



Promotion of Disability Employment Rights in Persons with Epilepsy (PWE) MULTI-STAKEHOLDERS & CORPORATE WORKSHOP

Wednesday 10 April 2019

Venue: 1st Floor Conference Room, Le Saint Georges Hotel, Port Louis, Mauritius

WORKSHOP REPORT

Edycs Epilepsy Group (Mauritius) with support from the National CSR Foundation, the Ministry of Industrial Relations & Employment and the Africa Disability Alliance organized a workshop in epilepsy and employment issues. The workshop was held on Wednesday 10 April 2019 at the Conference Room of le St Georges Hotel, Port Louis Mauritius attended by 50 representatives from the Corporate Institutions, the Ministries, Human Rights Commission, Civil Society Organisations, Persons with Epilepsy and their families.

The association of epilepsy and employment is poorly understood. The purpose of this report is to summarize the presentations and discussions of the workshop.

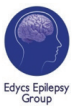
The Official Opening ceremony was attended by the following key stakeholders:

- His Excellency, Mr. YKJ Bernard Yeung Sik Yuen, Commissioner of African Commission on Human & People's Rights
- Mr. Medavy Pillay Munien, Chairman of the National CSR Foundation
- Mr. Vivek Doobree, Senior Labour and Industrial Relations Officer, Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations, Training and Employment
- Mr. George Ibrahim from SMCOA

The ceremony comprising of speeches was followed with the presentation of T-Shirt on the Promotion of the Rights of Persons with Epilepsy.

Below is the official workshop agenda:

09h45 – 10h15	<p style="text-align: center;">OFFICIAL OPENING CEREMONY</p> <p>Programme Moderator, Nabeel Heeraman, Project Officer Edycs Epilepsy Group</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Speech - President Edycs Epilepsy Group</i> • <i>Message - Chairman National CSR Foundation</i> • <i>Message – Commissioner of African Commission on Human & People’s Rights</i> • <i>Presentation of Promotion of Human Rights T-Shirts</i> <p style="text-align: center;">Official Opening of Workshop</p>	<p>Mr. Youssouf Noormamode Mr. Medavy Pillay Munien His Excellency YKJ Bernard Yeung Sik Yuen</p>
	PLENARY SESSION	All Participants
10h15 – 10h25	Presentation of SMCOA (Saint Mark Coptic Orthodox Association)	Sarah Habib, Representative SMCOA
10h25 – 10h30	Video Temoignage of Persons with Epilepsy	
10h30 – 10h40	Living with Epilepsy and Employment Issues	Mr. Ashvin Dana Candassamy, PWE
10h40 – 10h50	Epilepsy and Employment	Mr. Yasheer Soohun, Occupational Therapist
10h50 – 11h00	UNCRPD/African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (ADP)/TEDPA	Mr. Paramasiva Chengan, Deputy President Edycs Epilepsy Group
11h00 – 11h30	Employment Rights Act	Mr. Vivek Doobree, Senior Labour & Industrial Relations Officer, Ministry of Labour, Industrial Rela- tions, Employment and Training
11h30 – 12h00	Access to Employment & Disability Rights	Me. Coomara Pyaneandee, Vice Chairman UNCRPD, United Nations Expert
12h00 – 12h15	Discussions	All Participants
12h15 – 12h45	Closing of Workshop/Refreshments & Buffet Snacks	



PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

The purpose of the report is to provide an insight on the presentations and discussions on the issues of epilepsy and employment in relation to the UNCRPD, the African Charter on Human Rights of Persons with Disabilities also referred to the Africa Disability Protocol and the Training and Employment of Disabled Persons Act.

It further provides for an opportunity to develop a strategic developmental perspective in creating a conducive environment where Persons with Epilepsy can enjoy their Rights, just like any other citizen in getting access to employment.

RATIONALE OF THE WORKSHOP

Epilepsy is the most common serious brain disorder and a global problem affecting all ages, religions and social background. It imposes enormous physical, psychological, social and economic burden on individuals and families, especially due to misunderstanding, fear and stigmas. According to the WHO Report 2001 estimates about 50 million people affected by epilepsy, 10 million in Africa while 1% of the total burden of disease in the world result from it. This calculation of the burden of the disorder takes into account premature deaths resulting from the disorder as well as the loss of healthy life years due to disability. In Mauritius, the prevalence of epilepsy is estimated at 1% of the population including Rodrigues island, the 10th district of the Republic of Mauritius.

Persons with epilepsy are confronted with numerous challenges among others:

- Psychosocial difficulties which have a huge impact on their quality of lives (QOL)
- Understanding medical language and epilepsy information
- Employment and driving
- Stigmas
- Physical and sexual abuse
- Marriage

Employment is one of the biggest challenge facing People with Epilepsy in Mauritius. Approximately 50% of Persons with Epilepsy have difficulty finding and keeping a job. Of those who do not find employment due to the severity, frequency of seizures, medication side effects and associated comorbidities such as depression, anxiety disorder and migraine live on a social aid allocated by the Disability Unit of the Ministry of Social Security.

Official Opening Ceremony

The Official Opening Ceremony started at 09h45. Nabeel Heeraman was appointed Programme Moderator, who made a welcoming speech thanking Chief Guests: His Excellency Commissioner YKJ Bernard Yeung Sik Yuen, Mr. Medavy Munien Pillay, Mr. Vivek Doobree, Mr. George Ibrahim, President of Edyca and Board Members, Representatives of Corporate Institutions, Representatives of Press and Media, Persons living with Epilepsy and families and Member of the audience for responding positively to the invitation of Edyca Epilepsy Group.



This was followed by the speech of Mr. Youssouf Noormamode, who clearly pointed out that Persons living with Epilepsy shall not be discriminated on any ground when looking for a job or to remain in a specific job if seizures occurred. He further added that they should not be marginalized on this very basis. His Excellency Commissioner YKJ Bernard Yeung Sik Yuen from the African Commission on Human and People's Rights shared with the audience his experiences while being a commissioner in that high level institution but also broadened our knowledge on the road leading to the Ratification of the Protocol (ADP) designed by the Africans for the Africans. Mr. Medavy Munien Pillay, Chairman of the National CSR Foundation expressed his continuous support to organizations like Edycs Epilepsy Group in its furtherance to address societal problems such as epilepsy in the Republic of Mauritius. The Chief Guests came forward for the presentation of the Promotion of Human Rights T-Shirts with support funding from the NCSR Foundation.



Summary on the Discussions and Presentations

Presentation 1 – Saint Mark Coptic Orthodox Association (SMCOA), Mrs. Sarah Habib



The Saint Mark Coptic Orthodox Association (SMCOA) is an organization based in Egypt with which Edycs Epilepsy Group is in the process of signing a memorandum of collaboration and understanding in the medical field. The organization is represented by George Ibrahim, Sarah Habib and Youstina Mansy. The presentation of the organization was done by Sarah Habib, who gave an overview of the organization, the year it was founded and its milestone. The latter also pointed out that the SMCOA is present in several countries seeking collaboration with organization in the various field: education, poverty alleviation, empowerment & training, assisting organizations in providing medical support, providing technical expertise and also in the upskilling of staff of those organizations.

Presentation 2 – Video Temoignage of Persons with Epilepsy

The video highlighted the stigmas faced by two Persons with Epilepsy, testifying how struggle it was for finding a job, to retain a job and most difficult to remain in a specific job though they are qualified for that specific job position. This also depicted how marginalized they are in the employment sphere within the society just because they suffer from a specific form of disability. Indeed this workshop sent a message to all corporate institutions, underlining the pragmatic element of how employing someone with epilepsy can be prove beneficial for the organization as studies have shown that they even perform much better than others without disabilities, thus highlighting their effectiveness in their performances.

Presentation 3 – Living with Epilepsy and Employment Issues, Mr. Ashvin Dana Candassamy

Ashvin Dana Candassamy delivered a really moving testimony to the audience, where he related all the difficulties he faced to find jobs and the circumstances leading to his firing despite the fact of his positive performance. He also pointed out how his different employers looked for excuses just not to retain him due to his epilepsy, where he just have to continuously seek jobs.



Presentation 4 – Epilepsy and Employment, Mr. Yasheer Soohun



Yasheer Soohun, Occupational Therapist in his presentation made a thorough insight of how Persons with Epilepsy are viewed from the mainstream society, whereby just disclosing one's epilepsy during the interview can lead to the disqualification of the candidate on this very basis. He also elaborated on the issue of why employing someone with epilepsy and the jobs that one with epilepsy can or cannot perform.

Presentation 5 - UNCRPD/African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (ADP)/TEDPA, Mr. Paramasiva Chengan

Paramasiva Chengan, Deputy President Edycs Epilepsy Group outlined the different instruments aiming to protect the Rights of Persons with Disabilities:





■ UNCRPD, Article 27 – Work and Employment

“States Parties recognize the right of persons with disabilities to work, on an equal basis with others; this includes the right to the opportunity to gain a living by work freely chosen or accepted in a labour market and work environment that is open, inclusive and accessible to persons with disabilities.”

■ African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (ADP), Article 15 – Right to Work

“Every person with a disability has the right to decent and productive work, to just and favourable conditions of work, to protection against unemployment, to protection against exploitation and to protection from forced or compulsory labour.”

“Prohibiting discrimination on the basis of disability with regard to all matters concerning all forms of employment, including employment opportunities, vocational training, conditions of recruitment, hiring and employment, continuance of employment, career advancement, and safe and healthy working conditions.”

“Protecting the rights of persons with disabilities, on an equal basis with others, to just and favourable conditions of work and the right by persons with disabilities to exercise their labour and trade union rights.”

“Employing persons with disabilities in the public sector, including by reserving and enforcing minimum job-quotas for employees with disabilities.”

“Promoting the employment of persons with disabilities in the private sector through appropriate policies and measures, including through the use of specific measures such as tax incentives.”

“Ensuring the reasonable accommodation is provided to persons with disabilities in the workplace.”

“Ensuring that employees with disabilities or those who become disabled are not dismissed from their jobs on the basis of their disability.”

- Continental Plan of Action – African Decade for Persons with Disabilities (2010-2019)
- African Union Disability Strategic Policy Framework
 - Strategic Area 2: Reducing Poverty & Enhancing Economic Empowerment
- Training and Employment of Disabled Persons ACT (TEDPA), Paragraph 14. Duty to provide suitable employment

“No disabled person shall be employed to perform work which, having regard to the nature of his disability is not suitable.”

Presentation 6 – Employment Rights Act, Mr. Vivek Doobree

Vivek Doobree, Senior Labour & Industrial Relations Officer gave an insight on the Act that governs employees’ rights in the Republic of Mauritius where we cannot gainsay the fact that Persons with Disabilities can also avail this prominent instrument for the protection of their Rights in regards to employment.

Presentation 7 – Access to Employment & Disability Rights, Mr. Coomara Pyaneandee

Barrister-At-Law, Vice Chairman UNCRPD and a United Nations Expert, Coomara Pyaneandee opined the very fact that Persons with Disabilities need to enjoy all their Rights, where he himself is an example. Living himself with a disability has at any point in time hamper or be regarded as a burden in the furtherance of his ambition and zeal to practice as a lawyer, while being an expert in the field of disability. His eminent book entitled, 'International Disability Law', to which he made some references, encloses all the very aspect of disability that one can probe into to strengthen his knowledge about the different jurisdiction that exists governing the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.



The International Disability law books were distributed to the Chief Guests including representatives of the SMCOA and the SBM Foundation.

