



Disability Awareness in Action

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Stakeholder report on Uzbekistan

Submitted by Disability Awareness in Action

Rights of Disabled Persons

Full civil rights and freedom from discrimination for disabled people is guaranteed under Uzbek law. The 1991 legislation on “Social Protection of People with Disabilities of Uzbekistan” (N 422-XII) declares the intent of the government of Uzbekistan to ensure that disabled citizens have the right to full participation in the economic, political and social life of the country, including access to equal opportunities in public services and employment.


Challenges


Discrimination


In spite of a strong legislative framework for inclusion, social discrimination remains a significant obstacle to full inclusion. In Uzbekistan, the idea that a disabled person is an equal member of society, with equal rights and full inclusion in society is not a popular notion with broad-based support. National and local authorities still demonstrate limited capacity to enforce and institutionalize inclusion, and the general society stigmatizes disabled people, leading to widespread discrimination and further isolation in their homes or in institutions.

Many disabled adults in Uzbekistan are unemployed, under-educated and must rely on government disability benefits to remain above the poverty line. They experience difficulties because of poor social integration and ongoing attitudinal and physical barriers to full inclusion in mainstream society. As is the case in many developing countries, living with disability in Uzbekistan accentuates the likelihood of poverty.

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Although there are a number of NGOs, networks and associations¹ that serve the needs of disabled people, these organisations focus on serving people with disability only, while excluding their family members, neighbours and the general public as a whole.

Assistance for disabled people is still considered an act of civic duty, an act of mercy. Too often it occurs in the form of charitable events or material donations.

Access to education

Although 40% of disabled children² in Uzbekistan attend mainstream schools, barriers to accessing mainstream educational opportunities and overcoming social prejudice remain difficult for many families to surmount and disabled children are still too frequently placed in state institutions where educational opportunities are minimal.

Physical access to buildings

Under the law of “Social Protection of People with Disabilities”, the government has committed to ensure that each building in the country has access for disabled people. In practice construction companies either ignore this obligation or provide with unsafe facilities. Thus, inclusiveness is hindered due to the lack of appropriate infrastructures³ that would provide disabled children and adults with access to public and private institutions, such as elevators, ramps or special driveways for wheelchairs, and toilets.

Recommendations

Legislation

Disability Awareness in Action urges the government of Uzbekistan to ratify the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities immediately and take measures to implement its provisions as well as those of the strong national legislation to support people with disabilities to enjoy all their human rights.

Measures to combat discrimination

The Government should work with and promote the role of civil society to facilitate changes in attitude and behaviour towards disabled people allowing them to fully integrate and enjoy being active members of their communities. Awareness raising activities among general public could further facilitate integration of people with disabilities by making them to feel welcomed in their communities and empowering them to be active members.

¹The leading organisation is **Association of Disabled People of Uzbekistan** is a non state actor with a membership of 120000 disabled people. It has 110 local branches at the level of regions, districts and cities through the country. Research Paper on Social Protection of children with disability in Uzbekistan, UNICEF funded project, Republican Center of Social Adaptation of Children (RCSAC), Tashkent, 2007.

³ p.25. A. Education, Supplementary report from NGOs, CRC



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The Government must ensure that disabled people and their own representative organisations are active participants in decision-making processes on all matters that concern them, and not merely the recipients of aid. Only then will disabled people be able to lift themselves out of poverty and become citizens with equal opportunity for a life in dignity.

Physical access to schools and other buildings

The Government should oblige all construction companies to invite a representative of a disabled people's organization such as the People with Disability Society to sign off all acceptances of new constructions, in all parts of the country to ensure that the building has been constructed in accordance with necessary standards to allow disabled access.

Note on DAA

Disability Awareness in Action (DAA) is an international information network on disability and human rights to support, promote and coordinate national action by disabled people's own organisations and their allies; to further the equalisation of opportunities and human rights of all disabled people and to implement the philosophy that disability is a human rights issue.

Our main activities are: the collation of evidence on the lived experience of disabled people from around the world, including violations of their human rights. The provision of research and analysis of disabled people in relation to their rights. Working with governments, policy-makers, the media and civil society to ensure that the voice of disabled people is heard. Providing consultancy to promote disabled people's rights.

We have provided evidenced based reports to many UN bodies, particularly the Children's Rights Committee and the Ad Hoc Committee on the elaboration of the CRPD.