

GFD IN THE NEWS

SOURCE: Graphic Online

PERSONS WITH DISABILITY STRANDED AFTER PASSAGE OF ACT 715

These stairs are not disability friendly.

A key provision in the Persons With Disability Act, 2006 (Act 715), which requires public buildings to provide appropriate facilities to make them easily accessible to persons with disability is yet to be enforced, six years after the passage of the law.

The law requires owners or occupiers of public structures to provide appropriate facilities to make them easily accessible by persons with disability.

However, many government buildings, including that of the Attorney-General's Department and Ministry of Justice, where the law was drafted, Parliament House where it was passed, and the Judicial Service, which is supposed to enforce the law, lack adequate facilities for such access.

The Persons With Disability Act provides in Section 6 that: "The owner or occupier of a place to which the public has access shall provide appropriate facilities that make the place accessible to and available for use by a person with disability".

The violation of that provision constitutes an offence under Section 8 and the offender is liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding 50 penalty units or to a term of imprisonment not exceeding three months or to both.

Checks on some building in the ministries in Accra indicated that only the Ministry of Employment and Social Welfare had made adequate provision for persons with disability who use wheelchairs to access the building.

A smooth slope has been constructed at the ministry purposely to facilitate access to the building by wheelchair users.

However, the situation is not the same at other ministries' buildings, including the Attorney-General's Department and Ministry of Justice.

The staircases of those buildings are not disability friendly, especially for wheelchair users.

At Parliament House, it was observed that the only means by which persons with disability who use wheelchair can have access to the Public Gallery, for instance, is

through an elevator.

However, in the event of power outage or non-functioning of the elevator, such persons may be deprived access to the building.

The story is not different at the Judicial Service. A three-storey building behind the main Supreme Court building has no means of access for persons with disability who use wheelchairs.

The nature of some of the courtrooms is also not convenient for wheelchair users who may wish to access the buildings.

After the passage of the law, it was expected that public buildings, especially government establishments, would be re-designed to make them accessible by persons with disability.

The United Nations estimates that persons with disability constitute 10 percent of the population.

By that estimation, the population of persons with disability in Ghana as per the 2010 Population and Housing Census is about 2.4 million.

Source: Graphic Online