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Visual Impairment and Human Rights

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: It is important to recognize the extent to which views on persons with visual impairment have changed over the years. From looking at this issue as a medical condition, it is nowadays being regarded as a human rights issue which has today been embedded into legally binding instruments at the national, regional and the international levels.

Purpose: The purpose of this work is to address the human rights aspect of visual impairment, the challenges faced and to assess if the rights of persons with visual impairment are effectively enforced.

Methodology: The qualitative methodology of research was used to gather information such as observation and unstructured interviews.

Findings: We discovered that there is the inadequate provision of support needs to persons with visual impairment as well as inaccessibility to infrastructures.

Unique contribution to theory and practice: In theory, this piece of work is beneficial to the entire academic society as it contributes to the existing body of literature. In practice, it raises awareness on the need for the promotion and protection of persons with visual impairment. As concerns policy recommendations, we tackled the Government, institutions and the Community. As one of the policy recommendations to the government in particular, we saw the need to address the fact that they should be louder on raising awareness on the existence of such rights by teaching the human rights of persons with visual impairment in educational institutions. The institutions should organise talks or conferences which will help them identify challenges these people face while the community can contribute in creating a conducive atmosphere for these people by being warm and receptive.

Keywords: *Human rights, Enforcement, Visually Impaired.*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Visual impairment is an umbrella term, covering sensory disability, activity limitations, and participation restrictions. Impairment is a problem in body function or structure; an activity limitation is a difficulty encountered by an individual in executing a task or action; while a participation restriction is a problem experienced by an individual in involvement in life situations. It is estimated by the World Health Organization that they make up 385 million of the world's population with 4080 of them living in Cameroon¹. Thus, visual impairment is a complex phenomenon, reflecting an interaction between features of a person's body and features of the society in which he or she lives.

Visual impairment is a term used when people with special needs are unable to take care of themselves and meet their needs because of the lack of facilities and tools. It is not a description of a situation but an expression of the individual's relationship² with the surrounding environment. For example, a visually impaired person which is the focus of this paper who is unable to read, and therefore cannot go to school or work. But if the necessary equipment and devices that help him to read are provided, he is able to learn and work smoothly and easily. That is why a person can be visually disabled in one country but not disabled in another. This is because if the necessary equipment which serve as a barrier to the full participation of an individual in a society are provided, then that person is no longer disabled. It is also important to note that all the disabled persons are people with special needs, but not all people with special needs are disabled persons.

The term visually impaired encompasses³ a wide variety of conditions that may affect a person's mobility, stamina, and/or functioning. The concept of visual impairment, as WHO⁴ observes is broad and covers a range of sensory disabilities and health issues, including both congenital and acquired sensory disabilities. A visual impairment might also be defined as a disabling condition or other health impairment that requires adaptation. It is recognized worldwide and celebrated on the second Thursday of October every year. The theme for 2019 was "Vision First".

Persons with visual impairment include those who have a sensory impairment and who face barriers to participating in society on an equal basis with others. The various types of visual impairment include loss of peripheral, blurred vision, generalized haze, extreme light sensitivity and night blindness. Visual impairments can relate to a range of difficulties, including difficulty in moving, lifting or picking up objects, and/ or experiencing pain or fatigue. An accessible environment can have a significant impact on the opportunity that people with visual impairment have to participate actively in the society.

Persons with visual impairment have the same rights or needs as persons without disabilities as well as they have special rights or needs. These rights or special needs could pertain to employment, institutions, education or care just to name a few. They deserve to possess equal rights like persons without disabilities. According⁵ to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities "disabled persons have the right to economic and social security and

¹ <https://www.who/disabilitynews.net>

² <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/328319195> (accessed on March 21st 2020)

³ Robert Forbus: Ph.D. and Samantha Gomes: Ph.D., Physical Challenges and Disabilities (p1)

⁴ World Health Organization (2011)

⁵ Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities available at <https://www.ohchr.org>, (accessed on 19th March 2020).

to a decent level of living”. They have the right, according to their capabilities, to secure and retain employment or to engage in a useful, productive and remunerative occupation and to join trade unions amongst other rights.

Persons with disabilities make up an estimated 10 per cent of the world’s population (that is over one billion-285 visually impaired persons)-over 80 per cent of whom live in developing countries⁶. They frequently experience discrimination and face barriers to participation in all aspects of society-for example in accessing health care, education, employment and transportation. The rights to persons with visual impairment include equality before the law, freedom of speech, and respect.

Some theories which will be essential to this work include the natural law, triple pronged and human rights-based theories. A theory such as the natural law theory which was postulated by the Libertarians⁷ such as John Locke and Aristotle is relevant to this piece of work. According to them, human rights are given to human beings by God and not by man; hence the rights are natural. To them, all human beings regardless of class, sex, religion, social or political status should be treated with dignity. That is to say, people should be treated with the spirit of brotherhood. This theory is founded upon Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 10th December 1948. This theory is instrumental for the development of this piece of work because it calls for people to be treated equally.

The triple pronged theory was postulated by Henry Shue⁸ (1986). Under this theory there is the duty to respect, to protect and to fulfil human rights principles. He originated this theory from the obligations bestowed on States under the international human rights instruments. To him, the obligation to respect, protect and fulfil human rights principles is fundamental in determining the effective implementation and application of international human rights law. This theory emphasizes the fact that States are direct duty-bearers in the protection of human rights of citizens. In other words, States are responsible for promoting and protecting the rights of every human being, visually impaired persons inclusive. This theory is relevant to this work because persons’ visual impairment have rights which ought to be promoted, protected and respected.

The human rights-based theory was developed and postulated by the United Nations agency called the United Nations Development Group (2003). It focuses on the principles that peace, justice, development and human rights are fundamental in human existence as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It is centred on meeting the ends of the right holder and the duty bearer in all domains of life. This theory is further designed in order to enhance human development. It directly protects and promotes human development in accordance with the international human rights standards. This theory points out and criticizes inequality in any given society since inequality is considered as the centre of human development. It specifically condemns discriminatory practices and unjust distribution of power relation that destroys human development. This theory is centred on Article 1 and 2 of the U.D.H.R. This approach is useful in achieving sustainable progress and positive result in the equal treatment of human beings. The

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Notes on International human rights law by Prof Sone Patience (2019) Department of English Law-International Law: Level 600.

⁸ Henry Shue, Basic Rights, (Vol. 9,June 2, 2008)p20.

situation of vulnerable groups in our society, the structural causes of exclusion and poverty cannot be addressed without providing vulnerable groups with a voice and space to participate in decisions affecting them. This concept holds that those with the power to shape peoples' lives must be accountable to the most deprived groups in order to overcome discrimination in any given society. It then goes without argument that persons with visual impairment are a deprived group, hence any existing discrimination must be identified, understood and challenged in order to achieve equitable development with respect to human rights

1.1. Visual Impairment as a Human Right Issue

The period of 1983- 1992 was proclaimed by the General Assembly of the United Nations as the United Nations Decade for disabled persons; since then a global movement has emerged which recognizes the importance of integration of people with disabilities in the society⁹. Today the issues relating to the visually disabled are no longer mere welfare measures but have grown into fundamental human rights issues, a demand for full participation, equal opportunity and protection of rights from all perspectives have been taking place. International Human Rights law determines that every person has; The right to equality, the right to non-discrimination, the right to equal opportunity, the right to independent living, the right to full integration, and the right to security. These rights entail all human beings, persons with visual impairment included. In other words, the visually impaired which is the sole focus of this paper also have the right to enjoy these rights. These persons have the right to participate in activities that benefit them¹⁰.

1.2 Visual Impairment and Inclusion

The concept of inclusion recognizes that some individuals face barriers to enjoying their rights on an equal footing due to discrimination on the basis of age, gender, or other diversity factors, such as disability, religion, ethnicity and/ or status as refugees, asylum seekers, Internally Displaced Persons, returnees or stateless persons.

Inclusion is a broad concept that refers to the removal of barriers to enjoyment of rights so that all persons have equality of opportunity with regards to access to services and participation in society. Barriers can be related to policy and law, the physical environment, communication, and social and cultural beliefs¹¹. Barriers can manifest in legal frameworks and norms; institutional policies, standard operating procedures and budgets; and in attitudes and behaviour. For persons with visual impairment, inclusion means these persons have opportunities to participate in all activities on an equal basis with persons who do not have disabilities. This means that it is service providers' responsibility to design services to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, and, where persons with visual impairment are not accessing or participating in activities addressed to the whole population, make changes to programming to create the same opportunity for these persons to participate in activities that benefit them¹².

The concept of inclusion is of great importance when it comes to the equal enjoyment of all international human rights by all persons. Inclusion makes it possible for minority classes of

⁹Chaitanya, N. Laddha, Rights of person with Disabilities: A Human right approach, (2016) p1.

¹⁰ *Ibid*.

¹¹ Inclusive education: perception of visually impaired students available at <https://doi.org> (SAGE Journals) accessed on 3/07/2021

¹² *Ibid*

persons to have access to the enjoyment of all human rights. In this line, inclusion is looked at from a legal perspective. It is worthy to note that the concept of inclusion is still an illusion in certain aspects/domains in Cameroon.

2.0 Challenges Faced by Visually Impaired Persons

2.1 People's Negative Attitude Towards these Persons/Environmental Barriers

People's negative attitude has to do with how an individual in particular and the society at large reacts to persons with visual impairment. It is worthy to note that people's negative attitude in the society has an impact on these persons. Some of these attitudes include teasing or making mockeries of such persons, refusing to help them, disregarding them among others. All of the above listed and many more go a long way to contribute to the challenges faced by persons with visual. This is because they tend to feel unwanted or rejected by the society in which they find themselves and this could cause them to isolate themselves and reduce their self-esteem.

According to Abdul Kasambula Hakeem;

*"People's negative attitude has a bearing on the lives of persons with visual impairment"*¹³. To buttress this point, it is important to treat persons these visually impaired persons on an equal basis like persons without disabilities, so that they can have a sense of belonging in any society where they find themselves. In the Fako Division, some of these persons feel they are being jeered at because of their physical appearance and they tend to isolate themselves

2.2 Accessibility as a Challenge

Accessibility here is in terms of getting access to things and places. The visually impaired face challenges accessing places due to their impairment. A visually impaired person may face difficulty crossing the road, accessing a building, reading or even writing an examination which results to a limitation in education or accessing education. In order to feel belonged among people, it is important for there to be adaptations for such persons which will serve as a form of help to them and equally help them in carrying on with their daily activities.

According to Michael Mbongiseni Buthelezi in his work which focuses on exploring challenges experienced by physically challenged students in which he describes how the environment can serve as a limitation to the enjoyment of rights of visually impaired persons in these words;

"The environment disables people by not being accessible enough for them to move, function and communicate as effectively as people without impairment".

A great deal of the environment is designed by non-impaired¹⁴ people, for non-impaired living. For example, people using wheelchairs are only disabled if the environment is not designed for people with wheelchairs¹⁵. A wheelchair friendly building would probably include ramps, lifts, wide doors and corridors and accessible fittings such as light switches and motorized doors. Whilst these modifications benefit people who use wheelchairs, they can also benefit non-impaired people.

¹³Kasambula Abdul Hakeem, Persons with Physical Disabilities and their Working Life, (2015)p46.

¹⁴Michael Mbongiseni Buthelezi, Exploring Challenges Experienced by Physically Challenged Students, (2014)p20.

¹⁵*Ibid.*

2.3 Educational Challenges

In terms of education, these persons cannot be educated like persons without disabilities. Lack of educational facilities limits their access to education. For instance, visually impaired would need help reading or writing with their adaptive equipment such as Braille which is aimed at facilitating their daily experiences¹⁶. Educational infrastructures which are not built in such a way as to accommodate these individuals' differences contribute to the challenges faced by these persons in accessing educational institutions¹⁷. The lack of all these facilities and many more in education pose as educational challenges or barriers to visually impaired persons be it in Cameroon or anywhere in the world¹⁸.

3.0 Rights of Visually Impaired Persons

This refers to human rights generally attributed to every person without discrimination. Over the past three decades there has been a dramatic shift from medical and charity disability models to a model based on human rights and equal opportunities¹⁹. Persons with visual impairment are no longer seen as a special group requiring special medical and social services in segregated settings. Instead of adjusting the needs of the individuals with visual impairment to prevailing social standards, societies are adjusting their social norms to meet the needs of persons with visual impairment. In the social model, visual impairment is seen as the result of complex interactions between a health problem or a functional limitation and the social, political, cultural, economic, and physical environment²⁰. These, in combination with personal factors such as age, gender, and level of education, can result in a disadvantage. Under this approach, this kind of disability focus is no longer focused on how to provide for those deemed “unable” to integrate into mainstream society, but rather how to make society accessible to all, on an equal and non-separate basis²¹. In many countries persons with visual impairment have equal rights to education, safety/conducive environment, public transportation, social services, access to public places, employment and much more in the same way as they are available to non-disabled individuals²². In Cameroon, these rights are listed in the 2010 law relating to the protection and welfare of persons with disabilities and the conditions for its application entrenched in the 2018 Decree fixing the procedures for the application of this law, where mention has been made of the fact that the benefits and rights will accrue to persons who possess of an established valid national disability card.

3.1 The Safety and Security of the Visually Impaired

Persons with visual impairment as part of a minority population need a conducive environment and facilities in order to enjoy their rights fully since they face difficulties on a daily basis due to limitation in their ability to perform certain activities²³. Visually impaired persons experience an increased risk of becoming victims of violent crimes. Women with visual disabilities specifically

¹⁶ Obtained from interviews conducted with visually impaired students and lecturers at the University of Buea-Cameroon.

¹⁷ Obtained from studies and observations on the campus of the University of Buea-cameroon.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Views on disability, available at www.//https/disability.org, (accessed on April 14, 2020).

²⁰ Social Model on Disability available at <https://inclusionlondon.org.uk> accessed on 9/09/2021.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.*

experience a high rate of sexual assault and domestic violence²⁴. Children with visual disabilities also experience a high risk of abuse. Young people with visual disabilities are more likely to experience neglect and abuse and find themselves surrendered to the child welfare system²⁵.

When situations such as natural disasters occur, persons with visual disabilities are frequently denied 'our' right to protection²⁶. During such situations, these visually impaired persons should not be treated the same like non-disabled persons because their impairment can impede them from moving, seeing and so they need extra help unlike non-disabled person²⁷.

In the year 2016 during the 'Anglophone crisis' which began with riots in Buea, disabled persons including the visually disabled were among the many people arrested (amongst which we have people arrested with no just cause) and thrown in jail and today most of them are still awaiting trial. Some of these disabled persons are females who were pregnant before being arrested, others got pregnant in jail and they have put to birth and are raising their children in jail. In the words of the Regional Chief of Service of the delegation of Social Affairs in the Buea municipality;²⁸

"We have secured the release of some innocent disabled minors and are still working towards the release of other disabled persons who were arrested unjustly²⁹".

3.2 Equal Protection, and Due Process

It is the right of every citizen to be protected at all times from eminent danger especially when crimes are perpetrated against such persons. Persons with visual impairment should not be left out of this equation. In dangerous situations, persons with visual impairment ought to be given special care due to their impairment. Regarding due process, the same treatment accorded to non-disabled persons should equally be accorded to disabled persons including the visually impaired. In some scenarios, persons with visual impairment will need additional help such as Braille writings in educational institutions. There is the need for assistance in transportation for the blind. Crimes perpetrated against non-disabled persons should be prosecuted with the same amount of severity as crimes perpetrated against persons with visual impairment. In most cases, these persons if not accompanied by legal minds such as lawyers, human rights workers or social workers, they would hardly achieve the justice they deserve. These people help follow up cases related to persons with disabilities among other activities and see to it that these persons are well served by the legal administrative authorities. But it is disheartening to say that this is hardly the situation in Cameroon³⁰.

3.3 Persons with Visual Impairment and Accessibility

Accessibility is the primary component in the fight against discrimination involving persons with visual impairment. The principle of accessibility aims to dismantle the barriers that hinder the

²⁴ Safety and protection of persons with disabilities available at <https://emergency.unhcr.org> (accessed on 10/09/2021)

²⁵ Obtained from observations pertaining to visually impaired persons in Buea-cameroon.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ Mr John NjanjoLuma, (interviewed on the 31st of March).

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ Obtained from interviews with visually impaired persons and observations on the movements of such persons in the city of Buea-Cameroon.

enjoyment of rights by persons with visual impairment. The issue concerns not just physical access to places, but also access to information, technologies, such as the Internet, communication, and economic and social life. The provision of ramps, sufficiently large and unblocked corridors and doors, the placement of door handles, the availability of information in Braille and easy-to-read formats, the use of sign language interpretation/interpreters, and the availability of assistance and support can ensure that a person with a visual impairment has access to a workplace, a place of entertainment, a voting booth, transport, a court of law, among others. Without access to information or the ability to move freely, other rights of persons with visual impairment are also restricted. For instance, if the government does not facilitate the dissemination of information to persons with visual impairment during this crisis (Coronavirus-Covid19), it's likely that these persons would easily be infected. Such dissemination of information can be done by printing brochures with Braille so that these persons understand the necessary precautions to be taken³¹.

The law of 2010 modifying the law of 1983 relating to the protection and promotion of rights of persons with disabilities in Cameroon and its decree of application regulate and make mention of the right to the accessibility of persons with visual impairment to certain institutions through putting up structures which accommodate their differences. For example, article 20(2)(6) of the decree makes provisions for home assistance and reduction of transport fares for persons with disabilities.

Article 18(1) stipulates that:

“The State, Decentralized Territorial Communities, public and private bodies shall take all necessary measures to facilitate the accessibility of people with disabilities to public and private buildings and institutions open to the public”.

Article 18(2) of the same decree holds that:

“At the time of renovation or maintenance, existing buildings, public or private, open to the public, shall be redesigned to facilitate access and use by persons with disabilities”.

In addition to this Article 18(4) states that:

“The Construction of communication routes must take into account facilities for people with disabilities”

Since the promulgation of this decree, no initiative has been taken to put these recommendations into effect especially concerning persons with visual impairment. There is therefore the temptation to say that these rights and the decree fixing the enforcement of such rights remain an illusion till date due to the lack of effective mechanisms. It is the right of these disabled persons to be provided with facilities which suit their condition in order to guarantee the full enjoyment of their rights.

Accessibility when it comes to sports, cultural, artistic and leisure activities can be achieved through the development of specific services and infrastructures to meet the needs of people with visual impairment; through the development of sports, cultural and leisure institutions, public spaces and playgrounds, by specific equipment, appropriate passages and reserved places;

³¹Covid-19 and Persons with Disabilities, available at <http://disabilityrightsfund.org>, (accessed on April 15, 2020).

reduction of the prices of sporting, tourist, artistic and cultural events³². Concerning access to transport facilities there can be the reduction of transport tariffs for persons with visual disabilities and any other measure to facilitate the entering and exiting of public transportation means by these persons³³. Regarding the participation and presence of people with visual impairment at the various instances of political and social life, there should be the availability of appropriate procedures; equipment and electoral material which will help these persons understand and be involved with what is going on³⁴.

3.4 Persons with Visual Impairment and Employment

In Cameroon as in many other African countries, access to the job market is difficult and constitutes a major pre-occupation for many young qualified persons with visual impairment. Measures to deal with this difficulty/barrier for persons with this type of disability (the most vulnerable group) are found in the decree of 2018 in its article 13 (1) which states that:

“Disabled people justifying a professional or academic training benefit from preferential measures, including age waiver in recruitment to public and private employment compared to those valid when the post is compatible with their condition”³⁵.

Paragraph 2 of article 14 adds that:

“In any case, the disability cannot be the reason for rejecting the candidacy of a job seeker or for discriminating after recruitment”³⁶.

In Cameroon, there exist various forms of competitive examinations whereby persons with visual impairment can take part, but their candidature is not always accepted. Moreover, there exists no national rule that specifies their employment conditions and the type of employment they can apply for, thereby limiting the chances of persons with visual impairment to fully participate or be involved in the labor market.

Article 16 (1) of the above-mentioned decree stipulates that:

“The State, the Decentralized Territorial and, where appropriate, civil society and international organizations, create sheltered jobs for the benefit of disabled persons”³⁷.

Paragraph 2 adds to this that:

“A work station is deemed to be a sheltered job, taking into account the functional possibilities and performance capabilities of persons with disabilities”.

Moreover, Article 17 adds to the above stated provisions the granting of facilities by the State for the creation of individual enterprises³⁸, production cooperative societies or small and medium

³² The Annual Report by the Commission on Human Rights, (2018) p151.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ Article 13 (1) of the 2018 Decree fixing the procedures of the implementation of the 2010 Law

³⁶ *Ibid* Article 14 (2)

³⁷ *Ibid* Article 16 (1)

³⁸ The Annual Report by the National Commission on Human Rights and Freedoms(2018)p150.

sized enterprises by persons with disabilities³⁹. Once again, it is regrettable to mention that these provisions are not yet applied. Additional studies⁴⁰ have demonstrated that persons with visual impairment who do find jobs earn less than their co-workers without visual impairment. Workers with this disability are less likely to receive promotions as well. All of these things negatively affect the economic and living conditions of the visually impaired.

The government policy to fight against unemployment takes into consideration persons with visual impairment. Among the measures taken by the government to fight unemployment, is the creation of the National Employment Fund (NEF); a structure that welcomes, orientates and trains job seekers. However, it has been noticed that this structure does not always give the place of choice to persons with disabilities, the visually impaired inclusive. Due to their condition and in consideration of the existing law, a person with this disability deserves special attention in line with the provisions of articles 13 of 17 of the 2018 Decree of application of the 2010 law.

3.5 Adequate Standards of Living

In the Cameroonian society, persons with visual impairment are among the most vulnerable and poorest because most of them are under educated and under employed. Many live in the streets and begging has become their major occupation⁴¹. Poverty is seen as one of the factors that obstruct the assistance society could provide to these persons. In reality, many families in Cameroon live below the poverty threshold. In these conditions, it becomes difficult to give the required assistance to the families of this group of persons. It is the right of this class of minority to be provided with the necessary facilities of education and equally employment so that they can improve on their living standards and stop living in abject poverty.

It is undisputed that disabled people constitute one of the most marginalized and socially excluded groups in any society. There is increasing research showing that there is a positive correlation between disability and poverty, with each being a cause and a consequence of the other⁴². Hence, if an individual has a disability such as visual impairment, then he or she is statistically more likely not to have completed primary education, to have fewer formal education qualifications, to be unemployed; if employed to be paid less, and to have less access to public services than their non-disabled peers⁴³. Conversely, those who are poor are more likely to be disabled as they are more susceptible to chronic illness and disease, so they tend to live in substandard and insanitary housing conditions, work at more dangerous jobs and have less access to safe water and good nutrition⁴⁴.

³⁹Article 17 of Decree No.2018/6233 of 26 July 2018 fixing the procedures for the application of Law No.2010/002 of 13 April 2010 relating to the protection and promotion of persons with disabilities.

⁴⁰ Living with disabilities, available at <https://www.living-with.disabilities/com>, (accessed on March 3rd, 2020).

⁴¹ *Ibid*.

⁴²P.Beresford, *Poverty and Disabled People: Challenging dominant debates and policies*, published online by Wiley Network, (1996) p553-568 available at <https://www.tandfonline.com>, (accessed on 20 April 2020).

⁴³ Mitra&Sambamoorthi, *Disability and Poverty in Developing Countries*, (2008)p15 available at <https://www.sitersources.worldbank.org> (accessed on 20 April 2020).

⁴⁴ *Ibid*.

4.0 CONCLUSION

4.1 Summary of Findings

The current paper has examined the concept of visual impairment and human rights, not leaving out the challenges faced. As much as there have been efforts towards the enjoyment of these rights and privileges by visually impaired persons, it cannot be denied that there are still gaps to fill in some areas such as education, employment and accessibility to infrastructures. We found out that most of the infrastructures in the Fako Division are not constructed in ways which can accommodate persons with visual impairment, especially educational institutions. In terms of employment, there has been the recruitment in 2011 of 110 disabled teachers (the visually impaired inclusive and 2,500 youths including the disabled. In the University of Buea, there has been the recruitment of a visually impaired lecturer at the faculty of education.

Pertaining to the Cameroonian legal framework on visual impairment, there has been the enactment of the 1983 Law relating to the protection and promotion of persons with disabilities which was modified in 2010 and the 1990 Decree of implementation of this law which was equally modified in 2018. There has also been the ratification on international instruments such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of 1966, International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of 1966 and the International Convention on the Rights of Persons with disabilities of 2006. Through these enactments, any individual who possesses a valid National Disability Card is entitled to the privileges or advantages arising from the 2010 law relating to the protection and welfare of persons with disabilities such as the total or partial exemption of fees, assistance in terms of the setting up of an enterprise, medical assistance and exemption from taxes among others. It is rather sad to say that most institutions and even the concerned class of persons are unaware of these rights and privileges⁴⁵. It is said that one cannot claim what he is not aware he owns.

4.2 Relevance of Study

This study is beneficial to the entire academic community as it improves on the existing body of literature, since research hardly breaks new bounds.

The research is equally useful to policy-makers as it goes a long way to propose solutions and recommendations on how effectively the rights of persons with visual impairment can be made enjoyable.

The research also stands to benefit the world at large, Cameroon in particular and policy makers by enabling them realize the importance of the enforcement of the rights of persons with visual impairment

5.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 The Government

It will be better if there is an enactment of a law specifically addressing persons with visual impairment since each category of disability has needs specific to it. It would equally be better if

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

these rights and special needs are backed up by effective mechanisms which are charged with monitoring in order to make sure that the rights of such persons are effectively implemented.

The government should also work on raising more awareness on the existence of the rights that these visually impaired persons have either through the media, institutions or brochures, so that the entire community and the concerned class of persons are aware of the rights and advantages they have and to take the necessary actions when these rights are violated.

Moreover, we would recommend that the government gets actively involved with the international community in enforcing rights of persons with visual impairment. They should not only end at ratifying international instruments which entrench rights of persons with disabilities. Their decisions should be backed up with actions.

The government should put up structures or improve on existing ones which can in reality accommodate the limitations of these persons when it comes to accessibility of infrastructures, be it public, private offices or educational structures.

They should provide the necessary equipment (most especially the Braille) free of charge to persons with visual impairment which can help improve on their daily activities or experiences and also train them on how to use them and not leaving out the training of the individuals who teach such persons in institutions meant for such which will serve as a step towards inclusive education of these persons.

Increase the number of government institutions meant to accommodate or rehabilitate such persons as there is just one of such structure in Cameroon (the Rehabilitation Institute for the Blind) located in the Fako Division of Cameroon and they can equally join organizations solely centred on the visually impaired and working towards the achievement of inclusive education for these persons.

The government should insist that a specified percentage of qualified visually impaired persons be employed at every workplace depending on the number of employees needed and monitor to ensure that this is put to effect.

5.2 Institutions

To have talks with these persons more often through focus group discussions or conferences pertaining to their difficulties or challenges and see how actions can be carried out to improve on their daily experience. These talks should also be aimed at raising awareness on the existence of rights of these persons and the privileges accorded to them.

To equally work more closely with institutions in charge of the enforcement of such rights such as the Ministry of Social Affairs, Delegation of Social Affairs, ministries in charge of education, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs) to bring about more visible effects relating to the enforcement of such rights.

5.3 The Community

The community should endeavour not to shun such persons because of their limitations as it makes them isolated. They can do this by helping these persons in carrying out their daily activities whenever they can, be receptive and interact with them. Employers within the community can also begin to specify a particular percentage of qualified visually impaired persons who can be

employed at their workplace or organizations and see to it that those who seek employment are actually employed.

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