

# Ensuring Gender Equality & Women's Empowerment

Prof Dr Ruzita Mohd Amin

Head, Disability Services Unit

Office of Deputy Rector (Student Affairs)

& Professor, Department of Economics

Kulliyyah of Economics & Management Sciences,

International Islamic University Malaysia

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# Introduction

- Empowerment to individuals means to gain more control over their lives, either by themselves or with the help of others
- Empowerment leads to independence, self-subsistence, dignified life
- An important way to empowerment is through education and employment

# Women with Disabilities & Employment

- Women with disabilities (WwD) face double discrimination in employment - based on gender & on disability
- Trausdottir (1990) from Center of Human Policy, Syracuse University:
  - 17% of all WwD have less than 8 years of formal education compared to 3.5% of non-disabled women
  - Only 16% of all WwD likely to have university education compared to 31% of non-disabled women

# Women with Disabilities & Employment (cont'd)

- Stoddard (1998):
- one-third of WwD population live in poverty
- WwD mainly in low wage jobs and part-time works with few benefit
- WwD earn \$1000/month, nondisabled women \$1470/mth
- Married WwD earn \$270/week, Men with Disabilities (MwD) earn \$370/week

# Women with Disabilities & Employment (cont'd)

- Center for an Accessible Society (2001):
- Employment rate since 1995:
- Nondisabled women: 80%
- WwD: 33%
- nondisabled men: 94.96%
- MwD: 36.21%

# Women with Disabilities & Employment (cont'd)

- Problems & Challenges:
- *Job Entry*
- Lack of educational qualification (needs access to education)
- Physical environment - workplace not accessible, public transport not accessible (difficult to go to job interviews/and commute to a potential workplace)

# Women with Disabilities & Employment (cont'd)

- *Attitudinal barriers on the part of the employer:*
- Doubts on ability to perform well in a job
- Doubts on ability to interact well with others
- Medical costs
- Medical/sick leave

# Women with Disabilities & Employment (cont'd)

- *Job Performance:*
- Lack of accessible facilities
- Lack of support structure (eg. No financial support for assistant and accompanying assistant for furthering studies overseas, and for any official trips locally and abroad).
- Involve high expenses which can be a deterring factor from employing PwDs



# Way Forward

- Equal opportunity and access in education & employment
- *Physical infrastructure:*
- Adopt Universal Design/ create barrier-free environment at schools so that can get access to education (not much improvement in accessibility at schools for the last 30 years)

# Way Forward (cont'd)

- Adopt Universal Design/ create barrier-free environment at public places - develop a Masterplan for Accessibility (phase-by-phase approach) with clear target dates & close monitoring of corrective constructions
- Strict enforcement on provision of facilities for PwDs

# Way Forward (cont'd)

- Accessible public transportation with clear target dates (include subsidized accessible taxi service as in the Australian model)
- *Support Structure:*
- Provision for assistant to PwD employees (may be budgeted from the Ministry of Human Resource)

# Way Forward (cont'd)

- *Removal of Attitudinal Barriers:*
- National-level awareness campaigns through print, electronic and social media
- Include disability awareness in school curriculum

Thank you