

THE ILO-IRISH AID PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMME THROUGH THE PROPEL PROJECT IS PROMOTING EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES. THE PROJECT OPERATES IN ETHIOPIA, CHINA, INDONESIA, VIET NAM AND ZAMBIA. THE STORY PRESENTED IN THIS BROCHURE ILLUSTRATES ONE OF THE INNOVATIVE APPROACHES USED BY THE PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMME TO OPEN PATHWAYS TO DECENT WORK AND OPPORTUNITIES THAT IS BREAKING THE POVERTY CYCLE AFFECTING MILLIONS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES OF WORKING AGE.



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PROPEL works to build capacity of the media to effectively report on disability. Informed media coverage helps disability advocates reach policymakers, businesses, workers, and others with key messages about the rights of disabled persons, and the positive contributions they can make to the workplace and communities.

MEDIA TRAINING IS MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Since 2012, PROPEL has worked to strengthen the capacity of journalists, disability advocates, and representatives of government broadcasting authorities in China, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Viet Nam and Zambia to produce fair and accurate reporting on disabilities and promote rights and opportunities for disabled persons.

Working within the training model established, which includes, among other components, an overview of international standards on disability, the role of the ILO in promoting skills and work for disabled persons, and new angles for reporting stories on the issue, PROPEL provides practical guidance to the media on how to effectively report on disability, and stimulates a climate of inclusion on non-discrimination and equal opportunity.

In delivering the training, PROPEL undertakes qualitative research in each target country to gauge journalists' views and perceptions on disability, assess the level of importance given by the media to the issue, and identify knowledge and information gaps. Research is important for two reasons: first, it provides feedback to participants on how they view the issue, including whether they think the media are doing a good job of covering the topic and second, it helps to more effectively target training to the needs of participants.

To better understand how the media in selected project countries have covered disability, including how the issue was reported and frequency of coverage, PROPEL commissioned longitudinal studies spanning a ten-year period to help map out strategies to improve the quality and quantity of reporting to support inclusive development. General trends in reporting showed that while several countries experienced an upward shift in coverage of disability issues and use of appropriate language, the portrayal of disabled persons and associated stories are often negative and fall into stereotypical categories. (Alemu, 2012; Hayarti, 2014; Institute of Journalism and Communication Studies/One Plus One Beijing, 2013; Mweene-Chanda, 2013; Tran and Tran, 2013).

Over the past three years, nearly 300 journalists have benefitted from training events and other activities designed to build capacity to report on disability. Equipped with the right skills and knowledge, representatives of the media can help shape policies and public opinion. They can link the evidence on rights and access to opportunities for people with disabilities and factors that influence their participation in employment and training, to economic empowerment and improved living standards of disabled persons.

IN ETHIOPIA: A RADIO JOURNALIST APPLIES NEW APPROACHES TO COVERING DISABILITY

Gedle is a young journalist with visual impairment who runs a one-hour weekly radio programme on FM 98.1 in Addis Ababa. He established the programme “Dimtsachin” (Our Voice) with the sole purpose of changing listeners’ attitudes on disability and discusses various issues related to inclusive development through a participatory and interactive approach.

Gedle was among the 27 participants in a two-day media capacity building training workshop on how to report on disability organized by PROPEL/Ethiopia in October 2012. “I have never had a media training of such quality and

content, though I had attended about six training workshops on the same theme in the past. The PROPEL training changed my knowledge and approach to disability reporting in a drastic way.”

“My radio programme is one of the most listened to, according to a listeners’ survey conducted through Radio Fana in 2014.” Encouraged by his achievement in his Radio Fana Programme, Gedle started a weekly radio and TV programme called “Senay”, a 30 minute broadcast, available to listeners and viewers in the Southern Region of Ethiopia.



Gedle takes calls from listeners during his weekly programme “Dimtsachin”.

BUILDING A CADRE OF MEDIA TRAINERS: THE INDONESIA EXAMPLE

Since 2013, PROPEL has been working to strengthen the media’s capacity to effectively report on disability issues. In carrying out this activity, the project partnered with DIFFA magazine, a disabled persons’ organization that seeks to promote accurate, positive portrayals of disabled persons through the media to help build a more inclusive Indonesian society. PROPEL is, perhaps, the only project of its kind in Indonesia that works together with the media

in shaping public perception on persons with disabilities. Another key ally in the joint venture was the Alliance of Independent Journalists (AIJ/ Aliansi Jurnalis Independen), the country’s first independent journalists association.

During the first year of the project’s collaboration with DIFFA and AIJ, Jakarta-based workshops were held focusing on challenges to reporting on disability, advice on how to interview disabled women and men, and building relationships

with disability advocates. As a result of the training, journalists have gained a better understanding of the importance of including a disability perspective in their reporting and the role they play in advocating for the rights of disabled persons. From changes in Garuda Airline’s policy previously requiring passengers with wheelchairs to sign a liability release form, to a workshop organized by a journalist from National Geographic Indonesia on how to take appropriate pictures of disabled persons, training supported by PROPEL/Indonesia has had a real and positive impact on promoting a more inclusive society and positive portrayals of people with disabilities.

A year later, in 2014 PROPEL adopted a long-term approach for improving the Indonesia media’s capacity to report on disability by concentrating its efforts on specialized training aimed at boosting the professional skills of a small cadre of journalists from DIFFA, who would subsequently train other media representatives in selected provinces. Core elements of the training aimed to, among others:

- coach DIFFA journalists on how to deliver effective training workshops on disability in line with international standards;
- supply a “Disability Toolkit for Trainers” which includes modules on developing story angles, structures, character-driver stories, stigma and discrimination;
- offer tips on making workshops more

interactive, participatory to engage participants;

- provide journalists with additional information and resources on international standards and instruments on the rights of persons with disabilities; and
- arrange site visits to enterprises that successfully employ disabled workers where journalists were coached on developing story angles on disability or disability inclusion.

Since the PROPEL training, DIFFA has provided training to other journalists in Surabaya (EastJava) and Nusa Tenggara Timur Province. Altogether, more than 40 representatives of print, broadcast and online media outlets participated in the activities organized. AIJ continues to support the outreach efforts by participating in the selection of media representatives to attend the training.

To further assist the country’s journalists, A Pocket Guide to Reporting on Disability in Indonesia, a resource tool for information on global statistics on disability, appropriate terminology, tips on reporting, and references to international and national standards on disability, has been produced. The guide, available in Bahasa Indonesia, was developed in close consultation with DIFFA and the support of the Indonesian Press Council (DEWNAPERS) over a one-year period. It has been widely publicized and promoted as a reference tool for Indonesian journalists.

In their own words...

PROPEL efforts to engage with media and to build their capacity to provide fair and balanced representation of disabled persons has made a difference. Here’s what past participants in media training events have to say...

Indonesia

“I will apply the new writing techniques and select appropriate words (referring to disability)... The concept of “disability” itself is still a new word for our society. We need to help individuals to have a better understanding. I could explain disability during my air time.”

Ethiopia

“I feel a difference in the way I approach issues. Specially, choosing angles that are interesting, short, and specific helped my stories to become stronger. The training generally deepened my knowledge and helped refine my journalistic skills.”

IN CHINA: PROPEL PARTNERS WITH UNESCO TO BUILD MEDIA CAPACITY TO COVER DISABILITY

In China, PROPEL has worked to raise awareness on disability among the media and strengthen its role in promoting human rights awareness among the public, with a particular emphasis on the right to decent work of persons with disabilities. Since 2013, it has partnered with the Institute of Journalism and Communication Studies of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and One Plus One, a media organization operated by disabled persons, to study trends in reporting on disability, with support provided by the ILO Beijing Office and Handicap International China.

The findings of the study, highlighting problems associated with covering disability and recommendations, were presented at a media training in December 2013 and a provincial Disabled Persons Organizations Media Speakers event in September 2014. It is also expected to be shared in November 2015 in Guangzhou as part of an activity jointly organized under the auspices of the United Nations Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Among the aims of the November gathering will be to introduce some 30 local journalists and 60 government officials to international experiences in reporting on disability.

A practical tool: Pocket Guide to Reporting on Disability

The Pocket Guide to Reporting on Disability aims to enhance understanding and awareness of disability issues among media professionals. Better informed reporting will help raise public awareness on disability rights; portray the issues more accurately and with greater depth; foster respect for disabled persons as productive citizens; and through the process promote more inclusive and tolerant societies. Each pocket guide is tailored to the individual country, highlights key national policies and initiatives on disability and offers information resources. Pocket guides have been produced for Ethiopia, Zambia and Indonesia.

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