Chapter 7

Experience of Female Entrepreneurs With Disabilities in Zimbabwe

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ABSTRACT

The global population of people with disabilities is estimated to be around one billion which represents 15% of the population. It is further estimated that the majority of people with disabilities are found in developing countries to which the majority are women. Adding on to the challenge, 82% percent of disabled people live below the poverty line and can barely employ sustainable means of earning a living and neither can they widen livelihood options due to their circumstances. Thus, they are languishing in absolute poverty. Developing countries are lagging behind in promoting the economic rights of women with disabilities. This is mainly shown by their absence in formal employment because many developing countries do not have policies which facilitate the employment of women with disabilities. Women with disabilities in Zimbabwe are concentrated in light industry entrepreneurship. The majority are found in vending, buying, and selling of cloth and electrical items, others are involved in cross-border trading.

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INTRODUCTION

There are over one billion people with a disability, 80 per cent of which reside in developing countries (WHO and WB, 2011). People with disabilities (PWDs) have less success socially, economically, in school and in their work life resulting in a greater chance of poverty (Elwan, 1999). Data reveal that one in five is living under the $1.25 a day poverty line, has a disability (WHO and WB, 2011). Hence, it is important to implement measures directed towards PWDs to ethically achieve the first Millennium Development Goal; of halving the number of people living in extreme poverty by 2015 (McClain-Nhlapo, 2010). Developing countries are lagging behind in promoting the economic rights of women with disabilities. This is mainly shown by their absence in formal employment because many developing countries do not have policies which facilitate the employment of women with disabilities.

The WHO uses the following definition of disability:

*Disability is a generic term that includes impairments in the body functions and structures, activity limitation and participation restrictions. It indicates the negative aspects of the interaction between an individual (with a “health condition”) and his context (environmental and personal factors).* (WHO, 2006 in Barron and Ncube, 2010, p. 7)

Global Context

Regarding this, the global community has facilitated some strategic plans such as the Sustainable Development Goal with the purpose of making sure women with disabilities are not left out in the global development plans. There are specific goals which talks about the inclusion of people with disabilities in the development agenda. Given this strategic provision, the challenge has been the adoption of the SDGs and other policies into the national policy framework of protecting and promoting the economic rights of women with disabilities. Thus, the illustrative impact of implementing the policies and global frameworks intended for such is yet to reflect in the day to day lives of this identified target. The implementation of such strategies has been a challenge from the era of the MDGs which came and went but did not benefit much people with disabilities as most governments failed to implement them in ways that benefited people living with disabilities.
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