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Assessing the Contribution of Non-Governmental Organisations in Promoting Access to Employment of Persons with Disabilities: A Case Study of Mpigi District Persons with Disability Union.

The purpose of the study was to assess the role of Mpigi District Persons with Disability Union ((MPIDIPU) in promoting employment of persons with disabilities (PWDs) in Mpigi district. Access to employment has always proved to be very difficult for PWDs. It was, therefore, necessary to assess the efforts of organisations involved in promoting employment among PWDs. The study was guided by three objectives and they are, to identify the perceptions of PWDs to the role of MPIDIPU in promoting employment of PWDs; to assess the strategies put in place by MPIDIPU to promote employment of PWDs; and to examine the challenges MPIDIPU is facing while promoting employment of PWDs in Mpigi district. The research design was a case study design, which was mainly descriptive and analytical because of using interpretation and analysis of data collected from the respondents of the study. The study used a case study because it was expected that the results from the study were to reflect the situation in other district disability unions in Uganda. Qualitative techniques were mainly used for the study to allow for in-depth data through direct quotations of views and careful interpretation and analysis of the situations. However, some tables and graphical illustrations were used to reflect the various patterns of responses. MPIDIPU was chosen because it is one of the disability unions which is active in carrying out income generating activities and is relatively easy to reach. The data were collected from a total of 75 respondents distributed as 43 PWDs for interviewer administered questionnaires, 2 focus group discussions with 15 and 10 members respectively, and interviews with 7 key informants. Members for the questionnaire were selected using the snow ball method, those for focus group discussions were purposively selected by the councillors on the basis of their level of organisation and key informants were purposively selected since they were either leaders of MPIDIPU or partner organisations, that is, National Union of Disabled Persons of Uganda (NUDIPU) and Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MGLSD). The findings revealed that perceptions of PWDs towards the role played by MPIDIPU in promoting employment of PWDs is mainly positive evidenced by PWDs paying subscription fees, participating in union activities, providing ideas though a few responses revealed negative perceptions that revealed that PWDs think the union leaders are taking advantage of them. Another response was that no research has yet been done to ascertain whether PWDs‟ perceptions are positive or negative. It was indicated that MPIDIPU uses quite a number of strategies to promote the employment of PWDs including training PWDs; lobbying for funding; advocating for employment law (they have drafted an ordinance); and starting projects. This shows that there is a relationship between the role of MPIDIPU and employment of PWDs. Challenges that MPIDIPU faces in this role are lack of funds; lack of government implementation of vital policies; poor leadership; negative attitudes from both non-disabled and PWDs, among others.

It was, therefore, recommended that government takes seriously the issue of implementation of policies by investing in monitoring of government programmes; removing barriers to the education of both children and adults with disabilities because education empowers PWDs; MPIDIPU needs to build more partnerships which are mutually beneficial; more awareness is needed for both PWDs and the community so that rights of PWDs can be respected for them to

gain confidence and actively take charge of their development through such organisations like MPIDIPU.

Key Words: **Non-Governmental Organisations, Employment, Persons with Disabilities, Mpigi District**