

PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES: WHOSE RESPONSIBILITY ARE THEY?

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Every country has people with disabilities; some people are born with them while others acquire them during their life spans. They can get disabled due to diseases like high blood pressure, sugar diabetes, HIV AIDS, Tuberculosis, meningitis etc. Or, through accidents at work, accidents on the roads, in the homes, on the football playfield, netball field, hockey playfield and very many other places. When these accidents occur, people get stranded not knowing what to do or where to go. The purpose of this paper is to apportion the accountability, attribute ability of the disability to various section of society, how much responsibility does one have in causing the disability. It may be that the mother or nanny dropped the child at one time or another or maybe the mother did not take the child for vaccination against some of the disabling conditions, or maybe the father had an accident with the child while drunk or under the influence of drugs etc.

DISABILITIES CAUSED BY WARS OF INDEPENDENCE

Mozambique and Angola fought protracted wars with the Portuguese, to force them to surrender the government to the Africans. The same happened in Portuguese Guinea and Principe Islands. In the process land mines were planted. Mozambicans were made to fight against fellow Mozambicans and Angolans were made to fight fellow Angolans. In some of these areas, Princess of Wales Diana, had to come and help with demining the areas involved after independence which was a very noble and dangerous act. She was not involved in the wars, neither did she take part in deciding that the wars should take place between the two warring parties, but she just decided on humanitarian grounds to step in and help at the risk of her own life.

This also happened in Zimbabwe when the Africans were fighting against Ian Smith who declared unilateral independence from Britain in 1965 just to keep the Africans away from gaining independence. Here too land mines were planted to stop guerrilla fighters making inroads into the territory of the country's government. The same happened in Namibia and South Africa when the Africans were fighting for freedom from the white settlers. Although the demining has progressed well, there are still mines where people do not know as some of the ones who planted them are either dead or do not remember where they were planted. They therefore continue to disable people as they are innocent victims who just happen to step on them unknowingly.

This has happened to Americans when they involved themselves in wars in Vietnam, Nicaragua, Middle East in Iraq, Cuba and very many other places. Wars of supremacy are still going on in Syria there is what is being called a civil war between the government of Bashar Assad and the rebels. but this is a war of supremacy which the ordinary Syrians are getting involved in when the actual war is between America and Russia. There is also the smell of another war of supremacy cooking between United States of America on one side and Peoples Democratic Republic of North Korea on the other.

Now let me try to apportion responsibilities for these people who have acquired disabilities in life.

PEOPLE BORN WITH DISABILITIES

Primarily the responsibility for these is a matter for the family, the father and mother. If the disability occurred because the parents were trying to abort the pregnancy it is for them to sort it out. It is up to the parents to care of the child, taking him/her to for medical attention at all time and doing all other things needed for a child. Other people involved are the grand parents of the child who get involved in looking after the child. In Africa people love their grandchildren a lot and as a result they get involved in caring for the children disabled or not. The community in which the child is born also gets involved in caring for the child. When the mother needs to go and fetch water, firewood, or go to the market, the child is left with neighbors. This is how the community gets involved in caring for the disabled child. Other NGOs also take it upon themselves to help in taking responsibility for the disabled child. These are NGOs like SOS children's Village, who take the disabled child and care for it until it starts school, Then there is the Cheshire homes who also take the children from the parents in the morning and release them back to the parents in the afternoon. Although these people and agencies do this, it is not their responsibility. They are just helping and the responsibility remains that of the parents of the child.

PEOPLE DISABLED THROUGH ACCIDENTS

There are people who become disabled after having been hit by a motor vehicle or where a bus load of people gets involved in an accident and injures many people. If the vehicle is properly insured, the problem of responsibility lies on the insurance Company that insured the vehicle. The insurance company will take care of the medical expenses and pay appropriate compensations may be awarded by the courts of law. The injured person has after compensation to live on his own with the compensation money. This time, his wife takes up the responsibility if he has any wife at all, if he doesn't have any, then his relations have to help him all the time of his life.

If the vehicle that he was involved in an accident with did not have adequate insurance and maybe the person was not working or was working but did not have insurance at work, then he is in serious trouble because he then has to wait for good Samaritans to help him in his daily needs. Meaning he returns to being the responsibility of his relatives, and if he was not helping them when he was working, then he is in very serious trouble as the relatives will also abandon him. There are also road accidents that occur due to the person's carelessness and may not be covered by any insurance policy, a drunk crossing the road without checking is one such example, when such people become disabled, and they become the responsibility of their families again.

There are however still other accidents which occur due to various factors like fires in homes, electricity burns, children climbing trees in search of fruit, some people also climb trees to tap wine in select African countries, and some climb trees for fire wood, still others climb trees for one reason or another like to watch a football match when they cannot afford the entrance fee to the stadium they result in falling from the trees and getting injuries that may result in disability. Some fall from motor cycles and ordinary bicycles, these end up with disabilities at times. Nobody can be made responsible for these occurrences and the ultimate responsibility fall on the government and since each and every government is considered mother for everybody, government takes the responsibility and tries what it can to help in the circumstances.

Then there are those getting disabled if not being killed by thug attacks. There was one man in our Centre who was a treasurer of a church he got way led by thugs who wanted to steal the church money. The thugs beat him up severely to such an extent that he ended up becoming disabled and needing rehabilitation services. The church is as poor as a church mouse so they took no responsibility except just visiting him at the hospital. The responsibility for him fell on his wife fortunately his employers gave him a loan for rehabilitation services and kept him in employment.

Then there are those who get disabled through work related accidents. They may be involved in an accident while travelling to carry out work somewhere and on the way something happens that ends in the person being disabled. For these, the employer is solely responsible and is responsible for treatment bills, compensation and any other incidentals that may arise from the accident and disability. In such cases, the employer may decide to keep the employee on the payroll for the rest of his/her life if he is not able to resume his work in the company. If the employee chooses to retire and stay at home then there will be agreements between the two parties. If on the other hand the accident occurred due to the employees carelessness which will have to be verified by other competent bodies, then it will be up to the employer to decide what to do and in such a case the employer will be absolved from culpability. The disabled employee shall then become the responsibility of his family. Just as an example, in industrial jobs, accidents are bound to happen. To reduce the chances of accidents happening, the employers tell people

not to come to work under the influence of alcohol but if an employee comes to work very drunk and may at one time fall asleep under a stationary truck that is already loaded and ready to go, the driver of the truck comes and drives away and in the process maybe crush the legs of the drunken employee. Or while drunk operates a machine carelessly resulting in his loss of part of the body and therefore becoming disabled. These are just some typical examples of people becoming disabled due to work related accidents that are caused by the employees own carelessness. Such people cannot expect compensation from the employer. They will return to being a burden to their family, their relatives and the society.

DISABILITY ARISING FROM GENDER BASED VIOLENCE

GBV or Gender based violence is so common these days I am not sure whether this is only in Malawi or if it is the same in other countries. An example of this is when a man took a panga knife and cut off his wife's arms. The man is now in prison but the woman is disabled and cannot do her chores as she used to do before the incident. Another incident is that of a man who used to get beaten up by his wife every time he came from a drinking spree. This went on for a very long time and because the woman was stronger than the man, there was nothing the man could do until one day he found the wife sleeping in a drunken stupor. He took a panga knife and hacked off one of the woman's arms. In another incident, a man kept coming home late and his wife heard that he was going about with other women. When he returned home one day therefore and went to sleep, the wife cut his manly things and delivered him to hospital after which she surrendered herself to the police. This may not be a disability worth talking about but disabled the man became that he will never again have need for a woman sorry for him. With this, I am afraid that nobody can assist him even if someone wants to help.

As such gender based violence is also creating disabilities. Who then can be held responsible for such acts? The perpetrators of the acts are not worth anything which can help the person they have disabled. The end result is that responsibility fall on the national government. What governments can do is introduce legislation that will discourage people from committing such acts. That is not all, the root cause of such behavior must be found and possibly uprooted. It may be that it is alcohol abuse, drug abuse and other things that need to be looked into to stop these occurrences. The arrest of one person will not deter people of the whole country or the world for that matter, but the root causes must be identified and taken care of.

PEOPLE BEING DISABLED THROUGH GAMES

There are some very rough games that may cause disability. These are games like football, baseball, wrestling, boxing and others. In football a player can break a leg and may end with permanent injury that will result in a disability that will leave him unable to play again. In

baseball, the ball may hit a player on the head and cause brain injury, in boxing, a boxer may sustain head injuries that will leave him with such brain damage that he may not be able to speak or may not be able to think properly. Then there is motor racing either using motor cars or motor cycles both of which are highly dangerous. Then there is mountain or snow skiing which can result in disastrous accidents, then you find people indulging in sky diving where they jump out of an aircraft and dive downwards to the ground and when they get near enough, they open their parachutes which help them land safely. There are however possibilities of the parachutes failing to open leading to a terrible crash which can kill the person or maim him permanently. These are activities which people undertake at owner's risk, For these, the players take insurance covers so that whatever happens to them, the insurance will pay medical bills and also maybe pay them disability compensation. The responsibility for such accidents rests on the shoulders of the participants themselves and their sponsors if they have any. Government being the parent of all humans in any country still shares some responsibility and this is why they get interested to know the number of disabled people in their country.

DISABILITIES CAUSED BY NATURAL DISASTERS

Natural disasters are accidents caused by unforeseen phenomenon in the weather patterns and these have also made their contributions towards the creation of disabilities. For example a cyclone comes and blows away the roof of a building and as the roof flies away it leaves destruction on the way killing and maiming people and animals. Just a few days ago heavy winds brought down the walls of a school in one of the villages leaving seventeen pupils injured and four dead. The government has been blamed for this but the government did not create the wind. Some of the pupils may lose limbs in such occurrences and become disabled. There are also times when snow falls so heavily and may cause frostbite which may result in the loss of a limb. Who is to be made accountable for such disabilities? Nobody of course, if it had been possible God would have been held responsible but even then, how would anybody have been able to prove that he sent the cyclone or the snow?

PEOPLE WITH INTELLECTUAL OR LEARNING DISABILITIES

There are people born with intellectual or learning disabilities. These are sometimes called slow learners these are young people with slow or learning hardships. They have slow intellect and take time to assimilate things. There is no one else who can be made responsible for them except the family. The family has to look after them and see them through education no matter how difficult it may be. They can put them through special schools or employ a specialist teacher to take time on the children as it really does need time and patience.

PEOPLE DISABLED IN THE WARS OF INDEPENDENCE.

We have noted three cases of people fighting for their independence like those in Zimbabwe, Namibia, South Africa and others, after the country gains its independence there are many people returning from the battle field with various disabilities, some come after losing one or both legs while some lose one or both arms and some even lose sight due to chemicals they encounter in the battlefield. For these, it is the responsibility of the new government to ensure that the war disabled should be properly taken care of. I know in Zimbabwe, they created a Centre for disabled former guerrilla fighters where they were getting very good food, beer and anything they want. They had direct access to the President and all cabinet Ministers could be summoned by them at any time. At one time they summoned the army Commander and stripped him of all medals and symbols of rank saying he got to the position he was in because of them This was after the provisions side of the Army had overlooked their rations. These ones are automatically the responsibility of the new government and the state cannot shun from it. Similarly, I understand that in Namibia, they put all disabled war veterans on a permanent payroll. This is a good acceptance of the new Governments responsibility. In the countries which experienced these wars of independence like Angola, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe, the war disabled are being taken care of by the National Governments.

PEOPLE DISABLED IN SUPREMACY WARS.

The wars countries like the United States fought against (Vietnam, Nicaragua, Iraqi), or the war Israel is waging against the Palestinians, the war Germany waged against many countries in the world (first and second world wars), the war the United Kingdom waged against Argentina in the Falkland Islands) are what I call wars of supremacy. They are wars without proper provocation but for one nation to show that they are more powerful than others or to prove their supremacy in arms or fighting prowess both in the air and on the ground.

From such wars have emerged a lot of people with differing disabilities on all sides. For well to do countries like United States of America and United Kingdom the state takes full responsibility and keeps sufficient resources to pay compensation to the injured people. Or pay their relatives if the soldiers have died in the war. But for the country that was attacked, those left disabled from bombardments, gunshots, gas injuries etc., have nobody to claim from. They become destitute and have to rely on charity.

These wars of supremacy have become the largest creators of disabilities in the world. When one President wakes up from the wrong side of the bed, he just declares war on a country if he does not like its leader. Late former President Regan declared war on Libya where his bombs killed Colonel Muamar Gadhafi's adopted son. Or when George Bush just woke up in a nasty mood and

declared war on Iraq under the pretense that there were nuclear weapons or weapons of mass destruction in Iraq which was later proved false. These wars result in a lot of deaths suffering and disabilities in the attacked countries. Children and adults die and those who are lucky escape but with serious disabilities. The attacked country may not have resources to take care of those people left with disabilities. In such cases they have to rely on charitable organizations coming to assist and if not they become destitute. For the attacking countries like United States of America or the United Kingdom, they have special insurances to cover these problems. The war disabled then find they are living in luxury with a lot of money to enjoy. Their only suffering comes from loss of function in the affected limb or limbs. These are a total responsibility of the state and even if Governments change, there will be no change in their status. The relatives of the war disabled also have a share in caring for the person from time to time. They are therefore not without responsibility. They have to travel to wherever the person may be to visit him.

In Africa, there are many Africans who got disabled during some of these supremacy wars. The first and second world wars involved African countries that had been colonized by the foreign powers. There were countries colonized by Britain, then those colonized by Germany, Italy, and many others who took part in the partition of Africa. The Africans in those countries were forced to go and fight alongside their colonial masters. Malawi being a former British colony was made to fight on the side of Britain. The people who got disabled there were called war veterans and were left in the hands of the Government that took over after the British had left. Now Malawi has to raise funds every year to look after these war veterans when the people of Malawi had nothing to do with the wars that were going on against the Germans and Japanese and the rest. The responsibility for these should have remained on the shoulders of the colonial powers.

PEOPLE GETTING DISABLED BY DISEASE AND ILLNESSES.

People get disabled due to illnesses of a varying kind like polio, Tuberculosis of the spine, Malaria results into cerebral palsy, and also other factors like Amputations due to sugar or diabetes, acute high blood pressure, pneumonia, meningitis, rheumatism etc.

For people who have been disabled by these, the Government has to take up the responsibility to oversee their rehabilitation process. To do this Government relies on local organizations like Malawi Against Physical Disabilities, Malawi Council for the Handicapped, Federation for Disability Organizations in Malawi and many other International non-Governmental Organizations who voluntarily come to help.

DISABILITIES ARISING FROM AGEING.

People do not consider ageing as a disability but it is. Ageing is a process where the strength of the body diminishes slowly and causes failure to carry out certain functions in some people. Ageing can reduce sight, reduce movement, it can also cause mental retardation in some cases. It

may also disable the legs making it impossible for the person to travel freely and therefore making him/her depend on mobility assistive devices like walkers, walking sticks, wheelchairs and any such mobility appliance as may be prescribed by a physiotherapist or an occupational therapist.

The World Health Organization (WHO) says ageing presents both challenges and opportunities. Ageing will increase demand for primary health care and long term health care will require a better trained workforce and intensify the need to make the environment age friendly. The need for a well trained workforce is an opportunity for the youth to be trained and employed in the situation. This investment will enable the many contributions to be made by older people whether in the family or the local community available or to the country as a whole.

World Health Organization is therefore creating a World Day of Older Persons and is busy strategizing on what should be done to reduce the impact of ageing in the world. This on its own is an admission that ageing is a burning fuse which should be dealt with as soon as is possible.

For this group, an NGO called MANEPO Malawi Network for Elderly Persons has been born to take up the responsibility of advocating for older people in the country Malawi. Its main tasks are to create a society in which the rights of older men and women are protected and promoted in order to improve their quality of life. To fight against discrimination of older persons on the basis of their age. To advocate for age friendly health services. This is important in the treatment due to prohibitive costs and in actual fact most of them do not have proper sources of income to enable them to pay for the services. This is in spite of the immense contributions they have made in society. To enable older people to claim and realize their human rights just like anyone else. In places like Malawi older people are associated with witchcraft. If a person falls ill in a community and there is an older person around it is said the older people are responsible for the illness. If rains don't come, the older people are said to have bewitched the rains, if a person suffers from a stroke and bleed through the nose, they say he has been hit with a hammer and it must be the older people who have done it. They end up being beaten up or their houses being burnt or even they themselves being killed. The people doing these things forget that one day they will also age and be treated like they are doing to the others. Government must therefore intensify its work of sensitizing the community at large that ageing is an irreversible process that everyone will have to go through whatever their status or whoever they may be.

This organization though working for the wellbeing of older or aged people does not absolve Government from the responsibility of its aged citizens; neither does it absolve relations of the responsibility over the aged persons. There are many voluntary organizations putting themselves in the picture of caring for the aged. This probably comes from the fact that whatever we do, or whatever happens, one day we shall join the group of aged people. For this reason therefore, many people are trying their best to help destitute aged. You will find that a group of individuals

has bought Blankets, bales of sugar, plates, and pails for distribution to the aged. Some people even go to the extent of raising money and building houses for those living in dilapidated houses. So while ageing may be looked at in a negative way, there are positive sides to it. For example if someone decides to build a house for one aged person, the village builder will find work and so will builders suppliers who without that aged person would not have sold the items he has sold. And even the builder, he will not be alone he will employ some help thereby spreading the chance of earning some money in the process.

PEOPLE BEING DISABLED BY STROKE

The other disabling factor in the world is stroke. This is killing a lot of people, but for but for those who are lucky enough to survive they lose function in some areas of the body. Stroke is said to be the sudden death of brain cells due to lack of oxygen caused by a blockage of blood flow or rupture of any artery to the brain making the area that was receiving pulses and messages from the ruptured or blocked artery fail to receive any messages from the brain resulting in sudden loss of speech, weakness or paralysis of one side of the body. In the United States of America, it is said that about eight hundred thousand people suffer a stroke each year which is very disastrous.

The stroke is sometimes called a brain attack or a cardio vascular accident which occurs when blood flow to a particular area of the brain is cut off. This leads to the death of the brain cells that are deprived of oxygen and blood which is their survival or life support. When this occurs, the affected part of the brain is no longer able to transmit messages to some parts of the body with the result of function failure. This may be total or partial paralysis of one side of the body resulting in disability or inability to work properly for the affected person.

This type of disability can be prevented if governments intensify awareness to the population on what to do and not to do. In some areas it is said that lack of exercise, eating of fatty foods, too much intake of alcoholic drinks, too much salt etc. If the medical authorities are aware of these, why not inform the public and save them the calamity of living with a disability that could have been avoided.

SOCIAL DISORDER STUDENTS.

This may not be taken as a disability, but students with social disorders have some psychological problems needing assistance of therapists of a psychological and social nature like counseling as a rehabilitative treatment. Some may be having such problems due to drug abuse, alcohol etc.

and may need to be confined in a Rehabilitation centre not one like the rehabilitation centre for people with physical disabilities but special rehabilitation centres where such people will receive counseling and be kept away from the drugs they use. And if they are kept away from them for a long time, they can learn to live without drugs.

PEOPLE WITH ALBINISM

Albinism has been ignored for a very long time and not been considered as a disability. It is however a disability as it makes it impossible for the person to perform certain functions easily and is only able to work under certain conditions. Albinism is said to be an inherited genetic condition that reduces the amount of melamine pigmentation that is formed in the skin, hair, and eyes. This occurs in all racial groups throughout the world. There are problems that are associated with albinism. The skin is delicate, it must be taken care of and properly too. It is necessary to take precautions against damage. By using sunscreens, sunblock's, sun glasses for the eyes, and or protective cloths. This is because people with albinism are at risk of isolation. Because albinism is misunderstood, social stigmatization can occur. It is important therefore that parents of children with albinism should be kin to send their children to school and the schools must ensure that the children are encouraged to play with the other children and not left out of social activities being undertaken in the schools or colleges. Families with albinism should be encouraged to be meeting from time to time in order to reduce the stress that comes with having a child with albinism. Albinism is therefore definitely a disability as the person who has albinism does not work freely or walk freely. In the sunlight, he/she needs skin protection creams, Sunglasses for the eyes and protective clothing. Albinism therefore makes it impossible for the person to work freely without hindrance of any kind. Unfortunately the skin protection creams are not readily available more especially in the villages and where they are available; they are too expensive for ordinary Malawians. Even sun glasses and hats, they are not easy to find. It should therefore be up to government to import large quantities of the required items and place them in the health centers and make it possible for everybody with albinism to access them.

PEOPLE WITH EPILEPSY

Epilepsy is said to be the fourth common neurological disorder that affects people of all ages. It is said that in the United States of America one hundred and fifty thousand people live with active epilepsy. It is a neurological condition that affects the nervous system and causes seizures. Which are caused by a disturbance in the electrical activity of the brain. This may be as a result of brain injury or heredity from the family. The real cause is however not known and there are about one hundred and fifty thousand people getting epilepsy every year in the United States of America. Which is very worrisome?

These too are disabled in that they cannot work without taking drugs to stabilize their conditions. They also suffer discrimination in sporting activities and other outdoor life activities. There is need for assistance to be given to them so that they can access drugs as and when they require them. Organizations are being born to help in this field.

PEOPLE WITH ATTENTION DEFICIT HYPER ACTIVITY DISORDERS. (ADHD)

ADHD is highly genetic brain based syndrome that has to do with the regulation of a particular set of brain functions related to behaviors and sometimes results in behavior disorders. It is mental disorder mostly diagnosed in children who become hyperactive and are unable to control their impulses and may have trouble paying attention to anything.

This may be seen as some sort of temporary madness as it comes in spasms where the person is separated from his actions. The person may be involved in disruptive behavior but it is only of a temporary nature. In a way it may be described as a disability which disturbs a person when he is doing some other function beneficial to himself. This is an issue that needs to be looked into by parents. Normally mothers do not think it is a problem but it grows to adulthood.

PEOPLE BEING DISABLED BY THE HIV AIDS.

This is an epidemic that is causing disabilities in many people. It is said to be a virus that weakens the body system and slowly kill him/ her. There are very many interest groups wanting to give assistance with this problem. This is a problem which all governments, organizations and countries wish to eradicate once and for all. This is why world bodies have created the global fund in order to be able to provide funds to all organizations fighting this pandemic.

It is up to various interest groups to intensify efforts on prevention of the spread of the scourge by prevention mother to child transmission as well as general transmission through sexual encounters, to ensure that future generations become HIV AIDS free. It is therefore important that pregnant women diagnosed to be HIV AIDS positive should access Anti-retroviral treatment. Community campaigns are in full force informing the people on how to avoid contracting the virus. They are asking people to practice safe sex and also to desist from dangerous cultural activities that are likely to spread the HIV AIDS virus Like the practice in Malawi that when a man dies, his brother should marry the wife of the deceased. This means that if the man died of HIV AIDS related illness, then the brother will contract it and if he already had a wife it means that the wife will also get it. There is also the practice of what is called removing dust. This happens when girls reach their maturity age and start menstruation. They are taken to a place for initiation and after that they are told to have sex so that they can remove the dust from their

bodies. To stop all this it is known will be difficult. There are therefore many organizations buying and distributing condoms to all public places so that should there be need for sexual activity, it should be done safely with condoms.

This is an issue to be dealt with by the communities in the whole country. Community mobilization is very crucial in fighting this pandemic and no one entity can be held responsible. Government can be held responsible if it does not intensify community awareness of the dangers of the pandemic, if it does not provide or distribute the condoms and the Anti-Ret oral drugs to all sections of the country, and if it does not provide for stiff punishment to rapists, and those who purposely spread the virus that causes AIDS. Especially those who rape children. Whether they are under the influence of drugs or alcohol or not they should receive stiff punishment.

CHILDREN BORN OR HAVING HEARING DIFFICIENCY

For these, parents have the responsibility to take care of their children. For them the Catholic Church has formed schools in Malawi like what is called Montfort School for the Deaf, and another one is in one of the districts of the country Dedza some eighty kilometers from Lilongwe the Capital of the country. These schools are helping the parents in caring for their children who would otherwise have been sitting idle at home. Unfortunately these educational institutions teach in the English Language only and this does not help the children when they return home as there they find people speaking in vernacular which they have not learned. But as most educational institutions are in English, they are able to proceed with education to the level provided by the school.

PEOPLE WITH SIGHT PROBLEMS OR BLINDNESS.

There are people who are blinded by diseases caused by a certain type of fly. This is mostly rampant in the Lower Shire River. Some are getting blinded by meningitis, while others are being blinded by cataract. All these have a rather negative effect on the person as well as his family. Government of the time has the responsibility to look after these. The Government of Malawi is intensifying efforts to put a stop to some of the blinding causes, by spraying the areas affected and killing the flies responsible for bringing blindness in the area. Government has also taken an initiative in inviting doctors who go by the name of sight savers. These are operating on some of the people and restoring sight in some of them. And there are also others calling themselves Torch Trust. These are also looking into how blind handicapped can be helped. The from the Netherlands came CEBEMO, which came to Malawi to help train Malawian Blind people into farmers growing the country's main cash crop tobacco. This organization is fully funded by the Government of the Netherlands.

Here the Malawi Government is taking up the responsibility of sorting out the issue of the blind people.

All in all, the responsibility of people with varying disabilities lies in the kith and kin of the person. There are countries in the world who have taken it upon themselves to form charities whose work is to improve the life of different disabilities. These countries have the framework and therefore decide to cross the borders to help other nationalities. Such countries are like the United Kingdom which has the Royal Commonwealth Society for the Blind. This organization helps blind people in the commonwealth or what used to be part of the British Empire some years ago. Then there is the Sight savers, just to mention a few on the blindness side, These come to help blind Malawians without seeking funds from the patients, they are real helpers. They are fully funded by British tax payers and the entire work is fully equipped by the British and there is no way of the work falling by the way side like the other small charitable do. Then German too decided that they would work on assisting people who are blind. Christoffel Blinden mission was then formed to do this work in Germany but after tasting success decided to try and implement their success in Africa and Malawi was one of the countries included to receive the assistance from Germany. These too are fully funded by the German Government. Their sustainability is therefore not questionable.

Similarly, in Norway, the government there instituted what is called the Royal Norwegian Association for the Disabled. The Norwegian Government did not form this organization for Malawi but for its own people but seeing that disabilities know no borders, they decided to come to Malawi and help in the rehabilitation of people with disabilities.

From the Netherlands several organizations were formed to help people with disabilities. These were Memisa Medicus, Simavi, Bilance and others came together and formed an organization called Catholic Organization for Relief and Development CORDAID. This organization came into Malawi to help with the rehabilitation of people of various disabilities.

From Ireland came an organization called Irish Aid and from the Government of Ireland came assistance for people with disabilities and provided funds for the manufacture of mobility appliances for people with disabilities in Malawi.

From Denmark came the Royal Danish Aid for Development.

Still from United Kingdom is Comic Relief, Cherish International Motivation International all these came to help Malawian Disabled people.

CHILDREN BEING DISABLED BY MAL NUTRITION.

The issue that children are being disabled by malnutrition may be a laughable statement but there are children being disabled by malnutrition in Malawi. I have seen here children who reached three years of age but were unable to walk when others walk at the age of just months.

As if that is not enough, there are others who are getting disabled through over nourishment. I have seen this too where a child was failing to walk due to overweight. With overweight children, we have been advising the families to put the children on a less food diet and as soon as their weight goes down they start to walk. With the malnourished children however, they require good feeding. The parents are given instructions to give the child more food with peanut flour, meat or fish products milk, vegetables and other foods that will help them gain weight but first reasons for their malnutrition must be identified. It may be that there is a problem in the body that is making it impossible for the child to have an appetite or there is something that is preventing the food from having the desired effect. The European Union which has helped Malawi in dealing with the rehabilitation of disabled people has come in to help with this. They have a project called EU Afikepo Nutrition Project. All this local word is saying is that the European Union should reach out on the issue of malnutrition. The project has been given a local name possibly to enable local Malawians to understand it. It is mobilizing people to go out into the rural communities to identify people who have malnutrition problems and are then instructing them on what to do. There are people in the villages whom have a lot of chickens, goats, sheep and such animals. They can easily get milk from the animals and can also easily get meat nutrients from the animals and chickens. The people in the villages regard the animals as very important assets that should not be eaten but kept. In the Lower Shire of Malawi, a person may have over a hundred heads of cattle but walk with no shoes on his feet, torn trousers and tattered shirt. What such people need is intensive schooling that their children can lose their lives when they have the solution. Just for example I had a problem with my board because when the donors completed their agreed time of funding I suggested that we sell some of the houses we have so that the program should continue to run while we are looking into other funding solutions. The board refused saying the houses should remain there at the expense of the people we serve. This is the same mentality that we should keep goats, cattle, chickens and let the children die of malnutrition while the resources of saving them are available but should not be touched. The Hunger Project is one International organization from the United Kingdom that has taken an interest in helping children in Africa to get out of malnutrition. They are helping Malawians by providing loans to the rural communities with men and women as their target group so that they can enable them improve their own health and food security. They are encouraging the growing of trees for future sustenance and one particular tree is the Moringa which is said to have very be of high nutritional value to individuals.

In all the cases concerning disabilities we have noted and seen that there are many NGOs from overseas that come to help. Some are approached by individual disability organizations while others are approached by Government. Still others just come on their own to offer help where it is needed Whatever the case may be International NGOs come to offer assistance even if not approached. Through their own kindness and charitable spirit, they come to help although they are not responsible for the accidents or illness that have resulted into the disabilities. The

question however is how long shall we continue to rely on external forces to help us and how long are they prepared to extend their charity to Malawians.

National Governments including Malawi must take bold and deliberate steps to take up the responsibility for their people. Disabled people are citizens of Malawi and have therefore a right to enjoy the same privileges and rights enjoyed by everyone else in the country. To do this government must have a concrete plan for helping people with disabilities. Disabilities are here to stay. There will never be an end to them as we have already noted that disabling conditions are there and shall remain there. Government must institute a plan of action which will cover the care of people with disabilities. This can be a permanent disability pension fund created from the taxes or another tax rebate can be created for disabilities. Or an insurance cover for disabilities can be created to cater for any disabilities that may arise. Not only that Government can create business ventures whose funds will go towards the disability fund. I am sure donors if approached can look at this favorably as instead of helping permanently, they will be given a period of respite once they have helped establish the disability fund income generator. On top of this Governments must create a department of disability preparedness with full staffing to man it. The system of giving responsibility to some sections of ministries does not work in that the already established ministry looks at its own priorities first to the detriment of the others. This is why I would advocate for either a full ministry responsible for disability issuers or a department in the office of the president and cabinet and independent of ministries a vote should then be created for this ministry to function from, its job will be purely to cater for disabilities of all kinds Funds allocated in this vote will not be tampered with by any ministry as would happen if they were given through a ministry. It is known that African or developing countries are told to work with few ministers by either their former colonial powers or any external powers that may be wielding the stick of power over that particular country but the importance of such a ministry cannot be overemphasized. This cannot be compared to the disaster preparedness committee which works when a disaster has occurred. Knowing that disabilities are not disasters that happen infrequently, and that the staff in that section only wake up once a disaster has happened, The one for disabilities must be a fully fledged ministry with fully trained personnel and if they are not available , training should be arranged and organized for them now. Governments must create employment opportunities for those disabled because there some people who do not like to live on free money, they would rather work for It and earn it. The Ministry responsible for this function should not be an office ministry but an on the road or field ministry. It must have people in all areas of the country and must be fully mobile passing the messages to the rural communities on how they can avoid some of the disabling conditions, like stopping children from climbing trees in search of fruits, informing adults on the dangers of climbing trees in search of firewood and if they have to they should not cut the branch they are sitting on, or those going to tap palm wine should be warned against climbing the wine tree an drinking the wine while they are still in the tree, or advising people not to wash their clothes or

take baths in crocodile infested rivers, informing people to encourage their children to sleep under mosquito nets and to take their children to hospitals any time they suspect malaria. This will stop the malaria developing into an acute stage that may result in meningitis. Sensitizing people about drinking and driving which can result in road accident caused disabilities, informing the population on carelessness at work which may cause work related accidents, sensitizing people on actions of bravado like reckless motor cycle riding which may result in them getting disabled, and many other things. This is why I am saying this ministry must be an on the road because the task of trying to prevent disabilities is so big that it cannot be effectively done by office ministries. It is a mammoth task. What about those getting disabled through the HIV AIDS pandemic, the villagers must be informed that the system of taking over a dead brother's wife without knowing what killed the brother is dangerous. It is dangerous to the person taking over the wife and to his wife as well. People must also be informed of the dangers inherent in employing a temporary husband to help in impregnating their wives, they must also be warned against the myth that once one is HIV AIDS positive, the cure is having sex with a disabled woman. As I have said before, the task is not a small one for the ministry and not suitable for an office ministry.

What about those getting river blindness. It is said that from the lower part of Malawi, people get blinded by flies found in the River Shire which flows from Lake Malawi to the Indian Ocean. The lower part of the river is where the flies that cause blindness breed. It will therefore be the responsibility of this ministry to ensure that such areas are sprayed to rid the country of the flies.

Then there are those getting disabled on the roads. These may be getting disabled due to bad road conditions or bad drivers. It will be the responsibility of this ministry to have people checking sections of roads that may have the potential of causing accidents and informing the appropriate authorities. And where bad driving is concerned, the ministry must ensure that drivers are properly grilled in the driving skills in order to avoid accidents. They must also be sensitized against reckless and drunken driving which can be a cause of disability for him and any other person who may be affected by the results of his careless driving. For stroke, it will be up to the ministry to sensitize the people on the proper foods to be eaten, like less fats, less salt, less cholesterol, less alcoholic drinks, more exercises, and some such problems that cause stroke. They will have to liaise with other ministries on issues that affects them like Health, and Roads authorities. This really has to be a very busy ministry that will involve massive mobility but it can be done. Disabilities no matter who is responsible must be prevented at all costs and government being the most responsible should take up the responsibility of prevention. Disability is not just a burden to the family of the disabled person but is a burden to the economy of the nation as well. Prevention will therefore auger well for both sides.