

GFD IN THE NEWS

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DISABILITY WELFARE TO BECOME 2016 ELECTION ISSUE

Mr Francis Asong, Director of Voice-Ghana said the body wants to end the wishy-washy attitude of political parties to concerns of People with Disabilities (PWDs), during campaigns and governance.

He was speaking at a meeting in Ho to evaluate an Inclusive Governance Project for Persons with Disabilities.

Open Society Initiative for West Africa, an American NGO, funded the two-year project, which was implemented by VOICE-Ghana, in 10 districts in the Volta Region.

Mr. Asong said the projected Disability Manifesto, akin to the Women's Manifesto, should commit political parties to the statute-backed world trend of mainstreaming issues of disabilities into governance at all levels.

The project on the theme: "Inclusive Governance for All," sought to "increase the voice of the marginalised and socially excluded people with disabilities."

Beneficiary districts were Akatsi-South, Akatsi-North, Ketu-North, Ketu-South, Nkwanta-North, Nkwanta-South, Krachi-East, North-Dayi, Ho-West and Central-Tongu.

Implementation was done mainly through 20 Self-Help Disability Groups as front-liners, working with District Assembly core staff.

Besides energising PWD's towards a rights-based approach to governance issues, the project raised capacities of local governance staff, along the lines of policy conception, formulation and implementation.

The evaluation meeting covered the project's key results, discussed impact on beneficiaries, collated lessons learnt, evaluated the good practices and heard feedback from beneficiaries on how to scale up project objectives in other districts and regions.

Mr. Asong said landmarks of the implementation process included the establishment of memorandum of understanding with the assemblies to commit them to project goals and involvement of PWDs in Public Hearing Sessions and Town Hall meetings.

He said the project mid-year review wanted possible future projects to raise capacities and participation of PWDs in development planning processes, create forums for discussion of development issues and raise awareness of local development stakeholders about disability issues.

Consensus at the evaluation meeting was that the project had moved the districts many steps forward in the involvement of PWDs in local governance.

Angelica Wemegah, Public Relations Officer for an amalgam group of PWDs in the Ketu-South District with a membership of 752 told the GNA that getting a hearing from the assembly authorities was difficult in the beginning but things changed for the better after persistent overtures of project managers.

Philip Zidah said PWD participation and input into the Akatsi-North Districts affairs had resulted in the re-birth of a defunct vocational school at Ave-Afiadenyigba.

Charles Valentine Nyante, Programme Coordinator, VOICE-Ghana said the project was necessitated by a disturbing scenario of PWDs “largely excluded from development processes and therefore had limited opportunities to engage in public consultations and decision making”.

He said “anecdotal evidence has shown that people with disabilities generally lacked access to information about their rights and thus lack of knowledge about how to challenge their situation and often suffer discrimination in all aspects of their daily lives”.

An unintended result of the project was the push it gave to PWDs to participate in the recent local government elections.

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