

The Disability Observer



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PwDs & Elections



Policy tools to reshape the market for services

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Gerard Quinn, the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities did a thematic study on reimagining services in the twenty-first century to give effect to the right of persons with disabilities to live independently and be included in the community for member states who signed the UNCRPD. Due to COVID-19 disruptions in 2020 the Special Rapporteur was able to carry out his first visit in March 2022. The policy tools from the report submitted by the Special Rapporteur on reshaping the market for services can be applied in the Zimbabwean context in order to implement the UNCRPD provisions for the betterment of persons with disabilities.

Article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities states that, “States Parties reaffirm that persons with disabilities have the right to recognition everywhere as persons before the law.” The need for reform of the service sector is to the full restoration of power to persons with disabilities over their own lives especially in the Zimbabwean context where services are mostly designed for people who are termed “normal”. For example, advertisements are not done in disability friendly formats such as large print, pictorial or simplified formats nor are most premises disability friendly the lack of ramps, restrooms, and proper labeling for persons who are Deaf that may not have an interpreter present at all times. These are at odds with Article 12 of the CRPD that Zimbabwe is a signatory of.

The second policy tool that was discussed by the Special Rapporteur is voice and the co-design of future service paradigms. This is the inclusion of persons with disabilities as well as service providers keen on change because transitioning to any new service paradigm requires co-design from the outset and requires diverse voices around the table. Article 19 of the CRPD states that,

“States Parties to the present Convention recognize the equal right of all persons with disabilities to live in the community, with choices equal to others, and

shall take effective and appropriate measures to facilitate full enjoyment by persons with disabilities of this right and their full inclusion and participation in the community, including by ensuring that:

c) Community services and facilities for the general population are available on an equal basis to persons with disabilities and are responsive to their needs.”

Zimbabwe is a party State of the UNCRPD and has the mandate to implement the provisions of the Convention. Articles that were stated above have to be implemented in Zimbabwe in order to improve the livelihoods of persons with disabilities. The issue of service provision for persons with disabilities needs attention as most services in the private and public sector are not disability inclusive. Therefore, the need to give persons with disabilities their legal capacity to have a voice, choices and control in the services sector. Above it all there is need to co-design future services paradigm with persons with disabilities because no assumptions should be made on what persons with disabilities need and want hence the application of the phrase “Nothing for us without us”.



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