

Opening pathways into “unusual” employment for persons with disabilities

International Labour Office, Geneva, 26-27th April 2016

Summary of Meeting

An expert meeting hosted by the International Labour Organization discussed opportunities for waged employment for persons with disabilities, with an emphasis on developing countries. Participants were experts and practitioners with representation from UN organizations, governments, International NGOs, and businesses.

The meeting drew attention to successful examples of employment of persons with disabilities in a wide range of contexts, ranging from multi-national companies to large technology production lines, such as Jabil in Guangzhou, China, or the ready-made garments sector in Bangladesh. These examples showed the relevance of employment of persons with disabilities to the private sector in very different national, social and economic situations.

Alongside these examples of employment, job-matching services were showcased, such as the Malaysian Return to Work programme, and efforts supported by International NGOs. A global survey of these services shows largely similar challenges and solutions in different countries, but significant differences in policies and institutions supporting them. The challenge for the future is how to go from *services* to *systems* supporting employment of persons with disabilities more widely.

Increasing employability of persons with disabilities needs to be done in terms of both technical professional skills as well as other competencies needed for work, including foundational education and soft skills. Particular challenges in implementation include outreach to make disabled people aware of existing and new services, and in ensuring that services increasing employability are gender sensitive.

Linking persons with disabilities and employers in different contexts has several mechanisms in common. One is that services tend to be user-centered and focus on being responsive to different individual needs, through case management for example. The other is through their wide engagement strategies, with employers and other related stakeholders, such as training institutions and disability organizations.

Fostering inclusive employment has been successful in the case of relatively large employers, and has secured commitments from key companies. Going forward the challenges are about realizing commitments and about reaching through to further employers, especially small- and medium-sized enterprises.

The enabling environment for these activities is made of both the wider situation for social inclusion of persons with disabilities as well as the conditions of the labour market. Here Public Employment Services could offer a key opportunity for mainstreaming disability issues in wider services to reduce barriers to formal employment.

ILO has proposed to co-host a side-event at the CRPD's Conference of State Parties where it can continue dialogue on these issues. A range of tools and guidelines were proposed in this conference, and ILO will be pursuing in collaboration with participants.

Pathways into “unusual” employment

Introductory Session

- Moderator: Stefan Tromel, Senior Disability Specialist, ILO.
- Mathilde Tabary, Chair, ILO Global Business and Disability Network
- Shauna Olney, Chief, Gender, Equality and Diversity Branch, ILO.

The context for this meeting is the difficulty in recruiting and retaining persons with disabilities in waged employment. The challenge of making “unusual” employment more “usual” involves moving from less secure and precarious employment to waged employment in the formal sector. It is a challenge shared by many actors and requires an intersectional perspective to solve.

Employability of Disabled people

- Moderator: Marcia Rioux, Distinguished Research Professor, York University.
- The Global Apprenticeships Network: A Solution to Youth Unemployment, Cristina Gueco Martin, Communications and Field Support Officer, Global Apprenticeships Network.
- Enhancing the employability of persons with disabilities: a comprehensive package, Laura Brewer, Skills Development and Youth Employment Specialist, ILO.
- Increasing the employability of young people with disabilities through “Vocational Education in Lao PDR” (VELA), Conny Schmoger, Advisor, GIZ.

This session began with presentations considering a global initiative to promote apprenticeship programmes, a background on the components required in successful skills development of disabled people, and a practical example from an initiative in Laos. Key questions raised across the presentations and discussion ranged from implementation to policy environment.

In terms of implementation of skills development, it was noted that disabled people require more than just vocational skills related to specific professional tasks. Other skills required include basic/foundation skills such as numeracy and literacy, personal/professional work habits, and core work skills, such as independent problem solving. This different range of abilities required is also related to different ways of demonstrating employability – for instance, through functional resumes that can show the competencies an individual has.

One particular challenge noted in implementation in a range of contexts was in recruiting and engaging disabled people for training/employment programmes. A solution explored was to work with disability organizations to disseminate information and promote recruitment. There was discussion on how to engage the support of families with persons with disabilities, and question on whether there was a lack of investment because there were limited economic opportunities, or because of protecting disabled people from possible dangers. Another challenge noted in implementation was that often measures taken on disability were not gender-sensitive.

At the policy level, quotas for participation of persons with disabilities are used in many countries for both participation in education and skills development as well as in employment. Many participants commented that these were not fully effective for disabled people. The quota systems were often not based on numbers of persons with disabilities in the country, and not supported by programmes/services that would ensure meaningful participation. Quotas by themselves cannot solve the problem of limited participation.

In terms of institutions a number of modalities were discussed. Apprenticeships themselves can be based on public-private agreements between employers and educational institutions. Specialized vocational centers were discussed, and it was proposed that their key role would be to act as resource and support centers to promote mainstream provision. Targeted interventions are seen as welcome, if they promote mainstreaming.

Links between disabled people and employers

- Moderator: Undere Deglon, CEO, Disability Workshop Development Enterprise.
- Linking Persons with Disabilities with Employers: Global Survey of Job-Matching Services in Low- and Middle-Income Countries, Peter Fremlin, Consultant, ILO.
- Return to Work Programme, Social Security Organization, Malaysia, Gayathri Vadivel, Head of Job Placement and Employment Department, Social Security Organization Malaysia.
- Discussion and experience sharing on work in South Africa, Uganda and Ghana, Karina Fischer Morgensen, Consultant, Disabled People's Organization, Denmark.
- Reflections from Leonard Cheshire Disability, Revathy Rugmini, Asia Regional Representative, Leonard Cheshire Disability.
- Discussion and experience sharing on work in Bangladesh, India and Nepal, Marcia Rioux, Distinguished Research Professor, York University.

This session included a global over-view on job-matching services and the presentations of experiences from those working on implementation or promoting these services. The question raised in the survey was on how to go from job-matching *services* to *systems* providing wider and more systematic coverage. The discussion and subsequent break-out session brought out various dimensions of these questions.

The first important dimension was the results for persons with disabilities. This is important in both design and delivery of services. Design of services needs to be based on needs identified by disabled people, and their implementation has to be responsive to individual differences. The focus of case management in the Malaysian Return to Work programme came about after monitoring showed that people receiving benefits were not getting good results in getting back to work. Experience from different countries shows that disabled people might be receiving trainings, job-preparation, etc., that does not in practice lead to employment opportunities, and so may even have a negative effect for the users. As a result many of these programmes emphasized the need for focus on candidates and their situations, through, for example, a case management focus for individuals.

Discussion of gender issues brought out how men and women with disabilities are not accessing these services in the same way. Some of this is related to some mainstreaming job-matching services not being inclusive of women (for instance, in some places job-fairs that are largely attended by men). Improving gender-equality requires understanding the local context. Other options suggested include promoting testimonials of women with disabilities, encouraging applications, and subsidies for women with disabilities. Employers can also take initiatives to promote inclusion of women in the workplace.

Another important dimension is the stakeholders that need to be reached in these processes. An illustration of how complex this is came in LCD's description of the stakeholders that they engage, acting as a "stakeholder hub" for: employers, media, government, training institutions, financial institutions, volunteers, NGOs, and community service organizations (including those run by disabled people). This list demonstrates the complexity of systems around job-matching for persons with disabilities.

In particular, these services work with employers, and building that relationship is essential for good results. While some companies have done "Do-it-yourself"-Inclusion, worked out how to take inclusive measures themselves, many other companies were motivated or learned how to action through this kind of services. Subsequently employers play an important role disseminating and promoting inclusion in other companies, and spreading inclusive practices further.

One question raised is how this focus on individuals and individual needs can be maintained when these services are enlarged to reach more people. Discussion around scale included the following suggestions: replicating with the same level of individual support; learning from different and unexpected partners, such as segregated employment initiatives; celebrating and disseminating successes; generating a business model; and the importance of monitoring and evaluating. Monitoring is important to know which services are working for disabled people, and how employers and other actors can make further progress.

Inclusivity of Employers

- Moderator: Marc van den Biggelaar, Coordinator Disability Employee Network, Dow Europe GmbH
- Uncovering Hidden Human Capital, Debra Ruh, Global Disability Inclusion Strategist, G3ict/Ruh Global Communications.
- Inclusive Job-Center: an experience in Bangladesh, Bettina Liesel Schmidt, Advisor, GIZ.
- Easy to hire! Hiring people with disabilities is easy, Fang Hai Yan, Human Resource Business Partner, Jabil (Guangzhou) Co. Ltd.

This session showed the range of contexts in which employers are taking action to employ persons with disabilities and where they are benefitting by do so. Speakers covered examples of multinational companies, factories producing garments in Bangladesh, and an electronics manufacturing plant in China. The Bangladesh case was of an inclusive job-centre that is acting as a bridge between different actors, engaging both private and public sectors, and thereby offering differing options for future growth. The Chinese case was of a company that went from being obligated to employ persons with disabilities to investing and developing its own mechanisms to do so, and going on

to now acting as an advocate for inclusion both within the company as well as in the country and internationally too.

This session showed the importance of engaging employers using the “language of the private sector”, and different styles of work from what many disability organizations have been accustomed to doing. The session also showed that this different way of doing things can be relevant to employers in contexts as different as China and Bangladesh.

Nonetheless, challenges remain to reach wider numbers of employers. One of the important challenges is to go from awareness to action, and from commitments to results. National networks have been formed of employers working on disability inclusion, but these commitments need to be diffused and made concrete. In particular, while international companies may have advanced human resources considering diversity, it can be harder to reach small and medium enterprises. In this context, the challenge of scale is also one of working through supply chains to promote inclusion at each level.

Fostering Enabling Environment

- Moderator: José María Díaz Batanero, Strategy and Policy Coordinator, ITU.
- Public Employment Services, Zulum Avila, Employment Services Specialist, ILO.
- Survey findings on Employment of persons with disabilities in Tanzania. Fredrick Msigallah, Advocacy and Programme Manager, CCBRT.
- Public Employment Services and Supported Employment, Karen Warson, Expert on Supported Employment, VDAB.
- Special Education for Students with Disabilities in Indonesia. Sri Renani, Director, Directorate of Special Education, Ministry of Education and Culture, Indonesia.

The wider environment for employment of persons with disabilities exists against both the situation of persons with disabilities as well as labour market conditions more widely. The situation of disabled people determines conditions of education and social inclusion, and attitudes to employment. At the same time, conditions of work for everyone are in rapid change. Public Employment Services’ (PES) role is to facilitate entry and reduce barriers into formal employment. PES achieve this through provision of services, coordination mechanisms and gathering and responding to data on the labour market.

Examples in this session show how the situation of disabled people and the labour market are being linked at macro- and micro- levels. In Tanzania, a survey demonstrated employment of persons with disabilities in the health and education public sectors (with 2% of employees having disabilities); this was much lower (0.4%) in the private sector. PES and Supported Employment in Belgium shows the importance of a macro-level context, through UNCPRD ratification and EU strategies and detailed knowledge of the labour market, as well as the individual attention needed to address on a case-by-case basis. In Indonesia, disability services are provided by a range of ministries at national and provincial or local levels, and there is a challenge to link education institutions with business/industry in order to ensure employment.

Global Perspectives and the Way Forward

- Moderator: Peter Fremlin, Consultant, ILO.

- Context and Way Forward in Indonesia, Frank Schneider, Team Leader, Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities, GIZ Indonesia.
- Waged Employment for Persons with Disabilities: Key Issues and Way Forward. Hervé Bernard, Head of Inclusion Unit, Handicap International.
- Opening pathways to employment for persons with disabilities: the way forward, Tiziana Oliva, International Director, Leonard Cheshire Disability.
- Opening pathways into “unusual employment” for persons with disabilities – The way forward, Luisa Ernst, Policy Offer, DFID.
- Ibero-American Network of Inclusive Companies, Ana Mohedano Escobar, Responsible for Social Services, Ibero-American Social Security Organization.
- Discussion on way forward, Stefan Tromel, Senior Disability Specialist, ILO.

These speakers and subsequent break-out groups discussed ways to build on the momentum of work highlighted throughout the meeting.

Engaging businesses and the private sector was a key concern explored in a number of ways. Disability inclusion is partly about changing the way people do business, and both needs and creates a business culture that values diversity. There are opportunities to promote this through public institutions and public procurement regulations; and there is a need to reach small/medium size enterprises. Coming together to advocate to businesses and employers is seen as important, and a roadmap, guidance, tool-kits and/or trainings can be produced to address the needs and concerns of employers.

Learning and monitoring progress and change were highlighted as important. Part of this is at the macro-level in knowing the economic costs of exclusion of disabled people and about the needs of the labour market. Part of it is learning from what has been done, and showing stakeholders this through demonstrating change. An opportunity was also identified to learn from what has and has not worked with inclusion of women in formal employment. There was also a need identified at both nationwide and company levels to be better able to understand and monitor the extent of inclusion and results.

Reaching all stakeholders to promote employment of persons with disabilities will require bridging social and economic areas. The organizations and specialists at this conference are starting to find the key messages globally and to align their actions going forward. This coordination will be essentially to promoting change in countries and learning between different contexts. In order to link national and international initiatives, it is important to align work with the Sustainable Development Goals. There is also a collaboration being initiated with the UN Global Compact.

ILO will explore the tools and research areas proposed by this group, in collaboration with the organizations at this conference and other relevant partners. It was proposed that the unique set of actors brought together in this meeting could in the future complement the Global Business and Disability Network as a technical group.

The Conference of State Parties on the Convention of Rights of Persons with Disabilities will occur in June in New York. ILO has proposed to co-host a side-event on the same theme as this conference, where the dialogue can be continued and the results of this conference can be shared.