



Disability Inclusion in the Bangladesh Skills System

In Bangladesh, approximately 3.2 million youths have disabilities. These young people need help to access demand-driven education and training, thereby opening up pathways to decent employment. In 2008, Bangladesh was amongst the first countries to ratify the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. This makes it pledge bound to ensure the basic rights of persons with disabilities, including the right to decent employment. Since then, the Government of Bangladesh, International Labour Organization (through projects funded by Canada and the European Union), employers and workers organizations have taken major strides to achieve a shared vision of disability inclusion.

ILO's Approach to Disability Inclusion

ILO's approach to disability inclusion is to create systemic changes in the demand and supply of skilled persons with disabilities through activities and reforms within industry and training institutions. This approach is grounded in assuring the rights of persons with disabilities and recognizing the economic benefits of inclusion. Three key pillars of ILO's skills approach are policy reform, strengthening the skills system and training institutions' capacity for inclusive practices, and promoting partnerships and networks.

Promoting Inclusive Policies

The government of Bangladesh formulated a National Skills Development Policy (NSDP) in 2011 with ILO support which puts disability inclusion center stage in the skills reform process. NSDP recommendations include establishing an admission quota of 5 percent for persons with disabilities at all Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) institutions, providing stipends, hostel facilities and transport where necessary and designing reasonable accommodation and accessible training institutes.

This recommendation was subsequently approved by the Ministry of Education. ILO also supported the National Skills Development Council (NSDC) Secretariat to develop a National Strategy for Disability Inclusion after extensive consultation with all key stakeholders.

Promoting Inclusive Practices

In order to ensure effective implementation of the 5 percent quota for persons with disabilities in TVET institutes, ILO is supporting the Directorate of Technical Education (DTE) to make its skills system and TVET institutes disability inclusive. The DTE has asked all TVET institutes (49 Polytechnic institutes and 38 Technical Training Centers) to establish partnerships with Disabled Persons Organizations (DPOs) and NGOs working with persons with disabilities. This will help increase the demand for skills training among persons with disabilities and to facilitate their access with assistive devices and reasonable accommodation support.

The DTE further instructed TVET institutes to include considerations for persons with disabilities in their annual work plans, budgets, procurement plans and performance appraisals. An appraisal committee will soon be formed to recognize and reward best performing principals with benefits such as promotions and training opportunities. The DTE and ILO have identified five TVET institutions in different regions to develop as model centers in terms of accessibility. These models will be showcased to others in those regions.

As these inclusive measures are set up, monitoring and evaluation systems are being put in place. ILO extended support to DTE to track the employment of persons with disabilities passing from TVET

Employers are extremely satisfied with the performance of staff who have been recruited with disabilities.

training. The DTE has agreed to disaggregate the database by type of disability to help employers make reasonable accommodations for people with different needs.



To demonstrate how these inclusive measures can work, ILO has set up a number of pilots. ILO's EU-funded TVET Reform project piloted an initiative with the Centre for Rehabilitation of the Paralyzed to train persons with disabilities in sewing machine operation and linked them with employment in compliant readymade garment factories. ILO training partners BRAC, UCEP, TMSS and Muslim Aid have expanded the range of these pilots to include the hospitality, agro-food processing and furniture sectors. These pilots successfully trained persons with disabilities and linked them with jobs.

However, there have also been challenges. For example, persons with disabilities were found lacking motivation to access skills training due to low confidence and lack of support from families. Thus ILO is assisting the NSDC to develop a national social marketing strategy to raise demand for skills training among persons with disabilities.

Promoting Partnerships and Networks

In addition to encouraging TVET institutions to work with disability organizations, ILO is also supporting employers to establish partnerships with TVET institutes training persons with disabilities. ILO brought together six Industry Skills Councils - tourism, agro-food processing, furniture, ceramics, pharmaceuticals and IT - to sensitize their representatives on disability inclusion.

ILO's partner, the Bangladesh Employers Federation is now a member of the Global Business and Disability Network. BEF, with support from ILO, is establishing a Bangladesh Business and Disability Network to promote inclusion of persons with

disabilities in the workplace. The Network aims to highlight positive practices of employers who have already engaged persons with disabilities and provide technical support to those who wish to follow. The Network will be shaped by a committee made up of 8-10 champions from industries of various sectors.

To upscale this approach of disability inclusion, ILO plans to share its learning with 21 other ministries working in skills development. If inclusive attitudes are nurtured, hundreds of institutions will change, altering the landscape of access for students with disabilities in Bangladesh.



Polishing His Way to a Brighter Future

Persons with disabilities can find it hard to both employment and social acceptance in Bangladesh. Yet when they are given the chance, time after time they prove their worth in the workplace and value in society.

Disabled from an early age, Ashraful's family tried to enroll him in various schools but were unable to help him overcome the emotional and psychological barriers he faced. After some years, his parents gave up.

Luckily in 2015, Ashraful learned of Akhtar Furniture Academy's training program for persons with disabilities. To help meet their need for skilled labour, the company set up a training academy, with ILO support, that is compliant with National Technical Vocational Quality Framework standards.

The Academy provides accredited training in carpentry, lacquer polishing, wood working/ machine operation and upholstery work.

"Since my family couldn't make ends meet, I agreed to train there. I was especially motivated by the promise of a permanent job."

Ashraful completed his training in the Lacquer Polishing unit training in 2015 and is now working full time, receiving a monthly salary of 6,000 taka.



"I am now confident that I can do any job. I may not have legs but I have skills. Now I can help my family and I am respected by all!"

Akhtar Furniture Academy has already trained 40 men and women with disabilities. According to Academy trainers persons with disabilities tend to be more focused on work and very productive. Though there are some costs to make changes to accommodate disabled staff the benefits are greater, not only from a humanitarian perspective but also in business terms.

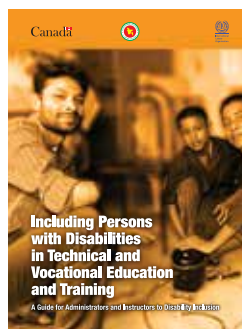
Disability Inclusion Resources

ILO's B-SEP project has produced two publications to help guide business owners as well as TVET administrators and instructors on disability inclusion.



The Competitive Advantage of Hiring Persons with Disabilities

This employer's guide to disability inclusion in the workplace outlines basic concepts of disability inclusion to help businesses create a more inclusive, accepting and productive workplace.



Including Persons with Disabilities in Technical and Vocational Education and Training

This practical guideline for TVET principals and instructors covers basic concepts of disability inclusion, planning for inclusion and accommodating students with disabilities.

To download copies, please visit www.ilo.org/dhaka or contact the ILO office.

ILO Bangladesh Skills for Employment and Productivity (B-SEP) Project, funded by Canada, is working with the Government of Bangladesh to create a skilled labour force by making skills accessible to all. For more information, please contact: bsep-skills-dhaka@ilo.org or visit www.ilo.org/dhaka