

Moving Forward

Toward Decent Work for People with Disabilities

Examples of Good Practices in Vocational Training
and Employment from Asia and the Pacific

Debra A. Perry, Editor

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First published 2003

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ILO / Perry, Debra A.

Moving Forward: Toward decent work for people with disabilities – Examples of good practices in vocational training and employment from Asia and the Pacific

Bangkok, International Labour Office, 2003

ISBN 92-2-113552-7

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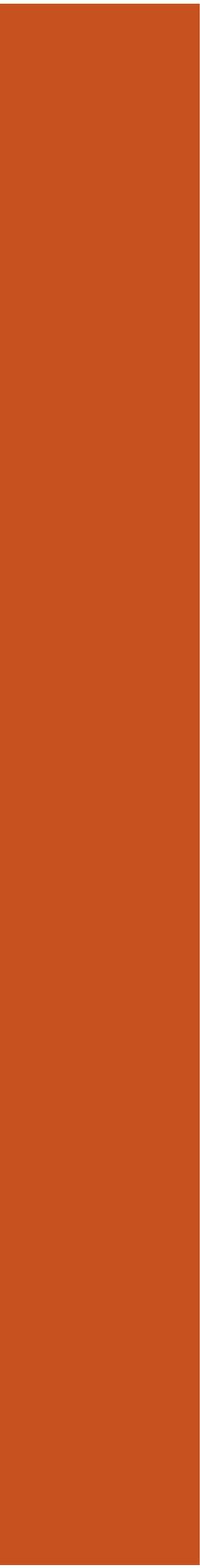
Printed in Thailand

In Asia and the Pacific, the year 2003 is a hallmark for promoting the rights of people with disabilities. It begins the second Asia and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons, 2003 to 2012 and implementation of the Biwako Millennium Framework for Action toward an Inclusive, Barrier-Free and Rights-Based Society. Governments from across the region adopted the framework at a high-level meeting in October 2002. The framework, in turn, will guide regional and national disability policies and activities in several priority areas, including training and employment. While the Decade of Disabled Persons and the development of its implementing framework clearly are major achievements, they also point to the strong need to continue promoting the rights and fostering the inclusion of people with disabilities in all aspects of community life.

The Biwako Millennium Framework for Action calls for, among other things, the passage of International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention No. 159 Concerning Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (Disabled Persons), 1983. The current year marks the 20th anniversary of the adoption of that convention by the ILO's International Labour Conference. Globally, 75 countries, including seven in Asia and the Pacific, have ratified Convention No. 159, which requires countries to develop and implement a national policy on vocational rehabilitation and employment of people with disabilities that is based on equal opportunity for and treatment of disabled workers.

One of the primary goals of the ILO is to promote equal opportunities for women and men, including those with disabilities, to obtain decent work. The ILO defines decent work as productive work in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity. ILO principles and the Biwako Millennium Framework of Action provide the necessary policy guidance to assist countries in reaching this goal. This publication, *Moving Forward: Toward Decent Work for People with Disabilities*, is a collection of examples of good practices that brings the ILO's principles to life. *Moving Forward* gives a voice to people with disabilities and presents profiles of some of the government, nongovernment and partnership programmes that are paving a path to decent work.

The region's continuing commitment to promote the rights of people with disabilities is remarkable. But, despite the passage of legislation and disability-positive policies in many countries during the past decade, people with disabilities are severely under-represented in the economic mainstream. They remain disproportionately poor, unemployed and excluded. The challenge of the second Asia and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons will



be to continue to transform commitment and policies into action and positive outcomes to reverse today's realities.

We hope that *Moving Forward* will inspire policymakers, service providers and people with disabilities toward more creative solutions to the challenges people with disabilities face in accessing training and employment. We also hope that it will foster positive change – change that leads to decent work for people with disabilities in a society that is inclusive, barrier-free and rights-based.

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2003

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Throughout Asia and the Pacific, many governments, nongovernment organizations (NGOs), international agencies and people with disabilities have designed and implemented creative and innovative programmes to meet the challenges confronted by people with disabilities in accessing skills training and employment. These programmes are useful models that lend themselves to total or partial replication. But, too often, only those individuals who attend meetings that describe such programmes and their impact enjoy the opportunity to learn from these good practices.

Although the region is politically, economically and socially diverse, a good idea knows no boundaries. The ILO selected many good practices related to the training, job placement, employment and self-employment of people with disabilities for inclusion in this volume. The ILO hopes these examples will inspire action or replication.

Purpose

The primary purpose of *Moving Forward: Toward Decent Work for People with Disabilities* is to provide policymakers, people with disabilities and especially service providers in Asia and the Pacific with examples of good practices related to various aspects of vocational training and employment. The term employment is used in its broadest sense to include formal sector jobs and new work forms for people with disabilities such as supported employment, self-employment, income-generating activities and participation in family businesses or cooperatives. While each country needs to and should adopt policies based on equal opportunities and inclusion, *Moving Forward* primarily addresses practices. However, several of the examples demonstrate how national legislation, policies and government funding are necessary to create an environment in which effective practices can flourish.

Moving Forward is also intended to foster increased regional cooperation and collaboration by providing a basis for dialogue and the exchange of ideas. Each profile of good practice includes contact information so that readers can learn more about the good practice through direct contact with the service provider.

The translation of this publication into national languages is encouraged. Comments and suggestions for improvement are welcome, as are submissions of additional examples of good practice for ILO dissemination.

Good Practices in the Context of Transition

Many global trends are influencing vocational training and the employment of people with disabilities. Among them are the forces of globalization and economic restructuring, the impact of technology and the shift from a medical and welfare model of disability to a social, rights-based approach.

These trends have a significant impact on the entire disability movement, which is undergoing an international transition as people with disabilities gain more control over their destinies and demand increased choices and options.

Many of the good practices profiled in *Moving Forward* reflect the current state of transition and the struggles and challenges associated with responding to national and global trends. In fact, some of the good practices were selected to illustrate how some groups and organizations are adapting to these very challenges. Other examples simply illustrate a good idea or innovative practice that increases training and employment opportunities for people with disabilities. Many of the examples do not reflect the optimum expression of international standards for equality, inclusion and decent work. However, they clearly demonstrate sincere and effective efforts to reach these standards within the social, economic and political situation of their respective countries and today's global reality. The book's title begins with the words *Moving Forward: Toward Decent Work* for good reason.

Organization of This Book

The examples in *Moving Forward* are organized into the following six categories:

- Vocational Training
- Work and Rehabilitation Centres
- Rural Services
- Self-Employment
- Employment Services
- Partnerships

Many examples fit into two or more categories. The selection of category was based on significant aspects of the practice that addressed a basic principle related to the category. Every effort has been made to ensure the inclusion of all disability groups and self-help groups, whenever possible.

Each category, or chapter, begins with an introduction and summary of the chapter's contents. The summary is followed by the names of ILO publications and products that relate to the topic and may be of interest to readers. Some of publications and products are available in multiple languages. To obtain copies or learn more about these products and publications, e-mail requests to disability@ilo.org or contact the ILO using the addresses and information in the back of this book.

Each of the 22 primary examples of good practice follows the same format. It begins with a section called *The Challenge*, which describes the basic need or issue the good practice initially addressed. *Meeting the Challenge* describes how the project, programme or specific practice developed and works to address present or evolving challenges related to decent work and people with disabilities. Each profile also includes sections on *Accomplishments* and *Lessons Learned* as well as sections entitled *Looking Forward* (future plans) and *Replication*. This last section is designed to offer guidance for those who may want to adapt or replicate the good practice in other settings. Each profile also provides names, addresses, telephone/fax numbers and e-mail and Web site addresses, when available. Readers are encouraged to contact the service providers who have offered to provide additional information about their good practices.

Within the profiles are boxes containing stories of individuals with disabilities who contributed to or benefited from the example of good practice, along with useful information. The book also includes four mini-profiles related to the primary examples.

Readers who would like a general overview of policies related to vocational rehabilitation can request a copy of the ILO's CD-ROM, *Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment of Persons with Disabilities*.

Methodology

The ILO collected the examples of good practices primarily through commissioned research as part of a larger project to develop comprehensive studies of the status of employment and training people with disabilities in 14 countries. The ILO also sought examples through existing disability service networks, such as the Work Commission of the Asia and Pacific Division of Rehabilitation International and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific's (ESCAP) Thematic Working Group on Disability-Related Concerns. Researchers, individuals and organizations submitted profiles following the criteria similar to those outlined in *Guidelines for Submitting Examples of Good Practice*, which are available on the *AbilityAsia* Web site (www.ilo.org/abilityasia). ILO consultant researchers and writers further interviewed the staff and others at each organization to secure additional information and then wrote up the profiles accordingly.

Because this project is part of a larger research effort, many countries and, no doubt, many examples of good practices are not represented. Readers are encouraged to submit additional examples that can be disseminated on the ILO's *AbilityAsia* Web site and through other means. Refer to the contact information in Annex III.

A Word about Language

Language and how groups of people are described can have a powerful influence on how people are perceived. Many in the disability movement therefore advocate for the use of “people first” language. People first language calls for use of the term “people with disabilities” rather than disabled people or disabled persons. In official ILO instruments such as conventions and recommendations, the text sometimes includes the terms “disabled persons” and “disabled workers”.

Generally, however, the terms “people with disabilities”, “disabled persons” and “disabled people” are used with the intention of reflecting accepted usage in different parts of the region and the world.

With regard to how specific disability groups are identified, the region incorporates a diversity of preferences and terms. This document will use, in most cases, people first language such as “people with visual impairments”. The names of the different disability groups are, however, identified with the description most commonly used and accepted in the region and, in a few cases, by the organization submitting the good practice example.

How to Use This Book

Readers can take several approaches to using *Moving Forward*. They may read it cover to cover or by subject of interest, such as vocational training. Although the content is arranged into six categories, many profiles can fit in two or more chapter's, as noted. The introduction to each category provides an overview of the chapter's contents to assist in making reading selections. One of the best applications of the book is to use the contact information and Web sites to learn more.

Acknowledgements

The ILO wishes to acknowledge the many individuals who made this book possible. They include the contributors to this volume and the researchers who worked on the larger ILO regional research project from which this volume resulted. Annex II presents the complete list of those directly involved.

Appreciation is also extended to the staff members and representatives of the organizations profiled in this volume. They worked with ILO consultants, researchers and writers to ensure that the content is as accurate as possible. In many cases, they provided photographs and anecdotes to enliven the text. Many of them are the contact people listed after each section or in the Annex, but unfortunately many will also go unnamed.

The ILO researchers and writers tried to make each example both technically useful and lively. In particular, Karen Emmons worked most closely with ILO staff on the document and shepherded it through to production.

Moving Forward: Toward Decent Work for People with Disabilities was published with resources from the ILO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific and the Subregional Office in Bangkok. Additional support was secured through the ILO project *Employment of People with Disabilities – The Impact of Legislation*, funded by Development Cooperation Ireland.

On behalf of all the people who worked on this publication, the ILO sincerely hopes that *Moving Forward* results in spreading good ideas and cultivating greater regional collaboration.

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2003

Skills are key to decent work. To compete in the workplace or the marketplace, people with disabilities must have the skills to obtain a job or to succeed in business. In many countries throughout Asia and the Pacific, people with disabilities receive training in segregated facilities for disabled persons. Although exceptions exist, segregated facilities, especially those reliant on government funding, too often lack the resources, equipment, services and skilled personnel to make graduates competitive in the open labour market. At the same time, despite the many international standards and national policies that promote the integration of people with disabilities into mainstream programmes, mainstreaming is not common. Furthermore, the forces of globalization and technology are changing the vocational training environment, placing new demands on systems that must change and become sufficiently flexible to meet skill demands and lifelong learning needs.

This section of *Moving Forward* features several examples of good practices related to ensuring quality vocational training, fostering mainstreaming and teaching technology skills needed for today's high-demand jobs. The examples of vocational training featured in this section illustrate some of the characteristics of a good training programme.

Globalization and new technologies require a new generation of skills and training approaches. The Redemptorist Vocational School for the Disabled, with its 100 per cent placement rate for graduates, demonstrates the success of training disabled people in the skills needed for a technology-based workplace. The Redemptorist School recognizes that people with disabilities have historically lacked access to basic education. It provides classes in remedial literacy skills as well as in English, a language critical in the global online environment.

The IBM project in Australia represents a new approach to delivering vocational training to people with recent spinal cord injuries. Computer training actually takes place in the hospital. It not only improves morale during medical rehabilitation but also introduces options for future livelihoods. IBM is also working with the Victoria School for the Blind to bring computer access and skills to people who are blind in Mumbai, India. Both IBM projects are presented as mini profiles following the story of the Redemptorist School.

The India Institute of Cerebral Palsy (IICP) highlights the importance of market research. Before establishing its centre and programmes, IICP officials met with people with disabilities and their families and then investigated existing and projected labour market trends as well as self-employment opportunities. The IICP hired one of India's premier marketing companies to analyse market possibilities. It developed its training programmes according to the interests and abilities of its trainees and the needs of the labour market. The IICP illustrates the importance of a curriculum that is based on the inputs of the business community and accredited training institutions with which it partners. As a result, the open job market values IICP certificates. Both the Redemptorist and IICP programmes provide opportunities for skills upgrading and lifelong learning.

The Adelaide Institute of Technical and Further Education (TAFE) in Australia illustrates a government effort to integrate people with disabilities fully into its vocational training system. The profile describes the overall policy and specific practices implemented in a local training institute aimed at integrating Deaf students. A programme in the Pacific island of Fiji (another mini profile) proves that students who are integrated into mainstream primary and secondary education have a better chance of finding challenging employment than young people who attend special schools. The programme has recently extended its service to include university attendance.

The profiles in this section highlight many other factors that contribute to high-quality and results-oriented skills development programmes for trainees with disabilities. A few of these factors include the use of appropriate technology and assistive devices, special training aids and adaptive training approaches, and confidence-building strategies.

Readers will find that all other sections of *Moving Forward* include examples of good practices that have vocational training components. In addition, the reader may find the following ILO documents of interest:

Integrating Women with Disabilities into Mainstream Vocational Training – A Practical Guide, 1999

Community-Based Training for Employment and Income Generation, 1994

From Illiterate to Computer Smart – Trainees with Physical Disabilities Learn Sophisticated Skills to Find Work and Help Society in Thailand

The Challenge

In the early 1980s when Father Raymond Brennan, a Catholic priest living in Thailand, travelled around the country, he took notice of people with disabilities. They were not hard to miss – many were on the streets begging. Father Brennan asked himself repeatedly, “Why can’t they get jobs?” The few training programmes available to people with disabilities focused only on simple skills. Challenging jobs were difficult to find. In Thailand, few employment opportunities existed that would allow people with disabilities to support themselves and their families. Father Brennan wondered what he could do to develop training opportunities that would lead to decent jobs for people with disabilities.

Meeting the Challenge

Father Brennan decided that technology training was the answer. Even in the early 1980s, he could see that computers would become indispensable features of the workplace. He had no experience in running any type of school, but he charged forward. His programme grew from short summer courses to a small, year-round school for about 40 students and then to its present facility known as the Redemptorist Vocational School for the Disabled. It currently houses and trains about 240 people with physical disabilities in a two-year programme offering advanced computer skills as well as electronics repair. The enrolment includes individuals from the Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Cambodia and Bangladesh. Two people from Myanmar will join the training thanks to a Honda Motor Workers’ Union sponsorship. In 1999, the school added a job placement service in partnership with the Government for all people with disabilities, whether or not they study at the school.

The Good Practice: Vocational training in advanced technology that prepares people with disabilities for today’s high-demand jobs.



• Background •

Father Brennan and a staff of three people started a small school and, along the way, learned how to build a vocational training centre. On the site of Father Brennan's church in the beach resort town of Pattaya (two hours drive southeast of Bangkok) was a wooden retreat centre that accommodated 50 people. In 1984, Father Brennan joined forces with the Association of the Physically Handicapped of Thailand to offer a short basic computer course to people with physical disabilities. He sought donations to pay two instructors and to buy needed equipment and software. He then solicited funds to build a modest facility with classrooms and a dormitory for year-round training sessions. Progress was swift; by 1987, the Redemptorist church launched its formal two-year school programme for 23 students with physical disabilities. Father Brennan's vision kept expanding. By 1995, the Redemptorist centre had built a five-story structure with classrooms, a dining room and a dormitory for the male students. The female students continue to use the original centre, though a larger dormitory will be constructed for them in 2004.

• The Redemptorist Training Programme •

Courses. The Redemptorist centre's skills training programme in computer programming, e-commerce, computer and business management, Web design and all types of electronics repair runs for one to two years. "Father Brennan wanted the courses to be progressive and move beyond typical basic skills," says Supornthum Mongkolsawadi, who, having lost both his legs, attended the Redemptorist school as a trainee and is now its principal. "Electronic repair skills were offered as an option so people could return to their village and open a shop if they wanted," he adds.

The school year is divided into two semesters of five months each, and students attend class six days a week. The instructors are mostly former students with disabilities who returned after working in mainstream employment for several years. Some were employed in software development companies, hotel administration and electronics shops.

Applicants. The maximum class size is 20 students. Each year brings far more applicants than available places. Applicants must have a physical disability and be 17 to 35 years old. For computer courses, they must have a ninth grade education and for electronics repair, a sixth grade education. Students pay their own transportation costs to the school. Courses, food and lodging are free. Only students studying computer programming need to purchase their own computer. To help them, the school provides low-interest loans with a three-year payback period. The school awards each electronics repair student a set of tools upon graduation.

The Redemptorist centre now has a policy to recruit women more actively – female students currently make up about 20 per cent of total enrolment.

English training. The curriculum has included teaching English since the opening of the school, but, as the school staff searched the classified advertisements for employment opportunities for its students during the 1990s, they noticed a high demand for English-language computer skills. Consequently, the curriculum adapted to the market and in 2000 added a two-year-course in computer and business management taught in English.

Ethics and social responsibility. All subjects incorporate the teaching of life skills and good citizenship. In addition, a Buddhist monk visits the school once a month to speak about ethical issues. The purpose is to instil in students a sense of service to society, explains Mr. Mongkolsawadi. To graduate with a computer certificate, students must write a software programme or create a project for the benefit of a community organization. Previous beneficiaries include the district education office and the local government tourist office. The service component of the curriculum follows the Redemptorist philosophy that the church helps people to help others. The school, says Mr. Mongkolsawadi, “enables people with disabilities to support themselves and society.”

Nonformal education. For students who want to continue their education, the school makes nonformal classes available with a curriculum that follows Ministry of Education standards.

• Other Services Available •

Job placement. During the 1998 economic downturn, the Redemptorist staff observed that many workers with disabilities were losing their jobs. Graduates also needed help in finding employers open to hiring workers with disabilities. In 1999, the school added a job placement service in partnership with the provincial government employment agency. Three Redemptorist placement officers and support staff provide job listings and maintain a database of job candidates who are either the school’s graduates or other disabled people who register with the service. Companies needing workers turn to the database. A provincial employment officer plans to set up a desk in the job placement office at the Redemptorist school to assist people further in finding jobs.

Assistance programme. Any person with a disability can use the school’s assistance service for self-employment, vocational counselling, advice on further education or skills training required for certain jobs and referrals for medical treatment.

Vocational counselling camps. The job placement service operates a mobile unit that travels around central Thailand about three times a year setting up “vocational counselling camps” at fairs and community activities for people with disabilities. The school works with other organizations, such as self-help groups of disabled persons, provincial employment offices and social welfare agencies. During the three-day camp, placement counsellors meet with disabled people and offer vocational training

information as well as an evaluation of potential skills. The counsellors provide interested people with advice on job-searching skills as well as with self-employment information, such as how to run a small business and obtain a start-up loan. If a person is interested in a skill not taught at the Redemptorist school, the counsellors will write letters for enrolment to a relevant training programme on that person's behalf.

Awareness raising among employers. Placement staff frequently reach out to chambers of commerce or employer organizations in different communities to encourage their members to hire workers with disabilities. As well, school staff visit individual companies to encourage them to give people with disabilities a chance to prove themselves.

The school sponsors employer seminars twice a year to work on changing attitudes within the business community. The seminars focus on Thailand's disability law, how to employ people with disabilities and the benefits of hiring disabled workers. The programmes feature case studies and include field trips to workplaces with disabled employees.

Accomplishments

Supornthum Mongkolsawadi, the school's principal, believes that teamwork on the part of staff and students is the Redemptorist school's most significant accomplishment. "There is a strong willingness among everyone to make the programme succeed," he says.

Since 1988, the school has boasted a 100 per cent placement rate. If people do not find a job easily, they find employment with the school until a job in the open market becomes available. The school did not implement any follow-up system until 1999; accordingly, the data to date on employed graduates' retention rates are insufficient. Nonetheless, considering that most students had not completed high school when they arrived, the placement rate is considered a remarkable achievement.

The total programme (vocational school and placement service) has helped more than 820 people with disabilities (200 of whom are women) find jobs in the 2000-2003 period. The placements include jobs in hotels, travel agencies, electronics shops and computer programming companies. Starting salaries of those employed range from 6,000 baht to 10,000 baht (US\$142 to \$238) monthly, which is comparable to salaries in the government sector offered to mainstream graduates with bachelor's degrees.

One Student's Story

My name is Kodhawe Khattiyot, and I am 23 years old and was born without feet. When I reached the third grade, the school provided me with a specially designed vehicle that moved by cranking a handle back and forth. I wanted so much to continue my studies, realizing that I would be of little help to my parents if I remained at home. I enrolled at a junior high school about five kilometres from home. Sometimes on the way to school, my cranking vehicle would slip into the ditch. I had to get off and on to my hands and knees to push it out.

For high school, I applied to a boarding school. The teacher in charge was afraid to accept me, but the principal was kind to give me a chance. I was the only disabled student in the school. I felt so lonely and so discouraged. There were no facilities for a disabled person. The building was three stories high. Classes were on different floors. My knees were hurting so badly and became swollen. It became almost unbearable.

Before graduation, I was confused – no where to turn, no one to consult. I wrote to the Centre for the Career Rehabilitation for the Disabled in Chiang Mai. I was accepted and went to further my studies. There, I was given a pair of special shoes. I was able to commute and to go anywhere all by myself. While at that centre, I learned about the Redemptorist Vocational School for the Disabled; I applied to study computer science with an emphasis on computer programming and was accepted.

After I graduated, I worked in freelance Web design with a pediatrician at Bangkok Pattaya Hospital to create a site called Thaibaby.com. The job allowed me to work from home. The income was not regular as it was based on task work. I applied for a job at the company where my husband works. I was hired in January 2002 in the financial section. My salary, together with general benefits, is equivalent to what other graduates with bachelor's degrees earn. I still take on freelance Web design jobs, but with a young baby there isn't always enough time.

I am quite happy with my regular job. My husband and I rent the house we live in, and I travel to my office by wheelchair.

Lessons Learned

Given its trial-and-error beginnings, the current state of the Redemptorist programme reflects several lessons learned. Some of the more important experiences include:

A programme must keep growing. The Redemptorist school started small by linking with other organizations, but it has kept growing in response to the needs of its students and the workplace. Its new course offerings, its current emphasis on developing services for women and its outreach to students from other countries are examples of continuing growth. New programmes enhance the school's visibility and attract new donors and partners.

Reliance on people with disabilities as instructors offers several advantages. First, instructors with disabilities have real-life experiences and empower students by demonstrating what they have achieved. Students' exposure to role models is especially powerful because some students with disabilities feel that they cannot perform as well as nondisabled people. Second, some instructors with disabilities can be stricter and more demanding than instructors without disabilities. They know what their students can achieve and do not make unnecessary allowances because of disability.

A holistic approach is needed. With many students coming from disadvantaged backgrounds, school officials find that a holistic approach is needed. This includes remedial education, counselling, independent living and job-searching skills and placement services to help people with disabilities move into the workplace.

Looking Forward

For the future, the Redemptorist staff would like to add an Employment Advisory Team to assist with job placement. The team would consist of employers who would work to increase awareness among other employers about the abilities of people with disabilities.

In addition, the school staff plans to incorporate assistive devices to accommodate students with severe disabilities in mastering the computer and electronic repair skills. To date, such devices have not been part of the school's teaching methods or available services.

Finally, school officials are studying the possibility of a one- to three-month "preparatory" course for nongraduates of the school. The objective would be to help people prepare for their job search, adapting to jobs and independent living. As a consequence of the vigorous recruitment of women, the school will construct a larger dormitory.

Replication

While the Redemptorist Vocational School for the Disabled is impressive in its current state of development, large sums of money are not needed at the outset to establish a similar vocational training programme. What is needed in terms of funding is ample funds to start a small course. It makes sense to use existing facilities, such as a church, school or temple, to test the environment, particularly in remote areas, and then expand as results warrant. People who start small have a better chance of succeeding than people who start with a big programme, and it is often easier to acquire financial support once a success can be demonstrated, especially in the case of services for people with disabilities. In addition, one centre does not have to do everything by itself. It is entirely reasonable to develop a network of organizations and take advantage of various connections, such as for medical rehabilitation services or other training skills. Links with other organizations can also prove strategic when requesting donor support. One service that must be coupled with skills training is job placement. Without somewhere to go, the training is nearly useless.

In short, Mr. Mongkolsawadi recommends a few important steps to be kept in mind when setting up vocational training:

- Define the situation. Determine how many people with disabilities reside in the target area, the types of disabilities they have, their educational backgrounds and so forth.
- Study the labour market. Look at employment possibilities to determine what skills could be taught. Similarly, look at opportunities in self-employment.
- Think through solutions. Select those that best help people with disabilities find placement in the market and develop a curriculum accordingly.
- Start small with one or two courses. Observe the results and expand as need warrants.

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Computer Training for the Recently Injured in Australia

A new programme in Australia brings together a large array of partners to help people who have recently sustained spinal cord injuries. Early on in the rehabilitation process, the programme introduces people to the possibilities of computer-related employment. In fact, the Spinal Cord Project – with its computer course – actually takes place in the rehabilitation unit of three hospitals.

The New South Wales Board of Vocational and Further Education, IBM, Telstra Communications, the Australian National Training Authority and the Council for the Encouragement of Philanthropy in Australia, variously support the programme, which began in July 2001. IBM, for instance, donated laptop and desktop equipment. Telstra provided and installed the communication capability. The Department of Education provided an initial grant of AUS\$100,000 (US\$60,000) to cover the salary of a manager and to provide teaching resources. Many organizations and individuals, including occupational therapists, offer their services for free.

The initial course was a 12-month pilot project conducted by instructors from the Northern Sydney Institute of Technical and Further Education (TAFE) and the Open Training and Education Network. Participants' knowledge dictated which skills the course covered. Several participants, for instance, had never touched a computer. One man, however, worked regularly with a computer. He learned more advanced techniques such as Web design and created a Web site for the programme while the other participants focused on basic computer literacy.

The project idea originated with Mark Bagshaw, international marketing manager, IBM Australasia, a wheelchair user. After surviving a diving accident that resulted in quadriplegia, he understood the value of the early introduction of training options to rehabilitation patients. "People want to know that their life hasn't come to an end, that they will be able to work and take part in all aspects of life," he says. "At the simplest level, our programme helped to put people on a positive path and showed them, first hand, how education and technology could help them achieve their goals."

According to Holly Roberts, Mr. Bagshaw's colleague, other programmes for people with spinal cord injuries often require individuals to delay training until the completion of their rehabilitation. But the waiting period can be long, painful and depressing. "The point of our programme," Ms. Roberts explains, "is to work as quickly as possible on people's self-esteem by showing them how they can adapt their lives and continue to help themselves through such services as the Internet." The course is meant to show them new career options as well, if need be. And it gives them something to do during the rehabilitation process.

Altogether, about ten partners shaped the original concept and implemented the programme in the hospitals. It was not an easy idea to pull together, but the results were immediate. Of the 31 original participants, about 21 of them moved on to or intended to pursue further vocational study in computers. Moreover, most have positive vocational and educational expectations as result of the access to technology made possible by the programme. According to their comments, the training gave them a sense of accomplishment and relieved boredom.

Those who finished the course received a small grant of AUS\$5,000 (US\$2,800) to purchase equipment or continue their courses.

The programme has been so successful that the New South Wales Minister for Education, IBM and Telstra have agreed to expand the programme's reach throughout Australia.

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VMS-IBM Centre for Computer Education in India

Blind people in India now can listen their way through the Internet. They can also type their way into a new career, such as office worker or call centre employee.

In partnership with IBM, the Victoria Memorial School for the Blind (VMS), a 100-year-old charitable institution in Mumbai, India, has set up a computer centre to train visually impaired and blind adults in computer literacy skills. The VMS-IBM Centre for Computer Education opens new avenues of personal and professional development for blind people by helping them gain meaningful employment, pursue advanced education, qualify for promotion and acquire skills to train others in computer know-how.

The project started when a VMS trustee approached IBM-India in Mumbai with a proposal to create a computer laboratory that would offer free computer literacy training programmes to blind adults. IBM responded to the proposal affirmatively by sponsoring the laboratory and programme under its Corporate Community Relations Department, IBM's philanthropic division. It provided the hardware, software and services and trained the trainers in assistive software and teaching techniques. The hardware included ten new multi-media computers, one server, a scanner and a Local Area Network (LAN). The software included the Windows 98 operating system, Microsoft Word 2000 (used to create, edit, print and save documents), Microsoft Excel 2000 (the spread sheet program used for accounting, payroll, marketing and so forth) and three assistive software applications: JAWS (a screen-reading program without which a visually impaired person cannot operate a computer), IBM Homepage Reader (the program to connect to the Internet) and Ruby Open Book (a program to scan, read and edit printed material). A private citizen later donated a Braille printer. To print English text from the computer into Braille, the school uses DUXBURY Braille Translation software.

VMS sought out CyberITes, an Indian computer training company that previously trained only sighted people, to take over the day-to-day management of the centre and the training of students. Even with its extensive background in training adults in computer literacy skills, CyberITes found that training blind people differed dramatically from training sighted people. IBM sent two trainers, one of whom is blind and whose expertise lies in both training blind people and training sighted people to teach computer skills to blind people. The IBM trainer and CyberITes students worked together intensively to ensure competent and thorough skills transfer in both assistive software knowledge and an understanding of students' needs. CyberITes developed the curriculum and made copies on the Braille printer.

Forty students were accepted into the initial course in two groups. The course is now working with its third group of 40 students. Four students have found computer jobs thus far.

Training the first groups proved as much of a learning experience for the sighted instructors as for their blind students. Even with the assistive technology and software that reads the text, the screen itself needs to be put into context. What is a window? Where are the icons? Where is the action bar? What do the different fonts look like? The instructors created a myriad of models that the students could “read” or “see” with their hands while listening to the explanations. Girish Rao of CyberITes explains, “Teaching how to construct tables was proving impossible. We got smart and made a matchstick model of a table showing rows, columns and cells. Using this touch-and-feel model, teaching tables was child’s play.”

Of the initial 40 students, 35 graduated. VMS approached an independent organization, the Computer Society of India, to test the students. Of the 29 who sat for the examination, 21 passed. Most of these students were still enrolled in college or were working in some form of employment. At the time of this writing, outcome data was not available, although interest in the programme is high.

One Woman’s Steely Determination to Compute

When my husband bought a computer in 2000, I was on fire to operate it myself. I am 46 years old, live in Jaipur and I am blind. I would think to myself, “If my watch can talk and my calculator can talk, why can’t this computer talk to me and tell me what is on the screen?” Then my son, who attends a Bombay college, wrote to me. He told me that IBM was going to conduct a computer course for the blind in Bombay. He read this in the newspaper. I was to go to Bombay for the summer vacation and thought, “I am going to do this course at any cost.”

My will power and determination were like steel. Today, I am managing all my husband’s correspondence with his export business customers. I do it without any sighted help – thanks to the IBM course, the Victoria Memorial School and its dedicated, untiring staff. – **Meena Tiwari**

For the future, VMS is planning to provide extended services to its computer students beyond the computer centre, such as a cyber cafe with three or four IBM-donated computers. Each computer will be loaded with assistive software, thus permitting students and graduates to practise and retain their skills, develop resumes and CVs, surf the Internet and write and respond to their e-mail. In addition, VMS is working with local industry to employ the graduates. It is planning to augment its training programme with modules in job-searching skills, interviewing skills, conversational English and other necessary soft skills needed in a competitive job market. VMS is trying to figure out how to provide its students with copies of assistive technology software that they can take with them into any new job. Given that JAWS, for example, sells approximately for US\$1,000 per copy, cost can pose a potential barrier for a prospective employer. VMS is also considering expanding its offerings to include advanced computer training in partnership with other computer companies and training institutes.

The school owes its success in delivering computer skills training to the visually impaired not only to IBM but also to the Mumbai-based philanthropic organization GKR Charities, which provides a generous grant to operate the centre.

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Wings to Fly – Children with Cerebral Palsy Find Their Way into Independent Adulthood in India

The Challenge

In eastern India in the late 1980s, parents watched with immense unease as their severely disabled children advanced toward high school graduation. They wondered, “What next?” Their children had been educated but in a protected cocoon – a setting of the Centre for Special Education at the Indian Institute of Cerebral Palsy (IICP). Parents knew that they had to help prepare their children for a less sheltered life beyond the IICP’s doors. And the young people wanted to learn the skills needed to earn a living and gain more independence. However, eastern India offered no opportunities for vocational training for persons with cerebral palsy and other substantial disabilities.

Meeting the Challenge

The IICP administrators could not ignore the needs and aspirations of their students. After several rounds of discussions with parents, students, former students who had found employment and officials from other centres working with people with disabilities, the administrators recognized that building a vocational training centre appeared to be the only solution. “A sheltered workshop was not an option,” says Reena Sen, IICP deputy director. “After the discussions, it was our organization’s conviction that a sheltered workshop is not conducive to helping people be included in the community. We did not want to segregate.”

The IICP Adult Training Centre (ATC) opened in 1992 and remains a unique example of a comprehensive rehabilitation centre because it:

- Provides optimum but time-bound training for open or self-employment through links with businesses, government and mainstream universities;
- Helps young people learn to cope on their own, with guidance and counselling for both trainees and family members; and
- Involves a family member in training alongside students interested in developing family-based businesses.

The Good Practice: With input from disabled people and their parents, a comprehensive adult training centre developed that teaches marketable skills, using appropriate adaptations and family involvement.



• Background •

Led by a parent of a child with cerebral palsy, the Centre for Special Education began operation in 1974 in Calcutta as a small school for two students. It grew into a national resource centre and major training organization and changed its name to the Indian Institute for Cerebral Palsy. Through its varied services, it now reaches more than 3,000 families. The IICP's main objectives are human resource development, providing needs-based training, undertaking applied research and developing service models for persons with cerebral palsy and their families in both rural and urban areas.

Those services, which are available to trainees in the ATC, provide a holistic approach to helping young people achieve independent living; they involve early intervention, therapy, family support and community-based rehabilitation. In addition, adult clients have formed a self-advocacy group to push for better implementation of disability policies and to change public perceptions about people with disabilities. Adult clients also lobby local authorities for improved mobility and accessibility in the community through, for example, bus access and the construction of ramps and lifts in buildings.

• Creating the Adult Training Centre •

Market analysis. In 1991, before creating the ATC programme, the IICP commissioned the reputable mainstream Indian Market Research Bureau to analyse what type of employment opportunities might be available for people with disabilities and which high-demand products could become the focus of its vocational training options.

At the same time, it organized workshops with representatives of industries and corporate businesses to discuss employment opportunities and ideas for vocational training. As a means of promoting the capabilities of workers with disabilities, the workshops highlighted success stories of people with disabilities working in open employment. At the end of one workshop, a company came forward to offer a contract for work: Bata India, a multinational company that produces shoes, was willing to engage ATC trainees in printing artwork on its shoe in-soles. Other companies offered financial support while the multinational ITC Ltd. offered computer hardware and software. Based on the

companies' interest and the market analysis, the ATC set up three training units – printing, catering and computer skills.

Instructors. The ATC hired and trained professionals in the areas of printing, catering and computer skills to teach students with multiple disabilities. The ATC staff now also includes unit supervisors, social workers and a vocational counsellor.

Curricula based on courses in mainstream institutions. The IICP bases its computer training on the computer curricula of the Department of Adult Continuing Education and Extension, Jadavpur University in Calcutta. The university's recognition of the courses allows IICP graduates to receive a certificate from the university. Though trainees learn in a segregated environment, the approach represents a step toward providing equal academic standards to people with disabilities.

Funding. A foreign agency donated about US\$60,000 for initial construction of the ATC and the purchase of basic equipment. The IICP now finances its services through grants from the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, nominal fees paid by trainees and project-related funds from donor agencies. In addition, money earned in the printing and catering units is allocated to the operation of the centre.

Fees. Trainees live at home and pay a nominal fee (about US\$10) for courses. Needy trainees are granted fee waivers and sponsorships. A bus service transports some trainees to and from their homes for a fee; others travel independently.

Course period. Each training unit brings together 12 to 16 students; the teacher/trainee ratio is 1:10. The training period varies from 18 months to 2 years, depending on the needs of the trainee.

The trainees. Not all student trainees have cerebral palsy. The ATC works with people who have hearing, speech and mobility impairments as well as with those with learning difficulties. Students are mostly graduates of the IICP's Centre for Special Education who transfer to the ATC at age 18. But young adults from other non-IICP programmes are also accepted. ATC trainees come from all socio-economic backgrounds, mostly from Calcutta and the neighbouring districts from where daily commuting is possible.

• Structure of the Programme •

Choosing a skills course. Every potential trainee undergoes a period of initial assessment. Students from the IICP Centre for Special Education spend two hours attending the ATC twice a week in their final six months of school. They are assessed for independence in personal care, social skills, work-related behaviour and literacy and numeracy competency. External candidates, primarily referred from the IICP's Outpatients Division, spend two days a week for two months undergoing an assessment.

The trainees participate in both the printing and catering units during the assessment period, allowing counsellors to observe them in a work setting and permitting both families and trainees to make informed choices. ATC staff members participate in meetings with a trainee and his or her family to help the trainee select a course according to his or her interest and capability.

Following placement in one of the training units, trainees and parents, either in groups or individually, meet with staff in six monthly assessment meetings to discuss progress, difficulties and future goals.

Adaptations in the Classroom

Adjustments in furniture and seating are a priority in the classrooms, but adapted implements and tools are kept to a minimum so that trainees are prepared for real-world work situations that most likely will not resemble an adapted learning environment.

If there are any problems regarding access, handling of equipment, seating or furniture, then physiotherapists and occupational therapists work with trainees with physical difficulties to adapt the tools and make the work environment accessible.

The Computer Unit uses a variety of specially adapted software and hardware donated by private organizations. Different types of switches associated with computer hardware make it possible for profoundly physically disabled users with poor hand function to use another part of the body that they can control – eyes, knee, foot, head. For instance, the “stay down” software converts the double key operations on the keyboard into single key operations while a key guard allows easier access for people who do not have good motor coordination in their fingers.

Vocational training choices. The training units focus on skills training through instruction and work experience in response to the orders the units receive from the public for various products. (The ATC units do not operate as production centres and thus do not solicit job orders. However, people hear of the service from others, through visits to the ATC or media attention, and place orders for catering items, printed material and so forth.) Students learn to share tasks and compensate for each other’s limitations and/or build on strengths. The skills training is organized into the following three units:

- In 1995, the IICP switched the printing skills in the Printing Unit from leather work to silkscreen printing, stationery printing, spiral binding and lamination. Consequently, Bata, which had been providing the unit with work-experience contracts, transferred its in-sole printing needs to a home-based unit run by a family with two IICP graduates. Their mother also trained at the IICP to learn printing skills along with her sons. The Printing Unit supplies all cartons and napkins with the IICP logo for use by the Catering Unit. Trainees also create invitation cards and print festival messages on the greeting cards that the IICP sells as a fund-raising activity.
- The Catering Unit teaches trainees to cook for themselves, their families and others either on their own or under supervision. The work experience involves orders for sweets and baked goods or staff lunches and meals for special events.
- The Computer Unit courses cover office and database management, desktop publishing, Web design and financial accounting. The courses were established in collaboration with the Jadavpur University in Calcutta.

Social skills. The IICP places equal emphasis on occupational skills and social, independent living and consumer skills. Non-tangible skills such as learning to be responsible, coming to terms with a disability, making friends and social contacts, are as important as specific vocational skills for coping with the outside world. Social workers address these topics in group and individual sessions. Techniques used for group counselling, which are conducted once a week for social skills training, involve discussions, peer interaction, role plays, audio-visual presentations, brainstorming and case study presentations. The sessions include field visits to factories, workshops, printers, bakeries, catering businesses and computer companies to prepare trainees for working in those settings.

Individual counselling is arranged if and when required to help a student cope with personal and emotional problems or training and work-related issues. Joyeeta Ganguly, for example, a young woman with a hearing impairment, had a training placement in a computer software firm. Initially, her colleagues were hesitant to give her any work because they were finding it difficult to communicate with her. Her ATC supervisors contacted the employer and suggested that her colleagues use written instructions as much as possible. The solution enabled Joyeeta to complete her placement successfully. She graduated from the ATC and now works as a computer data entry clerk for one of India's largest tea-producing companies.

On-the-job training. During the final three months of the programme, students seeking open employment can participate in an internship in industrial and private enterprises, though without salary or stipend. Initially, unit supervisors and ATC social workers monitor the training placement on a weekly basis, then fortnightly and only once during the final month. For those hired for full-time jobs after completing their internship, the once-a-month monitoring continues for about six months or longer, depending on the situation. Not all internships lead to a job offer, however.

Working with the family. When a trainee chooses self-employment, a family member participates in the same skills training, which is a condensed three-month programme that focuses on specific tasks and matters dealing with setting up and running a particular business. If a family decides to set up a home-based enterprise, only one family member undergoes training.

In addition, ATC staff members provide family members with information about income generation, loan facilities, crisis management and organizations that deal with disadvantaged groups and the rights guaranteed by the Persons with Disability Act, 1995. The IICP assists families applying for bank loans by offering guidance and advice on how to write and submit a loan proposal, including budget estimates. A staff member accompanies families during meetings with bank officials, when needed. The IICP helps self-employed graduates secure orders and advises them during business management crises, even years after they have left the programme. Counselling is available when needed.

• Other Services •

Support and recognition for employers. Once a graduate is hired, IICP trainers work with employers to help solve job-related problems that may arise. Services may involve visits to the workplace or simply a telephone call. The IICP acknowledges employers who hire persons with disabilities in its publications. The IICP also invites employers to participate in and speak at conferences, seminars, concerts, sports events and graduation ceremonies.

Training for trainers. The ATC welcomes trainers from different organizations in the field of rehabilitation who seek to upgrade their skills. During an intensive one-month needs-based programme, they train alongside people with disabilities in order to gain knowledge and practical experience.

Alternative training. For young people with substantial physical difficulties and profound multiple impairments who cannot participate in vocational training, the ATC provides an Adult Learning and Leisure Unit for continuing education and activities. The programme includes, at present, 35 former students of the IICP's Centre for Special Education who attend two or three times a week for as long as they like. The available activities allow participants to continue their education in literacy and numeracy or simply to pursue hobbies or personal interests, such as painting, writing and poetry. For adults with severe learning difficulties, the programme includes augmentative communication, learning enhancement and leisure skills.

Trainee Stories

- I had always felt scared about my future," recalls HIRAK Jyoti Rakshit, a cheerful person who enjoys dance and acting. HIRAK, a 24-year-old man with cerebral palsy, is now self-employed, working with his mother in their home-based business providing screen and press printing and office stationery. He was enthusiastic about screen printing from the start, even though he has the use of only his left hand. Individual counselling helped him recognize his positive abilities, including entrepreneurship. He was encouraged to set up his own business in August 1999. His mother volunteered to work with him and underwent practical training in silkscreen printing and marketing. She now concentrates on the "outside" jobs such as marketing and delivery of printed materials. In 2000, his former IICP trainers urged HIRAK and his mother to expand their business and apply for a loan from the National Handicapped Finance Development Corp., which is a funding agency within the Ministry of Social Justice and Employment that promotes economic and development activities for disabled persons.
- Barsha Bhattacharya has severe physical and speech impairments. She has cerebral palsy and is a wheelchair user. She communicates with a low-tech augmentative communication word and letter-based terminal in her mother tongue, Bengali. She is a talented poet and started expressing her feelings by writing poems with the help of another adult by pointing out words and spellings on her terminal. She has recently started using a more versatile computer programme – Clicker 4 – and an adapted switch that enables her to compose poetry independently. She is confident and active and plans to publish her literary work.
- My poor hand control and jerky movements made it difficult for me to do printing," explains Souvick Choudhury, 43, who has cerebral palsy and who enrolled at the ATC in 1997. "However, the professionals at the Indian Institute of Cerebral Palsy noticed my affinity for good public relations and business aptitude. After a review of my abilities, a tailor-made programme was devised for me. I was trained on the theoretical aspects of printing, marketing and office management." Within a year of completing his training, Souvick started Sai Prints. He has a trade license and his own bank account. His job calls for him to obtain printing orders, ensure that the work is completed and then deliver the order to the client for a commission.

Accomplishments

Since 1992, the IICP has completed five training cycles. An average of 25 trainees graduate during each cycle. The number of trainees attending at any one time increased from 28 in 1992 to 50 by August 2002. In terms of individual achievements since 1992:

- Of the 134 total who have completed training, 47 (13 women), or 35 per cent, found jobs in open employment and 46 (six women), or 34 per cent, sought self-employment. Forty-one per cent (seven women) are currently participating in internships or have gone on for further studies in computer courses. The types of jobs include work in a printing press, offices, small restaurants, snack bars, bakeries and IICP's Catering Unit as well as data entry, home-based printing and catering.
- Six home-based printing businesses for which the IICP trained a person with disabilities and another family member are successfully operating.

Lessons Learned

"There is a real commitment to team work in this organization," says IICP Deputy Director Reena Sen. "There is a shared belief and faith in each other's abilities and strengths. And there is realization that each and every person in the organization plays a crucial role in the quality of services that we offer." The IICP's achievements provide various insights:

Discussion of vocational training choices for a young disabled person should be initiated around age 12 or 13 and not at age 18. The early discussion of vocational training choices helps families and professionals identify a long-term goal toward which they can work. In addition, training can address appropriate work-related behaviours, relevant skills and knowledge and address barriers.

Support counselling may be needed for families of workers hired in open employment. Expectations of the family and of the adult with disabilities are sometimes too high regarding expected salary and other terms of employment, such as transport and leniency in leave regulations. When the job does not meet family expectations, the family does not value the job, posing barriers to the adjustment of the person with disabilities in the workplace.

Despite specific-skill training, employment in another field may be necessary. The economic situation may limit the lack of available jobs in the area of a trainee's specialization and thus necessitate rapid adaptation. If a suitable job for a graduating trainee opens up, the ATC will provide additional instruction to help that person pursue

the opportunity. For example, two trainees who trained for printing work but experienced difficulty in finding open-employment positions subsequently trained for laundry services, which resulted in their finding full-time jobs.

More emphasis on socialization skills is needed during the training period. Acquisition of social graces, daily living and personal hygiene skills and the ability to work with a team or to take criticism can be factors that facilitate inclusion in the workplace.

For access reasons, home-based self-employment options have become a necessity. Many people with disabilities have the intellectual capacity and the skills for open employment, but difficulties with physical access in offices and in the use of public transport pose insurmountable barriers. Some employers are sensitive to these issues and provide needs-based facilities, although they are rare. Many people see their home environment as more user-friendly. They are “independent” in the sense of using their knowledge and skills even though they are assisted by family members in a home-based enterprise.

Family involvement is pivotal in the rehabilitation process, though it can also prove to be an impediment. The involvement of a family member in work with former trainees creates successful businesses, but the person with the disability should remain for production activities. Increased responsibility leads to greater self-esteem, and the individual’s contribution to the household budget translates into greater social respect and acceptability.

Parents need help in clarifying their hopes and expectations and in recognizing barriers and limitations. The socio-economic context and constraints of a family can be major determinants in the choice of training and employment for a young person with disabilities. A close, two-way interaction between parents and their disabled child and professionals is needed to set goals and assess family expectations and commitment levels.

Home-based units are sometimes difficult to sustain. Many former trainees struggle to keep their businesses afloat in an environment of strong competition or a slow-down of orders after business start-up. Sometimes the person with a disability cannot keep up with delivery schedules. Family members can help, but they should not assume the disabled person’s role. Discussions with the family and reminders about training objectives and the individual rights of people with disabilities must continue during IICP follow-up visits.

Looking Forward

The IICP's decision to adhere to the teacher/student ratio of 1:10 in the Adult Training Centre has led to the delivery of high-quality training, but it has also created financial constraints that prevent the organization from offering the competitive salaries that would allow it to increase staff and thus extend its services to more people. The IICP plans to continue lobbying at the policy level for an increase in government grants. It is also looking for other ways to increase its financial self-sufficiency and is considering setting up a production unit for catering and printing products. The IICP intends to upgrade its facilities in all training units by seeking donor support.

It also is aiming to expand its training-for-trainers programme for instructors in mainstream training centres, particularly in district and rural areas, thereby widening the scope for greater inclusion of adults with disabilities.

In addition, the ATC's Adult Learning and Leisure Unit – in collaboration with the Department of Adult, Continuing Education and Extension, Jadavpur University and the National Institute of Open Schooling – will offer continuing education and adult literacy programmes through certified short courses for persons with severe physical and communication difficulties.

Replication

Funding and family involvement are two important conditions when setting up a training centre that follows the IICP model. A large centre is not the only venue for offering vocational training. It is possible to reach people with disabilities indirectly, particularly in rural areas, by motivating and providing training for trainers in rural-based organizations. Some ideas to keep in mind when establishing a training centre like the IICP or simply offering training include the following:

- Examine the market to identify jobs, opportunities and business trends. It is essential to understand the realities of the marketplace, including hiring biases. Public education and awareness campaigns may be necessary to create a more open, disability-friendly environment.
- Establish links with businesses, associations, marketing agencies, mainstream educational institutions and the government. These links are valuable in raising awareness and broadening employment opportunities as well as in ensuring higher-quality training. In an environment characterized by a slow-growing economy and strong competition for jobs, such links can prove advantageous.
- Integrate some type of work experience into the training classroom. It might make sense to consider a production unit or a mechanism that generates a level of income sufficient to make training centre services self-sustaining while providing work experience.

- Include in the curriculum a training unit on social skills, finance and marketing as well as some type of internship or on-the-job training in local companies. Each activity needs careful planning, and trainees need preparation and support for each component.

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For more information on high-tech augmentative communication systems, IICP suggests:

- Quest Enabling Designs Ltd. (United Kingdom)
- Toby Churchill Ltd. (United Kingdom)
- Penny and Giles Computer Products Ltd. (United Kingdom)
- The International Society for Augmentative and Alternative Communication (Canada)

Integrating Deaf Students – Mainstream Vocational Training and Education Programmes Adjust to Specific Needs in Australia

The Challenge

The Commonwealth of Australia enacted strong anti-discrimination legislation in its Disability Discrimination Act of 1992 and has a progressive record of inclusive policies for integrating people with disabilities into its state-funded programmes. However, legislation and policies do not always translate into reality. Australia's vocational education and training system (VET) is the main vocational training system for graduates of secondary schools. All VET courses are available to students with disabilities, but participation rates remain low.

The situation poses particular difficulties for Deaf individuals (see box). Mainstream secondary schooling does not necessarily prepare Deaf graduates who speak their own language, known as Auslan, for university or even vocational education, which is taught in English. Deaf students can therefore be at a significant disadvantage when they seek higher educational or vocational opportunities.

The challenge facing the Australian VET system in 2000 was how to turn policy into reality or, stated another way, how to provide the necessary services to support students with disabilities within the mainstream system.

Meeting the Challenge

The Government responded with its Bridging Pathways National Strategy for People with a Disability in Vocational Education. Using that framework and the funding it provided, the Adelaide Institute of Technical and Further Education (TAFE) system developed a model support programme to address the specific obstacles facing Deaf students. In keeping with the goals of Bridging Pathways, the programme allows for the integration into mainstream vocational training of Deaf students and illustrates how a government initiative can have a practical impact on people at the community level.

The Good Practice: Disability-specific support services to integrate Deaf students into mainstream vocational training.



• Background •

By offering education and skills training, the VET system provides the theoretical knowledge and skills needed for specific jobs. It delivers formal training that results in recognized qualifications at six different levels, from basic to more advanced. The system offers training in most industries, including mechanics, construction, horticulture and electronics. The most popular fields are business administration, economics, services, hospitality and transportation. In 2000, more than 37 per cent of VET students took coursework in these fields. More than 4,000 registered training organizations offered VET programmes, according to statistics gathered a year later. The training entities include Technical and Further Education (TAFE) institutions, universities, adult education providers and others.

Bridging Pathways. In June 2000, the Government adopted the Bridging Pathways National Strategy for People with Disabilities in Vocational Education and its blueprint for action. The strategy is a five-year commitment to improving opportunities for people with disabilities in vocational education and training. At its heart is an attempt to bring together several relevant sectors – government, disability and private – to address the inequities in the vocational training system that pose barriers to the employment of people with disabilities.

The goals of the Bridging Pathways strategy are to:

- Increase access to and successful participation in all fields of study by people with disabilities;
- Focus on employment outcomes;
- Create an accountable system that yields equitable results;
- Promote lifelong learning; and
- Enable people with disabilities to make greater contributions to society in terms of their economic and social life participation.

Major initiatives at the national level include:

- Development of an equity advisory service to ensure that national training packages are inclusive of people with disabilities;
- Establishment of Regional Disability Coordination Officer programmes to provide greater coordination of services for people with disabilities in vocational education and training at the regional level;
- Emphasis on research that will identify new methods to enhance equitable access to training for people with disabilities;
- Development of frameworks and systems to identify and raise awareness about important issues; and
- Formation of strategic partnerships between training institutes and the disability and private sectors.

The Deaf Community in Australia

The Australian Deaf community identifies itself as a specific cultural group and considers itself as “Deaf people” rather than as “being deaf”. The community uses its own language, which is known as Auslan. Auslan has its own grammar that does not translate into the written word. For people who have grown up using Auslan, English is essentially a second language.

According to Karen Lloyd, manager of the Australian Association of the Deaf, “Education is probably the single most important issue for Deaf people. Generations of Deaf children have been and continue to be ‘educated’ in a system controlled by people who are not deaf and who focus on deafness as a defect that needs to be ‘fixed’. The system attempts to educate them by using a language (English) that they do not know fluently and cannot fully access. ...[A]nd these generations of Deaf children have emerged with poor English skills, poor education, poor general knowledge, poor self-esteem and so on and so forth. Employment is probably the second most important issue for Deaf people. I say second because education is the key to appropriate and satisfying employment.”

• How the Adelaide Institute of TAFE Supports Deaf Students in Vocational Education and Training •

TAFE institutes are a significant component of Australia's vocational and education training system. The Adelaide Institute of TAFE (AIT) is based in the city centre of Adelaide and has an overall campus enrolment of 15,000 students. The number of new students each year who acknowledge a disability ranges between 500 and 600. Some 30 to 40 Deaf students are enrolled in AIT's literacy and numeracy programmes.

Courses range from hospitality and catering to clerical and other office work to the visual and performing arts. The duration of study programmes extends from six months to four years. The AIT campus includes a job placement office open to all students. The placement team works with the business and industrial community and directs students with disabilities to job opportunities. In addition, the team organizes employment forums throughout the school year that bring together students with disabilities. Specialized government placement agencies for people with disabilities operate outside the TAFE system.

Entering AIT. Upon high school graduation, a Deaf student applies to a particular course at AIT. With student selection based on academic merit, a Deaf student competes on par with other students. At the time of enrolment, students are invited to disclose voluntarily whether they have a disability and whether they need special support services.

Support services. Once a Deaf student is enrolled, he or she is encouraged to visit the Disability Liaison Officer to discuss any support needs. Some of the support services available at AIT include:

- Interpreters who can translate lectures into Auslan, a relatively costly form of support (US\$25 per hour).
- Specialized government-funded study programmes to assist groups of Deaf students in addressing literacy and numeracy difficulties.
- Auslan classes, which are essential for Deaf students who experience a mature onset of deafness and/or for students who grew up in homes in which Auslan was not used.
- Two certificate-level courses in Auslan. Students who wish to become Auslan interpreters are required to pass both certificates before progressing to the AIT courses in interpreting. A series of training workshops in basic Auslan are also available to interested staff and for people in the broader community. General instructors have access to a range of written material on strategies for supporting Deaf students in their classes.
- Counsellors available to all students to discuss personal, academic or integration struggles. The counselling staff includes one person trained in Auslan, though an interpreter also may be used in sessions with a Deaf person.
- Individualized services. For example, some Deaf students seek assistance with class assignments. In addition, three Auslan lecturers are on staff, and a Deaf general staff member is available to communicate directly with Deaf students. Finally, AIT is one of the few public facilities in Adelaide that has public telephone typewriters (TTY) for student use on campus.

Accomplishments

The success of AIT's support services for Deaf students has yet to be measured quantitatively, at least based on employment measures. However, the following provides some insight into the accomplishments of AIT's success in supporting Deaf students:

- A visit to the AIT campus suggests that Auslan is relatively mainstream. Its use is not limited to Deaf students. Given the availability of workshops and certificate courses in Auslan and interpreting, a number of hearing students practise and communicate in Auslan on campus. Deaf students are also taking the initiative to develop a Deaf culture on campus and have organized charity functions and other events.
- Auslan courses at AIT are making an impact on a new generation of high school teachers. The South Australian Education Department recently made a number of scholarships available to high school teachers for Auslan training at AIT. A large number of teachers are now fluent in Auslan. Their fluency is beginning to have a positive impact on educational outcomes, particularly in terms of the literacy and numeracy of Deaf students.
- A new generation of Deaf high school students is being influenced not only by teachers but also by AIT's Deaf students who have produced a video to encourage students to consider future study and training in the TAFE system. Deaf AIT students make presentations at campus Come and Try Tertiary Study Forums.
- Government and NGO staff members regularly participate in AIT training programmes in basic Auslan.

Lessons Learned

Given AIT's experience with opening its campus and classrooms to encourage the inclusion of Deaf students, most of the lessons learned involve communication:

An adequate number of staff members must be able to communicate in Auslan. For students to communicate, feel comfortable and learn, a sufficient number of staff must be trained in sign language. AIT arranges a series of nine one-hour workshops for front-counter staff in the basics of Auslan.

Training/educating the teaching staff is critical to winning their support. Basic sign language, awareness-building sessions and specific instruction in strategies for supporting Deaf students all need to be part of the training programme. It is also important to educate teaching staff about the tendency to interpret any learning problem as related to a disability rather than to the inadequacy of the student's earlier education or some other factor.

Budget limits for provision of interpreters are typically too low. The cost of interpreters is relatively expensive, and Deaf students are concerned about budget limits on interpreting services. More funding resources are needed.

Looking Forward

Some Deaf students are now working with students studying video production to create an instructional video on how to lecture to and how to teach and work with Deaf students in the classroom. The production should be completed by the end of 2003.

The Auslan programme plans to continue with the existing level of support and to work collaboratively with other service providers to educate and train members of the Deaf community. AIT plans to offer additional short Auslan courses for staff within the TAFE system and for workers from community service agencies that deal with Deaf clients. The expectation is that such workers will grow increasingly sensitive to the needs of Deaf students such that the number of service consumers will increase.

New students continue to be accepted into the literacy and numeracy programmes targeted to the Deaf. Both programmes are likely entry points for awareness about deafness and the acceptance of Deaf persons into the AIT or other campuses of the TAFE system.

Plans call for a focus on evaluation. AIT is seeking to partner with a university to assess its services for students with a range of disabilities, including blindness, mobility impairments and mental health challenges in addition to deafness. Such a formal evaluation will also assess the cultural sensitivity of those who come in contact with Deaf students at AIT.

Replication

The integration of people with disabilities into mainstream training institutions requires the administration's commitment and investment, which is often mandated by national policy. However, a policy is not necessary for training programmes and institutions to include students with disabilities and provide them with the necessary supports to succeed. Vocational training institutes planning to replicate the services offered at AIT should consider the following factors, many of which will apply to integrating other disability groups as well:

- Involve the Deaf community. It is essential to engage the Deaf community in developing any services or system that affects them.
- Ensure the availability of technology enhancements. Web sites, mobile telephone short message services (SMS), facsimile machines (invented by a Deaf person) and the visual message capability of telephone typewriters (TTYs) expedite communication for all cultures. These visual information sources, as well as staff

trained in their use, are important strategies for welcoming and assisting Deaf students.

- Engage in special outreach to Deaf students and applicants. It is important to visit schools and organizations to encourage Deaf students to participate in vocational education and training. Interpreters should be available to participate in both outreach efforts and information sessions to address the needs of prospective students.
- Undertake staff training and awareness building. Staff should be trained in basic signing skills that include, at a minimum, greeting messages so that Deaf students feel welcome. A training programme in basic sign language should be developed for interested staff, including frontline staff (such as those involved in course information and enrolment). Interpreters should be available to assist Deaf students with their initial contacts.
- Appoint special disability officers. The office and role of the Disability Liaison Officer or Student Support Officer should be established to coordinate all support services. Such an individual is a vital point of contact for both staff and students in providing information and training and in assessing and arranging support services (such as interpreters, additional educational support, counselling and so forth).
- Provide a range of language support services. It is incorrect to assume that the provision of an interpreter will accommodate all the needs of a Deaf student. Many Deaf students have the same need for language support as a person from another language background.
- Adopt creative and wide-ranging teaching methods. Adult learning methods such as working in a circle or breaking into small groups not only accommodates Deaf students and interpreters but also facilitates a valuable interactive learning environment for all students. The use of subtitled videos, PowerPoint presentations, handouts of lecture notes and Web links on course material are some of the many strategies available to ensure the clarity and availability of course material for all students.
- Create support groups and activities. Support groups of deaf students and activities for Deaf students can provide support and minimize isolation. Deaf students should be included in mainstream student events and activities. Special learning groups for Deaf students can address any deficits in sign language or literacy or numeracy skills.
- Address issues related to occupational health and safety. Interpreters require at least a ten-minute break each hour because of the physical demands of their role. Similarly, Deaf students require occupational health and safety training, especially for how to handle emergencies. Centre staff should ensure that signs are appropriately posted and clearly indicate emergency exit routes. A visual emergency alert warning system is ideal.
- Engage in advocacy and lobbying. In view of the difficulty in securing needed financial resources for interpreting services, staff and student training in sign language and wide-ranging support services for Deaf students, programme administrators will likely have to engage in lobbying efforts to ensure that decision makers comply with current policies and mandates, such as Bridging Pathways.

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Blind People Access Education in Fiji

In many advanced countries, blind and visually impaired students are integrated into schools and institutions of higher education. However, the practice is not as common in poor and developing countries, where education and training institutions lack resources for up-to-date training materials and equipment.

The Fiji Society for the Blind is the only national agency providing education, training, rehabilitation and related services to blind or visually impaired persons in a country of about 800,000 people. The society operates the School for the Blind but also mainstreams many of its students. In 1981, it began its mainstream education programme with help from a Helen Keller International consultant. Since then, more than 50 blind and low-vision students have attended regular primary and secondary classes. More than 50 per cent of those who attended the classes found open employment in fields such as teaching, music, office administration and factory work. One is even a policewoman. According to the available data, students who participate in mainstream education are more likely to find employment than those who completed their education in special schools for the blind. Of the 50 students mainstreamed since 1982, ten received or are currently enrolled in higher education beyond the secondary level.

One such individual is a female student at the University of the Pacific in Suva, Fiji's capital city. She was admitted in the fall of 2001 and is the first blind or visually impaired student to enrol in the university in its 40-year history. To overcome university administrators' apprehensions, the society staff conducted awareness-raising training and meetings to outline the responsibilities and expectations of both the Fiji Society for the Blind and the university.

The university's first blind student is now successfully pursuing her degree in education and language. To accommodate her needs, the university purchased a new computer and adapted speech and scanning software so that the student enjoys the same access to technology as other students. The Fiji Society for the Blind provided advice to the university on computer and software purchases and delivered training in their use. In addition, the society assists the student with counselling and support services. Lecturers and administrators have demonstrated resourcefulness in their efforts to meet the young woman's needs. With the society's help, they record textbooks and resource materials on diskettes, design special testing procedures and translate her Braille materials into written text.

Despite some apprehensions, the Fiji programme has had a remarkable impact thus far. University officials plan to ensure that courses and services are accessible to more blind and visually impaired students in the future. For example, the

university will provide appropriate adaptive technology and make buildings and lecture rooms accessible. It will also formulate policies to ensure the successful placement of blind and visually impaired students in the university system.

The Fiji Society for the Blind recognizes the need for new systems in regular schools to accommodate students with disabilities. To be successful, integration requires collaboration, commitment and understanding among all partners. Not all academic institutions in Fiji are willing to accept the society's mainstreaming initiative. Hesitant officials point to high costs, greater risk in terms of safety and security and the lack of government support. They note that special schools stand ready to teach blind students. Advocates maintain that costs can be shared among the stakeholders. For example, the University of the South Pacific purchased specialized speech and scanning software with a new computer while the Fiji Society for the Blind provided training and support services. In advanced countries, school or government-funded counsellors often provide needed training and support services.

Conditions for replication, explain staff of the Fiji Society for the Blind, require that the organization providing the integrated education programmes command the needed resources and expertise. It should also have capable students who are committed to success and demonstrate good independent living, mobility and communication skills.

According to Setareki Seru Macanawai, principal at the Fiji School for the Blind, "Many smaller island nations and developing countries in the region may find the Fiji Society for the Blind programme appropriate and affordable. It requires the existence of local expertise, basic resources and a strong network of committed organizations."

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Before the current trend toward community-based and mainstreaming programmes, vocational rehabilitation often followed a centre-based approach. That approach involved the establishment of large centres typically located in urban areas and the development of training and work programmes exclusively for people with disabilities. Many such facilities provided and still provide a full range of rehabilitation services that may include medical, residential, vocational and employment services.

Although the international standard for rehabilitation is now moving toward community-based and community-integration approaches, centres such as those featured in this section of *Moving Forward* illustrate how existing facilities are dealing with the realities of the current economy and the shift toward a more inclusive society. They also represent aspects of the ILO's Decent Work Agenda, such as providing productive work, adequate wages and long-term security.

Many centres are expanding their services to include community-based approaches that foster integration of people with disabilities into the community at large. For example, the New Life Psychiatric Centre in Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR) provides a range of services from traditional sheltered employment to various forms of community-based supported employment that can lead to open employment. New Life participants can enter the system at a point appropriate to their needs and advance through a series of vocational experiences that increase their skills and confidence.

Centres such as WORTH Trust in India offer comprehensive training and employment opportunities in industrialized settings that must adapt to rapidly changing economic conditions. WORTH's production officials expect their workers to perform at high levels; in return, WORTH Trust helps workers develop their skills and pays them wages comparable to those paid in the open market. WORTH Trust also offers technical assistance in business management and production expertise to other organizations throughout the world. Centres such as Eden House in the Republic of Korea serve groups of people with substantial disabilities who, owing to the nature of their special needs and a society that is not prepared to accommodate them, are less likely to become integrated into the open workplace. Eden House's workshop offers a variety of



production tasks associated with the delivery of environmentally friendly products and provides challenging work for clients with substantial intellectual impairments.

Today's work centres must pay equitable and decent wages and abide by a country's labour laws. At WORTH Trust, for example, a small portion of the workforce is unionized while the rest of the employees have established Work Committees to discuss workers' issues. Moreover, wages paid by WORTH are sufficiently high that many workers choose to remain at the centre. Eden House is required to make periodic reports about its compliance with government work centre policies. Like any employer, work centres must abide by safe work standards, and many are exploring how to provide insurance and retirement benefits.

While many organizations provide services for people who are born with or develop disabilities during their formative years, they often fail to address the specific needs of people injured on the job. Thailand's Industrial Rehabilitation Centre is an exception. It offers comprehensive medical, vocational training and guidance services for individuals with severe job-related injuries. It illustrates how to optimize the period of medical rehabilitation by offering vocational services simultaneously with the delivery of medical rehabilitation services. The vocational component facilitates the medical rehabilitation process and provides industrially injured persons with hope for their vocational future.

This section of *Moving Forward* features four profiles. Other sections also present examples of centre-based programmes, but in different contexts, such as service delivery in rural communities and the development of partnerships.

In addition, readers may wish to request a copy of the World Association of Supported Employment CD-ROM *Supported Employment, 2003*, which was produced with support from the ILO.

Trading the Workshop for the Worksite – Building Competency and Confidence Among People with Psychiatric Disabilities in Hong Kong SAR

The Challenge

Too many former clients of the New Life sheltered workshops for people with psychiatric disabilities were returning to the centre, as of 1992. Many reported that they had failed in open employment. They found the new situations overwhelming and claimed that they needed more training. New Life staff believed that the former clients were seeking refuge from the challenges of coping with open employment. As more former clients returned, the staff realized that, even though clients had learned vocational skills at New Life, they had not been properly prepared for adjusting to the new work environment.

Among the several issues affecting New Life's returning clients was the rejection of their job applications or, in the case of employed clients, the difficulty of managing the changes necessitated by meeting new people in the work setting or taking on new tasks associated with a given job.

In 1992, staff members of Hong Kong's New Life Psychiatric Rehabilitation Association recognized "a need to change" and offer "more realistic and comprehensive vocational services". If people with psychiatric disabilities were to move out of sheltered work and into open employment, they would need to build up their confidence as well as develop vocational competency. The public also needed to cultivate a more receptive attitude toward people with psychiatric disabilities and their abilities. How could one programme address all three needs?

Meeting the Challenge

New Life decided to take its workshops outdoors. Specifically, it realized that training in real-world work situations with ongoing support from a job coach would provide an effective learning experience. Instead of training people with psychiatric disabilities in an isolated setting, New Life created businesses and found jobs that required crews of workers in community settings. In fact, one of New Life's recent service contracts calls for cleaning and sweeping up around a popular campground.

In any given year, 200 people in the New Life programme benefit from the association's Supported Employment Service. The approach includes a range of job options. Workers

start with simple tasks and progress through job promotions and advanced skills training. Monetary incentives encourage upward mobility and underscore the importance of the work ethic. And, the programme emphasizes eventual work in open employment with ongoing support.

The shift required New Life's staff to become job coaches and to work alongside trainees. The programme emphasizes social skills, with work skills taught on the job. The staff devised a system that builds confidence through a gradual increase in responsibilities. New Life prefers work settings that integrate trainees with the public. Such settings offer preparation for dealing with encounters with strangers and the shift in workplace demands. They also offer a chance for the public to learn about people with disabilities and adjust biases.

The Good Practice: Supported employment service in a variety of fields with emphasis on jobsite training in community settings.



• Background •

The supported employment component is part of an already comprehensive programme offered by New Life. The association began operations in 1959 when a group of former psychiatric hospital patients organized the New Life Mutual Aid Club. In 1965, the club reorganized as the New Life Psychiatric Rehabilitation Association and offered a variety of services that now include temporary residential facilities for free or on modest terms, vocational training, sheltered employment and recreation and rehabilitation activities. New Life currently operates two long-stay care homes, one supported housing unit, 11 halfway houses, six sheltered workshops, one aftercare service, two training and activity centres and three hostels.

The Supported Employment Service is targeted to people with psychiatric disabilities in New Life's sheltered workshops and halfway houses. The approach, which New Life calls "placement training", provides employment opportunities in cleaning recreation facilities, car washing, working for a delivery service, selling vegetables in a stall or snacks and handicrafts in a kiosk in parks, retailing in a convenience shop and operating a restaurant. The association continues to provide classroom training in woodworking, handicrafts, sewing and printing.

When New Life opted to change most of its training to real-world work settings, it first set up a vegetable stall. Next, it opened a convenience store in a hospital. The New Life restaurant opened in 1998 and currently employs 33 people. In the 2002-2003 fiscal year, the restaurant earned approximately US\$350,000. It serves as a training space for several people with disabilities. Trainees develop restaurant skills and learn how to deal with a crowd of constantly changing customers, thus building their confidence in working with the public. Trainees also learn to work with a variety of colleagues (both nondisabled and those with disabilities), thus preparing them to cope with co-workers in open employment.

New Life currently operates six businesses termed “simulated businesses”, so called because the people working in them are considered trainees rather than employees, though they do earn wages. For work crew experience, staff members pursue contracts that are bid on in the open market for cleaning services. The first work crew contract acquired by New Life required the cleaning of a small barbeque area in a popular park. Under the contract, New Life had to recruit and train staff to operate cleaning equipment and grass mowers. As well, they had to learn about the Government’s occupational and safety regulations.

• The Structure of Supported Employment •

New Life’s trainees generally have been residing in New Life’s halfway houses and can choose a training mode from three possibilities:

- They can stay in a sheltered workshop for work training. This arrangement is typically appropriate for people who are not yet ready for employment.
- They can find a placement in open employment, such as in an office. This arrangement is typically appropriate for people who require minimal, if any, training. A job coach works with both the trainee and the employer to prepare for employment.
- They can participate in jobsite training in either a business or as part of a work crew. A job coach is an important part of the training structure.

The following describes the elements of New Life’s supported employment service for jobsite training.

An orientation programme. Every prospective trainee is orientated through a site visit and trial training period of about one month. Job coaches assess individuals’ work adjustment and performance during the trial period to determine their starting level. After a successful trial, coaches admit individuals as trainees.

Meeting individual needs with a rehabilitation plan. After a trainee chooses a field, he or she and a job coach set goals in an individual rehabilitation plan for the necessary skills needed for a specific job. The trainee agrees to spend six months in training before seeking open employment.

Many options. The jobsites offer a wide range of work activities that meet the different functional abilities of workers. In the case of the work crews, for example, simple tasks such as sweeping and general cleaning are suitable for workers with a lower functional ability or for newly admitted workers-in-training. Experienced workers take on more complicated jobs requiring multiple tasks such as tidying rooms or the use of advanced machines and chemicals. Not all jobs involve full-time work. Some jobsites require service only two days a week.

Work-habit building. The training elements focus on five objectives:

- Developing good work habits through demands for regular attendance, punctuality and work concentration;
- Building a good work attitude that is reflected in self-motivation, responsibility, problem solving, overcoming difficulties, work quality, discipline and flexibility;
- Enhancing social skills such as building relationships with co-workers, communication skills with supervisors, improving personal hygiene and image, seeking assistance when necessary, expressing emotions and developing cooperation and team spirit;
- Teaching work skills in cleaning, using tools and equipment, following regulations, handling enquiries, following safety practices and so forth; and
- Managing stress.

Intensive interaction with nondisabled colleagues and customers greatly improves interpersonal and communication skills. Workers cultivate support networks and positive relationships so that they can lean on each other in times of frustration and difficulty. Work experiences build trainees' self-confidence and self-awareness. Direct assistance from job coaches helps workers upgrade their skills and improve their attitude toward work.

Monetary incentives. The capabilities of New Life trainees tend to vary with an individual's progress during rehabilitation. To encourage improvement in a trainee's confidence and skills, New Life adopted a progressive training allowance scheme that links income and performance. The range of allowances, or payments, reflects trainees' actual performance, though the incentive averages about HK\$140 (US\$18) per day.

On top of the training allowance, workers receive an incentive payment of about HK\$42 (US\$5) per month for good performance. They receive another HK\$203 (US\$26) per month for full attendance. Shift workers receive an additional allowance. A worker's wages could reach about HK\$4,990 (\$640) in a typical month. Wages could go higher

if an individual works more than 26 days a month. The resulting pay is nearly comparable to that in open employment. In New Life's businesses, the income from sales covers the employees' and trainees' salaries. For the work crews, the contract fee includes the wages of the trainees.

Other incentives. In addition to the pay incentive, a promotion path helps motivate trainees to perform professionally. Workers start as "trainees" and graduate to "worker" status, a path that provides the first experience of upward mobility. More experienced workers can be promoted to foremen. The graduated positions give trainees a chance to work toward and achieve leadership roles. When in a leading role, trainees have a chance to help guide other trainees, further developing their social skills as well as boosting their confidence. The system inspires participants to work harder and provides a continual source of empowerment. The promotion path from trainee to worker to foreman gives participants the opportunity to explore their potential and experience a sense of achievement. They are required to work independently, to make decisions and to work with commitment, which, all combined, help prepare participants for open employment.

Advanced skills development. As trainees gradually assume increased responsibilities, they learn new skills appropriate to their competency. Skills might be associated with more demanding tasks, such as the operation of outdoor sweeping machines and indoor floor polishers.

• On-the-Job Guidance •

In all training situations, New Life staff provide the critical element of guidance and support in two ways:

Job coach. Staff trainers act as job coaches charged with two duties:

- Overseeing the performance of contract duties, with the delivery of high-quality service; and
- Providing trainees with supervision and support.

The amount of time a job coach spends with a trainee depends on the nature of the job and the person's level of ability. Someone placed in an office position may require little supervision, whereas a trainee in a store will likely need daily guidance in learning how to maintain the store and sell items. As a trainee's competency increases, the job coach gradually withdraws and thus helps build the trainee's confidence.

In addition to the assistance offered by the job coach, work crews are structured as support networks. Trainees can rely on each other for help. As team members, trainees also value their own work ability and their contributions to the crew.

Workers' meetings are conducted each day to discuss any difficulties or to highlight the efficiency of the work crew. Discussing the day's progress helps to instil further confidence in trainees and builds strong relationships among co-workers.

Counselling. New Life social workers provide counselling, advice and referrals for other services, such as house hunting or financial consulting for social security, taxes or other issues.

Alone Means Achievement for Mr. So

Mr. So lives alone in an apartment. By his measure and that of the New Life Psychiatric Rehabilitation Association staff, his independent living is a sign of success. Four years ago, he resided in the New Life Halfway House and had just joined its sheltered workshop for people with psychiatric disabilities. Within three years, Mr. So began working with the cleaning project at a popular campground, one of the nine New Life mobile crews that prepare trainees for integration back into the community and open employment. "I realized in the work project that my abilities were beyond what I was doing in the workshop," he says. After only seven months at the campground, he applied for a security guard position with a property management company and was hired. And that's when he went apartment hunting.

New Life first won the cleaning contract from the Sai Kung Outdoor Recreation Centre (SKORC) in 1998 and then renewed the contract in 2000 and 2002. SKORC is a popular day and over-night campground that offers the public recreation facilities, such as a swimming pool, a roller skating rink, squash and tennis courts, educational activities, bungalows, dormitories and a variety of indoor and outdoor activity centres.

The cleaning contract, which New Life won in open bidding, covers a wide range of activities and therefore requires coordination, teamwork, advanced skills and use of cleaning equipment. Because of the many visitors to the campground, tasks are highly demanding and must be completed within a rigid time frame and according to strict cleanliness standards.

The SKORC project has provided several chances for community integration. Workers meet campers (the public) every day and communicate directly with campground staff in carrying out their duties. Because the worksite is a highly popular public centre, workers constantly interact with nondisabled people.

• Open Employment Preparation, Follow-Up and Ongoing Support •

Trainees work in supported employment for an average of two years. They are discharged when they reach a level of independence. "We don't want them training forever," says Deborah Wan, New Life's chief executive officer. "They have to find a job."

When trainees reach a satisfactory work performance level, they prepare for discharge from New Life. They receive guidance in completing job applications, setting up interview appointments, developing interview skills and following up on job leads. New Life staff help trainees find job vacancies through the government placement agency or newspaper classified advertisements.

For a six-month period, a job coach follows the progress of a former trainee once he or she is hired. Follow-up may involve visits to the jobsite, discussions with the employer and telephone calls to the former trainee.

Accomplishments

Enhancing the self-confidence and self-image of trainees while upgrading their skills helps build a sense of empowerment, which New Life regards as an important output of its projects. That service users move from welfare dependence at New Life to self-reliance in society is another highly regarded accomplishment of the programme.

Before the launch of New Life's Supported Employment Service, more than 75 per cent of residents in New Life's halfway houses had no particular work activity or training or only minimal work experience. Given the shift from traditional training to real work experiences, the number of people moving into open employment has been impressive. The placements in 2002-2003 were as follows:

- 251 people (109 females) were engaged in the Supported Employment Service. Of these participants, 61 found individual training placement in open employment in office, clerk and cashier positions or on cleaning crews.
- Some 108 people, were working in mobile crews and 82 were working in New Life businesses. Salaries ranged from about HK\$1,500 (US\$192) to more than HK\$5,500 (US\$705).



Lessons Learned

Shifting from the workshop environment to real-world work situations involves much trial and error. It also yields experiences with invaluable insights, such as the following lessons:

A backup pool of workers is critical. If New Life is to maintain its work contracts, it needs to deliver professional, reliable and top-grade service. The reality of working with disabled trainees is that trainees often need time to develop a good work ethic. For example, a trainee may decide – for whatever reason – not to show up for work on a given day. Service providers need to recognize the possibility of erratic attendance and ensure that a staff person or another trainee is on call to fill a temporary vacancy.

Earning money during training builds self-respect and generates respect from the community. The empowerment gained from participating in a real-world work environment allows trainees to build up their self-esteem at a rapid pace. The income they earn adds to their sense of worth and their status as paid workers encourages respect from the public. The support of job coaches and social workers, combined with real-world work training and the demands of a contract, accelerates the rehabilitation process, often pushing many halfway house residents and sheltered workshop participants into open employment more rapidly than might be expected.

Work experience that involves interaction with the public offers tremendous training. Contacts with new people can be stressful. Without a work project as a transition, trainees would have few opportunities to prepare for open employment and self-reliance. Gradual integration into public situations with the immediate back-up of social support from co-workers and a job coach helps trainees adjust to meeting new people. At the same time, the positive interaction between disabled workers and community members helps build the public's acceptance of people with disabilities.

Looking Forward

New Life will continue its practice of using real-world work sites for its training activities, especially sites that employ cleaning and maintenance crews. It plans to continue offering integrated employment in supported rather than sheltered work settings. However, New Life needs additional service contracts and, with the hope of fostering the full integration of public and private sector interests, will seek out contracts with property management companies.

Replication

To begin, the New Life Supported Employment Service model requires worksites and therefore competent staff members who know how to find, bid on and manage contract work. Initial funding is also needed for equipment purchase. At the same time, replicating the New Life model requires trained job coaches familiar with the services required by the ongoing contracts; such coaches are essential for teaching appropriate skills. Not all job coaches need to have completed advanced education, but they do need to demonstrate a strong commitment to working with people. For example, supported employment requires weekend work and work beyond typical business hours. Especially critical to the success of such a programme is the promise of dependable, high-quality professional service in carrying out contract jobs. These factors and expectations must be considered in replicating such jobsite-based services. Once established, promoting the work through the media increases public acceptance of people with psychiatric disabilities and offers of employment and contract work.

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A Training Centre Changes with the Times – Institutional Self-Sufficiency and Challenging Jobs for People with Physical Disabilities in India

The Challenge

A model of originality and self-sufficiency as early as the 1960s, WORTH Trust's impressive work rehabilitation facility initially trained and employed people with disabilities, targeting those affected by Hansen's disease (leprosy). At a time when public shunning was common, WORTH purposely integrated people with Hansen's disease into its training programmes to try to address the discrimination. In addition, WORTH's unique approach called for creating a pool of workers with high-demand skills and thus break down stigmas and hiring barriers. Demand for training at WORTH rapidly outpaced capacity.

As time went on, WORTH created two more training centres and four more production units. Demand increased for WORTH's precision metal items as well as for its training and workers. But markets and demand change over time. How does an organization relied on by hundreds of people maintain its success and self-sufficiency over decades? How can it help people with disabilities move into the active labour force in a country where 80 per cent of job seekers fail to find jobs?

Meeting the Challenge

To maintain its success, WORTH found that it had to keep pace with the marketplace and change with the times. Though it needed to remain flexible, it also needed to adhere to the solid business principles and training practices that had led to its initial success. The formula seemed to work.

Consequently, it made dramatic change. WORTH switched from manufacturing once highly marketable metal items to fabricating less costly plastic objects. In addition, it dropped some skills development courses and added others, including, somewhat recently, a computer course featuring training in English and, in response to female trainees, a course in secretarial practices. At the same time, WORTH brought open-market conditions to its production centres. It is integrating its workplace in reverse by hiring some nondisabled workers. It pays good wages, provides benefits and facilitates workers' inclusion in mainstream community life by offering loans to help build homes and independence.

The Good Practice: Self-sufficient vocational training and work programmes based on sound business and rehabilitation principles and responsive to changing market demands.



• Background •

In 1963, the Swedish Red Cross started a Rehabilitation Industry Workshop in India that offered vocational training for people with disabilities caused by Hansen's disease. It also provided educational and corrective medical services. By 1970, the rehabilitation workshop started operating independently of the Swedish Red Cross and changed its name to WORTH Trust.

WORTH still provides counselling, outreach and physiotherapy to assist children with disabilities and their parents at no cost. Since the 1960s, it has operated a residential transitional school for children age four to eight years. The facility prepares young people to move into regular schools. More than 600 children with disabilities have undergone rehabilitation in the transitional facility and have moved into mainstream schools. WORTH also provides educational assistance, such as tuition or fees, to children of its trainees. In 1976, WORTH enacted a scheme to identify children with disabilities in need of assistance who could benefit from early intervention for physical, educational and social rehabilitation. In schools in the Indian state where WORTH is located, all children, whether or not enrolled in school, receive a free midday meal. Workers involved in the meal distribution have been trained to identify and report children with disabilities. WORTH then offers counselling to parents to help them understand the child's disability and the services available to them.

In 1973, WORTH adapted to the massive demand for its vocational training services and opened a Technical Training Centre and a production centre. Production managers imported high-precision machines to fabricate metal components that were in great demand for the manufacture of typewriters, calculators, automobiles, motorcycles and bicycles. To meet the production requirements of WORTH's several contracts, production managers hired disabled workers from outside sources as well as graduates of WORTH's vocational training programmes. The work required skilled labourers, and the WORTH training filled a large void.

When it started, WORTH's vocational training was of a higher quality than that provided by several mainstream vocational training centres. Companies that purchased parts made by WORTH's production centres began to hire into their regular workforce WORTH's skilled and well-disciplined employees with disabilities.

The same period saw an enormous demand for wheelchairs and tricycles, which were not then produced in India. WORTH designed and tested devices suitable for the local terrain and then started another production centre to produce assistive devices at an affordable price. Within the decade, WORTH built two more training centres to reach more people interested in its training services. WORTH courses are taught in line with the national curriculum standards. Graduates receive certificates recognized by the Government's education ministry.

Today, WORTH Trust operates three technical training centres, five production centres and two training centres offering instruction in computer and office skills. The income of the production centres finances all training, education, medical and operational expenses.

"Technically, the production centres are factories," explains Antony Samy, WORTH director. But Mr. Samy notes that the centres operate like a mainstream business. "We don't want to be dependent on the Government or the public," he says. "It is possible for people with disabilities to stand on their own." WORTH has been operating "on its own" for nearly four decades and is still going strong. "We're a well-run facility that changes with the times," adds Mr. Samy.

• WORTH's Programmes •

The training programme. WORTH offers two types of training:

- Formal training, which is a two-year programme, follows the Government's National Council for Vocational Training syllabus. Courses prepare trainees for jobs as machinists, lathe operators, welders or electronic technicians. Graduates receive a certificate demonstrating that they are qualified for employment in Government or the private sector.
- Informal training, which is also a two-year programme, for those who have not completed high school. Graduates do not receive a certificate. Skills are taught in welding, machine operation, electronics repair and basic computer use.

The training takes place in both classrooms and training workshops, depending on the skill. Both formal and informal programmes include on-the-job instruction in the WORTH production centres. In keeping with the Government's guidelines, the curriculum is organized around 60 per cent practical work and 40 per cent theory. Course enrolment never exceeds 16 people. Of the students in each course, five to eight are female.

Trainees with all types of physical disabilities in both programmes can stay in WORTH hostels at no charge, and the training is tuition-free. As already noted, production centre profits cover costs.

Production centres. Trainees and full-time workers in WORTH Trust production centres earn salaries comparable to those offered in open employment. WORTH bids in the open market for its contracts and must deliver professional-quality service to maintain those contracts. Therefore, demonstration of a strong work ethic, equal to what would be expected in a mainstream factory, is required of all WORTH employees. Production workers who are not WORTH trainees live in the community with their families and commute to the WORTH facility.

In addition to high-precision parts, WORTH makes and sells assistive devices on a nonprofit basis or donates them. Devices include wheelchairs, tricycles, abacuses and geometry sets for blind children, canes, pocket-sized plastic Braille slates and medicine pill boxes for elderly people and people with visual disabilities. In collaboration with the US-based Perkins company, production centre workers assemble Braille typewriters for export to the United States. The “Brillers” are made available at a highly subsidized price in India and other developing countries.

Wages. WORTH pays competitive salaries but could, because of its successful business, pay higher wages. Staff have opted for a system of remuneration that is fair to employees, though at a level that encourages them to seek open employment.

Worker representation. At one production centre, workers have organized a labour union; at the other four centres, Work Committees represent employee interests and provide a forum for discussing grievances or other issues with workshop management.

Job placement and support. In India’s environment of high unemployment for all types of workers, WORTH trainees find that, despite their skills, it is difficult to secure open employment. WORTH helps employees through a placement service that makes individual contact with potential employers. In addition, WORTH delivers business development training and provides information about where to apply for credit. Some trainees, such as those with welding skills, open their own shops.

Housing loans. To encourage the integration of workers into local communities, WORTH provides loans at very low interest rates for the purchase of land and construction of a house. Depending on a worker’s situation, the loans are repayable over a long period.

Training for trainers. WORTH provides training to trainers and managers from India and abroad who are interested in upgrading or starting training centres and production workshops for people with disabilities. The training for trainers takes place in the same courses offered to people with disabilities, thereby providing trainers-to-be with additional insights into various types of disabilities.

Advocacy. To help promote disability rights, especially with regard to employment, WORTH supports the lobbying activities of activist groups. In addition, it conducts seminars for government workers on the needs for accessibility and enforcement of policies affecting people with disabilities.

• How WORTH Changes with the Times •

Training courses in the 1960s focused on machine and lathe operations, welding and mechanical drafting. In the 1980s, WORTH discontinued the mechanical draftsman course in response to reduced demand for drafting services. By keeping in touch with market demands through employers, customers and former trainees, WORTH staff keep abreast of the market relevance of its training courses and make adaptations as needed. For example, WORTH added the electronics repair course in 1986 when staff recognized that the influx of electronic goods would mean the constant need for repair. Recently, in response to gender needs, the Rotary Club of Madras funded WORTH's addition of a basic computer skills course to broaden trainees' employment possibilities. Many of WORTH's female participants are interested in developing computer and office skills as well as skills in electronics repair. Teaching computer and secretarial skills along with English competency opens up employment options in small offices.

In its production centres, WORTH initially invested in the manufacture of brass and steel components, but as the costs of brass and similar metals increased during the 1990s, market demand shifted to plastic parts. In addition, technology improvements demanded greater "tolerance," or accuracy, in the dimensions of components. The companies contracting with WORTH, for example, needed components with highly refined tolerances beyond the capability of WORTH's traditional machines. To meet the shifting demand for cheaper but more sophisticated parts, WORTH invested in expensive computer-controlled injection moulding machines to make plastic component parts with high tolerance.

Accomplishments

WORTH Trust's accomplishments are significant. It is the only vocational training facility in India that covers its own costs and earns a surplus that supports its outreach and training activities. Each of WORTH's five production centres employs up to 50 people with disabilities, though not all the workers have participated in the vocational training programme. Its production workforce of almost all disabled workers is testimony to the abilities of people with disabilities.

WORTH production centres succeed in a highly competitive, global marketplace. Two of the five production centres have achieved ISO 9002 certification, which tells prospective buyers that the centres' products meet international standards and are suitable for export.

In April 2000, WORTH conducted a survey of the 1,174 people it trained since 1973. The results were significant in terms of long-term impact on employment, as the following data indicate:

- 852 (72 per cent) had factory jobs;
- 48 (4 per cent) had government jobs;
- 42 (4 per cent) were self-employed; and
- 232 (20 per cent) were unemployed or their status was unknown.

Lessons Learned

WORTH's four decades of vocational training experience and three decades of production centre experience yield valuable insights for people or organizations thinking about developing similar programmes. Some of the important lessons include:

Counselling services for trainees add a vital support ingredient to a programme. Guidance and counselling services assist people with disabilities in making appropriate employment choices that are in line with market realities.

A centre must change its curriculum with the times. While it is critical to know the market when setting up a centre or vocational training programme, it is essential to track trends constantly. Shifts in technology, for example, make some skills obsolete. If employment options for a skill decline, a programme needs to drop the affected training course and replace it with one that leads to employment.

A profitable production centre needs managers who understand the competitive market. Many well-meaning individuals who do not understand business nonetheless operate training and work centres. A good manager must see the production centre as an independent business competing in the open market. The centre must deliver high-quality products and service if it is to survive.

A production centre must be located near its market. It is often cheaper but imprudent to locate far away from customers, business hubs or the marketplace. If a centre locates itself some distance from its market or where products are to be delivered, it may not make its deliveries on time. With a few missed deliveries, a centre is likely to lose customers. Cost cutting is important, but not at the expense of maintaining customer contact and service.

A reliable power source is crucial. In developing countries, power is not always dependable. If telephones or fax machines shut down as a result of a power outage and a company is unable to communicate with its subcontractor, customers may go elsewhere. If a centre is located in an area that experiences any level of power cuts, it should plan for a continuous power supply by investing in a generator. The generator should be of sufficient strength to handle the peak hours of operation.

Looking Forward

WORTH intends to use more of its earnings for sensitizing the public about people with disabilities. It also plans to expand its outreach service to children and adults with disabilities and their family members. The goal is to provide more assistance to people with disabilities to help them reach their maximum potential in education, social life and employment.

WORTH intends to expand its line of assistive devices to include more products that support the education and employment of persons with disabilities. In addition, WORTH is researching potential products that fulfil the needs of India's increasing number of older people, such as better-quality wheelchairs, tricycles and chair lifts. It plans to continue to share its knowledge in production and product development with other organizations around the world, especially for devices targeted to people with disabilities. It is currently working with the ILO to train workshop personnel in Africa in wheelchair production techniques. It also plans to partner with the ILO in Asia and the Pacific toward similar ends.

Replication

Over the years, WORTH has provided training and employment for hundreds of people with disabilities. In the process, it has proven that production centres that employ people with disabilities can be successful and even generate surplus income, thus making funds available for other purposes. While many organizations may try to replicate WORTH's successes, most will attest to the difficulty of mounting a programme on the scale of WORTH. "Most people who plan to start a rehabilitation venture want to start big," notes Mr. Samy. "What they admire is something big and modern. They may not realize that such centres started humbly and grew over time."

The WORTH model and its success have been almost four decades in the making. In addition, WORTH relies heavily on local market opportunities and therefore belies direct replication. However, its highly industrial and market-driven approach to training and production has a great deal to offer. Even in an era of community-based and integrated employment trends, the realities of many countries suggest, first, that well-run productions centres like WORTH Trust can provide decent work alternatives for many

people with disabilities and, second, that certificate and trade-based training opens the door to good jobs.

Many self-help groups and cooperatives of people with disabilities aspire to the financial and production success of workshops such as WORTH, as do organizations in developing countries that want to manufacture wheelchairs and assistive devices. In the training programmes it offers to such groups, WORTH suggests the following considerations in replicating its approach:

- Realize that many rehabilitation ventures that are wide-ranging and modern started small.
- Remember that a market survey is essential to understanding what items are saleable and whether they can be manufactured within a certain country or region. Automotive parts, for example, are not in demand everywhere.
- Consider renting rather than constructing buildings at the outset of a programme. It is usually more economical. When the organization and business grow, the programme can construct a building based on real rather than imagined needs.
- Invest in capital goods, such as machinery, only after undertaking the required cost analysis. When such purchases are necessary, it is advisable to purchase (or even import) top-quality machines. Good machines that are reliable, durable and capable of producing high-quality products are cost-effective in the long run – if cost analysis supports their long-term use.
- Do not shift to the production of high-end products until the low-technology business base is secure. Upgrade technology regularly.
- Devote attention to location. Access to raw materials and markets for finished products cannot be ignored.
- Upgrade the skills of workers and constantly train supervisory and management staff. Time and resources must always be made available for human resource development, especially for staff who assume ultimate responsibility for quality and customer satisfaction.



WORTH Trust, India

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Cleaning Up and Creating Work – How Trash Bags Raise the Self-Esteem and Incomes of People with Multiple and Severe Disabilities in the Republic of Korea

The Challenge

In the Republic of Korea during the 1980s, people with disabilities resulting from cerebral palsy, autism, seizure disorders or intellectual impairments had few work options. They could not even dream of entering a work rehabilitation programme that promised productive activity, good wages and security. Such workplaces did not exist. Korea's typical approach to helping people with disabilities was a sheltered workshop that kept people "protected" or engaged in leisure activities. Employers who did offer jobs regarded disabled workers as charity cases in need of constant supervision rather than as capable and independent individuals.

Then, in 1983, a former judo player paralyzed from the neck down had a different vision – a workplace for people with multiple and/or intellectual disabilities. However, he quickly learned that creativity and innovation were essential if others were to see the employment potential of people with disabilities.

Meeting the Challenge

With five other people, also with disabilities, Jung Duk-Whan (see box, The Man Behind the Idea) created what he described as a "community workplace". It was called Eden Welfare Centre and was the country's first vocational rehabilitation centre that prepared people with severe disabilities for jobs that paid real wages for real work. While the existing welfare system provided protection, the Eden Welfare Centre focused on empowerment through employment. The centre produced electronic parts but also provided vocational counselling and on-the-job training. Then, when the Government started discussing the need for environmental protection policies, Eden's president discarded the electronics business and positioned the Eden Welfare Centre to become a major producer of environmentally friendly trash bags.

Today, the workshop, now called Eden House, produces 1,800 tons of environmentally safe trash bags a year, which amounts to 10 per cent of the entire Korean market. It employs an integrated workforce of 96 employees, 86 of whom are people with multiple and/or intellectual disabilities. The employees have a high sense of self-esteem

because they feel that they are contributing to a cleaner society by producing a useful product. And the work provides a variety of stimulating tasks rather than the more routine work of the electronics parts business.

The Good Practice: An innovative work centre that pioneered social integration and independence through meaningful employment and decent wages for individuals with substantial physical and mental challenges.



• Background •

Eden Welfare Centre opened in 1983 in Paju Kyonunggi province as a workplace for people with multiple and/or severe intellectual disabilities. It became Eden House in 1987 and is now both a residential and work facility. Along with its vocational programmes, Eden House provides social, educational and medical rehabilitation. A residential facility is located on the centre's grounds, but some workers live independently. Eden House is planning to institute a group home programme away from its current complex, but it is the Eden House production workshop that is the focus of this profile.

The production component of Eden House has gone through many changes and growth spurts since 1983. One of the more significant changes was Eden House's 1989 transformation from an electronics parts production centre to a manufacturer of plastic bags. When it became evident that electronics parts production would continue to yield low profit margins, Eden's management set out to achieve competitive power – the capacity to compete with private industry – and thus maintain a long-term workplace for its employees. Eden House had to find a niche. After completing a market analysis study, the management switched its primary business to plastic bag production.

When Eden House first applied to the government for financial support to change its manufacturing focus, government officials voiced doubt that people with severe disabilities could succeed in handling the complex processes involved in plastic bag production. Tasks included processing raw plastic, printing, packaging, supply management and marketing. Eventually, however, the Government provided the requested assistance. Eden's administrators then developed a methodical training programme and began producing simple plastic shopping bags. A year later, the facility graduated to the production of trash bags. In a strategy aimed at securing government contracts for trash bags, Eden House invited officials to tour its facility.

In 1992, Eden House upgraded once again to accommodate the more complex process of producing environmentally friendly (biodegradable) trash bags. The strategy positioned Eden House to compete for government contracts when the new environmental legislation scheduled to take effect in 1995 would require nationwide garbage recycling. Under the new law, all citizens and businesses would have to use special bags for recycling. Eden House won a contract to supply local districts across the country. To maintain that contract each year, Eden's bags compete with products made by other companies, and the Government tests the products to ensure that they meet specifications.

Each change in Eden's business required new equipment and new skills. Funding for the changes came largely from the Government in 1989 and 1990. In 1992, the Government, Eden House and private donors jointly contributed the US\$385,000 needed to upgrade the production system. With each change, workers underwent retraining for quality enhancement of their skills.

In response to the lobbying efforts of disability rights advocates, new legislation took effect in January 2000 requiring the Government to award contracts for certain products to organizations working with people with disabilities. One of these products is plastic bags. Producers have to maintain the same quality standards that apply to the private sector. Eden House has become one of the largest suppliers of plastic bags to government agencies.

Despite the 1995 and 2000 legislative changes that created markets for Eden House's plastic bag products, customers remained wary. To tackle people's biases, Mr. Jung developed high-profile awareness campaigns and opened the workshop facilities to the public to showcase the smooth-running operation. In addition, he pursued important international business credentials such as ISO 9001 certification for quality management and ISO 14001 certification for environmental management.

Environmentally friendly plastic bags are Eden's signature product. The workshop also manufactures other products, such as vinyl cloth, and operates a printing unit. More than 80 per cent of the entire production process is completed by people with severe or substantial disabilities.



- **How Eden House Trains and Employs Workers in Trash Bag Manufacturing** •

Eden House's capacity to absorb workers is limited. The facility provides assessment and counselling for many more people than it can hire in its production workshop. Those not accepted must be referred to other agencies and facilities. Eden House follows these steps in its hiring process:

Initial assessment. Vocational rehabilitation counsellors evaluate a person interested in joining Eden House. The counsellors assess the applicant's vocational abilities, including physical, daily living, language development, judgement and level of understanding. They also assess psychosocial traits, such as motivation, job-search capacities and family background. Counsellors take a complete vocational history and interview the applicant and his or her parents.

On-the-job assessment. After the initial screening, a prospective trainee is assigned to a production task for a month-long assessment of on-the-job performance. During that period, the vocational counsellors and worksite managers further assess the person's abilities and work with him or her on work habits and performance and help the prospective trainee determine his or her interests.

On-the-job training. After completion of the one-month assessment period, the official on-the-job training programme begins. It runs for approximately three months and includes a four-stage process that helps the trainee analyse work tasks, learn specific subtasks, develop appropriate work methods and set a schedule. Gradually, the training team, which consists of a vocational counsellor, engineers and worksite managers, provides more technical training, monitors performance and helps the trainee increase his or her level of output, which is tied to wages. When needed, the staff adjust tasks or devise adapted technical tools. People who experience difficulty in adjusting to a task continue in the training programme and rotate from one type of work to another until they find an appropriate task match.

Employment in the production unit. Once a person has completed the on-the-job training, the counsellors reduce their involvement in favour of a site manager who monitors workers. When a worker no longer needs the support of a counsellor and thus has achieved a measure of independence, he or she signs an employment contract.

Wages. Salary ranges from the minimum wage of 534,000 won (US\$410) to more than 1,650,000 won (US\$1,270) per month, depending on the task. Further, salary is based on productivity and is re-evaluated every quarter to ensure a compensation scheme that progresses with skills and output. In addition, workers receive a benefits package that includes medical, employment and industry disaster insurance as well as contributions to the national pension plan. The dormitory charges a fee and is available only to people who cannot commute.

Reaching Productivity Through Patience and Support

Yong-Jae Lee is 42 years of age and has Down's syndrome and autism. After completing primary school, he spent almost two years in an institution for people with severe disabilities. He came to Eden House six years ago with few skills and no employment experience. According to an initial assessment, Mr. Lee's judgment, understanding and ability to socialize were limited. Mr. Lee would not interact with anyone except family members. His physical abilities and health were good, and he could care for himself in terms of eating, dressing and managing his belongings. Even though he could not count and barely spoke, he could write.

During his period of on-the-job training at Eden House, Mr. Lee worked in the processing and packaging unit. Because he is unable to count, he packed bags but required considerable assistance in completing his work and was reluctant to ask for help when he needed it. When the on-the-job training ended after three months, Mr. Lee was assigned to the same unit and received the minimum wage, even though his performance was not up to the unit's standards. According to the staff, he continued to require guidance and support. But the staff's patience and support paid off. Gradually, Mr. Lee's performance, ability to work independently and social skills improved. Once "given up for hopeless" by his family, according to Eden House staff, Mr. Lee now works regularly and has shown marked changes in all areas of his life. He spends much of his leisure time surfing the Internet. Mr. Lee lives and works at Eden House where he hopes to remain.

Accomplishments

As vocational rehabilitation programmes in the Republic of Korea strive to become more competitive, the success of Eden House has made its training and production programme a model for other institutions. Eden's success has also contributed generally to the growth of vocational rehabilitation in the country. In addition, by giving workers with multiple disabilities and/or intellectual impairments a chance to prove themselves, the programme has changed public attitudes, with the proof in the popularity of the products produced by Eden House. In the words of one Eden House official, "At first, because of prejudice, we could hardly find a way to sell our products. Even local government officers distrusted us. However, after seeing what we could do, we gained their confidence."

On an individual level and over the years, Eden House has made a difference in the lives of hundreds of people. In 2001, 257 people received vocational counselling, with 20 accepted as trainees in the production unit. Last year, Eden House employed 86 people with disabilities, 27 of whom were women.

Since 1998, 42 people with disabilities from Eden House have been hired in the open market in businesses as diverse as an electronics factory, gas stations and various offices. Four people have started their own businesses.

Lessons Learned

The most significant lesson associated with Eden House comes from Mr. Jung's early belief that has been proven through years of experience: People with substantial disabilities are productive workers. With adequate training and job matching, people with substantial disabilities and intellectual impairments can succeed in both sheltered settings and open employment. In addition, Eden House has demonstrated that the following issues are important for creating the conditions that permit people with substantial disabilities to perform successfully:

Seeing is believing. An open-door policy and ongoing contact with government officers, politicians and others who influence public opinion or make purchasing decisions can mean the difference between a negative impression and no sales or a positive impression and a contract.

It is vital to lobby for legislation that provides or protects work. In the case of Eden House, support for legislation mandating a purchasing policy that requires a percentage of government funds to be spent on products made by people with disabilities led to guaranteed contracts.

People running a vocational production centre need to understand how to run a business. If the managers of a vocational production centre are not experienced in business, they should hire a management consultant to turn the business into an efficient operation. A vocational rehabilitation facility has to guarantee quality if it is to survive. A management consultant can advise about and develop systematic strategies for proper marketing, budgetary and production systems.

Quality improvement can strengthen competitiveness. The garbage bags produced by the vocational rehabilitation centre satisfy all government and commercial requirements. Unfortunately, the fulfilment of production requirements does not prevent prejudice in the form of product distrust, stigma and biased opinions that might limit the purchase of Eden House's products. To overcome these obstacles, Eden House aims to produce products of the highest quality. The ISO certification, which requires Eden House to meet international standards, helps break down many biases.

The Man Behind the Idea

A disability advocate and pioneer in the Republic of Korea's vocational rehabilitation and independent living movements, former judo sportsman Jung Duk-Whan is the founder of and driving force behind Eden House. In 1972, Mr. Jung suffered a training injury that crushed his neck and left him paralyzed. At that time, even people with mild disabilities were barred from entering universities or becoming judges. No laws existed to protect their rights, and they had few opportunities for vocational training or employment. The only facilities available to people with disabilities were welfare-oriented centres offering leisure-time and occupation therapy activities. Mr. Jung found that state of affairs unacceptable. He eventually took matters into his own hands.

"Our aim was to overcome the prejudice and discrimination that we had experienced from society," he says. The "we" refers to a small group of people with disabilities who helped establish Eden House in 1983. With them, Mr. Jung began his years-long mission of trying to change government systems and cultural attitudes that isolated people with disabilities from mainstream society.

The initial funds for Eden House came from personal savings and donations solicited by Mr. Jung's group. According to the Eden House philosophy, "The most important element in rehabilitating people with disabilities is to provide them with an opportunity for meaningful employment. Through the vocational rehabilitation programme, people with disabilities can become self-supporting and live independent lives. This gives them a sense of self-worth and validity within the community." At the outset, Eden House differed from other welfare centres of the time by turning its back on the "welfare" approach. Instead, it was the first vocational rehabilitation centre that offered real work and real wages.

Whether it was his severe disability, government constraints or financial setbacks, Mr. Jung was undaunted. As the Eden House profile illustrates, Mr. Jung put into practice his beliefs about people with intellectual and multiple disabilities. He developed a production centre where people work with pride and satisfaction. Eden House's environmentally safe trash bags not only provide workers with an income but also contribute to the overall social good.

As an ardent activist and advocate, Mr. Jung works tirelessly for amendments to laws and policies related to disability issues. In addition, over the years, Eden House has lobbied for major reforms to the Republic of Korea's disability policies. Successes include a revision to the Welfare of Disabled Persons Act that now requires both the national and local governments to give priority to products made by people with disabilities. A revision to the Contract Law with the State as a Party now grants the heads or contractual officers of the Government the right to sign

contracts. This revision allows private contracts to replace competitive bidding for the purchase of products manufactured by corporations established through the Social Welfare Corporation Act, such as Eden House.

Along with helping reform laws and regulations, Eden House has revolutionized the way society views people with disabilities. Mr. Jung himself is a case in point. In 2000 at age 55, he graduated from the Human Rehabilitation Department of Korea Nazarene University. Republic of Korea President Kim Dae-Jung awarded him a National Medal, and the university where Mr. Jung once competed in judo presented him with its Yonsei Social Welfare Prize.

Looking Forward

For the future, Eden House wants to promote a higher level of independent living among its workers. It plans to purchase land and organize group homes at a location separate from the Eden House complex. The new living arrangement will require new skills and increased community integration for the many Eden House workers who currently reside in Eden House facilities.

Eden House is also planning to operate a vocational rehabilitation research centre for the study of business management as related to training people with and without disabilities who want to manage a similar production centre.

To remain viable, Eden House is committed to following a long-term management plan that allows it to adapt to the changing market by developing and producing value-added products. In regard to ecological concerns, for instance, Eden House intends to research and develop an environmentally friendly vinyl product. The existing rehabilitation facility will be expanded to facilitate new training programmes that will create more employment opportunities for people with disabilities.

To accommodate its elderly disabled employees who are no longer able to work, Eden House plans to develop a facility that will permit the elderly to live with dignity in retirement. In addition, Eden House has plans for a Wheelchair Delivery Movement, an effort to aid people with disabilities in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Replication

Among Eden House's 86 employees, most are classified as having severe intellectual disabilities. They require a set of work tasks suited to their abilities while trainers must provide them with the appropriate training skills. An innovative work centre or production workshop starts with a good idea followed by a sound market analysis that identifies "niches" or areas with considerable room for entrepreneurship or pioneering development. Eden House began with and maintains a clear vision and specific goals. Its professional staff and sound management practices have made that vision a reality.

Within the Korean setting, Eden House founders seized on the potential market demand for environmentally friendly trash bags and took advantage of government policies related to the purchase of products made by people with disabilities. While Eden House's market position was helpful, such a position is not critical if a high-quality product is backed by solid market analysis and an aggressive marketing strategy.

In selecting products and services that form the basis of work and production centres, programme operators need to consider workers' needs and capabilities along with the product itself. Given that plastic bag production requires a range of abilities, it has particular value for workers with mild to substantial intellectual disabilities.

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“You Bring Me a New Life” – Returning Those Injured on the Job to Employment in Thailand

The Challenge

Not long after the Thai Government enacted workers' compensation legislation in 1974, it discovered that thousands of on-the-job injuries occurred each year. Many injuries left young workers disabled in some way. The Government also realized that, once injured workers collected their compensation, almost all returned to their rural villages, which offered little chance for decent work.

Officials in the Social Security Office responsible for workers' compensation believed that people disabled by work-related injuries could still be productive. To their thinking, workers could retain their independence if they were taught new skills appropriate to their new reality. The challenge was how to do it.

Meeting the Challenge

In 1980, the Thai Government sought assistance from the ILO for a feasibility study on building an Industrial Rehabilitation Centre. Two years later, the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) offered Thailand's Social Security Office five years of grant aid for buildings, equipment and technical support for such a centre. For its part, the Thai Government provided funding to buy land, install infrastructure and cover other expenses. Designed to help those facing the trauma of injury, loss of work and the resulting disruption to their lives and families, Thailand's Industrial Rehabilitation Centre (IRC) opened in 1985.

With 90 current staff members serving about 200 individuals each year, the IRC provides comprehensive medical rehabilitation, vocational preparation, job training and psychosocial and independent living services.

The Good Practice: Helping workers injured on the job return to work or find new employment.



• Background •

Thailand's workers' compensation law originally provided for vocational rehabilitation services. Then, in 1974, the Workers' Compensation Office started paying for hospitalization, even though hospitals offered only limited rehabilitation services at that time. As work-related injuries and rehabilitation needs increased, the Government identified the need for a specific organization devoted to rehabilitation and thus, in 1985, established the Industrial Rehabilitation Centre.

The Social Security Office of the Ministry of Labour operates the IRC. The Government provides a budget for the IRC's services from interest earned on the Workmen's Compensation Fund, which covers an injured worker's medical and vocational rehabilitation costs. The IRC dormitories and food are free, although other costs that exceed what is allowed during the rehabilitation process must be covered from another source. To cover the expenses that exceed allowable costs as well as costs associated with additional medical care, assistive devices, artificial limbs, start-up business loans or social activities, the Social Security Office established an NGO to assist the IRC. Known as the Kunakorn Foundation, the NGO has received Royal Patronage recognition from Thailand's monarchy and as a private entity enjoys more flexibility than the Social Security Office in seeking donations. The foundation makes funds available to clients whose vocational training costs are not covered by their workers' compensation.

Located in a suburb of Bangkok, the IRC accepts injured workers aged 15 years and older with job-related injuries or disabilities. However, the centre required workers to manage their daily routines on their own and to make certain that rehabilitation will improve their ability to work. Originally, the IRC opened to 100 people. Now it operates at full capacity with 200 clients, 80 per cent of whom are men.

• The Structure of the IRC •

The IRC runs a comprehensive rehabilitation programme. Its philosophy recognizes that each person seeking help has unique needs. During the admission process, a team of staff members counsels new clients in making decisions about their career path – do they want to return to their previous jobs, or do they want to learn new skills? If they have no idea what they want, they can observe other trainees and talk with staff people about options. An individual rehabilitation plan is developed in accordance with the person's history, physical condition and work intentions. Experience shows that many trainees who originally planned to return to their previous job in fact discover new potentials within themselves and, as a result, train for different careers.

Vocational rehabilitation typically coincides with trainees' medical rehabilitation period, which also takes place in the IRC compound (with visits to a hospital when needed). If the rehabilitation period extends longer than planned, a trainee incurs greater expenses. In such cases, the Kunakorn Foundation or other sources pay for rehabilitation until the trainee completes his or her rehabilitation plan.

Basic procedures. The basic procedure for rehabilitating workers is as follows:

- Admission and planning include an interview, tests and a rehabilitation evaluation for both medical and vocational needs;
- Workers have up to two weeks during the admission process to acquire information about options, to participate in an orientation session and to observe other trainees before making a plan;
- A counsellor is assigned to each trainee; and
- Trainees spend one-half of their IRC day in medical rehabilitation and the other half in job training, plus in recreation or other activities.

Medical rehabilitation. Medical rehabilitation is aimed at helping workers restore physical functions. The multidisciplinary team of 16 medical staff, including two nurses, five physical therapists, three occupational therapists, three prosthesis and orthotic specialists, assistants and other consulting doctors, allows for a full range of rehabilitation interventions according to the needs of injured workers. The team refers to outside services for corrective and reconstructive surgery or for other needs that the IRC is unable to meet.

ICR Services Help Keep Families Together

Six years ago, Aree Wongsam-Am's right arm was snagged by a hook in the meatpacking factory where she worked. She survived the accident but lost her arm. Overcome with depression, she feared the loss of her job and worse, her husband and child. She worried her baby might reject her because of the disability. While Aree went through medical rehabilitation, the IRC helped her obtain a childcare allowance from the Kunakorn Foundation. Aree spent many sessions with a counsellor and a social worker in learning how to cope with the change and how to deal with her family. She took advantage of the education courses available at the IRC and completed ninth grade studies. She was able to maintain her job at the meatpacking factory, and her husband works part time to help take care of their son and the housework. And her son, now seven, has no hesitations about kissing his mother's artificial arm.

Psychosocial services. As part of its holistic approach, the IRC devotes considerable attention to psychological and social rehabilitation. After their accidents, most injured workers lose their self-confidence, experience shame and sometimes suffer from depression. Their injuries are often the result of a severe traumatic event that affects all aspects of their lives, particularly family and community life. Injured workers often believe that their options are limited. The IRC's mission stresses the importance of preparing workers to face the changes in their lives.

The "resort-like" setting of the IRC offers injured workers a sanctuary from the trauma they have experienced. (Most people who take advantage of the IRC's services live at the IRC facility.) The exposure to people who have had similar experiences provides emotional support to the workers, especially new arrivals. By living together, injured workers are likely to share their stories and benefit from peer support. They also discuss their problems in one-to-one counselling sessions.

The other activities available in addition to rehabilitation include sports, music and meditation classes. Some trainees perform so well in athletic activities that they go on to participate in the Far East and South Pacific games for people with disabilities.

Family and financial services. Funded by the Kunakorn Foundation, social workers address issues related to family livelihood. For instance, social workers make home visits to advise families as to how they can adjust their routines and physical space for rehabilitated trainees upon their return.

Though families cannot live with trainees while they are in residence at the centre, the IRC takes a flexible approach for mothers with small children. It arranges a temporary nursery for them during their rehabilitation. In addition, the IRC helps coordinate assistance to cover baby food expenses and provides job guidance to spouses. In some cases, staff members help find jobs for spouses. Ruangrong Deepadung, the IRC director who recently moved to a new position, explains, "It is critical to take a holistic approach in working with people who come to our centre. But the rehabilitation will not be effective if their minds are unsettled from worrying about all the problems and responsibilities coming with them. Who will take care of their children? Where will they get the income? This is why we try to help out as much as we can."

Training of workers able to return to previous employment. A type of training termed "work preparation" helps workers refine the skills needed in their previous place of employment. Work preparation is usually a short course that runs for up to four months. The IRC staff work with employers to arrange suitable training according to a return-to-work plan. In most cases, however, trainees do not return to the same job because of the trauma they experienced and the limitations resulting from their disabilities. In the work preparation unit, skills training focuses on computer work, electronics assembly, bicycle repair, handicrafts and wood, metal and machine work.

A Former Safety Manager Offers Advice about Safety and Rehabilitation

Narong Limprasertporn worked as a safety manager at an auto parts factory until he was electrocuted on the job. The accident caused him to lose both legs. While going through medical rehabilitation, Narong learned to work with computers and to navigate in a wheelchair. As soon as he had regained his mobility, he drove himself to his former place of employment where he fortunately found a different but suitable job.

“You have to have strong determination to go back to work and good discipline in rehabilitation,” he says. “And make sure you keep one foot at your workplace so they don’t forget you.” Narong is now an avid speaker on safety for his company and other organizations. He has made special arrangements with his company and the IRC to return for rehabilitation services and constructive surgery when necessary.

Vocational training for workers needing new employment possibilities. Injured workers who cannot return to their previous job enter the more intensive vocational training process to develop new skills. Courses typically last from six weeks to a year. The staff includes 25 full-time instructors, including two with disabilities – an electronics teacher with an artificial leg and a teaching assistant in dressmaking who works with two artificial arms. Skills cover electronics, clerical work, small-engine repair, machine tooling, work, welding, woodworking, light printing, refrigeration and air conditioning, tailoring and industrial sewing. IRC instructors often organize internships and on-the-job training, especially for those who want to work in an electrical repair shop or in factories.

All skills training takes place in a classroom or an IRC workshop, with 11 workshops available for 15 job-training courses. Even though the IRC offers no sheltered workshop, the trainees who take a handicraft or woodworking course may earn some money from the sale of items produced as part of their assignments.

Entrepreneurship and special short courses. A new addition to the IRC’s menu of vocational training offerings is short courses organized in response to trainees’ requests. Courses range from a half-day to a few days and generally focus on setting up a small business such as hairstyling, farming or selling food or drinks. Specialists from academic institutions, NGOs and government agencies, along with experts in specific fields or successful vendors and shop owners, volunteer as guest trainers for the short courses.

Following a trend toward small and medium enterprise development, the IRC designed a special course called “young entrepreneur”. The course largely focuses on setting up and running a business. The IRC staff teach the course, but guest speakers, such as

successful alumni, frequently participate to share real-life experiences. The course is available three times a year for groups of 20 that express an interest in self-employment. The Kunakorn Foundation provides interest-free loans to graduates who want to start businesses.

Adult education classes. Most of the injured workers who participate in IRC courses have completed only a primary education. Accordingly, the IRC partners with the Ministry of Education and uses its classrooms after hours and on weekends for formal adult education. Classes are open both to IRC trainees and outsiders.

Employment services, discharge planning and follow-up. IRC graduates receive a certificate (nonaccredited) upon completion of their courses. Typically, trainees in the work preparation course are sent by their company. Thus, the company staff and the IRC work together with the trainee to plan training and discharge. Unfortunately, for those in vocational training interested in finding a new job, the IRC lacks a standard job placement service. However, instructors use their personal contacts to help graduates find employment. In addition, graduates are referred to the local Social Security Office and other service providers in their home communities. Job leads also result from media exposure. For example, a Thai television programme invites agencies and businesses to celebrate their anniversaries by talking about their activities and achievements of the previous year. When IRC officials participate, they generate several job offers for IRC graduates. Visitors to the IRC often provide connections to jobs as well.

The IRC does not have the resources to follow up with trainees after they leave the programme. Unless trainees return to the centre for an IRC anniversary event or to meet additional needs, the staff are not aware of their successes or difficulties. Staff members do, however, link clients to community-based organizations for follow-up assistance. The IRC has been coordinating with the Social Security Office and its regional branches to help with follow-up activities. When requested, the IRC will send a staff person to help a former trainee.

The IRC relies on a mailed questionnaire to collect updated data from its graduates. Questions cover family status, problems faced in the workplace, employment status, use of artificial hands or legs and so forth. Unfortunately, this method is not reliable because nearly half of graduates move after leaving the IRC and the questionnaire never reaches them. The development of a more reliable system for updating information and following up with graduates is an IRC priority for the near future.

Accomplishments

More than 2,600 injured workers have reclaimed their work abilities through the IRC. According to IRC estimates, about half of each year's trainees since 1998 have returned to their previous place of employment; about 40 per cent have become self-employed; and the remaining 10 per cent have found new jobs. Given that the IRC has not instituted a formal follow-up procedure, these figures are based on projections or the situation at discharge as well as on estimates returned from answers to mailed questionnaires and other informal sources.

"You bring me a new life," is a rewarding statement staff members frequently hear from the trainees, according to Ruangrong Deepadung.



Lessons Learned

The IRC recognizes that the process of returning seriously injured workers to some form of employment poses significant challenges. The following lessons might provide guidance to other vocational rehabilitation professionals in their rehabilitation efforts:

A holistic approach makes a critical difference. The IRC realizes that an injured body cannot be completely restored with just rehabilitation and skills training. Services must address emotional needs and the injured workers' social situation.

Small business development is an option for many permanently injured workers. Many workers do not return to their former jobs or even to formal employment, especially when a slumping economy means a scarcity of jobs. Training programmes should recognize the various paths to employment and, in the context of rapid economic change, provide courses in small business development, business start-up credit and links to follow-up support.

A rehabilitation centre must engage family members. Engaging family members in the rehabilitation process helps workers gain confidence and acceptance. Family support involves social worker visits to the family home while the injured person is undergoing

rehabilitation. Discussions should focus on how the family can help the disabled worker when he or she returns home without creating dependency.

Links with the former employer/job can be critical. The link between the employer and the injured worker is important, especially if the injured worker plans to return to work with that employer. The injured worker will benefit from the support of his or her employers and co-workers and the knowledge that a possible job is available after rehabilitation.

Programmes must prepare injured workers for the realities of returning home. Many injured workers experience a host of reactions, such as pity and discrimination, when they return home. The barriers and challenges to independent living at home differ from those at the IRC. Realistic preparation for these challenges is necessary to ensure trainees' successful integration in to their home community.

Many assistive devices are simple but can open up tremendous work options. Sometimes an injured worker simply needs a particular device to help him or her accomplish certain tasks. For example, a person with a prosthetic arm who has taken up farming needs an adaptation to handle a sickle. Similarly, a trainee with quadriplegia is unable to get a proper grip or maintain fine movement when using a soldering iron. He or she needs special gripper handles with fingers and a thumb supporter to assist finger movement so that he or she can pick up lead for soldering or adjust the soldering iron handle for ease of gripping.

Jobsite visits can be extremely effective. Many instructors use their connections with business and industry to set up worksite visits, on-the-job training and trainee internships. Trainees can see their options first hand and practice their skills in supportive settings. They gain confidence in their abilities and potential for work. Employers change their attitudes by watching injured workers perform successfully.

Training must keep pace with labour market trends and job opportunities. The IRC staff, some of whom maintain employment in the private sector and thus are aware of the job market, also study job listings. Their insights periodically prompt them to adapt the training programmes according to changing labour market needs so that graduates leave with marketable skills. In Thailand, most new jobs will be created in the informal sector, and the IRC is responding with new programmes in small business development.

An active public outreach programme is important. The IRC invites visitors to the centre, especially visitors from company human resource departments. "It is important that employers see for themselves what our trainees can do and how they do things," says Somsak Kanaprasertkul, an occupational therapist at the IRC. Employer visits not only help build the network of job possibilities but also raise awareness about accessibility. Employers are then more likely to create a disability-friendly environment in their workplaces.

Looking Forward

The IRC plans to expand its course offerings in response to an increase in small business opportunities in the labour market's informal sector. Vocational trainers and rehabilitation staff members are working with university professors to improve entrepreneurship training. The IRC also plans to work with technology-oriented institutions to develop assistive devices, such as new ways to use computer keyboards. In addition, the IRC, with Social Security Office funding, plans to expand and build four facilities in different regions to provide services closer to the homes of many workers. The IRC will also move toward establishing itself as a Southeast Asia regional training centre for rehabilitation staff from other countries. It will accept eight participants in 2004.

Because of the difficulties with graduates moving and thus not receiving the IRC follow-up questionnaire, the IRC is exploring other ways to keep track of the progress and problems of its graduates.

Replication

Creating a centre of the scope and size of the IRC requires a commitment on the part of government, a significant financial outlay, the availability of trained staff, expert consultation and guidance and, often, legislative and policy support. However, even a small rehabilitation or vocational training programme can turn to the IRC model if it plans to serve injured workers. The following considerations should be factored into the development of a service programme:

- Reach out to injured workers. Many vocational and rehabilitation programmes focus on people disabled since birth or by other causes and neglect individuals with industrial injuries.
- Build on their experience. Injured workers need and want recognition of their background and work experience as they undergo rehabilitation and prepare for new job positions. Their workplace knowledge is a strength.
- Advocate for the incorporation of vocational as well as medical rehabilitation provisions into laws covering workers' compensation and social security benefits associated with on-the-job injury and related matters.
- Add vocational training components to medical rehabilitation centres. As injured workers undergo medical rehabilitation, they could also explore and consider vocational options or even participate in vocational training.
- Seek employer input. It is important to work with employers, employer associations and government agencies that provide labour market information to ensure that training programmes are up to date and respond to labour force needs.

- Incorporate psychological consultation, social activities and spiritual elements into existing work or training programmes to create a holistic approach to medical and vocational rehabilitation.
- Identify or create a nonprofit organization (funding foundation) to subsidize services. A comprehensive rehabilitation centre requires a certain budget and considerable flexibility if it is to operate successfully. A government agency such as the IRC, which relies on the private Kunakorn Foundation, does not enjoy the unrestricted use of funds.
- Coordinate with different organizations, both government and private, to expand a programme's capacity in various aspects of rehabilitation, training and employment.

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Most training and employment programmes and facilities are located in populated areas and are often geared to formal, urban-based work. At the same time, most people with disabilities – an estimated 80 per cent or more in developing countries – reside in rural areas where employment options are limited and services inaccessible. The mismatch between service availability and geographic need is particularly burdensome for people with disabilities who, compared with their nondisabled peers, are more vulnerable to transportation barriers and more likely to face financial constraints. Even when rural-based programmes exist, they often exclude people with disabilities or fail to consider the unique needs of disabled persons. Women with disabilities face particular cultural biases in gaining access to education, training or employment opportunities.

This section of *Moving Forward* looks at programmes specifically designed to address the barriers faced by rural people with disabilities in finding suitable training and work opportunities. Most of the programmes offer a full range of services under the umbrella of one delivery mechanism, as they are often the only available service option. One provider or NGO typically delivers training, job-searching assistance or, more commonly, business development assistance, credit and other supports.

In Cambodia, the Alleviating Poverty Through Peer Training programme model addresses at least three of the barriers faced by people with disabilities: lack of transportation, low literacy levels and minimal access to credit. The programme uses successful village-based entrepreneurs to teach trainees with disabilities the technical and business skills they need to replicate profit-making microenterprises. The entrepreneurs provide practical, hands-on training in their businesses, which are often located in or near the trainee's village. The project offers trainees allowances and small grants and loans to help alleviate poverty and meet credit needs for starting microbusinesses.

India's Thakur Hari Prasad programme, which follows a community-based rehabilitation model, demonstrates how comprehensive rehabilitation, including medical, educational and vocational services, can be packaged into a community development approach to help people with intellectual impairments in rural areas. Like the other practices profiled in this section of *Moving Forward*, it demonstrates the need to take services to the communities where people with disabilities reside. But it goes a step further by training community members to serve as helpers and trainers.

The YAKKUM Rehabilitation Centre in Indonesia provides a full range of services to stimulate self-employment among its participants. Its comprehensive approach includes vocational training as well as subsequent business supports to handicraft producers, including assistance with distribution and marketing. The YAKKUM profile provides hope for rural-based organizations and for individuals with disabilities who are challenged by changing economic circumstances that threaten financial survival. The involvement of local village leaders to assist people with disabilities in securing land, space for a shop or other infrastructure for business start-up is another unique feature of YAKKUM's grassroots approach.

Finally, China's Green Certificate programme also illustrates the importance of collaborating with local authorities in rural communities to foster the integration of people with disabilities into existing rural training and development projects. When local authorities passed ordinances mandating the inclusion of people with disabilities into one of China's more successful programmes to train farmers and rural residents, a coalition of government agencies made the spirit of the ordinances a reality. The programme is achieving remarkable results.

Given that negative cultural attitudes and superstitions about disabilities are often strongest in remote and rural areas, disability sensitization and community involvement are frequent components of rural programmes. The models in this section seek to increase the incomes of disabled persons *and* foster grassroots social change.

Successful rural vocational services must reflect the nature of rural economies. For most rural areas, this means attention to self-employment, income generation and poverty alleviation strategies. Readers interested in rural programming will therefore also find the Self-Employment section of *Moving Forward* particularly relevant.

Readers may wish to consult the following ILO documents for more information:

*Alleviating Poverty Through Peer Training: Annual Reports
Community-Based Rehabilitation with and for People with Disabilities.
Draft Joint Position Paper. ILO/UNESCO/UNICEF/WHO, 2002*

Transferring Skills Villager to Villager – Alleviating Poverty Through Peer Training in Cambodia

The Challenge

When the ILO Disability Resource Team (DRT) project in Cambodia sought to integrate people with disabilities into provincial and other training centres in 1997, it came up against a tough challenge – by 1999, the project had become too successful! The number of disabled trainees increased from 3.5 per cent to approximately 15 per cent in the three targeted provincial training centres where the project operated. The project was so popular that more than 100 applicants with disabilities were waiting for services. Other problems surfaced as well. With distance and transportation as barriers, many people with disabilities could not reach the training centres. In addition, despite the project's promise of benefits, some people feared the separation from family, farm and income-generating activities. Moreover, some people lacked a basic education and were thus unqualified for the project's formal vocational training.

The dilemma was significant. Given its personnel and resource constraints, how could the project meet the high demand for vocational training and address the many barriers that posed obstacles to rural people with disabilities?

Meeting the Challenge

The solution called for creating “training without walls”. In a methodology labelled Success Case Replication (SCR), the project locates villagers with successful businesses and relies on them to train others. The ILO tested the method in Cambodia and whittled down the DRT waiting list by addressing the mismatch between the needs of people with disabilities and existing training opportunities. When funding for the ILO project ended nine months later, the SCR component showed enough promise that the Finnish Embassy funded a longer-term project that began in 2002. Named Alleviating Poverty Through Peer Training (APPT), the project focuses on applying the SCR model more widely.

The Good Practice: Helping people with disabilities start small businesses by using local entrepreneurs as trainers and providing business start-up support.



• Background •

The Economic and Social Commission of Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) in collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) originally developed the SCR model for a general population. From June 1994 to June 1999, this SCR pilot project achieved a 71 per cent success rate and helped more than 2,350 families in eight Asia and Pacific countries increase their annual incomes by an average of almost US\$450. The DRT project in Cambodia represented SCR's first application to people with disabilities. Given that the Cambodian people have traditionally transferred skills on an informal and personal basis, the advantages of the SCR approach seemed apparent to the DRT field staff. While the SCR methodology can never fully replace the system of formal, classroom-based vocational training, it does offer certain benefits, especially for poor rural people with disabilities (see box).

The SCR model also allows for training in skills not usually taught in formal training centres, such as soymilk production or construction of cement jars for collecting and storing rainwater. Trainees can also learn technical and practical business skills. For example, a stone cutting apprentice learns not only the craft itself but also where to buy or secure raw materials, how to market the finished items and success tips or "trade secrets".

Implementing SCR initially. In 2001, the ILO needed to make certain adjustments that would ensure the SCR model's success in Cambodia. Specifically, the model required new skills of the field staff and the cooperation of communities. The ILO launched one national and three provincial training workshops that focused on a systems approach as well as on the development of individual field workers' skills. The workshops increased field staff expertise and earned the support of national leaders. Also participating in the training were NGO and government field workers who could help identify successful local entrepreneurs. The three initial field workers were borrowed from the Ministry of Social Affairs, Labour, Vocational Training and Youth Rehabilitation (MOSALVY).

The ILO continues to implement the SCR model under the APPT project. It is working to refine procedures, to develop management information and evaluation systems and to provide staff training to new field workers. In addition to MOSALVY, which provides office space and some workers in the provinces, the ILO collaborates with

an international NGO, the World Rehabilitation Fund (WRF), which has provided, among other things, two field workers to expand the project's capacity further. The combined staff entails one manager, one support person and six field workers. Current project sites are located in Pursat, Siem Reap and Phnom Penh.

The SCR Model in Action

Locating and evaluating success cases. Field workers seek out successful microbusinesses, farmers or artisans. They learn about local successes by talking with prospective trainees, village leaders and colleagues and others. They interview duck farmers, hair cutters, producers of cement jars, producers of rattan mats and joss sticks, wood carvers, knitters, pig farmers and many others. Once the field workers identify successful businesses, they analyse the businesses to determine their viability and profitability. They ascertain the cost of raw materials, transport, labour, marketing and so forth and compare these costs to the income generated by a business to determine its profit. The assessment also benefits the targeted small entrepreneurs – many of whom have never conducted such an analysis but quickly learn how to do so.

If an activity looks profitable, field workers then assess the marketplace. Will the market sustain another similar business? One village might not be able to support more than one hair cutter, but basket weaving near tourist areas or in villages regularly visited by middlemen could sustain a group of producers. For example, in Siem Reap, home of Cambodia's famous Angkor Wat complex, tourism is on the rise, along with the demand for products for the tourist market. Basket weaving that uses natural products found in local fields provides the basis for both a village self-help group that caters to the tourist market and a company that exports baskets to the United States. Buyers go to the village to teach experienced weavers new designs. The weavers then share their know-how with others in the self-help group. The ability of the group to produce high-quality products in quantity appeals to buyers and benefits all the producers. As long as demand remains constant, an increase in the number of individuals engaging in income-generating activities does not seem to have an adverse impact on local markets.

Particularly in rural communities, assessing the market is not an exact science. Field workers must rely on their own knowledge of the local market and a community's needs and consider the possibility of gaining access to other than local markets.

Assessing trainers and setting training fees. With the assessment of profit and market completed, field workers find out if successful entrepreneurs are willing to train others. According to field workers, it is surprising how many people are willing to train others and are not afraid of competition. In some cases, such as basket weavers, new trainees can expand the trainer's market capacity and customer base. In addition, many people with disabilities agree to train other disabled persons after their own businesses are up and running.

Knitting Success

Mobility-impaired and without a wheelchair, 16-year-old Van Tuch was unable to leave her home. An SCR field worker heard about Van Tuch and met with her to find out about her needs and interests. He then arranged for Van Tuch to get a wheelchair and for her neighbour Im Sopheap to teach her to knit and crochet. With a small grant to purchase knitting needles and wool and a training fee of 80,000 riel (US\$20) paid to Im Sopheap, Van Tuch learned a skill. She now earns 60,000 riel (US\$15) per month knitting garments for people in the village and small hats to sell in the local market. Even though Van Tuch's income is not enough to sustain her, it nonetheless represents a contribution to her family while her work adds a new dimension to her life.



Some entrepreneurs offer training at no cost while others request a fee or charge for training materials. If the trainee comes from another village, the trainer may provide food and board, if compensated. Generally, training fees are higher for more profitable businesses. For example, cement jar making, which is a more lucrative business than knitting and requires a longer training period, commands a higher training fee. In Cambodia, training varies from two weeks to six months, and training fees vary from no charge up to 800,000 riel (US\$200). Phnom Penh, the capital city, commands higher fees.

Screening, selecting and matching trainees. Village leaders, provincial MOSALVY workers and NGOs help field workers find disabled people in need of services. Trained in interview techniques, field workers take applicants' histories and explore their interests, abilities and skills to determine what services are needed. The field workers then match people with disabilities to trainers based on mutual interest, geographic proximity and other factors. Many trainees already know of successful entrepreneurs in their own or nearby villages with whom they may want to train, or they might have developed ideas about businesses they want to start.

In selecting trainees, field workers assess the trainee's capacity for developing the technical skills needed to start and manage a small business. Sometimes, the trainer may become directly involved by conducting a short assessment or offering a trial training period so that both trainer and trainee can determine if they are a good match. In assessing capacity for developing a microbusiness, field workers may also look to family or self-help group members who may wish to become partners with the trainee or support the trainee's business.

Field workers also need to assess for any special trainees' needs related to both disability and poverty. Training allowances are available and paid to trainers or trainees to cover costs related to transportation, training materials, accommodations and so forth.

Establishing a practical hands-on training programme. Trainers must agree to teach the business and technical aspects of the skill or business in question and to share "trade secrets". When trainer and trainee, along with the field worker agree to the length of training and the associated fee, the trainer and field worker develop a simple written agreement that spells out conditions and fees.

Supervising and monitoring the training. Field workers need to provide support to the trainer and the trainee during the training period, intervene if problems or special needs arise and determine if the trainee is acquiring the skills needed for a successful business start-up.

Facilitating business start-ups. Business development planning begins early, even before the completion of training. Field workers and trainees determine the costs related to business start-up and make profit projections. The project offers grants and loans to trainees unable to secure credit through other channels. Grants cover minimal funding needs while loans, offered for 12 months at 5 per cent interest, usually assist those who need 200,000 riel (US\$50) or more. A business plan is a prerequisite for the receipt of grants and loans, and field workers are trained to help trainees and their families develop the plan. Additional loans help former trainees expand their businesses.

Regular follow-up is critical; in fact, field workers generally monitor and provide support for one year after the launch of an income-generating activity. Many trainers make themselves available for continued support and assistance. For example, one woman takes her former trainee's knitted items to a local market to sell to vendors. A pig-farming company makes a specialist available by mobile telephone 24 hours a day for emergency assistance.

Promoting multiplier effects. The term "multiplier effects" refers to replicating successful businesses according to market forces. For example, the company engaged in pig farming trained a woman with a disability in Pursat province. In turn, she trained 12 others in the required techniques and skills. To date, many people with disabilities trained under the SCR model in Cambodia have become trainers.

Project appraisal. To determine whether a start-up activity is a worthwhile investment, each trainee's case undergoes evaluation to determine training costs and the expenses associated with initiating the business as weighed against the income generated by the activity. Similarly, project success is measured in terms of total project costs and staff salaries versus outcomes. Evaluation reports are posted on ILO's *AbilityAsia* Web site.

Accomplishments

The first chance to field test the SCR methodology with people with disabilities lasted only from March to December 2001, at which time DRT project funding terminated. The Finnish Embassy, however, recognized the value of the approach and provided resources to continue and expand the SCR effort. Continuation of the work under the new APPT budget represented a major achievement. In terms of numbers of people served, the figures are as follows:

- Under the DRT project, 35 people were trained and 27 started businesses. Three field workers who also had other non SCR responsibilities achieved these results.
- Under the APPT project for the period March 2002 to June 2003, more than 160 people with disabilities were trained; of those individuals, 140 have started microbusinesses thus far. Many others have received other types of training, such as that offered by a mobile training unit in Pursat province. Trainees in Pursat also received assistance in setting up income-generating activities. Women comprise more than half of the Pursat trainees.
- Profits of former trainees in both project periods range from 60,000 riel to 480,000 riel (US\$15 to \$120) per month and higher, depending on the business. The profits compare favourably with a minimum wage rate of US\$45 per month in the garment sector.
- Under both the DRT and APPT projects, more than 130 NGO field workers and government staff and leaders received direct training in disability awareness and SCR. The training was both theoretical and experiential. Participants engaged in field work that involved interviewing and evaluating potential trainers. In a related accomplishment, field staff learned how to deliver effective training and as a result of the field staff's skill development, international consultants are no longer required as trainers.

Lessons Learned

One of the major lessons learned in the Cambodia project is that challenges can be met through simple yet creative low-cost solutions. Some of the more specific lessons learned include:

Change must be managed and training provided. When first introduced, the SCR model did not take hold despite the interest of national leaders and the DRT project staff. Although the method is relatively simple to implement, it nonetheless requires staff training, especially with respect to some aspects of business management, such as how to evaluate whether a business is making a profit. Further, staff needed to set forth goals and required encouragement to try the new approach and thus build their confidence.

Field workers who know the community and like to talk to people are particularly effective. A dynamic and outgoing field worker who is not reluctant to ask money or business questions is an important asset. He or she must know the appropriate fees for informal apprenticeships and understand local markets.

Developing government and NGO commitment facilitates sustainability. The support of government (both national and provincial) and NGOs is essential to the success of project implementation and to securing funding to carry out project activities.

The SCR model is particularly applicable to people with disabilities in rural areas. The SCR village-based approach is particularly appropriate for rural disabled persons whose barriers to formal training take the form of low literacy skills, limited mobility and transportation options and a general lack of resources. Learning by doing is an approach that suits people with certain types of disabilities. The “multiplier effect” (trainee becomes a trainer) empowers disabled entrepreneurs and encourages them to train other people with disabilities or, in some cases, nondisabled persons, often for fees that add to their overall profit.

The market demands constant assessment. If too many people start to produce the same products or offer the same services, the market could become “flooded”. That is the demand and low cost for the goods or services may decrease as a result of increased availability. Even rural markets can undergo rapid change and, therefore, require constant assessment.

Resources are needed for training fees, training allowances, grants and loans. While project costs are low in a country such as Cambodia, resources must be available for training fees, materials and credit. Given that resources for these purposes may be difficult to locate in rural communities, the project found it necessary to provide them.

Field workers must be mobile. To travel to rural communities and places most in need and to provide adequate follow-up, field workers must have reliable transportation. In this case, the project provides each field worker with a motorbike and the resources to use and maintain it.

A picture tells a thousand words. Photographs and simple examples of successful cases are invaluable for explaining the project, promoting the project to donors and conducting training.

A Trainee Becomes a Trainer

It took only two weeks for 19-year-old visually impaired Chea Saveun to learn how to make milk from grinding soybeans. She learned the skill from a neighbour and has established her own successful business by making, bottling and selling the milk. Her shop is located outside her home. With her first earnings, Chea Saveun bought an icebox and bottles. Her overhead costs include the soybeans, which she buys from the market, and a small monthly payment to her aunt who provides the electricity needed to operate the bean-grinding machine. Her income varies depending on demand – for example, she makes 8,000 riel (US\$2) a day but sells more milk at festival times. Overall, she is doing so well that she was able to secure a small loan of 400,000 riel to open a second “shop” at a nearby school. Her mother now operates the home-based shop while Chea Saveun works at the school. She also became a trainer, teaching another visually impaired woman to make soymilk. The other woman locates her stand at another school so that the two women do not compete with each other.



Looking Forward

The APPT project is continuing to assess the SCR model as it applies to people with disabilities in rural areas. It is developing improved monitoring and evaluation procedures. Through its Phnom Penh location, it is studying the application of the SCR approach to urban areas. After almost two years of field testing, the model seems well suited to rural people with physical impairments, many as a result of landmine accidents. While victims of landmine accidents have been the primary beneficiaries to date, the APPT project is increasingly seeking out people with other disabilities, especially those with hearing, visual and intellectual impairments.

Working with its partners, the ILO hopes to attract additional funds to expand the APPT project to other provinces. It is refining its procedures and starting to draft a manual that can be used for training purposes as well as for replicating the model. It also plans the development of additional training materials, a video and related promotional materials to facilitate project replication and expansion.

Replication

The SCR approach requires, first, the participation of successful entrepreneurs who are willing to train others and, second, the existence of markets that can support new businesses. Of course, funds are essential, especially for training fees, allowances, loans and grants. The SCR model can be incorporated into an existing programme, as was the case with the DRT project, or it can become a project focusing exclusively on the SCR approach, as was the case with the APPT project. Further, existing classroom-based training programmes can incorporate the approach into their curricula. The methodology also lends itself to families or groups that wish to learn and start a business together.

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Reaching Out to Rural Homes – Mobile Team Intervention for Families Living with Intellectually Challenged Persons in India

The Challenge

As a young boy, Medida Venkata Rao stayed home while his parents worked as labourers and his siblings attended school. Although he had only a mild intellectual disability, Medida was treated as if he had no potential at all. Left alone, he would play with younger children who encouraged him to misbehave. They taught him to tease girls as they fetched water. Eventually, Medida's behaviour frightened many children, and he grew rude to his family. When he became a young man, the community found Medida troublesome and shunned him – which only reinforced his bad behaviour.

While Medida was neglected as a child, others like him are overprotected or pampered. Children with intellectual impairments are often denied an education and rarely taught skills; some never even learn to eat or speak. As adults, especially in rural areas, they are unable to find productive work.

In the 1990s, a few of India's dedicated professionals recognized that people with intellectual disabilities had the right to lead fulfilling lives. They also believed that even in an atmosphere of economic obstacles and age-old cultural biases, communities and families could change how they treat people with intellectual disabilities. But how could people with intellectual disabilities in rural areas gain access to affordable training and rehabilitation services? How could parents and community members be transformed into service providers?

Meeting the Challenge

The Thakur Hari Prasad Institute (THPI) of Research and Rehabilitation for the Mentally Disabled believes that work can empower people with disabilities, even if that work takes the form of helping out at home. According to Vijay Thakur, project director of THPI's Community-Based Rural Project, the notion of work as a means of empowerment was an innovative concept for India in 1992, the year in which institute officials created a community-based programme.

The mobile Community-Based Rural Project reaches out to communities and organizes them to take responsibility for those with special needs. It provides medical and social rehabilitation, training and other services in neglected rural areas where people with intellectual disabilities rarely have a chance for independent or challenging lives. THPI committed itself to paying competitive salaries in order to attract high-quality staff, including physicians, physiotherapists and psychologists. The project strategy calls for a vocational training component that involves local volunteers who are paid a small stipend to train people with intellectual impairments, often on the job.

Today, the THPI Community-Based Rural Project relies on active community participation under the supervision of THPI's skilled staff, thereby helping an otherwise neglected segment of the population become productive and accepted community members.

The Good Practice: A mobile programme that penetrates rural villages and offers multidisciplinary services and community-based rehabilitation.



• Background •

Thakur Hari Prasad is a large organization that is the recipient of several awards. It was established in Hyderabad (southern India) in 1968 as a rehabilitation centre for children. Over the years, it has evolved into an institute employing more than 250 professional and paraprofessionals in paediatrics; clinical psychology; special education; speech pathology; psychiatry; occupational, hydro, art and music therapies and other innovative medical rehabilitation approaches. Its services focus on prevention, early detection and early intervention as well as on vocational training for people with intellectual disabilities. Its staff train trainers, arrange foster care for people in need, conduct research to develop training and rehabilitation models and advise the Government on national policy guidelines and community-based work.

The institute organizes seminars, conventions and sports events to raise awareness about the human rights of people with disabilities and advocates for integration through camps that serve all types of children. It produces for sale charts, manuals, books and audio/video tapes that deal with a wide range of subjects – from training in eating skills and horticultural therapy to education materials for people with intellectual disabilities in rural areas. Private donations as well as support from the Indian Government through the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment fund THPI.

• The Community-Based Rural Project •

Targeting rural needs. India's population includes more than 20 million people with intellectual disabilities. Until recently, the Government excluded such people from rehabilitation programmes. Instead, NGOs provided services in some communities but largely neglected rural areas. In India, more than 50 per cent of people with intellectual disabilities live below the country's poverty line. The situation for women with intellectual disabilities is particularly complicated. A concept of "eternal childhood" and protection of women dominates Indian culture. For example, a middle-class family is hesitant to send an adult daughter with an intellectual disability to a training programme that would enable her to go out of the home to work, explains Mr. Thakur. The family would, however, accept a training scheme that enhances the daughter's household skills.

In 1990, THPI officials wanted to fill the service gap for people with intellectual impairments in rural areas by creating a model of rehabilitation that could be replicated throughout the country. After researching and discussing strategies, THPI in 1991 started a family- and community-based rehabilitation programme targeted to rural-area people with disabilities. While the THPI model includes two small urban-based vocational training centres, its main focus is the mobile Community-Based Rural Project.

The rural project is based in Rajanadaram Mandal and serves about 36 villages. (India's division of states, which are further subdivided into districts and mandals. A mandal is composed of about 30,000 to 50,000 people.) The project's programmes in each village are time-bound, lasting two to three years. They prepare a community to take responsibility for its members with intellectual disabilities. During the prescribed time period, the programme conducts surveys, delivers services and training and provides regular supervision until the village can assume responsibility for residents with intellectual disabilities. The programme also uses a strategy of working with linkage organizations, such as primary health centres that already operate at the grassroots level.

The rural project team. Using a holistic approach to detect, identify and intervene as early as possible in the lives of people with intellectual disabilities in neglected areas, the programme's multidisciplinary rural project team pays attention to special needs for speech, language, behavioural skills development, social skills, gross motor and fine motor activities and development of leisure-time and vocational activities. The team consists of a paediatrician, speech therapist, occupational therapist, physiotherapist, psychiatrist, clinical psychologist, medical and psychiatric social workers and a special educator – all full-time employees of the institute.

Entering a village, organizing the community. When the rural project team goes into a new rural area, it solicits the support of the village leader, called the Sarpanch, and enlists women's groups and youth clubs as helpers. "We must enlist their help and empower the grassroots people; we just cannot do it alone," says THPI Director General Prof T. Revathy. As one of its first steps, the Rural Project Team conducts a door-to-door survey to identify people with disabilities. It next organizes a "camp" to assess people's aptitude and needs. Those with other than intellectual disabilities, such as vision or hearing impairments, are guided to the appropriate service or agency to meet their needs while the team targets those with intellectual disabilities.

During the assessment period, the team organizes a village committee made up of caring community members, parents of people with disabilities, teachers, artisans and other tradespeople willing to volunteer as trainers. The committee is the core support group and the key to THPI's success in rural communities. The team works constantly with the committee and trains it to assume responsibility for helping people with intellectual disabilities.

The team also identifies and works with linkage centres, specifically village-based organizations that provide a base for team activities. Linkage centres are often preschools or primary health care centres. Given that parents often go to the field or to work, the linkage centres are a place where parents can leave their children, if necessary. THPI trains the doctors at the centres to identify disabilities early and to make referrals to the team for needed services. (THPI is also training primary health centre doctors all over India in disability issues and how/where to make appropriate referrals.)

The rehabilitation plan. The team, along with a person with a disability and his or her family, develop a rehabilitation plan that can take one of three directions depending on the age of the person:

- Persons younger than 15 are integrated into local schools when possible;
- Persons who cannot take care of themselves because of severe disability or immobility receive home-based training in work skills, such as mat weaving; and
- Persons older than 15 are placed in local jobs and trained on site. Trades range from agriculture, carpentry, welding, pottery and white washing to plant nursery, cattle grazing and blacksmithing.

The committee also helps identify specific rehabilitation services as well as community members who can assist in providing services under the direction of the team.

Educational integration. Activities related to education receive the highest priority. In the absence of a preschool, the team helps establish such a school and makes certain that children with disabilities enrol in the school. Preschool enrolment begins the process of integration and fosters community acceptance of people with disabilities. Children function as an entry point in the process of changing adult attitudes. Activities in the centre focus largely on developing social skills among children with disabilities. Financial assistance to the preschool, as with the community-based programme, is time-bound and lasts for up to three years. Beyond the preschool, team counsellors work with primary school teachers and teachers at other levels to prepare them for students with disabilities who will eventually integrate into the regular classroom.

Working with families. If necessary, the team works in the home of children and adults who lack social skills; in this way, the team also counsels the entire family in how to help a person with a disability gain some independence – whether related to eating skills or house or agricultural work. Parents and siblings often become assistants in providing therapy for a family member with a disability. Workshops conducted for family members and other community volunteers help demonstrate how to train the family member with disabilities in the skills needed for employment. “In some villages, the grandparents play a key role,” according to Prof. Revathy. “They can be overprotective and not want the disabled person to go out. By training villagers, they can convince families and grandparents to give more independence to the disabled children and young adults.”

Additional team activities. Team members provide family, marital and behaviour counselling. They set up community development funds for use by families with a member who has a disability. Team members also help families obtain financial resources through bank loans and other government assistance. They raise awareness in families and communities about disabilities and about how people can help each other. They encourage the creation of support groups that involve people both with and without disabilities.

The team works with the village for two to three years before it moves on to develop programmes in other villages. During the active phase of village involvement, the team visits the village and provides or supervises service delivery approximately every three weeks.

Vocational training. Vocational training usually occurs on the job. For a period of one to three months, special educators train job coaches and instructors – usually women and youth from the village committee or people skilled in a particular trade – in how to teach the technologies appropriate for people with intellectual disabilities. Job coaches usually receive a stipend but not a salary. The type of training changes from village to village, depending on the local market and a village’s economic activity. The team or job coach negotiates with employers to identify training slots for disabled people. Once a trainee has reached a level of acceptable functioning, a wage is negotiated based on ability and output.

The team follows up on placements and visits individuals on the job. Placements are typically with small, private sector businesses common in mandal settings and often include positions in bricklaying, carpentry, animal raising, agriculture, tailoring and horticulture, to name a few. Some individuals work in the fields or help with home and community chores.

How the Rural Project Team Helped Medida

Medida, the boy perceived as troublesome by his family and community, met the rural project team during a village survey. At that time, he was 23 years old. The team found him hyperactive and unable to engage in constructive activities. He used unacceptable language and was physically abusive to his siblings. At the same time, the team described him as quick in acquiring skills, capable of good concentration and responsive to social reward. He showed real potential, and the team wanted to work with him to develop it.

Medida took part in training to learn how to take care of cows. By taking advantage of the community development fund started by the project, Medida's father bought a buffalo. It became Medida's responsibility to look after it. Being occupied in something productive and assuming responsibility seemed to result in positive changes. At the same time, the team worked with Medida by using reinforcing and other behaviour change techniques while encouraging family members to include him in household decisions. Community members also were involved.

Social workers counselled Medida about socializing outside his family. He volunteered to join a newly set up youth group in the village. At first, the group refused Medida entry because of lingering negative attitudes. The team talked with the youth group, which agreed to give Medida a chance. The youth group involved Medida in its main task, monitoring village sanitation. He learned about the importance of sanitation for good health and was further assisted by a village support group that helped with the monitoring.

The village children, who used to fear or tease Medida, gradually accepted him. During festival celebrations, the village leaders recognized his achievements. Now, Medida no longer stays at home alone. He often helps his father earn money by selling agricultural products.

• The Centre-Based Urban Programme •

THPI built two vocational training centres in urban areas to train, find job placements for and provide ongoing support to people with intellectual disabilities. Though most trainees come from urban areas, the centres also serve some rural residents and make hostel accommodations available for 30 trainees. Enrolment totals about 45 trainees each year, and each skills unit accommodates seven to eight people. Courses can last up to four years. Training takes place in classrooms; skill areas include carpentry, horticulture, offset press, letter press, book binding, tailoring, candle making, baking, home management, shop keeping and commercial cooking.

Job coaches work with trainees and are responsible for finding on-the-job training opportunities in, for example, a tea shop or chocolate factory. The job coach works as frequently and for as long as the trainee needs his or her assistance.

Accomplishments

Officials at the Thakur Hari Prasad Institute of Research and Rehabilitation believe that employment is a basic right. Therefore, they pioneered THPI's approach to prepare adults with intellectual abilities for entry into the job market. At the start of the programme in a given village, some trainees lack even the ability to feed themselves, but through participation in the programme they can complete various tasks and take pride in their considerable achievements. Other accomplishments include changes in family members' perceptions about the ability of people with intellectual disabilities, increased community acceptance of people with disabilities and empowerment of community members through the delivery of training to disabled people. And while the lack of job openings means that many people are not always placed in jobs for which they received training, the work behaviour developed during training facilitates individuals' adjustment to the work world and enhances their chances of success in any work situation.

Between 1991 and 2001, the community-based programme worked with 403 people with disabilities. Of them, 94 received skills training, 69 are now employed full time, 81 still apprentice, 91 receive home-based development training and the remaining 68 are still undergoing assessment.

In the same period, the centre-based programme has trained 146 participants, provided 110 people with job training and others received home-based support. The centre-based programme is intentionally small due to THPI's emphasis on working in rural areas.

Lessons Learned

Working with individuals with a range of intellectual disabilities and in different settings requires a strong multidisciplinary approach. Given that THPI set out to create a model that lends itself to replication, THPI officials have paid close attention to the programme's trials and errors. In developing a successful community-based programme, THPI has learned from the following experiences over the past decade:

Training core community workers reaps long-term returns. Typically, the rural project team works in impoverished communities. While many community residents are willing to help their fellow citizens, individuals' willingness to continue involvement over time requires some form of remuneration, including fees paid to community-based trainers. In order to sustain their interest and investment of time and energy, local trainers also need incentives in terms of raw materials, tools, maintenance of equipment and so forth.

Human resource training is a prerequisite for effective intervention programmes. Both grassroots trainers and local supervisors play important roles in ensuring the success of community-based programmes and overseeing an individual's vocational rehabilitation. Trainers and supervisors need to learn about disability issues as well as how to work with people with disabilities and how to manage a community's rehabilitation programme.

Success requires a strong community base. To sustain community-based interventions, a programme needs to be people- and community-centred as well as linked to mainstream programmes, such as nonformal education or adult literacy courses, rice distribution schemes and nutrition programmes.

Community centres are still needed. Not all interventions for people with intellectual disabilities can take place in a home setting. With the help of a trained paraprofessional or community worker, both children and parents can receive rehabilitation training and education at community centres. Group training saves time and money and results in needed social interaction and group support.



Looking Forward

THPI's plans call for expanding the ongoing programme by undertaking several additional activities. In addition, THPI expects to maintain and develop new partnerships with employers in order to sustain and identify more job opportunities. It also recognizes that to mobilize resources and reach more people it must network and develop additional linkages with NGOs and various agencies of the Government, particularly those with education and health oversight. The programme needs to reach out to more villages, perhaps necessitating the creation of another rural project team. Further, THPI sees one of its roles as promoting strategies that will encourage the Government to replicate the programme in other parts of the country. Finally, THPI plans to research and document the rural project team's success stories as a means of raising awareness and inspiring others.

Replication

Many aspects of the Community-Based Rural Project are worthy of replication whether or not the entire project is copied. In fact, the project was designed for easy replication in developing countries. It does not require facilities and does not incur overhead costs, other than for team vehicles. However, to ensure high-quality professional team members, a large investment in salaries is essential. Project success lies in building linkages with existing resources to meet the skill development and education needs of people with intellectual disabilities in rural areas. The central component is a village committee that works with the rural project team in surveying the population of people with disabilities and understanding their needs.

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Beyond Coconut Shells – Finding Vocational Solutions for Adults with Mild to Severe Disabilities in Indonesia’s Rural Areas Affected by the Financial Crisis

The Challenge

In the early 1990s, making wooden toys, tailored shirts and leather wallets provided a decent income for hundreds of people with disabilities who trained through the YAKKUM Rehabilitation Centre in rural Indonesia. But when the country experienced both a financial crisis and political upheaval at mid-decade, the marketplace changed, along with the earning potential of people with disabilities. Around the same time, the intense competition in open employment produced a crisis of confidence among graduates of the YAKKUM Rehabilitation Centre. Many of the graduates returned to YAKKUM in search of help. In addition, field workers started reporting that self-employed graduates were struggling and needed assistance.

By 1999, YAKKUM could not help but recognize that, first, a surplus of people were making similar handicrafts and that, second, job skills training was preparing people for positions that no longer existed. Clearly, YAKKUM needed to adjust its services to stay true to its mission of providing effective rehabilitation and vocational assistance, especially for people with severe disabilities who lived in rural areas.

Meeting the Challenge

YAKKUM’s eventual changes, seemingly small, testify to the power of good follow-up services and the importance of a rapid response to evolving needs: YAKKUM added “modern” and competitive training courses in areas such as computer skills; it offered seed money to former graduates interested in starting small businesses as either a main or second source of income; and it enlisted the skills of psychologists to help former trainees develop assertiveness in the increasingly competitive marketplace. With these adjustments, the income of many YAKKUM graduates returned to levels earned before the financial crisis.

The Good Practice: Follow-up mechanisms that detect problems and help current and former trainees maintain independent livelihoods.



One Woman Affected by YAKKUM's Changes

Former trainees such as Ni Nengah Wati benefited from the new approach. Since age six, Ni Wati, now 33, has been unable to walk. Because of her disability, she never attended school. She had no skills and no chance to earn income to help her family as she grew older. Then she attended YAKKUM, first in 1987 and again in 1991 and learned to cross-stitch and make toy animals. Upon finishing the training courses, she sold her handicrafts to YAKKUM's craft centre. Such was her success that she became her family's primary income earner. But then her sales orders declined during Indonesia's economic crisis. Ni Wati thought that she was somehow failing. In 2000, YAKKUM staff at the craft centre suggested that she start a second business. She decided to raise pigs, a typical project in her native Bali. YAKKUM offered "stimulation" money – part grant, part loan – to buy her first pigs and feed. She continued making handicrafts as well as raising pigs. Two years later, she had enough savings to build herself a house.

• Background •

In 1982, a man from New Zealand with support from church groups started the Bethesda Rehabilitation Project in Yogyakarta, central Indonesia. At that time, the centre was located in a house and offered a place where up to 20 people with disabilities could live and receive basic education. In a radical departure from the coconut shell crafts typically taught to people with disabilities, the centre offered vocational training in shoemaking and sewing. In 1987, the centre expanded its facilities to accommodate more people. It built dormitories where trainees could reside during training. In 1991, the centre became the Yayasan Kristen Untuk Kesehatan Umum (Christian Foundation for Public Health), or YAKKUM Rehabilitation Centre. By then, it was an independent foundation that received funding mostly from donor agencies and some private individuals. YAKKUM now provides medical, social and vocational rehabilitation programmes at a large facility in Yogyakarta. This profile focuses on its vocational services.

• The YAKKUM Vocational Training Approach •

Targeting rural areas. Under the YAKKUM approach, field workers locate people in rural areas who have mild to severe disabilities and who can benefit from the centre's services. The targeted individuals are the poorest of the poor and include those with disabilities attributable to congenital disease, polio, burns and accidents. Where possible, the centre arranges for corrective surgery, particularly in the case of club feet or cleft palates.

YAKKUM provides vocational skills training on three tracks:

- People seeking self-employment can choose a trade, such as tailoring or wood working. The training includes a course on managing a small business.
- People seeking open employment in factories study a particular skill.
- People interested in working in handicraft production learn techniques for producing soft toys, leather goods and wooden items.

YAKKUM offers two to three training cycles per year, with training courses lasting for two to three months. Depending on their needs, trainees spend one month to one year at the centre. If a client chooses woodworking and lives some distance from the vocational training centre, YAKKUM sends the individual to study with craftspeople in a city called Jepara, which is known for woodworking.

YAKKUM requires people unable to read and write to enrol first in special preparatory training aimed at improving their literacy. During this period, they also participate in vocational training courses as a way of discovering what they want to pursue when the literacy training concludes.

Outreach and follow-up. Always in search of clients, YAKKUM field workers continue to reach out to rural areas. They also monitor the work of graduates in self-employment or full-time jobs. Some parents remain fearful over the prospect of sending their children to the centre. In such cases, field workers use photographs as a means of documenting the centre's services and reducing family anxiety. In addition, YAKKUM invites parents to visit the centre.

Craft and production centres. YAKKUM set up the Craft Centre in 1991 to offer skills training and self-employment opportunities. Graduates become "producers" whose handicrafts are bought by the Craft Centre, but graduates do not earn producer status unless they make high-quality goods. About 160 producers currently receive steady income through the Craft Centre arrangement, which is based on an oral agreement rather than a contract. YAKKUM provides the producers with the raw materials they need. The producers work in their homes and are responsible for transporting their handicrafts back to the centre in Yogyakarta. As an incentive to ensure high-quality production, YAKKUM pays all the transportation costs of its producers if their goods are accepted. Some 40 producers have chosen to work at the centre where they have access to the equipment they need to produce their handicrafts.

After the Craft Centre buys the handicrafts from its producers, it sells them in its three outlet shops or exports them to European clients. Some items are also sold on consignment in the gift shops of prominent hotels. YAKKUM employs former trainees to handle quality control, packaging and distribution of the handicrafts it buys from the producers.

Every two years, the Craft Centre hosts a meeting of all its producers. The meeting focuses on a central theme aimed at improving productivity and incorporating new design trends into product lines. The meeting also offers training workshops intended to upgrade producers' skills and explores second-business possibilities. The gathering provides YAKKUM with the opportunity to follow the success or difficulties of its former trainees.

Tooling Leather Brings Independence

Suwandi, 30, is from central Java and a leather producer with the YAKKUM Craft Centre. Suwandi was 15 when he first attended the YAKKUM Rehabilitation Centre in 1987. Financial assistance from YAKKUM enabled him to continue his schooling at junior high school. He lived with his teacher during that time because his parents worked in other cities. In 1991, Suwandi began YAKKUM's vocational training course in leather craft. He now lives at his uncle's home about 110 kilometres from the YAKKUM Craft Centre. With the aid of short crutches specially made for him by the YAKKUM Rehabilitation Centre, he travels to Yogyakarta every month to deliver his leather wallets and other products.



YAKKUM also runs a production unit that employs 14 workers with disabilities who make leg braces and prosthetics. Another six people are employed in the metal workshop and manufacture the locks for braces distributed to people receiving corrective medical services in another YAKKUM unit.

• How YAKKUM Responded to the Needs of Its Current and Former Trainees •

The financial crisis that started in 1997 made a difficult economic situation worse. Even before the crisis, job opportunities were limited. Between 1991 and 1997, only five per cent of graduates found jobs in open employment. Only 28 per cent found full-time jobs either at the YAKKUM Craft Centre or with YAKKUM referral assistance. None sought jobs in the open market. Many vocational training graduates pursued self-employment or handicraft production.

So when the financial crisis hit Indonesia, even self-employed people had difficulty maintaining their income. Sales and orders for handicraft items fell dramatically. YAKKUM's field workers, typically involved in locating people in need of services, found themselves providing follow-up support to former trainees and thus were well positioned to detect difficulties early on. In addition, when even YAKKUM did not escape the hardships imposed by the financial crisis, it had to reduce its orders. At the same time, the handicraft producers began to ask for help.

Stimulation fund and business training. In 1999, YAKKUM managers decided to offer financial support for second-business start-ups to both former trainees who were self-employed and former employees who were producing handicrafts. With donor assistance, YAKKUM offered a "stimulation fund", which was half grant, half loan. The loan portion is interest-free, with repayments scheduled over a ten-month period. In some cases, the former trainee may repay the loan over whatever period of time the individual can handle. Depending on the region, typical businesses are pig farming and the sale of personal care items, such as soap. In remote villages, persons with disabilities are successfully developing snack-producing ventures, such as the sale of cookies or fried bananas. The products can easily be sold near schools or markets.

After YAKKUM approves a proposal for a venture, the applicant attends a two- to three-day training course in business skills at the Craft Centre. Parents of the applicants and village leaders are encouraged to join the applicant. "Village leaders have an important role in helping disabled people," says Sasangka Rahardjo, director of the YAKKUM Craft Centre. By understanding their needs and potential, village leaders can help facilitate working spaces for disabled people through, for example, the provision of land for pig farming.

Vocational guidance and training in "soft" skills. By analysing input from its field workers, YAKKUM officials realized that its system of permitting newly enrolled trainees to choose a training course was an ill-advised approach to training. Originally, after field workers located prospective trainees in rural areas, they would discuss different training options. Trainees would then select a training course, and field workers would arrange for the desired training at YAKKUM. But some trainees selected skills for which they were not well suited or for which support at home was absent. Consequently, many

failed their courses or were unable to apply their training in their own community. Sometimes the family was unable to finance a start-up business, buy land or rent retail space. Other times, a community's biases toward purchasing items from or using the services of a person with a disability brought about a business failure.

YAKKUM learned that many trainees did not know what they wanted to do or have a sense of what type of employment might lead to success. To address this "problem" as well as the emotional slump experienced by former trainees whose businesses had failed, YAKKUM sought the help of psychologists. Starting in 2000, the psychologists volunteered on a part time basis to provide vocational guidance and training in "soft" skills, such as assertiveness training, problem solving, group dynamics and speaking in public – skills often needed in self-employment businesses. The psychologists also counselled graduates and helped them select appropriate second businesses for them.

Now when trainees enrol at YAKKUM, a psychologist evaluates them through tests and interviews to assess their potential for specific types of training. Then field workers point out trainees' strengths and help individuals select courses suited to their capabilities and the social environment at home. The process results in a better match of trainees' preferences, abilities and opportunities.

To improve trainees' social environment at home and in the community, YAKKUM now invites parents and village leaders to its centre, with expenses paid, to provide awareness training about disability issues.

Computer courses. In 2000, the Microsoft Foundation's donation of hardware, software and funding for training helped YAKKUM develop courses in the high-demand computer skills required by a changing and contemporary employment scene. The training targets women in particular. Graduates of the courses typically pursue office work in open employment.

Accomplishments

YAKKUM has successfully met some of the organizational challenges presented by a changing labour market and unstable economic climate. It has proven itself to be a flexible, needs-driven organization. Its specific accomplishments include:

- Achievement of an excellent gender ratio. An average of 45 women to 55 men attend YAKKUM's courses each year.
- Donor funding. One private donor – a German philanthropist – provided funding in 1998 that continues to offer seed money to women with disabilities who are interested in setting up second businesses.

- Placement of graduates in jobs. In 2002, about 14 people took positions in open employment. Another 10 people found employment in furniture making and other woodcraft enterprises in Jepara, where they trained. The YAKKUM Craft Centre currently employs nine men and two women to handle quality control, packaging and distribution of producers' handicrafts. They earn a monthly salary of 375,000 rupiahs (US\$45). Another 17 people with disabilities work in the YAKKUM production unit.
- Satisfactory earnings. Nearly all of the 160 handicraft producers currently working for the YAKKUM Craft Centre live independently in their communities and earn, on average, 350,000 rupiahs (US\$42) a month or as high as 600,000 rupiahs (US\$72) per month. YAKKUM's record keeping does not include a complete accounting of its producers with second businesses, partly because some people work occasionally or in a group. Those engaged in pig farming, however, earn about 8,500 rupiahs per kilogram and own six to eight pigs that might weigh 60 kilograms at time of sale.

Lessons Learned

YAKKUM's mission to provide effective rehabilitation and vocational assistance requires the continual examination of programmes and adaptations when needed. YAKKUM's lengthy experience in working with people with disabilities has yielded many lessons, including:

Graduates need support once they return to their villages. Field workers engaged in follow-up monitoring provide support and guidance when needed.

Village leaders can help YAKKUM help others. If only one disabled person resides in a village, he or she most likely will feel alone and isolated, but the support of the village leader helps foster community integration. In addition, the village leader's support helps encourage a person with disabilities to consider and succeed in developing a business. In some cases, a community leader can help provide land or a location for a business.

Monetary incentives promote better quality control. Open-market standards must be applied to products if goods are to be sold to the public or exported. Given that some producers have to travel great distances to deliver their work, they can incur significant transportation costs. Linking such expenses to quality assurance has proven effective.

Field workers can be limited in their assessment abilities. Psychologists are better skilled than field workers in detecting individuals' potential and providing counselling. Most workers benefit greatly from assertiveness and other "soft" skills training before they return to their communities.

Looking Forward

The YAKKUM Craft Centre intends to establish links with other institutions to provide additional training courses. One plan calls for a partnership with the Academy of Fine Arts in Yogyakarta to teach batik design with natural dyes.

The director of the YAKKUM Craft Centre will pursue consultations with the ThaiCraft Association, an organization in Bangkok that provides a roaming marketplace and Web site for Thai handicrafts. Through ThaiCraft, YAKKUM hopes to learn about the management of specialized marketing events to promote and sell local handicrafts.

The Rehabilitation Centre's administrators will strengthen their lobbying efforts to acquire a higher level of grant assistance from the Government to fund its services. YAKKUM aims to be less dependent on private donations, though the move toward self-sufficiency may prove difficult over the short term. The Rehabilitation Centre also intends to expand its community-based rehabilitation services.

Replication

Replication of the core programme as presented in this profile – a rehabilitation centre that targets people with disabilities in rural areas and provides corrective medical services, vocational training and financial support for business development – requires a reliable source of funding and a multidisciplinary staff. In addition, strong links to handicraft markets are essential to ensure the sustainability of a service that hires former trainees to produce goods. Such a service also requires a manager experienced in sound business practices, design and quality assurance. With those elements in place, the steps to building a holistic centre can involve the following:

- Hire a talented crew of field workers who are not averse to travelling to remote areas. Workers do not need to be highly trained. In fact, secondary education is sufficient, but field workers do need to demonstrate a strong interest in working with people with disabilities and must exhibit sensitivity to their needs. Training can facilitate sensitivity. Field workers also need to commit to monitoring graduates once they return to their villages.
- Pursue the possibility of part-time volunteer work for psychological services, especially when funding is limited. Skills training should include assertiveness training and other social skills development.
- Demand quality control and devise an incentive system to encourage a high level of craftsmanship, thereby ensuring handicraft producers a reliable source of income.

- Provide family members and village leaders with accommodation and financial support for transportation so that they can visit the Rehabilitation Centre, particularly if families appear reluctant to let a family member with disabilities participate in training activities away from home.
- Develop a vocational training curriculum that focuses on marketable skills and teaches the importance of learning about market opportunities. As YAKKUM learned, it is critical to link with other organizations or institutions to share training costs. When seeking donors, it makes sense to cast a wide net. For example, by providing equipment and funding for training, the Microsoft Foundation helps communities in developing countries exercise their right to information.

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Raising Scorpions to Raise Income and Reduce Poverty – Integrating People with Disabilities into Agricultural Training in Rural China

The Challenge

Initiated in 1990, the Government's Green Certificate Training Project aimed to teach farmers how to improve their skills and increase their agricultural output. Better yields would mean higher incomes and an improved quality of life for millions of impoverished farmers. However, even though nearly one-fourth of China's rural disabled persons live in poverty and could benefit from skills training, the training project did not target people with disabilities.

By the end of the 1990s, the China Disabled Persons Federation (CDPF) estimated that 40 per cent of rural persons with disabilities had the capability to do some type of work but lacked the necessary skills. While government hiring quotas helped people with disabilities find jobs in the formal sector, the same quotas had less impact in the rural provinces, which depend on agriculture. A group of provincial CDPF officials wondered how to change the situation and reduce poverty rates among the rural population with disabilities. How could people with disabilities gain access to opportunities such as the Green Certificate Training Project and improve the quality of their lives?

Meeting the Challenge

In 1998, officials with the Heilongjiang Disabled Persons Federation, a provincial branch of the CDPF in northern China, lobbied the provincial government to issue administrative policies, or "Notices," mandating the integration of people with disabilities into programmes such as the Green Certificate Training Project. Once the provincial government responded affirmatively to the federation's request, officials of the federation formed alliances with government agencies and other programmes that deliver services at the township level.

Primarily, the CDPF worked with the Department of Labour and Social Security and the Department of Agriculture, Fishery and Animal Husbandry to help meet the needs of people with disabilities in rural areas. In a partnership that was unique for rural China, the three counterparts built on one another's strengths: a high level of knowledge about people with disabilities and their needs, considerable experience in vocational training and familiarity with agricultural skills.

The Good Practice: A rural-based integrated training programme resulting from official policy and innovative partnering.



• Background •

China's Disabled Persons' Federation was established in 1988 to protect the rights of people with disabilities and provide a range of services, including employment assistance. The Government funds the CDPF, which, in return, assists the Government by studying, formulating and implementing disability-related laws, regulations, plans and programmes. With offices at the central, provincial, municipal, county and district/township levels, the CDPF is highly structured. In Heilongjiang province alone, the CDPF operates 1,554 local branches. In 1995, those local CDPF offices conducted a survey to determine who among people with disabilities was interested in training in agricultural production and techniques or some other type of business. Armed with the survey data, the CDPF drafted a proposal to the provincial authorities for a formal directive aimed at overcoming negative attitudes about training people with disabilities. In adopting a policy directed at popular perceptions, the provincial government provided special financial resources and administrative mechanisms to move toward the realization of that policy.

"It was an easy process," says Dr. Zhuoying Qiu, a researcher for the China Rehabilitation Research Centre. Within a few months, the administrative government agreed to the passage of two policies: the Notice on Actively Supporting the Vocational and Technical Training for the Disabled Persons and the Notice on Actively Organizing the Rural Disabled Persons to Take Part in the Green Certificate Training Project.

The pioneering province. Heilongjiang is an agricultural province of 38 million people, including 1.3 million with a disability. Of those with disabilities, approximately 124,000, or 9.5 per cent, live in poverty. About half of all people with disabilities earn a living – however modest – from some type of agriculture.

As required by the two local policies, a total of 13 prefectures and cities and 67 rural counties, or 70 per cent of Heilongjiang province, immediately took action to include people with disabilities in mainstream training programmes.

The Green Certificate Training Project. The Green Certificate Training Project is a national programme (though it does not operate in every province) aimed at improving farming practices and farmers' agriculture skills. It provides expertise in planting techniques, animal husbandry and veterinary skills, aqua-culture, agricultural machinery, forestry, water conservancy, irrigation and agricultural products processing and other related skills. Many training courses focus on applying new skills to agricultural and rural income-generating activities that require low investment but nonetheless represent an opportunity for high income, such as raising scorpions (see box). Instructors are agricultural experts; the instruction takes the form of lectures, field work and follow-up guidance. Upon completion of the course, trainees take an examination in order to receive a Green Certificate, which is a "badge of credibility". The certificate is not a prerequisite to employment in farming or any other line of work, but it is a merit degree attesting to knowledge or skills qualification.

Government officials report that the Green Certificate training makes a difference in people's incomes. Average earnings are 30 per cent higher for farmers with a Green Certificate than for farmers without such a certificate. In regions where the Green Certificate project provides training, income in rural areas is 24 per cent higher than in rural areas of regions that do not offer Green Certificate training.

A Green Certificate for Scorpion Skills

The training programme in Tieli county of Heilongjiang includes education in the skill of raising scorpions, which are used in Chinese medicine. Scorpion farming caught the imagination of Fei Ziyu, a physically disabled man. In his first year of tending scorpions, 4,000 of them, Fei increased his annual income to 3,000 yuan (US\$360). Overjoyed with his success, Fei volunteered to train other physically disabled persons. He organized a course for eight people interested in raising scorpions. Fei hopes that other disabled people can have a chance to earn a higher income and live a decent and comfortable life. Raising scorpions is just one example of skills taught to people with disabilities in rural areas. Training courses focus on applying new skills to areas requiring low investment that lead to a significant rise in income.

- **How the Mainstream Training was Adapted to Include Participants with Disabilities** •

In an effort to improve and increase training opportunities for people with disabilities, the two notices required local branches of government agencies and organizations to work with people with disabilities at the county and township levels. Accordingly, the local CDPF in Heilongjiang province assumed responsibility for planning, implementing and monitoring the integration of people with disabilities into agricultural skills training projects. A Local Coordination Committee composed of officials from the three Departments of Education, Labour and Social Security, and Agriculture, Fishery and Animal Husbandry, and others coordinated the resources made available to the project by administrative sectors and technical departments.

The CDPF provincial office developed training plans and provided technical support. It initiated specialized training of Green Certificate and other mainstream project instructors in how to incorporate the training of people with disabilities into their work plans and how to teach people with specific disabilities. At the same time, the Heilongjiang CDPF invited instructors already experienced in training people with disabilities to teach in Green Certificate and other mainstream formal and informal training courses. The CDPF also created quotas for training in different geographic areas and for people with different types of disabilities.

Ordinary vocational schools, training centres, local government-run vocational employment institutions and private institutions – all of which already focused on training in agriculture, fishery and animal husbandry – opened their doors to people with disabilities. These various institutions, called “training sites”, receive financial support from either their local government or the local CDPF to cover the cost of training people with disabilities.

Informal courses. Under the umbrella of the Green Certificate Training Project, the CDPF created informal courses tailored to the needs of certain disability groups or people living in remote areas. The courses, delivered at “training stations”, are not available in formal training facilities but only at locations such as a farm, a business or a CDPF office. Many of the courses offer apprentice-type training, often in a one-on-one arrangement that brings together, for example, a farmer and a trainee. In fact, instructors typically are farmers or businesspeople or even former trainees with disabilities who have volunteered to train others with disabilities. Some work on a volunteer basis; others receive compensation from the CDPF for training time and supplies.

Both formal and informal training programmes under the Green Certificate Training Project run from one week to one month, depending on subject matter. Special courses for people with disabilities are not of any fixed length but instead are flexible to meet the needs of trainees.

Support services. Training agencies within the Department of Agriculture, Fishery and Animal Husbandry began the vigorous recruitment of people with disabilities from rural areas for participation in the Green Certificate Training Project. The CDPF connected people not interested in the Green Certificate to other training activities. The CDPF created or extended existing support services, such as sign language interpretation, vocational planning and referral, counselling and medical rehabilitation.

The administrative notices included a provision whereby the Government funds the CDPF to cover service costs so that people with disabilities can attend some type of training. For instance, while the Green Certificate project charges participants a training fee ranging from 50 yuan to 300 yuan (US\$6 to \$40), CDPF funding covers fees, transportation, food and lodging costs for people with disabilities.

The CDPF provides former trainees with financial resources that come from a variety of government agencies and programmes. The assistance generally takes the form of low-interest loans or grants to be used as “seed” money to buy start-up supplies, such as seeds or fertilizer for farming, or to set up a business, such as raising scorpions or dogs.

Adjustments in granting the Green Certificate. Instead of requiring that people with disabilities take the formal examination for the Green Certificate, some instructors offer shorter, less formal written tests. In the informal courses, instructors assess the progress of participants by observing trainees’ use of their newly acquired skills.

Follow-up. For a period of up to three months, trainers visit with former trainees to offer guidance and check on their situation. The CDPF assists trainees by helping them develop business plans, providing market information and, if necessary, even helping former trainees gain access to markets by coordinating the transport of their products. People with disabilities can call on the CDPF any time as problems arise.

Accomplishments

CDPF’s efforts have paid off. Many people with disabilities in Heilongjiang province have joined the Green Certificate project. Various government agencies made poverty alleviation loans available to people with disabilities to help them apply their training. As of mid-2002, the Green Certificate project had trained more than 6.7 million farmers nationwide; of them, 80,600 had some type of disability. Specific achievements resulting from the issuance of Heilongjiang province’s two notices include the following:

- The wide-scale teaching of agricultural skills to persons with disabilities set a precedent and stands as a model. The impact of the effort is measured by the fact that the number of persons with disabilities who had received any type of agricultural training increased from 2,357 in 1996 (training provided by the CDPF and mostly

in urban areas) to 20,405 in 2000. In 2001, 3,442 people with disabilities received training, followed by another 8,425 in 2002.

- People with disabilities in rural areas earn higher incomes. The Green Certificate project has helped 87 per cent of the 80,600 persons with disabilities who have received training since 1998 rise out of poverty. Some 9 per cent have become relatively rich with an average income of 2,000 yuan to 3,000 yuan (US\$243 to \$363). Farmers with disabilities in Heilongjiang province raise scorpions, fish, sheep, pigs, cattle, chickens and ducks. Many grow fruits, grain and vegetables. Some operate repair services or have opened their own fishery or animal husbandry businesses.
- The Government's investment in the project totalled 170 million yuan (US\$20 million), with fees totalling 138 million yuan (US\$16.6 million). The project accounts for 63,000 training sites (institutions, CDPF agencies and so forth), 19,000 stations for apprentice-type training (informal locations, such as someone's farm or business), 15 million textbooks and the production of more than one million sets of audio/visual teaching materials.

Lessons Learned

CDPF's targeting of the Green Certificate training represents a unique undertaking in China; no other effort integrates people with disabilities into a mainstream training programme. Some of the specific lessons learned in achieving success include:

Government policies help overcome resistance to the inclusion of people with disabilities in training programmes. Before the project's implementation, very few people with disabilities received any type of training. The issuance of the notices fostered an environment of change and authorized a mechanism – the CDPF – to coordinate the collaborative work of local agencies. The notices also provided a funding source to cover costs for training people with disabilities.

Low formal education need not be an obstacle to practical training. The low level of education or even agriculture experience among many people with disabilities has been a significant obstacle to training. With the help of CDPF instructors, however, Green Certificate trainers learned how to adapt their teaching methods to the needs of trainees, often relying on practical examples more than is typically the case, thus making learning easier for all types of trainees. The trainers proved that, even without much formal education, most people, including those with disabilities, can learn new skills and apply them.

Not all experts make good teachers. CDPF officials eventually recognized that agricultural and technical experts required training in teaching techniques and disability issues so that they could effectively pass on their technical knowledge to others.

Increased assistance to trainees increases participation. CDPF administrators noticed that even simple supports, such as providing food and accommodation, encouraged more trainees to attend the courses.

Looking Forward

In Heilongjiang province, the Green Certificate's agricultural training programme and related services will undergo additional development as part of the Socio-Economic Plan 2000-2005; in particular, the plan aims to reach more people with disabilities and further alleviate poverty in the province.

The CDPF will use the plan as an example of good practice to encourage other provinces and programmes to adopt a similar model.

Replication

The Green Certificate Training Project sets a positive example for other developing countries of how to improve economic conditions of people with disabilities in rural areas by increasing access to mainstream training courses. Few disabled farmers would otherwise enjoy an opportunity to receive such training. In this case, the project achieved integration through the enforcement of government policy. In some countries, it may be necessary to lobby more actively for legislation that mandates the inclusion of disabled people in existing or new programmes. Clearly, local authorities' cooperation can be an effective tool.

In replicating the approach, programme developers should ensure that training course subjects are diverse and responsive to the unique opportunities of a geographic area, such as its natural resources and market opportunities.

Courses should take different approaches and vary in duration so that all trainees can benefit regardless of their educational level and experience. Apprenticeships and formal and informal training are useful approaches.

Two important dimensions of the Green Certificate Training Project were instructor participation in the training sessions about disability and the special supports and accommodations for trainees with disabilities. Finally, integrating people with disabilities into the Green Certificate project demonstrates the importance not only of developing a policy on integration but also of implementing the policy with financial and equipment, as well as human development, support.

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People with disabilities want to choose how they work and lead their lives and how they support themselves and their families. For many, however, tight labour markets, inaccessible workplaces and discrimination leave self-employment as the only option for economic gain. Others may prefer self-employment or find that such employment is the primary method of generating income in rural areas, where most disabled people live. While small entrepreneurs working in the informal sector often contribute to national economies, too often informal workers lack decent work protection and job security. Effective self-employment programmes that address the disadvantages of participation in the informal sector can be particularly critical for people with disabilities and families with disabled members.

This section of *Moving Forward* describes four self-employment programmes, each with a unique approach to entrepreneurship. They embody the elements of successful self-employment programmes: market analysis and business development training, counselling, marketing assistance, access to credit, long-term support and follow-up and special outreach and support services that meet the needs of people with disabilities.

Two of the four profiles feature self-help groups with disabilities – “social” entrepreneurs that turned their initiative to the economic sphere. These groups – the Rehabilitation Alliance Hong Kong and Sri Lanka’s AKASA – have come to recognize that economic power is a prerequisite to both living independently and securing political influence.

The Rehabilitation Alliance Hong Kong (RAHK) raised the necessary venture capital from lenders and donors to purchase a 7-11 convenience store franchise. Alliance members quickly became employers as well as entrepreneurs and hired mostly disabled people to work alongside nondisabled workers in ways that capitalize on the strengths of all. If entrepreneurs in the truest sense of the word are risk-takers, then the RAHK fits the bill. In fact, in the RAHK’s second attempt at business ownership, it experienced failure. Learning from its mistakes, the group has returned to a successful formula based on sound business principles and now plans to expand its portfolio business.

Sri Lanka’s AKASA programme, which targets women, and Thailand’s Nakhon Pathom Disabled Association are examples of grassroots efforts that initially set out to organize people with disabilities for the purpose



of addressing advocacy issues. The two efforts soon expanded their focus to include basic livelihood concerns. In contrast to the RAHK's 7-11 franchise, the groups are building small businesses by using readily available materials in rural communities. Both groups, however, have recognized the importance of learning the principles of successful business management, such as market analysis, and eventually hope to sell their products to markets that extend well beyond the provinces in which they operate.

In addition to its focus on providing individual and small-group self-employment services, AKASA established a plantation that grows herbs and other plants used in traditional medicine. The Nakhon Pathom Disabled Association continues to organize "occupational groups" that provide training and marketing support for substantially disabled members and produce products such as shampoo and picture frames.

The final profile comes from Mongolia, a country where nomadic living and sheep herding are elements of the socio-economic structure. Mongolia offers an example of how people with disabilities and their families are integrated into a self-employment scheme designed for the general population. The programme, operated by the Norwegian Lutheran Mission, provides training in the production and sale of woollen items and is similar to the Green Certificate project described in the Rural Services section. Both efforts serve remote rural areas and have successfully integrated disabled people into an income-generating programme for the general population. The Mongolian example includes an additional good practice – continued learning opportunities to enhance skills are built into the project design and implementation process.

Readers interested in self-employment will find a variety of ideas in the Rural Services section of *Moving Forward*. Economic conditions in rural communities often dictate the development of microenterprises and income-generating activities for financial gain.

Readers may also be interested in the ILO's Start and Improve Your Business Programme.

A Convenience for Everyone – People with Disabilities Open a 7-11 Store in Hong Kong SAR

The Challenge

In the mid-1990s, members of the Rehabilitation Alliance Hong Kong (RAHK) dreamed of creating a tangible example of a business operated by people with disabilities. Most RAHK members are people with disabilities and they know well the difficulties of integrating into society. They also know that those difficulties are surmountable.

The RAHK envisioned its business venture as a viable demonstration that would prove to private enterprise owners and rehabilitation professionals alike that people with disabilities are capable of succeeding in business. They also wanted to inspire other people with disabilities by demonstrating that participation in society is achievable. And they wanted to make money.

The first question facing the RAHK centred on what type of business could support people with disabilities. At the time, Hong Kong was experiencing a rapid decline in manufacturing workplaces, rising unemployment and an influx of service industries, particularly the food and hospitality industry. The RAHK's dream seemed far from realization.

Meeting the Challenge

After market analysis and careful deliberation, a core RAHK planning group saw convenience and opportunity in numbers: 7-11. Working with the Hong Kong 7-11 Convenience Store Company in 1995, the group bought franchise rights for two stores and hired 22 employees, 17 of whom had some type of disability. Ever since, the business and the workers have flourished, and the RAHK is now expanding.

The Good Practice: A self-help group that creates mainstream businesses to offer employment to people with a range of disabilities and empowers them to live more independently.



• Background •

The Rehabilitation Alliance, Hong Kong is a self-help group of about 1,800 members, 75 per cent of whom are people with chronic illness and physical, visual, hearing, intellectual and psychiatric disabilities; the others are family members and supporters. The alliance was organized about a decade ago to promote full participation and equal opportunities for people with disabilities. Disabled people comprise the majority of the RAHK Executive Board members.

The RAHK also facilitates the exchange of ideas, knowledge and experiences among rehabilitation experts through seminars, forums and conferences. As an advocacy group, the RAHK fights for the rights and needs of people with disabilities and seeks changes in rehabilitation and related policies. It supports self-help and advocacy groups and collaborates with other organizations to promote rights and opportunities for people with disabilities. It conducts public education on the equal rights of disabled people and provides hotline services, training courses and recreation programmes.

• How the 7-11 Venture Started •

The idea. “We do think that disabled people can fit many jobs but just lack opportunities from the society,” says Joseph Kwok, vice chair of the Rehabilitation International Regional Committee for Asia and the Pacific and RAHK Executive Committee Member. “We chose a retail business because it has many tasks that fit people with different types of disabilities.”

In pursuing its dream of a model enterprise, the RAHK formed a core group to consider business possibilities. The group included businesspeople who had connections to a hospital and university. Once the group decided that a retail venture made the best sense, RAHK officials used their connections to enter into agreements with hospital and university administrators to lease retail space on their respective premises.

The 7-11 convenience business is based on an established “formula” system for stocking, pricing, accounting and the general operation of its stores. Given that most RAHK officials knew little about business, especially retail operations, the formula strategy made 7-11 a prime candidate. At that time, the 7-11 company in Hong Kong was looking to expand into hospital and university sites. It was an ideal match. When approached by the RAHK core group, the 7-11 company immediately responded in the affirmative. As negotiations began, the 7-11 company conducted a feasibility study.

Partnering with 7-11. Through long and sometimes intense negotiations with the local 7-11 officials, the RAHK was able to obtain a franchise fee at a nominal price, thereby substantially lowering the requirement for large sums of start-up capital. Only 7-11 and the RAHK are involved in the business. RAHK officials trained for two months with 7-11 to understand how the complete business works.

Finding locations. With an agreement to rent retail space already executed between the RAHK and the university and a regional hospital, the 7-11 officials coordinated the final transaction. Both landlords agreed to reduce the rent for the term of a three-year contract. At the end of that period, the contract would be available for bidding in the open market. The RAHK and 7-11 succeeded in renewing the contracts on the two premises by agreeing to pay market-value rent.

Start-up capital. For the franchise fee, renovations, inventory and all other start-up costs, the RAHK raised HK\$0.5 million (US\$71,429) – as a type of loan – from private individuals who have supported the alliance’s work in the past. The donors asked that the money be repaid to the RAHK to finance other activities.

Hiring staff. While the 7-11 formula includes specific requirements for hiring and training staff, the RAHK insisted on making adjustments to fit its needs. The RAHK recruits employees through NGO career centres, the Government’s Labour Department and newspaper advertisements and hires people with all types of disabilities. Given that the first 7-11 convenience store was set up with the stated objective of primarily hiring people with disabilities, the RAHK provided intensive training for the disabled staff.

Employees work eight hours per day and receive the same salary as that set by 7-11 for all its store workers. Annual leave varies according to position. Employees receive bonuses when profits exceed a certain level, and their benefits follow the Employment Ordinance and other relevant regulations, such as the Mandatory Provident Fund Scheme.

The number of staff at the two locations exceeds that typically employed in 7-11s, with tasks broken down among the extra staff. In addition, a job coach of sorts – an RAHK staff person experienced in working with disabled people – supervises the workers, provides counselling when needed and responds to customer complaints.

In addition to the hired staff, people from the RAHK vocational training programme work at the stores to provide on-the-job training.

Accounting. The 7-11 Convenience Store Company takes responsibility for all accounting work in its stores. The RAHK franchises follow the same procedure.

Security. The hospital location is open 24 hours daily while the university site opens at 7 a.m. and closes at 11 p.m. Security is a major concern for night shift workers. A closed-circuit television now monitors the 24-hour store. In case of emergency, staff call the police.

A Convenient Way Out of a Demoralizing Factory Job

Ho, 47, has worked on the full-time staff of the RAHK 7-11 for eight years. His boss describes his performance as a cashier as "excellent". Ho, (not his real name) finds his current work more rewarding than his years of work in different Hong Kong factories. "It was unbearable," he says of his previous employment. "The other workers looked down on me. They told me I would never be much of anything in life except a factory worker." He found the 7-11 position through open recruitment. "I enjoy life more now," he says. "Not only does my present job give me respect, security and job satisfaction, but it also lets me live independently." Going to work is fun, he adds. "I really enjoy it very much, even if it is hard work. Customers joke with him but take him seriously. "I feel respected by people," says Ho. In addition, the pay is better than in his previous employment." He has taken on a team leader role and assists in training new staff members.

Accomplishments

The RAHK believes that it has succeeded in convincing other people with disabilities that integration and making money is an achievable combination. The 7-11 Convenience Store Company has recognized the two "best performance" stores among the many hundreds of its franchises in Hong Kong. Within the first three years of operation, profits were sufficient to repay the initial HK\$0.5 million "loaned" by private supporters. At the request of the donors, however, the money was allocated to other RAHK activities.

The total number of staff with disabilities, ranging from chronic mental illness to intellectual and physical impairments, has always been higher than the number of nondisabled staff. Seventeen members of the current staff are people with disabilities and five (30 per cent) are nondisabled people. Nine of the disabled workers are employed full time and eight part-time. Some employees have worked at the convenience store since 1995.

Salaries range from HK\$5,000 to \$11,000 (US\$640 to \$1,410) per month for full-time staff and HK\$21.5 to \$32.5 per hour (US\$2.75 to \$4.17) for part-time staff.

Lessons Learned

Following the success of its retail ventures in early 2000, the RAHK opened a small stationery shop. RAHK had no business partner and officials quickly decided that they did not know enough to run a business on their own. They struggled to create accounting, inventory and purchasing systems. Thus far, the shop is not performing well. The RAHK realized that disability-focused organizations pursuing business ventures need people who understand business. Other lessons the RAHK learned in following its dream include the following:

A balance between making profits and creating job opportunities is essential. Partnering with business executives can pose difficulties. The 7-11 company has set policies on the number of staff per store, wages, profits and so forth. The RAHK entered many rounds of intense debate over these issues. While, for example, the 7-11 company wanted fewer staff, the RAHK maintained that extra employees were required because of the need to share tasks among people with disabilities. The RAHK insisted that providing disabled people with job opportunities is as important as earning a profit.

The support of influential people and organizations is critical. The RAHK's business undertaking would not have been possible without the support of the alliance's extensive network. Generous donor support and good locations were vital to setting up the two stores. Years of networking and good community relationships paid off for the RAHK.

University and hospital administrators can be socially responsive. Institutions such as universities and hospitals tend to support enterprises that aim to expand the opportunities of people marginalized by society. In fact, such institutions are often willing to offer below-market rents and are therefore good choices for setting up a business staffed by people with disabilities. Plus, the high level of traffic in those locations almost guarantees business success.

The division of labour among the staff is a challenge. Given that workers have different disabilities, their strengths vary. Therefore, jobs need to be assigned in accordance with a thorough assessment of employees' abilities, interests and skills. In addition, it makes sense to foster teamwork by employing people who have participated in the on-the-job training programme and, as a result, are familiar with the store and its tasks.

Looking Forward

The RAHK plans to open another convenience store with funding from the "seed money" programme of the Government's Marketing Consultancy Office for the Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons (see Partnerships section).

Replication

Starting up a business or even buying into a well-known franchise operation is not an impossible dream. Clearly, a good location and sufficient capital are important for getting started. Additional ideas for replicating the RAHK model include:

- Seek out hospitals, universities and other similar locations with steady retail traffic and where administrators are more likely to place a premium on social responsibility over profit. At the least, such institutions are likely to offer lower-priced terms, if only for an initial period.
- Negotiate for a reduced franchise fee and use social responsibility arguments as leverage. The franchise fee usually depends on the area where a business locates. For example, a higher franchising fee is expected in areas where the prospective market is expected to be strong.
- Spend several weeks training each employee in the tasks in which he or she has proven most competent.
- Understand the employment and labour laws and pay market wages and benefits.
- Anticipate shoplifting and other security issues by delivering appropriate training to employees and installing monitoring systems.
- Obtain the proper expertise in how to manage a business.

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Contact the local representative of the 7-11 Convenience Store Company for information about possible partnerships.

Women Inspiring Women – A Peer Group in Sri Lanka Improves the Lives of People with Disabilities

The Challenge

When she was 22, N.G. Kamalawathie left her parents' home and her village to take a job in the city. It was a huge step for a young woman in Sri Lanka, especially one with a disability. Most girls who have disabilities hardly have an opportunity to finish school, and they rarely receive encouragement to leave their parents' home unless to marry. Women with disabilities in Sri Lanka participate in meaningful activities far less than other women.

In the city, the young woman, also known as Kamala, struggled to find a landlord willing to rent to a person with a disability and an employer willing to hire one. Even when she did, she struggled up and down the stairs to her apartment and to her office. Having coped as a child with her mobility impaired by polio, she learned to pick herself up time after time and create her own opportunities. Seeking access to public services that would benefit women with disabilities proved to be an incredibly tough struggle for Kamala – at least on her own. “Why do we women in Sri Lanka, we who are using wheelchairs, have such difficulty in getting about? Why are there no facilities to help us?” she was left asking. These were questions not many women asked publicly in 1994. Kamala needed more than answers – she wanted change.

Meeting the Challenge

After months of confronting government officials and lobbying on her own for improved public access, Kamala recognized that it would take a chorus of voices to bring about change. So in December 1995, she organized a group of women with disabilities from various districts to discuss what could be done. The group called itself AKASA, a Sinhalese word for “the Heavens”. It is also the acronym for Aabathitha Athi Kanthavange Sanvidanaya, or the Association of Women with Disabilities. AKASA is a self-help support group devoted to creating new opportunities for its members. Since its inception, AKASA has evolved into a network of women's groups in the district of Anuradhapura, which is located in north-central Sri Lanka. In small village groups, women with disabilities, who are accustomed to experiencing alienation, have an opportunity to discuss day-to-day issues affecting their lives. The groups offer the women friendships while shared experiences generate moral support. And, in the context of a group, the women help each other find solutions to problems that can

range from family relationships to income earning. Through a larger district organization, women connect to training opportunities or financial resources to start businesses.

The Good Practice: Women empowering women through a support network that allows them to exercise their rights and gain access to services, skills training and self-employment.



• Background •

Women with disabilities in Sri Lanka have few opportunities for economic independence. Most are confined to their homes, protected by their families from a society that stigmatizes them. The situation is most severe for women residing in rural areas, where negative religious and cultural beliefs remain much stronger than in urban areas. The few existing organizations of women with disabilities are small, weak, charity-oriented and urban-based. In fact, some of the organizations were established by men, who may not fully understand the needs of women.

AKASA started with no money and only a few members. It grew into an organization that receives financial and moral support from the Swedish Handicapped International Aid Foundation (SHIA) and other funding agencies. AKASA members are rural women aged 18 to 40 years. They come from families that are among the poorest of the poor, with incomes ranging from 760 (Sri Lankan) rupees to 1,140 rupees (US\$8 to \$12) per month. More than 75 per cent of members are unmarried, and most have no more than a grade five or six education; they left school because of poverty and disability.

• How AKASA is Structured •

The organization. AKASA follows the bottom-up approach to development used by other grassroots NGOs in Sri Lanka. Working within their own villages, volunteers who trained as “mediators” organize small groups of three to seven women with disabilities. A total of 371 women have trained as mediators. Initially, all mediators were nondisabled women, but now mediators are women with and without disabilities. The mediators identify women with disabilities and then talk with them and their families about the possibilities available to them. The mediators encourage women to

come out of their homes and participate in the mainstream life of their communities by attending cultural, social, sporting and other activities. The women meet regularly in small groups to discuss their individual problems – from difficulties at home to the desire for employment – and then help each other find solutions. For instance, the women organize training workshops to learn specific skills. As members of a peer group, they feel empowered to interact with their community.

Sometimes as many as eight small groups within a village form a village society. Representatives of the village society meet as a district association and elect an executive committee consisting of a president, secretary, treasurer and committee members. All grassroots members constitute the general assembly; members not only have the power and authority to elect officeholders but also the right to contest any post at the district level.

Vocational training and income-generating activities. Initially, AKASA's objective was to organize women with disabilities and to study their situation and needs. When it became clear that poverty and the need for an adequate income were the women's most pressing problems, AKASA shifted into a second phase and began formulating appropriate and relevant strategies to help improve members' economic status. After several years of organizing and mobilizing, AKASA now focuses on developing income-generating activities for its members in Anuradhapura, where, according to an AKASA survey, women with disabilities are among the most impoverished individuals in Sri Lanka.

The AKASA Executive Committee appealed for help to the then-Minister of Social Services, who also hailed from Anuradhapura. In 1999, the women received ownership of a five-acre plot of land with a few old buildings. With additional support from SHIA, the buildings were repaired and renovated into an office, a dormitory for 20 women and a simple training centre.

To find additional funding for its employment-related projects, AKASA turned to the District NGO Forum, which processes all NGO proposals and recommends them to sponsors. With funding eventually in hand from different sources, AKASA established the following four projects:

Vocational Training Centre for Rural Women. At the vocational training centre, trainees choose courses in sewing, home gardening and animal husbandry; the courses last two years. The Sri Lanka-Canada Development Fund (SLCDF) supported the training effort with a grant averaging US\$200 per month until June 2002; at that time, the SLCDF terminated its programme in Sri Lanka. Since then, AKASA registered the training centre with the Department of Social Services, thus entitling the centre to receive a grant of about US\$0.40 per day per trainee, which is quite inadequate even to meet costs of food and other incidentals. As a result, each trainee now pays fees, which can be in the form of monthly rations – 10 kilograms of rice, 1 kilogram of sugar, 250 grams of lentils and

milk powder. The total market value of the package is about 300 rupees (US\$3), although very poor people receive the rations at rates subsidized by the state. In addition, parents often contribute a portion of home-grown vegetables.

Income Generation for Poverty Alleviation. Started in August 2001, the income-generation project provides both rural women with disabilities and women with a disabled child with financial support for setting up a self-employment activity. CARE Sri Lanka provided US\$6,200 to be used as a revolving fund for loans.

AKASA village groups selected the first 77 participants for the project, including 48 young men.

If an individual's disability is so severe that he or she is unable to participate in an income-generating activity, a family member assumes responsibility for the activity. The AKASA Divisional Association and each project participant sign a loan agreement, with repayment made to AKASA's Revolving Loans-Fund bank account. The interest goes to the village society. Upon selection for a loan, project beneficiaries are eligible for training in livelihood skills, marketing and leadership (see box). In offering the training courses and workshops, AKASA works with other community-based organizations that focus on social, religious, cultural and other mainstream activities.

Of the income earned by participants, a third must be deposited into a savings account held by the family member with a disability and a third must go to repayment of the loan from the revolving fund. The participant can spend the remaining third according to his or her needs and wishes. Since the project started, repayments have allowed 20 new beneficiaries to receive loans, bringing the total number of participants to 97 in two years.

Interest income derived by the village societies is used to support activities that benefit people with disabilities. Some societies, for instance, meet the travel costs of a village's community-based rehabilitation workers.

Traditional Medicines Plantation. A traditional medicines plantation occupies three of the five acres of land given to AKASA. The Ministry of Indigenous (Ayurvedic) Medicine that provides AKASA with technical advice has also agreed to purchase, for its own use, the medicinal herbs and plants produced on the plantation. The Ministry of Environment is supporting the project with a grant of US\$5,500. AKASA will use the profits from the project to cover its operating costs and ensure its financial sustainability.

Economic Upliftment and Improvement of Health Status. The United Nations High Commission for Refugees sponsors AKASA's most recent undertaking. The Economic Upliftment and Improvement of Health Status project targets very poor people as well as people with disabilities who were displaced as a result of civil conflict. The project's initial six-month phase is made up of two components. The first involves poverty alleviation support for 90 individuals in the form of a loan of 10,000 rupees

(implemented on the same basis as the poverty alleviation project previously described). The second component allows for grants of 6,000 rupees for 45 individuals to upgrade temporary housing. The project employs eight field staff, conducts workshops to strengthen support for the project and involves people with disabilities and family members, village leaders, government officers and bank managers. The initial phase will benefit a total of 150 people with disabilities when it concludes in December 2003 at an estimated cost of 3 million rupees (US\$30,000).

Helping Families

Dasa is a 15-year-old boy with severe and multiple disabilities who was fed only milk. His mother cannot go out to work because she has to look after him. For years, his father, a farmer, rejected Dasa because he required so much of the mother's time. The family is poor and badly needs the income that the mother could earn as a farm labourer. Parental tensions have affected Dasa's two siblings. Dasa was selected to receive a loan of 5,510 rupees (US\$58) from the AKASA project. His mother used the money to cultivate land owned by the family, which now earns an annual income of about 76,000 rupees (US\$800) from her labours. The father's attitude toward his disabled son has softened since the family's economic situation improved. Tensions have ceased, and the family has grown more close-knit.

Accomplishments

AKASA has 800 active individual members in 133 small groups in 10 subdistricts. It is a member of the District NGO Forum and the only disability-related member organization among the forum's 54 NGOs. Its representative was elected honorary secretary of the forum in 1999 and again in 2001. AKASA members participate in social, sports and cultural events, both in their local communities and nationally. In 1998, members won two gold medals and two silver medals in swimming events at the National Sports Festival for Persons with Disability.

Vocational training. The average monthly income earned by AKASA members who have completed training and set themselves up in self-employment is about 998 rupees (US\$10.50). In most cases, even this small amount will double a family's income.

In the first year of the AKASA Vocational Training Centre, eight trainees graduated; of them, three now work at the training centre, two are self-employed and one works in a garment factory. In 2002, 15 trainees completed the centre's training. Of those trainees, nine had intellectual disabilities; each received a cow as a donation from an NGO in the district. Three are employed in garment factories, and the other three received

sewing machines for use in self-employment. They now earn about 1,000 rupees (US\$11) per month. Sixteen new trainees were recruited in June 2003.

Income-generating projects. Individual women's economic status has improved by 20 to 55 per cent. The average monthly income for a woman ranges from 998 rupees to 6,365 rupees (US\$10.50 to \$67) for self-employment activities that include animal husbandry, carpentry, bicycle repair, dressmaking, inland fishing and fish net weaving. Eight project beneficiaries have started savings accounts, six have purchased land and two have invested in gold jewellery as a form of savings, as is common in some areas of Sri Lanka. Another two have purchased sewing machines; one bought a refrigerator and another has invested in a water pump. SHIA continues to help AKASA in its efforts to strengthen itself. For the period 2000-2002, SHIA provided US\$20,000 for AKASA's activities.

Lessons Learned

AKASA started from scratch with no role model; its success is a testament to the power of determination. AKASA's experiences in organizing and creating training opportunities offer the following lessons:

Grassroots decision making encourages empowerment. By involving themselves in all decision making related to AKASA projects, members have increased their self-confidence in making decisions about their lives.

Informal support networks encourage peer counselling. AKASA members help one another cope with daily life. The sharing of insights and new ideas among members helps individuals deal with their difficulties.

Working in a difficult and under-served area can encourage donor funding. By successfully implementing its pilot projects under severe socio-economic conditions, AKASA demonstrated the capacity of rural disabled persons to change their situation – given a certain level of outside support. Accordingly, AKASA has dispelled several myths about, first, the helplessness of women; second, the helplessness of rural women; and, third, the helplessness of rural women with disabilities. AKASA has used its successes to attract new and renewed funding.

The Woman Behind the Idea

As a young girl struggling to go to school and keep pace with siblings and friends, N.G. Kamalawathie (Kamala) learned to pick herself up and press on despite her mobility impairment. Her difficulties strengthened her, she says.

A bout of polio at age four severely weakened Kamala's legs. Most of the time, Kamala gets around on crutches. For long trips, she uses a wheelchair. After graduating from high school in 1980, Kamala enrolled in a gem-cutting course at the Vocational Training Centre for Disabled Persons. She then found a job at the Gem Corporation in Colombo, the capital of Sri Lanka. While working there, Kamala became active in sports for disabled persons, which provided opportunities to travel abroad and participate in wheelchair races. The travel experiences and exposure to foreign cultures stirred up questions about why women with disabilities in Sri Lanka need to struggle and why public access is lacking.

The determination she found in her youth drove Kamala to raise her adult voice in protest. In the mid-1980s, Kamala started campaigning for disability issues. Seldom did she find a sympathetic ear. When she did, there was no follow-up. Kamala then confronted the cold face of reality. Change would occur only when others who shared her needs joined forces. Kamala would find other disabled women and, believing in strength in numbers, they would discuss what they could do.

Meanwhile, Kamala answered an advertisement for a gem-cutting instructor at a school for physically disabled children and was hired. Again she found resistance. She learned that nondisabled officials and authorities made all management decisions at the school, which contradicted her belief that disabled people have a right to participate in decision-making processes that involve them.

Kamala pushed on, organizing a group of peers to discuss how they could bring about change. At that time, in 1995, Kamala was one of 56 women from Sri Lanka (and the only one with a disability) who was selected to attend the Beijing Conference for Women. Her interactions with women from other parts of the world filled Kamala with ideas about organizing and mobilizing women with disabilities.

Upon her return from Beijing, Kamala moved swiftly to register Aabathitha Athi Kanthavange Sanvidanay, or AKASA, as an official organization. And "the heavens" began to open for hundreds of disabled women in Sri Lanka.

Now 44, Kamala works full time as AKASA's president. In 2000, she received a presidential award for "the work rendered by her to the country in spite of being a woman who has disability". The following year, she earned recognition as "the woman who had contributed most" to her province.

Looking Forward

AKASA has earned the recognition and respect of local communities. By demonstrating its ability to plan and implement projects with efficiency and effectiveness, AKASA also has gained the acceptance of the NGO community and government officials and has started to challenge colleagues in the District NGO Forum. AKASA's next goal is the integration of women and others with disabilities into mainstream poverty alleviation and social development activities in district projects and programmes.

Replication

Organizing people with disabilities into support groups requires little funding. It does, however, require the involvement of people who want to work together to make changes in their lives. A strong leader can help create a cohesive group and lead others to form a vision. Replication of AKASA's self-help approach requires consideration of the following measures:

- Study the status of a target group with disabilities and formulate clear strategies that respond to that status;
- Get to know the community and the available resources;
- Link with other organizations and the government in strategic partnerships to share resources and exercise influence; and
- Identify donors, prepare grant proposals and approach donors regularly.

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Power in Unity – Self-Help Groups Ask for Government Training in Thailand

The Challenge

Sub Tongdonpum was 30 and a wage labourer when a coconut tree fell on him during a storm. It left him paralyzed from the chest down. With only a seventh grade education, Mr. Tongdonpum found few employment options upon his discharge from the hospital. He sold balloons and miscellaneous items that he picked up from the street. His meagre income put a strain on his marriage. Eventually, his wife left him, taking their son with her. In a culture where family is largely the only social safety net, Mr. Tongdonpum felt alone. And, yet, he recognized that many people in Thailand had suffered injuries in adulthood or had been living with disabilities since their youth and had no family to lean on.

Mr. Tongdonpum then heard of a quadriplegic man in his province who wanted to form a group of people with disabilities who could help each other. Unable to feed or bathe himself, Mr. Tongdonpum wondered how he could do anything for someone else.

Meeting the Challenge

“We can work together,” said Teerawat Sripathomsawat, the man with the self-help idea (see box). His positive outlook and determination overwhelmed Mr. Tongdonpum when the two men met. “I realized I have two working arms, a brain and a brave heart,” Mr. Tongdonpum said. He also agreed that together, “We could make change.” In 1996, they found ten more people with disabilities in their native Nakhon Pathom province, about 56 kilometres west of Bangkok. The nine men and three women joined forces and formed the Nakhon Pathom Disabled Club to seek rights and services. In 2000, they decided that the best way to help people live independently would be to assist them in starting businesses. The club asked the Government to provide its members with vocational training. Those members then shared their new skills by forming smaller vocational groups to train others and help members’ microbusinesses. And thus they began repeating the group-train system throughout the province. The club has now grown to about 4,000 members and in 2001 became the Nakhon Pathom Disabled Association.

The Good Practice: A self-help peer group of people with disabilities that develops work opportunities and links to government services.



• Background •

People with disabilities, especially in Thailand's countryside, typically spend their lives either relying on family members for sustenance or living lives of seclusion and neglect. The lack of assistance and access makes travel within Thailand, even short trips, difficult. Moreover, many people with disabilities are neither aware of government entitlements nor knowledgeable of how to gain access to services. The 1991 Rehabilitation Act of Disabled Persons, for example, provides for living allowances, a supply of assistive devices, education and loans but many people with disabilities are unaware of these benefits.

At its outset, the Nakhon Pathom Disabled Club set out to make disabled people in the countryside aware of available services, their rights and how to seek assistance. The club developed a home-visit programme that offered information and consultation to encourage people to take charge of their lives. However, the process took time, and the club exhausted the funding provided by a provincial charity. The club then changed strategy and asked the local government's social welfare and health care staff to set up a mobile service that would work with people with disabilities where they lived. Club members participated in the mobile service visits as peer counsellors.

Club members next decided that the best way to seek further financial assistance was by surveying their province to assess the needs of people with disabilities. When they proposed a census project, the good reputation the club had established through the home-visit project helped it secure financial support from the Government. Members put up banners and sent out vehicles with loud speakers to every district asking people with disabilities to register with the social welfare department. It took the club about two years, from 1996 through 1997, to collect more than 2,000 names. But the impressive feat earned the Nakhon Pathom Disabled Club the respect of government agencies as well as invitations from other provinces to assist in setting up self-help organizations.

In time, club members realized that the only way to secure independence was by earning their own income. They asked the Government to train them in job skills. The first group of ten trainees learned how to laminate picture frames. From this, Mr. Tongdonpum developed a successful laminating business and now earns on average 10,000 baht a month (US\$225). To spread the trainees' newly acquired knowledge and help others, Mr. Tongdonpum took "charge" of a small group of people from the district in which he lived and trained them in lamination. He and the small group began repeating the group system throughout the province.

• Organizing at the Grassroots Level •

Self-help vocational groups. Today, the Nakhon Pathom Disabled Association acts as a coordinating centre for its members. The managing committee of ten volunteers is the link between club members and the Government. The committee provides information on services, welfare and rights of people with disabilities and sends referrals for rehabilitation, training and education.

Small self-help groups pursue business opportunities by sharing information or, when orders for products are too large for a member to handle alone, by sharing work contracts. The small groups organize either by geographic location, such as members from the same district, or by type of product, such as needlework (crochet and cross-stitch items), clay work (miniature decorative items), herbal shampoo and detergent and even astrology (predictions). A group may have as few as two members or as many as 20; typically one person leads the group. Group leaders purchase materials to assist members who are not able to do so themselves. Buying in bulk also reduces costs. Groups sell their products at provincial fairs, where those able to travel with ease operate stalls. The groups also sell handicrafts on consignment at museums and restaurants. From their earnings, members contribute two per cent to the district groups' activities fund. Some trainees do not stay with a group once they have learned a skill and instead strike out on their own. For those unable to work alone for mobility or other reasons or for those without market access, the groups offer a way for people to help other people. Members earn from 1,500 baht to 15,000 baht (US\$35 to \$350) per month.

Training. The association has no budget for formal training courses, but it does arrange for training from the Government. When government training is not available, the association falls back on its own approach to training, in which interested persons learn a skill from volunteers. In fact, group leaders often serve as trainers, stressing that group members are expected to share their knowledge with newcomers. The association also encourages people with disabilities to set up their own groups in their local area or among people with similar interests.

Learning centres. The small vocational groups meet at a district-level learning centre, which is where social rehabilitation and job training take place. Three learning centres currently operate. Mr. Tongdonpum serves as leader for the Kamphaeng Saen centre; the district lets him use an old health care office as a work centre and for group meetings.

Market analysis. Government agencies provide vocational rehabilitation or training for people with disabilities. Many self-help group members have undergone the training, but few can apply the skills they acquired to earning a livelihood. The training does not provide any understanding of market dynamics or teach trainees how to run a business. The government courses are generic courses designed for all people with disabilities and are often outdated.

As a training instructor for a course in laminating picture frames, Mr. Tongdonpum emphasizes the need for market analysis. Laminating frames makes sense in his city, he explains, because the largely middle-class population can afford to buy decorative items in addition to necessities. Mr. Tongdonpum once surveyed the market potential of a remote province and found no prospects for the sale of picture frames. "I hardly saw picture frames hanging on walls," he explains. "So the same training in that area won't bring a trainee employment." With respect to the frame lamination business, Mr. Tongdonpum tells trainees to look for volume markets in government agencies, schools or temples, all of which award achievement certificates and diplomas and provide a built-in market for lamination. He also maintains orders from photography shops even though the steady work means lower prices.

The Kamphaeng Saen centre, now led by 45-year-old Jitr Muengnok, follows Mr. Tongdonpum's guidance. Mr. Muengnok travels to houses, village groups, school graduations and functions where people take pictures that they would want to frame. He looks for opportunities to solicit orders for his group.



• Accessing Government Loans •

In 1996, the Government began distributing loans nationwide from the newly created Rehabilitation Fund. Each disabled person was entitled to apply for a 20,000 baht (US\$460) interest-free loan, repayable within five years. Social welfare staff organized workshops in various provinces, including Nakhon Pathom, to publicize the availability of the loans. Applications required a business proposal and a co-signer, and applicants were to submit all the documents themselves. The approval procedure required a time-consuming case-by-case home visit by a social worker. When Nakhon Pathom Disabled Association members realized that the loan application process seemed unduly difficult, they grew concerned that many people would miss out on the funding opportunity. Accordingly, Mr. Tongdonpum's district group decided to pool their resources and work together to complete the applications and submit them en masse, thus encouraging the loan officers to work more efficiently.

Mr. Tongdonpum determined what information was needed for the business proposals. Later, when the approval officers made case-study visits, Mr. Tongdonpum scheduled appointments with each group member and the approval officers and arranged transport from one house to the next. The officers finished several cases in one day, a vast improvement over the one case per day they usually achieved. Because Mr. Tongdonpum's group members showed that they supported one another and worked as a unit, the approval officers permitted the applicants to co-sign each other's proposals. Of the 90 applicants from Nakhon Pathom who received a loan, 20 were members of Mr. Tongdonpum's group.

Mr. Tongdonpum used his loan first for a chicken-raising enterprise and second for a fish-farming enterprise; both efforts failed. He next attempted to grow coconut trees and failed in that venture. He later recognized that he lacked the needed knowledge for farming. "You need to find a job that suits you and that you can do on your own," he advises. For instance, Mr. Tongdonpum can perform nearly all the tasks in his lamination business. Therefore, he returned to that business, which enabled him to pay back his loan. Fortunately, his good repayment record helped him obtain a second loan to expand his laminating business. Mr. Tongdonpum has other jobs as well. He collects utility and funeral service payments from people in the community; he rents sound systems and lighting gear; and he manages a band of musicians with disabilities. All together, he earns up to 30,000 baht (US\$775) a month.

Accomplishments

The Nakhon Pathom Disabled Association has become a model for self-help organizations. It has not only helped raise awareness among the province's people with disabilities regarding their rights and work, but its achievements have inspired disability organizations and groups in other Thai provinces to follow the association's

strategies, including a focus on job creation. While the vocational group model is only a small part of the association's total programme, it is significant and growing and can point to a wide range of accomplishments, including the following:

- The association registered more than 4,000 people with disabilities in Nakhon Pathom province.
- It set up three learning centres for people with disabilities at the district level (though one is no longer active due to the lack of a leader) and is starting one at the subdistrict level.
- It organized work groups that produce handicrafts, white clay sculptured items and picture frames and one work group that provides astrology services. Several smaller groups are composed of only one or two individuals. Monthly earnings range from 1,500 baht (US\$35) for white clay products to 10,000 baht (US\$230) for frames to 15,000 baht (US\$350) for astrological predictions.
- During 2001, the association trained 21 people with disabilities in crochet, white clay and picture frame skills, and 11 others with severe disabilities in their chosen skills.

Lessons Learned

The Nakhon Pathom Disabled Association operates with volunteers. Starting with ten members and growing to its current size of 4,000, the association has proven that power in unity is the key to reaching its goals. Other lessons learned in its development as a model of self-help include:

Every organized group yields benefits and problems. Controversy and competition arise in organized groups, and the Nakhon Pathom Disabled Association is no different. Leaders have to learn to mediate incidents with problem solving and conflict resolution techniques.

Good leaders need to develop successors and move on. Once a group is organized and productive, the group leader/trainer needs to cultivate a successor within the group and then move on to develop a new group. In this way, the association optimizes the talents of its most skilled members.

The market determines the type of job training. If the skills to be taught have no market demand, training is a wasteful undertaking and demoralizes participants. Even in requesting government services, trainees should be assertive in asking for what is best for them in terms of market opportunities.

Each member must become financially secure before helping others. To be a volunteer, members should be financially secure so that they have the time to work with others and are not distracted by their own financial problems.

Group leaders must help with marketing and job development. They need to be encouraged, motivated and supported in their efforts to work and start a business. They need help with marketing and in sustaining the momentum required to succeed in income-generating activities. Group leaders, as work models, serve this role.

A facility that serves as a base for a group helps build cohesion. It is important to work with local officials to identify and gain access to unused office space as a possible training and social centre. To this end, groups need to build links with NGOs and self-sustaining businesses and not merely rely on government support.

The Man Behind the Idea

Teerawat Sripathomsawat travels in a wheelchair with a hired assistant. He voluntarily leads the Nakhon Pathom Disabled Association. His disabilities resulted from a rugby match injury when he was in college. Unable to finish his undergraduate degree in sport training, he resorted to selling T-shirts at the rugby stadium where he once played. "Once I brought home the money and my parents saw that I was all right, they gave me support. But it was a bittersweet experience being back to the field," recalls Mr. Sripathomsawat. "There were people who bought my shirts out of pity. I did not like that, but I had to swallow it. The most important thing was that I earned money."

Mr. Sripathomsawat eventually returned to school and earned a law degree. But when he found the work physically taxing, he began designing and selling sport shirts. The business grew, and he opened several shops. Now 43, Mr. Sripathomsawat operates a mini-mart. He supports his mother and a nephew as well.

"One person alone can hardly fight for rights," explains Mr. Sripathomsawat. "A collective has more potential. Our voices are louder and our needs are recognized. A lone disabled person tends to be treated like a beggar."

Mr. Sripathomsawat learned of the self-help idea through Thailand's Disabled Persons Association, a national group. After he identified 11 other people with disabilities in his province who believed in the self-help approach, the group launched a home-visit plan to convince others of the merits of self-help. Thus, the Nakhon Pathom Disabled Association was born.

"Independent living is a dream for many disabled people," says Mr. Sripathomsawat. "As a group we can learn from each other and exchange our experiences on how we deal with our basic needs and do things, how we survive."

Looking Forward

“I want people with disabilities to get together, create activities and learn from each other,” says Mr. Sripathomsawat, chair of the association. “My dream is to see them partner in businesses, services or industries that are not necessarily related to disability.”

In 2003 and as part of the Government’s independent living pilot project, the association plans to train severely disabled people in peer counselling. In the following year, it will provide information on health care, assistive devices, physical rehabilitation, peer counselling, rights protection and skills training. The association wants to create more work groups and see the development of centres in every district and subdistrict.

For the work groups, the association plans to merchandise herbal shampoo and detergent. It has tested the market and sees potential for the products. Mr. Tongdonpum will invite shareholders to contribute 500 baht each to help launch the products. He has applied for proper certification and registration of the products.

“To train people with severe disabilities is an ultimate goal. They have been neglected,” adds Mr. Sripathomsawat. “I wish we could do more. So far we have done so little. The problem is that we are all volunteers. We want to devote our time, but we have to earn our living.”

Replication

A self-help organization is based on the power, spirit and abilities of people with disabilities. It is essential to find those people and encourage them to work together to develop business ideas, obtain resources and, at the least, learn about available government and NGO services that may be helpful them.

To replicate the association’s self-help model, members of self-help organizations must determine an appropriate direction in accordance with their needs. With regard to vocational groups, activities need to reflect a group’s interests, abilities and market constraints/opportunities. The group must demonstrate creativity in identifying resources. Money is just one type of resource; others include volunteers, experts in various areas of job training and market analysis and unused office space for training centres. The main idea in forming a vocational group is to develop members who will establish new groups. As long as the process of group formation and spin-off continues, more and more people will benefit.

“Unity is power. We have to unite to keep the door wide open,” adds Mr. Tongdonpum. “If we stop, it will close down again. The officials can’t keep up with the job of providing services and deal with people with disabilities in general.”

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Spinning Wool into a Better Way of Life – Including People with Disabilities into Mainstream Training Programmes in Mongolia

The Challenge

M. Ariunzaya studied for a career as an elementary school teacher and, in 1995, was hired for a position in a school in Mongolia's second largest city, Darkhan. Then a car accident destroyed his dreams. His recovery took two years and required Ariunzaya to learn how to use a wheelchair. He eventually returned to the school where he taught, but was not allowed to return to his job. The staff did not believe that someone who survived a major accident would be physically and mentally fit for teaching. During his recovery, Ariunzaya's family lived off the pension of his elderly mother. Ariunzaya believed that his failure to support his family violated Mongolian tradition, which dictates that the eldest son assume financial responsibility for the family.

Mongolia's State Social Welfare Office estimates about 80 per cent of all people with disabilities live below the poverty line. Yet, the country has few programmes that address the specific employment needs of people with disabilities. In economic transition from socialism to a market economy since the early 1990s, Mongolia – whose citizens largely lead a nomadic life or reside in remote villages – offers limited employment in general. Therefore, people with disabilities, such as Ariunzaya, struggle to provide for their families. In Mongolia, how can people with disabilities work toward self-sufficiency?

Meeting the Challenge

Beginning in 1995, the Norwegian Lutheran Mission (NLM) reached out and began integrating people with disabilities into its newly established training courses to help rural residents in Mongolia develop income-generating projects. It was a first for Mongolia – and even for much of the developing world. Its success is largely related to recognizing the obvious: With most herding families in Mongolia tending sheep and goats, raw wool is plentiful, but it is often sold at low prices for export. Wool processing and the production of woollen goods can generate higher incomes. Accordingly, NLM set up animal husbandry and wool processing facilities in its two regional projects, one of which operates in partnership with the Government's State Social Welfare Office. Aside from taking advantage of a national resource, NLM's creation of an easily accessible centre and the active recruitment of people with disabilities have spelled success.

“It is hard to be disabled in Mongolia”, says Eva-Synnøve Dickson Lid, an NLM consultant, “People with disabilities are often left out.” The NLM programme offers them an uncommon opportunity.

The Good Practice: Designing mainstream vocational training programmes that include people with disabilities.



• Background •

The Norwegian Lutheran Mission originally began its work in Mongolia by focusing its two regional projects on poverty alleviation. NLM launched the first effort in 1995 in Darkhan as the Selenge Development Programme (SDP) in partnership with the local State Social Welfare Office. It launched the second project two years later in the capital city of Ulaanbaatar as the Bayansurkh Development Programme (BDP). From the beginning, the NLM projects were designed for all people, including vulnerable groups and persons with disabilities, although staff members made a special effort to reach out to disabled people in remote areas. At the same time, NLM recognized from the start that a training programme targeted even in part to vulnerable groups and people with disabilities requires special supports, such as transport assistance and lodging.

In the beginning, as now, the two projects provided training in animal husbandry, vegetable cultivation and wool processing. Each of the two sites operated a wool processing facility called a competence centre. NLM also operated a Health Development Programme (HDP) in Darkhan and Ulaanbaatar and a Child and Family Strengthening Programme (CFS) in Ulaanbaatar, both started in 1998. NLM received 90 per cent of its funds from the Norwegian government and the remainder from private donations.

The success of the wool processing project, which is the focus of this profile, has made that project the focal point of NLM activities in Mongolia. One of the advantages to this type of skills training is that trainees have the opportunity to earn an income relatively quickly. Both training centres teach wool processing; the SDP also offers animal husbandry (mostly sheep breeding) and vegetable cultivation. The SDP project not only provides raw wool for use in both projects but also sells the raw material to programme graduates. For trainees who become home-based wool producers, NLM guarantees

a market by buying products that meet the standards and quality demanded by NLM. With a huge demand for Mongolian handicrafts – 80 per cent of what NLM buys is exported to Norway, France, Germany and England – the products are either sold to tourists in Mongolia's capital city or exported.

• **How the Wool Processing Project is Structured** •

NLM takes sole responsibility for the training at the BDP site. At the SDP site, NLM supports the State Social Welfare Office trainers and provides equipment.

Skills training. NLM schedules basic two-week training courses several times per year. Each session accepts up to ten people with or without disabilities. Every SDP training session includes two to four people with disabilities. Skills taught include:

- Cleaning raw wool, or “carding” it, to produce the wool bits for processing;
- Spinning carded wool into yarn or felting it; and
- Creating slippers, shawls, scarves, socks, wall hangings, vests and bags.

At the BDP site, trainees can continue with advanced courses in the fabrication of various woollen products. A felting session, for example, runs for four weeks; the spinning and knitting course runs for five weeks.

Obtaining equipment and raw material. Wool processing equipment includes a hand carder, drawn carder and spinning wheel. The hand carder is made up of two wooden boards with several spikes that are pushed toward each other and pulled apart to form the wool into cottony-like balls. The drawn carder is a round drum rotated by a handle; the tumbling motion separates the fibres. The spinning wheel twists the raw fibres into yarn. NLM provides loans with long payback periods to former trainees for equipment purchases. Trainees also “borrow” raw wool from the centre when starting their business.

Production system. NLM encourages former trainees to organize into groups whose different members take responsibility for specific tasks. Generally, the groups have sprung up among families and include extended family members. A former trainee generally passes on his or her newly acquired knowledge to others who become part of a self-managed group. NLM is keen to see the individual groups grow, perhaps bringing together several families and increasing output. This type of “cooperative” is in a good position to negotiate big production contracts and purchase large volumes of raw wool at a favourable price. “Because of the post-communist situation, there is reluctance among people to move toward this direction,” observes Ms. Dickson Lid. Reliance on cooperatives, however, has proven more successful in remote areas, which have a tradition of cooperatives.

How Wool Processing Changed Ariunzaya's Situation

A friend of Ariunzaya attended one of the wool processing training courses and told Ariunzaya that it changed his life. Ariunzaya followed his friend's lead. In 2001, he applied to the wool processing training programme at the provincial Social Welfare Centre in Darkhan. Now the 32-year-old Ariunzaya makes high-quality woollen products and earns enough income to support his mother and two younger siblings. Although he makes the final product on his own, everyone in the family helps – sometimes his sister or brother takes the products to the welfare centre or brings the raw wool back to the house. They even help him clean the wool to prepare it for processing. When he sees his siblings wearing items he has made and hears them boast of his talents to friends, he feels great pride.

Training for trainers. In what is becoming a fairly popular practice, trainers are often former trainees who return to their families or villages and teach others. For example, one former trainee with disabilities coordinated with three other disabled people to create a self-managed group in a remote area of Darkhan-Uul province.

Financial support. Trainees pay their own transportation costs to and from the training centre. They also must find their own accommodations, though most have relatives or friends living nearby. NLM provides accommodation in its guest houses when people have no other options for lodging.

Promoting the project and its benefits. NLM organizes weekly programmes on the Darkhan-Uul provincial television station to raise awareness about its projects. The programmes feature stories about people who have benefited from NLM activities. According to NLM Project Manager Ms. Munguntuya, "The real advertisement is by word of mouth from the individuals and families who have benefited from the project to others." Advertisements for the mainstream training, which refer to the integration of disabled people, also indirectly promote public acceptance of people with disabilities as equal members of the community.



Accomplishments

The NLM project not only offers vocational training but also ensures work opportunities by taking advantage of available and inexpensive raw materials. Project success is largely related to the lack of development of a wool processing industry within Mongolia. Herders command a higher price for the raw material than what they traditionally earned by exporting it, and the project meets a clear need by both providing employment and building a new industry. Given that the wool processing equipment is produced locally, other manufacturers also benefit. Former trainees also have options for selling their products; they can sell to local shops or to NLM. "We can see results," says Ms. Dickson Lid. "We see people improving their lives. Those who used to collect bottles now make more money and provide their family with more food and firewood – basic things they need."

Since its inception, the project has reached between 12 and 28 persons with disabilities each year. In 2001-2002, the SDP project realized the following accomplishments:

- Some 19 people with disabilities were trained in wool processing. With the financial support of their provincial Social Welfare Office, some travelled long distances.
- Approximately 150 families worked regularly with NLM in Darkhan-Uul province; 30 of the families have a member with a disability.

When selling their products to NLM, producers earn about 30,000 tugrug (US\$27) a month, which is comparable to the state minimum wage.

Lessons Learned

The NLM project is one of a just a few examples of a successful training and income-generating programme that has integrated people with disabilities into mainstream training. The lessons learned by the NLM since opening its first training project include the following:

Earning a reliable income quickly attracts and motivates trainees. Once trainees realize that they have an opportunity to participate in skills training that can lead to employment, they become committed to the workshops. For people with disabilities, the project represents a chance to earn income and support their families and thus increase self-esteem.

Quality control is essential. Given that most products are exported to Norway and some to other European countries, quality control is a necessary concern and is the responsibility of the competence centres. Products delivered by the wool producers are checked before they are accepted. Producers receive advice on how to develop their products further to meet quality standards.

Involving persons with disabilities requires engagement with local communities. NLM has to pay special attention to the number of people with disabilities within the project. The quantity of products made by nondisabled persons dominates production. Working through former trainees and local government partners to advertise the project, the NLM staff actively seeks out individuals with disabilities to participate in the training seminars. "It is not very common in Mongolia to have programmes open to everyone, including people with disabilities," says Ms. Dickson Lid. "You have to make them aware that the option is here and open to them."

Including persons with disabilities broadens awareness. The NLM staff admits that it must confront state officials' negative attitude toward people with disabilities. Staff must be persuasive and strongly encourage the inclusion of disabled people in the training process.

Length of training is important. Given that several participants come from very poor families that need immediate income, the duration of training is an important consideration. With skills training organized into time-limited sessions, participants supporting families have the opportunity to earn some income between training sessions. The training approach calls for short initial sessions, monthly consultations and more advanced skills development while trainees produce woollen products.

Finding the raw material requires some effort. The number of people who would like to learn wool processing is increasing and the demand for raw wool is growing. Many herders bring raw wool to the city to sell to large processing factories that produce world-famous Mongolian cashmere and woollen products. Recent years, however, have seen disastrously tough winters such that the absence of animal feed necessitated the destruction of livestock, thereby decreasing the availability of raw wool. In fact, the wool that is now available may or may not be of the quality required for export goods. But the shortage has had one favourable impact: Though they formerly paid a terribly low price for raw wool, Chinese traders buying for producers in China now match the NLM price, which could encourage more export and even affect the volume of raw material available to the training project in the future.

Transportation is a significant obstacle for some people who want to attend training. With Mongolia's roads and public transport inaccessible to persons with disabilities, project staff sometimes travel to people living in remote areas in order to collect their woollen products or to transport people with disabilities to a centre for a training session.

How Training Leads to Better Housing

The *ger* is the traditional Mongolian home. It is constructed of hand-made felt from wool that is draped over a wood frame and covered with skin plaits and secured ropes. Traditionally, people in the countryside made the *gers* themselves. They sometimes passed them from generation to generation. Today, people buy *gers* in a store and the hand-made felt can be produced by people with disabilities. The *ger* does not use any nails and is easy to erect and take down, thus making it ideal for a nomadic lifestyle. Even in the towns and cities, many people still live in *gers*. Because the wood parts and skin plait covering last longer than the felt, the felt needs to be regularly maintained.

Looking Forward

NLM has a five-year plan to consolidate the two training programmes into one. It intends to train more trainers and to encourage the development of cooperatives or small enterprises. Further, it plans to offer sessions on running a small business. NLM is seeking a national partner to deliver additional wool courses in local competence centres. The main State Social Welfare Office hopes to expand its training project throughout the country as well as serve as a model for developing other types of small enterprises. NLM has helped other provincial Social Welfare Offices and NGOs create similar programmes by training teachers at the NLM competence centres and providing consultations.

Replication

Because integrated training and employment of people with disabilities is new to Mongolia, the NLM projects provide a real-life example of how people with disabilities can be included into any activity. While the specific wool processing project may not be applicable to many countries, it nonetheless embodies a set of characteristics that should be considered in establishing ventures that combine training and production with opportunities for self-employment. For instance, it offers skills training that involves low investment and can be carried out at home. This type of training is particularly appropriate for people who cannot spend much time away from home or cannot afford to pay for long-term accommodation. Further, the equipment used in wool processing is simple, easy to transport and install and is especially well suited for rural and remote areas or areas with difficult terrain. In addition, training delivered over short periods and with continued upgrading keeps trainees motivated and permits them to continue earning income while enhancing their earning potential.

The most important characteristic of the NLM project that lends itself to replication is the delivery of vocational training programmes that, from the outset, include all people, particularly those with disabilities.

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Many governments provide employment services for first-time job seekers and those who are unemployed or re-entering the labour force. The services vary but typically include job brokering (matching job seekers to job orders received from employers), labour market information and programmes to improve employability, such as career assessment, employment counselling, job-seeking skills, and/or referrals to training. People with disabilities need the same services. Where they exist, mainstream programmes are often inaccessible to many people with certain types of disabilities or programme staff may lack the awareness or communication skills to address the needs of those with disabilities.

This section of *Moving Forward* describes NGO- and government-sponsored services aimed at encouraging the placement of people with disabilities in the labour market's open, formal sector or in other settings.

Bizlink, for example, is a Singapore-based comprehensive employment services agency that offers vocational assessment, guidance and counselling, training and referrals, job placement assistance and job creation to people with disabilities. It demonstrates how a country lacking supportive laws, but providing government aid, can further the rights and employment opportunities of disabled persons. Similar to the YAKKUM programme in rural communities (see the Rural Services section), Bizlink has adapted to and survived major economic shifts by closely monitoring economic and labour force developments.

Not only do some people with disabilities need tailored services, employers do as well. Many employers exhibit the same negative attitudes about people with disabilities that are typical in the broader society. Even where employment promotion laws are in place, their impact depends on changing attitudes and informing employers about their obligations under the law. The Japan Association for Employment of Persons with Disabilities (JAED) provides a service to achieve these very goals. Among its many services for workers with disabilities, JAED helps employers interpret the laws related to people with disabilities and provides the information and support services employers need to open their companies to disabled workers. Employers hiring disabled workers also receive continued support from JAED with regard to disability management and workplace accommodation. JAED operates on a national level but offers lessons for any employment and training programme.

Some governments, especially in developed countries, provide mainstream employment services as well as specialized programmes to place people with disabilities in jobs in the formal sector. The Hong Kong SAR offers an example of such a service. Its Self-Help Integrated Placement Service (SHIPS) programme, launched to serve individuals with mental illness, offers job-matching services that lead to the employment of people with disabilities. SHIPS teaches job-seeking skills and provides support services to help people with disabilities conduct their own job searches. The results are surprising and positive.

A programme designed to move people with disabilities into open or self-employment must include some aspects of employment services as defined in this section. Readers interested in employment services should also review examples of good practices elsewhere in *Moving Forward*, especially the chapters on Work and Rehabilitation Centres and Partnerships.

The ILO has a series of publications related to employment services and people with disabilities, which include the following:

Assisting Disabled Persons in Finding Employment: A Practical Guide, 1997

Assisting Persons with Disabilities in Finding Employment – Resource Manual for Trainers, forthcoming

Getting Hired: A Guide for Job-Seekers who Face Barriers to Employment, 1995

Getting Hired: A Trainer's Manual for Conducting a Workshop for Job-Seekers who Face Barriers to Employment, 1995

Handbook: Accessibility and Tool Adaptations for Disabled Workers in Post-Conflict and Developing Countries, 1997

Placement of Job Seekers with Disabilities: Elements of an Effective Service, 1999

Support Doesn't Always Mean Welfare – A Unique Community Service in Singapore Promotes Independence of Citizens with Disabilities

The Challenge

Over the past decades, Singapore's rapid development has underscored the importance of education, science, technology and high achievement. It has also resulted in a low tolerance for government "welfarism" targeted to members of society perceived as failing to keep pace with others. However, when the Ministry of Community Development and Sports discovered from a survey of 4,385 people with disabilities that more than 50 per cent of such individuals were unemployed, it recognized that some people require assistance before they can contribute to society. But the Ministry wanted to find a system that would support rather than undermine the independence of people with disabilities.

Meeting the Challenge

In 1986, the Ministry of Community Development and Sports and the then-Singapore Council of Social Service jointly set up the Bizlink Centre. Bizlink relied on shared inputs from government, corporate and private sources to offer employment projects and services to people with disabilities. Today, the Ministry funds 50 per cent of Bizlink's programmes. Private and commercial parties, including the (renamed) National Council of Social Service and the Community Chest (a donor agency that solicits funds from corporate and private citizens) underwrite the other half.

Bizlink is a social service-based organization providing training, employment, job placement and other job-related services to people with disabilities. It has also developed an innovative marketing strategy for products crafted by disabled persons and, as its name implies, links an overlooked workforce with business needs. It helps people find jobs in the open market but also offers jobs through its production workshop, which competes for contracts in the formal sector. As a major resource for people with disabilities in Singapore, Bizlink registered 367 clients for vocational assessment in 2002-2003.

The Good Practice: Linking government, corporate and private needs and contributions to create opportunities that allow people with disabilities to participate in the workforce.



• Background •

The Government of Singapore does not believe that it should function as the sole provider of support for individuals. In fact, Singapore lacks legislative protections such as equal opportunity and minimum wage laws for the least-advantaged members of society, although a compulsory workers' compensation law requires financial input from all employers. Nonetheless, the Government is willing to share responsibility for creating opportunities for people with disabilities. It willingly supported the creation of the Bizlink employment programme. In addition to funding, it provided temporary government offices until the Bizlink Centre moved to its own premises, two years after its establishment. As noted, even today, the Government continues to supply 50 per cent of Bizlink's funding with the other half still coming from the Community Chest.

In 1995, Bizlink incorporated as a limited company. All assets, staff and functions were transferred to the new body, and a board of directors took over management of the organization. In January 2001, Bizlink joined other self-help groups in Singapore to become part of an initiative launched by the Ministry of Manpower called Careerlink, a central database of all job banks within the Ministry.

• How Bizlink is Structured •

Bizlink's comprehensive services include assessment, counselling, training and employment in its production workshops, marketing of products made by people with disabilities, job placement and follow-up. Five divisions deliver Bizlink's services:

Vocational assessment. New clients first meet with one of the Vocational Assessment Division's placement counsellors to discuss their employment goals and needs. Voluntary organizations account for 20 per cent of referrals and government ministries for another 10 per cent of clients seeking Bizlink's services. Otherwise, family and friends of disabled people recommend Bizlink to people they know. A third of the people who now turn to Bizlink are recently disabled. Some clients hear of the service while in hospital.

The service operates with several aims: to determine people's needs and goals; to provide basic skills training; to make referrals to training institutes outside Bizlink when needed; and to provide assistance to and connect with people with disabilities and/or their families. Not everyone requires a formal vocational assessment, which involves psychological tests and selected VALPAR (commercial term) work samples. In any event, the regular assessment is a one-day process. Other people may need more in-depth services, such as a situational assessment in the Bizlink workshop, which typically lasts for up to two weeks. During that time, participants can also learn management of time and money, and communication and presentation skills as needed. Another service provided during the assessment phase is "work hardening", a process of gradually increasing work demands until an individual can manage the regular workday. Bizlink also offers simple job skills training in clerical, cleaning and data processing tasks during the assessment period. After assessment, clients may be referred to other training centres, Bizlink programmes or open employment.

The Vocational Assessment Division also evaluates students who apply for admission to the Certificate in Vocational Training Course of the Vocational Training School for the Handicapped.

Information and referral. Through the Information and Referral Division, Bizlink's two community resource officers provide information to people with disabilities, their caregivers and family members as well as to the public on matters relating to disabilities and resources available in a given community. In addition, staff of the Ministry of Community Development and Sports, other voluntary organizations and even Parliament members use the service to make referrals. During their "meet-the-people sessions", Parliament members field questions about services for people with disabilities. The questions and needed referrals relate to an array of issues such as residential care, hostels, respite care, day-activity centres, nursing homes, sheltered or production workshops, mobility training for the blind, specialized vocational training outside Bizlink and financial assistance.

The community resource officers also provide assistance and counselling to people and/or their families on issues relating specifically to their disabilities or work matters. Finally, to increase positive perceptions, the officers visit schools and talk to young people about disability issues and the ability of disabled persons to function as integral members of society. The officers teach disability etiquette, that is, how to respond and provide help to people with disabilities.

Employment promotion. The Employment Promotion Division offers assistance to people with disabilities in job finding, both in the open labour market and in Bizlink's production workshop or its housekeeping/cleaning service teams.

Depending on the individual and the job market, job placement can take just a few hours or a few days. After discussing employment options with a placement counsellor, clients seeking jobs review the hiring notices sent to Bizlink by potential employers. Bizlink staff also actively solicit job offers from the business community and perform selective job matching. Bizlink can also access Careerlink to identify opportunities for people with disabilities searching for placements. Bizlink not only provides assistance to its own clients but also serves students of the Vocational School for the Handicapped. A unique avenue to permanent job placement is the on-the-job training internships Bizlink arranges for students still enrolled in training courses. "It is for a temporary period but, of course, we hope the students get absorbed into the workforce of the company they have been training with. And this often happens," explains General Manager Justin Tan.

Bizlink provides regular follow-up services to both clients and employers, usually for three months after placement but for longer if needed. During work site visits, staff consult with employers and employees about performance, the need for worksite modifications and aids, transportation issues and so forth and intervene with training or counselling with as needed. Often, Bizlink staff obtain assistive devices from other NGOs, such as speech synthesizer software for computers made available by the Singapore Association for the Visually Impaired. A Bizlink job coach can provide worksite training to ensure that a newly placed employee has sufficient experience and training to meet the requirements of the job.

Designing Workplaces for Workers with Disabilities

More than half of the employees of the Trusted Hub, a computer imaging and processing company, have disabilities. Some use wheelchairs. With the help of Bizlink, which worked with the Trusted Hub "from the ground up," according to Bizlink General Manager Justin Tan, the workplace was designed to accommodate workers' needs. "We designed the work processes and physical layout with everyone in mind," says Mr. Tan. "As a result, the cost of accommodating anyone with special needs was minimal."

Business development. The Business Development Division operates a production workshop that provides employment opportunities for people with disabilities who, for various reasons, are not ready for open employment. Except for short-term employees, Bizlink pays wages and benefits, including the contribution to the Provident (retirement) Fund. The compensation package includes bonuses and raises. The production workshop also serves as a trial work area for people with disabilities undergoing assessment, open-market job preparation and training. A workshop instructor provides training in new tasks and for those who need to upgrade their skills.

The work tasks at the production centre vary and respond to an ever-changing marketplace. Given that many jobs are moving from Singapore to nearby countries with lower labour costs, the Singapore economy is shifting to higher value-added work, including finance, genetics and information technology. These high-tech fields offer some service work contracts for Bizlink's workshop employees. However, Bizlink staff must study the marketplace and keep in constant contact with the business community to generate new contracts for the different sections of the Business Development Division. For example, using equipment donated by the customer, the workshop produces precision-made machine parts on a subcontract basis. To meet the demands of another contract, 15 people digitally archive documents by scanning images for conversion to digital files. Bizlink is also setting up telemarketing and call centres with the Singapore Association of the Visually Handicapped. Call centres can be operated from a person's home, allowing the employee to avoid the high cost of transportation to and from work.

Bizlink is working with several employers to create new work opportunities for its clients by encouraging the employers to use Bizlink services rather than depending on the imported labour typically hired for lower-skill jobs. To that end, Bizlink launched a pilot cleaning and housekeeping service in January 2001. With high demand for the service, workers earn decent wages. Bizlink now hires clients to fill positions on its many (currently five) housekeeping teams. In its effort to provide more services for people with intellectual impairments, Bizlink works with the Movement for the Intellectually Disabled of Singapore (MINDS) to identify and train people with intellectual disabilities for employment with the domestic cleaning service. Training courses take place at the MINDS Employment Development Centre. Volunteer job coaches and less disabled individuals work alongside a person with an intellectual disability to provide needed guidance and support.

Within the production workshop, Bizlink is starting to hire nondisabled individuals. According to Mr. Tan, the result is a type of reverse mainstreaming in which a workshop for people with disabilities is undergoing transformation into a conventional place of business. For example, a nondisabled employee handles quality control in the precision machine parts workshop, and the housekeeping service employs nondisabled cleaners to cover for any absent workers.

Centralized marketing. The Centralized Marketing Division operates with funding from the National Council of Social Service. It works to reduce marketing costs for participating agencies and to increase employment opportunities for people with disabilities. It helps three sheltered workshops and work centres in Singapore explore and develop new markets and secure subcontracts by promoting their products and services. The Goodwill Centre of Singapore operates under the Spastic Children's Association of Singapore and employs 66 people who produce and package candles and bookmarks. The Singapore Association of the Visually Handicapped employs 29 individuals who produce furniture and cane baskets; their signature product is a Braille bookmark. With 118 employees, the Society for the Physically Disabled operates a bookbinding and restoration business, manufactures notepads and copper wire bookmarks and provides printing and letter

shopping services. Sometimes the three groups share contracts. Together, the agencies serve people with all types of disabilities.

Bizlink's marketing staff uses two approaches to promote goods and services. First, it makes personal marketing contacts with retailers, distributors and other companies and publishes and distributes a full-colour, glossy catalogue under the brand name of "These Aabled People". The annual catalogue promotes products that were formerly available only in bazaars or at exhibitions. Each centre contributes to the cost of the publication, thereby reducing an individual agency's promotional expenses.

Second, three Bizlink marketers identify corporate customers that require large volumes of gifts and cards. They also try to identify businesses interested in a good work partner for services and seek out subcontracting tasks appropriate for the three agencies noted earlier. They actively market products and services, such as plaques, wooden furniture for children, handcrafted items – cards, candles, potpourri, photograph frames, glassware, T-shirts – and telemarketing, silkscreen printing and offset printing of office supplies.

Accomplishments

Part of Bizlink's success, according to Mr. Tan, stems from its creativity and perseverance. "You must look at the employment situation and imagine what you think will happen next. With the changing economy, we had to create jobs for people with disabilities. If we just kept checking for job vacancies, we'd just watch them disappear," he says. The housekeeping and cleaning crews, high-tech jobs in the production workshop and alliances with companies such as Trusted Hub (see box) are a testament to Bizlink's proactive stance. The following figures are indicative of the numbers of people who now enjoy greater access to decent work as a result of Bizlink:

- In 2002, Bizlink placed 190 people with disabilities (47 per cent of those served) in open employment. (The number exceeded 250 before the economic downturn.) More people with hearing disabilities (35 per cent of the total) were placed than individuals in any other group. The range of disabilities of those persons placed in positions covered physical (23 per cent), hearing (35 per cent), intellectual (15 per cent), visual (4 per cent), other (14 per cent) and multiple (9 per cent) disabilities. More than half of those placed in employment had received six years or less of education; about one-third had completed secondary school. Most of those placed in employment took production jobs (76), service industry jobs (56), clerical jobs (36), sales positions (16) and professional or administrative posts (four).
- Business development continues to provide employment to 80 individuals. Salaries depend on skill and seniority but range from S\$150 (US\$85) a month to S\$1,000 (US\$567) and above. Workers rotate jobs often in accordance with the type and number of contracts in place at any one time.

Making Opportunities Work

John (not his real name) was in his late teens when he first came to Bizlink. His mother had read of Bizlink's services in the newspaper. Intellectually disabled with an IQ below 50, John attended a special school that had already recommended a job for him in a local factory, but his mother was displeased with the work environment and the peers who spoke only Mandarin. Since John spoke only English, his chances for social interaction would be limited. His mother believed that John was capable of more than what the job offered him.

At Bizlink, John participated in the assessment process. An evaluator then arranged a two-week job trial to assess his work abilities further. John showed good stamina and work skills. His interpersonal and communication skills were limited but showed potential for development. His mother preferred a fast-food restaurant with a clean and genteel environment as a possible workplace for John, as long as the establishment was not far from home and did not present transportation challenges. The placement officer working with John and his family found him a fast-food position at a restaurant two bus stops from John's apartment. Meanwhile, the placement officer had to counsel both mother and son and prepare them for the training phase. John's mother had a strong tendency to be overprotective and had unrealistic expectations of her son. It did not help that John was largely uncommunicative; when he did respond, he spoke only one-word answers.

The first phase of the training involved mobility orientation. Again, difficulties arose with John's mother, as she questioned the training method. The training officer was patient but firm in handling her. As John's confidence grew, so did the mother's trust in Bizlink. John's work involves clearing trays, wiping tables and mopping the floor. At first, John had a problem with visual scanning. He often missed trays while moving along the aisle; thus began painstaking training whereby he had to stop along the aisle and scan tables on the left and right without fail before moving on to the next row of tables. While the scanning slowed his work considerably, it was necessary and eventually became a habit. Over time, John was able to pick up speed while attending to all the dirty tables.

John was also unable to tell time. He either missed his breaks or did not know when to return from a break. As a result, co-workers often had to search for John. The training officer suggested a small investment in a digital watch with an alarm timed for breaks and off-duty periods. It worked. Throughout the process, the placement officer provided counselling support and negotiated with the employer for assistance while the trainer prepared John to be as independent as possible. While there are days when John misses his bus stop on his way home and sometimes forgets to tell his family he is working late, he is performing well on the job. And he now speaks in short sentences of three words or more.

Operating for more than 15 years in changing economic times, Bizlink's corporate knowledge base and list of lessons learned is significant. Some of the most important lessons include:

New ideas can work! Bizlink shows that new ideas can be great ideas and that no service, programme or production facility can function on outmoded thinking. Several Bizlink employees constantly search for new contracts that lend themselves to effective adaptation to the skills of Bizlink's workers. Bizlink strives to respond to a changing economy and marketplace, even when such responsiveness means a change in approaches and the mindsets of its own employers.

Change must be incremental. Although segregated work facilities are no longer considered optimal work places for persons with disabilities, marketplace realities do not always allow for decent work opportunities in an open environment. One alternative approach is the slow integration of the workplace in reverse by encouraging some nondisabled persons to work with employed people with disabilities.

Cooperation with other organizations can save money and expand opportunities. From the start, Bizlink was built on a collaborative effort between the Government and other donors. Today, Bizlink constantly interacts with other disability organizations to enhance its programmes, to assist others or to share costs or contracts. Most organizations representing disabled people are working toward the same goals. Collaboration leads to success for all.

Service means meeting the needs of the entire disability population. Bizlink meets the needs of any person with a disability who walks through the door. Some individuals may need just the service of the employment placement division and may be in and out in a matter of hours or days. Others may work at Bizlink or require multiple and long-term services to ensure a successful outcome (see box).

Paying decent wages often requires subsidies to fill gaps. In an institution that accommodates people with disabilities of all working abilities, wage equity can be an issue. Bizlink tries to ensure that people are paid fairly for the work produced and takes care not to underpay anyone. Bizlink also strives to make each component of its production workshop self-sustaining; instructor and management salaries, however, require subsidies. The production workshop operates on an annual deficit of S\$300,000 (US\$170,355), which donor contributions cover. "Of course, it is our dream to one day get such high-value jobs that we can actually break even, but that is rare, even in developed countries," says Mr. Tan.

Helping with transportation can make the difference between work and no work. High transportation costs, inaccessible mass transit and generally high living costs, coupled

with a lack of income supports, make employment and independent living difficult for many people with disabilities. To address these barriers, Bizlink hires a fleet of five buses (another expense covered by subsidies) to ensure that its employees can reach the workshop. As part of its placement service, Bizlink helps newly placed individuals identify transportation options. However, for many people, transportation remains a major obstacle – and can be the difference between earning an income or not.

Looking Forward

With regard to its production workshops, Bizlink is constantly looking for high value-added contracts to diversify work tasks, increase profitability and remain on the cutting-edge of business needs. In particular, Bizlink is working to develop more meaningful and better-paying work for people with intellectual impairments. To that end, it is expanding its cleaning and housekeeping services and increasing the use of job coaches and supported employment. Bizlink is also seeking funds to enable clients with intellectual impairments and those with substantial physical or multiple disabilities to move into the open workplace with the necessary supports.

Bizlink is also actively lobbying the Ministry of Manpower to push through salary-substitution incentives to encourage employers to hire people who may require extended learning periods.

Replication

The Bizlink model developed in response to Singapore's socio-economic and political environment. In a strong and developed market economy challenged by downturns and limited government income supports, Bizlink has learned to compete, survive, develop market niches and secure resources from a variety of sources. It seeks private as well as government funding, strives to make its employment components self-sufficient and collaborates with related organizations to maximize resources. Any of these actions could be copied by other organizations.

To professionals in organizations interested in replicating the Bizlink model, Mr. Tan insists, "Come and see us!" He also stresses the need to analyse socio-economic conditions and the marketplace and to develop employment services accordingly. Part of Bizlink's success results from its constant assessment of the marketplace. The business development staff frequently speak on the telephone to and regularly visits companies to see if Bizlink can meet the companies' business and employment needs. Receptivity to new and different demands and maintaining contact with the business community are crucial to creating employment opportunities.

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Policy Can Make a Difference – But Employers Sometimes Need Help Following the Laws in Japan

The Challenge

The Government of Japan facilitates the employment of all citizens, including those with disabilities. It has enacted laws to help people with disabilities prepare for and find stable employment. Indeed, the existence of laws that promote the employment of people with disabilities can open up a wide range of opportunities but only if the laws are enforced and employers are familiar with them. To that end, a semi-government agency, the Japan Association for Employment of Persons with Disabilities (JAED), offers services for people with disabilities with specialized needs and for the employers who hire them. While Japan's laws and policies and a body to implement them form the heart of the Japanese employment system, authorities have come to realize that employers need information, support and assistance in implementing the laws and integrating people with disabilities into the workplace.

How can employers get the support they need to keep abreast of changing policies and the special needs of people with substantial disabilities to ensure their participation in the workplace?

Meeting the Challenge

JAED has evolved into a comprehensive service that provides vocational rehabilitation training, delivers public education activities, engages in international cooperation projects and provides employers with support services and research. This profile focuses on JAED's support services that help employers understand and implement the laws related to the employment of people with disabilities, especially as changes to the Law for Employment Promotion of Persons with Disabilities take effect in 2003.

The Good Practice: A semi-government agency that provides a multidimensional support network for employers and ensures job and training opportunities for people with disabilities.



• Background •

In 1966, Japan adopted an employment quota policy to benefit workers with disabilities. A predecessor of JAED, the Association for Employment of Persons with Disabilities, was established in 1971 as a nonprofit foundation with the voluntary participation of employers. Its aim was to promote the employment of people with disabilities by enhancing public awareness. Initially only a moral obligation, the quota is now a legal responsibility under the amendments to the Law for Employment Promotion of Persons with Disabilities in 1976. Other amendments provide for a levy and grant system (see box). With government support, the organization became the Japan Association for Employment of the Physically Handicapped in 1977 and later JAED.

As of the 1970s, the Government mandated that JAED assume a major role in implementing the nation's policies for people with disabilities, including the levy and grant schemes. Over time, JAED has taken a leadership role among Asian countries in the field of vocational rehabilitation for people with disabilities. As part of the Government's overseas technical cooperation programme, JAED dispatches specialists and accepts trainees for the purpose of developing and establishing vocational rehabilitation systems in developing countries. JAED also conducts surveys of how developed countries promote the employment of people with disabilities through policy directives and legal and systematic means.

JAED conducts research into employment support methods that help people with various disabilities, including those with intellectual and other developmental disabilities such as autism and learning disabilities. It publishes and distributes research reports, bulletins and sets of materials.

Within Japan, JAED now provides vocational rehabilitation services for persons with disabilities through its Local Vocational Centres for Persons with Disabilities. The centres are located in each of the nation's 47 prefectures (provinces). There are also three Regional Vocational Rehabilitation Centres for Persons with Disabilities and a National Institute of Vocational Rehabilitation that functions as the core facility.

Japan's Levy and Grant System

JAED helps employers comply with their responsibilities under the Law for Employment Promotion of Persons with Disabilities, particularly the levy and grant system. Employers are required to satisfy the stipulated employment quota by hiring people with disabilities – 1.8 per cent of each business' workforce. Those who do not hire per the quota pay a levy. Employers who hire people with disabilities may be eligible for grants to alleviate any economic hardships they may incur. A brief summary of the provisions follows:

Levies. The amount of the levy is 50,000 yen (US\$413) per month per person for the number of disabled workers short of the stipulated quota. The levy is not a "fine". Employers are not exempted from the obligation to employ the legally stipulated number of disabled workers even if they have paid the levy. For the time being, the Government does not collect the levy from small and medium-sized companies with fewer than 300 workers.

Allowances and rewards. Incentive funds are paid to employers who hire more workers with disabilities than is legally required. Employers with more than 300 regular workers are paid 25,000 yen (US\$206) as an "allowance" per person per month for the number of disabled employees in excess of the quota. Employers in small and medium-sized enterprises can also receive allowances.

Grants. Employers can receive grants to offset expenses related to hiring workers with disabilities, such as for the following:

- Provision of workplace facilities;
- Workplace attendants for severely disabled persons;
- Transportation expenses, such as the purchase or rental of buses to assist persons with severe disabilities in commuting to and from work; and
- Developing skills of workers with disabilities.

Employers who facilitate the return to work of employees disabled by job-related accidents or injuries can also receive grants for workplace or job accommodations.

Changes in the Law. To expand employment opportunities and further improve its support network, the Government of Japan revised its Law for Employment Promotion of Persons with Disabilities and made five important changes that take effect in 2003. Some expand services such as the requirement that local vocational centres must provide job-coaching services to help workers adapt to the workplace. Other stipulations relate to changes in requirements for how people with disabilities are counted in the quota system. Employers need to be educated about the specific changes and benefits that result from the amendments.

The local vocational centres offer a variety of services, including the following:

- Evaluation and guidance to ensure a person's suitability to a job or workplace;
- Referrals – along with medical, education and welfare organizations, the local vocational centre pinpoints appropriate vocational rehabilitation services for both challenged persons and their employers;
- Work preparation training – an eight-week course at a training site recreates workplace conditions to help participants with motivation, physical strengthening, social abilities and work habits;
- Vocational courses – in basic computer operation and other technical skills for persons with physical disabilities, such as visual impairments and cerebral palsy;
- Work experience and job coaching – to provide a smooth transition to work for intellectually disabled persons; and
- Coordination of job placement and support services – for the person with a disability and his or her employer. The official placement procedure is the responsibility of the Public Employment Security Office (PESO). Most though not all PESO offices employ special job placement officers who work with people with disabilities.

PESO's coordination with JAED for job placement can take several paths. A person with a disability might go directly to PESO. If the PESO officer is unable to help that person, the officer refers the client to the local vocational centre, where a counsellor will conduct an evaluation. Depending on his or her abilities, the client may be introduced to the centre's training services or to a sheltered workshop. If the client can be placed directly in open employment and the centre counsellor is aware of a position, the counsellor contacts the PESO officer with the details. For any placement of JAED clients, PESO officers work with the vocational counsellors and conduct all discussions and negotiations with the prospective employer.

• JAED's Support Services for Employers •

Support begins before employers accept workers with disabilities and continues after hiring. Employment advisers, guidance officers and vocational counsellors provide:

Seminars and study courses. JAED conducts employment support seminars and study courses for employers and human resources personnel. To help develop expertise in employment management, the seminars and courses introduce good practices and successful cases in the hiring of disabled workers. Guidebooks are issued as course materials.

Counselling to employers. For employers who have never before hired workers with disabilities, JAED's vocational counsellors demonstrate how employers can help employees adjust to their new job. The counsellors explain the Law for Employment Promotion for Persons with Disabilities and its various components, what the law means to employers and how employers can make any needed adjustments to their workplace or jobs to accommodate the specific needs of workers with disabilities.

Employment management support programme. Staff of local vocational centres, including vocational counsellors, advisors and specialists in the fields of medicine, social education, social welfare, psychiatry, vocational skills training, engineering and employment management, facilitate the integration or employment of disabled workers by advising employers about techniques such as job analysis, the use of assistive devices, training approaches and workplace improvements.

Job coach programme. In addition to supporting workers with disabilities once they are hired, job coaches provide support and advice in the following areas to employers who attend meetings at local vocational centres:

- Understanding different types of disabilities and associated assistive measures;
- Adapting work content, processes, tools and equipment;
- Creating effective instruction methods;
- Giving job direction, feedback and recognition; and
- Suggesting activities for nonworking hours and methods of communication with family members.

For the employer, the purpose of job coaching is to assist the disabled worker in learning her or his job and to ensure the employees' satisfactory adjustment to the workplace. Typically, coaching is available for two to four months, with eight months the maximum. The JAED job coach gradually transfers coaching activities to individuals in each workplace. Those individuals assume responsibility for maintaining any support the disabled worker may require. However, the job coach provides periodic follow-up, even after conclusion of the period of official job coaching. Examples of support provided by job coaches to workers with disabilities include helping the worker learn the job, making any necessary adaptations to the workplace and assisting with social integration and workplace communication.

Support for setting up an in-house advisory team to help persons with disabilities adjust to their jobs. JAED encourages employers hiring five or more people with disabilities to set up an in-house team that consists of an employer, disabled worker(s) and a vocational life consultant who is assigned by the employer to provide consultation and guidance to workers with disabilities on their overall vocational life. The purpose of the team is to foster creation of a workplace where workers with disabilities can realize their potential, contribute to the workplace and adapt to their jobs. JAED provides advice to employers when they set up a team and offers follow-up counselling and materials on how to manage the team successfully.

Follow-up service to employers. The follow-up service for employers receiving grants aims at improving the workplace environment to accommodate workers with disabilities. Employers receive advice and support on the proper use of the grants so that the funds contribute to the employment stability of employees with disabilities.

Trial employment scheme. In April 2001, the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare asked JAED to implement a trial employment scheme designed for employers who, owing to a lack of knowledge or experience, hesitate to hire workers with disabilities. Employers receive “encouragement grants” to try out a worker with a disability for three months while local vocational centres provide support to employers before, during and after the period of trial employment.

Publications. JAED publishes a monthly journal called “Working People’s Plaza” that deals with employment and disability issues. It also contains the latest reports on successful examples of workplaces where disabled persons are employed.

In addition, JAED publishes and distributes guidebooks for employers and persons with disabilities. It is also involved in the production and transmission of television programmes to encourage interest and understanding among the public about the employment of persons with disabilities. In addition, information centres make available free films and videos on themes such as employment management, expansion of vocational areas, work adjustments, vocational training and guidance of people with disabilities.

To promote the employment of workers with disabilities, companies are invited to prepare examples of good practices, including innovative management techniques and workplace accommodations. JAED compiles the examples for publication in a booklet for distribution.

Research activities. To improve employment support, JAED researchers experiment and probe for innovative ways to use technical aids to facilitate productivity. They also look for new ways to provide necessary employment-related support in cooperation with agencies in relevant areas, such as education, medical care and welfare.

Annual focus. September is designated as Promotion of the Employment of Persons with Disabilities Month. It is the time for events such as campaigns, work fairs, ceremonies, awards and lectures.

Accomplishments

In the most recent year for which data are available (April 2002 to March 2003), 23,552 people with disabilities received services at JAED’s local vocational centres, and 17,272 employers took advantage of JAED’s support services.

Placement services are the responsibility of the mainstream PESO service, which has employment specialists who are knowledgeable about disability issues. In the 2002 fiscal year, which ended in March 2003, 246,282 workers with disabilities were employed in enterprises to which the quota system applied.

Lessons Learned

In its many years of experience in helping workers with disabilities and employers, JAED has learned how to shape its successes in helping employers give more people with disabilities a chance to prove themselves. Those insights include:

Job coaching and follow-up increase the success of job placement. Paying close attention to the individual and the employer in a set time period immediately after employment, and then at intervals thereafter, helps ensure successful adjustment to the job while reducing dismissals.

Diverse channels are essential for distributing materials to employers. To ensure that materials make their intended impact, it is important to use a variety of approaches and media to convey the desired message. In addition, the message needs to be straight forward, and materials and applications for government incentives and grants need to be simple.

Technical support and advice to enterprises expedites the implementation of new provisions. Employers need help in learning about policy changes and how to implement them.

Looking Forward

Effective 1 October 2003 and based on Law No. 165 (December, 2002), JAED will become a special administrative organization named the Japan Organization for Employment of the Elderly and Persons with Disabilities (JEED).

The new JEED will have the following responsibilities with regard to the employment of people with disabilities:

- Vocational rehabilitation services;
- The collection of levies as well as the payment of adjustment allowances, rewards and grants based on the levy and grant system for employing persons with disabilities;
- Consultant and support services for employers;
- Public education activities; and
- Research and study activities.

With regard to the employment of elderly persons, JEED will be responsible for:

- The payment of grants;
- Consultant and support services for employers; and
- The provision of advice and guidance to elderly persons to help them plan for after their vocational life.

Replication

Many countries try to stimulate the employment of people with disabilities by instituting hiring quotas and levy systems. However, for poor and developing countries, enforcement is costly and challenging. Similarly, a support network similar to the Japan Association for Employment of Persons with Disabilities requires considerable political commitment and enormous financial resources. Replication of Japan's approach should be considered in light of careful study and expert advice.

Regardless of the status of a nation's policy climate, one effective approach to employment stimulation calls for educating and persuading employers to consider the merits of all job seekers. Some of the elements of the Japanese policy framework and comprehensive JAED approach lend themselves to easy and inexpensive transfer to other countries, particularly employer incentives, grants and technical supports and the use of job coaches. JAED's track record suggests that people experienced in working in sheltered workshops or in employment facilities for people with disabilities or teachers from special schools are excellent job coach candidates. An invaluable strategy that lends itself to replication anywhere is employers with innovative ideas on how to adapt their workplace or integrate workers with disabilities.

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Promoting Themselves – Preparing People to Find Jobs in Hong Kong SAR

The Challenge

Of all people with disabilities seeking employment assistance through the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, the former mentally ill had the least success. And yet, their education level and work experience were impressive. Part of the problem resulted from negative publicity generated by media reports describing how people with mental illness experienced relapses in public. Officials in the Selective Placement Division of the Labour Department seeking jobs on behalf of people with disabilities repeatedly observed that employers preferred people with any disability other than mental illness. How could the Labour Department officials help former mentally ill people find employment opportunities in the face of negative perceptions and discrimination?

Meeting the Challenge

The Hong Kong Labour Department decided that former mentally ill clients should handle their own job searches instead of relying on referrals made by placement officers. That way, they could sell themselves first and disclose their medical history later, if they so chose. But the Government did not send them off unprepared to seek jobs. Instead, in April 2000, it launched a training programme in its three Selective Placement Division branch offices. Called the Self-Help Integrated Placement Service (SHIPS), the programme involves small group counselling classes, instruction in job searching, links to mainstream services and job-hunting resources. SHIPS was such a success that the Labour Department officials extended the service to people with all types of disabilities.

The Good Practice: Building confidence and independence among former mentally ill clients to take charge of their job search.



• Background •

Selective Placement Division (SPD) officials in Hong Kong's Labour Department have been charged with assisting people with disabilities in securing open employment. SPD maintains branches that provide office and computer support to programme participants to assist them in their job search. In the past few years, SHIPS has experimented successfully with some innovative approaches to increasing the placement of workers with disabilities. As a result, the number of job referrals grew from 3,379 in 1992 to 9,218 in 2000, representing a 173 per cent increase attributable to expanded services. The number of placements grew from 1,366 in 1992 to 2,007 in 2000, representing a 47 per cent increase.

One of the novel approaches the SPD launched was the 1998 Trial Placement Scheme to encourage employers to offer job vacancies to people with disabilities for one month, thus enhancing employers' understanding of disabled peoples' working abilities. Participating employers receive a financial incentive for the trial placement that equals 50 per cent of the wages paid to employees in a particular position, with a ceiling of HK\$2,965 (US\$385) and a certificate of appreciation as recognition.

Then, in 1999, SPD experimented with the SHIPS pilot scheme to help its formerly mentally ill clients look for jobs on their own. Three months into the experiment, seven (54 per cent) of the 13 participants in the pilot scheme found jobs on their own. That placement rate was 23 per cent higher than what had been achieved by the traditional personal placement service for the former mentally ill group.

• How SHIPS is Structured •

Training seminar. The relatively short SHIPS programme is now tailor-made to fit the needs of particular disability groups (originally it dealt only with former mentally ill people). A one-day training seminar brings a group of 10 to 20 people, typically with the same disability, into a classroom located in SPD branch offices. SPD officers conduct the training. The topics focus on:

- The current job market situation;
- Goal planning;
- Job-listing sources and job-search plan development;
- Writing a resume and completing job applications;
- Applying for jobs by telephone; and
- Interview skills and responses to frequently asked questions.

Training materials include a SHIPS-produced film on interviewing techniques and the videotaping of mock interviews. Sometimes the placement officers vary the programme's content, adding subjects such as stress management, work ethics and so forth, depending on the needs of the particular group. The placement officers keep abreast of labour market trends and issues that can benefit clients. As well, they are familiar with the problems that job seekers often encounter during job interviews and prepare clients for any possible situation.

As part of the classroom session, participants practice their job-seeking skills in a half-day exercise that involves visits to the job centre of the Employment Services Division of the Labour Department (open to all job seekers) and to a Regional Central Library. The visits help familiarize clients with different channels for gathering information on job vacancies and job searching.

The Labour Department has 11 job centres that provide recruitment and employment services to employers and job seekers, respectively. Employers place vacancy orders at the centres. Job seekers can read the job cards or search the vacancies through the "vacancy search terminal" installed at the centres. If the employers release their contact information to the public, job seekers can contact the employers directly to request a job interview.

In addition to the local newspapers with their recruitment advertisements, the public libraries maintain reference books on job-seeking and interviewing skills. Computers are available for the public to search the Internet for employment sites and vacancies.

As a final exercise in the classroom session, the placement officer demonstrates the different resource tools available to clients at the Employment Resources Corner located in each SPD branch office. Clients can use a computer to practise their typing and computer skills. In addition, newspapers with recruitment advertisements, reference books and videotapes on job interviewing and application skills are available.

Progress review session. After the one-day training seminar, clients are free to use the Labour Office resources to initiate their job search. Each week, clients meet individually with SHIPS officers to report their job-search progress and share their job interview experiences.

Follow-up service. In October 2002, SPD organized a "refresher" seminar for SHIPS participants who had not yet secured employment. A psychologist and a human resources manager shared their expert knowledge on job-searching and interviewing techniques. According to the participants, the follow-up service provided additional benefits. Approximately 95 per cent of them felt more motivated in seeking a job. Encouraged by such a favourable response, the SPD intends to organize similar seminars once a year to strengthen the self-confidence and job-searching skills of SHIPS participants.

Accomplishments

The essence of the SHIPS programme is “to help the job-seekers to help themselves,” says Patrick Chow, head of the Selective Placement Division of the Labour Department. Before SHIPS, some job seekers presumed it was the placement officers’ responsibility to find them a job after they registered with SPD. Now, the responsibility for finding a job rests mainly with the job seekers. It is interesting to note that before introduction of the programme, adds Mr. Chow, job seekers usually called the placement officers from time to time to check the latest progress in finding them job possibilities. Today, it is the placement officers who ring up the job seekers to see what interviews they have arranged for themselves or what job they have found.

In 2002, 178 job seekers from the former mentally ill group joined SHIPS. Of them, 130 found jobs within the first six months of entering the programme (placement rate of 73 per cent). The overall placement rate for the former mentally ill group for the year was higher than for any other disability group. Total SHIPS participation among all disability groups was 714 people, of whom 495 found a job within six months.

Between September 1999 and October 2002, SHIPS conducted 88 sessions for 1,701 job seekers from different disability groups. Of them, 455 participants had a history of mental illness and succeeded in achieving 256 self-help placements, representing a placement rate of 56 per cent.

Lessons Learned

SHIPS is most useful for job seekers with disabilities who can read and write and have some work experience. The following experiences contributed to the success of Hong Kong’s SHIPS:

Good job-search motivation is critical. People who are unable to conduct an independent job search or lack motivation to secure employment will not benefit from the SHIPS programme.

Support and encouragement from the family members of job seekers are important. The need for encouragement during the job-searching process is obvious; clients will likely encounter difficulties or even failure in the course of seeking employment. But to adapt themselves to society again after a prolonged period of sick leave or unemployment, some clients may decide to re-enter the workforce by taking up part-time work. With the support of family members, clients need not worry too much about their earnings and thus might identify a wide range of job opportunities.

One Woman's Success Story

Judy's mental illness, schizophrenia, began in 1986. She suffered from insomnia, loss of appetite and auditory hallucinations. She recovered after several years of psychiatric treatment. Looking to pick up the pieces of her life, she registered at the Selective Placement Division of the Labour Department in August 2000. In November 2002, she joined SHIPS.

Before joining SHIPS, Judy (not her real name) had applied for several jobs, following up on referrals made by her placement officer. She was never offered employment. She suspected that her failure to receive job offers was related to her lack of confidence and unsatisfactory performance in job interviews. After joining SHIPS, she learned to find more job opportunities by reading recruitment advertisements on the Internet. In the SHIPS class, she was able to make friends with other former mentally ill job seekers. They formed a support group and shared job-searching difficulties and experiences. Judy grew more confident and could better handle questions in job interviews.

Judy succeeded in finding a job as a temporary secretary in December 2000 and stayed until July 2001, when her contract expired. In October 2001, also through her own efforts, she was hired as a contract clerk in the Building Services Department of the Government of the Hong Kong SAR.

Follow-up services are needed. Although SHIPS participants may have polished their job-searching skills, they may still experience difficulty in securing employment. They require the continued support and back-up services of SPD placement officers. Placement officers closely monitor the job-searching progress of SHIPS clients and provide advice and counselling as appropriate. When several clients experienced difficulty in finding regular employment, SHIPS officials realized from their many follow-up sessions that clients needed a refresher seminar to hone their job-seeking skills.

Looking Forward

SPD placement officers recognize the importance of sharpening the job-searching skills of job seekers. But they also believe that job seekers' self-confidence and ability to face times of adversity play a role in whether or not individuals secure employment. To achieve this, SHIPS plans to:

- Organize more SHIPS classes that are tailor-made to specific disabilities;
- Invite professionals, employers, human resources experts and successful clients to classes to share their experiences; and
- Organize confidence-boosting seminars with psychologists at least once a year. Experts on human resources management will also be invited.

Another Woman's Success Story

Cindy experienced the onset of schizophrenia in 1998. She received medical treatment and has recovered well. In April 2002, she registered at the Selective Placement Division of the Labour Department for employment services and joined SHIPS in the same month.

Before joining SHIPS, Cindy (not her real name) was nervous and lacked confidence in searching for clerical work, the type of work she preferred. However, her placement officer noticed that, after participating in SHIPS, Cindy was reading more recruitment advertisements, was sending out her resume more frequently and was contacting employers for job interviews nearly every day. She polished her interview skills in accordance with the SHIPS trainer's demonstration and the mock job interviews. She grew more confident that she could better handle interview questions. In July 2002, after performing well in an interview, Cindy was put on the waiting list for a general clerk position in a government department.

Through SHIPS, Cindy learned how to develop an understanding of the job market and that she needs to be open to a range of job opportunities. In January 2003, she became a temporary packer, a position not much to her liking. However, the placement officer monitored Cindy's job-searching progress closely and gave advice and counselling as appropriate. With the frequent encouragement and support from the placement officer, Cindy found a job as a general clerk in a hospital in May 2003.

Replication

SHIPS is relatively simple to replicate. It lends itself to any setting and requires little funding, if any – depending on the organization. It does, however, require a trainer and certain types of equipment to enhance service delivery. The following steps are prerequisites to setting up a basic programme scheme similar to SHIPS:

- Run a pilot scheme by selecting a small group of job seekers with good job-searching motivation and basic job search skills in job searching.
- Plan the contents of the training to suit the needs of the participants. What do they lack? Do they have the courage and skills to make telephone calls? Do they know what to say during job interviews? It is important at the outset to identify the difficulties faced by participants.
- Design the mode of delivery – using interactive activities and exercises.
- Find a suitable training venue, preferably with facilities such as an overhead projector and screen, computer notebook, television set, video recorder and video camera.
- Plan for a follow-up review to assess programme effectiveness and determine if modifications are required.

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Partnerships are relationships based on mutual needs and complementary goals that result in benefits for those involved. Partners share resources such as money, time, information and expertise in expectation of a return on investment. As increasing public scrutiny and accountability, corporate responsibility and limited resources challenge institutions in government, nongovernment and private for-profit sectors, partnerships represent a popular approach for solving problems and optimizing results.

ILO Convention. No. 159 Concerning Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (Disabled Persons), 1983 calls for consultation on the part of employers' and workers' organizations as well as organizations of and for disabled persons in the development of national policies and programmes related to the training and employment of disabled persons. The partnerships in this section of *Moving Forward* adhere to the spirit of Convention 159. Whatever their precise structure and composition, partnerships between and among NGOs, governments, businesses, employers, trade unions and people with disabilities increase vocational training and work opportunities available to disabled persons.

Most enlightened employers know that human resources and a sound reputation are two of their most valuable assets in a competitive global marketplace. They realize the importance of contributing to the communities in which they live and work and in which their companies thrive. The profile of Cambodia's Business Advisory Council describes a unique group of leaders from business and industry who have joined forces to provide technical advice to NGOs to improve vocational training and increase the job options open to people with disabilities.

The Employers' Network on Disability in Sri Lanka is a special project of the Employers' Federation of Ceylon (EFC) – and it is unique in many ways. It mobilizes its members to take a leading role in exploring and addressing the inequities faced by people with disabilities in gaining access to decent work. It started by examining the issue and building awareness among employers. Armed with knowledge and influence, it is partnering with NGOs and government agencies in a spirit of collaboration to address creatively the employment problems faced by people with disabilities. The EFC recognizes that a country's development must include all members of society.

The Marketing Consultancy Office (MCO) in Hong Kong SAR is a government initiative that created an alliance of more than 100 NGOs to strengthen their marketing position in a highly competitive and developed economy. As a business-focused programme, the MCO helps NGOs identify a niche and improve their marketing. MCO staff serve as marketing representatives who promote alliance members' goods and services. Sometimes it organizes partnerships among NGOs with like capabilities to bid for contracts larger than each NGO could handle independently. The MCO is an excellent example of a win-win situation, with customers securing the goods and services they need at competitive prices while contributing to the overall community. The NGOs win contracts that promote employment for people with disabilities.

Another example from Hong Kong SAR shows how the Hong Chi Association partnered with J.W. Marriott Hotel to develop a housekeeping training programme for people with intellectual impairments. Marriott constructed replicas of hotel rooms at the Hong Chi facility and trained trainers to teach the skills that Marriott needs. Still in its infancy, the programme shows promise for leading people with disabilities – trained by one of the world's premier innkeepers – to good jobs in the city's several hotels.

This section's final profile describes the pioneering activities of the Kanagawa Regional Council of the Japanese Electrical, Electronic and Information Union. The council's integrated programme of vocational assessment, training and adjustment services, delivered through experience in sheltered, work crew and open-employment settings, was initiated by the union in response to needs among its members. Today, its programmes, which are jointly funded by the Government and the trade union, rely heavily on the expertise of retirees who serve as job coaches.

As illustrated in this section, partnerships can motivate unions to respond to workplace inequities, help businesses reduce hiring, recruitment and turnover costs, encourage governments to respond to the needs of all citizens, assist NGOs in fulfilling their mission, and encourage people with disabilities to move forward toward decent work.

The following ILO products will be also of interest:

AbilityAsia, 2002 (Video)

AbilityThailand, 2002 (Video – Thai language only)

AbilityCaribbean, forthcoming (Video)

ILO Code of Practice: Managing disability in the workplace, 2002

Trade Union Action: Integrating disabled persons in working life, 1998

Partnering with Employers – Improving the Skills and Job Opportunities for Workers with Disabilities in Cambodia

The Challenge

In Cambodia as throughout the Asia and Pacific region, vocational training programmes – whether targeting people with disabilities or the general population – face the challenge of responding to labour market needs. To prepare people in high-demand skills, training programmes must use current and updated equipment and state-of-the-art training techniques. For example, in computer training programmes, trainees must learn keyboard and computer basics as well as how to operate software packages currently used by most offices. Even when people with disabilities demonstrate good skills, they may still face obstacles to entering the workforce. Owing to years of isolation and exclusion, they may lack the social skills or confidence essential to on-the-job success. For their part, employers often share the same negative perceptions about people with disabilities as held by the general population, such as doubting that disabled people can make productive contributions to the workplace.

In Cambodia, the problems are particularly acute because of the large number of people whose disabilities are the result of poverty, landmine accidents and years of internal conflict. These same factors mean that the Government lacks the resources required to address the needs of disabled people. How can people with disabilities overcome these obstacles? Who can best help?

Meeting the Challenge

A natural partner in helping people with disabilities achieve hiring success is the people who control the jobs – the employers. In Cambodia, the ILO provided technical assistance to an international NGO, the World Rehabilitation Fund (WRF) to develop a partnership between employers and organizations providing vocational services to people with disabilities. At the heart of the partnership is the Business Advisory Council (BAC).

The BAC, formed in 2001, consists of volunteers from leading businesses who have banded together to address the obstacles faced by disabled persons seeking to enter the economic mainstream. The BAC works in partnership with existing job training and employment programmes to help people achieve a better life through employment.

The Good Practice: Volunteer leaders from business and industry who work with NGOs, government and employers to develop decent work opportunities for people with disabilities.



• Background •

The Business Advisory Council model is based on a United States programme called Projects With Industry, which also proved effective in ILO field tests in Kenya and Tanzania in the 1990s. BAC members serve as advisors or even co-managers of employment and training programmes. The members link those programmes, their staff and their clients with disabilities to the workplace or to economic opportunities. Like any partnership, the BAC model is based on mutual or complementary needs – people with disabilities need training and jobs while employers need trained, skilled workers at reduced training and recruitment costs.

— From a Remote Village to Office Data Entry Clerk —

Before attending the computer technology training programme at Wat Than Skills Training Centre, Eng Naleak lived in a distant Cambodian village. Typical of many remote areas, the village lacked computers and the electricity and telephone lines to operate them. Disabled from birth, Eng Naleak is missing several fingers and has impaired mobility. Although she managed to finish secondary school, she had few job prospects. She helped with chores at home – cooking, sweeping and sewing – but she seldom went beyond her village or its immediate surroundings.

Today, Eng Naleak works as a data entry clerk for Digital Divide Data (DDD), a data outsourcing company in Phnom Penh. “I love my job and never dreamed my life would be like this,” she says. Eng Naleak earns a good living and is able to send money home to help her family. She is considered one of the best workers at DDD. “Although she only has three fingers on each hand, her speed is as good as that of her co-workers,” says her employer.

Eng Naleak’s success is due to the foresight of her family, her hard work, the Wat Than Skills Training Centre and the group of business volunteers, collectively referred to as the Business Advisory Council, which works behind the scenes to open employment and training opportunities for people with disabilities.

• How the BAC Started in Cambodia •

In Cambodia, the BAC was established as part of a United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and UN Mine Action Services-funded effort called the Socio-economic Reintegration of Landmine Survivors Programme. With technical assistance from the ILO, the World Rehabilitation Fund served as the project's executing partner and organized the BAC in the following process:

- Established a working group. In late 2000, several collaborating partners created a working group that formulated a plan of action to develop what would become the BAC. The partners represented the National Centre of Disabled Persons (NCDP), which operates a job placement programme for people with disabilities, Cambodia's Disability Action Council (the country's main coordinating body for disability issues), the Wat Than Skills Training Centre, the WRF, the ILO and the UNDP.
- Recruited members. The working group approached individual employers and business associations in Phnom Penh to explain the BAC concept and then invited them to attend an introductory meeting. Many of the employers who were first approached by the group had already hired people with disabilities from the NCDP programme. They were optimistic about the abilities of disabled workers. Once a few employers agreed to attend the meeting, the working group found it easier to ask other employers to attend the initial gathering.
- Conducted an introductory meeting. The working group used the inaugural meeting to discuss the challenges faced by people with disabilities in Cambodia. The group also discussed the purpose of the BAC and how employers could contribute to and benefit from participation. Everyone who attended the first meeting signed on and the BAC was formed.
- Developed the BAC structure. The BAC started meeting monthly and adopted by-laws. It held elections for major council posts, such as chairperson, vice chair and treasurer. With technical assistance from the ILO, the BAC developed vision and mission statements and a strategic plan. These organizational activities spanned several meetings but paid off in terms of building a bond among council members and defining a direction for their activities.
- Initiated action. BAC members invited other companies to join the council and began to take action on the strategic plan. Some of the BAC's initial activities called for starting on-the-job training and assisting people with disabilities in employment.

• The BAC in Action •

Secretariat and membership. An important component of effective BAC functioning is a strong secretariat. In the case of Cambodia, the WRF serves as the secretariat and maintains all documents, prepares the monthly meeting agenda, manages the development of promotional materials and supports the BAC in implementing its plans. The WRF stays in regular contact with BAC members, especially the chairperson. A businessperson, usually the elected chairperson, oversees all meetings. The majority of members must come from the business community. (The participation of too many NGOs or nonbusiness members, even as observers or beneficiaries, upsets the group's balance and dynamics.)

Meetings. Currently, the BAC meets monthly on a formal basis. Informal meetings are sometimes arranged in between the regular meetings to discuss specific issues, such as plans for a special event or how to influence government policies to stimulate the hiring of workers with disabilities.

Job placement. The BAC serves as a permanent advisory group to Cambodia's National Centre of Disabled Persons, the primary organization involved in providing vocational guidance and job placement services for people with disabilities. The NCDP maintains a database of more than 2,200 job seekers with disabilities. The BAC assists the NCDP in making job placements. Sometimes members work individually with disabled persons by providing career advice and guidance, assisting with resume preparation or practising job interviews.

Awareness building. The BAC reaches beyond its membership to find job opportunities. It refers NCDP employment specialists to other companies and its members promote awareness by writing articles in business publications. It engages in a variety of other awareness-building activities, such as sponsoring workshops, maintaining a Web site and distributing brochures related to hiring workers with disabilities and joining the BAC. It participated with the ILO to produce a video entitled *AbilityAsia*, which targets an employer audience to foster favourable attitudes about hiring workers with disabilities. BAC representatives also make presentations at regional forums on issues related to people with disabilities and their rights and employment needs.

Vocational training. The BAC provides technical assistance to job training programmes. Since its inception, the BAC has worked with the Wat Than Skills Training Centre and, more recently, with the Association for Aid and Relief (AAR-Japan). As an example of the BAC's partnering activities, members in the information technology (IT) field reviewed the curriculum and offered advice for upgrading Wat Than's services to make them more responsive to industry needs. In addition, BAC members invited trainees from the IT and sewing programmes at Wat Than to participate in worksite visits to their companies or

factories. Given that many trainees have never before worked, the site visits are an important step toward employment. BAC members also encourage employers to provide on-the-job training and internships for people with disabilities.

The BAC also assists Wat Than in obtaining sewing contracts for its training workshop so that trainees can earn while they learn. According to Wat Than former director Kim Mom, "It really has improved the morale of our students to know that important people in the community, people who have jobs and influence, take time out to help them."

Accomplishments

No doubt, many employers are fearful of hiring workers with disabilities. They are concerned that disabled employees cannot work effectively or will present problems in the workplace. Even though many examples exist to the contrary, these ideas persist. One of the most valuable contributions the BAC is making in Cambodia is to dispel negative attitudes among employers about hiring workers with disabilities. While that is a long process, signs suggest that attitudes are changing. The BAC is also helping to break down the barriers to finding jobs.

The following are some of the concrete achievements of the BAC in its short life cycle:

- **Placement.** From its inception in January 2001 until August 2002, the NCDP, working in collaboration with the BAC, placed more than 140 individuals with disabilities in private sector jobs. The period of January to June 2003 alone yielded 58 placements.
- **On-the-job training.** Using a fund allocated to the BAC for on-the-job training and operational expenses (US\$25,000), half of those placed – 70 people – received training and a salary partially supplemented from the BAC fund.
- **Reaching employers.** More than 30 new employers started to hire workers with disabilities. An employers' seminar reached many more. One employer in the garment industry established a policy to hire five workers with disabilities each month during 2002. At the Cambodia De-mining Workshop, which operates highly successful mechanical engineering and sewing departments and meets international specifications for de-mining equipment and gear, six out of ten workers are people with disabilities.
- **Employer-to-employer awareness raising.** A June 2002 employer seminar sponsored by the BAC and entitled Promoting Equal Opportunities for People with Disabilities reached more than 70 employers directly and many more through substantial local and international media coverage. At the Employer

Awards ceremony, which is expected to become an annual event, employers recognized those employers who were successful in advancing equal opportunities. The BAC uses the publications of member organizations and other business groups to promote its vision, mission and agenda. In addition, the BAC maintains its own Web site where employers can post job openings and search for qualified job seekers with disabilities. The various types of employer-to-employer awareness-raising activities are highly effective.

- Research. To guide its work, the BAC commissioned a survey of employers, both private and government, to determine attitudes and practices related to hiring workers with disabilities in Phnom Penh. Results indicate that, at present, NGOs are more likely than private for-profit companies to hire disabled workers. However, most employers who hire disabled workers are pleased with their employees' performance. Negative attitudes persist, though.
- Contracts and job creation. Through the work of the BAC, the Wat Than Skills Training Centre received several contracts from BAC members and companies, such as Coca-Cola, to manufacture uniforms and other products. While the initial intention of the BAC is to move people into employment in the formal sector, the securing of contracts is an unexpected by-product. In fact, the contracts exceeded the capacity of the centre's training workshop. As a result, six workshop graduates formed a sewing and handicrafts cooperative.

Benefits of Hiring People with Disabilities and of BAC Participation

- Improved skill development programmes
- Access to workers matched to labour force needs
- Reduced training and recruitment costs
- Lower job turnover
- Reduced taxes (in some countries)
- High-performing employees
- Improved employee morale
- A more diverse, creative workforce
- Follow-up services to facilitate satisfactory adjustment
- Access to disability experts
- Enhancement of the company's or organization's image
- Satisfaction of creating opportunities and contributing to social development

Lessons Learned

While the Business Advisory Council is successful and continues to attract considerable attention as a model worthy of study, its organizers and members have learned a great deal. Some of their insights include:

Many employers are willing to become involved in BAC-type groups and are willing to hire people with disabilities. Often, rehabilitation practitioners assume that employers have negative attitudes toward, and do not care to become involved, with disability issues. When presented with an idea in a business-like manner, many employers are willing to participate.

Job placement and NGO personnel must learn about the language, values and attitudes of business. Not only must job placement and NGO personnel become familiar with the ways of the business world, but they also need to educate businesspeople and employers about people with disabilities and associated rehabilitation issues.

Time is needed to organize and maintain a BAC. Organizers must be ready to make the time commitment and allocate the human and other resources. A strong secretariat is critical to success.

Employer-to-employer communication is critical. One of the most effective ways of promoting positive attitude change is through employers' sharing of successful experiences in hiring disabled workers.

Service providers must be ready to respond to employers' requests in a timely way. Timeliness is important in the business world. Job placement personnel must have rapid-response systems in place. They should also be honest with employers if they do not have access to appropriate candidates for specific job orders.

The BAC may go through a slump or slow period. Slow periods are natural in the life of an organization or group and should be recognized and addressed. Sometimes a new activity, variations in meeting style or the addition of new members can revitalize the group.

Recognize the contributions of member companies. Different factors motivate BAC members to participate, but most companies appreciate favourable public relations. The secretariat and partnering organizations need to promote publicly members' participation and contributions (see box on Starting a BAC).

Two Key Lessons

1. Employers can contribute more than money. Sometimes, rehabilitation and employment service staff assume that employers are not interested in people with disabilities. The BAC experience in Cambodia provides a strong lesson in just the opposite. When approached to play a role in improving options for disabled people, many employers responded with enthusiasm. “Employers told us they appreciated being included as partners and problem solvers and not just seen as sources of donations,” says Debra Perry, ILO senior specialist in vocational rehabilitation for Asia and the Pacific. “It is important to remember that companies and businesspeople have a lot to offer in terms of technical advice and that they can also benefit from participating in groups like the BAC.”
2. The leader is important to any group. Starting a BAC is not easy, and maintaining one is challenging as well. There was a point in Cambodia when the turnover of BAC members and the loss of a dynamic chairperson threatened the success of the council. With so many of the major companies in Cambodia being multinationals, managing directors may come and go frequently. Just one year following the BAC’s inception, the council’s dynamic leader, the managing director from Nestle, was slated to leave. He was insightful enough to suggest a successor whom the BAC recognized as an innovator and then voted as its chairperson. What could have been a difficult transition was averted thanks to good management and planning. Since turnover continues to be a problem, the BAC is looking to secure letters of commitment from companies that will outlive the tenure of a particular managing director. To ensure continuity and representation, the BAC includes business associations and local business representatives who are less likely to be replaced over the short term. By-laws, a strategic plan and a strong secretariat also provide stability and continuity even when members must move on.

Looking Forward

Although the BAC is currently active only in Phnom Penh, the council hopes, with new funding, to expand to the northern city of Siem Reap. Home to Angkor Wat and other world-famous temples, Siem Reap is also an area where many individuals have been injured by landmines. As Cambodia becomes more politically stable, however, it is seeing an increase in tourism in Siem Reap. Jobs and tourism are closely linked, and the WRF, with continued ILO technical assistance, plans to capture some of the tourism-related jobs for qualified workers with disabilities.

Each year, the BAC plans to partner with a different vocational training centre or programme. It will examine a centre’s curriculum and try to foster increased positive

outcomes among its graduates. The BAC is also working to influence government policy to create employer incentives and other policies to promote employment opportunities for people with disabilities.

In addition, the BAC is exploring another approach to securing jobs – the creation of a for-profit business that will train and hire workers with disabilities. The council plans to reinvest the profits into activities that will further its mission. Several ideas are currently under study.

The BAC is becoming a stable force in Cambodia’s rehabilitation sector, but long-term sustainability is an issue. While current WRF funding is secure, the BAC needs a permanent institutional home with funding for its secretariat. The partnership is now focusing on the development of such a plan.

Replication

The BAC model could be replicated in other countries or communities that offer employment opportunities in the formal sector. The model usually works best in urban areas where both large and small employers and business associations can participate. What is most crucial is an organization committed to supporting a BAC. Such an organization must have a clear vision about how the BAC can contribute to increasing decent work opportunities for people with disabilities. Funding is not a prerequisite for organizing a BAC, but human resources committed over a significant period of time are critical. Organizing a BAC is a time- and labour-intensive process, and those interested in replication must be ready to make the needed commitment.

Several conditions make it easier to mobilize a successful BAC. For example, existing job placement or training programmes can provide the focus for a BAC’s attention, advice and activities. Employers who have had successful experiences in hiring workers with disabilities can discuss those experiences with other employers and provide valuable inspiration to those considering involvement with a BAC. Resources for operating costs and organizing seminars are critical. Staff need to be knowledgeable about the workings of business.

Steps for Starting a BAC

- Learn about business in general and the model in particular. Visit the Web sites listed here for more information.
- Identify partners or a working group. Clearly specify the BAC’s purpose, member benefits and initial strategies for development.
- Locate a few businesspeople or interested business associations, even three or four employers who have hired people with disabilities or businesspeople who are enthusiastic about the BAC concept.

- Do not solicit funds; ask businesspeople to share their advice and expertise. These contributions are much more valuable. If financial resources are needed, seek them elsewhere. Often BAC members make contributions at a later date when they see the value of the partnership.
- Organize an inaugural meeting and name a temporary chairperson from the business community. At the initial meeting, introduce the employment and training challenges faced by people with disabilities, the BAC concept, the organizations sponsoring the BAC and the benefits of membership. Ask people to sign on as members at the end of the meeting. All meetings, but especially the first, should be informative, dynamic, focused and business-like.
- Encourage BAC members to solicit additional members from among their personal and business networks.
- Identify the types of challenges faced by people with disabilities seeking employment and generate ideas about how the BAC can help. Solicit the group's ideas as well.
- Work with the temporary chairperson to develop BAC by-laws or operations procedures and elect permanent leaders.
- Develop and implement a strategic plan of activities.
- Ensure that BAC members receive benefits, such as first access to trained workers and favourable publicity.

Current BAC Members

Business Intelligence Consulting Group
Caltex Cambodia
CAM GSM Mobitel
Cambodia Air Catering Services
China Hong Kong Macao Business Association
Digital Divide Data
Federal Express
Garment Manufacturers' Association in Cambodia
Hotel Inter-Continental
International Institute of Cambodia
Invotech Company Limited (Cambodia De-mining Workshop)
Nestle (Dairy) Cambodia Limited
PC World Magazine
Phnom Penh Chamber of Commerce
PriceWaterhouseCoopers (Cambodia) Limited
Rattana & Associate Companies
Regent School of Business
Siemens AG Representative
Total Cambodia Limited
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Web sites

BAC Cambodia: www.bac.org.kh
 Projects With Industry, US: <http://www.ed.gov/programs/rsapwi/index.html?exp=0>
 Employers' Forum on Disability, UK: www.employers-forum.co.uk

Sometimes a Good Idea Takes Time to Develop – Employers Encouraging Employers to Give People with Disabilities a Fair Chance in Sri Lanka

The Challenge

In 1994, an international donor supporting a job placement service in Sri Lanka shifted its funding emphasis to other activities for people with disabilities. At the same time, a school for special needs students and a prosthetics and orthotics workshop made independent appeals to the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) mission in Colombo for a consultant. Both the school and the workshop wanted assistance in, first, studying Sri Lanka's employment situation and, second, formulating recommendations about how best to move their students and clients into employment. The consultant suggested involving businesspeople to lend a hand. It was an idea that worked well in other countries and could easily be replicated in Sri Lanka. Finding interested businesspeople willing to work with the Government and NGOs was not a problem, and everyone was initially enthusiastic.

The businesspeople met as a loosely organized group, along with NGOs and the Government, to discuss how they could contribute to the employment effort. But after the first year, the group fell apart. Even though the notion of moving people with disabilities into employment was a good idea and the businesspeople were willing to help, something was missing from the alliance. The group seemed to lack the proper "glue" to keep it focused and cohesive.

Meeting the Challenge

In 1999, the Government of Sri Lanka and the Japanese Association for the Employment of Disabled Persons (JAED) sponsored a seminar on employment and training. Inspired by the seminar's message, the Employers' Federation of Ceylon (EFC) came forward and offered to lead the effort to encourage the employment of people with disabilities. Several EFC members, including CEI Plastics (see box), had been hiring disabled workers for years. They knew that people with disabilities could deliver in the workplace. An established employers' organization with available resources committed to creating job opportunities for disabled people became the much-needed "glue" that was missing in 1994.

The Employers' Federation of Ceylon, with funding from the ILO, developed the Employers' Network on Disability, which it officially launched in 2000. Still evolving, the network is at the heart of a renewed effort to address the employment needs of people with disabilities. It is a powerful link between NGOs, vocational training programmes, the Government, employers and people with disabilities.

The Good Practice: An employers' association champions the working rights of people with disabilities by supporting an employers' network on disability.



• Background •

The Employers' Federation of Ceylon (EFC) is the largest employers' forum in Sri Lanka. Its membership of 457 companies represents an employee base of about 350,000 people. Formed in 1929, it was the first organization to register as a trade union in Sri Lanka. (Sri Lanka's trade union ordinance recognizes any association of workers or employers.) 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.

Since its creation, the EFC has committed itself to strengthening Sri Lanka's business environment. According to Director General Gotabaya Dasanayaka, the EFC believes that business strength is built on the labour contribution of all people. "It has been said more than once by national leaders," says Mr. Dasanayaka, "that in the development goal, the first priority is employment. The second priority is employment. And the third priority is employment. In that context, it's essential that we bring into the productive labour force all sectors, including those who are considered to be marginalized. I would say that is one of our biggest challenges." With an overall vision statement to "Promote social harmony through productive employment," the federation is implementing several proactive measures to encourage its members to hire people with disabilities.

• The Evolving Employers' Network on Disability •

The Employers' Network on Disability is a work in progress. Like a pioneering business venture, it started as a good idea, set forth goals and a course of action and went forward. Also like a successful business, it reassesses its progress and operating environment, changing course as needed to take advantage of new opportunities or reassessing its direction when actions fail to deliver desired results. The following is the story of how the network developed – and the twists and turns it has taken thus far.

Getting started. Although it is a trailblazer, the Employers' Network on Disability is not without a role model. In 1999, the ILO sent EFC Industrial Relations Specialist Meghamalie Aluwihare and EFC member Anver Dole of CEI Plastics to study the Employers' Forum on Disability (EFD) in the United Kingdom. The British forum is an employer-funded and -managed membership organization focused on the issue of disability in the workplace. With more than 375 members, including an impressive list of corporations employing more than 20 per cent of the UK workforce, the forum is recognized as the authoritative voice on disability as it affects employers and service providers. It has achieved significant progress toward building positive employer awareness of and creating direct employment opportunities for people with disabilities. The EFD is a major proponent of the case for hiring disabled workers and attests to the bottom-line advantages of a disability-diverse workforce. While the forum proved to be a valuable model, the EFC found that it had to adapt rather than adopt its approaches.

The Steering Committee. As a direct result of the study tour, in 2000 EFC's director general organized a 15-member Steering Committee to establish the Sri Lanka version of the UK Employers' Forum on Disability. Representing the hotel, plantation, manufacturing and banking sectors, the committee became the basis of the Employers' Network on Disability. Its members decided that, as a first priority, the network needed to find out what employers were thinking and then promote the benefits of hiring people with disabilities. "Most employers have phobias" about people with disabilities, says Mr. Dole, also chair of the Network Steering Committee. "But once there are people with disabilities working who are capable, the phobias will quietly disappear."

The Steering Committee began to plan for its first awareness-raising activity – a national workshop that would bring together leaders from the top companies with other stakeholders and serve as the official launch of the Sri Lankan Employers' Network on Disability.

The official launch and employers' seminar. In May 2001 and to much fanfare, the EFC, again with assistance from the ILO, launched the network and conducted the workshop. In attendance were the executive director of the UK Employers' Forum on Disability and officials and representatives of the ILO, representatives of the Ministry of Social Services and other government agencies, NGOs, people with disabilities and their

advocates and more than 50 employers representing Sri Lanka's major businesses and industries. The high level of participation provided considerable opportunity for discussion and feedback. Employers were interested but needed to know more. Who are the job seekers? What are their skills and abilities? How can they be located? The answers were not immediately evident.

At that time, Sri Lanka lacked a strong government-operated employment service, even for the population at large. Also, the Government had yet to create a replacement service to succeed the job placement programme for people with disabilities that terminated in 1994. The Ministry of Social Services began to amass a database but was stalled by a lack of personnel and other constraints. The Ministry's field workers, some of them well trained, were unable to provide much-needed services on a large scale.

As hoped, the employers' seminar ended with recommendations directing the network's immediate work plan. At the same time, publicity in both the national and international media brought the disability issue to the attention of public awareness.

Implementing the course of action. To address the identified needs, the EFC contracted a consultancy firm to help carry out the following course of action:

- Examine and report on the current status of people with disabilities in the workplace;
- Study the needs of the private sector for trained workers as compared to those possessed by job seekers with disabilities;
- Develop a computerized database of job seekers with disabilities according to their skills, training needs and other parameters for access by employers interested in hiring; and
- Create a Web site that includes this database so that employers can access job seekers with disabilities.

Working collaboratively with the Ministry of Social Services to gather data about vocational training graduates and other job seekers listed with the Ministry's local offices and compiling employment advertisements in the newspaper, the consultancy firm was overwhelmed with responses. By May 2002, when the network organized a meeting to launch its Web site, the database contained more than 1,200 job seekers with disabilities, with more than 4,000 names still awaiting input.

Simultaneously, the consultancy firm worked with the EFC to conduct a survey of its members to learn about hiring rates and the types of jobs in which disabled persons were employed and to identify examples of good practice. Twenty-five percent of the 100 survey respondents (of 457 members) reported that they had hired a total of 179 people with disabilities.

In anticipation of increased hiring, Mrs. Aluwihare, the staff member in charge of the network, met with NGOs and government officials who work with people with disabilities to identify resources to support employers who may need technical or other assistance when they hire a disabled worker. The EFC learned about the value of such associations after hiring a top-notch employee referred by the Sri Lanka Federation of the Visually Handicapped. To assist her in her new position as the EFC's receptionist, the Sri Lankan Council for the Blind donated voice-activated assistive software so the employee could operate the computer needed for her job.

Thinking its work completed, at least for the time being, the network promoted its Web site and encouraged employers to hire workers with disabilities. The monthly EFC newsletter, for example, included (and still includes) a section on the Employers' Network and its activities. With information from the database and survey, the newsletter also featured a "Job Candidates Corner" that provided details of disabled job seekers 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 hirings. The Steering Committee was stumped about what to do next. Perhaps, members wondered, it was time for another awareness seminar.

Revising the course of action. The EFC requested ILO assistance. Together, the EFC and the ILO went directly to employers to get answers. The responses were consistent: If the network wanted to see more direct hiring of people with disabilities, it would need to adopt a more proactive approach that made hiring easier. Given that the network was not prepared to engage a placement officer as yet, the individual job placement approach was not feasible. In response, the ILO suggested a job fair to bring disabled job seekers, screened according to employer needs and trained in job searching, together with the many employers who expressed an interest in hiring people with disabilities. However, the EFC still needed expert assistance. It found it in an agency called Motivation and through the Ministry of Social Services.



Motivation is a UK-based NGO that receives USAID funding in Sri Lanka for coordinating the services of other disability NGOs to improve their delivery system. While Motivation's mandate under its grant agreement with USAID calls for fostering the training and employment of people with disabilities, that aspect of its work is not scheduled to begin for several years. Nonetheless, Motivation saw a good opportunity to work with the network and committed itself to the immediate project. At the same time, the Ministry of Social Services agreed to provide 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 (*Getting Hired: A Guide for Job Seekers Who Face Barriers to Employment* and its companion curriculum guide).

The job fair. From November 2002 to July 2003, when the job fair took place, Motivation, working with Ministry staff, further organized the database, selected and interviewed job seekers and provided training in effective job-seeking techniques. The Employers' Network drew from its members to assist with training in job-searching skills and to provide mock interviews so that participants could practise their skills in realistic settings. By the time the job fair took place, the job seekers were primed, and some recruiters already had their eyes on candidates they met during the practice interviews. Seventy-five people with disabilities, representing all disability groups, participated in the job fair.

The network sponsored a day-long event that began with a half-day awareness programme entitled "Promoting the Employment of People with Disabilities". Attended by more than 125 people, the event included presentations with follow-up discussions on interviewing, hiring and managing workers with disabilities. During the formal programme for employers, the job seekers practised their interview skills. The job fair took place in the afternoon, with 22 employers participating. Among the many companies were Sri Lankan Airlines, the John Keels Group, MAS Holdings (a company that also belongs to the Employers' Forum on Disability in the UK) and major hotels. Fourteen people were hired at the job fair, and many others were called for a second interview. A total of 44 people with disabilities, more than half of those who participated, ultimately found jobs.

Some employers expressed disappointment at not being able to hire the candidate of their choice. All the job seekers that spoke at the day's end expressed appreciation for the Employers' Network and its partners for organizing the event. Said one participant, "I was extremely impressed with the business community who, instead of sympathizing with disabled persons, recognized our skills and abilities. I am grateful to your organization for the efforts made toward giving us this opportunity."

Other notable moments included the attendance of the Minister of Labour, who conducted two television interviews from the fair, and the participation of the Additional Secretary from the Ministry of Social Services, who pledged to approach the Ministry of Finance for resources to support on-the-job training.

The job fair also generated several subsequent job orders and offers to train people with disabilities. 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 high-demand skills training.

A collaborative model. With the success of the job fair, all the collaborators committed to a more permanent working relationship. Motivation will upgrade and maintain the database and Web site (many employers reported the system was not user-friendly), continue screening and training job seekers and collaborate with NGOs for support services to help people with disabilities secure and retain jobs. It will also field hiring requests from EFC members by matching people with disabilities to job orders. The Ministry of Social Services will loan a trained placement officer to assist with network activities, especially the conduct of worksite visits and follow-up with disabled workers placed in employment. The EFC and its Employer's Network on Disability will dispatch the Ministry's placement officer to handle requests from members for job seekers or follow-up assistance. The organizations will also continue to seek out member support to assist with training in job-seeking skills and continue to encourage employer participation in the training and employment of people with disabilities.

Accomplishments

As one of the rare examples of an employers' organization taking proactive measures to improve the employment outlook for people with disabilities, the EFC's Employers' Network on Disability represents a major achievement. It has established the foundation for a collaborative model that is not only changing attitudes but also starting to show direct results in terms of the hiring of people with disabilities. Some of the network's specific accomplishments include:

With regard to promoting favourable awareness,

- Raising the profile of workers with disabilities throughout the country through its newsletter, seminars and the considerable media coverage of its activities.
- Participating in the filming of the ILO *AbilityAsia* video, which features interviews with employers, employees with disabilities and employment experts throughout the region. Several EFC members allowed the camera crew into their workplace and spoke of the strengths of their employees with disabilities.

- Participating in regional events to promote employer involvement in efforts to promote the rights and hiring of workers with disabilities. Representatives of the network, for example, attended the high-level intergovernmental meeting in Otzu, Japan, to evaluate the end of the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons, 1993-2002.

With regard to promoting positive change and services,

- Providing input into government policies and supporting and strengthening the Government's initiatives related to employment and inclusion of people with disabilities.
- Engaging other NGOs and donors in the network to foster increased employment opportunities for people with disabilities.
- Developing a collaborative model for serving people with disabilities and its employer members.

With regard to promoting direct employment of people with disabilities,

- Sponsoring research on the hiring practices and current employment situation related to people with disabilities in Sri Lanka.
- Mobilizing interest among at least 50 network members to hire or train people with disabilities.
- Developing a database and Web site.
- Advocating for government-sponsored salary supplements for trainees with disabilities who learn on the job.
- Realizing the direct hiring of 44 people with disabilities through the network's first job fair and an unknown number through awareness-raising activities.



A Model Employer in Sri Lanka

CEI Plastics is a private company that manufactures plastic moulded products for industry. The factory is located about 30 kilometres outside the capital, Colombo, in a semi-urban area. It has recruited people from nearby communities to work in its 24-hour shift system. Forty people with disabilities are employed in the workshop, stores, injection-moulding packing line and blow-moulding packaging section and as general workers who are required to move around among different tasks in the factory. Employees include both men and women; 19 have partial sight, 10 have no sight, 8 have mobility problems, 2 communicate with sign language and 1 has an intellectual disability.

A young man who uses a wheelchair and is skilled in motor winding is employed in the workshop, which is located on the ground floor. The only needed adaptations have been the construction of three ramps to replace a few steps and the widening of the toilet room door.

Another 14 people with disabilities, all women, have worked in the factory at some time but left after marrying. Some of them, however, started self-employment activities in their homes. One woman began making soap, for instance, and CEI purchases all its soap from her.

The disabled workers are distributed throughout the factory and are not confined to a particular section or activity. While they are visible because of their disability, they are at the same time difficult to locate because they have integrated so well with their nondisabled colleagues.

According to CEI Manager Anver Dole, disabled workers are eager to learn, easy to teach and generally more conscientious than their nondisabled peers. The Employers' Network on Disability uses CEI Plastics as a role model to demonstrate that the productivity of people with disabilities is equal to, and sometimes exceeds, that of other employees. Absenteeism, costs and other problems have never been an issue in the employment of disabled workers, says Mr. Dole. "Their production is often way above the average," he adds. "And they interact very well with other employees." CEI is looking to hire more people with disabilities, adds Mr. Dole.



Lessons Learned

While the Employers' Federation of Ceylon is an established organization, it was and still is new to the issue of integrating people with disabilities into the workforce, but it is committed to supporting the network and learning how to be of greatest benefit. Lessons learned so far include the following:

Awareness building is not enough. The EFC realized that it had to develop both a knowledge base and community linkages as well as provide "value-added" services beyond the database. Obviously, employers are busy and – without assistance, incentives or encouragement – most are not likely to take the extra effort that might be required in hiring a worker with a disability.

Practise what you preach. In 2001, the EFC set itself as an example to other employers when it hired a woman with a visual impairment as its receptionist and secured the appropriate assistive technology to enable her to perform her job duties. "She is one of the best receptionists we have ever had here and has made a real difference in the first impression made to callers," says the EFC director general. As a result, the EFC has enhanced its credibility with its members when encouraging them to hire workers with disabilities.

There is strength in collaboration. The network is learning about the importance of developing partnerships and relationships with the government agencies and NGOs that offer human, information and institutional resources.

Human resources are critical. The network is a special project of the EFC and has operated for more than two years with a small (US\$15,000) grant from the ILO. Establishment of the network would not have been possible without the EFC paying the salary of a part-time employee who serves as the network's secretary, and without the considerable human resource contributions of the Government, NGO partners and businesspeople.

People with disabilities should be involved. The Steering Committee includes a person with a disability who represents the major umbrella organization of people with disabilities in Sri Lanka. People with disabilities are included in network activities as job-search instructors, seminar presenters and advisors.

Looking Forward

The Employers' Network on Disability has formulated many plans for continuing its activities. Primarily, it looks to solidify its working relationship with its partners and to assess the impact of their respective roles and responsibilities. Through this mechanism, it will offer individual job placement and follow-up services in response to requests from Colombo-based employers.

It will also sponsor job fairs at the district level in collaboration with its existing partners and the newly formed Ministry of Labour's JobLink programme, an employment service for the general population. The Employers' Network will also establish a fund to accommodate offers from companies that wish to donate funds to sponsor people with disabilities for education and training.

Finally, recognizing that the network cannot continue to expand the project with its limited human resources and capital, even with the considerable contributions of its partners, it will seek to raise funds to cover the salary of a full-time professional to coordinate all its activities.

Replication

Any employers' organization can replicate the EFC initiative, but the success of such an initiative requires sustained commitment in terms of human and financial resources. An employers' organization interested in developing a similar network could link with government agencies, NGOs and with disabled persons to learn about disability issues. The interest of an established employers' association will be most welcome to the ILO, disabled people's organizations and other NGOs promoting the employment of people with disabilities. Such an association makes for a solid base of operation and an immediate group from which to draw experiences and develop relationships.

A network of employers concerned about improving the situation for workers with disabilities needs the commitment of its members. It is essential at the outset to survey the employers' organization to identify those people willing to give of their time and provide opportunities for people with disabilities and then form a small group to become familiar with the issues. Members, people with disabilities and employment experts should provide the necessary direction.

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Opportunity in Numbers – A Progressive Government Initiative in Hong Kong SAR Creates an Alliance of NGOs to Adapt to a Changing Economy

The Challenge

When economies undergo major shifts, businesses must adapt – or crumble. Not surprisingly, in the economic shift from heavy industry to service-oriented businesses, Hong Kong has been experiencing a high rate of unemployment. Clearly, today's employment frontier requires that people looking for jobs as well as those who help them must adapt to new demands.

But some organizations in the business of helping people with disabilities are slow in making the necessary changes. They may not be used to delivering customer-centred service, analysing the job market or competing in an open marketplace. Some need to find and teach service-oriented skills, and many lack the professional knowledge, marketing strategies or business skills required by the new economy. Consequently, people with disabilities often train in outmoded skills under old or noncompetitive standards. How can organizations unfamiliar with market-driven forces keep up or even move progressively with changing times? How can people who know about disabilities connect with people who know about employment?

Meeting the Challenge

The Marketing Consultancy Office (MCO) does much more than marketing. That is because its dynamic staff members redefined their roles. They work as partners with organizations serving people with disabilities needing employment opportunities and with businesses needing workers or services. One of the MCO's more progressive actions has been the creation of an alliance of 100 NGOs (sheltered workshops and supportive employment units). The MCO offers the alliance various types of training so that member NGOs can adapt to the new economy. At the same time, it is helping the NGOs understand that good business practice means effective programmes for workers with disabilities. Working with the alliance, the MCO identifies work and contract opportunities in the marketplace to help its members secure them for workers with disabilities. The MCO also pursues work-for-hire contracts and job vacancies and provides start-up funds for small enterprises. The MCO assumes a promotional function

as well, but, more importantly, uses the media, advertising and marketing options to highlight the products, services and the capabilities of people with disabilities.

The Good Practice: A unique government agency creates a strong network of employers, government resources and organizations for people with disabilities to actively promote training and job creation.

• Background •

Since the 1990s, the Government of Hong Kong SAR has been promoting the integration of people with disabilities into mainstream society. When a semi-private pilot project known as the Marketing Consultancy Office (for the rehabilitation of people with disabilities) concluded in December 2000, the Government decided to make the office a permanent agency within its Social Welfare Department. Originally, the MCO was operated by the Lottery Fund, a charity fund supported by a percentage of sporting events proceeds; its only responsibility was the expenditure of a large advertising budget to promote the capabilities of workers with disabilities. Eventually, the Government recognized that there is more to helping people with disabilities than advertising. It therefore retained the project's name when the contract expired and moved the MCO into the hands of the Social Welfare Department with the objective of "enhancing employment opportunities for people with disabilities through good marketing strategies".

In mid-2001, the Government hired a director and a staff of 14 people who brought diverse business experience, a large network of contacts and many dynamic ideas. With the staff's influence, the MCO quickly developed a broader vision by deciding that "enhancing opportunities" meant "developing businesses". The MCO staff set out to create businesses or, at least, to work in a variety of ways that would increase the employment opportunities for people with disabilities. The Government readily supported the MCO's expanded approach. Explains MCO Director Tiffana Chow of the initial plan, "We would have been marketing old ideas. If NGOs are to adapt to a new economy, we need new ideas."

• The MCO's Good Practices •

Creating the NGO Alliance. One of the MCO's first activities recognized that, if NGOs partnered with each other, they could increase their competitive advantage in obtaining work contracts and keep pace with the marketplace. The MCO pulled together into an alliance more than 100 NGOs, including sheltered workshops and supported employment units. The group represents a powerful human resource – more than 8,000 persons with disabilities related to autism, blindness, deafness, psychiatric disorders, Down's syndrome and physical paralysis.

Creating the alliance was not as difficult as it might seem, says Ms. Chow. “NGOs at first were very reserved but later found there is strength in union. They put their common interests before personal interest in order to achieve the greater good for people with disabilities. They now cooperate with each other on large work projects that a single NGO may not have been able to handle.” Contracts with hospitals or government agencies to wash cars, for example, can involve 400 to 500 automobiles, requiring more human capital than any one organization can supply.

To strengthen the competitive edge of each alliance member, the MCO initiated two primary service practices:

First, the MCO staff divided itself into three teams that each consist of a business manager, marketing officer and marketing assistant. The staff then divided alliance members among the three teams. Each MCO team is responsible for keeping its members aware of job opportunities, contracts available for bidding, market trends and training improvements.

Second, each team visited with its assigned NGOs to identify strengths and weaknesses in the areas of production processes and job placement. The teams recorded that information into a software programme for easy reference. Then the team discussed with each NGO the current market standards and job skills required by employers and business organizations. Based on the strengths-and-weakness assessment, the MCO now matches job orders and job vacancies with the appropriate NGOs. However, the MCO does not select specific NGOs for the requests; rather, it informs all eligible NGOs of the specific need and lets the spirit of competition take over. NGOs bid for contracts, or individuals are sent for job interviews.

Training services. Learning good business practices is critical for organizations embarking on the operation of small enterprises. The NGOs need to act like business owners and understand profit/loss responsibility, finance management and personnel requirements under the Government’s labour laws and regulations such as setting up provident (retirement) funds. With business training, organizations accustomed to subsidies or charitable contributions learn how to earn money and reinvest the profits in their programmes in order to help more people with disabilities.

To help NGOs improve their training components and even offer new skills, the MCO provides three types of services for alliance members:

Train-the-trainer courses. The MCO organizes training sessions targeted to NGO trainers so that NGOs can upgrade or recast their services in tune with marketplace standards. An NGO can request any type of training and the MCO will provide it. Instructors from alliance members or from the business community deliver the training.

Sharing good practices activities. The MCO creates training videos and develops workshops featuring alliance members with pioneering strengths in a particular area.

For example, the MCO recognized a huge business potential in car washing ventures because wages are more reasonable than what is offered by packing or assembly-line jobs. Three of the four NGOs with successful car washing operations jointly hosted a workshop on soliciting car wash contracts and managing the business. The MCO then produced a training tape of the workshop.

The NGOs that participate in the workshops are profiled and credited in the training tapes and promotional materials, thereby raising their status and public recognition. In addition, the MCO sends letters to alliance members recognizing the contribution of participating members in such activities. The recognition boosts the image of the groups involved and serves as an impetus to others to move forward. "Positive competition," as Ms. Chow describes it, "creates progress".

Famous Names Fuel Good Publicity

The MCO approached Italian Motors Ltd., the sole distributor of Ferrari and Maserati cars in Hong Kong SAR (and once the MCO director's employer), to discuss how alliance members could help with the company's car washing needs. The motor company and the MCO entered into an agreement to extend a contract to an NGO for two workers with intellectual impairments who would deliver a "car beauty service" at the showroom. Given the car company's high profile, the project easily caught the attention of media editors who churned out feature profiles that helped convey the message to the public and employers that people with disabilities can provide effective and reliable service at competitive fees.

In turn, the MCO successfully negotiated a service contract for washing 100 private cars belonging to officers at seven police stations. The project engaged 28 workers from seven NGOs. Even though the workers have no contract commitment, their work has been steady. Their success led to an agreement with the Transport Division of the Hong Kong Police Force to launch three pilot projects for one year; 32 employees working six days a week wash 106 police vehicles. Working with a supervisor, the car washers work in teams and provide their own cleaning supplies.



Training seminars. The MCO invites well-known business figures to share their expertise and experiences with NGOs. Topics cover issues and practices that NGOs or any group needs to know about in running a business. For instance, the director of an innovative UK-based NGO conducted a workshop entitled “The Way to Work – How to Work with Employers”, and “The Sustainability of Supported Employment Clients in the Open Labour Market”. The director of a publicly listed company in Hong Kong spoke on “The Customer-Centred Enterprise: How Hong Yip Service Co., Ltd. Achieves Extraordinary Results by Putting Customers First”.

Business development. The MCO defines business development quite broadly – from job placement to obtaining job orders for workshops to creating jobs for supported employment units. Through frequent visits and negotiations with both businesses and alliance members, the MCO keeps abreast of each customer’s many needs. Efforts centre on the following six activities:

- The MCO staff identify contracts and jobs offered through bidding in the open market and inform NGO alliance members accordingly. The staff also bank on old business connections and friendships to create new ventures. If an idea emerges at a social function or in a business meeting, the MCO staff jump on it. This is where knowing the strengths of member NGOs is most handy. In addition, staff members read the employment advertisements and make telephone calls to companies.
- In the case of service contracts, Ms. Chow advises targeting large businesses or public bodies to ensure better protection of employees in times of economic downturn. During those times, smaller firms have more difficulty paying their bills. And, adds Ms. Chow, “It is worthwhile to cultivate relationships with big private and public organizations because once you have obtained one type of job from them, such as printing, you can proceed to negotiate with them for catering service, cleaning service, car wash business and so forth.” Obtaining a contract for washing the private cars of police officers led to a much larger contract from the police authority to clean its official cars (see box).
- The MCO encourages agencies or corporations to rethink old practices. For example, the Social Welfare Department (SWD) operates youth centres, childcare centres, hostels and so forth that need to be cleaned. Previously, the SWD offered in the open market a single contract for cleaning 14 institutions. Only a large company would be able to bid for that work. The MCO convinced the SWD to break the one contract into 14 small contracts and offer them for bidding only to alliance members, thereby encouraging an NGO to bid to clean an institution nearest to its location.
- The MCO staff tailor marketing ideas to specific businesses. Given Hong Kong’s many residential buildings, property management companies need a variety of

services, including cleaning, gardening, security, printing, floral arranging and so forth. The MCO staff seek out executives in the appropriate companies and push the possibility of employing disabled workers for one or many of these services. Recently, one alliance member won an open-bidding contract (against two other alliance members and two private commercial companies) to provide multiple services to a 2,700-household estate.

- The MCO also serves its business clients' customers. For example, it recently convinced one property management company to offer residents of its apartments a home-service massage provided by people who are blind.

The MCO offers businesses several advantages. Given that companies usually require two to three price quotations on certain jobs, the MCO provides the quotations and saves a business the time of soliciting quotations from several NGOs. In addition, when complaints arise against certain NGOs, employers and businesses find it convenient to communicate with the MCO to resolve the problem.

- With HK\$50 million (US\$6.4 million) provided by the Government, the MCO began making start-up funds available for small businesses under the Enhancing Employment of People with Disabilities Through Small Enterprise project. The purpose of the project, which began operations in 2001, is to enable alliance members to create jobs for workers with disabilities by starting up businesses. A total of 33 NGOs applied for "seed" money to cover their first year of expenses of new businesses. A panel of experienced executives selected and then advised the approved ventures. By mid-2002, the MCO had granted about HK\$7 million (US\$897,000) to ten projects that included cultural kiosks in parks, a vegetable and fruit processing business, car cleaning, school lunch boxes and catering, a household goods retail store, a mobile cleaning crew and a mobile massage service by blind people. Recipients of the grants are required to include profit/loss accountability in their management.

The MCO does not solicit a charity attitude from its business clients in offering work contracts or hire workers with disabilities. Instead, it concentrates on instilling a sense of professionalism among NGOs and the workers they represent to ensure that they "produce quality products" and competitive customer service.

Creative use of the media and advertising. Instead of spending a large portion of its budget on advertising, which is expensive in Hong Kong, the MCO tries to maximize its resources, for example, by tapping connections with friends in the media to obtain free advertising space. But even without connections, many publications run public service advertisements for free when some space remains unsold. The MCO uses this little-known outlet to promote the services, products or events of the alliance and its members.

The best type of advertising is editorial stories on television and in newspapers and magazines that feature the work of people with disabilities. Reporters and editors are constantly looking for a new angle on an old issue. Feature stories in the media also attract new businesses. "We got orders from viewers after they saw a TV interview of a blind sewing machine operator," says Ms. Chow.

Marketing strategies to raise awareness. In addition to capitalizing on stories in the media, the MCO uses marketing events to raise awareness among employers and the public. Visible, reassuring activities demonstrate that workers with disabilities are as reliable as any employee. The MCO has organized catering promotions, handicraft sales in shopping malls and government office buildings and product/service presentations to associations and private and public organizations.

To create easy recognition for products made by people with disabilities, the MCO patented a "brand name". All handicrafts made by alliance members are labelled "SEPD", which stands for Support the Employment of People with Disabilities. The MCO operates a kiosk at the Hong Kong International Airport and at a shop in a government office building where SEPD items are sold. By taking advantage of a friendship, the MCO director has succeeded in also placing SEPD items in a prominent private shop popular for its high-grade products. The MCO promotes SEPD products to create public interest in the brand.

Accomplishments

From June 2001 to March 2003, the MCO helped its alliance members obtain:

- 629 job orders amounting to HK\$3.688 million (US\$473,000);
- 23 contracts worth more than HK\$5 million (US\$658,000);
- 45 full-time positions in open employment and 105 part-time positions that include data entry clerk, telephone operator, car cleaner, general building cleaner, masseur, store assistant, laundry worker, cashier and graphic designer;
- A two-year contract for operating the rehabilitation shop at Tseung Kwan O Hospital (serves patients recovering from accidents or diseases who need equipment such as wheelchairs, diabetes-checking devices, blood pressure monitors, walking aids and so forth);
- Ten business start-ups through the Enhancing Employment of People with Disabilities Through Small Enterprise Project;
- More than HK\$1 million (US\$149,000) in the sale of handicrafts made by people with disabilities for purchase at Hong Kong's airport and at other promotional venues (from July 2001 to March 2003);
- Ten television interviews featuring the Ferrari Car Wash project, the Police Car Cleaning service, handicrafts made by disabled people and sewing by blind people. The MCO has also helped generate 23 feature stories in newspapers and magazines;

- Exposure through 41 marketing events; and
- Increased marketing skills through 12 training courses.

Lessons Learned

A proven dynamic service, the MCO sees itself as a partner with disability service organizations and businesses. The MCO's experiences in remaking itself provide the following insights:

A good idea may be underdeveloped. The Government of Hong Kong SAR wisely recognized greater potential in the original Marketing Consultancy Office. By giving the MCO legitimacy as a government agency and supporting the ideas suggested by its newly hired director, the Government gave new life to a service that has increased opportunities for thousands of people with disabilities.

A dynamic leader makes a difference. The director of the recast MCO has work experience in marketing, product development, overseas joint venture operations, product licensing and distribution. Her familiarity with these operations is the source of many ideas – she knows what is possible, what are “short cuts”, what businesses want and what alliance members need to learn in becoming businesses or offering services.

One bad experience can turn an employer away; job coaching or follow-up support is often needed. The MCO has found that many businesses are receptive to hiring workers with disabilities. Many workers, however, have not been properly prepared for the employment environment, thus adversely affecting the opportunities for others with disabilities. When workers fail to show up for work or quit after a disagreement with a supervisor, the affected businesses become understandably reluctant to offer jobs to workers with disabilities. The MCO contends that follow-up support, back-up personnel and job coaches are critical elements when NGOs offer workers-for-hire or job placement services.

Bidding for contract jobs is good “on-the-job training”. For NGOs, experiencing the process of open-market bidding is more instructive than participating in a training course. “It’s better to hold their hand and go through this process,” says Ms. Chow. Making mistakes is no big deal, she adds, and says they learn first-hand what businesses expect from service providers and what it takes to be competitive.

Business deals with recognizable names provide marketing mileage and inspire worker morale. Linking the abilities of people with disabilities to famous brands and names, such as Ferrari, is likely to generate free publicity and media attention. When treated as a feature story by the media, the successful experiences of workers with disabilities employed by recognized companies can spawn wider public attention and acceptance of disabled workers. Furthermore, working with popular companies or products boosts the confidence level of workers.

Good publicity can motivate some business executives to use a service or buy products made by people with disabilities. When businesses see the favourable media attention that contract work with alliance members brings to the companies that hire people with disabilities, they have an incentive for following suit. But the initial interest must be met with high quality and professional service.

It is essential to treat all alliance members equally. When an NGO fails to win a contract bid in competition with other alliance members, suspicions might arise that the MCO did not provide it with the same information it provided to competitor NGOs. The MCO handles such situations by discussing with NGO managers the reality of market forces. Ms. Chow says, "We tell them that if they failed this time, perhaps they need to review their organization. Maybe other NGOs are hungrier to get business and are willing to lower their prices." It is a tough but necessary lesson in how to work in the business world.

Looking Forward

The MCO plans to organize an alliance of 20 NGO handicraft producers to adopt pricing and product strategies that will help them secure a unique position in the handicraft market. By organizing themselves and then purchasing raw materials in bulk, individual NGOs can produce items more cheaply, dispelling public concerns that handicraft products made by people with disabilities are expensive. A handicraft alliance also can pursue contracts for large job orders; by working together, groups can deliver products more quickly and avert complaints that products hit the market too late. To develop an understanding of the long-term marketability of handicrafts, the MCO intends to establish a product committee to monitor the life cycle of handicraft products. It also will create a system for pooling the capabilities of alliance members to work together to produce products suggested by the MCO.

Replication

Replicating the alliance model requires, first, a critical number of organizations along with an organizing entity, such as the MCO. A dynamic leader, fluent in marketing techniques and rich in business contacts, like Ms. Chow, is certainly a plus, as is the considerable financial investment the Government was willing to make. Even if some of these ingredients are not possible, aspects of the MCO alliance model can be adopted:

- Do not automatically assume that a huge budget or staff is required to hire an effective marketing representative. The appropriate representative must demonstrate professional marketing and business development experience, an understanding of economic and job opportunity trends and creative thinking. A marketing representative does more than just position products. He or she can

represent an organization and its trainees and not only develop new job ideas but also seek out contracts and positions in open employment.

- Learn, or hire someone who knows, how the media works and how to promote new angles that will make stories particularly attractive as features. That individual should not hesitate to approach a publication's advertising department, a billboard service, public transport agencies and so forth to request the use of public spaces not already purchased by customers.
- Recognize that an alliance of NGOs is not necessary for increasing employment opportunities for people with disabilities, though it seems to make sense in terms of maximizing human resources and sharing information. In any event, a marketing representative can work well for one organization or can work for several organizations.

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Good Housekeeping with Marriott Hotel in Hong Kong SAR

In an era when more economies are moving into services and tourism is fast emerging as a prime income-earning industry, turning down sheets is turning into jobs for people with disabilities. A first-of-its-kind partnership project in Hong Kong brings together a nonprofit organization and one of the city's major hotels to teach people with intellectual disabilities how to clean upscale lodgings.

The teaming of J.W. Marriott Hotel and the Hong Chi Association has produced an increasingly popular training course that offers potential benefit to other hotel chains and disability organizations in Hong Kong SAR.

For Hong Chi, the partnership provided a much-needed impetus. In 2001, the open-market hiring rate of Hong Chi's vocational training graduates with intellectual disabilities was down by 40 to 50 per cent. After starting as a sheltered workshop in 1976 and adjusting its programmes over the years to help its clients attain independence, Hong Chi paid close attention to trends in the economy. It initiated on-the-job training in sewing, metal and woodwork specialties. By the early 1990s, it achieved an open-market hiring rate of 60 to 80 per cent. But then the jobs requiring those skills moved out of Hong Kong to lower-wage areas. So Hong Chi began shifting to high-demand service skills, such as baking, fast-food catering, professional cleaning and clerking in office and convenience stores.

During the visit of an ILO specialist, conversations with Hong Chi touched on how the Marriott Hotel chain had hired disabled employees in many locations in the United States. With a nothing-to-lose spirit, Hong Chi sent a letter of proposal to the local hotel's general manager asking him to consider a partnership programme in training people to clean rooms; the programme would include on-the-job apprenticeships for possible employment with Marriott.

The response was positive and the partnership began. After visiting Hong Chi's leafy nine-hectare residential and training compound and vocational services facility in 2001, the Marriott general manager offered to build – at the centre – two model rooms replicating Marriott rooms for use in training.

From then on, progress was slow but steady. Hotel officials and housekeeping supervisors visited the Hong Chi training centre to understand the abilities of trainees with intellectual disabilities. Then, four Hong Chi staff members – one teacher, one instructor and two social workers – attended a three-week intensive training programme with the hotel staff to learn how Marriott makes its beds, folds its towels and cleans its rooms. After the training session, the four staff members wrote up a training programme and sent it to the hotel for comment.

During the three months in 2002 needed to build the model rooms, the Hong Chi staff selected seven trainees who demonstrated basic academic knowledge, acceptable communication and language skills, familiarity with number concepts, a measure of politeness and good grooming. Priority went to trainees with experience in cleaning work and an interest in hotel service.

The training period at the Hong Chi centre lasted three months: five days per week, seven hours per day. It included the teaching of English phrases and how to fill out basic forms required of room service workers, such as mini-bar consumption records. The trainees lived at Hong Chi's hostel accommodations during the weekdays and went home on weekends. When the trainees moved to on-the-job training at the hotel, they returned to their homes.

The seven trainees interviewed with Marriott staff members for placement in on-the-job training. Three were accepted. But when they began their apprenticeship in June 2002, problems suddenly sprang up. The trainees' work was slower than in the "classroom". Part of problem was the training itself. While the instructors understood how to teach people with specific disabilities, they were not as adept in tidying a room in the requisite time period demanded by Marriott's work schedule. Immediately, two Hong Chi instructors attended a two-month refresher programme at the hotel. Marriott's director of services believed that if the trainers did not have sufficient finesse to finish ten rooms in a day, they could not adequately prepare the trainees to the hotel's standard. In another major adjustment to the programme the Hong Chi trainers found they needed to assist the trainees in the hotel until they were familiar with the new environment. In September 2002, the training programme continued without any more setbacks.

"In the beginning I thought our trainees would only be able to do specific tasks each and would have to work together in groups to service one room. As it has turned out, they can work independently and finish all the tasks on their own," notes Ms. Nora Wong, the recently retired director of the Hong Chi vocational training centre.

The trainees work five days a week, receive breakfast and lunch every working day and are paid HK\$35 (US\$4.50) for each room serviced. Hong Chi assumes responsibility for the trainees' accident insurance. Once training is complete, they are expected to be hired as permanent employees.

Marriott recently increased the apprenticeship positions to five. "We can see they're very stable employees," says Sandra Ng, Marriott Hong Kong's human resource director. "They really put their heart into the job."

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Commitment to Community Service – A Trade Union Helps Open the Employment Field to People with Disabilities in Japan

The Challenge

In the 1970s, members of the Kanagawa Regional Council of the Japanese Electrical, Electronic and Information Union did not know where to turn for assistance in raising their intellectually disabled and autistic children. So they went to their trade union. At that time, Japan offered few programmes and services for children with disabilities. In response to the members' needs, the union started a foundation. It raised money by selling matches and tissues to fund a counselling service and telephone hotline. It also lobbied the local government to address public accessibility issues and provide education and other services for disabled students.

As the members' children grew, new frustrations arose. Questions that once focused on education and recreation needs changed to employment and skills training issues. As with the lack of services for children, few programmes were in place to help young adults with severe disabilities find employment. But it would take more than a hotline to offer solutions.

Meeting the Challenge

The Kanagawa trade union again rose to the challenge. In 1997, it used links with its many branches in different electric, electronic and information companies to find work experience opportunities for high school students with disabilities. Serving as volunteers, union members initially provided training and follow-up services. As the programme developed and students graduated, more systematic support was needed. The union then provided the land and a building for an Employment Support Centre; today, there are three such centres in the prefecture (province). The centres provide job placement, supported employment and training and employment opportunities through community-based contracts and production workshops.

According to Toshikazu Shiga, associate director of the three centres, “Most of our participants are referred to us by public welfare agencies serving people with disabilities and the Public Employment Security Office. We no longer have to rely on the sale of tissues to support the services, either,” he adds. “We now get funding from the city administrations of Yokohama and Kawasaki, Kanagawa prefecture.”

The Government is not the union’s only partner in this endeavour. The union works with the local employers’ organization to encourage businesses to hire workers with disabilities and assists corporations in establishing special subsidiary companies for people with disabilities under Japan’s quota legislation. The union has also discovered another natural partnership through the involvement of retired employees who have the energy and interest in continuing to work. The retirees have become job coaches for people training on the job and follow up with those who find employment.

The Good Practice: A trade union helps people with disabilities find employment and uses retirees with energy and expertise to serve as job coaches.



• Background •

The Kanagawa Regional Council is composed of 84 unions and about 60,000 members, or about 10 per cent of the membership of the Japanese Electrical, Electronic and Information Union (JEIU). The JEIU has 37 regional councils, 233 unions and 600,000 members.

In 1992 when it became evident that a more structured programme was needed to help young people with substantial intellectual disabilities prepare for meaningful employment, the council set up a working group. It studied the situation and made recommendations for a proposed employment centre. It recognized the need to address the shortcomings in the existing employment system for people with intellectual disabilities. For example, the management techniques developed for workers with minor physical disabilities were not appropriate to the needs of people with intellectual disabilities. The council members thought that, even though sheltered workshops could be good places for training, they often did not provide high-level employment

opportunities. Skills taught at special schools and vocational rehabilitation facilities were often outdated as compared with what companies required. And when people with intellectual disabilities did find employment, they often lacked the social and work adjustment skills needed to maintain their jobs and live independently.

The working group recommendations called for establishing a support centre that provided a range of services, including a transitional workshop intended to operate as a midpoint between a traditional sheltered workshop and open employment. Such a workshop should offer many types of work tasks similar to those found in factories and companies. It should incorporate standard production management techniques, including quality control and wage systems linked to work performance and comprehensible to people with intellectual impairments. Concerned that hiring only professionals with a social services background (education, social work and psychology) might lead to a daycare service rather than the intended employment-focused centre, the working group recommended the appointment of people with many years of private sector production experience.

Also in 1992, the JEIU set up the Earth and Love Foundation with a broad mission of social action and international cooperation programmes to address several social issues, including environmental protection and support for people with disabilities. The foundation collects donations and raises funds through the sale of specially priced consumer items. Along with government funds, its resources helped start the employment support centres.

The Yokohama South Employment Support Centre began operations in 1992. It promotes the employment of people with intellectual disabilities through vocational assessment, guidance and counselling, skills training, supported employment and job placement and follow-up services. With the 1996 addition of Poco-A-Poco (which means step by step) as a transition and training facility, the centre expanded its services. Building on its successes, the foundation then added the Shonan Area Employment Support Centre in 1997 and the Kawasaki North Employment Support Centre in 1999. In 2001, the programme expanded further with the addition of the Kawasaki City Works Daishi, which was modelled after Poco-A-Poco, and established collaboratively with the Kawasaki city government. The Poco-A-Poco and Kawasaki City Works Daishi offer intermediate vocational training and work programmes that assist participants in the transition from a sheltered workshop to company employment. They also provide permanent employment for a limited number of employees.

The centres and their workshops, along with the union's other social programmes, such as the daycare service for the elderly and a volunteer training programme, are operated collectively by the overarching social welfare corporation called the Denki Kanagawa Centre for Community Welfare.

• Employment Support Centre Services •

Following an initial assessment, trainees participate in centre services. Periodic assessments and case conferences then determine trainees' progress, wages and readiness to advance to the next level of training.

Assessment. During the initial two-week to one-month assessment, trainees participate in simulated work tasks to determine their capabilities, speed, habits, attitudes, interaction skills and tolerance (such as whether or not they can work an eight-hour day). The training process addresses any difficulties identified during the work simulations.

After the assessment, an Individual Nurture Plan is developed. Trainees can choose between participation in the workshop or employment-oriented programmes. The workshop programme fosters development through social participation and work activities. The employment-oriented programme gradually develops skills through the application of increasingly complex work tasks and experiences, such as simulated tasks in the workshop, an internship, part-time and full-time employment with job coaching and follow-up after job coaching is phased out. As the training proceeds, trainees undergo regular assessment to determine their progress. Assessment, vocational training and work adjustment are thus linked in one system.

Counselling and guidance. The objective of the service is to assist trainees in developing a work ethic, motivation and the habits and attitudes needed to earn a living. Training techniques include video presentations, lectures, role playing and other methods. Counselling and guidance activities include awareness programmes for family members. The counsellors are available for trouble-shooting or to provide assistance to former trainees.

Social skills training. Social skills training includes a variety of job-searching and independent living skills. For example, trainees may learn about appropriate work behaviours, practise job interviews and learn how to complete a job seeker's registration form. The curriculum also includes classes and instruction in communication, cooking, personal computer use, budgeting and money management, use of leisure time and other independent living skills.

The social skills training programme differs from the social skills training provided through the workshop and employment-oriented programmes. In the former, training activities are offered during the day and include a variety of social events, whereas social activities for those in the employment-oriented programmes are offered after working hours.

Workshop programme. Poco-A-Poco and Kawasaki City Works Daishi offer workshop programmes designed to stimulate development through participation in work activities. The programmes are interspersed with social events and training and generally run for three years but may be extended if needed. The participants' work activity assignments are flexible and determined according to their interests, abilities and skills. Annual conferences take place to review individual progress and develop plans.

Employment-oriented programme. The employment-oriented programme consists of three levels of graduated work experiences that slowly introduce trainees to increasing levels of skills, work demands and responsibility. The three levels are simulated work, internships (of which there are three phases, each demanding more of the trainee in terms of independence) and open employment in various settings and with different levels of job coaching and follow-up. Each level uses real work tasks as the basis of training and learning, such as contract production work (in the simulated work level in workshop settings), janitorial and other work tasks at the facilities of the Denki Kanagawa Centre for Community Welfare or at other community-based contract sites (first-phase internships) and a variety of actual work on the job at special subsidiary or regular businesses (advanced internships and employment). Both the workshop and centre staffs are continually challenged to find contracts with economic and instructional value.

Simulated work. The objective of the simulated work level is to develop an individual's work performance and social skills within a protected environment. By performing real work tasks in a workshop setting, trainees learn new skills under the supervision of a professional instructor (responsible for production) and alongside other workers with intellectual disabilities. The simulated work experience is a 30-hour, one-week programme (six hours daily), although shorter work periods are arranged depending on the trainee's work tolerance. Unlike participants in the workshop programme who are matched to tasks according to their characteristics, trainees in the simulated work level of the employment-oriented programme are encouraged to try different tasks to challenge themselves and learn to cope with a variety of demands. Some of the simulated work tasks include disassembling PC parts such as hard disk and floppy disk units, keyboards and other parts for recycling; attaching protection material to refrigerator hinges; packing copy machine parts with specification forms; assembling electronic connectors; printing; janitorial work and packaging gift items.

Wages in the simulated work level are not tied to performance, although participants are encouraged to move forward to the internship stage when they are ready. Comprehensive conferences to assess the individual's progress take place three times a year.

Internships. Advancing from the simulated work level, trainees enter internships to increase their hours, learn new work tasks, take responsibility for their output and work independently. As the following descriptions indicate, each internship phase demands more and more of trainees:

Work crew internships. In the work crew internship, several trainees work together at the union-operated Denki Kanagawa Centre complex or at public facilities that have contracts with the centre for the performance of janitorial, horticultural, dishwashing and other services. A job coach escorts the trainees to the worksites and, initially, directs the daily work and teaches the trainees how to proceed with the work tasks and operate machines or use work tools. (Often, training is initiated at the workshop.) As trainees master their tasks, the job coach gradually withdraws from the worksite but continues to direct the daily work, although he or she does not remain at the worksite for the entire day. Trainees are expected to carry out their assigned tasks independently according to the work procedures they learned and the directions provided by the coach. Trainees alternate working on weekends with other trainees.

Work experience internships. Work experience internships take place away from the Denki Kanagawa Centre or some distance from trainees' homes, requiring participants to use public transportation to commute. Worksites are facilities under contract to the Denki Kanagawa Centre or a special subsidiary company (see box). Job coaches provide transportation training and initial instruction in the required work tasks. Thereafter, the trainee must work under the direction of the facility or company supervisor. However, the supervisors are experienced in working with people with intellectual impairments, and the job coach continues to visit weekly after the initial training. Trainees are unlikely to work with others with disabilities, and no employment contract is implied in the internship agreement.

Employment preparation internships. Employment preparation internships imply that a host company will hire a trainee after a period of on-the-job training. The internship provides the trainee with a learning opportunity and offers some comfort to the trainee's family members, who may be concerned about losing the slot at the centre for their son or daughter if employment does not succeed. Parents are also often cautious as their children move out from secure and protected work environments to a competitive business organization. The internship provides the company with an opportunity to determine if the trainee is appropriate for the position. For their part, trainees have the opportunity to assess whether a setting is appropriate for them, develop relationships with co-workers and prepare for real employment. An employment preparation internship also gives employees a chance to build confidence. Finally, during the internship period, the company can make necessary adaptations, such as a change in production procedures or the reassignment of co-workers to facilitate successful employment and adjustment for all concerned.

Allowance and wages. A workshop participant starts with an allowance of 9,000 yen (US\$77) per month, which is augmented by a point system that corresponds to weekly performance assessments. Strictly speaking, workshop participants are under social welfare legislation and the minimum wage standard is not applied. Once a trainee's skills advance to a certain standard and he or she is earning approximately 30,000 yen per month, he or she is recommended to work outside the facility. The participant then receives a minimum wage of 1,000 yen (US\$8.57) per workday, paid by the outside facility/company in addition to the regular allowance paid by the workshop. The higher income for such trainees provides an incentive to workshop participants to move into this internship programme. Total income can increase as high as 52,000 yen (US\$446) per month, in addition to the disability pension (more than 67,000 yen or US\$574 per month) made to people with intellectual impairments.

Once a trainee acquires an employment contract from a company or legal trainee status with a company, the programme stops payment of wages. Instead, the company starts payment according to the minimum wage standard.

• Placement and Follow-Up Services •

Given that the Denki Kanagawa Centre for Community Service operates under the Kanagawa Regional Council of JEIU, all staff assigned to the Employment Support Centres are experts in personnel management and production. In addition, job coaches are selected from the ranks of retired union members. Job coaches and other staff members at the Employment Support Centres select candidates for available positions, help them prepare for interviews and provide support and training as they adjust to their new jobs.

Job coaches also work with employers who plan to hire the candidates to oversee any necessary adjustments or workplace modifications.

Follow-up by the job coaches occurs on a case-by-case basis. Some people with intellectual impairments need intensive monitoring and assistance while others require only short-term support or one-time counselling. When long-term support is required, job coaches generally follow a process called "fading-out", which involves spending less and less time with the trainee until he or she is able to manage the job independently.

Retired Employees Make Great Job Coaches

Traditionally, workers in Japan exhibit strong family-like ties. Companies do not want outsiders, including job coaches, at their worksites. The Kanagawa trade union developed an ingenious method to break down this barrier so that job coaches could assist people with intellectual impairments on the job. The approach also takes advantage of the respect afforded an employee who has worked until official retirement age and has displayed loyalty to the company. It uses retired employees from a certain company to serve as job coaches in that same company.

The retiree's working experience with that company combined with some training regarding workers with disabilities puts him in a good position to address concerns in production and management with respect to the hiring of workers with disabilities. In addition, his familiarity with his company's way of working and corporate culture contributes to a trainee's comfortable adjustment. Job coaches also have good connections in the company, which can yield useful information about job prospects. Coaches are major assets in identifying placement opportunities within a company or company group as well as in helping people with disabilities succeed in their newfound jobs.

Currently, the coaches are all male because the retirement pool happens to be a generation of male-only workers, a reflection of Japanese culture decades ago when most women stayed at home.

• Working with Employers to Expand Job Opportunities •

The Kanagawa trade union and the local employers' association work as partners to develop job opportunities in a company that has no experience in hiring people with disabilities. The trade union representative speaks with the company's union to encourage it to support the hiring of people from the Employment Support Centres. The employers' representative speaks with the management of the company about the same matter. This simultaneous top-down and bottom-up approach is effective in resolving the concerns of management and would-be co-workers.

The Denki Kanagawa Centre for Community Services offers consulting to companies that want to set up a special subsidiary company (see box) to expand the vocational options available to their trainees and others with disabilities. The centre staff have also provided guidance services to the Japanese Business Federation – with a membership of 1,540 large corporations – to encourage the hiring of disabled workers.

Accomplishments

The work of the Denki Kanagawa Centre for Community Services is influencing the broader Japanese trade union movement with regard to disability and employment. The national headquarters of the Japanese Electrical, Electronic and Information Union and other trade unions introduced an “employ people with disabilities” campaign. As part of the initiative, union members persuade companies to employ people with intellectual disabilities. While many companies are experienced in hiring people with physical disabilities, they are not as experienced in hiring and managing workers with intellectual disabilities. During their assemblies and deliberations with employers, trade union chapters are also starting to exchange opinions and ideas related to promoting the employment of people with disabilities.

Many other unions have visited the Employment Support Centres to learn about their operations. The Japanese Trade Union Confederation, Osaka Chapter, for example, is replicating the approach initiated by JEIU’s Kanagawa’s Regional Council.

Internationally, there are few examples of a trade union sponsoring vocational programmes for workers with disabilities; there are fewer still in Asia and the Pacific, making the Kanagawa programme a unique model. Within its partnership approach, it has leveraged the resources of the union and various levels of government and tapped the expertise of retirees and employers’ organizations to further its goals.

In addition to its significant activities, the Employment Support Centres have, since 1997 (after establishment of the first two centres, the third opened in 1998), assisted approximately 300 persons with intellectual disabilities each year. By the close of the 2001 fiscal year, the union’s programmes enabled 169 people with disabilities in finding open employment. Examples of placement outcomes include janitorial and cleaning work; production, assembly and parts packaging; direct mail; gardening; reprocessing of waste products; mail delivery within companies; automotive parts production and work in laundry facilities.

During the 2000 and 2001 fiscal years, the Employment Support Centres worked with corporations to create 11 new subsidiary companies that hired 130 persons with intellectual disabilities. The centres provided expert planning and organizational advice and job coaches during the first month of subsidiary operation.

Lessons Learned

The Kanagawa Regional Council demonstrated that a trade union can create flexible vocational rehabilitation programmes that benefit people with disabilities. In the process, it learned two significant lessons:

It is possible to develop flexible programmes in spite of governmental bureaucratic barriers. Many programme operators face administrative barriers in working with government funding and benefit programmes. The Kanagawa chapter of unionists faced such barriers and had to find ways to surmount them, especially those related to the administrative requirements of various government departments. For example, an agency supervised by the Department of Social Service was reluctant to involve itself in labour-related service areas, even though problems of people with disabilities need to be solved through job coaching, which is a labour-related service. As an entity financially and politically independent of the Government, the Kanagawa Regional Council of the JEIU was able to work with different programmes and coordinate administratively separate government services.

Retired workers can make considerable contributions as job coaches. Retired workers experienced in private business are a valuable human resource for social service activities. Their accumulated expertise in production, workplace communication and general work experience is beneficial to people with disabilities as they learn and adjust to a new job. The opportunity for job coaching also provides retirees with purpose and fulfilment.

Special Subsidiary Companies

To meet its requirements under the employment quota system for hiring people with disabilities, the Japanese law allows companies to set up what are called special subsidiary companies. The subsidiary companies provide work environments and make necessary adjustments to accommodate people with disabilities. To operate a subsidiary company, parent companies must maintain close affiliation to the special subsidiary by controlling decision making and assigning an executive officer and other personnel to the subsidiary company. Among other requirements, the special subsidiary company must demonstrate the appropriate management abilities and appoint full-time instructional staff to address the training and employment needs of its disabled workers. More than 20 per cent of the subsidiary's total employees (or more than five) must be people with disabilities. More than 30 per cent of the total number of workers with disabilities must have severe disabilities. Applications to acquire special subsidiary status are made at the Public Employment Security Office.

Looking Forward

The Kanagawa Regional Council is approaching other trade unions to encourage the hiring of people with disabilities. It plans to extend its influence to increase training and employment options for people with disabilities in other prefectures. It is also looking to develop partnerships and support activities so that employed workers with intellectual disabilities can live more independently. Specifically, the Denki Kanagawa Centre for Community Services is pursuing linkages with group homes and related independent living programmes.

Former Trainees Provide Mutual Support on the Job

Kiyomi had many work experiences before finding the Employment Support Centre. A high school graduate, she attended a sheltered workshop and interned at several different companies. However, six months after registering at the centre, she found a permanent job much to her liking – washing dishes at a company's employee kitchen.

Hiroshi, now 25, ended a five-year contract at a coffee shop before registering at the centre for help in finding another job. Her work experience had its joyful moments and hard times. Like Kiyomi, she found a job six months after she went to the Employment Service Centre. It was the food service job she hoped for, with the same employer as Kiyomi. They work together in a hot and busy kitchen that requires their constant attention, but they enjoy their work and their friendly co-workers, including each other.

Replication

Considering that trade unions advocate for worker rights, it seems natural that they should offer services to and advance employment opportunities for people with disabilities. Programmes such as those started by the Kanagawa Regional Council take full advantage of the trade union's knowledge of the workplace and connections with various companies and community agencies.

To replicate the Kanagawa model, a trade union must begin by looking for interest and support among its members. Certainly, injured workers, members with disabilities or those with family members who are disabled will demonstrate such interest. However, because of the nature of trade union solidarity, others are likely to be interested if the issue of disability is brought to the attention of the leadership and membership at labour union congresses and meetings. Building awareness and interest

is a first step. The next steps will depend on community needs, membership interest and the resources and partnerships at the union's disposal or that the union is willing to generate.

While solid funding is needed to establish a centre similar to the Denki model, certain aspects of the approach have stand-alone value. For example, supported employment programmes might consider recruiting retirees as job coaches in the manner of the Kanagawa programme. Workshops could replicate the system of graded internships to assist people with disabilities in making the transition from protected settings to internships to open employment.

Trade unions can influence training and employment opportunities for people with disabilities in many ways. Their vast linkages with governments, training programmes, workers, and employers' organizations and individual companies offer immediate opportunities for positive awareness building, and these linkages enable trade unions to influence and negotiate workplace changes with regard to the needs of workers with disabilities. With their expertise in advocacy and experience with legislative change, trade unions can work toward rights-based policies that foster equal treatment and opportunity for people with disabilities. And trade unions can make sure that people with disabilities are treated equitably and have a forum for expressing their collective voice.

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(English page)



Glossary

Augmentative communication: The use of a method or device to supplement a person's ability to communicate. There are a wide variety of methods currently in use ranging from no technology/low technology to high technology. Augmentative communication software programs allow an individual to use his or her computer for communicating, learning, working and playing games.

Adjustment or accommodation: Adaptation of the job, including adjustment and modification of machinery and equipment and/or modification of the job content, working time and work organization. Also, adaptation of the work environment to provide access to the place of work to facilitate the employment of individuals with disabilities.

Business development services: The wide range of services used by entrepreneurs to help them operate efficiently and grow their businesses with the broader purpose of contributing to economic growth, employment generation and poverty alleviation.

Community-based rehabilitation (CBR): A strategy within general community development for rehabilitation, equalizing opportunities and social inclusion of all children and adults with disabilities. CBR is implemented through the combined efforts of people with disabilities, their families and communities and the appropriate health, education, vocational and social services.

Disability management: A process in the workplace designed to facilitate the employment of persons with a disability through a coordinated effort and taking into account individual and business enterprise needs, work environment and legal responsibilities.

Disabled person: 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.

Employer: A person or organization employing workers under a written or verbal contract of employment that establishes the rights and duties of both parties, in accordance with national law and practice. Governments, public authorities and private companies as well as individuals may be employers.

Employers' organization: An organization whose membership consists of individual employers, other associations of employers or both, formed primarily to protect and promote the interests of members and to provide services to its members in employment-related matters.

Equal opportunity: Equal access to and opportunities for all persons in employment, vocational training and particular occupations, without discrimination, consistent with Article 4 of ILO Convention No. 159.

Impairment: Any loss or abnormality of a psychological, physiological or physical function.

Job adaptation: The adaptation or redesign of tools, machines, workstations and the work environment to an individual's needs. It may also include adjustments in work organization, work schedules, sequences of work and in breaking down work tasks to their basic elements.

Job analysis: The process of making a detailed list of the duties that a particular job involves and the skills required. This indicates what the worker has to do, how he or she has to do it, why he or she has to do it and what skill is involved in doing it. The analysis can also include facts about tools used and machines operated. A job analysis is usually the first step in the placement process.

Job retention: Remaining with the same employer, with the same or different duties or conditions of employment, including return after a period of paid or unpaid absence.

Labour market: A term used in economics to indicate the exchange between labour demand and labour supply for a nation, region, industry and/or occupation. The outcomes of this process include the level of (un)employment, pay and employment conditions.

Mainstreaming: Including people with disabilities in employment, education, training and all sectors of society.

Medical rehabilitation: Disability-related services and programmes at a local community, regional, state or national level aimed at delivering interventions to individuals with disabilities for their physical, psychological and social well-being. As used in this document, the term refers to interventions such as physical, speech and other therapies designed to maximize overall functioning.

Open employment: Employment in jobs in the open labour market; sometimes also referred to as regular or competitive employment.

Organizations of persons with disabilities: Organizations that represent persons with disabilities and advocate for their rights. These can be organizations of or for persons with disabilities.

Return to work: The process by which a worker is supported in resuming work after an absence due to injury or illness.

Situational assessment: The process of evaluating the performance of an individual in a real-work setting that could include a sheltered, supported or open employment workplace.

Sheltered employment: Extended employment provided under special and often protected conditions (for example, in a sheltered workshop) for people with disabilities who are considered unable to manage a job in competitive or open working conditions.

Supported employment: Characterized as paid work in integrated work settings with ongoing support for individuals with disabilities in the open labour market. Paid work for individuals means the same payment for the same work as for workers without disabilities.

Trade union: An association of workers organized to protect and promote their common interests.

Vocational rehabilitation: A process that enables disabled persons to secure, retain and advance in suitable employment and thereby furthers their integration or reintegration into society.

Worker/employee: Any person who works for a wage or salary and performs services for an employer. Employment is governed by a written or verbal contract of service.

Workers' representatives: Persons who are recognized as such under national law or practice, in accordance with the Workers' Representatives Convention, 1971 (No. 135), whether they are: (a) trade union representatives, namely representatives designated or elected by trade unions; or (b) elected representatives, namely representatives who are freely elected by workers of the undertaking in accordance with provisions of national laws or regulations or of collective agreements and whose functions do not include activities that are recognized as the exclusive prerogative of trade unions in the country concerned.

Workplace: All the places where people in employment need to be or to go to carry out their work and that are under the direct or indirect control of the employer. Examples include offices, factories, plantations, construction sites, ships and private residences. Sometimes called jobsite or worksite.

Workstation: The part of the office or factory where an individual works, including desk or work surface used, chair, equipment and other items.

Work sample: A mock-up or abbreviated work activity that closely resembles an actual business or industrial operation. Work samples are often used in the vocational assessment process.

Additional Acknowledgements

As noted in the introduction, a publication such as *Moving Forward* requires the efforts of many individuals. Through this list of additional acknowledgements, the ILO hopes to recognize most, if not all, of the contributors and helpers. First and foremost are those individuals who submitted or wrote the original examples of good practice. These include: Ms. Tiffana Chow, Ms. Karen Emmons, Mr. Kanetoshi Hattori, Ms. Lawan Jirasuradej, Ms. Tungalag Johnstone, Mr. Joseph Kwok, Mr. Setareki Seru Macanawai, Dr. Padmani Mendis, Mr. Suporntum Mongkolsawadi, Mr. Zhuoying Qiu, Mrs. Reena Sen, Prof. T. Revathy, Ms. Holly Roberts, Mr. Park Sang-Yong, Mr. C. Antony Samy, Mr. Marcus Sudibyo, Ms. Maire Sutherland, Ms. Deborah Wan Lai Yau and Ms. Julie Yoder.

Many others suggested examples, provided additional information or otherwise assisted ILO writers and researchers who developed the stories. This list includes: Mrs. Meghamalie Aluvihare, Ms. Linda Bender, Mr. Mark Bradshaw, Ms. Heather Burns, Mr. Ian Chambers, Mr. Patrick Chow, Mr. Christopher Kleinig, Ms. Chikako Kohyama, Mr. Khieu Kola, Mr. Apisada Inthorn, Ms. Eva-Sinnøve Dickson Lid, Mr. Jason McKey, Mr. Stephen Pang, Mr. Sasangka Rahardjo, Mrs. Sunee Saisupatpon, Mr. S.K. Chhem Sip, Mrs. Radha Subrahmanian, Mr. Justin Tan, Mr. Patrick Tan, Mr. Shri Vijay Thakur, Ms. Grace Wong, Mrs. T. Revathy, Mr. S.K. Wong and Mr. Bryan Woodford.

The ILO also acknowledges the following individuals who either edited or assisted in the final publication in some capacity: Ms. Emma Ferm, Ms. Sarah Field, Ms. Carol Soble and Ms. Sugunya Voradilokkul.

In addition, Ms. Barbara Murray, Manager, Equity Issues, Skills Development Department and Mr. Robert Ransom, Senior Specialist in Vocational Rehabilitation also of the Skills Development Department, ILO, offered invaluable assistance by reviewing the draft document and providing technical comments. Mr. Stephen Thompson, Public Information Officer, of the ILO office in Bangkok also provided review and technical production assistance. Finally, the ILO thanks Keen Publishing in Bangkok for the design and production of *Moving Forward*.

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