



Developing Entrepreneurship among Women with Disabilities (DEWD)

The International Labour Organization (ILO) has been involved in implementing income generation projects and other initiatives for women with disabilities for over 20 years. The most recent initiative is the ILO project, “Developing Entrepreneurship among Women with Disabilities” (DEWD), funded by the Government of Ireland. This project has developed a strategy to support women with disabilities and women with disabled dependents in improving their standard of living through training in micro-enterprise skills, vocational skills training as well as access to credit and business development services. A key element of the strategy is the involvement of the disabled persons’ organizations and women with disabilities in the project management and in carrying out project activities.

Project Strategy

The DEWD project strategy was tested in Ethiopia 2001–2004. The strategy represents an innovative and flexible approach to technical cooperation by the ILO in the field of disability. The approach is based on partnerships with local non-governmental organizations of persons with disabilities (DPOs) and designed and implemented in close consultation with DPOs, training providers, micro-finance institutions, and national and local government authorities.

The core elements of the strategy are:

- Strengthening existing enterprises of women with disabilities and encouraging potential entrepreneurs to start up businesses.
- Building capacity of national DPOs to:
 - Facilitate access of potential women entrepreneurs with disabilities to business training, vocational skills training and credit.
 - Take increasing responsibility for project implementation, in cooperation with local and national government, under contract to the ILO.
 - Mobilize and diversify their funding sources (e.g. to enable them to sustain project activities in the longer term).

- Ensuring effective involvement of women with disabilities in managing project activities through the creation of a Project Management Committee mainly composed of women representatives from participating DPOs.
- Making use of existing in-country sources of technical expertise, skills training, and micro-finance.
- Seeking ways of “scaling up” the project to reach more women with disabilities.
- Documenting the impact of project activities through case studies, surveys and photo and video records.

In Phase 2 (2005-2007), an innovation has been introduced in this strategy. Building on the positive experience in Phase 1 where women with disabilities took part in some training courses provided for women entrepreneurs as part of another Ireland-funded project “Promoting Women’s Entrepreneurship Development and Gender Equality” (WEDGE), the focus in Phase 2 of DEWD is to support the participation of women with disabilities in as many WEDGE training activities and events as possible. DPOs are involved in providing any support services which are required to make this inclusion work in practice.

Achievements – Phase 1

- Two DPOs - the **Ethiopian Federation of Persons with Disabilities** (EFPD) and the **Tigray Disabled Veterans Association** (TDVA) in Addis Ababa and Tigray Region, Ethiopia – have greater capacity to manage and implement enterprise development activities:
 - Some 443 women with disabilities – including mothers of intellectually-disabled children and wives of disabled war veterans – have received training:
 - 396 received training in basic business skills, and
 - 47 in “Improve Your Business” skills.
 - Market surveys were conducted, to identify new production and service opportunities that women entrepreneurs with disabilities might incorporate into their business plans.
- Women with disabilities have received training to participate in the Project Management Committee and to implement project activities – including baseline data collection, conducting basic business skills courses and providing business development advice.
- In preparation for trade fairs organized for women entrepreneurs by the WEDGE project, 20 disabled women entrepreneurs benefited from training in product design, marketing and exhibition skills.

- 55 disabled women availed of vocational skills training by attending courses at local private training centres or through apprenticeships with local women already engaged in a business activity.
- Over 200 women with disabilities and women with disabled dependents received loans to implement their business plans through the Gasha Micro Finance Institution (MFI) in Addis Ababa and the Start-Up Capital Loan Scheme in Tigray Region.

Activities – Phase 2

During the second phase (2005-2007), DEWD will build upon the strategy developed and tested in the first phase by:

- Extending coverage to include Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia, as well as other regions in Ethiopia.
- Continuing to develop the capacity of DPOs to facilitate the inclusion of women with disabilities in mainstream entrepreneurship development activities by:
 - Liaising with government ministries, employers' organizations, trade unions, women entrepreneur associations, Business Development Service providers, training providers offering business training and/or vocational skills, micro-finance institutions and other entrepreneurship and skills development partners.
 - Fostering the development of relevant support mechanisms for women with disabilities to participate in mainstream training and other events.
 - Ensuring the provision of any supports required by women with disabilities to enable them to participate in mainstream training and other events. Examples include the arrangement of sign language interpreters for deaf participants, materials in Braille for blind participants, and accessible venues to facilitate participants using wheelchairs.
- Working with micro-finance institutions to facilitate access of women entrepreneurs with disabilities to appropriate savings and credit products and services.
- Collaborating with DPOs to sensitize government ministries, organizations of employers, trade unions, women entrepreneur associations, micro-finance institutions, the media and other relevant stakeholders to disability concerns.
- Working with the public and private media and other relevant stakeholders to develop strategies to effectively convey positive messages about persons with disabilities and combat negative attitudes and stereotypes through the communications media.



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Additional information can be found on:

www.ilo.org/employment/disability

