



International  
Labour  
Organization

## Policy brief

# Making apprenticeships and workplace learning inclusive of persons with disabilities

Persons with disabilities face many challenges to entering the labour market, including negative preconceptions about their work capacities and lower educational achievements due to exclusionary training practices. Apprenticeships and workplace learning can effectively respond to many of the challenges by proving to employers the professional potential of disabled persons and improving their vocational skills. Further, apprenticeships that are inclusive of persons with disabilities enable employers to take on new talent and to tap into a pool of qualified job candidates with disabilities.

Governments, skills development institutions, employers and other stakeholders – including workers' organizations and those of persons with disabilities – have a role in promoting a positive environment that allows persons with disabilities to be fully productive in the workplace.

Examples from around the world demonstrate how disability-inclusive apprenticeships and workplace learning can be put into practice. Some of those explored in this brief include:

- Since 2012 Ethiopia has been taking steps to include persons with disabilities in the national apprenticeship system.
- Brazil's service for industrial training is working to include disabled people in all training modalities, taking a systemic approach to reform of systems and attitudes.
- In South Africa, "learnerships", which combine classroom and workplace training are year-long programmes where disabled learners are provided mentoring, coaching and support.
- An NGO in Egypt has shown that an apprenticeship programme is an effective way of including persons with intellectual disabilities in the tourism sector.

While the first section of this brief gives an overview over the concept and role of disability-inclusive apprenticeships and workplace learning, the second section focuses on practical approaches to implement these schemes. The third section details policy recommendations for each of the principal stakeholders for creating a more enabling environment and is followed by further literature resources.

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## 1. Building a bridge between learners, skills and employment

Work-based learning, particularly apprenticeships, is an effective way of transferring technical skills and preparing especially young persons for the labour market. At the same time, employers gain a skilled and dedicated workforce with the profiles that are needed. Opening this option for persons with disabilities provides practical opportunities for learning and to demonstrate ability in the workplace itself.

Apprenticeship programmes that are inclusive of persons with disabilities can be an important bridge between this disadvantaged social group and productive employment, beneficial for trainees and employers alike. Structured learning at a workplace can take many forms and it can be a component of technical and vocational education programmes.

### Text box 1: Concepts around workplace learning and apprenticeships

Workplace learning can take many forms, including internship, traineeship, apprenticeship, or industry attachment. The important feature is that it is based in a workplace itself, and not a simulated work environment. This exposure to the labour market and its conditions ensure that learners develop exactly the skills that are needed.

Apprenticeships use a dual system of training, combining on-the-job training with school-based training. Often the workplace-based training makes up the major share of the training process, sometimes up to 70%. Apprenticeships can be found in traditional trades as well as in modern occupations demanding cutting-edge knowledge and skills. In many countries *informal* apprenticeships take place in informal enterprises, often without complementary schooling.

Around the world, countries are currently introducing and upgrading modernised “Quality Apprenticeships” which are regulated by the labour code and based on a written contract for a fixed duration. Apprentices are remunerated and covered by social protection. Upon successful completion, a recognised certification is awarded. Occupational safety and health and the youth code are observed and social partners are involved in governance of the schemes.

### Text box 2: Understanding disability and work

Persons with disabilities make up 15% of the world’s population. Disability includes a range of impairments – including physical, sensory, intellectual or psychosocial – which, in interaction with attitudinal and environmental barriers limits full participation in society.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities of 2006 provided a new momentum for the promotion of the right of persons with disabilities to work. Furthermore, the Sustainable Development Agenda 2030 commits the international community to achieve decent work for all persons with disabilities.

The socio-economic inclusion of persons with disabilities has multiple positive effects. Access to vocational training and employment offers a chance to become financially independent, to contribute to the growth of one’s family and community and to participate in society. It also reduces the need for social benefits and increases the tax basis. Employers also report how recruiting persons with disabilities has been beneficial to their business success because they create more diverse workforces.

### 1.1. Responding to the challenges faced by persons with disabilities

Persons with disabilities, especially youth with disabilities, face many barriers to entering work. Apprenticeships provide a bridge between training programmes and employers, and between learners and the workplace. Apprenticeships are valued as effective forms of providing vocational training to young people and can also be used for re-training adults. They play an important role in school-to-work transition. Countries with apprenticeship-based Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) systems have lower youth unemployment rates than those with predominantly school-based TVET.

**Table 1: How apprenticeships inclusive of disabled people bridge the gap between skills and employment**

| Challenges faced by persons with disabilities in skills development and employment   | How quality and inclusive apprenticeships can contribute to solutions   |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Prejudice:</b> Employers assume that disabled persons have a low productivity and need costly adaptations.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➔ Apprenticeships are opportunities for disabled people to <b>demonstrate their work potential</b> and the contributions they can make to a company.</li> </ul>          |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Lack of work experience</b> is a key obstacle for young people in finding employment, especially for people with disabilities.</li> </ul>                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➔ Apprenticeship is a way out of the “inexperience-gap”. Through company-based training, apprentices <b>accumulate valuable work experience</b>.</li> </ul>              |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Skills mismatch:</b> Training programmes are not always up-to-date on technological developments and responding to industry needs.</li> </ul>                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➔ During the in-company training, apprentices are trained in the immediate <b>skills needed in companies</b> and the technology and equipment used.</li> </ul>           |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Isolation from society:</b> In segregated training programmes persons with disability don’t practice the social skills needed for employment.</li> </ul>           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➔ During an apprenticeship, <b>social skills are practiced</b> on a daily basis, like work-place relations, customer care, communication and problem solving.</li> </ul> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Low schooling levels:</b> Particularly in developing countries, people with disabilities have reduced access and spend fewer years in education.</li> </ul>        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➔ Apprenticeship can <b>motivate compensatory schooling</b>: foundation skills (maths, literacy, etc.) are acquired more easily if used at the workplace.</li> </ul>     |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Inadequate learning methodologies:</b> Classroom-based skills development can often not be adjusted adequately to individual learning needs.</li> </ul>            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➔ Workplace-based learning is “<b>embedded</b>” and supervised on a one-on-one basis – it is thus easier to adapt to individual needs and learning pace.</li> </ul>      |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Exploitation:</b> In segregated schools and workshops, work practices are often exempted from national labour laws (salaries, benefits, etc.)</li> </ul>           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➔ Quality apprenticeships respect the <b>national labour and youth code</b>, including social benefits, remuneration and union affiliation.</li> </ul>                   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Transportation:</b> When training institutions are located far away, disabled people, particularly in rural areas, are faced with transport challenges.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➔ Apprenticeships can take place in <b>local companies</b>. Employers often cover transport or apprentices can use their remuneration to pay for transport.</li> </ul>   |

## 1.2. Opportunities for employers: a new source of skilled workers

Across the world, employers face the challenge of developing and retaining staff. At the same time, more and more employers are recognising the benefits of employing persons with disabilities. Workplaces that are inclusive of disabled persons give employers access to a wider pool of talent, leads to improvement in accessibility and workplaces for all staff, and creates a positive image of the organization among staff and clients. Making apprenticeships inclusive of persons with disabilities gives employers a new source of skilled workers and opens up pathways for recruitment of disabled people.

Apprenticeships provide an opportunity for both employer and apprentice to learn about each other. The

employer can get to know the professional potential and work performance of disabled apprentices at the same time as they acquire and improve the social and professional skills to thrive in the organization. Short-term workplace learning programmes, such as internships, are a potential first step in longer engagement for both the employer and intern.

Developing more inclusive apprenticeship programmes also involves stronger partnerships between employers and other actors. Partnerships with training institutions, and sometimes organizations working on disability issues, can provide the source of suitable trainees and apprentices. In many countries there are incentives and support for employers who take initiatives in this area.

### Text box 3: Opening apprenticeships for persons with disabilities: The case of Ethiopia

In 2012, Ethiopia started including young people with disabilities into their national apprenticeship system. Training occupations are available on the basis of the individual abilities of each apprentice. Restrictions apply only when a job requires a specific ability, e.g. when eyesight is indispensable. The apprenticeships have a duration between one and four years, with 70% company-based and 30% school-based training.

Each regional training agency and training college has a designated focal point for disability inclusion and needs to reserve a specific share of their budget for reasonable accommodation purposes. Colleges usually identify the training companies, check accessibility and seek a good match between the company and the apprentice. Specialized support staff can be hired to assist companies and TVET schools in accommodating disabled apprentices. They advise on adaptations of workshops, facilities and curricula or accompany apprentices during the initial training phase at the company. Free scholarships are available for especially disadvantaged youth, e.g. from rural areas.

Upon successful completion, graduates with and without disabilities receive the same certificates and supports going forward. The scheme is still too recent to provide data on long-term employment outcomes, but first evidence shows that a number of apprentices are hired by their training companies. In addition, the government encourages graduates to set up joint cooperatives, offering microfinance and business development services. Despite these efforts, it is reported that additional knowledge and strategies are needed to overcome negative attitudes and to improve accessibility.

## 2. Implementing apprenticeships inclusive of persons with disabilities

Implementing inclusive apprenticeships requires local practical and institutional arrangements, as well as policy measures at the highest level. Impact is more likely to be achieved through coordinated action across all levels. At the practical level, overall coordination through a specific local institution will be highly conducive to a smooth inclusion process.

### 2.1. Employers

#### Recruitment process of apprentices with disabilities:

Companies are key to effective apprenticeship schemes and ideally the major part of the training takes place there. Recruitment of apprentices for in-company training can differ considerably. In some cases, apprentices have to actively search and apply with a company. In others, TVET schools, public employment services or other institutions may identify the training companies. Outreach and recruitment opportunities can be facilitated through job fairs, social media campaigns and other initiatives that support direct contact between disabled job seekers and companies.

Companies will wish to have a word in selecting the apprentice. To encourage applications, employers can state in their vacancy announcements that applications by disabled candidates are welcome and disability-related needs will be accommodated. Vacancy announcements should be published in alternative formats, e.g. accessible digital format, large print or Braille. Pre-testing and selection criteria should focus on the skills, knowledge and abilities regarded as essential to the in-company training. Physical accessibility and accommodation at the interview location needs to be ensured and adjustments to the test methodology, the presence of a support person or sign language interpretation should be provided, if needed.

### Text box 4: “Nothing about us without us!”

Disabled People’s Organizations and related institutions can be strong partners with a great capacity to advise on policy and programme design and sensitisation and information campaigns. Representatives of disabled people have the right to participate in all initiatives that concern them. They may also be able to provide or recommend specialised experts and services when it comes to improving accessibility, the adaptation of work premises and training schools.

**Workplace matching:** A successful apprenticeship depends on a good matching between the job requirements and the candidate’s abilities, capacities and interests. Matching between apprentice and chosen occupation should be done on an individualised basis. Public employment services, Disabled People’s Organizations (DPOs) and specialised support services can help to find the right match. It might also be possible to adjust a job description by deleting tasks the person is unable to perform and replacing them with other tasks. Assessment requirements might need to be adjusted to the apprentice’s abilities and the respective learning objectives.

**Managing accessibility and accommodation:** Changes in the physical infrastructure at the workplace should

follow individual needs and should be based on consultations with the apprentice. Specialised services and DPOs may provide valuable expert advice on providing reasonable accommodation. Basic elements to consider are an easy entrance to and movement around the premises and adaptations to workstation, tools and equipment. Staff rules, security protocols, instructions and other documentation might need to be available in easy language or accessible electronic format. Evacuation procedures should include clear and easy-to-read signage and for people with hearing impairments, audio signals have to be complemented with light signals.

**Creating a positive work environment:** Learning can only be successful in a respectful environment. Companies should actively seek to establish a positive and helpful work-culture. Senior managers should signal clearly their commitment to disability inclusion and make information on disability etiquette available to all employees. Supervisors and co-workers have to be sensitised about disability management in the workplace and the specific needs of the trainees. They should also be able to address any questions they may have about training a disabled apprentice.

#### Text box 5: Understanding individual abilities and needs

People with disabilities, even with the same type of impairment, will have individual abilities and needs. For instance, one visually impaired person might be able to read large print, while another will require a screen-reader or braille. One wheelchair user might be able to walk short distances and another will need full accessibility. One person may enjoy customer exposure, while another might prefer a quiet work environment. It is therefore important to base changes in the work environment, workstations, tools and equipment on individual accommodation needs. The easiest way of doing so is by asking directly what kind of assistance and accommodation a person will require. Experience shows that often different, and possibly even less costly accommodation may be needed than initially assumed.

Multiple discrimination of disabled apprentices can occur with relation to race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation or a migrant status and should form part of the sensitisation measures. Particular attention should be given to avoiding gender-based discrimination. Female and male disabled trainees should be treated with equality. Women and girls with disabilities are particularly vulnerable to gender-based harassment and violence. Sensitisation and a zero-tolerance policy are crucial elements of a safe environment. As a positive example,

the National Training Institute of Costa Rica has taken provisions to address specific needs of women with disabilities, including the prevention of gender-based violence in all their premises and training programmes.

**Orientation for the apprentices:** Apprentices need initial orientation to the company and their workplace, including occupational safety and health procedures. Information should be conveyed in an accessible format. Companies can assign a colleague to act as a “work buddy” and facilitate the day-to-day practical life and social relations at the company. Any special support needed should be analysed and discussed during the orientation phase jointly with the apprentice.

**Training supervision and job induction:** For the success of apprenticeship, in-company supervision and job-coaching are crucial. In many countries, designated employees (often trained and certified) acts as supervisors. They track learning progress, stay in contact with the TVET school and provide assistance, if needed. In addition, experienced company workers carry out the actual training. Apprentices with disabilities may benefit from in-depth supervision and coaching, particularly at the beginning of the apprenticeship. If needed, additional assistance might be provided by external temporary job assistants. Such assistants may also provide follow-up and act as counsellors and mediators in case of problems.

#### Text box 6: Brazil - Applying a systemic view and adapting for individual needs

In Brazil, access to vocational training is a right for all. The Brazilian National Service for Industrial Training (SENAI) has a long-running experience of including persons with disabilities in all training modalities, including their apprenticeship programme. Apprentices receive a training contract, social protection coverage and a remuneration. Many companies see apprenticeship as a good way to fill the official quotas for disabled staff with workers they have trained themselves.

A specific unit, the Programme for Inclusive Actions (PSAI), supports training schools in their inclusion efforts. Each of SENAI's regional departments has focal points on disability who form a mutual support network. Focal points, teachers and trainers are regularly trained on disability inclusion by PSAI. SENAI also includes persons with disabilities among their teachers – many of them who have been trained by SENAI before.

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Apprentices with all types of disabilities are accepted and in principle all occupations are open for training. Each candidate is considered depending on individual abilities and limitations. Jointly with the candidate, PSAI assesses the possibilities and feasibility for mastering a given occupation and the necessary accommodations to be made. National legislation foresees that curricula, didactic materials, duration and exams can be adjusted and sign language interpreters can be hired. In addition, great efforts have been made to adapt existing and build new, fully accessible schools. Graduates with and without disabilities receive the same, nationally recognised, certificates. In case of limitations, the certificate states the tasks and competencies mastered.

Approaching inclusion with a systemic view has been crucial to the success: Facilities and equipment, curricula, examination methods and people's attitudes – all were addressed simultaneously. Capacity building was organised across all levels: with managers, supervisors, teachers, trainers, secretaries and even canteen staff. Clear objectives, indicators and constant monitoring were crucial to the process. It has become evident that inclusive training promotes mutual respect and leads to greater professional success of graduates with disabilities.

Further information: <http://www.portaldaindustria.com.br/senai/en>

## 2.2. Classroom-based training at technical and vocational colleges

Complementary training in the classroom should take place at regular TVET colleges and give access to equal certification. Inclusion into regular TVET colleges and alongside peers without disabilities leads to a better participation in all aspects of work and life. In contrast, training in specialised institutions leads to segregation and perpetuates isolation. Countries that have ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities have de jure agreed to inclusive education as a right and many of them have started making inclusive TVET a reality.

**Making regular TVET colleges more inclusive:** Accessibility and accommodation is as much an issue for the training-company as it is for the TVET college. In a situation of scarce resources, TVET colleges can adopt a gradual approach, starting with easy-to-modify structures and work stations and apply *universal design* principles for renovations and new constructions. Diverting a share of the annual budget to an accessibility

fund will generate reserves to finance more costly or ad-hoc interventions. The biggest barriers, however, are to be found in people's mind-sets and preconceptions. Teachers and trainers, college principals and co-students need to become disability-aware and create a respectful and supportive learning culture.

**Adaptation of curricula:** Accommodating individual needs demands a certain degree of flexibility in the curricula and alternative training and testing methodologies. In strongly centralised TVET systems it may be difficult and time-consuming to change the curricula. It is therefore recommended to give national curricula the character of a *framework curriculum*, while leaving TVET colleges the autonomy on how to shape the learning process in practice and allow for personalised learning plans. Teachers and trainers will need sensitisation and training to be able to adapt the training. It is also crucial to keep curricula up-dated with the needs of the labour market. This requires frequent industry contacts, company surveys and access to the results of national skills needs anticipation.

**Compensatory schooling:** In developing countries, disabled people often have lower schooling rates because of inaccessible schools or a stigmatising social environment. Compensatory schooling offers opportunities for disabled students to catch-up, compensate educational gaps and reach the educational levels needed for TVET training.

**Strengthening social skills and self-confidence:** A main success factor for inclusive apprenticeship is an adequate preparation for the world of work. Disabled young people may have low self-esteem and limited opportunities for socialising outside their families. Psychological support and training on workplace relations, work hierarchies and customer care should precede company placement.

**Monitoring and Evaluation:** Monitoring and Evaluation are essential steps for quality control and measuring impact. Part of the monitoring process should be a frequent contact with the training-company, to keep each other informed about the learning progress, e.g. training booklets to be signed by the company supervisor and college teachers to increase complementarity between learning at the two places. Evaluations and tracer studies can provide information on the employment situation of graduates, the impact of the apprenticeship and any improvements needed.

### Text box 7: South Africa - Mentoring and coaching in “learnerships”

South Africa implements a structured TVET programme called “learnership”, based on complementary theoretical and practical training at TVET schools and companies. It provides professional, technical skills and life skills, such as communication and teamwork. It is open to all young South Africans, including those with disabilities.

Learnerships are based on a contract between the learner, the employer and an accredited training provider, which stipulates the training conditions and defines the rights of all involved parties for the duration of the programme. The training lasts about 12 months divided equally between in-company and classroom training. Learners receive a stipend and are awarded a nationally recognised qualification and certificate.

Disabled learners receive intensive mentoring, coaching and support during their training. Proper planning is required for the success of this process. Companies need to ensure adequate support structures, such as in-company mentors and job-coaches who can assist learners with the mastery of the technical and practical skills.

One of the drawbacks is that companies still employ a very low percentage of their learners. In addition, the scheme implies a large amount of paperwork if employers want to apply for financial government incentives.

### Text box 8: Egypt - Workplace learning for intellectually disabled persons

The Egyptian NGO Ebtessema, with support of the ILO office in Cairo, offers workplace learning for intellectually disabled people at tourist hotels by the Red Sea. The programme consists of 50% theory and 50% practice and starts with a three-months “incubator-training” in a simulated work environment.

Trainees are given career guidance and trained in practical and social skills, followed by a one-month theoretical and technical training in alternation between company and school. This is followed by three months of practical training at a hotel. Ebtessema staff accompanies the trainees during the first weeks of workplace learning. Later, a trained hotel staff acts as a work-buddy to support them and help them integrate.

Ebtessema places high value on creating a positive attitude within the companies. It provides orientation session for managers, HR and other staff to ensure that employees communicate effectively and clearly with the trainees. Ebtessema staff remains available to offer follow-up support in case it is needed.

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.../... Trainees do not receive a formal certificate, but are generally hired by the hotels where they were trained. Through the initiative, employers realise that they can fulfil the 5% employment quota for disabled persons with motivated workers who contribute to the hotels’ productivity.

One of the most important aspects is the strengthening of social skills. In Egypt, people with intellectual disabilities are often kept at home and have little social interaction other than with their families. The preparatory training helps to build up self-esteem and is important for becoming independent workers.

*“I’ve been able to achieve my dream of working in a good place where I am appreciated and earning a good salary. I now have many goals to look forward to”.* (Hassan, hotel worker trained by Ebtessema)

## 2.3. Support institutions

Institutions specialised on workplace inclusion, such as public employment services, career guidance services and DPOs, can play a crucial role in providing coordination and assistance by:

- ➔ Advocating with companies on the benefits of training persons with disabilities.
- ➔ Identification of companies that are willing or have a potential to train disabled apprentices.
- ➔ Providing career-guidance to young persons with disabilities.
- ➔ Helping disabled youth to find and apply at a training company.
- ➔ Facilitate the recruitment process at the company, if needed assist with communication.
- ➔ Advising companies and TVET schools on accessibility, reasonable accommodation and managing disability.
- ➔ Guiding TVET colleges on adapting curricula, didactics and examinations.
- ➔ Offering job-coach services at the beginning of the company-based training.
- ➔ Acting as a help desk and mediator in case of grievances, including prevention of discrimination, exploitation and harassment.
- ➔ Providing follow-up and acting as a point of reference during and after the training period.
- ➔ Supporting the transition into the labour market, including access to business development services and microfinance opportunities.
- ➔ Conducting evaluations and tracer studies.

### Text box 9: Indonesia – Challenge of mainstreaming a good practice

The Vocational Rehabilitation Centre for People with Physical Disabilities (BBRVBD) in Cibinong, West Java offers training programmes which include workplace learning in selected companies. Training is available in electronics, the metal industry, the garment sector, graphic design, informatics and the automotive sector.

The training begins with a school-based preparatory phase on technical skills, interpersonal skills, work ethics and self-confidence. After an induction to the workplace, trainees receive several months of practical training to become proficient in a specific job role within the company. Workplace learning takes about 20% of the programmes and some companies pay a minimum allowance. BBRVBD provides transport and supports the companies in adapting curricula and workstations. By the end of the training, graduates receive a certificate and have good employment prospects within their training-companies. Others opt for starting their own businesses.

The demand for training is high, but it is not easy to satisfy it, particular at the national level. Around 85 - 100 of trainees live at the Centre's dorm-facilities and an additional 50-100 trainees come from nearby areas. The premises offer good accessibility and follow *universal design* principles. However, curricula could benefit from a regular up-dating and from collaboration with the companies, to better reflect the needs of the labour market.

BBRVBD is the only training centres of this kind in Indonesia. It caters exclusively for trainees with physical disabilities from all over the country and can hardly satisfy the high demand. Although it could serve as a role model for mainstreaming disability in regular TVET colleges, a major constraint are conflicting responsibilities: While the Centre is managed by the Ministry of Social Affairs, regular TVET centres fall under the responsibility of the Ministry of Manpower. This makes institutional collaboration difficult.

## 3. Policy Recommendations

Inclusive apprenticeship needs an enabling environment, policies and laws that put the United Nations Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities principles into practice and set the basis for mainstreaming disability in the provision of regular TVET. Effective and pertinent policies can only result from the participation of workers' and employers' organizations and representative DPOs. National training authorities, TVET colleges and public employment services should also be part of

such a process. Meaningful and well-functioning programmes need to include the concerns and experiences of everyone involved.

### 3.1. Governments

Governments play an essential role in creating a supportive legislative and social policy framework and disability equality should be mainstreamed as a cross-cutting issue among all Ministries and governmental institutions. In terms of apprenticeships, government agencies have a role in coordination, creating an enabling policy environment and providing services and support.

- Coordination – among training institutions, employers, DPOs and services and other stakeholders. As well as promoting practical linkages among these institutions, governments can also promote a shared understanding of how to work on disability issues, and monitor how successful they are.
- Enabling policy environment – including disability issues in technical and vocational trainings, ensuring that frameworks for quality apprenticeships have conditions for inclusion of persons with disabilities.
- Services and support – training institutions and employers will need to make adaptations to execute these changes. Government agencies and policies can provide guidelines, regulation, incentives, and technical support.

### 3.2. Skills development institutions

Skills development institutions should be incorporating persons with disabilities throughout all trainings, and in a way integrated with other trainees. The process of developing an inclusive skills development system can be a lengthy one, as it involves reform through policies, budgets, infrastructure, mind-sets, as well as the training delivery itself. Alongside this process, there are practical measures to be taken in regards to mainstreaming:

- Outreach – to persons with disabilities to encourage and facilitate entry into workplace-learning.
- Adaptations – adjusting classroom and workplace trainings to make sure that persons with disabilities can participate productively.
- Engaging employers – skills development institutes, especially those with pre-existing relationships with employers, can play an important role in encouraging and demonstrating employers to take on trainees with disabilities.

- Establishing partnerships – together with disability organizations and other partners, skills development institutes can acquire the expertise and resources needed to make these changes.

### 3.3. Employers and employers' organizations

Employers and employers' organizations have the chance to take the lead on inclusion of persons with disabilities in apprenticeships. Other stakeholders will need the assurance that employers are willing to engage persons with disabilities in workplace learning.

- Advocacy and experience sharing – Employers and employers' organizations can disseminate best practices and the possibilities around hiring persons with disabilities. In many countries, networks of businesses and disability are playing this role.
- Taking on apprentices with disabilities – Initiating the process in an adaptive way will enable employers and apprentices to learn from each other and develop more sustained inclusion.
- Making disability-inclusive workplaces – Employers may want to make a high-level commitment to disability inclusion, develop a disability management strategy and take other measures to improve accessibility and inclusion in their workplaces.

### 3.4 Disability organizations and those representing disabled people

DPOs should be consulted from the beginning by the government, and pro-actively engage in dialogue at all levels. Apart from their role in advocacy and awareness-raising, they can provide valuable advisory services and capacity building with multiple stakeholders. DPOs should familiarise themselves with the concepts and challenges of TVET and apprenticeship and analyse good practice, lessons learnt and favourable “business-cases” to effectively influence and push forward inclusive policies. DPOs also have a role in supporting the practical implementation of inclusive apprenticeship programmes, at each stage from outreach to classroom and workplace learning.

### 3.5. Workers' organizations

Trade unions can advocate for disability inclusion among their members and develop a union-wide strategy for the inclusion of disabled workers in skills development. Workers' organizations should actively represent and protect the labour rights of apprentices with disabilities at the policy and sectoral level, within company work

councils and safety committees. They are in a unique position for promoting positive, inclusive and respectful attitudes among co-workers, informing disabled apprentices about their rights and guiding and supporting them in case of grievances.

#### Text box 10: United Arab Emirates - From short-term to long-term learning

The “Inclusive Internship Program” (IIP) is a pioneering, privately funded programme by the SEDRA Foundation for Inclusion in the United Arab Emirates, Abu Dhabi. It is open to young adults with all types of disabilities and for training in all occupations. Training focuses on sectors with good job prospects, especially in services and hospitality, where it facilitates internships and apprenticeships in three types of programmes:

- **Short-term IIP internships** for a three to five days: These programmes serve as an introduction for persons with disabilities to the workplace and as an “awareness raiser” for companies.
- **Pilot IIP six-weeks internships:** Companies can make first experiences with disability-inclusion and disabled interns and their families can learn to handle work commitments. Pilot IIPs serve as a trial for a long-term IIP.
- **Long-term IIP dual apprenticeships** for six to 18 months: These programmes take place in diverse occupations and train the apprentices for supported or independent wage employment.

All programmes have a strong focus on workplace-learning and the company- to-classroom ratio is 4:1. They build on an active involvement of the company-supervisors and the family members of the trainees. Classroom training includes units on self-development, reflection and intensive work preparation, including travel, workplace etiquette and work methods. Currently, SEDRA adapts training modules to gain accredited, officially recognised certificates.

SEDRA acts as an operational manager between companies and trainees and their families. This triangulation facilitates the support for all stakeholders. Families can receive preparatory training and ongoing support on organisational matters and common stressors. Likewise, a job coach from SEDRA prepares the company staff, supervisors and co-workers on topics such as shop-floor management, support tools and communication strategies.

## 4. Further references

- Managing Disability in the Workplace. An ILO Code of practice, ILO 2002 [http://www.ilo.org/public/libdoc/ilo/2002/102B09\\_340\\_engl.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/public/libdoc/ilo/2002/102B09_340_engl.pdf)
- Promoting diversity and inclusion through workplace adjustments: A practical guide, ILO 2016 [http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed\\_norm/---declaration/documents/publication/wcms\\_536630.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---declaration/documents/publication/wcms_536630.pdf)
- Inclusion of People with Disabilities in Vocational Training: A practical Guide, ILO 2013 [http://www.ilo.org/public/libdoc/ilo/2013/113B09\\_301\\_engl.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/public/libdoc/ilo/2013/113B09_301_engl.pdf)
- Disability Inclusion Toolkit and Resource Manual, ILO 2011 [http://www.ilo.org/skills/pubs/WCMS\\_169363/lang-en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/skills/pubs/WCMS_169363/lang-en/index.htm)
- ILO Toolkit on Quality Apprenticeships, ILO, (forthcoming)
- UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities <http://www.un.org/disabilities/convention/conventionfull.shtml>
- Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (Disabled Persons) Convention No. 159, ILO 1983 <http://www.ilo.org/ilolex/cgi-lex/convde.pl?C159>
- Human Resources Development Recommendation No. 195, ILO 2004, <http://www.ilo.org/ilolex/cgi-lex/convde.pl?R195>
- Upgrading informal apprenticeship: [http://www.ilo.org/skills/projects/WCMS\\_158771/lang--en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/skills/projects/WCMS_158771/lang--en/index.htm)
- ILO disability webpage: <http://www.ilo.org/disability>



For more information on links between education and training and productive and decent work, visit the **Global Public–Private Knowledge Sharing Platform on Skills for Employment**, initiated by the ILO and benefiting from the support and collaboration of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the World Bank.

<http://www.skillsforemployment.org/KSP/en/index.htm>

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