

GRACE CHARRIER

Notes on meetings with the National Coordinating Chairman/CEO of the Federal Civil Service Staff with Disabilities Multi-Purpose Cooperative Abuja-Nigeria

I would like to begin that these meetings held in Nigeria culminated from IAAP's (International Association of Applied Psychologists) advocacy mission to the Deputy Permanent Representative of the Permanent Mission of Nigeria to the United Nations, Ambassador Usman Sarki, which took place on the 17th December 2013.

At this very fruitful and epic meeting, IAAP was led by Dr. Judy Kuriansky, Chair, Psychology Coalition at the United Nations (PCUN), with Grace Eke-Charrier, UN Peace Ambassador and Professional Affiliate, IAAP and Dr. Mat Osicki. The mission was to accomplish shared goals with regards to the MDGs and the evolving SDGs and the importance of Psychology to the post-2015 agenda.

One of the many highlights of this meeting in New York was the issue of Persons with Disabilities (PWDs). It is worthy of note that we submitted a statement to the recent UN high-level meetings on Persons with Disabilities (PWDs). Ambassador Sarki also mentioned the high priority placed on their welfare and ensuring sustainable programmes for the PWDs in Nigeria.

Therefore, on the 17th January 2014, I was invited to the Permanent Mission for a meeting by Ambassador Sarki in order to meet with the Coordinating Chairman and CEO of the FCSSD, Nigeria, Alhaji Iliyasu Abdul-Rauf.

He introduced the NGO as a cooperative incorporated for civil servants with disabilities but re-iterated that it was not a part of the civil-service or government and explained that they are into coop financing, rehabilitation and the empowerment of the PWDs.

Thereafter, IAAP was invited to Nigeria to see their set-up and strategize on ways in which we could collaborate using our expertise to ensure sustainable development.

ABUJA: NIGERIA

FEBRUARY 7 2014

The CEO met me in the foyer of the office and immediately introduced me to the staff and a few members of the Board.

He was elated that I had arrived the country, earlier than expected as we had just had our first meeting just a few weeks before. I explained to him that IAAP is very passionate about the cause: to make an impact in the lives of these people.

He invited me for a formal meeting the next day when all members of the Board would be in attendance and more importantly, would coincide with his hosting of the Emirs and other traditional representatives from the Emirates in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) and its environs as he wanted to introduce me to all of them, and I agreed to be a part of it, most heartily.

FEBRUARY 8 2014

With the arrival of the Emirs and other traditional rulers and the Board, we were off to a good start. Prayers were said for successful deliberations.

The CEO explained the objectives and roles of FCSSD:

- empowering civil servants with disabilities
- empowering widows, their children and orphans who face similar plight
- extending goodwill and support to others, other than civil servants, as part of their CSR (corporate social responsibility)
- supporting PWDs with decent accommodation
- placing high priority on education by giving scholarships to those who seek and are qualified

He tasked the Emirs and other traditional rulers to return to the grassroots- their immediate family, compounds, wards and local governments, in that order, to do some data collection as best as they can (we all know how cumbersome this can be) so as to seek out PWDs and create

awareness of the activities of FCSSD for them to take advantage of as they have so much to benefit from this initiative.

The CEO also explained that the FCSSD partners with others to play dominant roles and requested the Emirs to form groups, for easy identification so as to make the job of the FCSSD easier in giving them all the support they need.

The groups would include:

- the blind
- the deaf
- the dumb
- those that have been stricken with polio in their early years
- the lepers
- the albinos

Skill acquisition centres and cooperative societies would be formed for empowerment and the FCSSD would constantly support the Emirates with various incentives and programmes that would be highly beneficial to them.

Thereafter, the CEO introduced me formally and allowed me speak and I went on to introduce myself and IAAP's advocacy efforts and how the launch of the Nigeria project took place in New York with Ambassador Sarki creating the platform for us to collaborate and be a part of ensuring the welfare and sustainability of the PWDs.

I also told them of the fulfillment of our passion to make an impact in the lives of women, the girl child and the PWDs, more so by using my influence as a United Nations Peace Ambassador.

I also assured them that IAAP would leave a solid imprint in Nigeria.

I was welcomed and all were very excited about IAAP representation and looked forward to our collaboration which they anticipated to be successful. I concurred that it would and thanked them for having me.

Meeting with the FCSSD BOARD

This immediately followed the meeting with the Emirs.

I was introduced to the rest of the Board and with the exception of the CEO, all happen to be PWDs and very intelligent men and women. The secretary of the Board happens to be a lawyer with no limbs. Others are blind, deaf and dumb, polio-inflicted, hunch-backed and so on. Mentally strong, they are.

They were very excited to hear about IAAP and what we are bringing to bear in their lives and looking forward to accommodate us in whatever areas and which would be extremely impactful.

I assured them of IAAP's total commitment to the cause and that I would be in touch with the CEO who would brief them on the next steps once I reverted to my organization.

Conclusion

This has been such a fulfilling and humbling experience for me. I became very philosophical after this and made up my mind to build on this platform which Ambassador Sarki has graciously given IAAP.

An approval has been given by the management board of FCSSD to partner and collaborate with IAAP after concluding my advocacy meeting with them.

Official letters have since been exchanged between IAAP and FCSSD.

