Kathmandu School of Law Review


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justice should be based on examination of objective evidence

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Status of Differently-abled Persons in Work Place: A Study of Courts inside Kathmandu Valley

Anupa Aryal

Abstract
Nepal has been adopting a range of policy, legal and institutional measures for the protection and promotion of the rights of persons with disabilities even before the CRPD came into force. It enacted the Disabled Protection and Welfare Act (DPWA Act) in 1982 and the Disabled Protection and Welfare Regulation in 1994. These acts intend to protect and promote the rights and interests of the persons with disabilities, recognize the need for the prevention of disability, and provide welfare services such as health, education, care and training to the persons with disabilities in order to make them competent and capable enough. This paper after empirical research using interview and observation method as data collection tool, tries to identify whether the rights to persons with disability are properly protected and promoted in Nepal.

Introduction
Nepal signed the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and the Optional Protocol to the CRPD on 3 January 2008 and it came into force for Nepal on 6 June 2010. It enacted the Disabled Protection and Welfare Act (DPWA Act) in 1982 and the Disabled Protection and Welfare Regulation in 1994. CRPD defines “persons with disability as those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments, which in interaction with various barriers, may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.” This is a broader definition when compared to the definition provided by DPWA Act. The DPWA Act defines a person with disability as “a citizen of Nepal who is physically or mentally unable or handicapped to do normal daily life-work, a blind, deaf, dull, crippled-limb, lame, handicapped with one leg broken, handicapped with one hand broken or a feeble-minded persons.” The terms used in this Act cannot considered as disable-friendly and appropriate. Hence, in 2007, the government of Nepal adopted an instrument on the definition and classification of disability. It defines disability as “a condition where a person feels difficulty to perform day-to-day activities and participate fully in social life

* Ms. Anupa Aryal is BA. LLB 4th year Student at Kathmandu School of Law (Purbanchal University), Bhaktapur, Nepal.
due to problems in body organs and system, including physical, socio-cultural and communication barriers."

The total number of disabled people in Nepal is reported to be 5, 13,321, which constitutes 1.94% of total population. This minority has been completely marginalized- they are fewer in number but more vulnerable in status. However, the government is doing series of activities for the protection and promotion of their rights. This article deals only with two basic rights of disability, only those would be the matter of discussion.

The Right to Work and Employment

The Right to employment is a fundamental right of every citizen of Nepal. Everyone has the freedom to practice any profession or carry on any occupation, industry or trade of their will. The DPW Act prohibits discrimination on the ground of disability in any form – be it in appointments, promotions, governmental service or other public services. It provides various measures to promote training and employment opportunities for the persons with disabilities. The CRPD provides that state parties must employ persons with disabilities in public sector. The Civil Service Act, 1993, in Section 7, provides that out of the 45 percent posts to be fulfilled by open competition, 5 percent are to be set aside and filled up by separate competition between the persons with Disabilities only.

To see whether this quota is fulfilled or not, the researcher visited 5 different courts of Kathmandu valley and following data is found:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.No</th>
<th>Court Visited</th>
<th>Total Number of Employee</th>
<th>Number of Disabled Employee</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Kathmandu District Court, Babarmahal</td>
<td>243</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Vision impairment, leg deformity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Special Court, Babarmahal</td>
<td>47+4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4 Initial report, (n 1): Disability has been classified into seven categories: (1) physical disability; (2) visual impairment: blind and low vision; (3) hearing impairment: deaf and hard of hearing; (4) deaf blind; (5) speech impairment; (6) mental disability: intellectual disability, mental illness and autism; and (7) multiple disabilities.

5 Central Bureau of Statistics, Government of Nepal, National Population and Housing Census 2011, November 2012, p. 211. (But, The National Living Standards Survey, 2010/11 shows that overall 3.6 percent of people had some kind of disability in Nepal. The survey included physical, visual, hearing, hearing and seeing, speaking, mental and multiple disabilities. The disability rates for males and females were 4.2 percent and 3.0 percent, respectively. Of all persons with some kind of disability, 29.2 percent were persons with physical disabilities, 22.3 percent had visual related disability, 23.4 percent hearing related disability, 2.4 percent vision/hearing related disability, 8.6 percent speech related disability, 6.8 percent mentally retarded and 7.3 percent multiple disability.

6 CRPD(n 2), Art.27; DPW Act (n 3) s. 8.

7 Constitution of Nepal,2072, art. 33.

8 DPW Act (n3), s 8.

9 CRPD(n2), art 27(g).

10 Here separate competition for the 45% is held between women, indigenous peoples, Madhesi, Dalit, persons with disabilities, and candidates from the backward areas.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Court Name</th>
<th>Employees</th>
<th>Disability Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Patan Appellate Court, Hariharbhawan</td>
<td>141+10</td>
<td>Hearing disability, leg deformity, haemophilia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Supreme Court, Singadurbar</td>
<td>500 (around)</td>
<td>Letter registration-leg deformity, library, inspection and supervision-hand deformity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Bhaktapur District Court</td>
<td>77</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Lalitpur District Court, Lagankhel</td>
<td>52</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure I:** Status of Persons with Disabilities as Employees in Courts in Kathmandu Valley

Out of 1,074 employees working on these courts, there were only 8 differently abled people. Mrs. Sabitra Katle, working at Kathmandu District Court, was the only one appointed on disability quota. Mr. Vinod Dutta, the employee of Patan High Court, was selected on Madhesi reservation quota. All others competed in the open category. These employees are appointed by Public Service Commission after passing its examination but some of the workers like Drivers and office assistants are appointed on contract basis either by the court or on an individual. If the civil service act was appropriately followed there must have been at least 24 employees working in these courts. When asked about this provision, Mr Dhurba Kumar Uprety, the Registrar (formally Shrestedar) of Kathmandu District Court replied “We have those employees who are appointed by Public Service Commission and it’s not we who decide who comes to the court as employee; and on contract basis, we don’t have any provision for quotas regarding as such; and people who come on quota basis are usually not disabled”. The researcher then went to head office of public service commission at Anamnagar to know about this provision and to know how disabled people are selected and appointed.

Geeta Kumari Humagain\(^{11}\), Information Officer of Public Service Commission said,

“We publish advertisements for certain posts along with the eligibility criteria in our website and national newspapers and conduct examination and interview. Generally, only a few numbers of positions are announced in an open advertisement. So, securing 5% of 45% is not possible. When a larger number of positions are open in an advertisement, there are only a few people qualified for the post and sometimes, the quota goes vacant”.

Public service commission has not published any annual data to give the precise information on how many people are employed and on what basis. Hence, it is difficult to find out if this provision of Civil Service Act is properly followed.

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\(^{11}\) Interview with Geeta Kumari Humagain, Information Officer of Public Service Commission, Kathmandu, January 10 2016.
However, the following data can be found after going through the record of appointed persons on government services:\footnote{12}{Public Service Commission, ‘Publication Related to Appointment’, Public Service Commission of Nepal Official Website, available at www.psc.gov.np, accessed on 1 May 2016.}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S. No</th>
<th>Fields</th>
<th>Appointed disables</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Administration</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Forestry</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Health</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Legal</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Kharidar\footnote{13}{Notice published by the Public Service Commission, Nepal failed to address which department the Kharidars have been appointed. Kharidar is a rank of government employee rather than a department.}</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Geology</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textbf{Figure II:} Total Number of Disabled Persons Appointed on Different Government Sectors in 2072-73\footnote{14}{This table only represents the number of disabled employee employed on quota basis, differently abled employee selected from the open categories are not included as such records has not been prepared by the Commission itself.}

This data clearly shows that not a single disabled person is appointed in Legal Service of Government of Nepal and only 15 people are appointed in the Administration (\textit{lekha/prasasan}). Mrs Humagain, the Information Officer of Public Service Commission also said, “It is what the government asks for, the government has not identified what type of job are more favourable to disabled persons with different deformities and there is a lack of policy in this regard. This issue can be addressed with a change in policy”. When interviewed, all differently able employees said that it is a matter of disgrace that only a few reserved seats are opened each year. Mrs Sabitra Kafle\footnote{15}{Interview with Sabitra Kafle, \textit{Nayab Subba} (Non-Gazetted 1\textsuperscript{st} Class Officer), Kathmandu District Court, Kathmandu, 27 April 2017.}, who passed Public Service Commission exam in the year 2068 said, “On the year I got selected, eight positions were reserved for differently-able people based on quota but six seats remained vacant as there were no competent persons to compete for the post.” She added, “until and unless we groom disabled people from the grass root and make them competent in the respective fields, the reservation right we get will never be utilizedfruitfully.”

\textbf{Right to Accessibility}\footnote{16}{CRPD n (2), art 9.}

The DPW Act recognises that a barrier-free environment involves a variety of aspects including barrier-free buildings, transportation and information and communications. The CRPD clearly requires state parties to take appropriate measures to ensure that persons with disability enjoy access to the physical
Various national policies and plans have been adopted for different objectives and strategies to enhance accessibility. The National Policy and Plan of Action on Disability\textsuperscript{18} includes policies to make disability friendly physical infrastructure. One of the main objectives of the thirteenth plan (2013–2016)\textsuperscript{19} was to increase the access to renovated government buildings, public utilities, road transport and other infrastructures and make disabled friendly environments too.

The Second Five-year Plan of Nepalese Judiciary 2066-2071 had an agenda to make courts disable friendly and accessible by constructing disable friendly parking, ramps, lifts, sign boards and Brielle, wide corridor, toilets and interior. The researcher used Access Handbook template\textsuperscript{20}, universal design booklet\textsuperscript{21}, the Five-year Plan of Nepalese Judiciary\textsuperscript{22} and Article 9 of CRPD to establish 8 criteria to decide either the building is disabled friendly or not i.e. ramps, disable friendly toilets, sign language interpreter, electric lift, electric wheelchair, assistance in access to information, public signage in Braille and signboards. The data collected below is completely based on observation and interviews with responsible authorities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.No</th>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Kathmandu District Court</th>
<th>Lalitpur District Court</th>
<th>Bhaktapur District Court</th>
<th>Patan Appellate Court</th>
<th>Supreme Court</th>
<th>Special Court</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Ramps</td>
<td>Yes (at the entrance)</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Only at the front</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Toilets</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Electric lift</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Sign language interpreter</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Electric wheelchair</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Assistance in access to information</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Public signage in Braille</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Sign boards</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure III: Accessibility in Court*

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{20} National Disability Authority, Access Handbooks, 2012.
\textsuperscript{22} Supreme Court of Nepal, \textit{Second five-year plan of Nepalese Judiciary2066-2071}, 2009.
The data demonstrates that accessibility of the court is very difficult. Courts are the place where people usually have to visit in search of justice. But they seem to be a place of injustice for persons with disability as they are lacking on various criteria of accessibility. Except Kathmandu District Court, none of the other courts has disabled-friendly toilets; and ramps are underestimated in almost every place. The right to information and the principle of fair trial require having an interpreter. However, none of the courts has an interpreter, thus having a sign language interpreter would be out of question. Nonetheless, all the courts are planning to employ an interpreter (dobhase). Sign boards and public signage in Braille, electric wheelchair, assistance in access to information are still in an imaginary state. Electric lift is available in two courts only. Differently abled employees working inside these courts are forced to be more handicapped because of the building structure. Vinod Dutta, an employee of Patan High Court, who has a leg deformity stated, “At one point in time, I could not even climb the stairs and having no ramps or lifts made it more difficult for me. But what can be done? I hope the new building will include more disabled-friendly structures. Now it is easier because I work on the ground floor.” Durga Dutta Lamsal, an employee of the same court, stated, “Though the number of differently-able people bringing case to court is minimal, it is difficult for those who come. Court benches aren’t moved to ground floor just for one person’s purpose”. Muluki Ain, 2020 provides that the case of disabled person must be prioritized, however there is no special provision regarding any special privilege to be given to them.

Analysis

Considering all the facts and figures mentioned above, there are different causes behind the ineffectiveness on the right of employment and accessibility. One of the major reasons is poverty. Eighty percent of the world’s disabled people live in developing countries, making the worldwide disabled population collectively one of the poorest and most marginalised segments of society. In Nepal and in the majority of developing countries, a large majority of disabled persons are found in economically weak communities. This is because the poor are more exposed to dangerous working and living condition with lack of access to healthcare facilities and poor nutrition, among others. In Nepal, the population living below the poverty line is approximately 23.8 percent till 2013. This resulted in the disabled
persons not having equal opportunities and access. The special needs for disabled are also not fulfilled. Not having access to proper education also has amounted as another major problem to the persons with disability in gaining job opportunities. There are only 85 thousand students enrolled in 365 special/integrated schools in Nepal. There are only two thousand and forty-eight students who have received a chance to enrol in higher education, which is just 4.38% percentage of the total disabled population. So to increase the job opportunities in any sector- be it legal or others - people with disability must have access to higher and further education. The Supreme Court of Nepal, in the case of Shudarson Subedi and Babu Krishna Maharjan v. HMG et. al, has issued a directive to make sure that disabled persons shall not be charged with any type of fees in public school, universities and training centres within the territory of Nepal. Thus having only 2048 students enrolled in higher education is a lacuna in governance. One of the major hindrances in providing accessibility and employment is the poor and improper execution of law. GoN has executed a number of plans and policies for execution of law but none of them is executed properly and that has resulted in the deprivation of the right to persons with disability. The Supreme Court of Nepal, in the case of Prakash Mani Sharma v. Government of Nepal, has ordered the government to constitute a committee monitored by Supreme Court itself to prepare six-month periodic review regarding the promotion of disabled people and submit it to Supreme Court for regular inspection. Even after such a step, disabled people are still lagging behind which shows the need for more concern and effectiveness. In Nepal, education for the people with blindness started from 2021 BS. Although Nepal has signed the treaties and conventions on rights of persons with disability, a situation exists where expected achievements have not been made in respecting, protecting and fulfilling these rights.

Conclusion

After the empirical research using interview and observation as data collection tool, it is found that the rights to persons with disability are not properly protected and promoted. Persons with disabilities are not having a proper access to public places and their right to employment is also not well guaranteed. There are various reasons behind it but lack of proper education, poverty and non-implementation of the law are arch the list.

It is essential for the government to take necessary measures to address these problems and secure the rights of disabled people. The overall development goal of the government of Nepal is to attain poverty reduction through sustainable, inclusive and equitable growth. In thee last Three-Year Plan, which ended in July 2016, the GoN stressed on employment generation, infrastructure development and agriculture as the engines for development. However, only this effort has

with this achievement, the GON is further streamlining its measures to narrow down the gap between the rich and the poor: The average per capita income is 721 US Dollars.

31 Ibid.
32 Shudarson Subedi and Babu Krishna Maharjan v. HMG et. al, WN 3586, 2060.
33 Prakash Mani Sharma v. NG, NKP, 2064, p. 1435.
34 Ibid n (20).
36 Country Strategy, n (19).
not improved the standards of differently able persons. Increasing the grant to disabled people, making the provision of free education in every level mandatory, making disability home and promoting higher education for disabled people may help to solve this problem to some extent. Ensuring scholarships to the disabled people studying in private schools, conducting training and establishing high schools for disabled may improve the education standard of differently able persons. This will simultaneously result in increase of employment opportunities. Classifying jobs as per the physical capacity of disabled persons will also improve the employment condition. Hiring only the disabled persons in specific jobs by the government also may improve the condition of such persons.

According to the Supreme Court of Nepal, a legal provision should be made effective as that requires 10 percent quota reservation for training and five percent quota for employment in every sector including governmental and non-governmental\textsuperscript{37}. A lot of work has remained to be done for making workplace accessible for disabled people too and we are at the very initial stage. This process is going to take a very long time. Most of the states have made disabled friendly guidelines for building designs and at the initial stage, it is necessary for the Nepalese government as well to adopt the culture. Disabled friendly construction can be made even using local resources at a very low budget and the government should also focus on this. In older buildings, construction of disabled friendly ground floor will work for now. Employing assistants for the old or disabled people in court should be a temporary alternative until signboards and Braille are arranged.

\textsuperscript{37} Ibid.