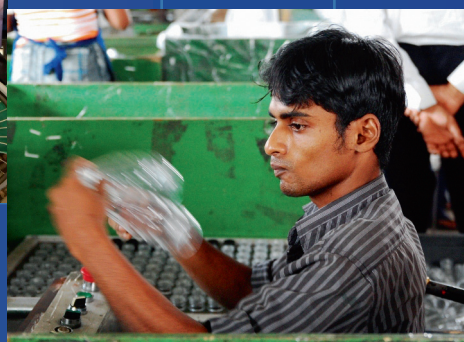




International
Labour
Office
Geneva

Disability in the Workplace: Employers' Organizations and Business Networks



Skills and
Employability
Department



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Disability in the Workplace: Employers' Organizations and Business Networks

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ILO
Bureau for Employers' Activities and
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Photos on cover and back page

The ILO acknowledges and thanks those involved in providing photographs for this publication.

Front cover (four pictures from left to right): Blue Ribbon Employer Council, US Business Leadership Network, Employers' Federation of Ceylon and Paul-Ehrlich-Institut, Germany

Back cover (four pictures from left to right): Business Advisory Board and Disability and Perspektiva, Employers' Federation of Ceylon, Chamber of Industries of Guayaquil and NASSCOM Foundation

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Foreword

Employers' organizations and business networks can play a major role in providing technical advice and services that help employers to hire, manage and retain employees with disabilities. Through their work and engagement, which differ depending on the environment in which they exist, they are able to change and improve disability practices by demonstrating leadership and providing guidance.

These themes are the basis of *Disability in the Workplace: Employers' Organizations and Business Networks*, which describes the contemporary experiences of 12 employers' organizations and business networks on the issue of disability inclusion. The descriptions are short, only three to five pages, but each captures the origin, context and structure of the 12 organizations as they relate to the issue of disability.

Disability in the Workplace: Employers' Organizations and Business Networks provides insights into how representative organizations of business address the issue of disability. The practices described in these examples demonstrate how such organizations are well placed to link business interests and the productive integration of people with disabilities in the labour market. At a moment when countries are rapidly ratifying and seeking to implement the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, a comprehensive human rights convention for people with disabilities, there are increasing needs to provide inspiration and guidance for businesses. *Disability in the Workplace: Employers' Organizations and Business Networks* responds to an emerging body of information that supports the business case for hiring people with disabilities and the interest of companies to maintain diverse workforces.

We hope that the readers, – be they executives or staff from employers' organizations, business networks, company human resource or corporate social responsibility directors, or others – will find inspiration and insights from the experiences and examples highlighted.

We wish to express our thanks to those involved in the development of this working paper. Appreciation goes to Henrik Moller, Senior Advisor, Bureau for Employers' Activities and Debra Perry, Senior Specialist in Disability Inclusion, Skills and Employability Department, who were responsible for developing the working paper and to Tiina Eskola, who conducted the research and drafted the cases. The funding for this publication was provided under the ILO-Norway Partnership Agreement. The 12 organizations are especially acknowledged for sharing their experiences and taking the time to work with the ILO on this publication.

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Introduction

Disability in the Workplace: Employers' Organizations and Business Networks is a compilation of 12 case studies of employers' organizations and business networks, describing their activities related to disability and employment. The publication is intended for employers' organizations and other representative business organizations, companies, workers' organizations, ILO staff, people with disabilities, and others interested in learning about the inclusion of disabled people in the workplace. It contributes to the knowledge sharing activities of the ILO Global Business and Disability Network.

The ILO Global Business and Disability Network is primarily composed of multinational companies, employers' organizations and business networks from around the world - companies and groups with a specific interest in disability issues as it relates to the workplace and their businesses. It also includes representatives of international disabled persons' organizations and resource groups and networks that provide technical assistance to the business and employer members and who are committed to encouraging disability diversity in the workplace.

The Network has four goals:

- Knowledge sharing and the identification of good practices among members;
- Development of joint products and services;
- Strengthening of employers' organizations at national levels to reach national, small and medium enterprises; and
- Linkage and partnership with ILO projects and activities at country level.

Methodology and outline

Each case study presented in this publication provides a description of the organization and specifically highlights its disability-related activities and outcomes. The information has been collected by contacting the organizations and requesting reports and background material, and by reviewing their web sites and other available information. In some cases, the organizations developed brief descriptions of their activities, which were used as basis for the case studies. The organizations were then consulted to get more details and clarifications on specific points, as required.

It should be noted that the case studies are not meant to give a comprehensive account of all the disability activities carried out, or to provide an independent analysis of each featured organization. Rather, they aim to illustrate what employer groups have done to facilitate disability inclusion and to promote the employment of people with disabilities among their members.

Each case study follows the same structure:

- **Introduction** gives a brief description of the organization, its history and activities, and the motivation for starting their disability-related activities;
- **Structure and partners** introduces the way the organization is structured and names its partners;
- **Key activities** describes the organization's activities around the issue of disability in the workplace;
- **Achievements** highlights the main accomplishments resulting from these activities; and
- **Lessons learned** outlines, in brief, what the organization regards as relevant insights arising from its experiences.

Types of organizations

The publication features employers' organizations and business networks from countries in Asia, Europe, Oceania and South America, each operating in its specific social, economic and cultural environment. While some of these organizations have existed for decades, others are very recent initiatives. The size of their membership ranges from 15 to several thousand employers, and the membership includes small, medium and large employers both from the private and public sector, as well as multinational enterprises.

Despite their differences, the organizations featured in this publication can be divided into three types: 1. **employers' organizations**; 2. **disability-specific employers' organizations**; and 3. **other business networks** with a common interest in disability and employment. Although these categories are not strict, they help to distinguish the differences in the organizational structure and demonstrate that there are different ways to organize employers' disability groups:

1. **Employers' organizations** represent one or more sectors of industry. They generally advocate for employers' interests on a wide range of labour market issues, and assistance in disability-related issues is one of the many ways they serve their members. The *Chamber of Industries of Guayaquil* (Ecuador), the *Confederation of Indian Industry* (India), the *Employers' Federation of Ceylon* (Sri Lanka), *NASSCOM* (India), the *Serbian Association of Employers* (Serbia), and the *Vietnam Chamber of Commerce and Industry* (Viet Nam) through its involvement in *Blue Ribbon Employer Council*, are all employers' organizations that have developed activities on disability inclusion.
2. **Disability-specific employers' organizations** are organizations that focus specifically on disability in business. They are managed and usually fully funded by members, and often have permanent staff that provides a range of services to members. They include the *Australian Network on Disability* (Australia), the *Employers' Disability Network* (New Zealand), the *Employers' Forum on Disability* (United Kingdom), and the *US Business Leadership Network* (United States).
3. **Other business networks** are essentially also employers' disability organizations but they can be distinguished from the second type by not having paid staff or membership fees. However, the members often meet regularly to share experiences and carry out activities, and individual members may sponsor activities and provide in-kind contributions to the group initiatives. The *Business Advisory Board on Disability* (Russia), and *UnternehmensForum* (Germany) are networks of this type.

Reasons for employers to develop disability initiatives

While each organization has its own story behind its origins or reasons for starting disability activities, some similarities among them exist:

The *Chamber of Industries of Guayaquil* (Ecuador) and the *Serbian Association of Employers* (Serbia), both employers' organizations, began their disability activities as result of a new legislation that introduced quotas for employers on hiring disabled people. Both organizations responded to the needs among their members to comply with such legislation and started assisting them in recruiting disabled workers.

The *Confederation of Indian Industry* and *NASSCOM* initiated disability programmes related to their affirmative action and corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities.

Of the disability-specific employers' organizations and other business networks, several (e.g. the *Australian Network on Disability*, the *Employers' Forum on Disability*, the *Employers' Network on Disability*, *Unternehmensforum*) were founded by groups of employers who had already gained

experience in hiring disabled workers and wanted to share experiences and promote the business benefits of engaging with people with disabilities. Others (e.g. the ***Business Advisory Board on Disability***, the ***Employers' Disability Network***) were developed to better engage the business community in including disabled people in the labour market. In a number of cases (e.g. the ***Business Advisory Board on Disability***, the ***Blue Ribbon Employer Council***, the ***Employers' Disability Network***, the ***Employers' Network on Disability***, ***Unternehmensforum***), the development of the organizations was facilitated by project funding or technical assistance from government agencies, NGOs or international organizations.

Common practices

The case studies highlight a variety of means of action and activities that the organizations have undertaken to assist employers in becoming more disability inclusive. This section highlights five main practices that are common to many of the featured organizations. The first three practices describe services to employers and policy level activities that most organizations are involved in. The last two relate to services that directly support disabled people and benefit employers as well. However, the organizations differ with the respect to the latter: while many of the organizations have activities that directly serve disabled people, some have made a conscious decision not to do this but to exclusively work with their members.

The common practices are:

1. Raising awareness and building capacity on disability inclusion

Virtually all the organizations are engaged in raising their members' disability awareness and building their capacity on different aspects of disability inclusion, mainly by organizing workshops, training courses and programmes. In addition to training, some of the disability-specific employers' organizations offer consultancy services on specific topics, such as making businesses accessible to employees and customers with disabilities.

Many organizations also organize member events to share information and experiences, and conduct publicity campaigns and promotional events to raise awareness on disability inclusion in the labour market.

2. Providing information and tools on disability and employment

Most of the organizations provide their members with information and tools on disability and employment-related issues, mainly through web sites or printed material. These include disability facts and figures, best practice examples, and practical advice on topics such as disability-specific legislation, hiring and retention of disabled employees, managing disability at the workplace, reasonable accommodation, and accessibility.

Many of the employers' disability organizations, in particular, offer a multitude of resources, some of them responding to very specific needs of their members. For example, some have developed tools for employers to benchmark their progress in becoming more disability-responsive.

3. Influencing policy on employment and training of disabled people

In addition to building their members' capacity to include disabled people in the workplace, some of the organizations have been active in joint committees with government agencies and ministries to develop policies on education, training and inclusion of disabled people in society. Furthermore, a couple of the organizations have established corporate codes of practice on disability inclusion in order to encourage the development of company disability policies among their membership.

4. Providing career development opportunities and organizing vocational training

Several case studies describe activities that focus on advancing the skills and professional development of students with disabilities. Such activities include organizing career counselling, skills training, on-the-job training and internships. Students who often find it difficult to gain relevant work experience and employers who will be able to source qualified candidates for available jobs benefit from these activities. Indeed, these case studies suggest that employers can have a significant role in upgrading the skills of disabled students and jobseekers.

5. Linking disabled jobseekers with employers

A number of the organizations are engaged in directly facilitating the hiring of disabled jobseekers. The case studies describe a diversity of activities such as organizing job fairs, creating databases of jobseekers with disabilities and matching potential candidates with interested employers, and promoting contracting opportunities for entrepreneurs with disabilities.

Together, the activities described in the case studies address common barriers that disabled people face in accessing the labour market, from inadequate laws and policies to weak institutional capacity to implement those policies and laws; and from physical and informational barriers to the lack of awareness about disabled persons' abilities and the resulting negative attitudes and stereotypes. As such, the case studies attest to the leadership potential and impact that groups of employers can have in making labour markets more diverse and inclusive.

Key lessons learned

A number of valuable lessons learned have been identified by the organizations. They relate to organizational development and to the employment and training of disabled workers. Whereas some of them are very specific to the particular organization, there are several common lessons that emerge from the case studies:

An organization for employers should be led and governed by employers

Many organizations found that in order to truly respond to employers' needs, an organization for employers should be led and governed by employers. This lesson was particularly expressed by disability-specific employers' organizations.

Collaboration and partnerships with other organizations add value

It is noteworthy that none of the organizations portrayed in this publication have carried out their disability activities in isolation. Indeed, all emphasized the importance of collaborating with government agencies and ministries, other employers' organizations, trade unions, academic and vocational institutions, NGOs – and, importantly, with disabled people and their organizations.

Partners are described as a source of disability expertise, experience, information, and human and institutional resources. Partners can help upgrade activities, and collaboration ensures that organizations complement and learn from each other.

Whereas some of these collaborations are more of informal nature, such as exchanging information, others are solid partnerships with clearly identified roles for each stakeholder, for example when implementing special projects or initiatives.

A related point emphasized in many case studies is the importance of involving disabled people and their organizations in planning and management of the organization. In several organizations,

disabled people's organizations (DPOs) and disability NGOs¹ serve as experts, advisors or partners in implementing special initiatives. Further, they provide specific disability expertise and a link with the disability community.

Awareness raising is pivotal

The case studies highlight a continued need to raise awareness about disabled workers and their capabilities. Many employers are unaware of the benefits of hiring disabled people and not all employers are sensitized to disability issues. Nevertheless, the organizations featured do not stop at awareness raising but complement it with additional activities. Some organizations suggest that a good way to increase awareness and change attitudes is to engage in activities that bring disabled people to the workplace. Thus, raising awareness, while important, may not be enough.

Qualified disabled jobseekers should be matched to jobs

Organizations that facilitate the recruitment of disabled employees emphasize the importance of carefully matching disabled jobseekers with suitable jobs. This involves taking into account both the labour needs of employers and the interests and qualifications of disabled candidates. This way, both disabled people and their employers gain from the recruitment. However, the prerequisite of such a match is to ensure that people with disabilities have access to relevant vocational assessment and training.

Employers' organizations have a major role and interest in making the workplace inclusive

The case studies offer practical examples for employers' organizations and groups of employers that are interested in developing activities related to disability inclusion. They also demonstrate the power and leadership that these organizations have to change their members' practices and influence the workplace from the disability perspective. Employers' organizations and networks – of different types and operating in very different environments – can play a major role in providing technical advice and advisory services that help employers to hire, manage and retain disabled employees as well as serve them as customers.

The case studies point to the relevance of disability inclusion expertise among employers and their organizations. Such expertise is becoming increasingly important as more and more countries sign and ratify the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCPRD, 2008) – a Convention which came into force in a record time because of its rapid ratification rate. The Convention includes specific reference to disabled persons' right to employment in an environment that is "open, inclusive and accessible"² and promotes disabled persons' career advancement. This has implications for national laws and policies which need to be amended to reflect the principle of non-discrimination and the requirement for reasonable accommodation, and therefore also for employers.

Moreover, the case studies indicate that, from an employers' point of view, becoming a disability-inclusive workplace is not about charity. Rather, these cases reflect the understanding that inclusive workplaces are mutually beneficial to employers and persons with disabilities. This also resonates

¹ Disabled people's organizations (DPOs) are membership groups of disabled people that are involved in a variety of advocacy, self-help, leadership and capacity building activities. They are also sometimes involved in specific projects for their members and even employers, such as providing job matching or providing disability awareness and accessibility training. DPOs can represent a specific disability group, or act as a cross-disability organization or an apex organization that all subgroups or disability specific groups may join. Typically, DPOs are representative with elected leaders from among their members. DPOs are different from organizations for disabled people that are usually NGOs whose leadership may or may not include disabled people and they are usually organized to provide services for disabled people.

² *United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (2008): Article 27.

with the general business case for hiring disabled persons, which outlines the benefits of a diverse workforce, inclusive of disabled persons. The business case states that³:

- People with disabilities make good, dependable employees. Many cases document comparable productivity, lower accident rates and higher job retention rates between employees with disabilities and a company's general workforce.
- People with disabilities represent an untapped source of skills and talent, including technical skills if they have access to training and transferable problem-solving skills developed in daily life. People who become disabled while working often have valuable skills and experiences learned on the job, in addition to their formal skills qualifications.
- Disabled people, their families and friends are often an overlooked market segment. Especially in developed countries, many have significant disposable income.
- Hiring people with disabilities can contribute to the overall diversity, creativity and workplace morale and enhance a company's image among its staff, community and customers.

In sum, the organizations portrayed in this publication have provided leadership and helped to make enterprises more inclusive – to the benefit of businesses and disabled persons alike.

Box 1: Terms and definitions

A few of the disability-specific words in this document may be new to the reader. Generally, when referring to people with disabilities, the terms “people with disabilities” and “disabled people/persons” have been used interchangeably, reflecting common usage in most parts of the world.

In its Code of Practice on Managing Disability in the Workplace, the ILO defines a disabled person as “an individual whose prospects of securing, returning to, retaining and advancing in suitable employment are substantially reduced as a result of a duly recognized physical, sensory, intellectual or mental impairment”.

As a comprehensive human rights Convention for people with disabilities, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) recognizes that disability is an “evolving concept”, stating that “persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others”.

The term “reasonable accommodation”, according to the UNCRPD, “means necessary and appropriate modification and adjustments not imposing a disproportionate or undue burden, where needed in a particular case, to ensure to persons with disabilities the enjoyment or exercise on an equal basis with others of all human rights and fundamental freedoms”.

The term “accessibility”, according to UNCRPD, refers to ensuring that persons with disabilities have “access, on an equal basis with others, to the physical environment, to transportation, to information and communications, including information and communications technologies and systems, and to other facilities and services open or provided to the public, both in urban and in rural areas”.

Note on currency exchange rates: some of the case studies contain information on the organizations' membership fees. These are reported in the currency of the country in which each organization is based and conversion to US dollars is provided as a footnote. The conversion to US dollars was done using the International Monetary Fund's “Representative Exchange Rates for Selected Currencies”, value as of October 07, 2011. URL: http://www.imf.org/external/np/fin/data/rms_rep.aspx. All estimates are approximations.

³ International Labour Office (2010): *Disability in the workplace: Company practices*. Geneva: ILO.

Australian Network on Disability, Australia

Introduction

The Australian Network on Disability (AND), an organization funded by Australian private and public employers, was established to advance the inclusion of people with disabilities in all aspects of business.

The organization was started as Employers Making a Difference in 2000 by a group of employers who had successfully recruited people with disabilities and wanted to share their experiences with others, and promote the benefits of employing people with disabilities. In 2003, eight employers signed the **Charter for the Employment of People with Disability**, making a public commitment to enhancing employment opportunities for people with disabilities. The organization's name was changed to the Australian Network on Disability in 2010, and these founding organizations became AND's Platinum members. Currently, AND has over 100 members from a range of sectors, including banking, retail, education, recruitment, professional services, manufacturing and public administration.

AND takes an organizational development approach to disability inclusion: it aims to support its members and other organizations to change their internal behaviours, attitudes and systems, and increase their knowledge so that they can confidently engage with people with disabilities. This then leads to mutually beneficial outcomes for both employers and people with disabilities.

AND activities include providing expert advice and consultancy services, developing tools and publications, and delivering training as well as implementing practical programmes on disability-related issues. It also regularly holds information sharing and networking events.

Structure and partners

AND is a not-for-profit organization fully funded by its members. Memberships are organized into packages: Gold, Silver or Bronze, and a separate 'small organization membership' for employers with less than 20 employees. The membership fees depend on the package that the employer chooses and range from AUD 550 to AUD 11,000⁴. The gold membership offers the most comprehensive package of services and benefits. The eight employers, who have been part of AND since its beginning, have exclusive status as Platinum members.

AND is governed by a Board of Management consisting of 12 people, most of whom are representatives of the member organizations. A team of seven staff works in collaboration with member organizations to assist them in disability inclusion. Each member has a designated Relationship Manager, a staff member who works with them to develop an annual member plan. These plans outline how AND will assist individual members to achieve their goals related to disability inclusion. The plans also provide an opportunity to review previous achievements and discuss information on best practice and cutting edge developments.

⁴ Roughly USD 540 to USD 10,760 (October 2011).

Key activities

Providing tools and resources for disability inclusion

AND provides comprehensive disability-related information through its web site both for employers, organizations and people with disabilities. Much of the material is available to the general public, such as fact sheets, newsletters and several information resources.

One such resource is **Opportunity**, a booklet explaining the benefits of employing people with disabilities and articulating how companies can make themselves more accessible and attractive to customers and jobseekers with disability. Opportunity was developed in collaboration with AND members in 2008. To accompany the booklet, the **Disability Confidence** web site (www.disabilityconfidence.org.au) was launched in 2008, containing further information and case studies on disability inclusion.

One of AND's flagship publications is **Managers' guide: disability in the workplace** which was published in 2008. The publication was sponsored by member companies – Telstra Corporation, IBM and Manpower – and adapted from the UK Employers' Forum on Disability's Line Managers' Guide. The Managers' guide advises how to appropriately support and manage people with disabilities in the workplace. It includes topics such as employer benefits and responsibilities, recruitment, retention, further learning and development, and performance management. To provide up-to-date information on government programmes, new initiatives and amended legislation, the guide was revised in May 2011, with sponsoring from Westpac, Ageing, Disability & Home Care, Department of Business & Innovation and Telstra Corporation. The original Managers' guide has proven to be one of AND's most popular products, with several thousand copies sold since it was launched.

In 2010, AND developed a collection of resources specifically for its members, including information on disability-specific legislation, reasonable adjustments⁵, disclosure, accessible customer service, statistics and information about disability types. The materials are available to purchase in plain text to enable members to upload onto their respective intranet sites and customize them with their company logo and format. These intranet resources were developed in direct response to requests by members, who wanted some basic information they could make available to their employees as a first point of reference when they had a disability-related question.

Conducting training courses

In addition to providing tools, AND regularly organizes training designed to assist organizations to become more disability confident. AND first started providing training on the recruitment of people with disabilities in 2001 and since then, training sessions have been developed in response to the areas of members' needs. Training programmes include modules such as **Welcoming Customers with Disability**, **Managing Disability in the Workplace**, **Human Resource Essentials**, **Disability Confidence for Workplaces**, **Communication & Etiquette** (a short briefing session on how to confidently communicate with people with disabilities), and **Mental Health & Workforce Wellbeing**.

Providing consultancy services

Since its inception, AND has offered consulting services to member organizations to build their capacity to welcome people with disabilities as employees, customers and stakeholders. Consultancy services can be requested on a range of topics, for example, on developing disability-related employment strategies and action plans, reviewing employers' recruitment and selection processes, or developing and reviewing web site resources. Members receive a comprehensive report identifying specific barriers with suggested strategies for how barriers can be removed or minimized. For example, a review of an online recruitment process may identify barriers for candidates with

⁵ See reasonable accommodation. The differences in terms reflect legal differences between countries.

disabilities. Also a recommendation may be made to provide alternative communication or application methods so that candidates with disabilities will not be disadvantaged.

The most popular consultancy services help members to develop and implement internal reasonable adjustment policies and procedures. Reasonable adjustment procedures enable employers to facilitate any adjustments or modifications that may be required to recruit or retain a qualified disabled candidate. Developing a reasonable adjustment policy and procedure is a way for member organizations to take the first step towards disability confidence, as it provides a system of accommodating individuals as well as allowing the organization to identify any barriers (either direct or indirect) that may exist.

Another popular service offered is the review of premises which identifies the access features and barriers to the physical workplace. AND's disability access consultants review the workplace to identify barriers to potential or existing employees with disability, then provide specific recommendations on how to make the workplace more accessible. During the past five years, AND has reviewed more than 50 workplaces.

Supporting students with disabilities in gaining work experience

AND members recognized that tertiary students with disabilities face significant challenges in making the transition from education to employment. As a response, they designed an internship programme that provides students an opportunity to showcase their skills and talents. The **Stepping into...™** programme commenced in 2004, offering work experience opportunities in Sydney in the law profession. Since then, the programme has operated annually with dozens of member organizations involved each year. Stepping into...™ now offers internship opportunities to students studying law, accounting and finance, engineering, information technology, public policy and research, marketing and advertising and human resources in AND's member organizations. The programme has expanded to include all major metropolitan centres throughout Australia. The duration of internships is generally four weeks during the university semester breaks, or the equivalent to four weeks spread out over a longer time period to accommodate all students with disabilities. The participating students are paid a salary equivalent to that of a graduate.

In its role as the Stepping into...™ coordinator, AND promotes the programme to members and students with disabilities, finds eligible students who want to participate, and matches them to their host organizations. AND briefs and coaches the students before they take up their assignments and assists the participating employers to implement reasonable adjustments as required. AND also supports the students and employers throughout the internship period and conducts an evaluation at the end of each programme.

Over the years, several hundred university students have interned through the programme. On average, one in three students who apply will succeed in gaining an internship opportunity. Academic achievement is only one of the assessment criteria; other factors include overcoming adversity, personal goals and achievements, participation in volunteer programmes or charity work, and overall drive and determination to succeed. It is not uncommon for the host organizations to offer their interns a job after the internship.

Organizing member events

AND holds regular seminars for its members on specific topics of interest. In addition to providing current information, the seminars serve as an opportunity for members to discuss and share experiences. Networking lunches are also held for members, involving informal roundtable discussions on a requested topic or theme.

While AND facilitates various events for its members, many activities are also open to non-members. Most notable is the Annual National Conference for employers focusing on disability. The inaugural conference **Raising the Bar: expectations, legislation and practice**, was held in Sydney in May 2010 and brought together over 160 delegates representing members and non-members, public and private organizations, as well as NGO's, community organizations and service providers. During the conference the participants discussed changes to legislation and policy related to disability issues and shared latest knowledge, case studies and examples of best practice.

According to AND, the inaugural national conference exceeded all expectations in terms of numbers of delegates, and the feedback was positive. The 2nd Annual National Conference took place in May 2011.

Achievements

Some of AND's specific achievements to date include:

- Launching the Charter for the Employment of People with Disability (URL: <http://www.and.org.au/content/view/11/42/>) in 2003 and having eight organizations commit to its implementation, which set the benchmark for many other organizations to follow. The Employment Charter has also guided the development of AND consultancy services, programmes and training services. It provides a common language for the AND members to talk about their progress;
- Bringing members together in 'Member Special Interest Groups' to implement reasonable adjustment policies and procedures. Prior to the development of AND there were very few organizations that had systems in place to seamlessly make adjustments to accommodate an individual's disability;
- Establishing Stepping into...™, the internship programme for students with disability, which has been beneficial in demonstrating pipeline talent. Additionally, it has provided many students with valuable, solid paid work experience that contributes to future career pathways; and
- Bringing together high-level executive sponsors from across organizations through AND's 'Champions' meetings, and providing them with an opportunity to network, share their successes and discuss their challenges. These meetings have assisted diversity practitioners make progress as well as led to the development of new projects such as a business administration traineeship programme for people with intellectual disabilities.

Lessons learned

Listen and respond to employers' needs. AND realized that the greatest challenge experienced in operating an employer funded organization is the need to efficiently and effectively develop services, programmes and publications that resonate with their members. The most valuable way of achieving this is to ensure constant contact with members and find out ways to make it easier for them to be disability inclusive.

URL: www.and.org.au

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Chamber of Industries of Guayaquil, Ecuador

Introduction

The Chamber of Industries of Guayaquil (Cámara de Industrias de Guayaquil – CIG) is an employers' organization established in Guayaquil, Ecuador's largest industrial city, in 1936. The mission of the CIG is to represent the interests of its members – more than 800 private sector companies, with 29 of them being among the 100 biggest enterprises in Ecuador – as well as to support the industrial development of the city and the entire country.

The CIG represents 36 sectoral groups, including food and beverage, fishing, metal, plastic, chemical, pharmaceutical, paper and printing, textile, transport, hotels, wood, cement and construction and energy. It serves its members by lobbying for their interests, providing technical and economic information and training courses, and implementing special projects for unemployed people and other target groups.

While the CIG has been focusing on equality policies for decades, its work on facilitating the access of disabled people to the labour market started in 2009 when it began to assist its members in complying with the new national legislative standards for disability and employment.

Although Ecuador's economy and the employment rate have been growing continuously in recent years, people with disabilities – who represent about 13 per cent of the total population⁶ – still face major challenges in finding decent employment. To promote the employment of disabled people, a labour law reform⁷ that established hiring quotas for disabled employees was approved in 2006. The law covers both public and private employers with at least 20 employees, and stipulates that from 2010 onwards, people with disabilities should make up four per cent of the total number of employees. The law also includes provisions on a penalty levy for failing to observe the quota.

While some employers were immediately in compliance with the law, others found the new situation challenging. In particular, many companies faced difficulties sourcing qualified employees with disabilities. Also, in several cases, employers simply created meaningless new jobs for disabled jobseekers to comply with the law, without considering the needs of the enterprise or the skills of their newly recruited disabled employees. This resulted in a loss of motivation among disabled employees on one hand, and decreased productivity on the other.

The employers also encountered difficulties after hiring disabled employees, mainly due to the lack of disability awareness and knowledge on how to manage disability in the workplace. The employers did not necessarily know how to make accommodations required by some of the disabled employees, nor were disabled employees and their colleagues always adequately prepared to the new work situation.

To respond to the employers' needs, the CIG developed a three step programme in 2009 to enhance the meaningful employment of persons with disabilities. Through the programme, the CIG aimed to provide their members with skilled employees and people with disabilities with concrete tools to facilitate their employment and improve their employability.⁸

⁶ Consejo Nacional de Discapacidades [the National Council of Disabilities] (CONADIS), URL: <http://www.conadis.gob.ec/estadisticas.htm#estadis>, as accessed on 28 January 2011.

⁷ Ley Reformatoria al Código Del Trabajo, Registro Oficial Nº 198 (Art. 33), Lunes 30 de Enero De 2006, see, for example, <http://www.conadis.gob.ec/legislacion.htm#legisla>, as accessed on 28 January 2011.

⁸ CIG: *Actividades de la Cámara de Industrias de Guayaquil para facilitar la inserción laboral de las personas con discapacidad* (unpublished report).

Structure and partners

The CIG implements the programme in partnership with disability peak organizations – the National Council of Disabilities (CONADIS), a government agency responsible for developing and coordinating disability policy, and the Service of Labour Integration (Servicio de Integración Laboral – SIL), a special unit under the National Federations of and for Persons with Disabilities that provides job placement services and general support and advice on disability inclusion in Ecuador. The CONADIS has been assisting the vocational training component of the programme while the SIL has been in charge of the programme monitoring. These partnerships have proved fruitful because of the extensive disability information and outreach to disabled people that the organizations have.

Key activities

Creating a database of jobseekers with disabilities

To assist its members in sourcing jobseekers with disabilities, as its first step in 2009, the CIG created a database of professionals and graduates with disabilities. CVs of professionals with disabilities were collected through advertisements in newspapers, and those who sent in theirs were interviewed by a human resource expert who then developed competency profiles of each jobseeker. The database, consisting of about 40 CVs, allowed CIG member companies to access the resumes of jobseekers who already had specific skills and competencies. About 32 jobseekers were matched to jobs related to their education through the database⁹. However, it soon became clear that there was a lack of qualified disabled jobseekers to meet the demand of the labour market. The CIG decided to expand its training programme with the help of the CONADIS and the SIL. CIG also realized that these partners were needed to follow up and keep records of the newly recruited disabled employees, which is fundamental for evaluating the sustainability of the programme.

Providing skills training for persons with disabilities

In 2010, the CIG launched **Free training programme for persons with disabilities**, developed in partnership with the SIL and CONADIS.

After the SIL assessed employers' current labour needs, the CIG and its partners selected four subjects for skills training: computer, accounting, secretarial and entrepreneurship skills. The entrepreneurship training was particularly aimed at those people who already had specific technical skills and wanted to start their businesses based on those skills.

While the CIG covered the costs of training, the SIL identified trainees with disabilities and organized training groups. The CONADIS provided the training infrastructure and assisted the SIL in keeping its database of employers and disabled people updated.

In 2010, 214 persons in total received training and the results of the training programme were encouraging: according to the SIL at the end of the training, most of the participants found employment. Many of them were employed by CIG members and one has been hired by the Chamber itself. The CIG has facilitated their hiring by periodically distributing bulletins to its members with information and contacts of the trained persons.

The follow-up to the entrepreneurship training indicated that the newly-trained entrepreneurs faced difficulties in accessing initial capital and credit to start their businesses. To overcome these challenges, in November 2010, the CIG started a partnership with the MIRO Foundation, a

⁹ CIG: *Actividades de la Cámara de Industrias de Guayaquil para facilitar la inserción laboral de las personas con discapacidad* and PowerPoint presentation by Jorge Illingworth, Senior Specialist in Employers' Activities, ILO DWT/CO-Lima.

microfinance provider, to provide loans of USD 700 to persons with disabilities who wants to start a small business.

In addition to specific training geared at disabled people, the CIG offers its regular monthly training seminars and courses free of charge to participants with disabilities.

Promoting a culture that values diversity at work

The CIG and its partners are planning to implement the next step of the programme in 2011, with the aim of advancing a working environment that respects diversity and promotes the personal development of all employees. Its specific objectives are to:

- raise awareness and cultivate positive attitudes about disability in the workplace. The disability awareness training will involve persons with disabilities, their colleagues and the HR staff, thus starting an awareness process within the enterprises;
- enhance the self-confidence of employees with disabilities;
- address physical barriers at work by advising companies on accessibility and accommodation for persons with disabilities; and
- develop and improve the skills of disabled people.

This part of the programme is geared at small and medium enterprises which normally have fewer resources to carry out such activities, but also have to comply with the law. The CIG is currently surveying the specific training needs of the enterprises involved to design tailored courses.

Achievements

Since its inception in 2009, the CIG programme has made progress in:

- Assisting its members in complying with the law and also facilitating their access to employees that fit their skill requirements by establishing a database of qualified candidates with disabilities;
- Enhancing the employability of disabled people by providing skills training to over 200 persons with disabilities, many of whom were employed afterwards; and
- Making the labour market more inclusive and advancing the understanding of the business benefits of a diverse workforce.

Lessons Learned

Consider the needs of both employers and disabled people. Skills training must match the needs of the enterprise as well as those of participants. In the CIG programme, the skills training was designed to match employers' current skills requirements, while the training on entrepreneurship specifically answered the requests of many disabled persons involved.

Partnerships with organizations that work with persons with disabilities can bring many benefits. The major obstacle in developing the database of jobseekers was to locate interested disabled people. Thus, the CIG decided to start collaborating with organizations and agencies that already had a solid experience in disability issues and access to a wide network of potential programme participants.

Training persons with disabilities is not enough – awareness-raising is also needed at workplaces.

In the beginning of the programme, the CIG realized that to facilitate disabled people's access to the labour market, it is essential not only to enhance their skills but also to provide disability awareness training at workplaces. In order to face and fight possible prejudices and teach people how to manage diversity, HR staff should also be included in the training.

URL: www.industrias.ec (in Spanish)

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UnternehmensForum, Germany

Introduction

UnternehmensForum is an association of private sector employers established in 2002 to promote the joint interests of businesses and people with disabilities in the labour market. It started as an initiative of 15 medium and large companies that are mainly based in the Rhine-Main region of Germany. In total, they employ over 500,000 people and cover a wide range of industries: banking, education, manufacturing, transport, energy, chemicals and pharmaceuticals.

The aim of UnternehmensForum is to develop effective strategies to enable all workers to fully participate in working life, including persons with disabilities. The organization is based on the notion that disabled people, like anybody else, can be committed employees and make significant contributions at work. Due to Germany's aging population, hiring people with disabilities will become all the more relevant in the context of the expected skills shortages in the future. Therefore, hiring and retention of disabled persons at workplace is also a question of competitiveness for businesses.

Initially, UnternehmensForum began as a pilot project with financial support from the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. In 2006, it was transformed into its current legal form of a non-profit organization dedicated to business and disability. Over the years, the network has become as active platform both on the state and the federal level. Its areas of work include developing good practices and promoting practical solutions to integrate people with disabilities in the labour market and support the professional development of disabled graduates.

Structure and partners

UnternehmensForum is an independent, non-profit organization. Each of the 15 member employers appoints a representative to the Forum, who is normally their focal point for disability. The Forum operates with a lean organizational structure, and it is represented by a volunteer Board consisting of three non-paid persons from the member companies.

There are no official or formal partnerships with other organizations. However, UnternehmensForum engages in close and continuous collaboration with the Confederation of German Employers' Associations (BDA), the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and the Confederation of Rhineland-Palatinate Business Associations (LVU). In addition, the Forum regularly exchanges information with disability ombudspersons at state and federal level governments.

UnternehmensForum has also worked with the Cologne Institute for Economic Research that has established an information system on vocational rehabilitation of disabled persons, commissioned by the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. This information system, **REHADAT**, contains detailed information on various aspects of vocational rehabilitation designed for use by disabled people as well as professionals involved in rehabilitation.

Key activities

Sharing information and good practices to raise awareness

Founded as a platform for like-minded employers to exchange information and experiences, the main activity of UnternehmensForum is to collect and share information and examples of good practice. The members do so by exchanging experiences informally, as well as through events, such as workshops, training sessions for disability focal points of member enterprises, and annual general meetings.

In 2010, UnternehmensForum organized a workshop on labour law and the rights of persons with disabilities. The main speaker, a lawyer specialized in labour and social law, informed the participants about employers' rights and duties related to hiring disabled employees, and disability management at workplace. In addition to the member companies, among the invitees were four representatives from other enterprises, who deemed the workshop very useful for their operations.

UnternehmensForum also shares information with policy-makers, business associations, and other enterprises at various events organized by other bodies. For example, in 2003, it put up its own exhibition stand at the German Employers' Conference (Arbeitgeberstag) as well as during panel discussions organized by the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and disabled people's organizations (DPOs). In 2010, UnternehmensForum was invited to speak at the launch of the **Action plan of the Rhineland-Palatinate state government to implement the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)**, as well as at the **Congress on the implementation of the UNCRPD** organized by the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. During these events the participants discussed, for example, the role of employers' organizations in raising awareness about disability among employers, incentives for employers to hire people with disabilities and enterprise-based training of disabled people.

Many of the inclusive practices and solutions that the members have developed are also available to the general public via the UnternehmensForum web site, in the form of best practice case studies (in German).

Promoting the professional development of disabled graduates

UnternehmensForum is involved in a project to advance the professional development of disabled graduates, **ProBAs**. The purpose of ProBAs is to improve the access of disabled bachelor's graduates to employment opportunities and to increase their chances of finding a master's programmes at universities. Many graduates with a bachelor's degree struggle to find jobs and the problem is more pronounced among disabled graduates. In addition to challenges in finding jobs, disabled graduates face barriers in entering master's programmes due to insufficient accommodations and assistance available for them. The project also aims to raise the awareness among employers and public service authorities about the employment of disabled graduates, and thus, combat discrimination faced by many disabled jobseekers and employees.

The ProBAs project provides opportunities for disabled bachelor's graduates to acquire first hand professional experience in research, science, management and administration through working at the project partner organizations or businesses. The participating organizations offer the graduates opportunities to participate in research projects, work in administration, or acquire key qualifications required in particular jobs. The jobs are for a defined period of three years.

The project planning started in 2009, and the implementation takes place between 2011 and 2014. As a “strategic partner” of the project, UnternehmensForum makes ProBAs more widely known and liaises with decision makers to promote it. Two of the Forum members, Paul-Ehrlich-Institut and Boehringer Ingelheim are regular project partners, along with 13 other partners from public and private sector: while Paul-Ehrlich-Institut coordinates the whole project, Boehringer Ingelheim offers traineeships for the Bachelor’s graduates within the project. So far, the organizations involved have recruited 14 Bachelor graduates, and all of them have reported that they are satisfied with their jobs. An evaluation will bring out more detailed results in 2012.

Supporting implementation of disability inclusion agreements

To improve the opportunities of disabled jobseekers in the labour market, the German Social Security Code¹⁰ requires employers to make ‘inclusion agreements’ (‘Integrationsvereinbarung’) with disabled people’s representatives and the works council¹¹. These agreements cover issues such as inclusion of persons with disabilities in the enterprise, ways to organize work, working conditions and environment, and sometimes target quotas for disabled employees or for training of disabled youth. The UnternehmensForum members use these inclusion agreements as a planning and management tool for developing inclusive HR policies and for managing disability inclusion and rehabilitation. In 2010, the members updated their inclusion agreements and published practical guidelines on inclusion agreements. The guidelines, which contain advice, tips and examples to assist other enterprises in developing and implementing their agreements, are available on the web site of UnternehmensForum.

Achievements

UnternehmensForum’s achievements to date include:

- Placing the topic of employment of persons with disabilities on the agenda of top level management of participating enterprises;
- Participating in regional and federal level events to communicate results and experiences of UnternehmensForum to various audiences, including workshops on the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Germany;
- Initiating projects, such as ProBAs, a pilot project for the further professional development of disabled bachelor graduates;
- Sharing good practice examples and developing instruments such as mentoring programmes and integration agreements for use by member enterprises; and
- Training of disability focal points in member enterprises.

¹⁰ The Book IX of the German Social Security Code, entitled "*Rehabilitation of and Participation by Disabled People*", entered into force on 1 July 2001. Source: International Social Security Association (ISSA), Observatory [online], URL: <http://www.issa.int/Observatory/Country-Profiles/Regions/Europe/Germany/Reforms/Book-IX-of-German-Social-Security-Code-SGB-IX-now-in-force>, as accessed on 7 June 2011.

¹¹ The works council is a body representing employees at local/firm-level.

Lessons learned

Disability inclusion expertise among employers is necessary. The practical disability inclusion experience gained by the members of UnternehmensForum has provided them unique expertise that is in high demand in the private sector and among policy makers, confirming the relevance and necessity of such an initiative.

Employing disabled people makes economic sense. The skills shortages induced by demographic change are already visible, and the number of applications for dual training (i.e. combining institution-based vocational training and enterprise-based apprenticeship training) has decreased by 40 per cent among UnternehmensForum members. Therefore, it makes economic sense to hire, retain and include disabled employees in the labour market today, and it will be without alternative in the future.

Learning from others can save time and money. The approach to learn from experiences and good practice examples of other enterprises has proven successful, as exchanging experiences and practical solutions often saves time and money.

Enterprise-level disability sensitization can lead to sustainable results. UnternehmensForum realized that continuous enterprise-wide disability sensitization is important for the sustainability of results. Sensitization activities have led to positive attitudes towards disabled people in the member companies, and have proven to be more effective than just observing legal requirements on disability inclusion.

URL: www.unternehmensforum.org

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Confederation of Indian Industry, India

Introduction

The Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) is a business organization founded to facilitate the growth of industry in India. It developed from a small association established in 1895 to a large organization with over 8,100 members. The membership represents both private and public sectors, including small and medium enterprises, multinational corporations and about 400 national and regional sectoral associations with an outreach to over 90,000 companies in total.

The CII assists its members in becoming more productive and competitive through a variety of services. It is involved in influencing policy, organizing conferences and trade fairs, and providing consulting services and training programmes on a range of topics. It also assists its members in developing and implementing CSR programmes, and engages in development initiatives related to areas such as health, education, livelihood, diversity management, skill development and the environment.

In 2006, the CII developed a specific **Ability Initiative** related to the employment of disabled people. The initiative rests on the idea that persons with disabilities constitute a vast pool of human resources that can be productive and be contributing members of society – provided that they have access to relevant training and employment opportunities.

Structure and partners

The CII is an industry-led organization headquartered in New Delhi, with 63 offices in India and seven offices outside India. It also has ten **Centres of Excellence** that provide various advisory services, such as leadership development, throughout India. Employer representatives constitute the strategic leadership of the organization, while the Director-General manages the day-to-day operations, with the help of the CII Secretariat.

As it is a large organization, the CII also has a regional governance structure, and dedicated committees and task forces on specific issues, including on disability. As part of the Ability Initiative, the CII set up regional **Core Groups** or **Ability Forums** comprised of local employers, representatives of disabled people, relevant NGOs, training institutes, government agencies, and relevant experts. The aim is to create a common platform where stakeholders deliberate on how the corporate sector could play an active role in becoming more disability-friendly and promoting the employability of disabled people. The groups have two focuses: (i) placing disability on the corporate agenda and (ii) promoting employment opportunities for persons with disabilities.

The first **Core Group on Special Ability** was established in New Delhi in 2006, and a year later other Core Groups or Ability Forums were set up in National Capital Region of Delhi, Kolkata and Bangalore.

Key activities

The CII's activities under the initiative include developing and disseminating knowledge and tools, sensitizing employers on disability issues, improving disabled persons' access to employment and services, and undertaking specific projects.

Establishing a Corporate Code on Disability

In 2006, the CII established a **Corporate Code on Disability** to assist its members in developing a disability policy. The voluntary Code contains a set of standards related to employment of disabled people, including statements on non-discrimination, reasonable accommodation and the need for awareness-raising on disability. The CII has disseminated the Code among the membership to encourage its adoption.

To set an example to its members, the CII itself has also recruited people with disabilities as employees.

Advocating for employment of disabled people

To promote diversity in the workforce, the CII started conducting disability sensitization workshops and seminars for employers, especially human resource managers, across the country. The trainers come from organizations working with disabled people as well as representatives of corporations that actively recruit disabled employees. The sensitization events cover issues such as inclusive employment practices, accessible workplaces and imparting skills to people with disabilities.

To complement the sensitization sessions, the CII developed two advocacy films. **Beyond Barriers** highlights companies from various sectors of economy that have successfully employed disabled people, while **Equal Opportunity Inclusive Growth** introduces individual disabled persons and their workplaces.

Besides raising awareness, the CII has developed practical tools to assist its members in disability inclusion. In 2009, the CII published a disability manual, **A Value Route to Business Success – The Why and How of Employing Persons with Disability**, in collaboration with the Diversity and Equal Opportunity Centre (DEOC). Written in a question and answer format, the manual provides information, and detailed guidance and advice for employers on recruiting and managing disabled people at workplace.

Assisting companies in recruiting disabled employees

In 2010, the CII organized a **Disability Conclave** in Chennai, with a specific **Employment Opportunity Session**. During the session, employers interviewed and interacted with disabled jobseekers and as a result some of the jobseekers were offered jobs in the CII member companies from IT and hospitality sectors.

The CII has also undertaken specific “recruitment drives” across different cities in India. Recruitment drives are interactive platforms that bring together employers and disabled jobseekers in order to discuss and understand each other’s needs, and to match disabled jobseekers to available job opportunities in the private sector. Although no specific data exists on how many people have found jobs through the recruitment drives, the CII estimates that a significant number of people with disabilities have been employed this way.

Improving accessibility

In 2009, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) issued guidelines stating that visually impaired persons should have banking rights, instructing banks to make at least one third of their ATMs accessible to persons with visual impairments. To facilitate the implementation of the guidelines, the CII started an initiative geared at its member banks in 2010. Acting as an interface between stakeholders, the CII has organized a seminar on accessible banking and joint meetings with member banks, ATM vendors, technology providers and relevant disability NGOs. It has also facilitated one-to-one meetings, and conducted a sensitization

exercise for banks. As a result, five banks have so far committed to the RBI guidelines and are taking steps in becoming more accessible.

As part of the initiative, the CII also developed an e-Handbook, **Banking Access for the Visually Challenged** to guide and assist banks in making their services accessible. In 2010, the handbook was launched on the CII's web site. It includes a resource list to enable banks to contact technology providers.

Advancing employability through education and training

Realizing the importance of education in advancing the employability of disabled people, the CII started collaborating with educational institutions and employers, both in matters of policy and practice. For example, the CII's Ability Forum in the Karnataka state gave inputs on the draft **Policy for the Students with Disabilities** at the Indian Institute of Management in Bangalore (IIMB).

Another example of such an activity is a specific employability project organized in collaboration with Voith Turbo, a company manufacturing drive technology, and LS Narain (LSN) Foundation, an NGO, in the state of Andhra Pradesh. During the project, the CII and its partners organized a training course in manufacturing for eight people with physical disabilities. The three-month course was held at the campus of Voith Turbo in Nacharam, Andhra Pradesh and it included both soft skills and technical on-the-job training in various departments. During the training, the LSN Foundation provided the trainees with food and accommodation in Hyderabad while Voith Turbo bore the costs of the training and a stipend for each student.

The training programme brought about positive changes in the trainees' skills and confidence. Upon its completion, some of the trainees were immediately offered jobs at Voith Turbo and Amara Raja Batteries. Others are looking for work with the assistance of the CII and the CII is confident that all of the trainees will ultimately find jobs.

Achievements

The CII's achievements to date include:

- Introducing the CII Corporate Code on Disability which has proven useful in promoting and placing the issue of disability on the CII members' corporate agenda;
- Building capacity on diversity management among the CII members through sensitization workshops and materials;
- Organizing recruitment events, which have led to employment for a number of persons with disabilities throughout the country;
- Assisting banks in becoming more accessible to customers with visual impairments through a specific initiative; and
- Proactively promoting the **National Awards for the Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities** among the CII's members and partners. A number of the CII member companies have been recognized for their work on disability.

Lessons learned

The private sector needs to get involved in disability inclusion. The CII found that the engagement of private sector employers is crucial in advancing the employment of disabled people. However, this may first require building disability awareness and providing strong incentives for employers.

Partnerships with stakeholders bring results. In the CII's experience, collaboration with businesses, government agencies and the civil society is important in addressing the barriers that disabled people face in accessing employment and training opportunities. In particular, public private partnerships can be useful in upgrading vocational training: the private sector can assist in improving vocational training by providing industry-based skills training with government support.

An accessible environment will facilitate the employment of disabled people. The CII realized that in addition to raising awareness and matching disabled jobseekers to available jobs, it is vital to improve accessibility in the workplace as well as in public places and public transport to advance the employment of disabled people.

There is a need to develop an effective system to link prospective employers with people with disabilities who are seeking employment. As many employers are increasingly using IT enabled services in recruitment, creating databases of skilled disabled candidates and upgrading existing ones to be available online would facilitate hiring of disabled people.

URL: www.ciionline.org

References:

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- The CII web site, URL: www.ciionline.org

NASSCOM Foundation, India

Introduction

NASSCOM is an organization of information technology and business process outsourcing¹² (IT-BPO) companies, established in 1988 to promote trade, business and research in the IT-BPO industry in India. The member companies operate in software development, services and products, consulting, e-commerce and web services. Its membership includes close to 1,300 Indian and multinational companies which together employ over 2.5 million people in India. NASSCOM serves its members by providing information on government policies, market opportunities and other strategic issues related to the IT field. Among its many activities are to promote joint ventures and facilitate linkages within the industry and to conduct IT research. NASSCOM established **NASSCOM Foundation** in 2001 with a vision to build an inclusive and sustainable India by harnessing the capabilities and competencies of the IT-BPO industry.

NASSCOM Foundation started actively working on promoting employment for people with disabilities in early 2010 when it launched its **Accessibility Initiative**, an advocacy programme centred on the issue of employment and accessibility in the industry. One of the main aims of the initiative is to create a platform to empower persons with disabilities with the help of NASSCOM member companies.¹³ In the long term, the aim is to reach every level within an organization – from the top leadership to middle management to all employees – in order to bring about change in policy, organizational practices and attitudes towards disability.

The motivation to start the programme resulted from recommendations of the civil society as well as a growing understanding of diversity within the IT-BPO industry. The Foundation realized the importance of broadening the diversity agenda of NASSCOM members to include people with disabilities.

In its approach, the Foundation focuses both on the business case as well as rights-based perspective. It aims to assist the industry to tap into the wide pool of available talent among persons with disabilities and for its members to truly become equal opportunity employers.

Structure and partners

NASSCOM Foundation, a charitable organization, is headquartered in Delhi and employs close to 20 people. It is managed by a board of trustees, including some NASSCOM founders. The Foundation is funded mainly by NASSCOM and its member companies as well as grants from international private foundations.

The Foundation's disability work is guided by the **Disability Advisory Group** comprising of disability advocacy organizations, including the National Centre for Promotion of Employment for Disabled People, National Association for the Blind and EnAble India, and representatives of leaders from the IT industry. The purpose of this group is to inform and

¹² Business process outsourcing (BPO) refers to the process of hiring a company to handle business activities of another company.

¹³ INDIACSR web site, URL: <http://www.indiacsr.in/article-1692-NASSCOM-Foundation-Job-Fair-for-Persons-with-disabilities-show-employers-the-way-towards-inclusivity-at-workplace.html> , as accessed on 18 March 2011.

advise the Foundation on issues such as accessibility and employability. In addition, the Foundation formed the **Disability Working Committee (DWC)**, consisting of representatives of member companies such as Mphasis, Wipro and Yahoo, to help mentor and guide peer companies to establish inclusive policies and practices.

Through the Accessibility Initiative, NASSCOM Foundation collaborates with three primary partners: IT-BPO member companies, NGOs and the Government of India. The Foundation seeks to act as a bridge between the civil society and private sector in order to collectively work towards improved employment opportunities for people with disabilities. To collaborate with government agencies, the Foundation promotes various government schemes and initiatives to include of people with disabilities within the IT-BPO industry. It also collaborates with government-run vocational rehabilitation centres to host joint job fairs to recruit persons with disabilities.

Key activities

NASSCOM Foundation's Accessibility Initiative focuses on three broad topics:

1. **Employability.** The Foundation seeks to promote the employment of people with disabilities based on their capabilities and qualifications. To this end, NASSCOM Foundation aims to influence the HR agenda of the IT companies and establish linkages between the member companies and vocational training institutes, professional educational institutions and non-profit organizations to source the talent pool of qualified people with disabilities.
2. **Accessibility.** The Foundation aims to raise awareness among IT companies on the importance of a barrier-free environment and on implementing physical and web accessibility requirements. In its awareness work, NASSCOM Foundation cooperates with the real estate sector to advance the accessibility of all IT buildings using the accessibility guidelines issued by the Government of India. With regard to web accessibility, the Foundation observes the international World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) guidelines and promotes web accessibility amongst its member companies through workshops.
3. **Assistive Technology.** The Foundation collaborates with companies and encourages them to make affordable, quality products for assistive technology. In 2010, NASSCOM Foundation co-sponsored **A Compendium of Assistive Technology**, an assistive technology resource, developed for the International Conference on Assistive Technology, led by Spastics Society of Karnataka.

In 2010-2011, the Foundation focused on the topic of **Employability** and its activities to this end are described here:

Building disability awareness among employers

NASSCOM Foundation has conducted a number of diversity awareness workshops for NASSCOM member companies. The sessions introduce effective policies to facilitate gainful employment for people with disabilities and assist the participating companies in setting goals to become more inclusive. The Foundation follows up with all participating companies to ensure action is taken. Since the initiative began, 190 persons with disabilities have been employed by ten IT service companies.

Providing resources and information about inclusive practices

As part of the Initiative, NASSCOM Foundation shares information and resources on disability inclusion among stakeholders. It sends out periodic informative emails to NASSCOM member companies and the Foundation's web site includes articles on disability as well as a list of organizations that train, place and counsel people with disabilities for easy access to members. Members have access to a community site which is regularly updated with information about disability-related topics. Member companies can also reach out to the Foundation directly for more information and contacts of disability experts, such as accessibility designers. This service has proved useful: on average, five to ten companies contact the Foundation every month for advice.

In 2010, NASSCOM Foundation published a handbook, **Inclusivity at the Workplace – Five Principles that Enable and Empower Persons with Disabilities**. The handbook provides case studies of companies and discusses good practices in disability inclusion. It includes a self-assessment questionnaire for companies to measure their inclusiveness and plan for improvements in their practices.

Counselling jobseekers with disabilities

As one of the activities to promote the employability of disabled people, NASSCOM Foundation collaborated with the Vocational Rehabilitation Center (VRC) in Chennai to provide HR counseling to jobseekers with disabilities. The event started with a panel discussion with representatives from the NASSCOM member companies, the Government and NGOs. After the panel, 60 disabled jobseekers from a range of backgrounds such as engineering, sciences and the humanities took part in a career guidance counseling session by HR managers from five companies. During the career guidance session, the HR managers advised jobseekers on opportunities in the IT-BPO sector, the skill requirements in the industry, writing CVs and participating in job interviews.

Bringing jobseekers and employers together through a job fair

Following the sensitization workshops and counseling sessions, the Foundation was keen for its members to start recruiting disabled people.

Given the growing need for skilled and qualified persons with disabilities in the IT industry, the Foundation decided to conduct its first job fair as part of World Disability Day 2010 celebrations in Delhi. The Foundation organized the first fair in collaboration with Sarthak, an educational institute for training people with disabilities and Vocational Rehabilitation Center for the Handicapped operated by the Government. The job fair brought together some 450 disabled jobseekers with IT employers like Aegis, Designmate, Disability India Network e-Vindhya, Genpact, Synopsys, Wipro Infrastructure, IBM, IBM Daksh, Mphasis, NetAmbit, Netmagic Solutions, NewGen and Team Computers. Representatives from the Ministry of Labour, and disability advocacy groups also attended.

More than 450 candidates registered for interviews and over 70 candidates were recruited on the spot or selected for further interviews. Encouraged by the fair's turnout, the Foundation is planning to organize similar events in other regions.

Mentoring youth with disabilities

To facilitate the IT industry in sourcing qualified employees with disabilities, the Foundation started a specific training and mentoring project in 2011. The project identifies volunteers from IT companies to provide mentoring and career counseling for disabled youth interested in working in the IT industry. In addition to basic IT skills, regular training is offered in

communication skills, English language, resume building and interview skills. The project also includes training that prepares participants for jobs in the IT-BPO, retail, hospitality and other service industries. The training is by non-profit organizations and includes company visits. The ultimate aim is to improve the employability of participating disabled youth and get them absorbed in the industry through job fairs that will be organized at the end of 2011. Through regular interaction and engagement with disabled trainees, the employees of the participating IT companies also get sensitized on disability issues.

Achievements

Some of the specific achievements of NASSCOM Foundation's Accessibility Initiative include:

- Successfully engaging over 35 NASSCOM member companies in disability inclusion activities through workshops, volunteering activities and events;
- Actively facilitating employment opportunities for people with disabilities by linking member companies with disability NGOs and vocational training centres for disabled people;
- Providing career counseling for about 150 disabled jobseekers; and
- Realizing the direct hiring of about 190 disabled people through job fairs and other facilitated placements.

Lessons learned

Building an inclusive organization is a process. NASSCOM Foundation realized that employing persons with disabilities requires more than educating employers; it also requires changes in policies, facilities and attitudes within the organization – which is a process that takes time. The Foundation seeks to ensure that disability inclusion becomes a sustainable part of a company's DNA by approaching the topic at all levels of the organization from leadership to mid-level managers and employees.

Management commitment makes a difference. The Foundation learned that engaging the leadership in disability inclusion is vital. Disability inclusion is an issue that needs to be dealt with at the core of the organization and this can only happen if the leadership is informed and committed. To this end, NASSCOM Foundation plans to facilitate leader-to-leader sessions at CEO level on the business case for employing disabled people. In the end, the Foundation aims to hold up the Indian IT-BPO industry as a role model for inclusion.

URL: www.nasscomfoundation.org

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Employers' Disability Network, New Zealand

Introduction

The Employers' Disability Network (EDN) is an organization bringing together public and private employers to promote the inclusion of disabled people in business. Launched in January 2010, the EDN currently has some 25 members, representing sectors such as banking, retail, telecommunications and public administration.

The EDN aims to cultivate disability-inclusive culture by assisting its members to increase their capacity in including disabled people as employees and customers, and sharing best practice on disability within different areas of business. Its activities are based on the premise that disability is part of the diversity of society, and that organizations, including employers, should reflect diversity in their operations.

The origins of the EDN were laid in 2007, when Workbridge, a specialized employment agency for jobseekers with disabilities, undertook an evaluation of how it could work more effectively with employers. The evaluation report emphasized the need for employers to take a leadership role in engaging other employers to increase the employment opportunities of disabled people. At the same time, the Ministry of Social Development employed a Principal Disability Adviser who facilitated a meeting with key disabled persons' organizations, supported employment and specialized employment agencies, employer organizations and trade unions to discuss the employment of disabled people. At that meeting, engaging with employers was again highlighted as a key activity.

As a result, Workbridge, with the support of the Equal Employment Opportunities Trust (the EEO Trust), an organization that provides information and tools on diversity issues at workplace, presented a proposal to the Ministry of Social Development to support the development of an employer-led organization on disability similar to the Employers' Disability Forum in the UK. A service delivery unit of the Ministry of Social Development called Work and Income started facilitating the development of the EDN.

While both the UK and Australian employer network models served as a basis and inspiration for the EDN, it reflects a unique New Zealand response due to the country's specific characteristics: in New Zealand there are few large employers; the service provision arrangements rely on both mainstream and specialized services; and the disability community is well connected and organized.

Structure and partners

The EDN is a non-profit organization funded by its members. The member fees are staggered according to the size of the employer, and range from NZD 300¹⁴ for small employers to NZD 3,000¹⁵ for employers with over a 1,000 employees. In addition, the members support the EDN activities through in-kind assistance, such as designing and developing the web site; providing legal and secretarial support; and sponsoring products.

¹⁴ Roughly USD 230 (October 2011).

¹⁵ Roughly USD 2,310 (October 2011).

As a separate legal entity, the EDN is governed by a board of trustees who are elected representatives from the member employers. The board aims to have a wide geographical distribution, a range of skills, and employers of different sizes.

Most of the EDN's current employer members are founding members who joined the group at its start, but other employers have since become members of the EDN. New members are constantly sourced by setting up appointments with key stakeholders and through promotional work.

Although the EDN is an employer network, it was established as a collaborative effort. The original steering group that was created to lead the EDN's development involved many stakeholders, including government agencies; disabled persons' organizations; employers' organizations and trade union representatives and the EEO Trust. Equally, these stakeholders have been engaged in the strategic planning of the EDN activities, along with the board members and other EDN members.

Key activities

Getting the initiative off the ground – the organizational development of the EDN

As a relatively new organization, the EDN's activities to date have concentrated on organizational development. Before the launch of the EDN in 2010, the steering group in charge of creating the EDN organized two events, one in Auckland and one in Wellington, to discuss the initiative with employers and gain their approval to the idea of the network. Both events confirmed that employers supported the idea.

Identifying the EDN's niche was an important step in selling the concept and determining the mission and vision of the EDN. The steering group resolved that the EDN should be an employer-led organization which drives a culture of change through establishing new practices and, importantly, provides a complementary service to existing service providers, such as specialized disability employment providers and the EEO Trust.

The efforts to start up the organization were supported by a business leader with respect and status and commitment to the disability field, who offered his assistance to the nascent group because he believed that employment was the single most important issue for disabled people. He contacted a number of chief executives, both in the public and private sector, to get their commitment to attend an initial meeting of the EDN. As a result, 15 employers attended the initial establishment meeting and endorsed their support for the purpose and intent of the EDN.

Launching a web site with information and tools

As one of its first activities, the EDN, with the assistance of its members, created a web site to provide employers with a one-stop shop to relevant information on disability. The EDN web site was formally launched at the Parliament by the Minister for Disability Issues in September 2010. One of the highlights of the launch was hearing three disabled employees describe their experiences about the impact of employment on their lives and the support they had received from their employers.

The web site contains information, tools and practical advice on the hiring and retaining disabled employees, and serving disabled customers. It also includes guides on accessibility and reasonable accommodation, links to research material as well as examples of success stories of jobseekers with disabilities who have found employment. Many of the resources

offered have been developed by stakeholders, such as disabled people's organizations or disability service providers.

Establishing the Employer Charter and Customer Charter

To enable employers to identify where they stand as a disability-confident organization, the EDN started using the **Employer Charter** and **Customer Charter**, developed by the Australian Employers Network on Disability (AND).

The employment and customer charters provide the framework for employers to develop good organizational practices. Both Charters introduce ten action points, covering issues such as policy, staff training and disability awareness, working or physical environment, involvement of disabled people, monitoring performance and in the case the Employment Charter, career development and retention, retraining and redeployment. The charters facilitate employers to make structured action plans that foster improvements and that are linked to their business objectives. The Charters also serve as the basis for the EDN Board members to discuss with other employers about joining the EDN.

The Employer Charter and Customer Charter are complemented by **Employers' checklist** to allow employers to rate their disability confidence as an employer and **Providers' checklist** to enable rating as a disability-aware business.

Achievements

Despite its recent launch and taking into account that establishing a new organization takes time, the EDN has already made considerable progress in promoting disability inclusion within business. Its achievements include:

- Gaining the support from significant business leaders, both public and private, and the endorsement from the disability field to get the EDN to its current point of development;
- Launching the EDN web site at the parliament which provided an opportunity to showcase the organization and its activities;
- Publishing the New Zealand version of the **Line Managers Guide**, originally developed by the UK's Disability Forum, to equip employers with the tools to more effectively engage with people with disabilities. The guide is available to all employers free of charge;
- Providing employers with the Employer Charter and Customer Charter, both succinct outlines stating what it means to be a disability confident organization in terms of employing and serving disabled people, and accompanying assessment tool which can be used by employers to develop a disability inclusion action plan; and
- Endorsing the position paper **Realising the Health Benefits of Work** by the Australasian Faculty of Occupational and Environmental Medicines launched in March 2011. The paper comprises a consensus statement, to which the EDN is signatory, outlining the health benefits of work.

Lessons learned

The lessons learned by the EDN so far are:

Employers are leaders. The EDN realized that if the organization is going to effectively engage with employers, then it is employers who have to drive the direction of the organization. In the case of the EDN, this involves both private and public employers. It is also important to ask the employers what they require to more easily employ and better serve people with disabilities.

Involve people with disabilities. The EDN recognized that it is crucial to engage with organizations of disabled people. The representatives of disabled people have been participating in the steering group and strategic planning meetings of the EDN.

Develop an approach that fits with the environment. In the case of the EDN, the support of existing employer disability networks such as the Employers' Disability Forum in the UK and the Australian Network on Disability have been instrumental in getting the organization started. However, it is important that any model developed for the employers' groups reflects the particular national environment, taking into account the characteristics of employers and existing services, and the role of people with disabilities in the country.

Work in collaboration with other employers' organizations. A number of national employer organizations offer a range of services and supports, and working collaboratively with these organizations ensures that the EDN's service offerings complement what is available and focus the EDN on providing "value added" service.

URL: www.edn.org.nz

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Business Advisory Board on Disability, the Russian Federation

Introduction

The Business Advisory Board on Disability (BABD) is a consortium of businesses that is committed to raising disability awareness and promoting disability issues in the business community. It was created in 2008 by Russian and international companies: ANCOR, Clever, Citi, Clifford Chance, Coleman Services, DPD, Ernst & Young, Hewlett Packard, Johnson & Johnson, KPMG, Microsoft, Naim.ru, Nike, Raiffeisen Bank, Transaero, and the Regional Society of Disabled People – Perspektiva – a disability NGO.

The BABD developed out of a group of businesses that Perspektiva had been working with to find jobs for youth with disabilities in Moscow. When Perspektiva launched its employment programme in 2003, it provided job support and training for youth with disabilities and collaborated with employment agencies. However, it soon became clear that people with disabilities would be more successful in finding jobs if Perspektiva and the business community worked in partnership. Perspektiva learned about networks of businesses in other countries that were also promoting employment opportunities, such as the UK Employers Forum on Disabilities (EFD) and the US Business Leadership Network (USBLN). In 2008, it secured a grant from the UK Embassy in Moscow to collaborate with EFD in a project that would aim to develop a similar network in Moscow. The BABD was the result of the project.

In Russia, like elsewhere, disabled people face barriers to accessing career development and employment opportunities in the open labour market. Despite recent developments to improve accessibility and educational opportunities for disabled people, much remains to be done. The unemployment rate for disabled people is still very high¹⁶ and many disabled people who have jobs work in companies managed and owned by disability NGOs. There are few programmes to support the inclusion of people with disabilities to mainstream employment. The BABD wants to change this by:

- Raising awareness of disability issues among a wide range of people in the business community with a focus on the inclusion of people with disabilities in the workplace;
- Organizing internships, job shadowing, training and other work experience opportunities;
- Assisting with adjustments at the workplace to support disabled employees; and
- Promoting the inclusion of disability issues in its members' business operations, including services, products and supply chains.

The BABD operates with a strong business imperative that involves opening existing vacancies to disabled candidates and being prepared to make reasonable adjustments in the workplace, not creating "special" positions at a company for persons with disabilities.

¹⁶ "There are 6 million persons with disabilities of working age, and only 15 per cent of them are employed", President Medvedev, April 8, 2009, presentation at meeting of the President's Disability Counsel.

Structure and partners

The members participate in the BABD on a voluntary basis, and the group welcomes new membership from any interested business. A rotating chairperson that changes every six months manages the group. There are no fees for participation, but the businesses provide office space for meetings and trainings, participate in training sessions as trainers and help to organize BABD activities.

In addition to the 15 core members, there are some companies, such as Headhunter.ru, GE, IBM, Renaissance Capital and Boeing that participate regularly in events but do not attend BABD meetings. Perspektiva is an equal partner to the business members and provides the network with a wide range of support and expertise and serves as a link to the disability community.

Through Perspektiva, the BABD engages with Ministries, the Russian Parliament and other business groups, and invites their representation to various events. It held a joint roundtable with the Department on Disability of the Ministry of Health and Social Development in 2011 to discuss the employment of disabled people. The event was broadcasted live on one of the TV stations. More recently, the BABD liaised with the Russo-British Chamber of Commerce and has been invited to speak at the American Chamber of Commerce in Moscow on several occasions.

Key activities

Many of the BABD activities focus on providing practical employment and training experiences for people with disabilities through identifying job opportunities, internships, job shadowing, and training and job support programmes. Perspektiva identifies most of the disabled participants for various activities while the business members assist in finding vacant jobs and provide training for jobseekers with disabilities.

Organizing Path to Career competition for students with disabilities

In 2007, the BABD organized the first competition for students with disabilities, **Path to Career**, which has since then become an annual event. Its aim is to help students with disabilities gain new skills and experience that will increase their job prospects as well as to provide them with direct opportunities to interact with members of the business community. In addition, this programme aims to lead to new opportunities for the students within the BABD companies as participants in an internship, job shadowing¹⁷ or training programme.

Preparation begins six months before the event when the competition is advertised in Moscow universities. On average, about 50 students with disabilities submit their applications, after which they write essays and take part in interviews that assess their skills and readiness to participate in the programme. About 15 to 20 students reach the final round of the competition.

¹⁷ Job shadowing involves a student spending time with a professional (working, for example, in HR, public relations, accounting, etc.) and observing their work, participating in meetings and other activities. The idea is to gain understanding on what a particular job involves. The professional is also available to answer specific questions about the job.

Before the final event, the students take part in training sessions on job-seeking and life skills. The training programme includes topics such as preparing a resume, improving presentation skills and overcoming fears. The students also have an opportunity for individual consultations to help them prepare for the final competition.

In the first year, Perspektiva was responsible for identifying, selecting and preparing the students for the final round; but in 2011 the BABD played a key role in all activities, including the training. In the first two competitions, the participants included students of IT, law, psychology, economics, social work, and translation.

The final round of the competition involves a day of activities. The students present themselves to members of the business community and participate in interactive business games and interviews about their career ambitions. At the end of the event, students are awarded with prizes and certificates, such as the “best presentation” or the “best interview”. Many of them are also offered paid internships, job shadowing, participation in companies’ internal training programmes¹⁸, or temporary positions at a company. Often, the internships lead to jobs at the companies. When the fourth competition was organized in April 2011, 11 of the 16 participants received offers for internships, training or employment opportunities.

Students and employers alike have enjoyed taking part in Path to Career. According to the feedback on the programme, it has enabled many participants to better understand their career goals and become more confident about the future employment. Businesses, on the other hand, have become more and more active in taking part over the years. Some employers have noted that their attitudes about the abilities of disabled people have changed as a result of meeting qualified young professionals with disabilities.

In addition to the competition, the BABD organizes study tours to member companies for high school and first and second year college students with disabilities. The study tours enable them to learn about professional opportunities, meet with different professionals in the company and get advice on career development. About 90 high school and college students have taken part in the study tours and had the opportunity to see the operations of a bank, law firm, airline or shipping company.

Promoting positive images of disabled people

In 2009, the BABD organized a photo exhibition to portray positive, active images of persons with disabilities. The **Life in full colour** exhibition featured people with disabilities at work or with family, living a full life as part of their community. The BABD members collaborated in the event: while Perspektiva identified the disabled individuals photographed, the business members hired a photographer and developed and mounted the photos for the exhibits. The exhibition has been displayed in most of the BABD member companies, including in their regional offices outside Moscow, in a Moscow shopping mall and at a conference on employment held by the Association of European Businesses.

¹⁸ Disabled participants take part in training sessions that are organized for all company staff, such as team building, English language skills, time management, presentation skills and communication skills. As a result, the disabled participants have the opportunity to spend time in a professional environment with companies’ employees, while the employees also get experience in engaging with disabled people in a workplace setting.

Organizing disability awareness training for businesses

Perspektiva conducts disability awareness training sessions for BABD companies to raise their awareness about disability issues. The training sessions cover the social model of disability, correct terminology, disability etiquette, how to make workplace adaptations, legal issues related to employing someone with a disability, and how to provide accessible services for disabled customers. Training sessions are facilitated by disabled trainers who provide concrete examples of situations that can arise at the workplace with a new employee with a disability. The participants then discuss these situations in small groups. Trainings have been held both for staff of individual companies and staff from different BABD companies. One training session was also open to companies outside BABD.

More than 150 line managers have participated in the training sessions. All who attended noted the usefulness of the training, especially in terms of the positive change in their attitudes toward people with disabilities and their ability to work.

Achievements

Some of the BABD's achievements to date include:

- Establishing a growing, committed employers' group that advances employment opportunities for people with disabilities;
- Providing valuable work experience for 65 students with disabilities through internships, the Path to Career competition, job shadowing activities, and jobs for about 14 jobseekers with disabilities who are employed by BABD members;
- Increasing the disability inclusion capacity of employers. The BABD member companies have more awareness about and experience with including disabled people in the workplace, as well as other disability issues;
- Drawing media attention to the issue of disability. For example, the Path to Career events secured significant media coverage, including a report on **Russia Today** that airs internationally. In addition, recent discussions with a Russian cable channel resulted in plans to make a series of short films about disabled people who are successfully employed; and
- Highlighting the issue of disability inclusion to a wider audience through organizing employment forums for other members of the business community and participating in conferences, meetings and committees with government agencies, chambers of commerce and NGOs.

Lessons learned

Get the commitment of the high level management. The BABD has realized that it is essential to have the commitment from the company's high level management for the employer initiative. This allows for active participation and sustainability of the disability inclusive practices.

Starting with small initiatives builds confidence. While it is valuable for businesses to have experience on disability issues before they become BABD members, it is not essential. If a participating business has an interest in becoming more disability inclusive, then it is a good reason to be involved. The companies can start by hanging a disability photo exhibit at the workplace or by hosting a study tour for students with disabilities. Then they can move on to

including young people with disabilities into the internal training programmes, and later provide mentoring, internship or employment opportunities. It is necessary to search for opportunities rather than obstacles when deciding to employ people with disabilities.

Partner with experts. In the case of the BABD, Perspektiva has played a significant role in providing information, disability awareness training, legal and consulting advice on matters related to disability. Perspektiva has also served as an important link to the disability community and has helped to identify jobseekers with disabilities and link the businesses with potential employees with disabilities.

Involve people with disabilities in company activities. Engaging people with disabilities in activities such as internships, disability awareness training and others is a good way to increase disability awareness and promote positive attitudes, as most people in Russia have not had the opportunity to meet or speak to people with disabilities and continue to hold many stereotypes about their abilities.

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Serbian Association of Employers, Serbia

Introduction

The Serbian Association of Employers (SAE) was established as a non-governmental organization in 1994, and registered as an employers' organization with the Ministry of Labour in 2005. The organization comprises employers of all sizes, operating in 20 industrial sectors. Its membership includes over 1800 individual companies, referred to as 'direct members', and over 100 regional and sectoral employers' organizations. In total, the members represent about 100,000 companies that employ some 280,000 workers.

The SAE aims to represent and promote common interests of employers; provide relevant information and services to its members; strengthen and coordinate linkages between them; and to inform the wider public about the interests of employers. Its main activities include advocacy and lobbying, collective bargaining on national, sectoral, and company level, promotion of a business friendly environment and various international activities. The SAE is also involved in providing various training and education programmes to the members and modernizing vocational education and training (VET) to match the real needs of the economy.

The SAE started actively working on disability issues when a **Law on Professional Rehabilitation and Employment of Persons with Disabilities** was adopted in May 2009. The law, which came into force in May 2010, promotes disabled persons' socio-economic inclusion and their equal opportunities in the labour market, and establishes an employment quota system. The law stipulates that an employer with 20 to 49 employees is required to employ one person with a disability while those with 50 and more employees are required to employ at least two disabled persons, and that subsequently one person with a disability is to be employed for every additional 50 employees. The law also stipulates a penalty levy for failing to observe the quota.

However, while the law was to bring significant changes to employers' obligations, there was little interaction or collaboration between disabled people and employers that would facilitate the implementation of the law. To address this, the SAE collaborated with the ILO to launch a new project for employers in 2009, **Corporate Social Responsibility and Employment of Persons with Disabilities**.

Structure and partners

The SAE is an independent organization headquartered in Belgrade with four main bodies: General Assembly, Management Board, Executive Board, and Supervisory Board, all of which have specific duties within the organization. The activities on disability issues are not dedicated to any specific department within the organization.

The SAE engages with numerous national institutions and councils that work on disability issues, such as the Social-Economic Council of the Republic of Serbia; Solidarity Fund under the Ministry of Labour; Retirement and Disability Fund; National Employment Service; and VET Council. In addition, the SAE participates in the preparation of the plan of active measures for the employment of disabled people that is adopted by the Sector for Employment under the Ministry of Economy.

Key activities

The project Corporate Social Responsibility and Employment of Persons with Disabilities, implemented from November 2009 to March 2010, aimed to inform employers about the law and facilitate its implementation, for example, by establishing relations between employers and disabled people's organisations (DPOs), and also to dispel myths and stereotypes about the abilities of disabled people and about employing persons with disabilities. The project was implemented in collaboration with the Sector for Employment of the Ministry of Economy, the National Employment Service and representatives from trade unions, disabled people's organizations (DPOs) and local government. All project partners were responsible for assisting in the implementation of the project from their particular perspective, and for informing their members about it.

The project's first activity was to organize a tripartite meeting in November 2009 to which all stakeholders from government agencies, trade unions and DPOs were invited. The purpose of the meeting was to introduce the project goals and agree on the responsibilities of each stakeholder to achieve the goals and benefit from foreseen joint activities. In the meeting, it was agreed that all stakeholders would participate in the project roundtable meetings to discuss the situation of disabled people in the labour market, challenges related to hiring disabled persons and possible solutions to overcome these challenges. This way, stakeholders could express their points of view and share them with others.

Raising awareness on persons with disabilities and their employment

A major component of the project was to increase the disability awareness of employers. To dispel myths around employing people with disabilities, the SAE published a booklet, **Myths and Realities about Employees with Disabilities**, aimed both at employers and the wider public. To accompany the booklet, the SAE also made a short film about persons with disabilities and their wish to be actively included in labour market. Two thousand copies of the booklet and 500 copies of the film were distributed to different stakeholders, employers in particular.

The next step was to develop and organize a one-day training workshop on disability awareness for employers. The largest employers representing four sectors were selected as target groups on workshops: banking, local government and public enterprises, services and food sector. The workshop covered issues such as basic disability concepts, reasons for employing disabled people, international standards and domestic legislation concerning the employment of people with disabilities, how to recruit disabled employees and examples of good practice. In total, 81 participants took part in the workshops.

In addition, the SAE developed a special section on its web site to distribute information about the law and the rights of persons with disabilities. The web site introduces the law and its key provisions and advises employers on its implementation. It includes key messages to the public, a list of professional rehabilitation companies in Serbia, and links to additional information.

Organizing roundtable meetings to facilitate the implementation of the law

To facilitate the implementation of the law, the project organized 11 one-day roundtable meetings throughout Serbia: in Kragujevac, Novi Sad, Sremska Mitrovica, Novi Beograd, Bor, Veliko Gradiste, Leskovac, Nis, Lazarevac and Belgrade. The aim was to introduce the law and particularly the employers' rights and obligations that it lays down. Nearly three hundred participants, including employers, representatives of relevant ministries, National Employment Service, trade unions, DPOs, NGOs and local government came together to discuss the successful implementation of the law. The participants identified a number of

practical issues related to advancing the employment of disabled people, including the importance of removing physical barriers in infrastructure and transport; encouraging disabled persons to register with the National Employment Service and actively look for work; improving the education and training opportunities of disabled people; raising disability awareness among employers and workers; and improving statistics on disabled people. While many of the points raised will take time to achieve, public and open discussion among the stakeholders brought the issues to the table and clarified the role of each partners in the initiative.

Achievements

SAE's achievements with its project partners include:

- Developing a new service for employers by providing them with relevant information and training on the employment of persons with disabilities, either as part of regular seminars related to labour legislation or upon request;
- Bringing stakeholders – DPOs, employers, government agencies and trade unions – together through networking and information sharing events, and significantly increasing the capacity of all project stakeholders to implement employment policy for persons with disabilities. These events allowed for discussions on ways to achieve full implementation of the law and advance the employment prospects of persons with disabilities;
- Raising awareness about disability and employment of disabled people by organizing round tables and seminars throughout Serbia. These events reached a wide audience through media exposure and provided possibilities of initiating further activities on the local level related to the issue of employing persons with disabilities; and
- Publicizing the issue of disability beyond the stakeholders directly involved in the project through media. Representatives from TV, radio and newspapers were invited to attend the project events and interview participants. During the project, over 300 reports were made, particularly by the local media, about the issues related to the employment of disabled persons.

Lessons learned

Engagement of all stakeholders leads to successful implementation of the law. While it is too early to have a clear picture on the medium and long-term effects of the law, the number of disabled employees and the number of people with disabilities registered as looking for employment have grown since its introduction, according to the data by the National Employment Service (NES). The SAE believes that a greater engagement of all stakeholders will have further positive effect. This includes participation of the relevant ministries through the adoption of the bylaws that provide more information on the implementation of the law; the participation of the National Employment Service through improving educational opportunities of disabled people; and better statistics on persons with disabilities. Commitment of all stakeholders is also needed to overcome obstacles related to physical accessibility – many of which are by no means costly to remove.

Improved vocational assessment of disabled persons will improve their chances of finding employment. It is crucial to concentrate on disabled person's abilities and what they can do, instead of their disabilities. Also, these assessments help determine additional training needs of disabled jobseekers.

Employers and disabled jobseekers should be carefully matched. The needs of both employers and disabled persons need to be taken into account to develop satisfactory, long-term employment relationships.

URL: www.poslodavci.org.rs

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Employers' Federation of Ceylon, Sri Lanka

Introduction

The Employers' Network on Disability was established by the Employers' Federation of Ceylon (EFC) in 2000. The EFC is the largest employers' organization in Sri Lanka. Its membership of some 539 companies represents an employee base of over 440,000 people. Formed in 1929, it was the first organization to register as a trade union in Sri Lanka¹⁹. A permanent secretariat provides services such as handling labour law and industrial relations matters on behalf of member firms, addressing concerns about occupational health and safety and workers' compensation and educating members about other issues related to human resources.

The Employers' Network on Disability has the overall goal of increasing employment and training of people with disabilities within the Sri Lankan business community. The Network is open to all employers, and today it has over 35 members, among them multinationals and large and small Sri Lankan companies²⁰.

The Employers' Network evolved from a loosely organized group of business people, government representatives and NGOs that were interested in promoting the employment of disabled persons in the 1990s. When the EFC started leading the effort, the new Network established its current shape as a network of employers through close collaboration with public administration and NGOs.

The Network models the British Employers' Forum on Disability (EFD) which is an employer-funded and managed membership organization focused on the issue of disability in the workplace. However, the Sri Lankan Network has adapted the EFD model to the Sri Lankan context. Services to its members include facilitating the hiring of disabled people through organizing job fairs that bring employers and disabled jobseekers together; organizing disability awareness raising events; developing publicity materials; and promoting the vocational training of disabled people through various activities.

Structure and partners

In 2000, before the launch of the Network, the EFC's Director-General brought together a Steering Committee for the Network. The original Steering Committee consisted of 14 EFC member companies, representing the hotel, plantation, manufacturing and banking sectors. Since then, the membership has doubled.

The Employers' Network on Disability was formalized by a constitution in 2005. The constitution recognizes the original 14 companies as the founding members of the Network, and stipulates the goals and membership rules of the Network. The Network is managed by the Governing Council which has replaced the original Steering Committee. Elected by the membership, the Governing Council is composed of the Director General of the EFC and eight member representatives. The Network may appoint maximum three additional member representatives who have experience on disability issues. Currently, one of the representatives is from an international disability NGO called Motivation.

¹⁹ Sri Lanka's trade union ordinance recognizes any association of workers or employers.

²⁰ Membership in 2010.

At the moment, the Network does not employ any staff, but the Governing Council is responsible for organizing activities, the Network Secretariat is housed by the EFC, and the administrative work is carried out by an EFC staff member. Occasional human resource assistance is provided by member companies and other collaborators for specific activities. Since 2007, the Network has been charging a nominal membership fee.

While there are no formal partnership agreements, the Network collaborates closely with government agencies, the ILO, NGOs and disabled people's organizations (DPOs). The cooperation includes joint activities, awareness raising campaigns, participation in government committees on disability, and exchanging knowledge and information. The Network has also benefited from financial contributions of its partners.

Importantly, the Network has collaborated with DPOs since its beginning. The Steering Committee includes a representative from a major umbrella organization of people with disabilities in Sri Lanka, while other DPOs are also invited to participate. People with disabilities are also included in Network activities as advisors, job-search instructors and seminar presenters.

Key activities

Conducting an employers' seminar

The official launch of the Network took place in 2001 and as its first awareness raising activity, an employers' workshop was conducted during the launch. In attendance were more than 50 employers representing Sri Lanka's major businesses and industries, people with disabilities and their advocates, government agencies, representatives of the ILO and NGOs. The high level of participation provided considerable opportunity for discussion and feedback. The employers seemed interested in hiring disabled employees but needed to know more about jobseekers, their skills and abilities and how they could be located. However, such information was not readily available and it was recommended that the Network's immediate work plan should include finding such information.

Developing a database of jobseekers

To address the identified needs, the Network contracted a consultancy firm to research the current status of people with disabilities in the workplace, determine labour market needs and compare those to skills possessed by jobseekers with disabilities. It also created a web site that included a database of jobseekers with disabilities so that employers could identify potential employees.

The response from disabled people seeking employment was overwhelming. When the web site was launched in 2002, the database contained more than 1,200 jobseekers with disabilities, with more than 4,000 names still awaiting input. A survey that was carried out among the EFC members revealed that 25 of 100 survey respondents²¹ had hired 179 people with disabilities.

Expecting increased hiring, the EFC staff member who coordinated the Network met with NGOs and relevant government officials to identify resources to support employers who might need technical or other assistance when they hire a disabled worker. The Network also encouraged employers to hire workers with disabilities through the monthly EFC

²¹ The survey was sent to 457 members of the EFC.

newsletter that included (and still includes) a section on the Employers' Network and its activities. The newsletter featured a **Job Candidates Corner** that provided details of disabled jobseekers and **Best Practices** to describe exemplary employer actions and policies with regard to disability. But the information in the newsletter did not seem to lead to new hires and the Network realized that they needed to adopt a more proactive approach that made hiring easier for employers. The Network decided to organize a job fair that brings disabled jobseekers together with the interested employers.

Organizing job fairs

To prepare for the fair, the Network collaborated with their NGO partner Motivation in selecting and interviewing jobseekers and providing training in effective job-seeking techniques. The Ministry of Social Services provided a field worker trained in assessment and job placement techniques to work with the initiative on a part-time basis. The ILO provided guidance and technical assistance, including job-searching skills materials. The Network drew from its members to assist with training in job-search skills and to provide mock interviews so that participants could practice their skills in realistic settings. By the time the job fair took place in 2003, the jobseekers were primed, and some recruiters already had good impressions of some of the candidates they met during the practice interviews.

The job fair began with a half-day awareness programme for employers during which the jobseekers practiced their interview skills. The interviews took place in the afternoon, with 22 employers and 75 people with disabilities, representing all disability groups. Among the many participating companies were Sri Lankan Airlines, the John Keells Group, MAS Holdings and major hotels. As a result, 44 people with disabilities, more than half of those who participated, found jobs.

The job fair also generated several subsequent interests. For example, on the day following the job fair, one employer requested 50 women to work on a sewing project on a temporary basis. Others wanted to make donations so that people with disabilities could gain access to further skills training.

Encouraged by the success of the first fair, the collaborators have continued organizing job fairs. Five of them have taken place in the capital Colombo and one was organized in Kandy, situated in the central hills of Sri Lanka. In total, about 350 people with disabilities have been employed through the fairs.

Establishing and promoting the Code of Good Practice on the employment of disabled people

In 2006, the Employers' Federation of Ceylon launched its Code of Practice, **Managing Disability Issues at the Workplace**. The voluntary Code provides practical guidance on the management of disability issues at the workplace covering recruitment, selection, training and development, safety and health at work, among others. The Code is a guideline for the Network members and has received extensive support from employers.

Encouraging employers to go beyond hiring

Through the Network, the EFC has encouraged individual employers not only to hire but also to provide training and other supports to promote the participation of people with disabilities in the workplace. Sri Lanka Airlines developed a CD-ROM to teach basic sign language to employers participating in job fairs so that they can communicate with deaf jobseekers; and ID Lanka Limited has organized English-language training courses for disabled jobseekers, especially those who want to enter the IT or financial sector.

The Network member Standard Chartered Bank published and launched a guide on accessibility called the **Barrier Free Access Handbook**. The guide introduces the legal regulations relevant to the built environment²². In addition to the legal provisions, it also provides advice for employers on making the workplace more accessible for disabled workers.

Nestle Lanka Limited, also a member company of the Network, sponsored advertisements to promote disabled persons' opportunities in the labour market and the Network on Disability. Designed by a top advertising company, the advertisements were featured several times in the leading newspapers in Sri Lanka.

Improving vocational education and training for people with disabilities

As more employers are willing to hire disabled jobseekers, improving the skills of disabled people to match the needs of employers has become critically important. The EFC is taking an active role in this by working with the Ministry of Labour Relations and Manpower to provide advice and facilitate educational development of persons with disabilities.

In addition to collaborating with the public administration, the EFC has offered information and communication technology (ICT) training courses for visually-impaired persons at its premises since July 2009. The trainer is the EFC's receptionist – visually impaired herself – and has undergone extensive training in ICT skills for visually impaired persons both locally and internationally. By August 2010, a total of 63 trainees had registered for the course, 35 of whom completed the first two modules and received certificates.

The EFC has also participated in a training fellowship with Korea Employment Agency for the Disabled (KEAD). The Sri Lankan delegation visited Korea in 2008 to learn more about employer approaches to promote the training and hiring of disabled persons and representatives from KEAD visited Sri Lankan training institutes in 2010. The collaboration has included forging a sister-school relationship between Korean and Sri Lankan training institutions to facilitate the vocational training of people with disabilities.

Achievements

Some of the Network's specific accomplishments include:

- Participating in the steering committee of the Ministry of Labour Relations and Manpower that is specifically looking into the educational development and employment of disabled people. As part of such collaboration, the Network members took part in the special job fair in February 2009, carried out by the Career Guidance Division of the Ministry;
- Facilitating hiring of disabled people by establishing a database of jobseekers with disabilities, matching people to jobs and providing training for human resource personnel on disability issues;
- Realizing the direct hiring of 350 people with disabilities through the Network's job fairs and probably a much larger number through awareness raising activities;

²² Disabled Persons' (Accessibility Regulations) [2006] are under the provisions of the *Protection of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act No. 28 of 1996*.

- Raising the profile of workers with disabilities throughout the country through its newsletter, seminars and the considerable media coverage of its activities. For example, the EFC organized an exhibition called **Disability poses no limitations**, to commemorate the International Disability Day in December 2009, providing a platform for hundreds of people, including people with disabilities and employers, to share their experiences and tell about the potential of people with disabilities in the work place; and
- Producing six films that showcase persons with disabilities who have been employed by EFC members. The films are available in Sinhala, Tamil and English.

Lessons learned

Awareness building is not enough. The EFC realized that it had to develop both a knowledge base and community linkages, as well as “value-added” services that went beyond the database.

Practice what you preach. In 2001, the EFC set itself as an example to other employers when it hired a receptionist with a visual impairment and secured the appropriate assistive technology to enable her to perform her job duties. As a result, the EFC has enhanced its credibility vis-a-vis its members when encouraging them to hire workers with disabilities, and has benefited from a productive employee who has now been with the organization for more than 10 years.

There is strength in collaboration. The Network has learned the importance of developing partnerships and relationships with government agencies, NGOs, donors and international partners that offer human, information and institutional resources.

Human resources are critical. The Network is a special project of the EFC that started with a small grant (USD 15,000). The Network would not have succeeded without the EFC employee who serves as the Network’s coordinator, and without the considerable human resource contributions of the Government, NGO partners and businesspeople.

Involve people with disabilities and their organizations. The Network relies on the participation and expertise of disabled people and their organizations as members of the Steering Committee, advisors and instructors.

URL: <http://www.employers.lk>

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Employers' Forum on Disability, the United Kingdom

Introduction

The Employers' Forum on Disability (EFD) is the UK's national employers' network specifically focused on the topic of disability. Its membership of about 350 employers, including 100 multinational corporations, small and medium sized enterprises and public sector employers, employ approximately 18 per cent of the UK workforce. Members include employers from banking, education, health, broadcasting, telecommunications, manufacturing and retail sectors.

Established in 1986, EFD pioneered the first employers' organization of its kind. At the time of its formation, the initiatives to promote the employment of disabled people in the UK were largely developed in isolation of employers' needs, and the creation of EFD started addressing that gap. EFD was launched with support from the Prince of Wales' Advisory Group on Disability and Business in the Community (BiTC), a business-led coalition promoting corporate social responsibility. The original founding members at the official launch in 1991 were Barclays, BBC, Pearl Assurance, Prudential Assurance, Shell International and Shell UK.

EFD was created when its founder proposed to business leaders that companies should jointly fund a central expert resource which would allow employer members to benefit from best practice and disabled people to benefit from economic and social inclusion. Many of these business leaders had personal contact with disability through connections with disability NGOs and/or family members.

The most powerful thing EFD did in the beginning to trigger change was to run the world's first **Leadership Development Programme for People with Disabilities**. The programme, run by EFD for seven years, enabled disabled entrepreneurs to access leadership and management training courses organized by major corporations for their own employees. Participating corporations found that their management expectations regarding people described as 'disabled' were transformed by this opportunity to work alongside them during the courses.

The underlying idea in EFD's approach is that corporate disability confidence presents a huge potential to businesses as they learn how to recruit and employ disabled people on the basis of capability, and as they learn how to become fully accessible for disabled customers and stakeholders in the wider community. Given this, EFD aims to enable employers to become competent in disability inclusion, and to support a broader systems and culture change in terms of policies and practices related to disability. It serves its members through advising and supporting businesses in all aspects of disability confidence, conducting training on disability issues and providing a range of services and resources.

Structure and partners

EFD is an independent not-for-profit organization managed and funded by its members through membership fees and through financing web sites, new initiatives, tools and events. The standard membership fee is GBP 3,000²³ annually. Some members also provide pro bono advice and actively participate in joint problem solving such as the Business Taskforce on Accessible Technology. Although technically a charity, EFD does not receive government grants or charitable donations. EFD has a group of around 50 core funders or partners representing both the public and private sector and various business sectors. These 'gold members' receive certain benefits such as additional support, free services, and access to focused networks.

EFD is governed by a board composed of representatives from the membership and is managed by a CEO and some 35 staff.

People with disabilities are strongly represented in EFD's activities, including through an influential network of associates. The disabled associates are all experienced in business matters, serve as expert advisors, ambassadors, speakers and trainers. They contribute to all events and to the drafting of guidance on best practice. The 20-strong UK network of associates was created in 1991, followed by a growing network of eight worldwide associates in 2007. EFD has good relations with other disability organizations in the UK and beyond, but does not have formal partnerships with them.

In addition to the general network, EFD has facilitated sub-networks by region and economic sector. Scotland, Wales and Yorkshire have formed regional networks while sector-specific networks exist for the creative industry, the police and ICT technology: the pioneering Broadcasting and Creative Industries Disability Network (BCIDN), active from 1989 to 2011, consisted of the major broadcasters in the UK. It facilitated the recruiting and retention of disabled employees, the sharing of good practices among its members and promoted a non-stereotypical representation of people with disabilities in the media. The Emergency Services and Law Enforcement Network (ELEN), which has more than 30 members, was organized in 1999 at the specific request of the Association of Chief Police Officers. The Network shares best practice and provides advice on the service delivery within law enforcement. The Business Taskforce on Accessible Technology (BTAT), launched in 2008, is the most recent of the sector-specific groups. Its 35 members have come together with the shared aim to advance accessible technology products and services.

In 2007, EFD's president created a president's group in order to position disability as a top management issue. The group brings together members at chief executive and board level.

Key activities

Benchmarking disability inclusion: the Disability Standard

To enable its members to measure their performance on disability confidence, EFD created the **Disability Standard** in 2004. The Disability Standard is a self-assessment tool, validated by EFD experts, for enterprises and public bodies to evaluate their performance relating to disability as it affects their entire business.

The Disability Standard measures three areas: employer commitment, organizational policy and practice, and the impact of policy and practice. Disability Standard participants carry out

²³ Roughly USD 4,660 (October, 2011).

an online assessment by rating their performance on a range of disability-related issues (including accessibility, outsourcing, recruitment, customer services), and providing evidence in support of the ratings. Disability experts assess the ratings and evidence of each participant, and draw up a 'diagnostic report' for each company. The results of all participants are pooled together to establish a benchmark score.

The report assesses the member's performance against previous Disability Standards rating (if available), their sector average and the overall benchmark average. On the basis of the report, individual employers can develop a disability action plan. While the individual employers' ratings are confidential, participants receive either a Platinum, Gold, Silver, Bronze or Participant certificate, depending on their rating. Tracking the Disability Standard participants' performance over time shows that employers' disability confidence rating has improved as they continue to benchmark themselves with the help of the Disability Standard.

The first Disability Standard in 2005 had some 80 employers participating while the subsequent Standards in 2007 and 2009 had over 100 participants. Consultation with members and disabled people after the 2009 Disability Standard found the Standard to be a useful and credible exercise enabling business improvement - but also a resource intensive exercise that needed to be more versatile to meet the specific needs of individual organizations. The Disability Standard has therefore been revised in 2011.

Improving ICT accessibility for jobseekers, employees and customers

EFD undertook, with the help of the consulting firm McKinsey & Company, the first research into the many obstacles created by inaccessible online recruitment systems. McKinsey founds that 1.3 million disabled people in the UK alone were unable to apply for jobs with the vast majority of companies only recruiting via online processes. As a result, EFD published the guidance on how to ensure that online recruitment does not systematically exclude disabled and other disadvantaged jobseekers, backed by the web site: www.barrierfree-recruitment.com.

In addition, the EFD-facilitated Business Taskforce on Accessible Technology (BTAT) has created its own **Accessible Technology Charter** to which companies can sign up. The signatories of the Charter commit to ensuring that the technology they purchase and use allows them to hire from, and provide products and services to the widest pool of people. The Charter also requires them to consult with disabled employees and integrate accessibility into procurement processes. The Charter has been complemented with a business tool called the **Accessibility Maturity Model** which enables companies to measure their ICT accessibility. The public launch of these initiatives is due in late 2011.

The senior ICT directors engaged in BTAT are also contributing to the creation of a procurement protocol that can be adopted by any company wanting to ensure that all new ICT purchases make accessibility and usability an important requirement when deciding on ICT related purchases.

Providing information and advice on disability confidence

EFD raises awareness and provides information and definitive guidance on best practice through its web site, networking events and publications. While information on some specific topics, such as legislative briefings, are available to members only, EFD shares a lot of disability and business-related information to the wider audience as well. It has a media centre with facts and figures and case studies to be used by journalists, which is considered important to promoting disability as a business issue.

EFD's first major publication, **Disability etiquette** was launched in 1991 and has sold well over 2 million copies. Since then, it has published a multitude of guides, often in collaboration with their members, among them **Guides on disability communication** geared at different audiences and **Line manager guides** on managing disability at work. It also issued a set of 18 **EFD Briefing papers** that provide employers with practical guidance and case studies on various issues related to the employment of people with disabilities. EFD recognizes that many large corporations want to provide their employees and customers with information which is specifically relevant to them. Therefore, all EFD publications can be tailored to feature particular corporate brands, and many guides are available either in hard copy, or as licensed versions for use on the corporation's intranets.

Although EFD has always offered a helpline service to its employer members in some form, a specific service, **Disability Directions**, was established in 2007. It is provided by a team that answers a range of disability-related member queries via phone, email, textphone²⁴ or post. The service is confidential and tailored to the needs of the particular client. Inquiries can be about any aspect of business and disability, for example, how to recruit someone with a mental health condition, how to design an accessible conference, or feedback on specific policies affecting disabled people.

Organizing training on disability issues

EFD offers training courses and workshops on different aspects of disability management and confidence to the membership; it also tailors training to meet the specific needs of a particular organization. Most courses are either free or discounted for EFD members, while non-members pay the full training fee. Most of the trainers and presenters are disabled themselves. In 2010, nearly 1,500 people attended EFD's training events.

The training methods vary. In addition to face-to-face training, EFD offers telephone tutorials, expert speakers to events and online training, or a combination. One example of online learning is **Disability Confident**, developed in 2004 in collaboration with Skill Boosters, a company specialized in inclusive learning. Disability Confident is an interactive learning resource which uses case scenarios and activities as a basis of learning about best practice, legal obligations and how to maximize the access and contribution of disabled people as employees and customers.

Another key online resource and publication, **Realising Potential**, sponsored by Intercontinental Hotels, was launched by EFD in 2006. It presents the new business case for disability, emphasizing the benefits which result when a company becomes disability competent, and contains facts and figures on disability as it affects business and the global economy, case studies, and advice on stakeholder engagement and on organizational change. The Realising Potential web site has had around 24,000 visits per year since its launch and is now being updated to provide a global resource to global business. The new site will be branded: **The New Business Case for realising potential**.

EFD also provides a policy and procedural audit services designed to help employers design barrier free and adaptive processes for recruitment, retention of people who become disabled, and doing business with people with disabilities.

²⁴ Textphones allow people who cannot hear or speak through an ordinary phone to type and read conversation during a call.

Achievements

Some EFD's major accomplishments during its 20 years of operation include:

- Engaging over 1,000 employers in improving their disability confidence;
- Mobilizing leading UK corporations, alongside the disability movement, to actively support both the abolition of the 1944 UK Quota and the introduction of modern anti-discrimination legislation, the Disability Discrimination Act, in 1995;
- Through the Disability Standard, setting the corporate standard for performance on disability as it affects a business and defining what best practice on disability actually means with regard to recruitment, employment, customer care and stakeholder engagement more widely;
- Disseminating over 8 million best practice guides throughout the UK and internationally to raise awareness of disability as a business priority and to make it easier to deliver business improvement;
- Increasing the capacity of hundreds of organizations and thousands of managers to employ and retain disabled employees and to do business with disabled customers and through its disability confidence training build relationships between individual business leaders and individual disabled people; and
- Creating a global advisory group of multinational partners now setting out to establish similar networks in other countries, starting with an emerging Employers' Forum on Disability in Spain.

Lessons learned

Employers should lead the organization. An organization for employers must be owned and led by employers who create a platform to engage with disabled people's organizations and other stakeholders. The platform must position employers as its key customers and then offer employer relevant services and toolkits.

Bring business leaders and disabled people together. An employers' network like EFD can only challenge deep-rooted misconceptions regarding disability by bringing business leaders together with disabled people, be they disabled opinion leaders, politicians, experts, advisors, entrepreneurs, advocates, graduates, colleagues, customers, shareholders or jobseekers. This face to face contact, reinforced by the message that employers should treat disabled people fairly and employ them on the basis of capability is crucial. The problem solving skills of both business and persons with disabilities can also generate creative solutions that may well bypass the traditional way things are done.

Establish a clear organizational role. EFD realized that it should establish a clear role that is separate from the role of the agencies that help disabled people to find work or who advocate on their behalf. EFD does not provide services to disabled people directly; it loses its capacity to influence its employer members if it is seen to be part of the traditional disability services field. EFD's job is to make it easier for employers to say 'Yes' when approached by disabled jobseekers for work opportunities and to create productive partnerships with services that promote economic and social inclusion.

Use the language that business understands and recognizes. It is important to watch the jargon and avoid terms and tone that reinforce the view that 'disability' is 'owned' by government, doctors or charities.

Value added services require resources. According to EFD experiences, it is key to have the resources to employ a small team to energize, communicate, and deliver a package of messages, services and innovation which provide added value to the business community.

URL: www.efd.org.uk

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US Business Leadership Network, the United States

Introduction

The US Business Leadership Network® (USBLN®) is a national disability organization representing over 5,000 employers in the country, both public and private and small and large employers. The organization aims to promote disability-inclusive workplaces, supply chains and marketplaces through an approach that recognizes the abilities and potential of people with disabilities. The USBLN® also offers an affiliation status to local or statewide Business Leadership Networks or other entities that meet the criteria. However, the membership in the USBLN® is not open to government agencies or non-profit organizations that solely provide services to individuals with disabilities.

The USBLN® had its origins in the Business Leadership Network (BLN) which was launched in 1994 under the now defunct President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities. The President's Committee worked through its state Governors' and local Mayors' committees on disability to form the BLN. In 2001, the mandate of the President's Committee ended and its resources were transferred to the new Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) at the U.S. Department of Labor. Following the final meeting of the BLN in 2002, the USBLN® was established as an independent organization.

The USBLN® mission is to promote the full inclusion of people with disabilities in the labour market; assist in career preparation for people with disabilities; improve customer experiences of people with disabilities; and promote the certification and growth of businesses owned by entrepreneurs with disabilities. It also supports its Affiliate Network through ongoing dialogue, cross-affiliate communications, technical assistance, and national branding of the Affiliate Network.

Structure and partners

The USBLN® is a non-profit organization that receives its funding through corporate membership and affiliate fees, and from partnerships, grants and contracts. The USBLN® has a staff of seven and is managed by a 15-member Board of Directors. The Board members are elected at the annual meeting and are representatives of private sector employers.

In 2008, the Board of Directors established a Corporate Advisory Board (CAB) to inform the Board about the business environment and to provide strategic direction to its activities. The Advisory Board consists of representatives of member corporations who are appointed for a two-year period. Both the Board of Directors and the CAB include persons with disabilities.

In addition, the Board established a Student Advisory Council (SAC) in 2010 to assist USBLN® Board members and staff by providing insight about employment barriers that students with disabilities face. The SAC also develops publications to assist businesses and students ease the transition from education into internships and employment. The SAC consists of five student members and plans to expand.

The USBLN®'s private employer members pay an annual membership fee of USD 5,000. Discounted annual membership rates are available for small businesses of less than 500 employees and range from USD 1,500 to 2,500. Membership benefits include national recognition as a leader in supporting disability inclusion in business, exposure to the entrepreneurial and professional community of individuals with disabilities and their

networks, subscription to a monthly newsletter, access to general and member-only resources through its web site and opportunities to reach specific local communities through the USBLN® affiliate network.

The local or state-level affiliate members pay an annual fee of USD 300. As Affiliates, they are authorized to use the USBLN logo and have access to USBLN® web site members-only section. They are also invited to participate in awards and recognition programmes. The USBLN® supports the Affiliate Network with technical assistance, communication and sharing promising practices.

A wide range of federal, business, non-profit, and academic organizations collaborate or partner with the USBLN®. Each collaboration or partnership is individually negotiated with the organization. For example, the alliance with U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP), formalized by a two-year agreement, promotes internships for college students with disabilities and distributes ODEP policy documents and products to the USBLN®'s distribution list. There is no funding involved in this partnership. On the other hand, the partnership with the HSC Foundation includes a grant from HSC to produce training materials for employers and the Affiliate organizations on mentoring, internships, and establishing Student Advisory Councils (SACs). The idea behind a student advisory council is to give students with disabilities an opportunity to build up their leadership skills and improve their future career opportunities while employers benefit from advice and insights of the students especially in terms of disability issues.

Key activities

Promoting the career development of students with disabilities

In December 2009, the USBLN® launched the **TOWER™ Initiative (Tools on Work and Employment Readiness)** to assist qualified students and youth with disabilities in gaining relevant work experience. The initiative supports disability inclusion by linking employers with qualified students and youth with disabilities through internships and mentoring. The USBLN® also offers consulting services for its corporate customers on hiring students with disabilities.

As part of the initiative, the USBLN®, in collaboration with one of its non-profit partners, developed toolkits on mentoring, internships and student advisory councils in 2010. The toolkits on internships and mentoring cover topics such as recruitment, hiring, and providing accommodations and developing interpersonal and applied skills. The toolkit on student advisory councils provides information and advice on establishing student advisory councils.

Electronic copies of the toolkits have been distributed to over 5,000 employers, organizations, Affiliates, and government agencies.

Increasing opportunities for entrepreneurs with disabilities

In 2010, the USBLN® launched a programme to enhance the contracting opportunities of businesses owned by individuals with disabilities. **The Disability Supplier Diversity Program (DSDP)** provides certification for Disability Owned Business Entrepreneurs (DOBE) and facilitates their access to contracts with corporations. The programme also benefits the USBLN®'s corporate members by providing them opportunities to expand their supplier diversity initiatives to include disability-owned companies as suppliers.

Business owners participating in the programme go through a certification process which verifies that the business is at least 51 per cent owned and operated by a person with a

disability. Once the business is certified, it is incorporated into the USBLN® database of DOBEs that the USBLN® corporate partners can use to source suppliers. The certification is renewed annually. The USBLN® organizes an annual USBLN® Conference that includes networking and training seminars for certified businesses. For example, during the September 2010 Conference, disabled business owners met with corporate diversity procurement representatives in supply chain workshops and a specific networking reception. Similar opportunities are planned for the 2011 Conference.

The DSDP is the first and only third party certifier of disability-owned business in the United States and the number of corporate partners that are taking part in the programme is increasing; it currently has 16 corporate partners and 23 certified businesses.

Organizing events and campaigns

An important aspect of the USBLN® work is organizing events where members and other stakeholders can network and share experiences. One such event is the **USBLN® Annual Conference** for corporate members, affiliates, and other stakeholders, organized since 1999. On average, 400 to 500 people attend the conference during which the USBLN® presents awards to recognize the champions in promoting disability inclusion in employment. At the 2010 **Annual Leadership Awards** banquet, recognition was presented in seven categories: Partner of the Year, Affiliate of the Year, Lead Employer of the Year, Volunteer of the Year, Supplier Diversity Corporation of the Year, Employee Resource Group (ERG) of the Year and Market Share Corporation of the Year.

The USBLN® also organizes separate meetings for the network's affiliate organizations and corporations for exchanging information, learning inclusion strategies from each other and for developing connections within the affiliate and corporate groups.

In 2009, the USBLN® launched the Campaign for Disability Employment (CDE), **What Can YOU Do?**, in collaboration with various other disability and business organizations and with funding from the U.S. Department of Labor. Aimed mainly at employers, the campaign highlights the contributions that people with disabilities can and do make in the labour market, and encourages developing workplace practices and environments that are inclusive of people with disabilities. The Campaign has its own web site that includes tools, such as on-line forums and video public service announcements that challenge assumptions about what people with disabilities can do in the labour market. The video clips as well the print materials have been widely circulated and used. For example, clips have been shown in cinemas thousands of times and companies have used them internally, raising awareness among their corporate leadership and employees. The printed advertisements have been featured in magazines, such as Harper's Bazaar and Time Magazine. The public service announcement, **I Can**, was selected as a finalist for the 2010 **PR Week Awards** in the category of 'Best Use of Audio/Video (Broadcast)'. As of April 2011, the earned media value for the Campaign's marketing materials was USD 17.5 million. The Campaign is funded through September 2012.

Achievements

Between 2004 and 2010, the USBLN®'s corporate leadership led the organization from an unincorporated, federal governmental entity to a fully established, independent business-operated, national organization. During this time, the USBLN® obtained its legal non-profit status, revised its by-laws, registered its name and trademarks, and developed affiliation criteria for state and local business-led disability networks.

Recent achievements of the USBLN® include:

- Expanding the Corporate Advisory Board from five to 17 corporations in twelve months;
- Launching the first and only pool of certified disability-owned businesses that have met rigorous criteria for certification; and
- Building alliances and collaborations with the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy, the Job Accommodation Network, the Campaign for Disability Employment, and the Diversity Consortium; and negotiating funded partnerships with Cornell University, Syracuse University, and the Institute for Community Inclusion.

Lessons learned

Corporate members should govern and direct the organization. To best serve its employer members, the governance and direction of the organization should remain completely in the hands of the corporate members. It is also important that the Board of Directors be comprised of high level representatives from corporations. The staff's role is to implement the directives of the business members.

Develop programmes that add value for corporate members. For example, an initiative such as the Disability Supplier Diversity Program of the USBLN® assists the corporate members to expand their diversity supplier programmes.

Use of modern information technology saves resources. In this age of the virtual office, emails, teleconferences and webinars enable regular communication and training, and scarce resources do not have to be spent on physical space. All USBLN® staff telecommute, and most staff and member communications are done via email and conference calls. USBLN® Corporate members and partners have conference rooms and meeting facilities where occasional in-person meetings can be held, such as annual meetings for Board of Directors and Corporate Advisory Board.

Live and in-person events that allow for face to face interaction are critical. Despite using modern information technology, face-to-face events, such as summits and conferences, are still essential. They not only allow for greater audience and presenter exchanges, but enable interactive informal relationship building and peer mentoring across and between corporations and disability organizations. These events need to have a balance of state-of-the-art training and networking opportunities.

URL: www.usbln.org

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- The USBLN web site, URL: www.usbln.org

Blue Ribbon Employer Council, Viet Nam

Introduction

The Blue Ribbon Employer Council (BREC) is an initiative of employers established in 2007 to promote the employment of Vietnamese with disabilities, an estimated 7 million people, 60 per cent of whom are of working age²⁵. The BREC provides a platform for employers to share experiences and examples of good practice related to employment and vocational training of people with disabilities. It aims to raise employers' awareness on disability, provide technical assistance to employers on disability-related matters, and assist them in recruiting employees with disabilities. It also supports disabled people's career development by providing training in job-seeking skills and organizing job fairs.

The BREC is a result of collaboration between two organizations: Vietnam Chamber of Commerce and Industry (VCCI) and Vietnam Assistance for the Handicapped (VNAH).

The Vietnam Chamber of Commerce and Industry (VCCI) is an employers' organization founded in 1995 to represent and promote the interests of the Vietnamese business community. The VCCI has over 10,000 members – both companies and business associations – that it serves through various activities. For example, it provides information, guidance and consultancy in matters related to the business environment, assists in settling disputes through negotiation and mediation, acts as a voice of business in socio-economic policy development, and facilitates dialogue among businesses and between businesses and governmental agencies.

The Vietnam Assistance for the Handicapped (VNAH) is a US-based NGO that has been operating in Viet Nam since 1992. With an overall aim to assist Vietnamese with disabilities to lead richer and fuller lives, the VNAH runs a range of programmes, including national-level activities related to socio-economic inclusion of disabled people and technical assistance to regional prosthetics clinics, wheelchair factories, and vocational training centres.

The VCCI and VNAH teamed up to create the BREC when VNAH secured funding from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) as part of the **Inclusion of Vietnamese with Disabilities** project. The partnership proved to be a good match: while VNAH had expertise of disability issues in Vietnam, VCCI had access to the business community and was involved in supporting disability and corporate social responsibility issues.

At the time of its launch in 2007, the BREC had 25 members, consisting of local and international companies and organizations, both large and small. In 2011, over 100 employers are members of the BREC, representing various industries such as health, hospitality, IT, manufacturing, and food and beverage.

²⁵ According to Vietnam Household Living Standards Survey 2009.

Structure and partners

Both the VCCI and VNAH are involved in managing and running the BREC initiative. The VCCI houses the BREC office in Hanoi and, with funding support from VNAH and USAID, has hired the BREC staff. Members of the VNAH staff are part of the BREC team as technical advisors.

The BREC is governed by a 7-person Board that consists of representatives from member companies and chaired by the General Director of VCCI's Bureau of Employers' Activities. However, the BREC does not have an official status within VCCI. At the moment, the BREC is not yet a formal association managed by membership fees. Rather its operation costs are covered by the VNAH-USAID project. However, there are plans to restructure the BREC into an independent organization that charges fees for its services.

Regarding partners, the BREC collaborates closely with the National Coordinating Council on Disability (NCCD), which monitors the implementation of disability-related legislation and coordinates governmental programmes on disability, and the American Chamber of Commerce (AMCHAM). The BREC also works with other organizations such as Employment Services Centers in Hanoi, Danang and Ho Chi Minh City by exchanging labour market information and information about the experiences of employers in hiring disabled employees.

Key activities

Starting its activities with a survey

As one of the first activities of the BREC, VNAH and VCCI carried out an employer needs assessment in 2007. The assessment surveyed 70 employers, including the BREC members, to find out about disability awareness among the business community and current practice related to employing disabled people. The findings highlighted that those employers who already had experience with disabled employees were positive about hiring disabled people. On the other hand, many employees who had no experience with disabled employees upheld negative, stereotypical attitudes about their capabilities.

Organizing job fairs to match disabled people to job opportunities

To facilitate the hiring of persons with disabilities, the BREC partners collaborated with the Department of Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs, to hold a two-day job fair in Ho Chi Minh City in November 2007. The event attracted about 1,600 people with disabilities and 40 employers, including the BREC members. In addition, five training centres and five employment centres joined the fair, along with representatives of media that widely publicized the event. The job fair proved to be an effective vehicle for introducing persons with disabilities to employers and, as a result of the fair, 225 jobseekers with disabilities were offered jobs.

Following the success of the fair in Ho Chi Minh City, a second job fair was organized in Hanoi in December 2007. Over 600 persons with disabilities, 40 employers, as well as training and employment centres and organizations working on disability issues participated in the event. By the end of the day, 185 disabled persons found jobs. The media coverage of the fair was extensive with three major TV channels and several newspapers reporting the event.

Since its launch, the BREC has partnered with various organizations to organize six job fairs in DaNang, Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City. Most of the fairs have exclusively targeted disabled jobseekers with considerable success. Together, the fairs and other BREC activities have

generated job opportunities for an estimated 1,500 people with disabilities. In addition, because training centres have taken part in the fairs, about 500 disabled persons have been linked to vocational training opportunities.

Developing a web site with an employment database

In 2008, the BREC launched its web site that was developed by a BREC member company FPT. In addition to introducing the BREC members and activities, the web site includes a specific section where employers post job advertisements and jobseekers upload their CVs. By the end of 2008, the web site contained advertisements for about 900 jobs and 80 CVs. The BREC estimates that more than 200 people have been hired through the web site.

The BREC upgrades the web site periodically to make it more user-friendly and accessible to people with disabilities.

Increasing disability awareness of employers

One of the BREC goals is to increase the awareness of employers regarding the benefits of hiring and retaining employees with disabilities. It has worked towards this goal by organizing awareness raising sessions for employers, both members and non-members. These programmes typically highlight the benefits of hiring persons with disabilities and include presentations by the BREC members who have successfully hired disabled employees.

In addition to specific programmes, the BREC has facilitated employer meetings and networking events throughout the country. The meetings provide the BREC members an opportunity to share experiences and exchange information related to employing disabled people and to learn about forthcoming BREC activities. The events also offer an opportunity to acknowledge the most recent BREC members and provide them with a certificate of membership.

Recognizing exemplary efforts in disability inclusion

In 2008, VCCI and VNAH organized a BREC Awards Event, **Blue Ribbon Awards**, for employers, organizations and individuals who have been exemplary in hiring and retaining disabled employees and promoting employment of disabled people. The BREC members were involved in award nominations and it was decided that the Blue Ribbon Awards would be given out in six categories, including categories for enterprises of different sizes, government organizations and employees with disabilities.

Two hundred and fifty (250) people took part in the Blue Ribbon Awards ceremony in 2008. Among the participants were high-level representatives from the government, persons with disabilities, the BREC members, the US embassy, and dozens of journalists and three TV stations. The judging panel, comprising of Hanoi Disabled Persons Organization, NCCD, VCCI, VNAH, and media representation, presented awards to employers, employees with disabilities, and outstanding individuals in the community. A second awards ceremony was held in 2011 with similar success.

Achievements

In its five years of operation, the BREC's accomplishments include:

- Placing the issue of disability in the agenda of its membership, which has grown from 25 to more than 100;
- Realizing the employment of about 1,500 persons with disabilities through job fairs and other activities;
- Linking about 500 persons with disabilities to vocational training opportunities;
- Providing inputs on national policies relating to disability and employment, such as the Labor Code and the National Law on Disability;
- Providing assistance to employment service centres in Da Nang, Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City to make their services more accessible and inclusive of disabled people, and providing them training on vocational rehabilitation techniques and tools (including on vocational evaluation, work adjustment, reasonable accommodation); and
- Raising the profile of disabled employees in Viet Nam by attracting media attention to its activities.

Lessons learned

Employers are open to hiring disabled employees – but they may need support first. When starting the BREC activities, the BREC partners quickly realized that many businesses wanted to hire people with disabilities but did not know how to begin. Therefore, the BREC started providing technical support by, for example, identifying qualified persons with disabilities and linking them with prospective employers.

Plan for sustainability. Although the BREC started as a project, to ensure its sustainability, the VCCI and VNAH are currently planning to restructure the BREC into an independent employer-run organization, with a fee structure.

URL: www.brec.vn

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