

Decent Work for People with Disabilities

Inclusion of People with Disabilities in China



International Labour Organization



FACT SHEET

Women and men with disabilities can and want to be productive members of society. In both developed and developing countries, promoting more inclusive societies and employment opportunities for people with disabilities requires improved access to basic education, vocational training relevant to labour market needs and jobs suited to their skills, interests and abilities, with adaptations as needed. Many societies are also recognizing the need to dismantle other barriers - making the physical environment more accessible, providing information in a variety of formats, and challenging attitudes and mistaken assumptions about people with disabilities.

Current situation



Nearly 83 million women and men in China or 6.3 per cent of the population had a disability in 2006¹. Slightly over half of this population (52 per cent) is male, and 48 per cent female. Over 32 million people are of working age.

Most people with disabilities (75 per cent) live in rural areas. Poverty is widespread – evidence from 2005 indicates that almost 14 million people with disabilities in rural areas live in poverty and that the per capita income of households including persons with disabilities was less than half the average for other households.²

Around 43 per cent of people with disabilities over age 15 are reported to be illiterate. Less than two thirds (63 per cent) of children with disabilities aged 6 to 14 are enrolled in school. About 85 per cent of poor disabled persons have never advanced beyond middle school education. As a result, they had comparatively lower qualifications and poor production skills. In 2006, the annual average employment rate of persons with disabilities was 76 per cent in urban areas and 79 per cent in rural areas, compared to employment rates of over 90 per cent among non-disabled persons³.

1 UNDP: "China Human Development Report, 2007/08: Access for all: Basic public services benefiting 1.3 billion people". Compiled by United Nations Development Program, Beijing, Nov. 2008. http://www.undp.org.cn/downloads/nhdr2008/NHDR2008_en.pdf (accessed on 15 December 2012).
2 Zhang Dongmei (2009) 'Policies and Effects of Poverty Reduction for People with Disabilities in China' in Von Braun et al (eds) The Poorest and the Hungry. Assessments, analyses, and actions: An IFPRI 2020 book.
3 UNDP: "China Human Development Report, 2007/08: Access for all: Basic public services benefiting 1.3 billion people". Compiled by United Nations Development Program, Beijing, Nov. 2008. http://www.undp.org.cn/downloads/nhdr2008/NHDR2008_en.pdf (accessed on 15 December 2012).



Governmental support for people with disabilities

The Government of China has adopted and implemented a number of laws, policies standards and initiative pertaining to people with disabilities, including their right to productive and decent work. The main ones are:

- **The China Constitution**, enacted in 1982 and amended in 1988, 1993, 1999 and 2004, provides a general protection to people with disabilities.
- **The Law on the Protection of Disabled Persons**, enacted in 1991 and amended in 2008, safeguards the rights of people with disabilities. Among issues addressed are: rehabilitation, education, employment, cultural life, welfare, access, and legal liability. The amendment added details about stable financial support, better medical care and rehabilitation for people with disabilities, along with favourable employment and tax measures.
- The Government has established a quota system requiring all public and private employers to reserve no less than 1.5 per cent of job opportunities for persons with disabilities. Provincial Authorities specify the exact quota level; this may vary between Provinces.
- **The Rehabilitative Medical Education Plan (1992)**, contains regulations on training and education of rehabilitation doctors and therapists, physiotherapists and occupational therapists.
- **The Regulations on the Education of Persons with Disabilities (1994)**, ensure the rights of persons with disabilities to education and aim to develop persons with disabilities-related educational projects.
- **The Provisional Regulations of the Qualification System for Prosthetists and Orthotists (1997)**, aim to improve the production of artificial limbs, assistive devices, wheelchairs and canes, while focusing on standardizing production.
- **The Rules on the Employment of Disabled Persons** adopted in 2007, encourage social groups and individuals to support their employment through various means, and bans discrimination.
- **The Employment Promotion Law (2007)**, contains an anti-discrimination provision relating to persons with disabilities.
- **The 12th Five Year National Programme on Disability (2011-2015)**, has as one of its key aims the creation of 1 million jobs for people with disabilities in the next five years.
- **The Regulations on Construction of Accessible Environment (2012)**, require local governments to construct various public facilities to accommodate disabled persons.
- **The Mental Health Law (2012)**, standardizes mental health care services, requiring general hospitals to set up special outpatient clinics or provide counselling, and calls for the training of more doctors. It aims to prevent people from being involuntarily held and treated in psychiatric facilities.



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These laws contributed to realization of Decent Work Country Programmes in China (2006-2010), addressing the needs of those most disadvantaged in the labour market, including disabled persons, and promoting worker rights and fundamental principles and labour rights at work.

Key groups and ministries responsible for people with disabilities

Established in 1988, the China Disabled Persons' Federation (CDPF) is a unified organization of/for the 85 million people with disabilities. It is a nationwide umbrella network reaching every part of the country and has been allocated responsibility for issues related to disability by the Government. The CDPF: 1). represents the interests of people with disabilities and helps protect their legitimate rights; 2). provides comprehensive services to disabled people; 3). and, supervises affairs relating to people with disabilities. It aims to mainstream persons with disabilities in employment, education and general public social and cultural lives. The State Council Working Committee on Disabilities has been established to steer and coordinate disability work. It is composed of 36 members, representing ministries and social groups.



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Key international standards on disability and their status

- International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention concerning Discrimination in Respect of Employment and Occupation, 1958, (No. 111). *Status: ratified, 12 January 2006.*
- ILO Convention concerning Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (Disabled Persons), 1983, (No. 159). *Status: ratified, 2 February 1988.*
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006) and Optional Protocol. *Status: ratified UN Convention, 1 August 2008. Optional Protocol has not been signed.*



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Organizations for persons with disabilities

- State Council Working Committee for Persons with Disabilities
- China Disabled Persons' Federation

Organizations of persons with disabilities

- China Association of the Deaf
- China Association of the Blind
- China Association of the Physically Handicapped
- China Association of Persons with Intellectual Disabilities and their Families
- China Association of Persons with Mental Disabilities and their Families

The role of the ILO

The primary goal of the ILO today is to promote opportunities for everyone, including people with disabilities, to obtain decent and productive work, based on the principles of freedom, equity, security and human dignity. The ILO works to achieve its goals of decent work for all through promoting labour standards, advocacy, knowledge building and technical cooperation services and partnerships, both within the ILO and externally. The China Decent Work Country Programme establishes the framework for delivery of ILO action in this country.

In China, a current ILO technical cooperation project “Promoting Rights and Opportunities for People with Disabilities in Employment through Legislation” (PROPEL) focuses on achieving the following goals:

- Improved capacity of governments and social partners to address discrimination against persons with disabilities and promote equality of opportunity in training and employment for men and women with disabilities in general, and people with intellectual disabilities in particular.
- Improved media capacity to report on the rights of persons with disabilities, including those with intellectual disabilities, and portray their working capacities.
- Improved employability of persons with disabilities through access to skills development programmes.

PROPEL-China, together with other stakeholders, will strive to improve work and employment opportunities created for men and women with disabilities, through the creation of an enabling legal and policy environment, the promotion of skills and entrepreneurship development opportunities and measures to eliminate discrimination.



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The way forward

Productive and decent work enables people with disabilities to realize their aspirations, improve their living conditions and participate more actively in society.

Ensuring a disability perspective in all aspects of policy and labour legislation, effective implementation and enforcement of existing disability laws and policies and providing for equal employment and training opportunities are among the factors that contribute to the reduction of poverty and to the social and economic inclusion of people with disabilities in China.

Further information:

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