



International
Labour
Organization

▶ Questions on Disability and Work

Key issues on promoting employment of persons with disabilities

This document brings together the technical advice of the disability team at the Gender, Equality and Diversity branch (GED) in the ILO. The information in this document is pragmatic guidance, rather than statement of institutional position. ILO positions can be found in the statements and standards that are linked to throughout. Given the complex and changing nature of many of these issues addressed in this document, the intention is to update it on a regular basis.

Finding out about disability and work

Promoting decent work for persons with disabilities contributes to improving the world of work for everyone. Everyone can benefit when barriers to do with accessibility and inclusion are removed. Persons with disabilities benefit from new opportunities and the social importance of work; employers benefit from a source of talent, different perspectives and improved work processes; governments benefit through an economically engaged group.

This guide summarises the most important topics that you need to know about to secure employment for persons with disabilities. Browse through it or jump straight to the issue that is relevant for you now.

Understanding disability

Persons with disabilities make up 15% of the world's population. Disability should be understood in terms of social and environmental factors and not just an individual's physical or mental condition. The aims are to empower persons with disabilities, transform their position in society, and ensure persons with disabilities can access their rights in the world of work and beyond.

International frameworks on disability and employment

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with disabilities sets out the international approach for understanding and acting on rights of persons with disabilities. The Sustainable Development Goals include disability in the development agenda and set the goal of leaving no one behind. International labour standards protect the rights of workers with disabilities.

Persons with Disabilities in the World of Work

Persons with disabilities can work productively in all areas and types of decent work. It is important to promote employment on the open labour market using mainstream policies and programmes to promote employment. Skills development and employment promotion measures should be made inclusive of persons with disabilities.

Making employers and employment more inclusive

Employment of persons with disabilities should be based on the productive contribution they can make. The “business case” for disability explores the benefits for private sector companies of disability inclusion. The ILO supports business and disability networks at global and national levels to promote further employment of persons with disabilities.

Policies, strategies and stakeholders

Promoting employment of persons with disabilities relies on policies and institutional support, and attitude change to create an enabling environment. Pathways need to be found that effectively give persons with disabilities access to employment opportunities. A multi-stakeholder approach is necessary to make interventions at each stage in the route to employment and to bring about a future of work inclusive of persons with disabilities.

International Cooperation and the ILO

The recently adopted United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy is the base for further action on disability inclusion in the United Nations System and the ILO. This will develop the range of ways that ILO already acts on disability inclusion, from labour standards to development cooperation and its own role as an employer.

About this guidance

This guidance is intended as pragmatic advice to complement the deeper research and policy positions on disability and work available elsewhere. Clarifications, further questions, and different approaches are welcomed to strengthen the advice given in this document, as the intention is to update on a regular basis.

The questions and answers are designed to show ILO staff, constituents and disability organizations how to approach the key issues around disability and work. This is designed to contribute to develop a common ground in promotion of decent work for persons with disabilities, and that it encourages and gives confidence to those looking to take initiatives in this area.

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Understanding disability

Persons with disabilities make up 15% of the world's population. Disability should be understood in terms of social and environmental factors and not just an individual's physical or mental condition. The diversity of persons with disabilities comes from both a wide range of disabilities and disability is present in every social or economic group.

Work on inclusion of persons with disabilities aims to empower persons with disabilities, transform their position in society, and ensure persons with disabilities can access their rights in the world of work and beyond. Some important concepts to understand to make this happen include accessibility and reasonable accommodation, as well as what it means to "mainstream" disability inclusion in policy and programmes.

1. What is disability? Who are persons with disabilities?

Disability is a combination of individual as well as social factors. Disability is made up of an individual's experience of long-term impairment(s) in interaction with social or environmental factors. Impairments may be physical, mental, intellectual or sensory. It is estimated that 15% of the world's population, or over 1 billion people, are people with disabilities.

A common misconception is that persons with disabilities are mainly persons with physical disabilities, or those using wheelchairs. In fact, disability is a diverse phenomenon and persons with disabilities are a very heterogeneous group. Often disability is "invisible", so it is not possible to just look at someone and know whether they have a disability or not.

Impairments can be as different as schizophrenia, Down syndrome, chronic pain, or hearing or sight loss. They might be something people are born with, or acquire later in life due to accident, illness or ageing. As well as many types of impairments, persons with disabilities are in all social groups, and so their experiences are very different.

The concept of disability is evolving. Not all persons with disabilities will identify as having a disability, as the concept may be unfamiliar, negatively perceived, or unhelpful to describe their own experience. For some of the same reasons, many official certifications of disability may only cover a small part of the population of persons with disabilities.

Related Questions

- The Convention of Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) gives a definition of disability in Article 1. See [more about the CRPD](#) in this document.

Further Information

- The figure of 15% of the world's population having a disability was introduced by the [World Report on Disability](#) (2011), from World Health Organization and the World Bank.

2. How does disability interact with gender, age, and other factors?

Disability should be looked at "intersectionally" – in other words, in relation to other factors such as gender, age, class, race, sexual orientation and other social characteristics. People

can face multiple or different types of social exclusion or discrimination simultaneously, and this makes both their situation and response to it different.

Gender is particularly important as women and girls with disabilities are in substantially different situations and have different needs, compared to men and boys with disabilities.

A lifecycle approach to disability – looking at when people acquire a disability – is important to see the different situation among young and older persons with disabilities. Disability is much more common among older people, and many factors around ageing are to do with disability or perceived disability.

ILO has been facilitating discussions around the particular barriers that indigenous persons with disabilities face in accessing training and employment.

Further Information

- On the situation of indigenous persons with disabilities in the world of work, see the ILO paper [“Indigenous Persons with Disabilities: Access to Training and Employment”](#) (2015).

3. What are the appropriate ways to talk about disability and persons with disabilities? What terms should be used?

It is important to talk about persons with disabilities in respectful and inclusive ways that reflect the language chosen by persons with disabilities themselves.

The appropriate term to use in an international context is “persons with disabilities”. Previously the ILO also used the term “disabled persons”.

- “Persons with disabilities” is the language agreed in the Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), and currently has wide international acceptance.
- “Disabled persons” is used in ILO Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (Disabled Persons) Convention, 1983 (No. 159), and is sometimes the preferred term in the UK.

These terms can sound negative, but they are both affirming that disability comes from social issues beyond the individual. “Disability” is often used as a term of pride by persons within the disability movement.

Some groups or countries prefer different terms. However these alternative terms should be approached with caution because they often do not respect the language chosen by persons with disabilities themselves.

There are two particularly common alternative terms to disability. They are shared here for reference but their use is not encouraged.

- “Persons with special needs”.
- The “differently-abled”. This term is especially common in Indian English.

There are some positive reasons for using these terms, and they are often intended to raise the issue in a softer way. But both terms make things about the individual with “needs” or “difference”, rather than the social and environmental barriers that create their disability. Furthermore, all of us have needs and different abilities, and they both are associated with many factors in life beyond just disability.

In some cases, persons with disabilities can be referred to in terms of specific types of impairment or disabilities. In general, the most appropriate solution is “person-first” language, that puts the person first and any impairment second. For example: “persons with visual impairments”, “trainees with physical disabilities”, “employees with mental health conditions”.

In most contexts, there are terms that have been traditionally used but are offensive or derogatory – these should be avoided.

Whichever words are used, generalizations about persons with disabilities should be avoided. Persons with disabilities are as diverse as any other group, and even attributing positive characteristics to them could be seen as patronising. For example, it would be a generalization to say that persons with disabilities are particularly “loyal”, “creative”, or “brave”.

4. What is known about the situation of persons with disabilities?

Persons with disabilities make up 15% of the world’s population. Disability is more common among women, poor people, and older people. Globally, persons with disabilities do not have as good outcomes in either education or employment as persons without disabilities.

Persons with disabilities are roughly 60% as likely to be employed as persons without disabilities. Data from eight regions across the world shows that 36% of persons with disabilities of working age are in employment, compared to 60% for persons without disabilities. Women with disabilities are less likely to be employed than men with disabilities and persons without disabilities. Persons with more severe or multiple impairments are also less likely to be in employment.

In most countries persons with disabilities in employment are more likely to be in vulnerable employment, or to be paid less than persons without disabilities. Often they are more likely to be in self-employment. In Mongolia, for example, persons with disabilities are four times more likely than persons without disabilities to be engaged in the informal sector. Many countries report wage gaps between persons with and without disabilities. For examples, studies from Chile, Spain and the United States show wage gaps of 16, 12, and 14% respectively between persons with and without disabilities. This wage gap can be higher for women with disabilities or persons with certain types of disabilities. One study in Peru found that of persons with disabilities in employment 61% of those in rural areas received less than the minimum wage, compared with 36% in urban areas.

Further Information

- The statistics in this section are summarised from the United Nations’ [Disability and Development Report](#) of 2018.
- The ILO keeps a [directory of labour force statistics on persons with disabilities](#).

5. How is data collected on persons with disabilities?

Disability is a complex phenomenon so measuring it needs to be done carefully. Currently, the best way to measure disability prevalence in census, labour force surveys and other instruments are the “Washington Group Questions”, the short-set of which is six questions with a focus on functional limitations. Their name comes from the Washington Group on

Disability Statistics that created them. Each of the six questions asks about a specific area of functioning and has responses based on perceived level of difficulty.

The Washington Group Questions should be included in population censuses, labour force surveys and household surveys. While many countries now use them in censuses, further advocacy is needed to ensure that they are used in a wider range of national surveys. This will make it possible to understand, monitor and respond to the economic, social and employment situations of persons with disabilities in terms of how it compares to that of persons without disabilities.

Many countries use methods that are not reliable, and these will often show 1-2% of the population as having a disability. These might be based on people identifying themselves as disabled, which is unreliable because of stigma and different understandings of disability.

Some countries have registration procedures for persons with disabilities, and while having numbers of people registered with disability is useful, it does not give an idea of overall numbers of persons with disabilities in the population. This is because registration faces the same challenge as self-identification, in addition to whatever barriers there are in the registration process. Furthermore, not all persons with disabilities will be interested to register as disabled.

Data collection methods need to be carefully designed to make sure they are in line with the concept of disability in the CRPD.

Further Information

- The [Washington Group on Disability Statistics](#) provides a wealth of information online on how to use their methodology for measuring prevalence of disability.
- The ILO is developing a module to include disability-related questions in labour-force surveys.

6. How are mental health, or psychosocial conditions, linked with disability?

Disability includes persons with long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments. Mental health conditions, like depression or anxiety, are in some cases disabilities but not always. Often “psychosocial conditions” refers to the same conditions, but this label has a built-in emphasis on the interaction with the surrounding social environment. Mental health conditions and intellectual impairments are separate things.

As with other conditions or impairments, it is important to look at social barriers that make these conditions disabling. Whether mental health or psychosocial conditions is considered a disability, this depends both on the way the condition manifests and/or its intensity, as well as how a country’s legislation and culture perceive it.

Mental health is important to everyone, with or without a disability. Initiatives promoting mental health in the workplace have some aspects in common with work on disability inclusion. They both include attention to individual circumstances and making workplace adjustments, for example. Mental health interventions should be accessible and inclusive of persons with disabilities. It is also important to note that persons with disabilities may, because of social exclusion, be more susceptible to mental health conditions.

7. What is accessibility?

Accessibility is meant in a broad sense, and includes:

- Physical environment. For example: step-free access, tactile surfaces, clear signs.
- Transportation. For example: physical accessibility to vehicles and stopping-points; audio and visual descriptions of information and routes.
- Information and communications. For example: subtitles and audio-description of images/videos; larger font and braille versions; easy-to-read versions; digital or online formats that can be used by screen-readers
- Facilities and services open/provided to the public. For example: physical accessibility of the location; accessibility of information and communication.

As this list shows, physical environment is only one of the dimensions that is relevant in accessibility. This is contrary to a widespread idea that accessibility is just to do with ramps, elevators and step-free access. Those are important, but need to be accompanied by other types of access. Often accessibility features designed for persons with disabilities also improve usability for everyone.

Universal Design is a key concept in promoting accessibility. Universal Design is the design and composition of an environment so that it can be accessed, understood and used to the greatest extent possible by all people regardless of their age, size or disability. Applying Universal Design principles from the outset is more cost-effective than trying to promote accessibility as an afterthought.

Accessibility is one of the rights specified in the CRPD.

Related questions

- Accessibility and reasonable accommodation are related but different concepts.
- The CRPD gives a definition of “universal design” in Article 2, and specifies the right to Accessibility in Article 9. See more about the CRPD.

Further information

- See the 2005 ILO handbook on making ILO offices accessible to persons with disabilities.

8. What is reasonable accommodation?

Reasonable accommodation is about making adjustments so that an individual person with disability can use something in an equal way. Accessibility is a general condition for all, while reasonable accommodation is usually a modification made for an individual. The concepts are separate, even though there is a strong relation between them. When there is low accessibility, there will probably need to be more modifications for individual needs. But even when there is perfect accessibility, reasonable accommodation can still be needed for specific things.

One of the commitments governments make in the CRPD is to ensure provision of reasonable accommodation to persons with disabilities in the workplace and other areas. The CRPD makes it clear that not providing reasonable accommodation is one of the forms of discrimination on the basis of disability. The “reasonable” part means it refers to adjustments that are appropriate and which do not impose an undue burden. Assessing whether an adjustment does or does not imply an undue burden depends on a number of issues, including the size of the organization.

While general accessibility is implemented progressively over time, the provision of reasonable accommodation is required now. Reasonable accommodation means making adjustments for individuals, including with regards to the organisation of work, work tasks and the provision of sign language interpreters, personal assistants or assistive devices, when these are required at the workplace.

The concept of reasonable accommodation does not only apply to workers with disabilities, but also to any other workers, including those with family responsibilities. “Adjustment” is sometimes more easily understood than “accommodation”.

Related Questions

- Reasonable accommodation and [accessibility](#) are related but different concepts.
- The CRPD gives a definition of “reasonable accommodation” in Article 2. See [more about the CRPD](#).

Further Information

- For information on how to provide reasonable accommodation in the workplace, see the ILO publication [Promoting diversity and inclusion through workplace adjustments](#) (2016).

9. What is the “twin-track” approach to disability inclusion?

The “twin track” approach embraces two ways of ensuring disability inclusion; a “mainstreaming” and a “disability-specific” approach.

“Mainstreaming” of disability refers to the approach of systematically including disability-related issues in an organization or programme. It is a common approach, often taking inspiration from “gender mainstreaming”. It means seeing the design, implementation and monitoring of programmes and services in light of how they affect persons with disabilities and taking steps to ensure inclusion. This would mean that all of an organization’s planning, communications, activities, and events take measures to make sure persons with disabilities are included on an equal basis with others.

The “disability-specific” approach focusses on addressing the specific needs of persons with disabilities to empower them and improve their lives.

While “disability-specific” approach can be helpful, the focus should be on effectively mainstreaming disability in general programs and initiatives.

International frameworks and employment of persons with disabilities

Disability now has an important place in human rights and international development frameworks. The UN Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) identifies the rights of persons with disabilities and the things governments need to do to protect and ensure those rights. This includes the rights of persons with disabilities to work and employment. Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development explicitly includes persons with disabilities in its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

International labour standards offer protections to persons with disabilities as they do to other workers. There is furthermore a specific ILO convention on vocational rehabilitation and employment of persons with disabilities that is discussed below.

This section covers the key international frameworks. There are some further region-specific frameworks that are not covered in this document.

10. What is the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)?

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) was adopted in 2006 and opened for countries to sign in 2007. It has been quickly and widely adopted, with more than 180 ratifications. It is now the main legal reference used by countries in shaping legislation and policy on issues relating to persons with disabilities.

The CRPD is an important turning point in the international work on the rights of persons with disabilities. While other human rights frameworks included persons with disabilities implicitly, the CRPD makes the rights of persons with disabilities explicit in all areas of life and sets out the meaning of discrimination on the basis of disability. In the years since its adoption the CRPD has informed and transformed the way countries across the world work on disability issues.

It is often said that the CRPD is a “paradigm-shift” on the way disability is understood and worked on. Disability is seen as created in interaction with social and environmental barriers. The CRPD elaborates on the rights of persons with disabilities as human rights, the equality of persons with disabilities before the law, and does so without any exceptions.

The CRPD stresses the importance of the participation of persons with disabilities through their representative organizations. The drafting of the CRPD was characterised by participation of civil society and persons with disabilities themselves. In Article 32 of the CRPD States Parties recognize the importance of the inclusion of persons with disabilities in their international cooperation.

In terms of accountability, all countries that have signed the CRPD are required to submit reports to the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, a body of independent experts that monitors implementation. Shadow or parallel reports can be submitted by civil society, UN entities, national human rights institutions or organizations representing persons with disabilities.

Related Questions

- Many questions refer to the provisions in the CRPD, including the definition of disability, accessibility and reasonable accommodation. In the next question the right to work and employment is discussed.

Further Information

- See more information and the text of the CRPD at the [UN's CRPD Homepage](#).

11. What are the rights of persons with disabilities to work and employment?

Article 27 of the CRPD sets out the rights to work and employment of persons with disabilities. These are the right to work on an equal basis with others, and opportunity to gain a living by work freely chosen. The freely chosen work should be in a labour market and work environment that is open, inclusive and accessible to persons with disabilities.

The article goes on to elaborate measures that countries shall take to safeguard and promote these rights. To summarise them here, they are: prohibiting discrimination on the basis of disability, protecting rights of persons with disabilities, ensuring their labour and trade union rights, access to vocational training programmes and other services, employment opportunities, employment in the public sector, promoting employment in the private sector, reasonable accommodation in the workplace, opportunities to get work experience, vocational rehabilitation and return-to-work programmes.

Related Questions

- The previous question [describes the CRPD](#).
- All of the questions in this document are related to the way countries and other stakeholders can implement the measures determined to promote the rights of persons with disabilities to employment.

12. How do the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) include disability?

The SDGs establish the place of disability in the international development agenda, complementing the establishment of disability as a rights issue in the CRPD. Persons with disabilities are mentioned explicitly in several goals. The SDGs make a core commitment of leaving no one behind, and actively including persons with disabilities is necessary to achieve this.

In terms of employment of persons with disabilities the particularly relevant goals are numbers 4 and 8, on education and decent work respectively.

Goal 4, on quality education for all, includes 4.5:

By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations.

Equal access to education and vocational training will ensure that persons with disabilities are provided the education and skills to find decent work.

Goal 8, on economic growth and decent work for all, includes 8.5:

By 2030, achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value.

Monitoring of progress of the SDGs will need to monitor the situation of persons with disabilities. To be able to monitor these targets there will need to be good national data on the employment situation of persons with disabilities. Goal 17, on strengthening the global partnership for sustainable development, mentions explicitly (in 17.18) the need for data disaggregated by disability.

The predecessors to the SDGs, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), did not mention disability explicitly at all. During their implementation, it was shown that not targeting persons with disabilities did not effectively address exclusion and hindered the achievement of many of the MDGs. Advocacy from the disability community meant that disability is firmly included in the SDGs.

Further Information

- See more about the SDGs on the [UN Sustainable Development Goals Knowledge Platform](#).

13. What are the international labour standards on disability?

All labour standards apply equally to workers with disabilities, although they might not always be referred to explicitly. Of the eight core labour standards, the ILO's Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111) is particularly relevant, in that it stipulates taking a national approach to ensure equality of opportunity and eliminate discrimination in terms of employment.

ILO has disability-specific labour standards, namely ILO Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (Disabled Persons) Convention, 1983 (No. 159) and its accompanying Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (Disabled Persons) Recommendation, 1983 (No. 168). Convention 159 sets out principles and actions for vocational rehabilitation and employment policies for persons with disabilities. One of the principles stated in the Convention is about consultation to form these policies. As well as representative organizations of employers and workers, representative organizations of and for persons with disabilities shall also be consulted. Convention 159 currently has 84 ratifications.

The Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations is the supervisory body in charge of the application of international labour standards by member states of the ILO. Their 2020 General Survey on certain instruments related to the strategic objective of employment "[Promoting employment and decent work in a changing landscape](#)" included Convention 159 and Recommendation 168.

The way disability issues are understood and worked on has been changing rapidly worldwide. Convention 159 was developed more than twenty years before the CRPD. Convention 159 anticipates, and reinforces, some of the work-related provisions made in the CRPD. There are still constituents that are actively using Convention 159, and in the past 10 years it has been ratified by Vietnam (2019), Belgium (2015) and Afghanistan (2010). However, in most countries the main reference for national change on disability issues, including those to do with employment, is the CRPD, and national legislation subsequently developed to implement it. The CRPD's provisions on training, work and employment issues go beyond those in Convention 159.

Related Questions

- See more about the [CRPD](#).

Further Information

- ILO website on [Labour Standards](#) and [ILO Information System on International Labour Standards](#).
- [ILO Convention 111](#): Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958
- [ILO Convention 159](#): Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (Disabled Persons) Convention, 1983

- Countries that have [ratified Convention 159](#).
- Tripartite submissions and responses from the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations can be found at [submissions by countries for Convention 159](#) and by [searching comments by supervisory bodies](#).
- [ILO Recommendation 168: Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment \(Disabled Persons\) Recommendation, 1983](#)
- [ILO General Surveys since 1985](#)

Persons with Disabilities in the World of Work

Persons with disabilities can and do work. Many work productively, in areas of their choosing. Rather than seeing the type of work as related to their disability, it is important to see how peoples' talents and abilities can be utilized in all areas of the economy and barriers to their work removed. Employment of persons with disabilities should be promoted on the open labour market using mainstream policies and programmes to promote employment.

Often the result of social exclusion related to disability means that persons with disabilities can have challenges in their life situation, educational background, skills or experience to access or progress in employment opportunities.

In this section a range of measures are discussed to make persons with disabilities more ready for work, and mainstream skills development or employment promotion to be more inclusive of persons with disabilities. This should be done in parallel with making employers and employment opportunities more inclusive, as explored in the following section.

14. Does disability stop people working? Can persons with disabilities work?

Many persons with disabilities, with all types of impairments and even when they are seen as "severe", can and do work productively in both developed and developing economies. Some workers with disabilities are very high performers; some are not. In this way they are also like any other population group.

The idea of "disability" is not the same as "incapacity to work". In many contexts, these two things have been treated as the same – either in people's ideas, or in the way social services and policy have been designed or provided. Part of the paradigm shift on disability means seeing these two issues separately.

It is true that not every single person with a disability can or wants to work. There are also many persons without disabilities who might not want or be able to work. In some cases, it is possible to see that it is disability that is the reason someone cannot work. It should be remembered that disability is made up of the impairment and the social and environmental factors it interacts with; someone with a similar impairment but in different social or work situation might be able to work effectively.

The question should move away from why someone "cannot" work to which barriers can be removed and what support can be provided, so that persons with disabilities are enabled to work effectively.

The reason the social conditions are important is that often it is these factors that stop persons with disabilities working, not the impairments they have. Low expectations of what they can do often prevents persons with disabilities from finding opportunities or thriving in them when they are in work. These combine with the exclusion persons with disabilities face more widely in society, and in areas necessary for professional development, such as education and skills development.

15. Are there jobs that are better for people with certain types of disabilities?

It is important to avoid associating certain jobs with certain disabilities.

A common first response to supporting persons with disabilities into work is to look at what work they can do “according to their disability”. This approach should not be pursued at a policy-level because it ends up stereotyping disabilities and jobs. Types of disability or impairment are usually very diverse, and stereotypes can be harmful and limit the ambition of persons with disabilities and their potential to contribute to work and social life.

Every job can be done by someone with or without a disability, provided the person has the right skills and experiences. Requirements in competency or experience could be stipulated as minimum qualifications, and effort should be made to make sure they are not discriminatory. For example, for a driving job, there might be requirements on level of vision. Given existing technology can easily adapt for driving using hand-operated control, there would not need to be requirements around lower-body strength. As technology changes, these requirements will also change.

Not every person with (or without) disability can do every job. Each individual has their own experience, skills and desires. These should be taken into account when choosing a job. Disability is just one factor among these.

It is better to avoid situations where people with certain impairments are encouraged into certain work to the exclusion of others. Any group of people with a specific impairment is very diverse, and individuals will be able to perform a wide range of occupations and tasks. Supports should be made available to pursue the occupations that match an individual’s skills and interests.

16. What does decent work mean for persons with disabilities?

Decent work involves dignity, equality, a fair income, rights at work and safe working conditions. Too often, disability-related barriers or stereotypes have stopped persons with disabilities finding decent work. When realized, decent work can be a pathway for persons with disabilities to achieve personal aspirations and wider social empowerment. When persons with disabilities are in decent work that will change the way families, communities and societies see disability and what it can mean.

Decent work applies at global, national, and local levels. The ILO agenda for decent work includes: rights at work and non-discrimination; employment opportunities and fair income; a safe working environment and social protection; and ability to organize and participate in decisions through social dialogue.

Promoting decent work for persons with disabilities means promoting each of the components of decent work and making sure that they are inclusive of persons with disabilities.

Rights at work and non-discrimination should include robust measures to prevent discrimination on the grounds of disability. Promotion of employment opportunities should include persons with disabilities. Safe working environments should include the necessary accessibility measures and relevant adjustments for persons with disabilities. Social dialogue on work should include the voice and representation of persons with disabilities.

Related questions

- See more about the [right to work](#), and the [relationship between social protection and decent work](#) for persons with disabilities.

Further information

- ILO Website on [Decent Work](#).

17. How does disability relate to self-employment, or public and private sector employment?

All types of decent work are relevant for persons with disabilities. Different types of work have different requirements and different pathways into them.

Self-employment

Working for oneself can give independence and flexibility. It often allows people to explore their skills and capacities in an adaptive way, outside of predefined employment relationships. Sometimes this makes it a way that persons with disabilities can get around discriminatory or inaccessible environments which create barriers to accessing paid employment. Promoting self-employment or entrepreneurship is often what programmes supporting employment of persons with disabilities have focussed on, especially in developing economies.

However, self-employment should not be the only choice that is made available to persons with disabilities. Like persons without disabilities, not every person with disability will be naturally suited to self-employment and entrepreneurship. It should not be the only option that programmes supporting employment of persons with disabilities consider. Often these programmes are also limited by only considering a certain range of small business opportunities. Self-employment will not be the only solution to more persons with disabilities entering the world of work.

Having said this, it is important that mainstream entrepreneurship and self-employment programmes, covering both training and support, should be inclusive of persons with disabilities who have decided to pursue this type of employment.

Public Sector

Public sector employment will often have regulations around non-discrimination and sometimes also quotas for employment of persons with disabilities. This is not necessarily reflected in higher number of employees with disabilities, however. The public sector also often requires quite fixed profiles of candidates, and this may disadvantage persons with disabilities who have less orthodox backgrounds. As such formal recruitment structures can be a threat (through inflexible requirements) as well as an opportunity (in instituting non-discrimination). Recruitment is often quite complex, because there are different agencies involved in public sector recruitment processes.

Private Sector

Engaging the private sector is essential for the inclusion of persons with disabilities in economic development. Methods for this are described elsewhere in this document, including the development of Business and Disability Networks.

Working with the private sector can also provide a range of low- or semi-skilled jobs, as well as the opportunity to work with longer supply chains. However, as with other types of employment, there is no single solution that can respond to the diverse situations of persons with disabilities.

There is a particular challenge of engaging small and medium-sized enterprises that may need community-based solutions or other innovative networking, as well as tailored support.

18. How can skills development include persons with disabilities?

Skills development, including Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), is important on a national level for the economic and social benefits of having a more skilled workforce. Persons with disabilities often find that one of the key barriers to finding work is a mismatch in their skills and the needs of the labour market. Providing persons with disabilities with relevant professional skills and preparing them for the workplace will be a key component of promoting employment of persons with disabilities.

There are many ways that existing skills development systems and TVET institutions are not accessible and inclusive for persons with disabilities. Addressing these barriers has been one of the main focusses of ILO work on disability inclusion in recent times.

Key steps for inclusion in skills development

A recent policy brief on making TVET and skills development programmes lists the key steps to be taken:

- an enabling policy or strategy should be put in place;
- mistaken assumptions about the abilities and capabilities of persons with disabilities should be challenged;
- buildings and transport should be made accessible;
- entry criteria, teaching methods, materials and evaluation methods should be reviewed and adapted;
- TVET workforce capacity to teach trainees with disabilities alongside trainees without disabilities should be strengthened;
- operational alliances should be formed with key partners;
- a system of on-going support to inclusion, including reasonable accommodation, should be developed;
- the effectiveness of the policy or strategy should be regularly monitored and reviewed; and
- resources should be allocated to make these changes possible.

More details on the steps can be found in the policy brief.

As these steps show, significant initiatives across skills development systems and institutions are needed. Often an important part of this will be taking specific measures to target persons with disabilities for intake to skills programmes and providing supports for their meaningful participation in them. This may involve considerable efforts for outreach to persons with disability and disability organizations, as potential trainees may not be aware of these schemes or see their relevance to them.

An important component of skills development is workplace learning. Apprenticeships and workplace learning can be part of a skills development programme, or they might be a

standalone initiative. They are a key bridge between learners, skills and employment, and especially so in the case of persons with disabilities where they offer potential solutions to the challenges of gaps in experience and employment. Making apprenticeships and workplace based learning inclusive will involve changes from employers, classroom-based training, and support institutions. More details on these steps can be found in the policy brief on making apprenticeships and workplace learning inclusive of persons with disabilities.

Related questions

- See the next question for common [challenges in making skills development inclusive](#).
- Skills development is often a component in a [broader service to promote employment](#), and skills development systems should be seen in the context of wider employment services.
- It is important that persons with disabilities are provided targeted support to ensure their mainstream inclusion in skills development programmes, [rather than provision of specialised training centres or courses](#).

Further information

- The key steps described above come from the ILO policy brief on [Making TVET and skills systems inclusive of persons with disabilities](#) (2017).
- More about workplace learning can be seen in the ILO policy brief on [Making apprenticeships and workplace learning inclusive of persons with disabilities](#) (2018).

19. What are common challenges in implementing inclusive skills development programmes?

Some interventions focus exclusively on making adjustments to skills development programmes. A more integrated approach is recommended. If the focus is too limited it will face serious challenges of connecting with the situation of persons with disabilities and of creating the link with employment.

Efforts for inclusion need to respond to the diversity among persons with disabilities, and their different backgrounds, abilities and desires. In cases where only one type of training is made inclusive this can encourage people to join where it is not a good fit.

- Persons with disabilities need different types of skills development that lead to different outcomes. For some employment would be a good outcome, and for others entrepreneurship would be a more relevant path.
- Some people will need support and counselling to know the options that are best for them.
- In many cases people will need preparation for work and development through “soft skills” – including communication and adjusting to other workplace norms.
- Many persons with disabilities have been told that they are not able to work and so they, and their families, may need further information and encouragement to consider training and work.

Making skills development inclusive needs to be closely linked to labour market needs and with concrete pathways into employment themselves. These should be considered seriously before the training programme is started.

- Often trainings targeted at persons with disabilities are out-dated or not relevant to the demand of employers.

- In the case of training people to become self-employed, trainings need to include skills to run a business and offer links with resources needed to start one.
- After a training programme there are often barriers to employment. These might be in the environment – like inaccessible or expensive transport – the employers – not ready to employ persons with disabilities – or the persons with disabilities themselves not prepared for conditions of employment. Early anticipation of these issues will help resolve them. Advocacy and partnerships with employers, exposure to workplace conditions, and workplace learning are helpful approaches.

Related questions

- See the previous question for how [skills development programmes can be made inclusive of persons with disabilities](#).

20. How can other services to promote employment be inclusive of persons with disabilities?

The approach of mainstreaming is that all measures to promote employment should be inclusive of persons with disabilities. Any program designed as relevant to the situation of a specific sector or group will also have relevance for persons with disabilities, and making it inclusive for persons with disabilities will make it more effective. This includes active labour market programmes and other mechanisms for giving people more access to the labour market and good jobs.

Employment services are an important bridge between people looking for work and employment opportunities. For jobseekers they often provide information, counselling, training and/or job-placement. They may also be providing support to employers to receive candidates, and in some countries they also administer benefits to those not in employment. It is important that employment services work simultaneously with both “sides”: preparing persons with disabilities for work at the same time as making employers and employment conditions more inclusive. Partnerships with disability organizations can help them reach and provide the necessary supports to persons with disabilities, or accessibility adjustments to employers and training organizations.

Public works programmes are a form of providing employment through creating (sometimes temporary) jobs. One common form is employment-intensive infrastructure programmes. As well as providing a certain level of employment, these schemes can be important measures for poverty reduction. Inclusion of persons with disabilities will be important for these programmes to meet their aims of providing employment to those who need it most. In some cases, targets or quotas are set for numbers of persons with disabilities. Further adjustments maybe needed to outreach and ensure recruitment of persons with disabilities, along with flexible working patterns and/or adjustments to specific jobs that would allow meaningful participation.

Related questions

- The longer discussion of [skills development](#) and common [challenges to inclusion in skills development](#) will have many issues relevant for inclusion in employment services.
- Mainstream services may be complemented by some [disability related services to enter employment](#).

21. Are there specific types of employment only for persons with disabilities?

There are two important pieces of context to understand before answering this question. The first is that the right of persons with disabilities, and priority for this guide, is employment to be in the open labour market. The second piece of context to note is that of seeking to promote decent work. The questions in this document discuss the range of measures that can be taken to achieve decent work in the open labour market.

For something to be considered decent work it must be fair and freely chosen employment, in safe conditions of work. Too often segregated employment for persons has not been in conditions of decent work, and has not offered genuine social or economic inclusion in society. Any modality that is approaching a type of segregated employment should be assessed to see whether it is breaching the rights of persons with disabilities.

There are different ways that employment might become reserved for persons with disabilities. It could be opportunities or jobs created specifically for persons with disabilities, sections of workplaces that are designated for persons with disabilities, or even whole organizations or workshops for persons with disabilities. In most cases these should be treated with caution. For example:

- Workshops for persons with disabilities might be a form of segregated employment. In some cases, there are forms of segregated workshops that are transitioning into open labour market employment. This transition should be approached carefully, with due attention to the circumstances and future opportunities of persons who had been working in them.
- Some countries have provisions where there are lower minimum wages for persons with disabilities, meaning that they are sometimes employed in roles and conditions that persons without disabilities would not be.

Related questions

- This issue should be seen in terms of [rights of persons with disabilities to employment](#) and of [decent work for persons with disabilities](#).
- The next question deals with the question of [training centres or specialised training programmes only for persons with disabilities](#).
- There are some cases where positive discrimination might target roles or entry points for persons with disabilities. These include through some [recruitment mechanisms](#) or [quota systems](#).

22. Should there be training centres or specialised training programmes only for persons with disabilities?

There are serious challenges in having training centres or training programmes dedicated towards persons with disabilities. It is preferred to move towards targeting inclusion of persons with disabilities in mainstream programmes. Institutions dedicated to training of persons with disabilities could move towards becoming centres that advise and support inclusion of persons with disabilities in skills systems more widely. In some cases specialised training programmes can be a step towards developing more inclusive mainstream programmes.

Challenges in disability-specific training centres and programmes

There has historically been a tendency to see training centres dedicated to persons with disabilities as the best way to provide training or other employment supports. In practice, these and some other specialized programmes for persons with disabilities, face serious challenges.

In both the cases of dedicated centres and specialized training programmes there are often large gaps between what is provided and both what is needed by persons with disabilities as well as what is needed by the labour market. There can be challenges of accountability, quality, link with broader social inclusion and the self-fulfilling nature of low expectations about what persons with disabilities can do.

Even when there is a better quality of programme, the approach of dedicated centres is also often a highly-centralized one that can reach only low numbers of persons with disabilities.

There are often suggestions from stakeholders or the disability community for further development of specialized programmes or centres. They are seen as being able to provide a fullness of response that mainstream provision cannot. These suggestions should be responded to with care.

Moving towards targeting and centres of excellence

The exclusion of persons with disabilities needs to be addressed and often mainstream services are not reaching them. The response on disability can be to target, support and provide the best advice possible.

Targeting services means that, for example, vocational training or labour market programmes, could target specifically persons with disabilities. This would help them reach the people that most needed them. Targeting might need some adjustments and support.

Support for persons with disabilities will help provide the resources needed to meaningfully get opportunities. This might be in terms of grants, assistive devices, or other adjustments to provide access to mainstream programmes. Support services might develop into substantial programmes, and the emphasis should always be on integration with mainstream services and on promoting access to open employment.

In some cases training programmes dedicated to persons with disabilities can represent an important step in mainstreaming. For instance, they might be the first time a training centre directly approaches trainees with disabilities. Or they might be a way to develop models for trainings with certain groups of persons with disabilities that could be seen as harder-to-reach with existing training approaches.

Ideally training institutions for persons with disabilities would shift to becoming resource centres that support the mainstreaming of persons with disabilities throughout the training system as a whole. In some cases, training centres for persons with disabilities have adapted their role by opening up to trainees without disabilities too.

Related questions

- [See more about inclusion of persons with disabilities in skills development.](#)

23. What are disability related ways to support employment of persons with disabilities?

Most of this document focuses on how to make sure persons with disabilities are included in mainstream programmes to promote employment. In addition to these there are important mechanisms that have been designed around the needs of persons with disabilities. These are supported employment and return-to-work programmes, described in the following questions.

Related questions

- See below for more about [supported employment](#) and [return-to-work](#).
- It is important that persons with disabilities are [included in mainstream services to employment](#).

24. What is supported employment?

Supported employment refers to intensive, often hands-on practical support, to include people into work. One of the most common forms is adapting employment for persons with intellectual disabilities. This might use a job-coach to adapt work in a person-centred way, supporting the person with disability as well as adjusting the employment context. This has shown to be a useful solution in a range of contexts, including low- and middle-income country contexts. There are training programmes available for job-coaches who are prepared to be able to work with both the employer and employee to provide the practical support necessary.

In the context of persons with psychosocial disabilities, an approach called Individual Placement Support (IPS) is used which is similar to supported employment, but would usually be less reliant on an external job coach.

25. What are return-to-work programmes, or disability management?

Return-to-work programmes are for responding when a person acquires an injury or disability through their career. In some places these are called “disability management”, which often has a similar mandate. Return-to-work support might be offered by the employer itself, or, in collaboration with the employer, by an external service. In some cases these services are offered by government agencies, who work with employers, trade unions and disability organizations to get the best results for persons in the programme.

Having mechanisms to understand and respond carefully to a new injury or disability can contribute greatly to the chances of better employment outcomes afterwards, including that the person continues in work. Careful communications with the person themselves is an important part of managing the process. In some cases, training programmes and/or transition to new roles or jobs can be an important way the person continues to use their skills and experiences.

An important part of the future of work will be lifelong learning and career transitions. Return-for-work schemes have often been designed in terms of injury or disability, but their lessons about career transitions could be important for wider populations.

In some cases return-to-work or disability management programmes will also focus on the broader work environment. They may consider aspects of prevention of injury in the

workplace or measures to avoid a condition being made worse. Often they are combined with measures to make workplaces more accessible and inclusive, as well as providing adjustments based on individual needs.

Related questions

- See more about [accessibility](#) and [reasonable accommodation](#).
- See more about the [future of work](#).

26. How does social protection relate to decent work for persons with disabilities?

Social protection is one of the key components of the decent work agenda. It is also an area of vital importance to realizing the rights of persons with disabilities inside and outside of work.

Making social protection inclusive of persons with disabilities is an important international agenda. ILO has been working with partners to develop a common approach on this issue, in ways that social protection systems can be made compatible with the provisions of the CRPD. A statement on this issue was developed and is linked below. As it states, “social protection should always contribute to the empowerment, participation and inclusion of all persons with disabilities”.

The relation between social protection and decent work has key challenges that come from the way disability benefits are designed and other provisions that are made for persons with disabilities. Too often they have been, or still are, based on persons with disabilities being certified as “unable to work”.

Making eligibility criteria for benefits based on “incapacity to work” is a common approach but there are serious issues with it. First, disability is not the same as “incapacity to work”, and most persons with disabilities can work productively in more inclusive labour markets. Second, seeing persons with disabilities as unable to work would be discrimination against their right to work. Third, designating someone as “unable to work”, or basing their receipt of a benefit on them not working, are creating serious barriers or disincentives for them to seek or keep work.

Social protection should be designed in a way that enables persons with disabilities to participate more in the world of work. It will be important to remove existing barriers or disincentives to this in social protection systems and create more positive links with finding and keeping work. This may include seeing disability benefits as responding to the “extra costs” of disability, which will be there whether the person is in work or not. Social protection may also specifically address other disability-related barriers. If benefit eligibility is designed so that benefits can be combined with receiving income from work then that removes one of the important barriers to finding work.

Related questions

- See more about the [right to employment](#), and [decent work for persons with disabilities](#).

Further information

- For more on how social protection for persons with disabilities needs to change, see the 2019 Joint Statement “[Towards inclusive social protection systems supporting the full and effective participation of persons with disabilities](#)”. The statement

comes out of a process that was co-facilitated by ILO and the International Disability Alliance.

27. What is the situation of persons with disabilities in the informal economy?

More than half of the global workforce is in the informal economy and in many developing countries this percentage is close to 90%. The “informal economy” is a wide concept that refers to all economic activities insufficiently or not covered by formal arrangements. It can be found in all sectors of the economy, in both public and private sectors, working inside or outside of formal organizations. Work in the informal economy often means poor working conditions, lack of rights at work, and limited or no social protection.

In terms of people in work, persons with disabilities are more likely than persons without disabilities to be in the informal economy. The risks and vulnerabilities of the informal economy will interact with disability-related barriers and the more vulnerable situation of many persons with disabilities, especially women with disabilities. As well as already being in the informal economy, persons with disabilities may be especially vulnerable when jobs in the formal economy are informalized. This might also be relevant in the increase of the platform and gig economy.

Disability should be included in the steps taken to assess and respond on transitioning from the informal to the formal economy.

- The process of supporting transition from informal jobs to formal ones should take into account the situation and needs of persons with disabilities as well as removing disability-related barriers.
- Promoting employment and decent jobs in the formal sector should take into account measures for promoting employment of persons with disabilities.
- Prevention of informalization of formal jobs should take into account those that are especially vulnerable to this process, including persons with disabilities.

Related Questions

- See [more data on employment](#) of persons with disabilities.

Further information

See the ILO Recommendation on [Transitioning from the Informal to the Formal Economy, 2015 \(No. 204\)](#). It mentions persons with disabilities as one of the groups that should be given particular attention to. An ILO news article on [“ways out of informality”](#) gives some context to the recommendation.

28. What is the situation of persons with disabilities in crisis settings?

Crises, including natural disasters, pandemics and armed conflicts, disproportionately affect people with disabilities. Outside of crisis situations, people with disabilities are among the most hidden, statistically-invisible and socially-excluded groups, particularly in terms of the labour market and social services. In disaster and conflict settings, people with disabilities are also often overlooked, including both those who already had a disability before the crisis and those who acquired a disability as a result of a conflict or disaster.

People with disabilities may need support in accessing mainstream and targeted emergency relief, medical care, and rehabilitation services. Like others affected by the crisis, they may

need targeted support to earn an income, establish (or re-establish) their livelihoods, become self-reliant, and contribute to their communities.

Article 11, “Situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies”, of the CRPD reinforces and specifies States’ obligations under international humanitarian law to ensure the protection and safety of persons with disabilities in situations of risk, including armed conflict, humanitarian emergencies and natural disasters.

Approaches to including people with disabilities in the response to crises include

- The internationally-agreed method for data disaggregation by disability, as also mandated by the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, is to use the Washington Group on Disability Statistics’ short set of six questions (this gauges whether persons have a functional limitation in a number of areas, e.g. walking, seeing, hearing, communicating);
- Needs assessments related to post-conflict and post-disaster situations, as well as to the labour market, need to take disability-related needs into account, particularly in regard to the accessibility of the (re)construction of the physical environment and information systems.
- All transition initiatives need to be inclusive of people with disabilities, including skills development systems, legal frameworks, employment services, etc.
- The involvement of local Disabled Persons’ Organizations in decision-making and all relevant bodies is essential for making sure that people with disabilities are not overlooked in reconstruction and recovery efforts.
- Sensitization and capacity building on disability issues for stakeholders in post-conflict or post-disaster situations, including humanitarian workers and employers, is crucial to raise awareness about people with disabilities and promote equal employment opportunities.

Related Questions

[How is data collected on persons with disabilities?](#)

[How does social protection relate to decent work for persons with disabilities?](#)

Further information

- [ILO Recommendation on Employment and Decent Work for Peace and Resilience, 2017 \(No. 205\)](#).
- [Thematic study on the rights of persons with disabilities under article 11 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, on situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies](#), Human Rights Council, Thirty-first session, 30 November 2015.
- The [Charter on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action](#) was one of the key outcomes of the World Humanitarian Summit (23-24 May 2016, Istanbul), and called for the development of guidelines on the inclusion of persons with disabilities in humanitarian action.
- [Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030](#).

Making employers and employment more inclusive

Employers have a range of motivations for promoting disability inclusion. They stand to gain from new employees, compliance with legal requirements and contributing to social development. The “business case” for inclusion of persons with disabilities explores these reasons further, and how disability relates to priorities of employers.

Employers can take a range of action on disability inclusion, from recruiting further employees with disabilities to better accommodating persons with disabilities already in the workforce and creating disability-responsive products and services.

One of the important ways that employers can work together is through business and disability networks. The ILO supports the Global Business and Disability Network and there are more than 25 such networks at a national level.

Making employers and employment more inclusive should be done in parallel with making sure persons with disabilities can access relevant skills development and preparation for work, as explored in the previous section.

28. Why do employers hire persons with disabilities?

Employment of persons with disabilities is ideally a “win-win” for persons with disabilities, employers and society more widely. An employment opportunity can transform the life of a person with disability, be an important gain for their employer, and contribute to social and economic change. Employment plays a transformative role for individuals and in some cases provides the base for social inclusion and changing the position of persons with disabilities in society more widely.

Employers have a range of reasons to employ persons with disabilities. Employing persons with disabilities gives employers an important source of new talent and the opportunity to play an important role in social development. In other cases employers may already be employing persons with disabilities but not be fully aware or responsive to their situation or any adaptations that could allow them to work more productively. The fact that persons with disabilities make a productive contribution is part of the “business case” for inclusion of persons with disabilities, which is described further below.

Often there is national legislation or policy that provides requirements or incentives for employers to hire persons with disabilities, and to make sure that hiring processes are not discriminatory on the grounds of disability. Many employers will want to reach international standards on rights of persons with disabilities even in the case that there is not strong national legislation.

Each of these motivations will be relevant in different ways to employers in different situations. Some large employers, like multinationals or public-sector employers, might have corporate standards on diversity and inclusion, or institutional standards on avoiding discrimination. Smaller employers sometimes find development or social responsibility approaches more relevant.

Unfortunately, in a minority of cases employers may have less positive reasons to employ persons with disabilities. In some contexts persons with disabilities might be paid less, because of legislation and/or fewer opportunities for livelihoods elsewhere. Persons with

disabilities' vulnerability might make it easier for employers to take advantage of their circumstances. These dangers need to be mitigated by providing meaningful employment opportunities, effective social protection, ensuring standards at work and changing attitudes around disability and work.

Related questions

- The next question explores the [business case](#) for inclusion of persons with disabilities.
- Employing persons with disabilities should be understood in terms of [decent work](#) for persons with disabilities.

Further information

- See the ILO Infostory on the [win-win of disability inclusion](#).

29. What is the “business case” for inclusion of persons with disabilities?

Making the “business case” means showing employers the advantages of taking measures for inclusion of persons with disabilities. The advantages have to be stated in ways that relate to the key concerns of employers such as productivity and the ability to create better products and services.

Much of the business case for inclusion of persons with disabilities is integrated with the case for the benefits of more diverse and inclusive workforces. These include access to a wider, untapped pool of talent; increased innovation from employees with diverse experiences; increased engagement and retention from the workforce and an enhanced company reputation. Having a diverse workforce makes organizations representative of the population more widely and their clients. As such, disability should be more systematically part of diversity and inclusion agendas.

The specific aspects of the business case for disability inclusion apply to both employing persons with disabilities and other actions that employers can take on disability. Removing barriers that persons with disabilities face can often make work processes more efficient for all. Using universal design in their infrastructure – physical and digital – will make spaces and services more accessible for persons with disabilities and all employees or clients. Making services and products that persons with disabilities can use will often make them more usable for all clients.

The business case for inclusion of persons with disabilities was developed with the private-sector and profit-oriented employers in mind. However, it is also referred to and relevant for public sector employers who will have similar motivations of increased productivity and more relevant product and services. Given that the public sector has to provide services that can reach all of the population they will have even more incentive than the private sector to make sure services are inclusive of persons with disabilities.

Using the business case complements other reasons for the inclusion of persons with disabilities, such as the rights of persons with disabilities or compliance with legislation. Referring to the business case is designed to create a positive engagement about opportunities. This is not a contradiction to the other reasons to employ persons with disabilities. The business case is part of the work necessary to achieve the right of persons with disabilities to work. That right can only be achieved when employers are convinced and act on ways to make it real.

Related questions

- See the previous and next question respectively for context on [why employers hire persons with disabilities](#) and [what employers can do on disability inclusion](#).
- See more about the [Global Business and Disability Network](#) as well as [national networks](#).

Further information

- See the ILO Infostory on the [win-win of disability inclusion](#).

30. What can employers do to promote inclusion of persons with disabilities?

Employers have a wide scope for action on promoting inclusion of persons with disabilities. Beyond hiring persons with disabilities there are measures that can be taken to promote inclusion inside and outside of the workplace.

The Global Business and Disability Network's Charter has a list of principles that capture the scope of action employers can take:

1. Promote and respect the rights of persons with disabilities by raising awareness and combatting stigma and stereotypes faced by persons with disabilities.
2. Non-discrimination. Develop policies and practices that protect persons with disabilities from all types of discrimination.
3. Promote equal treatment and equal opportunities for persons with disabilities by providing reasonable accommodation in the recruitment process, on-the-job, apprenticeships, training, job retention, career development and other relevant terms and conditions of employment.
4. Accessibility. Progressively make the company premises and communication to staff accessible for all employees with disabilities.
5. Job-retention. Undertake appropriate measures to enable current employees who acquire a disability to retain or return to their employment.
6. Respect confidentiality of personal information regarding disability.
7. Attention to all types of disability. Consider the needs of those persons with disabilities who face particular challenges accessing the labour market, including persons with intellectual and psychosocial disabilities.
8. Collaboration. Promote employment of persons with disabilities among business partners and other companies and collaborate with national employer and business networks on disability as well as with organizations working to advance the rights of persons with disabilities.
9. Evaluation. Review regularly the company disability inclusion policies and practices for their effectiveness.
10. Knowledge sharing. Report on company efforts to promote the employment of persons with disabilities to all relevant stakeholders and share information and experiences.

Applying these principles can look quite different for each employer. It should be noted that disability inclusion involves actions to be taken at a company-wide level. While sometimes disability inclusion is located in corporate social responsibility or diversity functions, the range of measures that can be taken cover the whole of an employer's activities, and will need to be achieved through ownership of departments throughout the organization.

The principles above demonstrate that employers have a role in promoting disability inclusion within their organization and also catalysing change outside of their organization.

Collaboration and knowledge sharing are two of the important ways they can do this. Another way that they can do this is to promote disability inclusion through their supply chains, through procurement practices and encouragement to their suppliers.

Related Questions

- See previous questions on [why employers hire persons with disabilities](#) and the [business case for disability inclusion](#).

Further info

- On the Global Business and Disability Network site you can see the [charter principles and related resources](#) as well as the [model self-assessment tool](#) for companies to assess their efforts for inclusion.

31. How can employers find and recruit persons with disabilities?

Recruiting persons with disabilities to appropriate vacancies can be challenging. Employers who decide to take disability inclusion more seriously often find this one of the substantial difficulties in doing so.

There are a number of steps that can be taken to find and recruit persons with disabilities:

- Recruitment procedures can explicitly mention that candidates with disabilities are welcome, advertisements and procedures, like online recruitment, are accessible, as well as through the use of internships programmes.
- Job-analysis and redesigning roles are sometimes used to adjust vacancies to individual candidates or for wider intake. These methods are based around a pragmatic assessment of job functions and adjustments that can be made to them, for instance by splitting roles in different ways.
- Fast-track entry. Short-term training courses, apprenticeships or inclusion of persons with disabilities in existing workplace training courses.
- Partnerships with disability organizations, employment services or other forms of outreach. These can help to identify qualified candidates and secure support or preparation that facilitates their intake.

Outside of recruiting new employees with disabilities, it should be remembered that most employers will already have staff with disabilities working for them. An environment that is positive about disability, and highlights cases of colleagues with disabilities succeeding at work, can encourage and make easier for other colleagues to share their disability status and adjustments that would help them work more productively.

Ultimately, recruitment of persons with disabilities is a shared challenge. In the medium- and long-term, skills development systems need to be made inclusive of persons with disabilities and there need to be more substantial links made between persons with disabilities and employment opportunities. Employers can make a key contribution to these longer-term changes by working in partnership with other organizations working towards these goals.

Related questions

- See more about [why employers hire persons with disabilities](#), the [business case](#), and need to make more [systematic links between employers and persons with disabilities](#).

32. What is the Global Business and Disability Network?

The Global Business and Disability Network (GBDN) is a unique employer-led initiative that works to promote the inclusion of people with disabilities in workplaces around the world. GBDN members include multinational enterprises, national business and disability networks, and international not-for-profit and disabled people's organisations.

The GBDN is based on the idea of peer-to-peer to exchange between employers, and promoting the "business case" for inclusion of persons with disabilities. The employer leadership of the network ensures it is based on their needs, and its members lead by example on disability inclusion across the world. Company members of the GBDN sign up to the network charter and its ten principles of disability inclusion.

As of April 2020, the GBDN consisted of more than 20 global company members, 9 not-for-profit organizations and more than 30 National Business and Disability Networks. ILO acts as a secretariat to the GBDN. Active communication between members through the year takes place in an annual meeting, webinars, regional meetings, social media activities and a newsletter sharing good practices.

Related questions

- See more about the [business case, what employers can do on disability inclusion, and National Business and Disability Networks](#).

Further information

- See more and subscribe to the newsletter on the [Global Business and Disability Network website](#).

33. What are National Business and Disability Networks?

National Business and Disability Networks (NBDNs) are based on peer-to-peer exchange between employers and promotion of the business case for inclusion of persons with disabilities. They are forums where companies and supporting organizations come together to work towards further employment and social inclusion of persons with disabilities. Often these spaces are unique opportunities to investigate this issue from the point of view of employers.

There are currently more than 30 NBDNs across the world. Each looks quite different, from the newly formed to the well-established. Common roles include the peer-to-peer exchange, developing technical capacity among employers, creating links with disability organizations, communications and awareness raising as well as being a voice for business on disability issues.

NBDNs are often members of the Global Business and Disability Network (GBDN) and this collaboration allows for exchange and support. Often the multinational members of the GBDN will have subsidiaries or national offices that will benefit from joining a national network and the cooperation and initiatives that can be taken through one.

Related questions

- See more about the [business case, what employers can do on disability inclusion, and the Global Business and Disability Network](#).

Further information

- The GBDN website has a list of [NBDN members](#).
- There is a document summarizing [principles and guidelines for NBDNs](#).

34. How can public procurement support employment of persons with disabilities?

Public procurement can be used to promote the accessibility of products and services as well as the employment of persons with disabilities. For instance, there is a legislation in the European Union and in some countries like the US and Canada that promotes the accessibility of products and services purchased by public authorities. This can be done either by making accessibility a compulsory requirement or by giving extra points for suppliers that commit to accessibility in their products and services.

Public procurement can also be used to promote the employment of persons with disabilities. This can be done by giving preference to suppliers that employ persons with disabilities, companies owned by entrepreneurs with disabilities, as well as by requesting suppliers to promote the employment of persons with disabilities in the actual delivery of the service, e.g. a tender to run a catering or restaurant service in the premises of a public authority.

Policy, strategy and stakeholders

Promoting employment of persons with disabilities relies on policies and institutional support, and attitude change to create an enabling environment. Laws and policies can protect the rights of persons with disabilities and put in place the initiatives that will make them real. One of the most common policies used is quota mechanisms.

Pathways need to be found that effectively give persons with disabilities access to employment opportunities. A multi-stakeholder approach is necessary to make interventions at each stage in the route to employment. Governments, employers, trade unions, and disability organizations all have important roles to play.

Working together, they will be able to bring about a future of work inclusive of persons with disabilities.

35. How can attitudes be changed around disability and work?

Changing attitudes to disability and persons with disabilities is an essential part of the process in all interventions on disability and decent work. Negative or stereotyped ideas about disability and work are one of the key barriers to imagining and realizing better outcomes. Awareness and attitude change needs to be developed among everyone involved, from persons with disabilities themselves, to their families, communities, service providers, policy makers, employers and the general public.

Attitude change should show how disability inclusion can be relevant to stakeholders with different priorities. The idea is to move from disability being something stigmatized, threatening or risky to something that is innovative, an opportunity and an investment. This

will be a key factor in allowing individuals and organizations to better understand, acknowledge and respond to disability.

There are some guiding principles to keep in mind in attitude change.

- A social understanding of disability. Disability should be understood in terms of the social and environmental barriers that create it, and how these can be addressed. Case-studies of individuals are often a powerful tool and should be presented in ways that promote social change not just individual agency.
- Each stakeholder will be receptive to different arguments and methods. Governments and employers, for example, have different motivations and will respond to different inputs. Likewise, while a seminar or training course might be appropriate to reach government or civil society, many employers would be more engaged through shorter more dynamic events.
- Show successes not just problems. There are many challenges that can be listed regarding disability and employment, and this can often be daunting. The more that positive methods or successful cases of inclusion can be highlighted, the more the audience will be empowered to emulate them.

36. How can legislation and policy support employment of persons with disabilities?

Many countries are moving to update national legislation to be in-line with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). However, even with new national legislation on the rights of persons with disabilities, there is still often a long way to realising a legislative and policy framework that supports the rights fully. Often legislation moves in the direction of the CRPD but key gaps in compatibility remain.

In terms of achieving the rights of persons with disabilities to work, there are key provisions to be made in legislation and policies to be developed. As well as robust disability legislation protecting the rights at work, disability needs to be included in mainstream employment legislation and policy. Potentially discriminatory aspects of law – such as limitations on work persons with disabilities can do – should be removed. Anti-discrimination measures need to be established in a meaningful way.

In terms of employment policy, disability should be considered as a factor within any employment promotion scheme, whether it is for youth, women, or any other target group. An essential part of considering disability as a factor will be active consultation with persons with disabilities and/or the groups that represent them.

National policy on promoting persons with disabilities needs to consider the key areas described in this document, namely promoting readiness of persons with disabilities to work, more inclusive employers and conditions of employment, the links between both sides and institutions that support them. Some frequently-used policies are explored in this section, such as quota mechanisms.

Policy-making, and the results of policy, should be supported by good data on the situation of persons with disabilities. Gathering and analysing data on persons with disabilities and their employment profiles will be essential. Disability-related questions should be included in national census, labour force surveys, household income and expenditure surveys, and other tools.

Related questions

- See more about the [CRPD](#) and on [data about persons with disabilities](#).

Further information

- See the ILO 2015 Guidance Note on [inclusion of persons with disabilities in national employment policies](#).
- See the ILO 2014 Guidelines on [achieving equal employment opportunities for people with disabilities through legislation](#).

37. How can pathways be developed between persons with disabilities and employment opportunities?

It is important to find pathways for persons with disabilities to access employment opportunities. Taking a pathways approach is looking for pragmatic ways to find results for persons with disabilities now, alongside the structural changes that need to be made in the medium and long term. It is based on finding links between the situation of persons with disabilities and that of employers, rather than focussing on just one side.

Policy measures and interventions should be assessed in terms of their ability to strengthen pathways for persons with disabilities to access work. Both policies and services need to intervene both on the side of persons with disabilities as well as conditions of employment. Too often interventions on promoting employment of persons with disabilities have too narrow focus.

There will be a question of scale when effective interventions are found. In many cases the links made between persons with disabilities and employment might be done on the scale of hundreds of persons with disabilities. Scaling these effective practices further brings important questions of financing, institutions and capacity. Often these interventions need a capacity for intensive and often technical work with individuals and employers. In different contexts there will be different answers about whether these can best come from public employment services, disability organizations, business and disability networks, other stakeholders, and/or partnerships between these.

One pathways approach that could be used more frequently is that of asking how persons without disabilities find work, and then making these routes more inclusive of persons with disabilities. Most mainstream interventions to promote employment will have done an assessment of the most relevant measures, and this makes inclusion of persons with disabilities in them all the more relevant. Often social capital and informal networks are an important way through which people find work, and persons with disabilities will often have less strong networks even in the case they could access similar levels of education. Interventions could usefully consider how to support persons with disabilities in accessing social networks.

Related questions

- Pathways between persons with disabilities and employment may include [skills development](#), [employment services](#), [disability-specific employment services](#), and [measures by employers to recruit](#).

38. How can governments or civil society incentivize employment of persons with disabilities?

Governments or civil society sometimes offer employers support and incentives for employing persons with disabilities. One of the most common incentives considered by governments is that of tax advantages for employers who employ persons with disabilities. Other incentives might be designed to facilitate employment of persons with disabilities, through support for salaries or contributing to the costs of workplace adaptations or accessibility modifications. Awards or competitions might celebrate employers who take actions in this area.

Incentives for employers need to be designed and communicated clearly, so they mitigate the risk of perpetuating stereotypes around persons with disabilities not working productively. A scheme to support the salary of a person with disability might be designed with a transition to regular employment, for example. Communication should emphasize the business case for employing persons with disabilities – any incentive is the means to this end, not the end in itself.

Direct incentives should be accompanied by substantial programmes promoting skills, employability and job-placement of persons with disabilities. Ultimately the most important incentive will be employers being able to employ qualified persons with disabilities.

Related questions

- See the [business case for disability inclusion](#) and specific compliance measures like [quota legislation](#).

39. How are quotas used for training and employment of persons with disabilities?

Employment of persons with disabilities can be pursued with or without quota systems. They should be understood in a wider context of measures to promote employment. In the cases they are used, quota systems should be implemented carefully to avoid possible risks.

What are quota systems?

Quota systems are one of the most common policy measures to promote employment of persons with disabilities. They are based on allocating a number or percentage of positions for persons with disabilities in employment and, sometimes, to reserve positions in training or skills development.

There are many different implementations of quota systems. A typical case is that they require a percentage of jobs to be filled by persons with disabilities. This might be 1-5% per organization, and often only applies to larger employers, seen as those with over 50 or 100 employees. Details of quota systems may be different for public or private employers, and can also have allocations for type or severity of disability.

There may be a levy or penalty associated with companies that do not comply with the quota. These could be self-declared by the employer, or based on inspection and penalty. In some cases, the funds collected through this are put into a centrally-managed fund used to implement programmes to get persons with disabilities into work.

What are key issues in implementing quota mechanisms?

Quota systems are often chosen as a way to compel the attention of employers, and require that tangible actions are taken. However, as well as challenges in implementation there are sometimes unintentional negative consequences.

One of the key challenges in implementation will be monitoring their fulfilment. This will be difficult even for a well-intentioned employer, as disability status is not an absolute thing. Even in the case where there are systems of disability identification cards or certificates they would often not cover all, or even the majority, of persons with disabilities.

Another challenge is how to respond in the cases of non-compliance. Too often this can shift the dialogue around promoting employment of persons with disabilities to be solely one of compliance with a certain percentage. Many stakeholders support stricter sanctions or punishments for employers that do not reach the number of persons with disabilities required.

Non-compliance with quota mechanisms should be seen in context. If there are a range of systems supporting training and placement of persons with disabilities, then the employer would have less reason not to fulfil the quota. However, in situations where the support systems for persons with disabilities are weak, it could be seen as unfair to hold the employer responsible for what is a more collective failure.

Negative consequences of quota implementation sometimes include discrimination against persons with disabilities, for example through:

- “Fake” employment of persons with disabilities where they are counted against the quota but not genuinely employed;
- Reinforcement of negative stereotypes about the roles of persons with disabilities or their ability to work.

The United Kingdom is an example of a country that stopped using quota mechanisms after seeing them as discriminatory.

There are key things to consider in the case that quota systems are chosen:

- When quotas are implemented they should be supported by positive measures to increase the employability of persons with disabilities and support to employers in employing them. These might include skills development, job-placement, or technical guidance for employers on accessibility and reasonable accommodation.
- Decisions around planning and implementation of quota systems should be made through social dialogue with employers, trade unions and organizations representing persons with disabilities.
- Persuasion should be used alongside the pressure for compliance. This can include: guiding employers with evidence; showing business-related benefits of disability inclusion; and offering substantive programmes supporting employment.

Related questions

- See more about [gathering data on disability](#), the need to [open pathways into work](#), and [incentives that might be offered for employers](#).

40. What are the roles of governments on disability and work?

Governments have overall responsibility to ratify and implement general and disability-specific international labour standards as well as the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), which establishes the right to work of all persons with disabilities.

Many governments will have development plans to realize the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). There may be coordination bodies or lead ministries on disability, however work on disability and employment needs, at a minimum, to also engage ministries and agencies responsible for work and training.

Governments will have a wide range of responsibilities to promote the rights of persons with disabilities. Key areas related to work and employment include:

- Creating overall legislative, policy and coordination frameworks on disability;
- Engaging and consulting with representative organizations of disabled people;
- Ensuring the skills development and promoting job-placement persons with disabilities;
- Employing persons with disabilities in the public service.

Related questions

- See more about the [policies and legislation](#) that governments can adopt on disability inclusion.

41. How can employers work together to promote disability inclusion? What role can employer federations play?

Any individual employer has important roles to play to promote inclusion of persons with disabilities. Coming together they will be able to solve common problems, share knowledge and best practices, and develop common positions to address these issues more systematically.

Employer federations often play an important role in hosting National Business and Disability Networks. By doing this they connect the issue of disability inclusion with their members (and often other companies outside of their membership too).

It is essential that employer needs and situations are reflected in the design of policy and interventions to promote employment of persons with disabilities. Employers should be consulted actively and through employer federations, business and disability networks, or otherwise, employers should come together to represent and voice their input on these issues.

Related questions

- Employers can take a number of [measures on disability inclusion](#) and they may want to belong to the [Global](#) or to [National Business and Disability Networks](#).

Further resources

- See the ILO and Global Compact 2017 [guide for business on the rights of persons with disabilities](#).

42. What can trade unions do on disability and work?

Recent research by the ILO's Bureau for Workers' Activities (ACTRAV) has shown that trade unions all over the world are working on disability inclusion. Many unions have found that disability inclusion fits naturally into their agenda of social justice. Other trade unions may not be aware of workers with disabilities or the potential of persons with disabilities to work.

Exchange between trade unions is an important way to develop understanding and action. Working on disability offers unions a chance to further engage membership, ensure decent work, and strengthen or develop new partnerships.

Specific actions that trade unions can take on disability include:

- Mobilizing membership of workers with disabilities;
- Raising disability in advocacy and collective bargaining;
- Supporting development of policy or standards around disability and employment;
- Promoting employment of persons with disabilities;
- Improving working conditions for persons with disabilities;
- Supporting individual workers with disabilities.
- Representing the voice and needs of workers with disabilities, and persons with disabilities looking for work.

Further information

- See the ILO 2017 publication on [trade union action on decent work for persons with disabilities](#).

43. How should persons with disabilities be included in the response to climate change?

A global transition towards a low-carbon economy has both positive and negative impacts on the world of work, but the transition is expected to be a net generator of jobs. Against the backdrop of high global under- and unemployment of persons with disabilities, as well as the persistence of discrimination, a just transition - with its inherent focus on social inclusion and poverty eradication - offers the unique opportunity of maximizing employment opportunities for persons with disabilities, while minimizing the negative impacts of the transition.

In addition to more effective climate change action, which relies on whole-of-society approaches to be successful, this can also lead to increased economic empowerment and reduced vulnerability among persons with disabilities. For employers, it can lead to reaping the benefits of leveraging a previously underutilized talent pool.

Implementing a just transition to a low-carbon economy that aims to leave no one behind will require a context-specific and locally determined mix of legal standards, social protection, skills development and attitudinal transformation that create an enabling environment for green jobs to perpetuate and decent work opportunities for persons with disabilities to proliferate. If done right, a just transition towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies for all can contribute to the goals of achieving social justice, decent work, social inclusion and the eradication of poverty.

At this unique time that climate action is accelerating and the transition to green economies has started to take form, a just transition - that is inherently disability-inclusive - represents a unique opportunity to shape a future that works for all.

Further information

- [ILO Policy brief “Persons with disabilities in a just transition to a low-carbon economy”](#)

43. What can organizations working on disability do on work and employment?

There are many ways in which disability organizations can contribute to promoting decent work for persons with disabilities, and many are already taking these actions. As well as the support the organization provides, there is a key role in working together with other stakeholders. Specific roles include:

- Advocating and providing policy inputs on work and employment issues;
- Providing support or guidance to training institutions, job-placement programmes, employment services or employers.
- Implementing job-placement or other programmes to support persons with disabilities into work;
- Evidence-gathering from members around situation of persons with disabilities and work;
- Supporting individuals with disabilities to achieve decent work.

There is an important role on representing voices of persons with disabilities in the world of work. Here there is an important distinction between organizations working on disability, and those representing persons with disabilities. Organizations representing persons with disabilities are those run by and for persons with disabilities themselves. They are also known as Disabled People’s Organizations (DPOs). In the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and ILO Convention 159 it is required to consult these organizations representing persons with disabilities.

Organizations working on disability, but not led by persons with disabilities, should keep this difference in mind and promote the voice and ability of persons with disabilities to directly advocate on these issues.

Related questions

- See more about the [CRPD](#) and [ILO Convention 159](#).

44. How can the future of work be made inclusive of persons with disabilities?

The future of work provides significant opportunities and challenges for inclusion of persons with disabilities. Opportunities include new solutions to many of the traditional barriers to work that persons with disabilities have faced, inside and outside of the workplace. However, the challenges include changes in the world of work that affect everyone may affect particularly persons with disabilities, and that new environments or technologies may not be accessible or inclusive.

Many initiatives that are being taken to promote employment of persons with disabilities now will make important contributions to an inclusive future of work. Accessibility and universal design, for example, should be more systematically essential parts of workplaces and other environments going forward. As the world of work changes, and lifelong learning and career changes become more frequent, return-to-work programmes originally oriented

towards persons acquiring disabilities may become a relevant methodology to learn from or extend more widely.

The ILO, GBDN and partner organizations are working to make sure that global attention to the future of work is inclusive of persons with disabilities. The ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work highlights the importance of “ensuring equal opportunities and treatment in the world of work for persons with disabilities, as well as for other persons in vulnerable situations.”

Five objectives have been identified as needing particular attention to make a future of work inclusive of persons with disabilities:

1. New forms of employment and employment relation integrate disability inclusion.
2. Skills development and lifelong learning made inclusive of persons with disabilities.
3. Universal Design embedded in development of all new infrastructure, products and services.
4. Assistive technologies, existing and newly developed, to be made affordable and available.
5. Measures to include persons with disabilities in growing and developing areas of the economy.

Related questions

- See more about [accessibility](#) and [return-to-work programmes](#).

Further Information

- See the [ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work, 2019](#).
- ILO publication on [Making the Future of Work Inclusive of Persons with Disabilities](#).

International Cooperation and the ILO

Inclusion of persons with disabilities is now being considered more systematically within the United Nations system, and this is manifested in the recent establishment of a United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy.

This new intensity of strategic focus will develop a range of initiatives that the ILO already takes on disability inclusion, from labour standards to development cooperation and its own role as an employer.

45. What is the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy?

The [United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy \(UNDIS\)](#) was adopted in 2019. It is a strategy for disability inclusion in all pillars of United Nations work. Recently released, it will be the model and guiding force for how United Nations agencies, including the ILO, take work on disability inclusion first.

The UNDIS includes a system-wide policy, an accountability framework, and other implementation modalities. The main elements of the strategy include:

- Strategic planning and management. This includes inclusive programming that actively involves organizations representing persons with disabilities, as well as oversight through monitoring and evaluation.

- Inclusiveness. This includes participation of persons with disabilities, gathering disability-related data, and universal design, accessibility and reasonable accommodation.
- Organizational culture. This includes developing capacity of staff on disability inclusion, awareness raising, and adequate human and financial resources allocated for disability inclusion.

In addition to these main elements of strategy, the accountability framework also has indicators on programming that covers projects, evaluations, country programmes and joint-initiatives.

United Nations agencies are encouraged to report on their progress against the accountability framework annually.

Further information

- See more about the [UN Disability Inclusion Strategy](#) on their website.

46. How does the ILO work on inclusion of persons with disabilities?

ILO's Decent Work agenda and initiatives to create an equitable future of work are designed to benefit all. These initiatives, and international labour standards, increase decent work for all, including persons with disabilities. In addition to specific labour standards on disability (described in a previous question), there is a code of practice that describes disability management in the workplace.

There are a few ways in which disability is placed in the strategy of the ILO. Between 2014 and 2017 the ILO had a specific Disability Inclusion Strategy and Action Plan. ILO's overall strategic plan for 2018 to 2021 includes disability in the cross-cutting driver on "gender equality and discrimination". Disability inclusion is an explicit part in the manual that describes guidelines for ILO's development cooperation. The United Nations Disability and Inclusion Strategy (UNDIS) will inform an ILO-specific policy and strategy to taking disability inclusion further.

ILO works closely with its constituents to promote disability inclusion, globally and in a range of country offices. The ILO headquarter disability team develops technical guidance on promoting decent work of persons with disabilities. The Global Business and Disability Network is a platform that brings together multinationals and national business and disability networks. The ILO is undertaking a series of regional meetings with trade unions to highlight the opportunity to work on disability inclusion and develop partnerships to take this work further. ILO development cooperation features work to promote employment of persons with disabilities around the world.

ILO is taking steps to be more inclusive of persons with disabilities within the organization, which includes being a better an employer of persons with disabilities.

Related questions

- See more about [international labour standards and disability](#), and how the ILO [employs staff with disabilities](#).

Further information

- See the ILO website on [Disability and Work](#). The ILO disability team is part of the [Gender, Equality and Diversity and ILOAIDS Branch](#).
- See the ILO 2017 [Disability Inclusion Strategy and Action Plan](#) for 2014-17.
- See the ILO 2016 [Development Cooperation Manual](#) for notes on how disability is included in ILO projects.
- See the [ILO Strategic Plan 2018-21](#) for the ILO strategic vision.

47. How can individuals champion disability within ILO work?

In addition to the strategic and institutional measures needed for inclusion of persons with disabilities, individuals have an important role. Being a disability champion means putting disability on the agenda and sharing on disability issues from whichever that person is in. Disability champions are an essential part in mainstreaming disability inclusion further in ILO work, and ensure ILO policy and programming is responsive to the situation of persons with disabilities.

One of the most important contributions to deeper understanding and attention on inclusion of persons with disabilities will be the social change that comes from individual initiatives. Formally, efforts can be made to ensure that disability is considered at the relevant junctures and included through all pillars of work as a cross-cutting issues. Informally, discussions with colleagues and counterparts remind people of the importance of disability and will be a driving force in changing attitudes towards persons with disabilities and disability issues.

Part of making an inclusive workplace will be giving attention to the situation of colleagues with disabilities. Promoting their access to any adjustments needed, professional networks and support to career development will contribute to their work and experience of an inclusive workplace.

48. Does the ILO hire persons with disabilities?

Yes. An ILO staff survey on disability inclusion in 2014 found that 15.5% of respondents had a disability, understood as those that either declared themselves as having a disability or those experiencing limitations in activity or functioning. Over half of these acquired their disability after joining the ILO. Older and female staff were more likely to have a disability. The response rate to the survey was 24% of ILO staff, and while disability may be more frequent among respondents, it shows that there are significant numbers of persons with disabilities among ILO staff.

Inclusion of persons with disabilities is an ongoing process, as the staff survey has shown. Persons with and without disabilities reported witnessing or experiencing discrimination on the grounds of disability with in the ILO.

In 2005 the ILO made a specific policy on the employment of persons with disabilities has promoted equal access to employment opportunities for men and women with disabilities within the ILO. The employment policy is accompanied by a reasonable accommodation reserve which, if needed, provides for workplace adjustments that involve a cost.

In headquarters and in some field offices some adaptations have been made for accessibility and inclusion. ILO explicitly welcomes applications from persons with disabilities.

49. What opportunities are there for persons with disabilities in international development?

Like other sectors of employment, international cooperation is not fully inclusive of persons with disabilities. However, there are persons with disabilities already working within the sector and initiatives to promote recruitment of further persons with disabilities.

Some challenges exist for persons with disabilities joining the ILO, or the United Nations system. Recruitment processes are not yet fully accessible or inclusive, and the type of positions may require experience, professional network or profile that are harder for persons with disabilities to develop.

There are already some initiatives to develop inclusive work environments, as well as work experience or entry points for persons with disabilities within the international system. These efforts will be expanded and made more systematic within

Related questions

- See previous questions for how the [ILO employs persons with disabilities](#) and the [reform of the United Nations system on disability inclusion](#).

Further information

- See [ILO Jobs](#) for vacancies. ILO vacancies include paid internships, most of them in ILO headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland.
- United Nations Volunteers is [making efforts to engage persons with disabilities](#).
- Some persons with disabilities have made use of the [Open Society Foundation Scholarships](#).

About this guidance

This guidance is intended as pragmatic advice to complement the deeper research and policy positions on disability and work available elsewhere. It was designed by the disability team in the International Labour Organization (ILO) to summarise the advice it gives to constituents in countries all over the world.

The questions and answers are designed to show ILO staff, constituents and disability organizations how to approach the key issues around disability and work. This is designed to contribute to develop a common ground in promotion of decent work for persons with disabilities, and that it encourages and gives confidence to those looking to take initiatives in this area.

50. What are key sources for further information?

- The ILO's [website on disability and work](#).
- The [GBDN website](#), which also has subscription to a newsletter, and its [LinkedIn page](#).
- ILO's Gender and diversity [field specialists](#).
- ILO People course on "Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities" (for ILO staff only).
- An [e-learning course](#) from ILO International Training Centre.

51. Acknowledgements

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