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### Employing People with Disability in Egypt / **توظيف ذوي الإعاقة في مصر**

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## THE PUBLIC POLICY HUB

# Employing People with Disability in Egypt

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## **Abstract**

No country can afford ignoring 10% of its population as a workforce; this is the estimation of people with disability [PwD] in Egypt. The perception of employers towards PwD as incapable, or fear of lower productivity results in totally missing the opportunity and the benefits of hiring those workers who happen to be PwD.

The main purpose of this paper is to develop an integrated approach to enable a business environment for PwD in Egypt. It examines legal and social aspects of the issue in Egypt and other countries, and suggests policy alternatives to increase the chance of PwD to reach decent jobs.

The lack of statistics and data in terms of types of disability, significance of rehabilitation services, and actual challenges faced by PwD in the labor market is posing a challenge in policy design and the initiation of proper interventions.

The recent Law [10/2018] labeled “Rights of People with Disability” is a great step forward but is not enough. Current policies consider PwD a homogenous group rather than a wide spectrum with different needs and approaches.

The absence of reasonable accommodation for people with disability hinder their access to the work place. It includes access to recruitment and hiring processes, adapting workplaces, modifying working hours and other working preparations.

Additionally, PwD are underrepresented in the education, training and capacity building services. This has impacted negatively the competitiveness and qualifications of PwD which make them concentrated in blue collar jobs.

This research recommends that policy makers in Egypt should raise public awareness of employment of PwD, establish data banks for PwD, accommodate PwD in the workplace, build their capacities and create supportive business environments for disabled entrepreneurs.

## **Keywords**

*Disability, Work, Job, Employment, Inclusion, Entrepreneurship, Workplace.*

## I. Executive summary

No country can afford ignoring 10% of its population as a workforce; this is the estimation of people with disability [PwD] in Egypt. They are not a homogeneous group but rather a wide spectrum with different needs. The high cost in building the capacities of PwD and the uncertain results limit the efforts in this area and prevent release of massive potential. Moreover, lack of statistics on PwD in the labor market are posing challenges in policy design and initiation of proper interventions.

Employability of PwD is complicated. The perception of business owners of PwD as incapable, adding to the fear of lower productivity, results in totally missing the opportunity and the benefits of hiring some excellent workers who happen to be PwD. There is also a problem in the PwD quota system that has been effective since 1982, as it has not been very effective.

Most PwD are discouraged and feel dependent because of the constant stigma they are subjected to from the society in general, and the stubborn obstacles in joining the labor market and being productive. Reason for exclusion varies according to the person's type and severity of disability, as he/she may need special tools and equipment in the work place. Access to education and other public services due to the challenges in public transportation and mobility is another common hindrance.

Classic approaches to PwD are based on a social-welfare medical model, but recently they became based on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRDP) that Egypt has signed and ratified in 2007. PwD appeared in the Egyptian 2014 Constitution, and the National Council for People with Disability is considered the legal patron for all PwD according to the recent Law [10/2018] about the rights of PwD.

The law [10/2018] is a great step; it includes most requirements and aspirations of PwD and their families. We believe that the law surpasses the expectations of most Egyptians. This is risky because people can only apply a law they can comprehend. Inclusion of PwD in the work environment needs training and education. Inclusion in the education environment needs public awareness. A national organized campaign to raise public awareness is urgently needed, it has to be orchestrated to deliver one message "PwD are not a burden on the society but a part of it. Every one of them have the right to get as much education as s/he can realize and the right to get as high a job as s/he can achieve".

Most workplaces need modifications and adjustments, or even redesign as "Universal" to accommodate people with different needs. Creating environments, including workplaces, which respect human diversity and promote the inclusion of all people will permit PwD a better chance to blend in with colleagues and maintain a successful career.

Entrepreneurship is a possible choice for those PwD who are eligible and can start their own business. Finding financial resources is a larger challenge for

PwD, than someone who is normally abled, especially if they need to get special equipment or software related to their impairments, in addition to typical costs such as premises rental, equipment, and ICT services. Using the existing financial institutions, special programs could be created to provide PwD with necessary support and training.



## II. Background

Considered the largest minority in Egypt, persons with disabilities (PwD) have long been marginalized. Policies concerning the rights of persons with disabilities in Egypt are formulated around charity rather than the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRDP) that Egypt signed and ratified in 2007 (Hagras, 2012).

PwD generally suffer in public transport, majority of buildings, and complex procedures to access basic services like health and education. This is aggravated by the social stigma about certain disabilities, which in its best condition stops at the level of sympathy. Because of the absence of inclusion, PwD are more likely to suffer from poor health and education services that affect their self-esteem, opportunities for participation and interaction with others, and puts them at higher risk of abuse and exploitation. According to the UNDAF country report, ***“Disabled adults of working age are three times more likely to be unemployed and live in real poverty” (Integrated Program to Promote the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Egypt, 2011).***

There are many challenges facing PwD stemming from an approach based on a social-welfare medical model. This certainly affects education inclusion, service provision, healthcare, rehabilitation, accessibility, data management, funding, consultation, and communication (World Report on Disability, 2011). Inclusion and empowerment are two repeated notions in literature about disability, but countries highly vary in both interpretation and implementation.

In Egypt, change is slow. Since Egypt ratified the “Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities”, CRPD, the terminology of rights has been implemented in the policies. The social understanding of disability affected legal development, too. The 2014 Constitution carried new hopes for formulating policies about PwD who were mentioned in nine clauses. Clause (81) states:

***“The State shall guarantee the health, economic, social, cultural, entertainment, sporting, and educational rights of persons with disabilities and dwarves, strive to provide them with job opportunities, allocate a percentage of job opportunities to them, and adapt public facilities and their surrounding environment to their special needs. The State shall also ensure their exercise of all political rights and integration with other citizens in compliance with the principles of equality, justice and equal opportunities” (Constitution of the Arab Republic of Egypt, 2014).***

A very inclusive clause that covers all life aspects and cross sectorial rights and services that PwD need to live independently and empowered, should be translated into compiling laws and policies.

### A. The Legal Framework for People with Disability in Egypt

The phases of evolution of the disability movement and rights can be viewed through four phases; institutionalization during the fifties until the end of the seventies. Then, shifting to community focus and grass root movement during

the eighties until the 2000s, followed by integrating law into society recently, that led to issuing a new comprehensive law adopted by the Egyptian parliament in 2018.

## **Institutionalization**

Disability and related issues were legalized since the fifties in response to Egypt's signing of the 1948 International Human Rights Declaration. However, this law (Number 116/ 1950) focused on social insurance granted for an inability to work, and thus, was limited to males of an employable age. This limited scope denied coverage for children, elderly and the majority of women as they did not participate in formal employment sectors (Shukralla et al,1997). At the time, the legal regime rendered the government without responsibilities towards PwD. In 1975, legislation was enacted to comprehensively approach the rights of disabled persons. Law Number 39/1975, with its 21 articles, set regulations to provide the essential rehabilitation capacity to guarantee the rights of disabled people.

Article 4 of Law 39 created a Supreme Council for Rehabilitation inclusive of all the Ministries. This council handles all questions relating to disability. However, the efficiency of interaction between related ministries can be a concern with its affiliation to the Ministry of Social Solidarity, not the prime minister.

The 1975 Rehabilitation Law was amended in 1977 and 1978 with Law No. 25 that guaranteed welfare rights, and then by the law of Civilian Employees No. 47 and Law of Public Sector Employees, No. 48, which secured employment in state sponsored agencies with priority given to veterans and veteran families (Hagras, 2005). Welfare rights under the rehabilitation law were once again amended by Law No. 92 of 1980, and Law No. 49 of 1982 amended the act to increase the employment quota from two per cent to five per cent, although the 1981 Employment Law number 137 had no provisions for persons with disability.

By the end of the 1970s, Egypt had legislation including mental disabilities, and items related to education, political elections, employment, social insurance, and rehabilitation. Laws were drafted through a top down approach in each concerned ministry and compiled into a draft that was then approved by the parliament.

## **Community focus and grass roots**

Throughout the eighties, more organizations giving direct and community-based services appeared. The revolution in technology and medicine, especially for the prevention and rehabilitation fields, along with enhanced communication channels, motivated third sector organizations to act positively in their societies. This activity was not under the umbrella of law, it was rather in a grass roots notion.

INGOs, with the support of national NGOs, adopted Community Based Rehabilitation

programs. CBR programs are the true catalysts for disability rights in many countries, Egypt included, as they organically alter negative assumptions of disability (Miller, 2011). These programs targeted the quality of life of persons with disabilities by giving access to different scopes. To reach this, programs involved multiple stakeholders such as persons with disabilities, their families, community organizations, health care providers, local governments, and education and social services (WHO Community Based Rehabilitation). Overall, this mindset identifies family and community structures as a crucial factor to the success of rehabilitation efforts.

During this era, the 1996 childhood law (Number 12) evolved. It deals with disabled children in its sixth chapter under the subheading “Care and Rehabilitation for the Disabled Child.” Articles 76 and 77 state that they have the right to

- (1) Enjoy special social, health and psychological care, which increase their ability to depend on themselves and to facilitate their integration and participation in their society.
- (2) Rehabilitation, which includes all social, psychological, medical, educational and vocational services, required to help the disabled child and their families to overcome the consequences of their handicap (Sadek, 2008).

### **Integrating the law and the society**

The adoption of the rights- based approach was the main shift in formulating laws and policies. Highly inspired by international developments, thoughts about disability were modified. Civil society began to turn to legislative and political frameworks as a necessary media to further mobilize and solidify rights for persons with disabilities (Miller, 2011). By 2007, the international community, including Egypt, adopted The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

The CRPD is the most recent treaty in international law and the only legally binding instrument about disability.

### **Adoption of comprehensive law**

The Egyptian parliament passed a new law [10/2018] replacing the old insufficient law 39/1975. This new law is the reward of years of advocacy and suffering.

The definition of disability is cornerstone in this law as it reveals how the society currently understands the problem:

***“A person with a disability is a person who has a partial or full stable limitation, whether physical, mental, sensory, or that prevents him when dealing with barriers and surrounding environment from participating fully and effectively with society and on an equal footing with the others.” [Law10/2018- Article 2]***

This definition would have been more professional if it was in line with the international standards in the CRPD that stress on the fact that the disability is in the environment and barriers not in the person’s body.

The Law finally addressed the notions of equality, discrimination, equal opportunities, the government responsibility towards PwD and social protection. It includes clear definitions of the previous terms with emphasis on rehabilitation and awareness about prevention of disability. However, there are fears related to implementation, as there is still some remnants of the medical model mindset manifesting in issuing a medical card for PwD as part of accessing healthcare.

It should be noted that it entails tax exemption and financial incentives to employing PwD, along with retaining the quota (5%), highlighting the importance of environment considerations for the needs of PwD, daily one-hour work time reduction, and exemption from health tests prior to hiring. The law addresses the punishment related to acts of discrimination, isolation, and violence in workplace, and gives tools for assertion and justice.

### B. Stakeholders' analysis

The below table outlines the key stakeholders who have influence on PwD. They are classified based on their power of influence and degree of interest. This section analyses each of the stakeholders to have a clear understanding of their roles and impacts.

<b>Table (1): Stakeholders of PwD</b>	
<b>High Power</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ministry of Finance</li> <li>• Ministry of Planning</li> <li>• CAPMAS</li> </ul>
<b>Low Power</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National Council for People with Disability</li> <li>• Ministry of social solidarity</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Private Sector</li> <li>• Education &amp; Training institutions</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PwD</li> <li>• Families of PwD</li> <li>• Relevant NGOs</li> </ul>
	<b>Low Interest</b> <b>High Interest</b>

### PwD

The definition of PwD varies from one country to another; it may include those born with disability, patient of epilepsy, psychiatric disorder, certain chronic diseases, and learning disability; it may include those who became disabled because of aging or an accident. This makes comparing figures and practice of different countries less easy as regulations actually apply to a different group of the population.

Current laws and regulations are only meant for a PwD who is willing to work; As a human being, a PwD needs a job to lead a normal life, feel an accomplishment and to get an independent source of income. Accessibility is a daily challenge, both in the workplace and in the daily commute to work (Gazzaz, 2018). A PwD may refrain from work because the working environment is repulsive.

## **Families of PwD**

The load of a child with a disability lies primarily on her/ his family, Disability may be caused by genetic factors or may start during pregnancy or childbirth.

Diseases during early childhood are likely to be maltreated because of the generally inadequate healthcare system. In poor areas, births usually take place out of hospitals at the hands of non-professional midwives, and a lack of oxygen during delivery may result in damaged brain cells and, consequently, physical or mental disability.

Uneducated families in Egypt tend to hide their children with disability to avoid stigma and negative effects on marital chances of their siblings, therefore depriving the child from early intervention that could have a great effect on a below-school-age child with disability: allowing him/her to attend school and special training. This would consequently permit more employment opportunity.

Low-income families have more reasons to hide their disabled children to avoid the costs of prolonged care, rehabilitation, commuting to and from schools, and to save some money for their healthy siblings who are typically regarded as worthier.

## **Relevant NGOs**

Certain NGOs in Egypt focus on helping PwD; most of them were created by an enthusiast PwD or her/ his parents. “In my NGO, which I created in 1997 to help the deaf, I used to train the person at his/her own request for the new job, like learning a certain computer software or using a certain tool. Training costs a lot of money because specialized trainers are rare. After receiving her/ his new salary, s/he starts paying the cost back to the NGO. This is the only way to keep the NGO alive” explains Tamer Anis, member of the National council for PwD in oral interview.

Because of government resource shortage, Rehabilitation is usually provided by NGOs of different capacity and quality; in the absence of PwD descriptive distribution map, services are provided according to the geographical location of available service providers not the needy disadvantaged PwD.

For example, Al-Hassan Foundation provides services to PwD in Egypt. They deliver wheel chairs but not for any one! They ask the person to attend a school regularly or get a job, monitor her/ him for six months, if s/he is a serious, s/he will get a tailor-made wheel chair to ease her/ his movement. “When this person gets a chair, s/he becomes a partner who actually helps the foundation in many ways. All their current employees are PwD who were the foundation beneficiaries, and they do a perfect job and are role models for new comers” explained May Zein-EIDein founder and CEO of Al-Hassan foundation in oral interview.

## **National Council for People with Disability**

The council was created in 2012 under the name “The National Council for

Disability Affairs” then changed its name in 2018 to be “The National Council for People with Disability”. The frequent change of the council name and chairperson (four within five years) who is directly appointed by a Prime Minister decision may indicate a foggy vision of the council’s role, and possibly a not-free-to-move political compass.

To fulfil its job of national coordination between stakeholders to the benefit of PwD, the council was supposed to report directly to the prime minister. This never happened as the busy prime minister always delegated the job to the minister of social solidarity as the closest ministry to the job of the council. This permanent delegation resulted in limbo; there is a clear conflict of interest as the MoSS has different priorities and follows its own political agenda. In fact, the council was supposed to monitor, evaluate, and report the MoSS and other ministries’ performance to upkeep PwD’s interests.

The most recent PwD law [No 10 of 2018], Article 37 considers the council a legal patron of all PwD, and obligates the relevant law enforcement agency to inform the council immediately after arresting any PwD, and requires the council to provide **“Health, Social, Technical, Specialized and legal help, including psychiatrist, lawyer and a particular physician if needed”**

### **Ministry of Finance and Ministry of Planning**

The Ministries of Finance and Planning, who are dominant in controlling the national budget, would only allocate funds according to national interest. PwD are not usually considered an important issue, thus, they rarely take priority in the government agenda. In contrast, year 2018 was officially called “The year of People with Disability”. The PwD law was approved by the parliament and issued in February 2018. The executive regulation or “La’iha”, according to Egyptian bureaucracy, means that after 4-6 months the law will be formally approved.

The new law was revolutionary in many aspects; we expect sizzling media debate and long litigation in explaining the legal text, especially the articles concerning quota in schools and universities, and the article concerning tax exemption.

### **The Ministry of Social Solidarity**

The Ministry of Social Solidarity is a chief player in the field of disability. The Ministry of Health also shares in the verification of the health condition of the disabled to qualify for some benefits like reduction on customs, or eligibility to certain rehabilitation program. MoSS is mandated to **“prepare policies to care for persons with disabilities, and issues licenses to non-governmental organizations (NGOs), which provide rehabilitation services, physical therapy, intellectual education, and other social services for persons with disabilities”** (Country Profile on Disability, Arab Republic of Egypt, 2002). The Ministry is also concerned with issues related to training and employment, advocacy, education, accessibility, sports, and leisure, and is responsible, among others, for the social and economic rehabilitation of PwD through integration programs.

There are two specific departments inside the ministry that serve PwD; General Department for Social Protection and the General Department of Social Rehabilitation for PwD (GDSR) (EIRefaei 2016). The Social Protection Department grants social pensions to the disabled based on a medical certification that is provided by the client from the Health Insurance Organization based on the Social Security Act No.87 of 2000 (Social Security Law number 87, 2000). In the Childhood Law number 12 for the year 1996, the state should provide ***“Rehabilitation services, technical aids, and appliances free of charge and according to the budget allocated for this purpose”***. In addition, the law asserts the MoSS’s role in providing rehabilitation through setting up institutions that would serve children with disabilities.

The General Department of Social Rehabilitation for PwD (GDSR) mandates, sets, supervises, and checks the general policies of the ministry in the protection and rehabilitation of the PwD, as well as the programs that serve them. Since the ministry itself does not directly give any direct services, NGOs are delegated for that mission under the authority of the ministry. The Ministry has a supervisory and regulatory role over NGOs in addition to a role that involves assigning projects and allocating budgets to NGOs for its execution, serving a strategic plan (EIRefaei 2016). The GDSR is also mandated to set out its programs and projects with its implementing bodies according to its yearly plan or its 5-year plan.

The department is also mandated to manage the financial planning, statistical analysis, quantity, and quality of services provided in the social care and rehabilitation services in Egypt. It takes part in the research and development of social rehabilitation services on both local and international levels in cooperation with local, regional and international agencies. It also sets and monitors the execution of the ministries’ policies towards PwD in the field of social care and rehabilitation (ibid).

### **The Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics (CAPMAS)**

CAPMAS is the official –and the only legal- Egyptian census apparatus, used to conduct a General National Census every ten years. The last Census conducted in 2017 did not allocate enough resources to collect data about the typically marginalized PwD sector. Available information about the distribution and characteristics of PwD in Egypt are conflicting percentage estimates ranging from one million to 18 million (2018). The absence of a legal definition of a PwD complicates the issue, and Census data collectors are not adequately trained to evaluate a PwD case, therefore, they had to depend on self-reporting (Helaly, 2018).

### **Private Sector**

The private sector in Egypt provides the majority of employment in Egypt, which is estimated at 70% of total employment. The majority of them are employed in the informal sector or in Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). These types of firms have no HR system, recruitment policy, payrolls, tax records, and

definitely do not comply with the PwD law. Formal businesses in Egypt could be either a national business or a local branch of a multinational firm, while the latter might be affected by the mother company's policy towards employing PwD, both must totally conform to relevant Egyptian labor laws. Both types of businesses are naturally reluctant to adopt any inclusion policy that may incur expenses.

Tax exemption pronounced in Article 23 of the PwD Law No 10 for 2018 gives a privilege of 5% reduction on income tax for the business owner for every single employed PwD above the legal quota. This could simply accumulate to 0% tax rate at 21 employees with disability; a huge encouragement for ghost PwD who only appear in the payroll, and enormous loss of tax revenues; the law probably should have specified a ceiling for tax exemption.

### The Education System

Inclusive education (IE) is influenced by the UNESCO World Declaration on Education for All (EFA) in 1990, the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education in 1994, and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2006. However, there is no clear definition for the nature and extent of inclusion (Anati, 2012; Weber, 2012). Accordingly, IE as comprehended and practiced in Egypt, may not be similar to what is mentioned in the international literature (Aldaihani, 2011; Almuhareb, 2007).

Abu Alghaib (2012) explains that most children with disabilities get education in isolated environments despite the governmental recognition of IE. Egyptian schools remain inaccessible for PwDs (Al Thani, 2006; Wehbi, 2007), and the attitude of teachers toward having students with disabilities in ordinary classrooms are negative (El-Ashry, 2009), and it is even worse with intellectual and behavioral disorders (ibid).

The type of disability and the family financial resources decides the child's chance of attending a school. Most families prefer enrolling their children in normal schools to permit early social interaction on one hand, and to avoid the hassle of special schools on the other hand. Being unfit for normal school and the need for an escort for longer years than usual may shorten the years a child with disability spends in school, thus reducing his/her employment opportunity.

According to Ms Maha Helali, member of the National Council for PwD, Egyptian Ministry of Education is already running around 900 schools for students with special needs which is far below the required capacity. Only 2% of students with disabilities actually go to school. Helali adds: ***“we advocate for inclusive schools that allow diversity, children with moderate degree of disability could attend along with their healthy peers, actually most schools are poorly equipped and lack trained teachers”[to deal with children with disability].***

### C. International Best Practices

This part shows international best practices of promoting employment of PwD.



It address the key policies including quota systems, accessibility, education and capacity building, and entrepreneurship.

### **Quota system**

It requires governmental and private sector employers, who pass a specific number of employees, to employ a certain percentage of workers with disabilities (Thornton, 1998). The logic behind the quota is that, without allocating quotas, employers will not consider the employment of people with disabilities due to discrimination practices, worries about high costs, or lower productivity (WHO, 2011). The quota differs from one country to another; For example, it is 2% in South Africa, 3% in Turkey, and 5% in Germany (WHO, 2011). Moreover, quotas may differ among sectors as it is very difficult to hire people who suffer from sever impairments in some sectors such as mining and construction (Thornton, 1998).

In many countries, if the businesses do not comply with the quota scheme, they pay a financial contribution into a governmental fund to be used to enhance the accessibility of disabled people to the labor force (Murray, 2003). In contrast, some countries apply better policy to increase the effectiveness of quota systems instead of financial sanctions. The governments in these countries sign agreements with the corporations to enhance the accessibility to the labor market, in partial fulfilment of their quota requirement. This system is implemented in several EU states such as France, Italy, and Poland; in many Asian countries, involving China, Japan, Thailand, and some African countries, such as Mauritius and the United Republic of Tanzania (Murray, 2003). However, the concept itself is not parallel with the inclusion policy and has many flaws in implementation.

### **Reasonable accommodation**

Reasonable accomodation means “Necessary and appropriate modification and adjustments not imposing a disproportionate or undue burden, where needed in a particular case, to ensure to persons with disabilities the enjoyment or exercise on an equal basis with others of all human rights and fundamental freedoms” (UN, 2006). These measures facilitate access to the work place and training centers on an equal basis with others (WHO, 2010). The reasonable accommodation involves facilitating access to recruitment and hiring processes, adapting workplaces, modifying working hours and other working preparations.

These arrangements could be a voluntary measure, such as in Denmark, or obligatory, like the United States (WHO, 2011). Thus, regulations need to encourage governmental organizations, NGOs and the private sector to make the business environment suitable to PwD.

## Education, Training and Capacity building

To make PwD more competitive in the labor market, the education, training and capacity building services should be accessible. The education system must be inclusive for the children with disabilities in an appropriate way as the Ministry of Education should provide customized support that fits with the needs of the child to be integrated well in the educational system (European Commission, 2010). At the same time, the training and capacity building programs must be offered in a proactive mechanism through taking into consideration the different needs of PwD.

Zambia has a good example for disability-sensitive vocational training; the Luanshya Technical and Business College (LTBC) and Mansa Trades Training Institute. They include PwD in their education and training programs, which began by creating an accessible environment through establishing new ramps in the buildings. The reception has lower cabinets and counters to ease the communications between the staff and PwD. After these modifications in 2013, 36 students with disabilities enrolled in the Mansa Institute. Before 2013, there were no learners with disabilities in the Kaoma Trades Training Institute. In cooperation with the ILO, the instructors and administrative team participated in the ILO Disability Equality Training, a course that helps the education and training centers to provide disability-sensitive educational services. In 2015, the PwD represented 15% of the total students enrolled in the Kaoma, 16 learners with disabilities out of 104 students. [ILO. (2015). Moving Towards Disability Inclusion: Stories of Change].

## Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship can be a catalyst for promoting employment of people with disabilities. Although there are PwD who have severe impediments and are not able to start their own businesses, entrepreneurship can be a possible choice for many other disabled people (OECD, 2014). This requires working on four main interventions: raising awareness, business development services, financial services, public and private procurement. In the USA, the Senior Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE) provide support to the people with disabilities to start and operate their own business. This includes training on all aspects of entrepreneurship, in addition to mentorship services<sup>(1)</sup>.

Public procurements can be a significant opportunity for entrepreneurs with disabilities as suppliers. South Africa applies a Preferential Procurement for entrepreneurs with disabilities. Its Policy Framework Act, Act 5 of 2000, promotes participation of entrepreneurs with disabilities in the government procurement to encourage self-reliance and enhance their income level. The government targets allocating 5% of its procurement to enterprises owned or managed by people with disabilities (Minister of Social Development Republic of South Africa, 2015).

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1 [www.score.org](http://www.score.org)

2 <https://www.nds.org.au/resources/buyability-social-procurement-specialists>

BuyAbility Procurement Initiative is another good example in Australia. This initiative promotes the employment of PwD through connecting the Australian Disability Enterprises with government and private sector procurements. This initiative is based on a regulation that allows governmental organizations in Australia to buy their goods and services from the Australian Disability Enterprises without the requirements to issue a competitive tender. The BuyAbility initiative provides contract management services to the public sector and private sector enterprises who can buy products and services from Disability Enterprises<sup>(2)</sup>.

### **III. Significance of the Problem**

PwD estimation goes up to 10% of the population, No country can afford marginalizing this percentage of its population by not including them in the work force. Reasons for exclusion varies according to the person's disability type and severity, as he/she may need special tools and equipment in the work place. Access to education and other public services due to the challenges in public transportation and mobility is another common obstacle.

According to article 23 (1) of the Universal Declaration of Human rights. "Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favorable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment". Finally, employing PwD may help change the societal and cultural norms regarding capacities of disabled people, thus positively enhancing their lives.

### **IV. Problem Statement**

Employability of PwD in Egypt is lower than developed countries. The perception of business owners of PwD as incapable, or their fear of lower productivity results in totally missing the opportunity and the benefits of hiring some excellent workers who happen to be PwD. There is a problem in the PwD quota system that is effective since 1982 and it is causing damage and not resolving the problem.

Self-image of the PwD for themselves is another challenge. Mostly, they are discouraged and feel dependent because of the constant stigma they are subjected to from the society in general and the stubborn obstacles in joining the labor market and being productive.

Current policies consider PwD a homogenous group rather than a wide spectrum with different needs and approaches. The high cost in building the capacities of PwD and the uncertain results limit the efforts in this area and prevent release of potential. Moreover, lack of statistics and data in terms of analyzing reasons behind disability, significance of rehabilitation services, and actual challenges faced by PwD in the labor market is posing a challenge in policy design and the initiation of proper interventions.

## **V. Policy Support for Employment of People with Disability**

To promote the employment of people with disabilities and to enhance their access to decent work opportunities, the policy makers should pursue a comprehensive approach to create an enabling environment through developing legislations and laws, making employees with disability more competitive, and creating more job opportunities through self-employment and entrepreneurship. Values of the policy options are Equality and non-discrimination; Accessibility to the workplace; and Participation of people with disabilities.

### **A. Raise Public Awareness of PwD**

#### **Description**

The law [10/2018] surpasses the expectations of most Egyptians, which is risky, because people can only apply a law they can comprehend. Inclusion of PwD in the working environment needs education. Inclusion in the educational environment needs public awareness. A national organized campaign to raise public awareness is urgently needed and it has to be orchestrated to deliver one message, “The PwD are not a burden on society but a part of it. Every one of them have the right to get as much education as s/he can realize and reach as high a job as s/he can achieve”. Examples of the awareness gap:

- Existing employees, or prospective employees, who are PwD or able-bodied persons, possesses a unique set of abilities and limitations.
- The work or school colleagues need to learn the etiquette of dealing with a PwD, for example avoiding a long conversation with a person in a wheel chair while you are standing, try to sit down to facilitate the conversation.

#### **Forecasted Consequences**

- The Egyptian society will become more tolerant to “Different People” which means enhanced social, educational, and work opportunities for PwD.

#### **Advantages**

- Increase collective awareness about different disability types, thus supporting workplace, school, and societal inclusion of “Different People”.
- Teachers, trainers Managers and staff will understand the physical features of disability, social barriers of disabled people, overcoming barriers in the education and training facilities. PwD are more accepted as schoolmates, work colleagues, friends and life partners.
- Allow early medical intervention to help children with disability, as less Egyptian families will try to hide their children with disability to avoid stigma. Early intervention can significantly raise the likelihood of attending school and eventually get a decent job.

### **Disadvantages**

- Campaign effect on the problem-laden society should be closely monitored; overdose may result in further PwD rejection by society.

### **Constraints**

- Requires creative design to deliver a message that contradicts the public understanding of the issue, PwD are not charity seekers, do not exclude them, merge with them

### **Political Feasibility**

- Highly feasible, requires limited budget.

## **B. Accommodating PwD in the Workplace**

### **Description**

Spread awareness of practical solutions to maximize inclusiveness for PwD within the workplace. Those with mobility challenges, autism, blind or deaf individuals have different needs that should be fulfilled to allow them to work effectively. The workplace needs modification and adjustment, or possibly to be redesigned as “Universal” to accommodate people with different needs. Here are some examples according to (Northwest ADA center, 2018):

- Environmental - effective lighting; adequate space for travel and maneuvering; minimal noise levels; elimination of obstacles in path of travel; accessible entrances.
- Controls and Tools - accessible door handles, light switches, elevator controls, faucets; tools with textured grips with a diameter which minimizes grasping force.
- Workstation and Storage - minimal glare; blinds or curtains on windows adjacent to workstation; adjustable chairs and workstations (ergonomic furniture); storage in range of reach for all employees; organizers and file folder storage on the desktop.
- Computers - accessibility features in operating systems; training in the ergonomics of seating posture and positioning; ergonomic use of keyboard, mouse and monitor.
- Communications - volume controls on telecommunication equipment; accessible, high contrast signage; alternate formats (large print, electronic files).
- Safety - multi-sensory alarm signals (auditory, visual); emergency and safety equipment clearly identified and placed in a conspicuous location.
- Training - for example training only one healthy employee on sign language will make the workplace much more inclusive for deaf employees.

### **Forecasted Consequences**

- Successful pilot projects will be copied to new workplaces giving wider choices and better job opportunities for PwD.

## **Advantages**

- Universal design is useful to normal employees who suffer from aging or temporary illness. Creating workplaces that respect human diversity and promote inclusion of all people will eventually raise morale and loyalty of workforce.
- PwD equipped with necessary tools could be more productive than normal workers.
- The workplace will be more accommodating to PwD thus providing them a better chance to blend in with colleagues and maintain a successful career.

## **Disadvantages**

- Invitation for corruption or PwD exploitation, thus needs continuous monitoring and by supervising entities.

## **Constraints**

- Cost of replacing existing accommodations.

## **Political Feasibility**

- For the first steps, many interested international and local NGOs or donors may participate with the necessary funds to introduce changes to some pilot workplaces, this will encourage employers to hire more PwD and enjoy the financial incentives according to [Law10/2018].

## **C. Enabling Entrepreneurship Environment for PwD**

### **Description**

Entrepreneurship is a possible choice for those PwD who are eligible and can start their own business. Finding financial resources is a larger challenge for PwD than a normal person, especially if they need to get special equipment or software related to their impairments, in addition to typical costs such as premises rental, equipment, and ICT services. Using the existing financial institutions, a special program will be created to provide PwD with necessary support regarding:

- Raise PwD awareness of the possibility of getting a loan and starting a business.
- Provide training programs on financial management and banking procedures.
- Evaluate the qualifications of the applicant.
- Conduct feasibility studies.
- Formulating the businesses models.
- Provide training and technical assistance.
- Follow up, marketing, business fairs and promotional support.

### **Forecasted Consequences**

- Business success stories will go viral in the media, inspiring more PwD and even able-bodied people to start their own private businesses.

### **Advantages**

- High productivity of entrepreneurs compared to typical workers.
- New businesses can be positioned in the applicant's home or very close to it, thus reducing mobility problem.
- Increase public awareness of feasibility of small and microbusinesses.

### **Disadvantages**

- High risk of loan repayment, failure due to health conditions of the applicant.
- Preferential interest rate may open the door to corruption or PwD exploitation.
- Need continuous support by the training providers.

### **Constraints**

- Resistance by PwD who used to receive financial aid and expect to get permanent governmental jobs.

### **Political Feasibility**

- Highly feasible according to current state policy of encouraging micro and small enterprises as part of economic reform.

## **D. PwD Databank and Analysis Unit**

### **Description**

There is a need to use statistical methods to collect realistic data about PwD in Egypt. According to the Egyptian law, this has to be performed under direct supervision of CAPMAS after slow and lengthy procedures. Currently we have only estimations but no reliable data. We recommend creating a unit within CAPMAS for PwD data on the national level to produce periodic analysis and reports for effective monitoring and evaluation of the PwD within Egypt, focus on effects of law [10/2018]. Data should be available for all public or private organizations interested in PwD inclusion.

This should not be confused with a database of résumés and personal information of “PwD seeking a job” that may be initiated and maintained by the National Council for PwD to facilitate matching with available job opportunities in their geographical zone.

### **Forecasted Consequences**

- Availability of better data on PwD.

### **Advantages**

- Raise community awareness about the prevalence of disability and its roots with reflections on the environmental causes, showing that no one is immune.
- Possibility of benchmarking local indicators against international published counterparts.
- More rational public policies regarding PwD based on reliable data.

### **Disadvantages**

- None.

### **Constraints**

- None.

### **Political Feasibility**

- Highly feasible with very little additional cost to CAPMAS.

## **E. Presidential Attention**

### **Description**

The National Council for PwD was supposed to report directly to the prime minister; that never happened, the prime minister delegated the job to the minister of social solidarity as apparently the closest ministry to the job of the council.

This permanent delegation resulted in limbo and clear conflict of interest as the MoSS has different priorities and follows its own political agenda. In fact, the council was supposed to monitor, evaluate, and report the MoSS and other ministries' performance to the government. We suggest that the council reports directly to the president exactly like the National Council for Women.

On the other hand, MoSS as the first line of contact with PwD should focus on creating better platforms and providing better services tailored to their diverse needs, not affected by politics.

### **Forecasted Consequences**

- The government will see PwD from a different perspective; they are no longer a Social problem, but a large Group of citizens of political and economic importance with diverse needs and rights.

### **Advantages**

- Immediate inclusion in government development plans.
- Resolve the conflict of interests between the National Council for PwD and other governmental agencies.
- Better services provided by MoSS to the PwD.



### **Disadvantages**

- Additional work load on the president, may delay decisions.

### **Constraints**

- Resistance of MoSS to lose its control on the council.

### **Political Feasibility**

- Feasible if the president accepted the responsibility.

## **F. National fund for PwD**

### **Description**

Currently, funds to support PwD are scattered in the national budget. The recent law [10/2018] decided many new services and advantages for PwD that needs extra funds through various governmental bodies. We suggest creating a single source inside the Ministry of Finance to fund all the costs of the new law, whatever the government agency that sustains the cost during application of the law.

This mechanism will be helpful to tally the real annual cost incurred by the public budget and the national economy in support of the PwD. Supplementary analysis should be carried out in the next two years to evaluate and possibly amend each article of that law.

### **Forecasted Consequences**

- Better control on public funds.

### **Advantages**

- Generate financial data relevant to PwD.
- Produce detailed cost-benefit analysis for financial incentives in law [10/20158].
- Suggest possible legislative or regulative intervention to spend public funds effectively according to what PwD need and deserve.

### **Disadvantages**

- Extra administrative work that may render the process longer.

### **Constraints**

- Might require amendments to effective bylaws.

### **Political Feasibility**

- Highly feasible given the Egyptian government central tendency on financial issues.

## VI. Conclusion & Recommendations

Egyptian public policy needs to address enhancing the PwD chance of employment, which is a difficult goal regarding the high unemployment national rate. The current economic situation in Egypt makes real estate the most lucrative form of investment and construction sector is a hostile work environment to PwD. This paper suggested six policy alternatives with minimum cost that will even save public funds.

The first step is to have major mindset modification while formulating policies, starting with adopting the rights-based approach; that PwD have the right to make informed decisions about their lives and deserve to have alternatives and choices. Also accepting that PwD are not a homogenous group that can be given the same tailored solution. Different types of jobs are needed to suit the different kinds of disability, different educational levels, geographic locations, and gender of the PwD. Service providers should be able to provide customized services to PwD. This will open the door for innovation in both regulation and implementation.

A national inclusion campaign could be higher in value than the (5%) quota law. People's behavior could be changed more effectively by media campaigns than by laws. The campaign could give guidance on how to make the work place more inclusive.

Partnership and effective networking in the private sector to make a variety of training available is another option. Listening to employers and handling their fears is much more efficient than increasing the quota or fines due to not abiding by the quota. Working on community rehabilitation to understand disability together with affirmative policies can create more opportunities and a better workplace environment. A workplace that respects human diversity and promotes the inclusion will allow PwD to maintain a successful career.

Microfinance and self-employment promotion can also be key success factors.

Bearing in mind that the informal sector is the major market sector in Egypt, this intensifies the need to promote enterprises among PwD. Regulations and laws should ease the process of giving loans with simple procedures, along with consulting services and monitoring start-ups.

### Recommendations

1. Enacting and enforcing the harmony between regulating legislations. Inclusion in education is an indispensable step towards further integration in life. A PwD cannot be kept isolated during the educational journey then suddenly shift him/her into inclusion through employment. We need to amend the construction code of educational building design to better accommodate a larger segment of PwD. Moreover, educational textbooks should shed light on disability to enhance the social knowledge and awareness.
2. Further study to evaluate the effect of the 5% quota for PwD that may add to the cost of production, thus putting local producers at a disadvantage against international competitors not constrained by such a burden. It is also unfair to force a certain group (i.e. formal businesses) to withstand a cost the whole society should share.

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