues. Similarly Mulumba (2011) argued that international development targets are unlikely to be met without including the issues of disabled people in development programs.

There is, however, a risk the target could cause a focuses on those easiest to bring out of poverty, not those in chronic poverty. According to Albert (2005), while there has been a shift towards disability rights in rhetoric, in many places there has been little concrete action and it is increasingly recognized that disabled people are among the vulnerable groups at the risk of poverty and social exclusion. Disabled people experience significantly poorer health outcomes than the non- disabled people in terms of health that are not connected to a specific health conditions that are connected to their disability (Bonnel, 2004). That means disabled people are at risk of experiencing social exclusion that are connected with their disability. Indeed, the link between poverty and disability is reinforced by the fact that more than 80% of people with disabilities are unemployed (Sweeny, 2004). And the most common form of employment for individuals with disability is begging. Of the estimated 700 million PWDs worldwide, 80% live in developing countries (Paauwe, 2010). And according to Katsui(2005),

82% of PWDs worldwide live under the poverty line. In Ethiopia access to basic services, like education and health, financial as well as policy- making processes is already poor for the average citizen, but for PWDs access and participation are extremely difficult (UN 2011). A report of MoLSA (2008) shows that less than 1% of disabled people have access to education in Ethiopia and there were 17 special needs education schools, including 11 run by NGOs. Observations show that in Wolkite town there is no special education center, for disabled people who can't learn inclusively with non- disabled students.

1.2 Statement of the problem

Persons with disabilities in Ethiopia have been unable to participate in national developments due to lack of assistance and the attitudes of society (JICA, 2002). Poverty and inadequate socio-economic participation of persons with disabilities (PWDs) have been described as the distinctive characteristics of the disability sector and movement in Ethiopia (Dagnachew, 2011). In Ethiopia disabled people are among the most disadvantaged and most vulnerable groups of the society. Roads, buildings, transport facilities and other public recreational areas have limited participation and integration of persons with disabilities in the society (JICA, 2002). These and other studies shows that in most situations they have the history of silence and remain out of the mainstream of the society. Even though, large number of people lives in poverty in the country, the case of disabled people is extremely worth (Dagnachew, 2011). This fact insures that poverty and disability have looked to be inseparable concepts because what is true for poverty is also true for person with disability.

The constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, Proclamation No. 1/1995, guarantees the rights of persons with disabilities in a manner compatible with the rights of all citizens and special rights for people with disabilities. In addition to this according to FENAPD (2009), United Nations has also declared standard rules on the equalization of opportunities for persons with disabilities. Moreover, especially in recent years Wolkite town and the country at large are implementing different poverty reduction strategic plans to achieve Millennium Development Goals, to eradicate poverty, and to become a middle income society. However, studies show that among the millions of people with disability in the country, only few are beneficiaries of governmental and non-governmental services.

The achievement of poverty reduction strategy targets and millennium development goals is impossible unless disability issues are specifically addressed. In contrast, despite their huge number in the society, because of different economic, social, political and other factors disabled people in Wolkite town are failed to exercise their rights and they are excluded from development targets. It is the fact that constitutional rights, international conventions and laid down policies are needed to be implemented to alleviate poverty, to achieve millennium development goals and to ensure inclusive society in the town. However, there are different challenges the local government face to implement those policies, laws and conventions successfully. There is, therefore, a need to study the state of access to social services for disabled people by comparing with different existed laws, constitutional rights and international agreements; the causes of their exclusion from social services; and also the challenges that government faces to mainstream disability issues in all sectors plans and implementation practices of Wolkite town.

1.3 Objectives of the study

1. To identify the causes of exclusion for disabled people in public sector service provision.
2. To identify the major challenges to mainstream disability in development programs.

2.   Research Methodology

2.1 Research Design

The aim of the research was to describe the efforts made regarding service provision in public sectors related to disabled people in Wolkite town. Describing; policies related to disabled people, the awareness of disabled people and local leaders and public sector managers and experts on the constitutional rights of disabled people was needed. And also was important to identify the causes of exclusion of disabled people in public sector service provision. Therefore, descriptive research design was appropriate in this study.

2.2 Sample design

The population of this study was people with disabilities who are seven years old and above in Wolkite town assuming that exclusion from social services like education starts at this age. According to MOE (2005), children start primary education in Ethiopia at the age of 7 years. The number of disabled people particularly visual impaired, hearing impaired and physically handicapped in the town were 216 (LSAO, 2011). In addition leaders and experts in the selected public sectors were selected deliberately who have a close relation with disability issues in their organizational activities. And also disabled people association leaders were also among the population of the study.

2.3 Sampling frame

In the study the samples were selected randomly from the disabled population that is visual impaired, hearing impaired and physically handicapped. Individuals were selected according to their list in the Civil and Social Affairs Office. Regarding the sample units who were selected from public sectors, individuals were selected who are in appropriate position to gather the necessary information.

2.4 Sampling Technique

In this study both probability and non-probability sampling technique were used. Probability sampling (lottery method) technique was used because it gives equal chance to people with disabilities particularly, visual impaired, hearing impaired and physically handicapped. Regarding selecting sample from public sectors and disabled people organizations non- probability sampling method was employed since they were chosen deliberately. Hence by using purposive sampling method from non- probability technique, four public sectors; education, health, youth children and women's affairs, civil and social affairs office; and one disabled people association were chosen.

2.5 Sample Size

This study applied a simplified formula provided by Yamane (1967) to determine the sample size at the level of precision of 0.09 as:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)}2$$

Where, n is the sample size, N is the population size and e is the level of precision. The above formula provided approximately 86 sample individuals.

In addition from four public sectors, Education sector, Health sector, Women Children and Youth sector and Civil and Social Affairs Office two individuals in each sector that is the leader and the planning expert of each sector were selected.

2.6 Instrumentation

In the study both open ended and close ended type of questionnaire were used to collect data from disabled people. The questionnaires were filled by enumerators assuming that disabled people in the town were failed to read and write. Moreover, semi-structured interview were employed to collect data from government personnel and leaders of public sectors and disabled people organizations.

2.7 Types of data

For the purpose of the study both primary and secondary data were employed. Primary data were collected from people with disabilities, from government personnel, leaders of public sectors and from leaders of disabled people's association. Secondary data were collected from concerned government organizations or public sectors like Wolkite town's social and civil affairs office, Guraghe zone labor and social affairs unit, Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, census reports, Ministry of Education, and Disability Associations.

2.8 Data analysis

The primary and secondary data gathered through interview and questionnaire is analyzed quantitatively using descriptive statistics to facilitate the interpretation of the result.

4. Result and Discussion
4.1 Causes of Exclusion for Disabled people

In the history of human kind people with disabilities in almost all parts of the world remains out of the mainstream of the society. The causes of their exclusion are different from society to society as well as between individuals. The causes of exclusion of people with disabilities from social services in the town also are different between individuals which are presented below in figure 1.
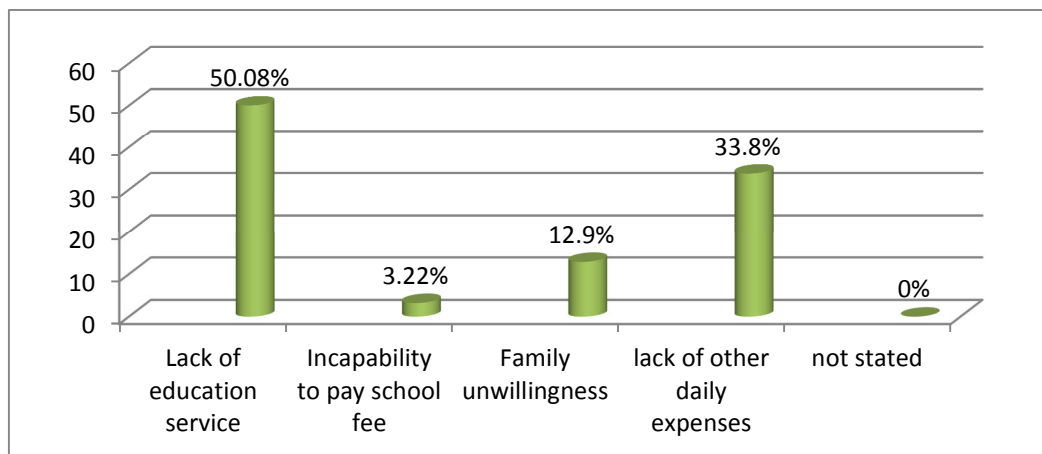
Figure 1: Causes of exclusion for people with disabilities from education service

Source: Researcher Field Survey, February-March 2012

There are many causes for people with disabilities to be excluded from social services provided by the public like education, health, sport and recreation activities and others. This exclusion from social services results to another exclusion in their social life, like from employment, information and others which increases their vulnerability to poverty and diseases.

The result of the study revealed that disabled people face many barriers that hinder them to access education service in the town. Even though there are different barriers that hinder them to access education, the main barrier is lack of appropriate education service in the town for disabled people like special schools for disabled people or special classes for special need education in other schools in the town. The result from interview also depicts that no budget is allocated for disability issues in the town to provide social services for this group of the society.

In contrast to this ground fact, Ethiopia signed the agreement of United Nations Declaration of Human Rights and other different declarations to exercise the rights of disabled people. UN declaration of human rights for disabled people states, State parties recognize the right of persons with disabilities to education. In realizing this right, state parties shall ensure that: Persons with disabilities are not excluded from the general education system on the basis of disability, and that children with disabilities are not excluded from free and compulsory primary education, or from secondary education on the basis of disability. Therefore, it is possible to say that the major cause of exclusion of disabled people from social services in the town is lack of the service designed for disabled people which is the responsibility of the government.

Another cause of exclusion of disabled people from education as shown in the figure is lack of income for daily expenses. This shows that disabled people excluded from education service because their daily life is not secured and they are engaged by other activities which are necessary for them than learning for their daily survival like securing their food, cloth, and others. To ensure their daily survival they are engaged by other activities like begging. Therefore they don't have time to go to school.

Article 41(5) of the constitution of Ethiopia adopted in 1995, sets out that the state's responsibility for the provision of necessary rehabilitation and support services for disabled people. Moreover, UN convention on the rights of persons with disability which Ethiopia agreed to exercise guarantees persons with disabilities to receive the support required, with in the general education system to facilitate their effective education. This indicates that the state has responsibility to rehabilitate and support disable students by providing especial attention to participate in education services provided in the town which may include school feeding, providing cloth and educational materials. It was found out that large number of disable people excluded from education service because of such economic related barriers which are crucial for their day to day survival. In addition the study found that attitude of the society towards disability is another cause of their exclusion from social services. It is strengthening by other literatures, as Hendriks (2009), describes "Social attitudes are a particularly disabling factor". He explained that the majority of the society believes that those people who are disabled are cursed and are under the wrath of God, the creator. Parents and relatives of such disabled people are thus inferior and are most unhappy about their children. Consequently, people with impairments are denied access to education, employment, housing, sanitation, and many other essentials that they have a right to. This exclusion from social services for disabled people leads to further exclusion. Their illiteracy makes them less qualified and this lack of qualification become barrier for employment opportunity. Their unemployment hinders them to access goods and services properly in the mainstream of the society. The vicious cycle continues in this way unless it is broken somewhere.

4.2 Challenges of Mainstreaming Disability Issues

Many literatures agreed that because disability and poverty are two sides of the same coin, disability is a crucial issue in development. And they argued to mainstream disability issues in the development programmes in order to alleviate poverty and achieve development in one society. However mainstreaming disability issues in all development programmes face different challenges in different societies. The challenges for mainstreaming disability in the development programmes in the study area are presented in table 9 below.

Table 1: Weight of challenges to mainstream disability issues in the development programmes

Rank of the challenge:	Type of challenge									
	Resource limitation		Attitude of the society		Lack of political commitment		Invisibility of the issue		Small number of disabled people	
	No	Percent	No	Percent	No	Percent	No	Percent	No	Percent
First	11	12.79	16	18.6	52	60.48	8	9.3	-	
Second	12	14	45	52.32	20	23.25	10	11.62	-	
Third	15	17.44	17	19.76	8	9.3	39	45.34	7	8.13
Fourth	39	45.34	8	9.3	6	7.14	24	27.9	9	10.46
Fifth	9	10.46	-		-		5	5.81	70	81.39
Total	86	100	86	100	86	100	86	100	86	100

Source: Research field survey, February- March 2012.

Even though the importance mainstreaming disability is not questionable, it is not applied in some parts of the world including Ethiopia. Different literatures shows mainstreaming disability in development programmes face different challenges in different societies. As shown in the table above, the Government faces different challenges to mainstream disability in the development programmes in Wolkite town and they are different in their weight or by their seriousness in the study area. According to the respondents opinion the first challenge to mainstream disability in the development programmes or in the process of poverty reduction as shown in the above table is lack of political commitment in political leaders of all levels.

The study revealed that people with disabilities can and want to be productive members of society. Promoting more inclusive societies and employment opportunities for people with disabilities requires improved access to basic education, health service, vocational training relevant to labor market needs and jobs suited to their skills, interests and abilities. This environment can be created only by mainstreaming disability in to all development agendas of the country or society. Since disability is a human right issue, importance of mainstreaming in development agendas is not controversial.

Ethiopia signed many international agreements and made part of the country's law of land to create fertile conditions for people with disabilities to develop their potential in order to become the productive member of the society which leads to mainstream the issue in all development programmes. However, according to MOLSA (2008), it is not mainstreamed in development agendas. The study depicts that lack of political commitment among political leaders is the major challenge to mainstream the issues of disability in all development agendas (60.48 percent of respondents rank it first). The country signed UN Convention on the Rights of Person with Disabilities and other agreements to provide education service, health service, sport and leisure venues, to create employment opportunities and other services. However, it is possible to say the implementation state of these conventions, rights and policies related to people with disabilities in the study area is very low. This indicates there is lack of political commitment on the political leaders' side to deal with the problem.

The other major challenge as the result of the study reveals, to mainstream disability issues in development agendas of the town is the attitude of the society towards disability. The interview result indicates that for many people in the society, person with impairment is in some way abnormal and created for begging. This attitude affects their self–esteem and their self-confidence for disabled people themselves and the commitment of political leaders to implement policies since they are part of the society. In Ethiopia, the majority of the society believes that those people who are disabled are cursed and are under the wrath of God, the creator. Parents and relatives of such disabled people are thus inferior and are most unhappy about their children (Hendricks V, 2009). In addition to this the study depicts that lack of resource like human resource (for example trained teachers in sign language) and material resource; and invisibility of the issue are also among major challenges of mainstreaming disability in development agendas in the study area.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations
5.1 Conclusion

Majority of disabled people in the town are unemployed and the employment opportunities created in the town are not participatory for those group of the society because they cannot fulfill the required qualification and other discriminatory characteristics of the employment opportunities. Almost all of the employed disabled people in the town are self-employed in the informal sector in which there is no entry requirement and needs less or no

qualification but which is a risky and lacks guarantee.

The major barriers hinder majority of them from participating in social life and social services provided by the public, like education, health, sport and recreation activities is absence of the services designed for those people in the town. Other causes are economic problems especially for education service, discrimination (family unwillingness because of society's attitude).

Even though, mainstreaming disability issues in all development programmes is the best approach to solve the problem of disabled people, it is not mainstreamed in the town. Challenges for the government to mainstream disability issues in development programmes are lack of political commitment on the political leaders' side to deal with the problem; the attitude of the society towards disability; resource limitation (human resource and material resource); and invisibility of the issue.

5.2 Recommendations

In order to avoid the exclusion and to empower people with disabilities: awareness creation, political commitment, enforcement of laws, coordination and mobilizing resources, proper monitoring and evaluation of policies and plans is vitally important.

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