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SG NAHWAL / Liberia

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On the role of Public Service Trade Unions in the achieving Decent Work for persons with Disabilities 8 December 2016-ILO Geneva, Room XI –South R2

According to the 2008 population census, the last done in Liberia, 16% Liberia`s 4 million inhabitants are People With Disabilities (PWDs). In 2013, the statistics shown that 94% of PWDs in the country live on charity and handouts. Thus only 6% of our PWDs are independent simply because, they lack education, skilled trainings, and opportunities to improve themselves. As a result, they cannot compete for the limited jobs on our job market. Luckily, there is now the Lion Club Computer School of the blind which graduated about 16 students in its first circle. Graciously, all of have been gainfully employed. But that school is in financial trouble and something has to be done to keep hope alive for a vulnerable generation.

For a fact, Liberia has made efforts in creating some cosmetic legislations that have established two institutions to cater for PWDs; one is managed by PWDs themselves (National Commission on Disabilities- NCD), and the other is managed by the Vice President`s wife, the Group of 77. Both institutions are funded by the government to cater for organizations of people living with Disabilities. But these cannot meet the needs of PWDs due to insufficient funding added to the challenge of dishonesty! These are charity Institutions and they are not justice oriented. Above all, they do not address the needs for capacity building and empowerment of PWDs. They neither speak to employment nor conditions of work for PWDs.

The unions in Liberia have not attended to PWDs on two counts:

1. Firstly, Unions themselves are still struggling for recognition so that their voices are considered by Decision Makers. Frankly, the current Liberian government has an anti – union posture. And
2. The issues of Rights of PWDs are not a common knowledge among TUs in the country.

But the good news is, with this exposure, couple with the new vigor of advocacy from Psi affiliate in collaboration with their consortium in the country, the time is reap for the inclusion of PWDs` related issues on the agenda of TUS for advocacy in Liberia.

A M A N D L A!!!!