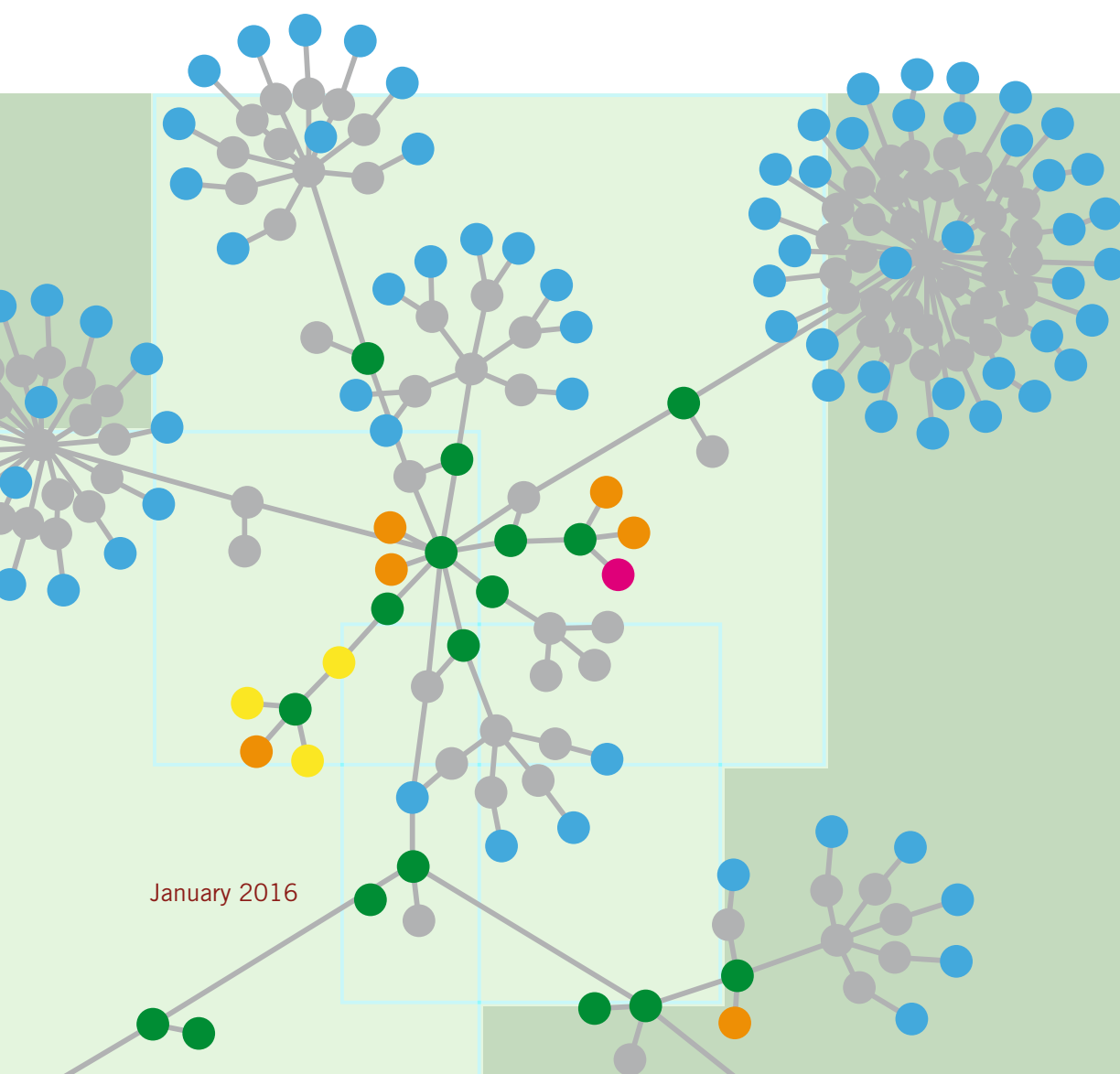




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Disability in the Workplace:

Employers' Organizations and Business Networks



January 2016

Conditions
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Disability in the Workplace: Employers' Organizations and Business Networks

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Acknowledgements

The ILO Global Business and Disability Network (GBDN) would like to thank the employers' organizations and business and disability networks that have contributed to this revised publication of *Disability in the Workplace: Employers' Organizations and Business Networks*. The first edition was published in 2011 to share practices on how different business organizations support and promote employment of people with disabilities. In this publication, 14 organizations introduce and share their initiatives and practices on disability inclusion. The organizations from Australia, Germany, Sri Lanka, United Kingdom, Viet Nam were also presented in the first edition, but in this edition with updated information on their latest initiatives. We are pleased to also present new examples from employers' organizations and business networks working on disability inclusion in the workplace from the following countries: Bangladesh, Brazil, Canada, Chile, China, Costa Rica, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, and Spain.

Our special thanks go to Joseph Piscicolo and Victoria Tellez who planned and conducted the interviews with the organizations, as well as to the editor Jorinde Van Heers.

During the past years, the ILO Business and Disability Network has increasingly worked with national employers' organizations and business networks on promoting disability inclusion at a national level. What we have learned from the experiences working on the ILO GBDN is that companies are not only willing, but very keen to share their experiences globally. It is because of this that the GBDN has been supporting the establishment of national business and disability networks in an increasing number of developing countries. Beyond the very useful exchange of practices, networks can also be instrumental in promoting joint initiatives among companies, for instance in providing training to disabled job seekers in professions and skills that are in demand. Business and disability networks can also support a legislative and policy environment that is more conducive to the employment of persons with disabilities.

We hope this revised publication, with diverse practices on ensuring disability inclusion in workplaces, will inspire business and employers around the world to strive for diverse workforces.

ILO Global Business and Disability Network Secretariat



Introduction

Since 2010, the International Labour Organization (ILO), the UN agency whose mandate is the promotion of decent work, facilitates the ILO Global Business and Disability Network (GBDN), provides technical expertise to its members and directly supports its activities through the Network Secretariat, based in the ILO headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland.

The GBDN started from companies wishing to share expertise, experience and challenges around disability inclusion with other businesses. Currently, the GBDN initiative brings positive changes to the workplace through its members. This global network of multinational enterprises, employers' organizations and business networks on disability was formed to assist employers to manage disability in the workplace and implement their strategic business plans on disability; to promote good practices in the wider business community through business-to-business knowledge sharing; and to develop products and services that respond to expressed demands from the members. The GBDN also aims to see changes from policy and practical levels within the members related to the training, hiring or retention of disabled persons, which makes it crucial for the GBDN to support initiatives on a country level where substantial change can happen. Through the International Disability Alliance (IDA), a network of global and regional disabled people's organizations (DPOs), the Network members also benefit from the invaluable insight of people with disabilities themselves.

Companies, employers' organizations and business networks that are part of the GBDN believe in the benefits of having a diverse workforce, as it makes them be better prepared to meet the needs of all consumers, including consumers with disabilities. Companies also share with us the positive impact employees with disabilities have generated among other colleagues, which has often led to an increased commitment by staff to the company. They also indicate that the levels of productivity, including absenteeism, of employees with disabilities are similar if not better than that of non-disabled employees. Many employers have also changed their practices to effectively include persons with disabilities, including revising their recruitment processes to ensure barrier-free work places for people with disabilities. It is also important for companies that their recruiters focus on the abilities of the candidates, and not the disability of a candidate.

The Network activities and events have shown that employers are not only willing and keen to share their experiences in this field, but also support and take part in the establishment of national business and disability networks. The Network is increasingly supporting the establishment of national networks in developing countries. We believe that these nationally established networks will be one of the key drivers for increased promotion of disability inclusion among employers.

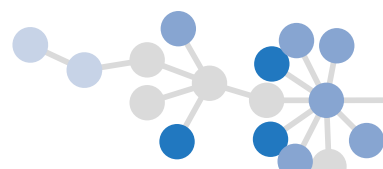
Types of organizations

This publication features 14 employers' organizations and national business and disability networks and their key activities on disability inclusion work, and the different ways that business organizations can engage and encourage their member companies to become more disability inclusive employers. Each of the organizations introduces its structure and partners; key activities; key achievements; lessons learned; and key messages for other organizations.

The presented organizations operate in different social, economic and cultural environments. The organizations can be divided into two types: 1) employers' organizations; and 2) disability-specific business networks:

1. The employers organizations represent one or more sectors of industry and generally advocate for employers' interest on various labour market issues. One of their areas of work might be to support their members on disability inclusion. For example, the organizations in Bangladesh, Chile, China, Sri Lanka and Viet Nam are all employers' organizations that have developed programmes on disability inclusion.
2. National business and disability networks are organizations that focus on promoting disability inclusion in the workplace. Their members consist of mainly multinational and national enterprises. The organizational and governance structure vary from organization to organization, but their common goal is to promote disability inclusion in the workplace, and act as a facilitator in bringing businesses together in order to raise awareness and build capacity on disability inclusion.

Each of the presented organizations is unique in its way of operating and in supporting its members to become more disability confident. It is inspiring that each country and network has found its preferred way of operating and engaging its members. There is, hence, no optimal way of establishing or managing a national business and disability network. We are proud to share the different good practices with the readers, and hope to see more and more countries and companies collaboratively develop networks in order to share knowledge, experiences, challenges and solutions at a national level.





Australian Network on Disability, Australia

www.and.org.au

Introduction

The Australian Network on Disability (AND) is a network of private and public Australian employers that is both led and funded by its members. AND's mission is to advance the inclusion of people with disabilities in all aspects of business – as employees, customers and stakeholders.

AND originated in 2000 as Employers Making a Difference, a group of employers who had successfully recruited people with disabilities and wanted to share their experiences with other businesses. Today, AND has over 130 member organizations from a range of industries and sectors including banking, retail, education, recruitment, professional services, manufacturing and all levels of government.

AND promotes the business case for including disability in the workplace and aims to support its members' efforts to professionally develop those employees with disabilities – whether congenital or acquired. The Network delivers consultancy services and training, and provides members with a range of tools, publications and resources designed to facilitate their journey towards disability confidence. AND also works with member organizations to develop and implement practical disability programmes.

Structure and partners

AND is a not-for-profit organization that is fully funded by its members. All Australian businesses are eligible for membership, with members packaged as Gold, Silver, Bronze or Small Organization Membership. The organizations which have been a part of AND since its beginning have exclusive status as Platinum members.

AND is governed by a Board of Management consisting of 12 senior executives: most of whom are representatives from member organizations. AND currently has nine employees who work in collaboration with member organizations to advance their inclusion strategies. Each member has a designated AND Relationship Manager who supports the development of an annual member plan that outlines the organization's goals as well as how they will be achieved.

Key activities

Providing consultancy services to member companies

AND provides consultancy services to its members that are tailored to suit the needs of individual organizations and are designed to build organizational capacity regarding the inclusion of people with disabilities as employees, customers, and/or stakeholders. Members can request consultancy on a range of topics such as developing inclusive employment strategies, reviewing recruitment and selection processes, conducting accessibility audits and creating accessibility action plans. Members can also request ad hoc consultancy services for specific and unique issues that require support.

Among the most popular consultancy services offered by AND is its supporting of the development and implementation of workplace adjustment policies and procedures, which facilitates organizational change amongst employers to better enable disability inclusion. Additionally, AND provides accessibility audits, which identify the access features and barriers that may exist in workplaces and retail outlets. AND first reviews the work premises to identify barriers to potential or existing employees and customers with disabilities, and then provides recommendations for improving the accessibility of the premises. These accessibility audits focus not just on building standards, but also on how safe, equitable, and dignified access can be achieved. AND has reviewed over 100 premises in the last five years.

Composing publications on disability

AND has a suite of publications available for members and non-members to purchase, in both hard copy and electronic (HTML) formats. One of the organization's flagship publications is *Managers' Guide: Disability in the Workplace* which was first published in 2008 and then updated in 2011.

The Managers' Guide provides advice on how to effectively support and manage people with disabilities in the workplace. Topics addressed in the publication include employee benefits and responsibilities, recruitment and retention, learning and development, and performance management. The guide has sold several thousands of copies since it was launched, and many members have embedded the HTML version within their intranets for access by all employees.

In 2013, AND launched a new publication called *Beyond Recruitment: A Guide to Developing and Retaining People with Disability in your Organization*. This publication was primarily sponsored by the National Australia Bank, and guides organizations to make their day-to-day activities – such as meetings, training, and employee development – inclusive of people with disabilities. The publication answers the common questions that people may have once a person with a disability has been recruited.

Providing training services

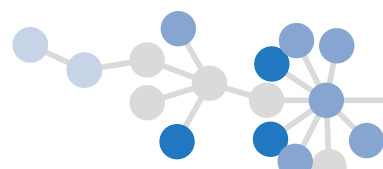
AND holds training sessions designed to assist organizations in becoming more disability confident. Training has been one of AND's key service offerings for over a decade, with the packages offered evolving over time to meet members' needs. Training packages currently offered include: Disability Confidence for Workforces or Human Resource Managers, Mental Health and Workforce Wellbeing, Inclusive Workplaces, and Access and Inclusion for All.

Internship and Mentoring Programmes

Research shows us that students and graduates with disabilities can experience significant barriers to find employment once they have completed their studies. To address this inequity, AND developed the Stepping into...™ Programme, which provides university students with disabilities an opportunity to showcase their skills and talents through a structured, paid internship within an AND member organization.

The duration of the internships are generally four weeks and take place during the university semester breaks. Flexibility is built into the programme to accommodate the specific requirements of students, and participating members are fully briefed on how to manage a successful internship. Interns are paid at the same rate as other graduates.

Stepping into...™ has been running for almost a decade and has assisted hundreds of university students with disabilities to gain confidence, build a powerful network of contacts, and develop valuable skills that have helped them gain employment after graduation. An independent review of the programme conducted in 2012 identified that, students with disabilities who participated in Stepping into...™ achieved the same employment outcomes as students without disabilities after graduation and did significantly better than students with disabilities who had not participated in the programme. This review demonstrated that Stepping into...™ actively closes the gap in employment outcomes for university graduates with disabilities.



In recent years, AND has also launched a mentoring programme for jobseekers with disabilities called *Positive Action towards Career Engagement*, or PACE. PACE matches people leaders and senior executives (mentors) with students and jobseekers with disabilities (mentees), offering professional and personal development opportunities for all participants. The programme provides opportunities to students and jobseekers with disabilities to develop their skills and confidence in a workplace setting, which can assist them in their future job searches. Mentors also gain significant benefits from the programme through developing their management and communication skills.

PACE recognizes that jobseekers with disabilities frequently find themselves with little or no work experience, and may not be fully aware of the skills and attributes they can offer an organization. This adds to the difficulties that any jobseekers may encounter when trying to enter their chosen profession. PACE aims to level the playing field for jobseekers with disabilities by fostering experiences that can be highlighted on a jobseeker's resume, while also boosting confidence and work-readiness. Participation in PACE has grown rapidly since its inception in 2012. PACE was sponsored by ANZ and IBM Australia in 2014, and is provided as a free service to member organizations and students/jobseekers with disabilities.

Organizing disability-related events

Since 2010, AND has hosted the Annual National Conference for employers focusing on disability, the only one of its kind held in Australia. The AND Conference is a valuable event for diversity practitioners, HR professionals and people managers, and brings together over 130 delegates representing member and non-member organizations, NGO's, government agencies and service providers. The AND Conference provides a platform for member organizations to showcase their achievements in the disability space, and also gives delegates an opportunity to learn about new initiatives from Australia and around the world.

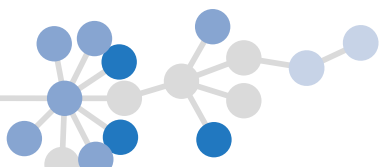
AND also holds quarterly Member Round-Table Meetings in Sydney, Melbourne and Canberra on specific topics of interest. These Meetings provide members with an opportunity to discuss and share experiences, and also hear from specialists on specific topics. AND has also recently commenced the facilitation of round-table meetings for member universities.

Furthermore, the AND Disability Champions' Network, where senior executives from member organizations share their successes and challenges in an informal and discreet setting, convenes on a regular basis.

Achievements

Some of AND's most notable achievements include:

- The establishment of the Stepping into...™ internship programme which has provided hundreds of disabled university students with valuable work experience, actively closing the gap in inequitable employment outcomes for those with disabilities. The programme has also served as a valuable talent pipeline for AND members;
- Developing the AND Disability Champion's Network which brings together high-level executive sponsors from across public and private organizations, solidifying disability as a core business issue;
- Building networks of employers across Australia, who regularly meet, discuss ideas and renew their commitment to including people with disabilities in all aspects of their business;
- Creating the PACE mentoring programme which assists jobseekers with disabilities to build confidence and gain insight regarding the skills and abilities they can offer employers, while also contributing to positive cultural change within member organizations; and
- Solidifying its reputation as the voice of Australian employers on issues around disability.



Lessons learned

Listening and responding to employers' needs is crucial. As an organization with a history spanning nearly 15 years, AND has experienced many changes in the way businesses approach issues around disability. As a member-led and resourced organization, it is critical that all of the products and services resonate with AND's members in addition to furthering the goal of creating a disability confident Australia.

It is imperative to manage resources proactively and efficiently. Understanding the organization's resources is also something AND has gained a much greater understanding of. In the past they have been guilty of agreeing to everything, which has resulted in resources (people and financial) being stretched. AND now plans their annual activities in a proactive manner, rather than a reactive one.

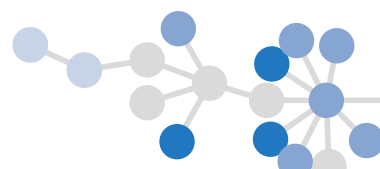
Key Messages

AND's top four tips to other organizations looking to enhance their inclusion of people with disabilities:

1. Engage your senior leaders in understanding the business case for access and inclusion.
2. Create an access and inclusion plan that engages people across your organization with the understanding that disability barriers come in physical form as well as in attitudes and perceptions.
3. Learn from other organizations and member networks that are successfully inclusive of those with disabilities.
4. Do not worry about getting everything right immediately – make a plan, begin and react to challenges as they present themselves.

References

Communication with Rachel McDougall, Marketing & Communications Manager, AND





Bangladesh Employers' Federation, Bangladesh

www.bef.org.bd

Introduction

In Bangladesh, people with disabilities are challenged by prevailing disability stigmas in attitudes and perceptions. While research demonstrates the vulnerability of these individuals in Bangladeshi society, the Bangladesh Employers' Federation (BEF) works to improve social and employment barriers faced by those with disabilities in order to mainstream their inclusion in the workforce.

Founded in 1998, BEF is a national organization representing all sectors of industry, trade, and services in Bangladesh. The need for an employers' organization in Bangladesh stemmed from employers' desire to receive consultation and representation regarding industrial relations. Accordingly, BEF was established to represent employers' views on labour matters and bring them to the attention of national and international governance structures. Today, BEF represents 90 per cent of established employers in its nation's private sector and engages in a broad array of activities in all aspects of industrial relations.

After attending a disability workshop in Sri Lanka organized by the ILO in 2011, BEF became inspired by the talents and abilities of individuals with disabilities. Upon returning from the workshop, BEF decided to support the inclusion of people with disabilities in the Bangladesh workforce and discussed the benefits and challenges with its members. BEF is now committed to supporting various initiatives focusing on disability and believes firmly that strong advocacy is needed for employers to understand the benefits of employing individuals with disabilities.

Structure and partners

BEF is the lone nationally recognised organization of employers registered by the Government of the Peoples' Republic of Bangladesh within the Directorate of Labour of the Ministry of Labour and Employment. The Federation represents many of the major enterprises in the private sector, national and multinational corporations and autonomous bodies.

BEF deals with a wide range of activities that are supervised by an elected Managing Committee and coordinated by a Secretariat that sustains an active professional staff. The Managing Committee consists of Bangladeshi entrepreneurial leaders, senior managers, and industry representatives. It comprises a president, vice-president and 18 members elected to terms of two years. The Committee is assisted by 14 Sub-Committees that are each headed by a Committee member and encompassed by various sector representatives. The Secretariat, headed by a Secretary-General, is manned with over 50 experienced employees. It has the responsibility of implementing the Federation's decisions under the supervision of the Managing Committee.

Key activities

Forming disability-related partnerships

After representatives from BEF attended the Employers' Organizations and Disability Inclusion: Study Tour, which was an event organized by the ILO in Colombo, Sri Lanka in July 2011, the Federation has sustained an active participation in national and international disability events. Accordingly, the Federation has formed connections in order to partner with various stakeholders in the disability arena to both learn more about best practices and influence national policy.

The BEF maintains close relations and has liaised with the related department of Bangladeshi government and other organizations dealing with the welfare of people with disabilities. Through participation in various working groups and national meetings focused on disability inclusion, BEF has contributed to the development of a national strategy for the inclusion of people with disabilities in vocational training programmes. In consequence, vocational initiatives focusing on people with disabilities have been instituted by the Bangladeshi government with assistance from the ILO through its Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Reform Project in Bangladesh.

The BEF has also become involved with the ILO Global Business and Disability Network attending the Network Meeting in April 2014 and the regional Disability Equality Training event held in Bangalore in the same month.

Raising awareness about disability

BEF raises awareness about the importance of disability inclusion and cultivates positive attitudes among employers regarding disability in the workplace. The Federation maintains that disability awareness training should involve people with disabilities as well as their colleagues, managers and HR representatives. BEF promotes awareness-raising in its member organizations in order to enhance the self-confidence of employees with disabilities, address issues of accessibility and accommodation, and develop the skills of disabled individuals.

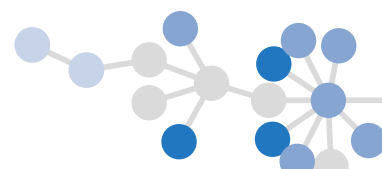
BEF feels strongly about the promotion of materials and resources on disability in order to make employers aware of disability issues. Accordingly, BEF has initiated the printing and publishing of multi-lingual brochures that promote the rights of people with disabilities and the associated accountability of employers to maintain compliance. BEF hopes to continue these endeavours in order to facilitate the contribution to the national economy and GDP growth by those with disabilities.

Organizing disability initiatives

BEF organizes various initiatives among its members around disability including workshops, job fairs, and other professional development programmes such as internships and job shadowing experiences.

In 2011, BEF organized a workshop jointly with the National Forum of Organizations Working with the Disabled (NFOWD) with the goal of building community capacity to achieve the human rights of all persons with disabilities. The event was titled *Training and Employment for Persons with Disabilities: Present Situation and Future Plan of Action* and took place in the Bangladesh capital, Dhaka, at the BEF Conference Hall. The event served to bring attention to the issue of disability in Bangladesh and to promote remedial actions moving forward.

Additionally, BEF organized a job fair for people with disabilities and a discussion meeting on *Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities into Mainstream Economy* in Bangladesh in 2013. Both events demonstrated BEF's sustained commitment to promoting disability inclusion and have made incremental strides in forwarding the disability agenda in Bangladesh.



Achievements

Some of BEF's most notable achievements include:

- Contributing to the development of a nationally recognized and implemented strategy to include people with disabilities in vocational and training programmes;
- Organizing workshops and job fairs that have developed the skills of potential employees with disabilities and have helped disabled jobseekers to find available jobs; and
- Enabling employers in Bangladesh to understand that people with disabilities are not less valuable in the work environment than those who lack disabilities.

Lessons learned

Employers are open to hiring people with disabilities. BEF realized that many business organizations wanted to hire people with disabilities but did not know where to start. As a result, BEF began providing technical support to build the capacity of employers to include people with disabilities. BEF now understands the importance of standing beside employers to help commence their involvement in disability inclusion.

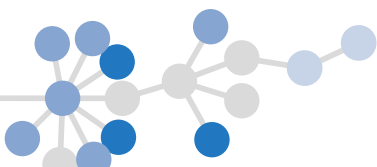
Employing people with disabilities makes economic sense. The skill shortages induced by demographic change is visible and the number of applications for dual training (i.e. combining institution-based vocational training and enterprise-based apprentice training) in Bangladesh has decreased by 40 per cent. Consequently, BEF holds that it makes economic sense to hire, retain and include people with disabilities in the labour market.

Key Message

The Federation's key message to employers and organizations seeking to promote disability inclusion in the workplace is to not be discouraged by its associated challenges. It has been rather difficult from a Bangladeshi perspective to create a convincing platform among employers for the inclusion of those with disabilities. Though there are difficulties, BEF urges the persistence in advancing the disability agenda, as accommodating those with disabilities is essential from both a human rights and economic perspective.

Reference

Communication with Farooq Ahmed, Secretary General, BEF





Business Network for Social Inclusion, Brazil

www.redeempresarialdeinclusao.com.br

Introduction

Rede Empresarial de Inclusão Social (Business Network for Social Inclusion) was founded in May, 2012. The Business Network, founded to create employment opportunities for persons with disabilities in Brazil, was created by Serasa Experian with the help and participation of 60 enterprises and the ILO during the 26th Forum on the Employability of People with Disabilities. Experiences related to hiring people with disabilities could be exchanged during this Forum held by Serasa Experian. At this time, the Forum was used to gather employers interested in starting a national network on disability in Brazil.

The idea of building such a network emerged after Joao Ribas (in memoriam), Diversity & Inclusion Coordinator at Serasa Experian, attended the ILO Global Business and Disability Network's Buenos Aires meeting in 2011. During this meeting the ILO Network had presented an example of an initiative on how to respond to specific challenges faced by employers when including people with disabilities in the workplace that could be replicated at a national level.

The ILO's Senior Specialist in Disability Inclusion at that time, Debra Perry, during her introduction of the Network, stressed the importance of securing commitment from senior management to extend further opportunities to people with disabilities and to build a strong, successful national disability network.

The Business Network for Social Inclusion's mission is to unite and mobilize enterprises in Brazil, in order to promote the inclusion of all persons with disabilities in the job market. This is accomplished through awareness raising, identification of best practices, articulation of contacts, partnerships and projects for the professional development of persons with disabilities, realizing the professional qualifications and facilitating the hiring and retention of persons with disabilities.

The Business Network strives to become the platform for knowledge sharing, referencing, leadership development, and application of employment opportunities for persons with disabilities in Brazil.

Structure and partners

The Business Network for Social Inclusion is an entrepreneurial movement. It is the first business network in Brazil for the inclusion of people with disabilities in the workplace. Because of the importance of hiring, retaining, and development of persons with disabilities, 12 private sector enterprises volunteered to spearhead the Network's initiatives. Both national and multinational enterprises became part of the first Steering committee of the Network, which meets twice a month.

Currently, The Business Network for Social Inclusion has gained 70 members, which makes a total of over 80 companies, mostly situated in Rio de Janeiro and in São Paulo.

The Network members meet monthly to discuss challenges and share knowledge involved with the inclusion and integration of persons with disabilities into the workplace.

Third party organizations and government authorities also participate as guests in the meetings, this way all important segments can be represented, effectively targeting the Network's mission.

Key activities

Hold open forums with enterprises and government officials in order to promote diversity and inclusion in Brazil

The Network will continue to gather and mobilize companies in Brazil to promote the inclusion of people with disabilities by sharing good practices, forming partnerships, and developing products and services to facilitate the recruitment and retention of disabled persons. In particular, the Network will focus on addressing the following six issues related to disability: health and vocational rehabilitation, accessibility and assistive technology, formal education, training and professional qualifications, recruitment and selection and building positive disability awareness among teams, management and society in general.

In December 2012, the Network organized its first open forum, inviting multiple companies to participate. Both national and multinational companies from diverse sectors presented their practices of recruiting persons with disabilities. In addition, the Municipal Secretary of Persons with Disabilities (SMPED), as well as the Assistant Secretary were invited to participate. The topics discussed in 2012 included: recruitment and selection of persons with disabilities, standard audit compliance with the quota law, and training and professional qualification for persons with disabilities.

Organize workshops with SMPED in order to overcome barriers of hiring and training people with disabilities

The Steering Committee of the Network has also conducted meetings with SMPED. In discussions in 2013, the Network launched a workshop with the Secretary and the Network's member enterprises, with the goal of bringing up all potential barriers involved with training and hiring persons with disabilities. Additionally, these workshops provided the opportunity to openly discuss solutions in order to further include persons with disabilities into the job market.

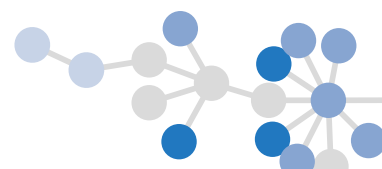
Hold regular round-table meetings for enterprises to discuss, learn, and share

The Network holds regular round-table meetings for its members. In 2015 also organized a joint-meeting with the ILO Global Business and Disability Network. Since its establishment in 2012, the Network has conducted nearly 20 of these meetings. The following topics have been discussed: main challenges when establishing strategic partnerships, main benefits of establishing these partnerships, the vision of the representatives towards diversity in their respective companies, the role of diversity and inclusion, the realities of diversity and inclusion today, and the necessary roles involved with guaranteeing inclusion in the corporate world.

Publish a guide on diversity and inclusion in the workplace in partnership with the National Association of Health at Work (ANAMT)

In 2014, The Business Network for Social Inclusion also partnered with ANAMT in order to publish a manual for inclusion of persons with disabilities in the workplace: *Inclusion of Persons with Disability: The Medical Guide of Health and Safety in the Workplace*.

The publication's main topics include the sharing of knowledge and good practices between enterprises, the articulation of contacts, partners, and projects, and the development of products and services that highlight the professional qualification that favours the hiring, retention, and development of professionals.



Achievements

The Business Network for Social Inclusion achievements include:

- Establishing a network of employers in Brazil, in order to further the diversity and inclusion of persons with disability agenda;
- Producing publications such as the *Inclusion of Persons with Disability Manual*, in partnership with other organizations such as ANAMT, to support companies;
- Inviting third party organizations and government officials into the conversation about disability in the workplace;
- Holding regular round-table discussions and providing companies with the opportunity to share best practices, challenges, and knowledge about diversity and inclusion.

Lessons learned

Seek support from top management. Top management approval and support of an inclusion programme of any kind, regardless if it includes training or not, may prove essential to securing funds and to raise visibility and awareness of the issue internally and externally.

Raise disability awareness internally. Supervisors and co-workers' attitudes can greatly affect the integration and performance of the disabled employees. Fostering an inclusive environment is an important aspect of success.

See costs as investments. Because in the end, inclusion pays off for the individual, the workplace environment, and the company. Focusing on costs may be discouraging, but when the initiative is regarded as an investment, advantages stand out.

Be clear about goals from the start. Defining a goal and strategy proves useful to keep track of what works and what doesn't, and adapt, change or refine when needed.

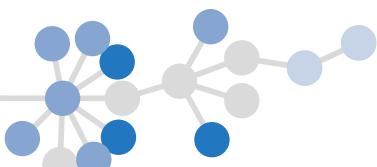
Be open to share knowledge and foster partnerships. There is no need to reinvent the wheel and do it on your own. Knowledge sharing and dialogue with other companies, organizations or the public sector will very likely answer your questions and provide you with information that you may struggle to find on your own.

Key Message

The Business Network for Social Inclusion encourages other companies to replicate their programme and approach to disability inclusion at the workplace.

Reference

Communication with Andrea Regina, Latin America Corporate Sustainability & Diversity Lead, Serasa Experian





Canadian Business SenseAbility, Canada

www.senseability.ca

Introduction

Canadian Business SenseAbility is a national not-for-profit business network that offers both expertise and resources to help businesses across Canada turn disability into a business opportunity. Its mission is to help Canadian businesses recognize and act on the strategic advantage of the large, untapped talent pool of persons with disabilities. To achieve its mission, SenseAbility helps companies become “disability confident” by removing barriers that prevent them from hiring and doing business with people who have disabilities. As the one-stop source of information and advice on disability inclusion from a Canadian business perspective, SenseAbility reduces the risk and guesswork.

SenseAbility was officially launched in September 2014, the result of recommendations by the Panel on Labour Market Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities – a panel appointed by the Government of Canada in 2012 to consult with private sector employers to understand the barriers faced by employers in hiring people with disabilities. The Panel produced an in-depth report titled *Rethinking Disability in the Private Sector*¹ with its findings. It identified the need for a business-focused organization to help break down barriers and assist companies in becoming more accessible and inclusive based on the business case for hiring people with disabilities.

SenseAbility is an organization created by business for business, which helps companies access the real, tangible benefits of employing talented people with disabilities: lower turnover, absenteeism, training and safety costs, greater innovation, and access to untapped markets.

Structure and partners

SenseAbility is a not-for-profit organization currently operating with seed funding provided by the federal government and private corporations; it aims to be fully funded by its members by 2018. SenseAbility is open to all Canadian business. Its current membership focus, however, is on private sector organizations. Membership fees are based on the number of Canadian employees within an organization, ranging from small businesses (less than 200 employees) to large businesses (over 20,000 employees).

SenseAbility is governed by its Board of Directors, comprised of 7 business leaders from prominent Canadian businesses, all of whom are member organizations. It also has an Advisory Board of experts from the disability community and currently employs three full-time and two part-time employees.

SenseAbility’s patron is The Honourable David C. Onley, Ontario’s 28th Lieutenant Governor from 2007 to 2015 and its first lieutenant governor with a physical disability. Onley has worked tirelessly to increase awareness of the challenges people with disabilities face. The Ontario Government recently appointed him Special Advisor on Accessibility so that he may continue his work to breaking down barriers, promote the economic benefits of inclusion and employment of people with disabilities, and champion accessibility across the province.

SenseAbility has been in organizational start-up mode for the last 18 months, developing its membership offer, bilingual websites and resources. It is now actively seeking and accepting corporate memberships.

1. Labour Market Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities. *Rethinking Disability in the Private Sector*, 2013, www.esdc.gc.ca/eng/disability/consultations/rethinking_disabilities.pdf

Key activities

Canadian Business SenseAbility is Canada's leading business network focused on helping employers access the real, tangible benefits of employing talented people with disabilities: lower turnover, absenteeism, training and safety costs; greater innovation; and access to untapped markets. The network offers businesses convenience and expertise to help turn disability into business benefits. SenseAbility members enjoy access to business-focused information, practical advice, external experts, peer networks and services created to streamline their journey to disability confidence. Members are supported in the following ways:

Advisory Services

SenseAbility's consulting services are designed to meet the unique needs of our member organizations and to assess how to best assist them. This includes reviewing a company's experience with people with disabilities, highlighting areas that may need changing, and helping them develop an Accessibility Action Plan to move forward. SenseAbility continues to support organizations as they progress.

The DisAbility Inclusion Index (DII)

The DisAbility Inclusion Index (DII) is SenseAbility's online benchmarking tool for measuring its member companies against key elements of disability inclusion and accessibility. The tool establishes a benchmark score so that progress can be measured year-over-year. It focuses on four key areas of inclusion: culture, recruitment, accommodation and stakeholder alignment (customers, suppliers, vendors and partners).

Ask an Expert

SenseAbility's Ask an Expert member-only portal feature helps members find answers or guidance on where to find one. A member hotline is also provided for challenges that require a more in-depth discussion.

Programmes and Events

Membership provides opportunities to network with other organizations, attend conferences, participate in workshops and listen to presentations from experts in the disability community. Employer-led events provide members with an opportunity to share their learning and network with other leading organizations at round-table discussions.

Access to SenseAbility Recruiting Partners

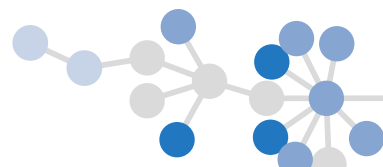
SenseAbility has partnered with several organizations to assist their members' search for qualified candidates with disabilities.

Member-only Portal

Our member-only web portal provides member organizations with a broad selection of useful information and tools to assist them in becoming disability confident. Recognizing the wide ranging needs of our members, the site has been designed to provide both basic information about disabilities, to more in-depth information and best practices on planning, recruitment, communication, and accommodations for organizations who are well on their way to becoming accessible and inclusive. In the near future, the portal will also include access to business-relevant e-learning modules, which members can use to educate and create awareness among their employees. Members also have access to a library of useful publications and videos on disability and employment, with full search capability.

Sharing Challenges and Successes

To assist members in learning about other organizations, SenseAbility provides success stories and testimonials from other companies detailing the positive impact that hiring people with disabilities has had on their business. The member portal also provides the SenseAbility Member Forum – a forum for members to ask questions and to share their experiences with other members.



Achievements

Some of SenseAbility's achievements include:

- Championing the business case for hiring people with disabilities in Canada and starting the conversation within private sector businesses about the barriers to accessibility and inclusion;
- Building Canadian Business SenseAbility from a vision to reality in 18 months – a one-stop source of information and advice on disability inclusion from a Canadian business perspective;
- Developing and building a comprehensive library of Canadian, business-relevant information and tools to help Canadian businesses remove the guesswork and risk out of becoming disability confident;
- Creating the Diversity Inclusion Index (DII), a tool to assist businesses in establishing a benchmark and measure their progress in becoming disability confident; and
- Successfully engaging over 100 senior business executives, politicians and media at our September 2014 launch event in Toronto.

Lessons learned

A business-focused approach is critical to breaking down barriers. SenseAbility is an organization developed by businesses, for businesses. Its focus is to educate employers on the corporate benefits of hiring and doing business with people with disabilities.

The key to success is buy-in from leadership. Tone from the top plays a crucial role in ensuring disability accessibility and inclusion in organizations. Business leaders have huge influence on change initiatives in their organizations.

Changing attitudes in the workplace is one facet of a multi-faceted approach to change. For people with disabilities to be successful in finding and keeping jobs, meaningful support and change must also come from educators, service agencies, governments, trade unions, stakeholder groups, families and from people with disabilities themselves.

Key Messages

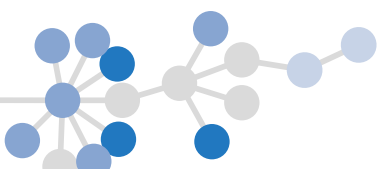
It's not about compliance. Hiring people with disabilities isn't about "doing the right thing". It's "doing the right thing for business". Complying with legislation is a minor part of the equation. The true value for organizations doesn't come from ticking the right boxes, but from accessing the benefits of an inclusive environment.

Don't lower the bar; open the door wider. People with disabilities represent a large, educated untapped labour pool. It's not about charity and social responsibility. There is a solid business case for hiring people with disabilities. The benefits include reduced employee turnover, absenteeism and safety incidents, and improvements in productivity. In addition, companies hiring people with disabilities often discover they have access to new markets and products.

Address attitudes, bias and misconceptions about people with disabilities. By far, the greatest barriers to people with disabilities are the attitudes, bias and misconceptions of others. Focusing on changing attitudes goes a long way towards creating an accessible and inclusive organization.

Reference

Communication with Joan Turner, CEO, Canadian Business SenseAbility





Society for Industrial Development (SOFOFA), Chile

web.sofofa.cl

Introduction

With a proven management in Chile and Latin America, the Society for Industrial Development (SOFOFA) is a leader in establishing and promoting cooperative partnerships with the public sector and civil society in the field of disability organization. SOFOFA's two main goals are to help and support people with disabilities in their job search, and help and support employers hiring people with disabilities.

The Disability Commission of SOFOFA was founded in 1992 and seeks to identify and promote opportunities for socio-professional integration in Chile for persons with disabilities. Its mission is to recognize that disability is everyone's business. Challenges faced by persons with disabilities and the consequences of societal barriers affect not only the person with disability, but also society as a whole. Therefore, solutions must include social sectors. Additionally, SOFOFA's mission is to promote cooperation in public, private and civil society, because inclusion requires actors to be able to supplement efforts. Working together means optimizing resources and energy and greater efficiency or: promoting participation at community level. Breaking barriers require active protagonists and not spectators. It is therefore necessary to open channels for participation by various agencies, institutions and companies in each community, without exception. SOFOFA focuses its actions locally. Specific tasks should be made permanent where the daily lives of people with disabilities are developed, for example: in the district or community, in the immediate surroundings. Finally, sharing knowledge in order to overcome barriers ahead is also part of SOFOFA's mission. The goal is to learn to define and size the problems and possible solutions, in order to better define priorities.

Structure and partners

SOFOFA has a president, an executive secretary and a board; additionally there are three committees that report to the board. Committees are categorized as such: labour, general advice on hiring people with disabilities, and education.

In total, 1,000 businesses are represented at SOFOFA. Corporations seek out SOFOFA for its reputation and expertise.

Key activities

Network of Businesses and Public Institutions (Sello Inclusivo)

Sello inclusive is one of SOFOFA's small networks for businesses and public institutions. Its newest project is to construct a network of disability-friendly businesses by encouraging companies to implement disability inclusion policies through different initiatives, such as prizes for disability confident companies.

In addition, SOFOFA has worked in **collaboration** with the Asociación Chilena de Seguridad (Association on Health and Safety in the workplace ACHS) for disability inclusion and occupational safety and health related issues.

Regular Conferences

SOFOFA regularly organizes meetings in Santiago, and other cities in Chile in order to promote the rights of persons with disabilities. Focus of the conferences so far have been to discuss progress on the different disability inclusion related initiatives among different companies, upcoming projects, as well as research round disability in workplaces.

Achievements

SOFOPA aims to set example for other organizations, and currently has people with disabilities in its Board. SOFOFA aims at involving as many communities in Santiago as possible. During the past years, SOFOFA has also collaborated with the ILO on development of disability inclusion related publications for businesses.

In November 2015, the Chilean Business and Disability Network was launched with the support of the ILO and SOFOFA. The Network is a direct result of the “Business Strategy for labour inclusion of people with disabilities” adopted in 2013 by SOFOFA with the support of the ILO. The new network is composed of more than 70 enterprises, and it seeks to provide a forum for exchanging ideas, generating discussions and reflections on the different dimensions related to the employment of people with disabilities. The Network will also support other businesses interested in starting the process of hiring people with disabilities.

Lessons learned

Understand societal barriers. SOFOFA has learned to understand social barriers, and how they can support businesses and convince them about the business case of hiring people with disabilities.

Know the laws on accessibility. In order to reach out to the Government, organizations need to understand and know the legislation on disability inclusion, including accessibility in workplaces.

Having **patience** in achieving targets and raising awareness in an organization is key for success and to changing mind-sets.

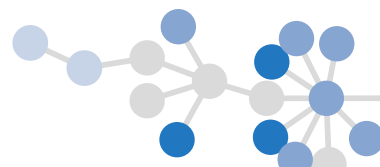
Key Message

Create partnerships. Collaborate with relevant stakeholders and partners.

Be transparent and exemplify honesty. We need a disability confidence model or a model in which society can place their trust in. SOFOFA needs to be transparent and share information openly in order for more and more companies to become involved in knowledge sharing and partnerships around this topic.

References

Conversations with Jorge Carrasco Täger, Executive Secretary and Andrés Yurén, Employers' Specialist, ILO





China Enterprise Confederation, China

www.cec-ceda.org.cn

Introduction

China Enterprise Confederation (CEC) is one of the earliest national confederations in China established for economic and social development. Founded in 1979, CEC comprises an alliance of enterprises, entrepreneurs and business associations. Its mission is to represent the needs of enterprises and facilitate liaisons between enterprises and the Government.

Dedicated to securing a voice for employers in the legislative process, CEC delivers services to members in the forms of training, business consulting, networking and organizing activities to increase enterprise competitiveness. Its many services include management modernization, solution research, innovation capacity building, business operational improvements and the enhancement of Corporate Social Responsibility policies. CEC also creates knowledge-sharing forums to promote cooperation among Chinese and foreign businesses.

CEC actively participates in the activities of the ILO and other United Nations agencies on behalf of its member businesses. CEC also engages in the national tripartite conference of China for coordinating labour relations.

Structure and partners

CEC consists of 290 group members, 4,500 direct members and 545,000 indirect business members. These members include a majority of the top 500 enterprises in China across various industrial sectors and in almost all of the provinces, cities and autonomous regions throughout the country.

The organization is led by a chairman and is divided into operating departments and professional committees. The fifteen operating departments and eleven sub-committees under CEC work closely together and collaborate with other enterprise confederations and industrial associations to best serve the interests of its membership base.

Externally, CEC collaborates with various partners such as disability-specific organizations, the ILO, and other organizations to plan and implement activities around disability inclusion.

Key activities

Survey research on the employment of people with disabilities in China

In recent years the employment situation of people with disabilities in China has changed dramatically. Continuous reforms, new policy developments and the constant adjustment of industrial structures have created a demand for detailed and accessible information regarding the Chinese business context of employing people with disabilities.

In order to obtain this source of in-depth knowledge, CEC and the ILO country office for China and Mongolia jointly conducted research on disability inclusion in Chinese enterprises through questionnaire surveys. The hope of the research was that CEC would garner a better understanding of the opportunities and challenges facing people with disabilities and, subsequently, be enabled to promote recommendations and enforce measures to support the betterment of their conditions.

The report of the survey results revealed that most enterprises believed disability inclusion to be a social responsibility and that these companies are willing to employ people with disabilities. People with disabilities are already recruited in several ways. In recent

years, enterprises have become more knowledgeable about the relevant laws and regulations affecting the disabled, but there is a gap in their ability to apply these laws practically in their workplaces. For instance, there is not enough training for people with disabilities.

The report has shown a consistency in some positive cases of enterprises' employment of people with disabilities. Equal treatment to people with disabilities is shown in several ways, one being the provision of reasonable accommodations to promote the reaching of full workplace potential. Employers also propagate equal treatment through fostering a tolerant and fair work culture and environment. In many cases, training is organized to improve the labour skills of those with disabilities.

The report also conveys some of the CEC recommendations to the Government regarding necessary changes for disability inclusion. CEC suggests that a stronger implementation of relevant policies and a greater devoted effort to publicizing laws and regulations for those with disabilities is necessary. CEC believes that if the government plays a more active role in adopting measures to promote disability inclusion, the enterprises will be able to follow suit and actively perform their social responsibility of providing more opportunities for the disabled.

Meetings in collaboration with the ILO Global Business and Disability Network in 2013 and 2015

Two meetings for representatives from the ILO and multinational and Chinese enterprises to share knowledge, experiences and challenges around disability inclusion in workplaces have been conducted in Shanghai in 2013 and in 2015.

Organized by the ILO Global Business and Disability Network (GBDN) in collaboration with CEC as well as members companies of the GBDN, the meetings have featured presentations from several companies regarding good practices that have proven people with disabilities can be successfully included into the workforce. In the 2015 meeting, the participating companies agreed to form a national business and disability network, with specific focus on networking, and sharing of experiences and company initiatives.

International conference on the benefits of disability inclusion

In October 2013, an international conference on "Unlocking the Treasure: Corporate Social Responsibility and Employment of Persons with Disabilities" was held in Beijing. The conference was jointly organized by CEC, the China Disabled Persons' Federation (CDPF), the Sino-German Corporate Social Responsibility Project, the CSR Centre of the Embassy of Sweden and the ILO.

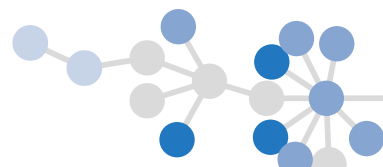
The international conference was organized to facilitate knowledge-sharing among businesses and other organizations focused on the effective workplace inclusion of people with disabilities. The meeting provided a networking platform for stakeholders to exchange information on good disability inclusion practices and gain access to various information and tools on managing disability. The conference also served to raise awareness among employers and the general public regarding the relationship between corporate social responsibility and disability inclusion.

More than 250 participants from various backgrounds attended this conference, including the top management of national and international corporations, chambers of commerce, business associations, academia, media and NGOs.

Compilation of cases regarding successful disability inclusion practices among Chinese employers

CEC in collaboration with the ILO, CDPF and other organizations compiled *Cases of Integrative Employment of Persons with Disabilities in Chinese Enterprises* to make public the successful cases of enterprises effectively integrating people with disabilities into the workplace. The hope of these cases is that they will promote more enterprises to take up CSR and diversity policies around disability.

CEC collected information on employment practices of enterprises that have hired people with disabilities in different locations and industries. From this information and several interviews, CEC organized and shared 16 case studies of employment practices related to disability of China's local enterprises and the Chinese branches of multinational companies.



Analyses of the information showed that companies found success in employing people with disabilities when they focused on improving accessibility in their enterprise environments as well as management and communication methods regarding disability. Additionally, the creation of proper recruitment channels and the optimization of evaluation/assessment systems for employees with disabilities were deemed important. CEC hopes the cases will provide a positive reference for more enterprises to join in the integrative employment of people with disabilities.

Training workshop on disability inclusion for employers in Chongqing

CEC and the ILO jointly conducted a workshop in the Chinese city of Chongqing to provide guidance to employers regarding the inclusion of people with disabilities. Held in June 2014, the training workshop hosted over 90 participants. Since the workshop was held, several efforts of employers in Chongqing and disability organizations have been made to provide equal opportunities for persons with disabilities.

Achievements

Some of CEC's most notable achievements include:

- The establishment of a better understanding of China's current situation with regards to the employment of people with disabilities through extensive research measures;
- Participating in and organizing events with multiple partners such as the ILO and disability organizations in order to develop its ties with employers' organizations in different countries and form connections with international communities;
- Collecting and compiling information and examples of good disability inclusion practices among Chinese enterprises in an effort to stimulate positive attitudes among other companies with regard to hiring people with disabilities; and
- Formed channels of communication with employers who successfully recruit people with disabilities to help improve capacity building and share experiences with other Chinese enterprises.

Lessons learned

Taking concrete actions to encourage disability inclusion is necessary. More concrete initiatives are necessary to raise awareness about disability inclusion within employers' organizations and business enterprises. Training, networking, and various tools must be introduced in order to encourage employers to take the first step in hiring people with disabilities.

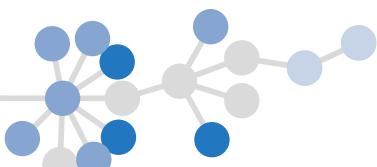
There is a need to establish a credible platform through partnerships. Having an impact on the disability agenda requires partnering with the right organizations. In partnering with the ILO and disability-specific organizations, CEC has created a credible platform for encouraging Chinese enterprises to adopt disability-inclusive practices.

Key Message

The key message of CEC to other organizations interested in successfully promoting disability inclusion in business is to have a strong understanding of your disability context, partner with the right organizations to ensure a strong impact, and prepare activities and deploy tools to guide employers through the process of disability integration.

References

Communication with Ma Chao, Deputy Division Chief (International Cooperation Division, Employers Department), CEC





Asociación Empresarial para el Desarrollo, Red de Empresas Inclusivas, Costa Rica

www.aedcr.com/redempresasinclusiva

Introduction

The Asociación Empresarial para el Desarrollo (Business Association for Development AED) is a not-for-profit organization that promotes corporate social responsibility and sustainability through a membership of more than 120 private and public companies. These companies share the view on benefits of incorporating good practices in their business strategies for their different stakeholders, as well as reducing negative impacts and maximizing positive impacts on society they can establish more sustainable economic, social and environmental relations.

AED works with Costa Rica's productive sector on practical and technical guidance, capacity building and training, best practice exchange and partnership creation in key issues for development. The organization adopts private-public partnerships joining efforts from the business sector, government and NGOs in order to achieve inclusion and social cohesion.

Established in 1997, AED is the local chapter for international corporate social responsibility organizations, and the technical coordinator for the UN Global Compact. AED's mission is to contribute to build a prosperous, inclusive and worthy society in harmony with the environment, through a conscious, articulated and engaged business sector.

Structure and partners

AED is composed of 126 companies from a wide range of industries and sectors including banking, agriculture, construction, food and beverages, manufacturing, professional services, retail, tourism, amongst others. All of Costa Rica's businesses are eligible for membership.

Leaders of member companies, including presidents, managers and executives, compose AED's Board of Directors and Board Committees. Members are elected every two years in the General Assembly. The statutes of the organization regulate duties and responsibilities of the Board, which meets every two months, alternating with meetings of the Executive Committee.

The service model for associates is designed in three dimensions: economic, social and environmental. Each area develops tools and methodologies, specialized services, advocacy spaces, projects and initiatives to support companies and articulate joint efforts.

The social dimension works with a range of themes that seek to guide the companies; main topics are human rights, labour practices, community and social inclusion. Each specific issue is linked to global and national challenges. Currently, AED works with 18 employees as technical staff.

Key activities

Business development services are aimed at providing information, tools and methodologies that allow member companies to incorporate responsible best practices within their business models.

Working Groups

Working groups are capacity building and networking opportunities for member companies in specific topics. The groups are led by an expert organization or company, which provides methodologies, tools and content for each session. They generally consist of ten monthly sessions where participating companies commit to specific tasks in order to advance in particular topics. The working groups deal with topics such as inclusion for people with disabilities as part of the workforce, poverty reduction for employees, gender equality, eco-efficiency, sustainable strategic alignment, labour practices, UN Global Compact and many more.

Red de Empresas Inclusivas (Inclusive Business Network)

In Costa Rica, achieving a full, productive and decent employment has been problematic in recent years, but there are population groups that are more affected than others. Access to employment is particularly difficult for people with disabilities due to several reasons: prejudice, social stigmas, attitude barriers, low educational level and limited physical access to working facilities.

Recent data from population census and household surveys have shown that a very high percentage of people with disabilities within the working age are not part of the labour force. Two out of three people with disability do not work and are not actively seeking for a job or have no plans to look for a job.

In partnership with public and private institutions, the Inclusive Business Network is a coalition of the business sector and its objective is to multiply employment opportunities for people with disabilities. These are companies committed to equal opportunities and quality employment that recognize the contributions of this population to society. The partners are the Ministry of Labour and Social Security, the ILO and the United Nations Development Programme (UNPD).

The Inclusive Business Network meets once month to discuss specific topics. The objective is to share knowledge, experiences, goals and actions in order to multiply the positive impact. The Network organizes awareness-raising workshops around a wide range of topics that interest businesses, such as non-discriminatory hiring processes, the UN Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), how to create accessible action plans, national legislation on disability, community engagement.

The Network has around 60 company members, and these companies hire more than 400 people in total.

Consultancy Services

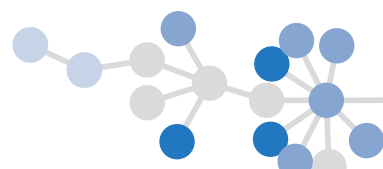
As part of the service the Inclusive Business Network can provide consultancy services to its members according to their individual needs.

Toolbox

The Toolbox for Inclusive Business consists of eleven modules which include guides, manuals, videos and worksheets created by AED. It is directed to all companies that wish to be inclusive and recognize that diversity and differences in people enrich each area of its business. The toolbox will be posted on the networks website for public use.

Costa Rica Incluye Recognition

Costa Rica Incluye recognizes companies for their good practices in social and labour inclusion of persons with disabilities, and it also recognizes their affirmative actions in the generation of operations that promote inclusion in areas such as: accessibility in digital media, community and accessibility in physical space, customer service, hiring, inclusive products.



“30 minutes free of discrimination” campaign

The campaign “30 minutes free of discrimination” was launched to encourage the hiring of people with disabilities in companies and institutions. The campaign encourages organizations to contribute to a 30 minute free of discrimination and prejudice interview, which represents on average the time a job interview lasts.

Holding disability-related events

The Inclusive Business Network has hosted conferences for employees focusing on disability. The main motivator was Mr. Carlos Rubén Fernández, an international leader in labour inclusion. He is the current President of Golu Business Solutions Group and was the former president of the ONCE Foundation for the inclusion of people with disabilities in Spain. The Inclusive Business Network has also been invited to showcase their achievements in national conferences giving the opportunity to discuss and share experiences.

Achievements

Some of the Inclusive Business Network most notable achievements include:

- There are currently more than 60 affiliated companies in Costa Rica;
- More than 400 people with disabilities have been hired over the past four years;
- More than 20 companies have been recognized in *Costa Rica Incluye* for their good practices and positive actions toward persons with disabilities;
- Building networks of employers across Costa Rica which has contributed to create a positive cultural change; and
- Monthly training sessions which bring together companies from all sectors to exchange good practices and discuss ideas to include people with disabilities in all aspects of their business.

Lessons learned

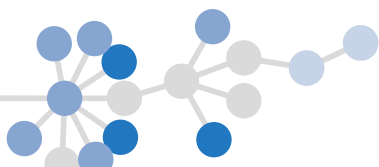
The first step in the integration of persons with disabilities is to eliminate attitudinal barriers. Companies are the people who work in them, so we cannot speak of inclusive businesses without a trained workforce, which has a clear view of the position of the company and is sensitized on the importance of promoting the full participation and equal opportunities for people with disabilities. It is necessary that the company and its staff are prepared to incorporate within its payroll persons with disabilities. You need to constantly develop training activities to involve workers, including voluntary activities to strengthen the principals of human rights of the company and help to implement within the organization all the required changes. This will transform the company, regardless of size in a more competitive and productive organization, while generating economic and social value to society.

Key Messages

- Senior leaders have to understand and be involved in the programme.
- Create an action plan.
- The action plan to be an inclusive business has to be transformed into a company's policy.
- Engage every person of the company.
- Work in a public-private partnership.
- Exchange good practices that have been successful with other companies.

References

Communication with Gabriela Echandi, AEDCR





UnternehmensForum, Germany

www.unternehmensforum.org

Introduction

UnternehmensForum is an association of private sector employers established in 2002 to promote the joint interests of businesses and people with disabilities in the labour market. It started as an initiative of 15 medium and large companies mainly based in the Rhine-Main region of Germany. In total, they employ over 650,000 people and cover a wide range of industries such as: IT, banking, chemicals, education, energy, manufacturing, pharmaceuticals and transportation.

The goal of UnternehmensForum is to develop effective strategies to enable all workers to fully participate in working life, including persons with disabilities. The organization is founded on the notion that disabled people, like anybody else, can be committed employees and make valuable contributions at work. Due to Germany's aging population, hiring people with disabilities will become more relevant due to the expected skill shortages in the future. Therefore, the hiring, retention and development of disabled persons in the workplace is vital in order for a business to remain competitive.

Initially, UnternehmensForum began as a pilot project with financial support from the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. However, in 2006, it was transformed into its current legal form of a non-profit organization dedicated to business and disability. Over the years, the network has become an active platform both on state and federal levels. Its areas of work include: developing good practices, promoting practical solutions to integrate people with disabilities in the labour market, and supporting the professional development of disabled graduates.

Structure and partners

UnternehmensForum is an independent, non-profit organization. The 20 member employers appoint a representative to the Forum, most often their focal point for disability related topics. The Forum operates with a lean organizational structure, and it is represented by a Volunteer Board consisting of three persons volunteering for member companies.

There are no official or formal partnerships with other organizations. However, UnternehmensForum engages in close and continuous collaboration with the Confederation of German Employers' Associations (BDA) and the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. Additionally, the Forum exchanges information regularly with disability ombudspersons at both state and federal levels.

UnternehmensForum has also worked with the Cologne Institute for Economic Research which has established an information system on vocational rehabilitation of disabled persons, commissioned by the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. The information system, REHADAT, contains detailed information on various aspects of vocational rehabilitation. It is designed for use by disabled people as well as professionals involved in rehabilitation.

Key activities

Sharing information and good practices to raise awareness

Founded as a platform for like-minded employers to exchange information and experiences, the main activity of UnternehmensForum is to collect and share information and examples of best business practices. The members do so by exchanging experiences informally, as well as through events such as: workshops, training sessions for disability focal points of member enterprises, and annual general meetings.

German industry's Inclusion Prize

German industry's Inclusion Prize was offered by UnternehmensForum for the first time in 2012. This prize recognizes exemplary commitment to the training and employment of people with disabilities. In 2014 it was awarded jointly by the Confederation of German Employers' Associations, the Federal Employment Agency and Charta der Vielfalt (Diversity Charter). The prize is sponsored by the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, where it is administered by Andrea Nahles. Over 80 companies had applied for the prize, five of whom received the coveted award.

The winners of the Inclusion Prize demonstrate that inclusion can be successful regardless of the size of the company: "When employers give their employees – with or without a disability – the opportunity to contribute their particular skills, then everyone profits". This was the joint conclusion of the initiators.

Many of the inclusive practices and solutions that the members have developed are also available to the general public via the UnternehmensForum website, in the form of best practice case studies (in German).

Inclusion training (InkA) for more severely disabled young people between 2013 and 2019

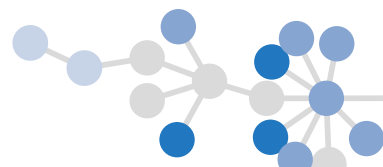
Forge new paths and build bridges in order to give people with disabilities access to dual training. It is with this aim in mind that UnternehmensForum launched the "Inclusion Project". A total of 40 severely disabled trainees will be appointed various traineeships between 2013 and 2015, allowing them to complete their training together with non-disabled trainees. To this end, the existing training structures are to be adapted to the needs of severely disabled young people.

In a joint effort involving schools, companies, authorities and other partners, severely disabled trainees are to be given the opportunity, on completion of their training, to be taken on permanently by the training company or to switch to another company. After all, those who have demonstrated their abilities and resilience in the world of work have emphatically proved themselves to be qualified employees in the economy.

Inclusive doctoral graduation: New opportunities for graduates with a disability (PROMI)

University graduates with disabilities working towards doctorate degrees frequently encounter additional challenges. Providing support for these doctoral candidates in their studies and job searches is the aim of "PROMI – Inclusive doctoral graduation". With this project, a total of 45 disabled graduates will be given the opportunity to work towards a doctorate at one of the 15 German partner universities. With this in mind, 15 additional half-time posts for scientific staff will be made available each year between 2013 and 2015. While studying for their doctorates, the university graduates will be employed on a three-year contract, subject to social security contributions – thereby not only giving them financial security, but also a legal entitlement to the necessary occupational rehabilitation services.

As a cooperating partner and to supplement the employers' services for severely disabled graduates operated by ZAV (International Placement Services) at the Federal Employment Agency, UnternehmensForum brings the employer's perspective. PROMI is managed, scientifically monitored and evaluated by the University of Cologne, while UnternehmensForum is a member of the project's advisory board. The project is sponsored by the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs.



Supporting implementation of disability inclusion agreements

To improve the opportunities of disabled jobseekers in the labour market, the German Social Security Code requires employers to make *Integrationsvereinbarungen* (inclusion agreements) with disabled people's representatives and the works council.

These agreements cover issues such as inclusion of persons with disabilities in the enterprise, ways to organize work, working conditions and environment, and sometimes target quotas for disabled employees or for training of disabled youth. The UnternehmensForum members use these inclusion agreements as a planning and management tool for developing inclusive HR policies and for managing disability inclusion and rehabilitation. In 2010, the members updated their inclusion agreements and published practical guidelines. These guidelines, which contain advice, tips and examples, assist other enterprises in developing and implementing their agreements, are available on the web site of UnternehmensForum.

In 2010, UnternehmensForum was invited to speak at the launch of the action plan of the Rhineland-Palatinate state government to implement the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), as well as at the Congress on the implementation of the UNCRPD organized by the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. During these events the participants discussed the following: the role of employers' organizations in raising awareness about disability among employers, incentives for employers to hire people with disabilities, and enterprise-based training of disabled people. In 2012 Boehringer Ingelheim was the first German company to present its own action plan for implementing the UNCRPD. With the action plans of Deutsche Bahn, SAP, RWE and Fraport, all corporate action plans published to date in Germany originated from members of UnternehmensForum.

UnternehmensForum also shares information with policymakers, business associations, and other enterprises at various events organized by other bodies. For example, since 2003, the Forum put up its own exhibition stand at the Arbeitgebertag (German Employers' Conference) as well as during panel discussions organized by the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and disabled people's organizations (DPOs).

Achievements

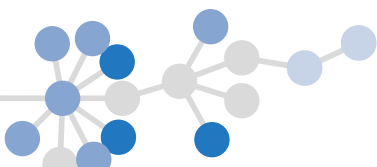
UnternehmensForum's achievements to date include:

- Placing the topic of employment of persons with disabilities on the agenda of top level management of participating enterprises;
- Participating in regional and federal level events to communicate results and experiences of UnternehmensForum to various audiences, including workshops on the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Germany;
- Awarding the German Industry's Inclusion Prize in order to recognize outstanding exemplary companies for their commitment to the successful integration of people with disabilities in business life;
- Initiating projects, such as InkA and PROMI;
- Sharing best practices and developing instruments such as mentoring programmes and integration agreements for use by member enterprises; and
- Training of disability focal points in member enterprises.

Lessons learned

Disability inclusion expertise among employers is necessary. The practical disability inclusion experience gained by the members of UnternehmensForum has provided them unique expertise that is in high demand in the private sector and among policymakers, confirming the relevance and necessity of such initiatives.

Employing disabled people makes economic sense. The skills shortages induced by demographic changes are already visible, and the number of applications for dual training (i.e. combining institution-based vocational training and enterprise-based apprenticeship training) has decreased by 40 per cent among UnternehmensForum members. Therefore, it makes economic sense to hire, retain and include disabled employees in the labour market today, and it will be without alternative in the future.



Learning from others can save time and money. The approach of learning from the experiences and best practices of other companies has proven to be successful, as exchanging knowledge and practical solutions often saves time and money.

Enterprise-level disability sensitization can lead to sustainable results. UnternehmensForum realized that continuous enterprise-wide disability sensitization is important for the sustainability of results. Sensitization activities have led to positive attitudes towards disabled people in the member companies, and have proven to be more effective than just observing legal requirements on disability inclusion.

Reference

Communication with Reinhard Wagner, UnternehmensForum





Qaderoon Business Disability Network, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

www.qaderoon.com

Introduction

The Qaderoon Business Disability Network is the first employers' network in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and the first Arab network associated with the ILO Global Business and Disability Network. Launched in April 2014, its vision is to catalyse employers to include persons with disabilities as equal and effective members of the workforce.' Its mission states that this vision will be achieved by 'providing guidance, advice, and best practices to employers to facilitate the recruitment and retention of employees with disabilities, through advocating favourable government policy and disability confident work environments.'

Structure and partners

Under the patronage of the Saudi Ministry of Labour, a group of business individuals with a shared interest in enabling persons with disabilities formed a steering committee in 2012 to develop the vision, mission statement and framework for a national business disability network. Six leading Saudi Arabian businesses adopted the idea and agreed to partner together to establish the Qaderoon Business Disability Network in February 2014 as a limited liability company (due to the absence of non-profit organizations' regulations in Saudi Arabia).

The network operates as a non-government, non-profit organization governed by a board of directors from the six founding members with an elected chairperson. The board approves the network's strategy and annual operating plan and budget. A full-time team led by an executive manager and comprised currently of five staff members coordinate the network's operations. Annual membership fees from the member companies fund the network operations.

Qaderoon works closely with the Ministry of Labour and the semi-governmental Human Resources Development Fund, which is responsible for job creation and placement activities that promote the government's nationalization strategy. Qaderoon is also exploring areas of collaboration with disability social organizations and NGOs. Since its inception, the network has doubled its membership, over the short span of eight months, to twelve members representing diverse industries including manufacturing, trading, retail, logistics and health care.

Key activities

Development of a national Disability Confidence Model

The Network, at the request of the Ministry of Labour, actively participated in the development of the first national model in Saudi Arabia for measuring employers' "Disability Confidence" in employing persons with disabilities. The model is comprised of an index that accounts for eight different elements: commitment, know-how, recruitment, HR systems, products & services, communication, premises, and Information Technology. The model and its index are intended to be used as a tool to improve employers' disability confidence by first assessing it and then helping to formulate action plans to further enhance it. The project, which kicked off in May 2014, entailed piloting the model with Qaderoon's members before its intended launch to employers nationwide in 2015.

Training based on disability inclusion best practices

One of Qaderoon's benefits to its members, was to coordinate two training events:

1. Building Confidence in Employing People with Disabilities provided by the University of Massachusetts, USA. The workshop focused on explaining the principles of employment and interacting with persons with disabilities in the work environment.
2. Mentor and Buddy System. The system aims to help companies effectively integrate employees with disabilities into the workplaces.

Achievements

In a short time span, Qaderoon was able to achieve the following with regards to disability inclusion:

- Completed the development and testing of a national Disability Confidence Model with its members;
- Participated in the national Human Resources Forum in November 2014 with a paper on Disability & Employment, and a workshop on the role of employers in the employment of persons with disabilities. Also participated in a local job fair held in the city of Jeddah in May 2014;
- Issued three newsletters highlighting and promoting the network's achievements; and
- Joined the ILO Global Business and Disability Network and participated in its annual Network meeting in October 2014.

Lessons learned

Support from senior leadership is crucial for disability inclusion to work. Qaderoon realised that senior management sponsorship for disability inclusion is needed before the organization's employees can truly commit to a culture inclusive of people with disabilities.

Every aspect of the business should be re-evaluated through the lens of people with disabilities. In order to truly become disability confident, an organization must consider the specific barriers that may affect people with disabilities across varying business units, work groups, and local environments.

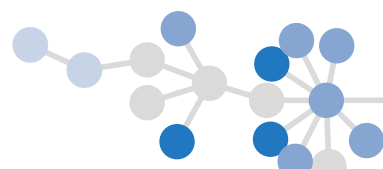
Impacting the disability agenda requires private and public sector collaboration. Qaderoon realised that communication between employers, governmental departments, and public institutions can make or break whether or not disability inclusion is taken seriously.

Key Message

In a relatively short time, Qaderoon has formally launched, doubled its membership, organized inclusion events, and created a Disability Confidence Model for employers. With buy-in from governmental institutions and employers as well as their ongoing support, a national disability network can be formed and make an impact on the disability agenda relatively quickly.

References

Communication with Khalid M. Sindi, General Manager, Qaderoon Business Disability Network





South African Employers for Disability (SAE4D), South Africa

www.sae4d.co.za

Introduction

South African Employers for Disability (SAE4D) is an organization for South African employers committed to the integration of people with disabilities in the workplace.

SAE4D was formed to share experiences, develop best practices, confront and tackle prejudices that act as barriers to the integration of people with disabilities in the workplace, and generate a common understanding of the challenges and solutions required to fully develop the potential of people with disabilities to contribute meaningfully to society and business. SAE4D is committed to empowering companies to integrate people with disabilities into the labour force.

As an employers' network, SAE4D offers a platform in which the voices of people with disabilities are heard and where action is taken to empower men and women with disabilities as equal citizens in the workplace. SAE4D is committed to enriching the South African workforce by empowering companies to recruit, retain, and professionally develop people with disabilities. SAE4D's philosophy is based on the recognition that people with disabilities enrich the fabric of our society, our communities, our businesses and our families. As employers, members of SAE4D believe that men and women with disabilities have inherent worth and ability that has gone unnoticed for too long in the job market.

Structure and partners

SAE4D is an employers' network, and a non-profit organization. However, any level of government may join as an employer and equal member. SAE4D is a formalised networking platform, and gives the opportunity for employers to share experiences, and receive support and guidance from their peers in the business sector.

SAE4D members are signatories to its constitution with a commitment to work toward inclusion of men and women with disabilities in the workplaces. The network is governed by an Executive Committee that is also actively involved in the recruitment of new member companies. The executive committee members are assigned to approach their networks and promote SAE4D. Companies have to apply for membership to the Secretariat of the group. All members are equal partners in the group's pledge and commitment to empowering employers to integrate people with disabilities into the workplace as equal citizens. Members are expected to fund the work and projects of the SAE4D. Current members include 14 multinational enterprises.

Key activities

Breakfast Workshops to encourage open dialogue

Free workshops provide employers in South Africa the opportunity to come together and share knowledge and practices around disability inclusion. During the Breakfast Workshops, a host organization is able to showcase what they have been doing to promote disability inclusion in their company. External experts, from for example universities or other institutions, are also invited to present different topics at the workshops. This is a way for other members to get ideas through best practices, to ask questions, and to learn more about the benefits of disability inclusion in the workplace.

Establishing a database for recruitment purposes of persons with disabilities

The SAE4D's focus currently is to develop synergies between various stakeholders in the employment and recruitment of people with disabilities. This will include research into the levels of available skills and collaboration between the private sector, government and disability sector NGO's on skills development, education and training of people with disabilities. Through an interactive and consultative process, the SAE4D's objective is to either directly or indirectly (through an accredited service provider) provide members access to a database of skilled and/or professional people with disabilities available for employment.

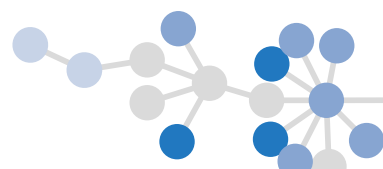
Advocate for disability inclusion on behalf of employers

The South African government utilises the knowledge and expertise of the SAE4D when consulting the views of the employers in relation to disability inclusion.

Achievements

Some of SAE4D's most notable achievements include:

- Developing best practices for the inclusion of people with disabilities in the workplace;
- Liaising with government to ensure a coordinated response to including people with disabilities in the workplace;
- Establishing effective forums to discuss the requirements of employers and organizations representing people with disabilities when dealing with workplace issues;
- Advising employers on setting up their own grant and scholarship programmes to support people with disabilities during their high school, university, or college studies;
- Developing a strong social media presence in order to promote the integration of persons with disabilities into the workforce as well as creating a visibility online through radio interviews and informational videos about disability inclusion;
- Remaining a model for other companies in terms of compliance with the law and integrity; and
- Partnering with universities, engineers, and architects in South Africa to discuss what legislation on accessibility and employment should look like in practice; especially in terms of accessibility.



Lessons learned

Be up-to-date on current legislation, information and concerns on disability inclusion. Every month collect the frequently asked questions from your members, and answer them on the website, providing corporations with wanted information.

For recruitment of new members, preparation and training is a key investment. Make sure members are well trained in order to deliver successful presentations in order to recruit potential new members.

Make sure that your status as an employer organization is clear. The aim of a business and disability network is to support employers and speak on behalf of the employers. It is also crucial to give a voice to the persons with disabilities themselves by collaborating with Disabled People's Organizations (DPOs) and NGOs working in the field of disability inclusion for knowledge and information.

Focus on the “right things”. It is important to focus on your members' needs and to promote disability rights.

Efforts must be driven from the top of a company. Make sure the support for the promotion of persons with disability is driven from the top of the corporation for successful and enforced policy actions.

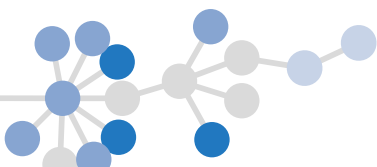
Key Messages

SAE4D's tips to other organizations looking to enhance their inclusion of people with disabilities:

1. Your network should be aware of the available and current documents, laws, and tax incentives in your own country. Understand them in order to successfully promote the business case for hiring persons with disabilities, both internally within your company and externally.
2. Learn and understand international conventions that were ratified by your country and invite others to uphold the set standards.
3. Have clear goals and understand what you're aiming to achieve as an organization.
4. Collaborate with and learn from other companies and Business Networks, both nationally and internationally.
5. When recruiting new company members, look for companies who are passionate about what the network stands for in terms of disability inclusion. Also, when reaching out to a new organization, make sure support comes from the top by reaching out to top management.
6. Your governance structure must be transparent as a non-profit organization. Have an accountable and transparent policy. For example, uphold your own standards and ethical values.
7. Use your members' competencies, skills, and time to support your network pro-bono.
8. Utilize your own employees with disabilities as models for campaigns and efforts.

References

Communication with Jerry Gule, Chairperson, SAE4D (representing Total South Africa)





Foro Inserta Responsable, Spain

www.fundaciononce.es
www.foroinserta.es
www.portalento.es

Introduction

The Foro Inserta Responsable (FIR), sponsored by the ONCE Foundation, provides a platform for participation and social innovation among their member companies. The Network was created to promote training and employment for people with disabilities, and to share good practices about corporate social responsibility and disability.

The main objective of FIR is to further the development of social innovation initiatives that promote multi-stakeholders policies and practices within the framework of corporate social responsibility. FIR is credited as a source of innovation and networking around the inclusion of people with disabilities in companies. FIR encourages enterprises to implement policies on disability inclusion to achieve competitive advantages and to improve corporate profitability.

Structure and partners

FIR is a multi-stakeholder public-private partnership sponsored by the ONCE Foundation and the European Social Fund. FIR has more than 80 members, including around 70 multinational enterprises. The members also include disabled people's organizations, business schools, CSR think tanks, and business organizations. An advisory committee meets biannually and works on developing new projects that could be of interest to FIR members and other companies. FIR activities take place mainly in Madrid and Barcelona, but since 2014 several of the most important cities in Spain have held FIR activities.

Key activities

- **Breakfast meetings for executives.** The objective is to share policies and actions related to inclusion of people with disabilities, and CSR and disability. The following meetings were especially attractive to the FIR members: "Perspectives for CSR in times of crisis"; "Managing diversity as a competitive edge in today's environment"; "Including the disability variable in sustainability reports"; "How to implement an integral awareness plan for the employment of people with disability in organizations"; "The values of sport in business management".
- **Workshops.** Here, the main goal is providing companies the tools needed to implement such policies.
- **Panels and round-table discussions.** Themes that are directly related to the principles of FIR, and aim to foster knowledge in this field, form the topic of discussion. In addition, the aim is to raise awareness through motivational initiatives, and to further **corporate volunteering**.
- **FIR's website.** It serves as a virtual hub which aims at facilitating and stimulating the sharing of experiences. The site provides easy access to documentation of interest, legislation or news on the implementation of CSR-D policies in organizations, sharing of tools, manuals and good practices, and participation in working groups.
- **The FIR newsletter.** Furthermore, as a vehicle for the dissemination of good practices, the quarterly newsletter seeks to raise awareness and advance toward the social integration of people with a disability by reporting on the initiatives of the ONCE Foundation and its partners.

Achievements

- **More than 11,000 persons with disabilities** have **found a job** in FIR member companies.
- Companies have boosted the talent and diversity of their staff by including people with disabilities. FIR companies take an active role in supporting and spreading special plans and campaigns such as “No Te Rindas Nunca” (“Never give up”). This plan was developed by ONCE Foundation in collaboration with FIR companies to help unemployed young people with disabilities find a job. The campaign also has several awareness raising videos that are available publicly on their website.
- FIR has helped activate and further the development of **specific training for people with disabilities that matches the real need of employers’** through projects like “Aulas Abiertas”.
- Companies’ closer consideration of the needs of people with a disability has improved. Hence, organizations have included this variable both in the start of their production process and in their business strategy; thus meeting the needs of customers with disabilities among others. This has led to a broader range of accessible products for people with disabilities.
- FIR achieved the inclusion of social clauses in private tenders as a way of extending its policy to the supply chain and to select the most responsible supplier.
- More than 3,000 managers have participated in FIR activities so far; 1,400 HR and CSR Managers receive the quarterly newsletter.

Lessons learned

To achieve a commitment on promoting social and labour inclusion of people with disabilities, we have learned that the key issue is **finding the best candidate for a position while highlighting diversity as a source of competitive advantage**. FIR also offers – through the organization FSC Inserta – its expertise in human resource consulting for people with disabilities, including support and assistance, as well as specific consultancy services in tailoring strategic plans to meet the disability inclusion policy needs.

FIR has, through its members, learned the importance and need of:

- Senior management commitment
- HR Team and business partner’s engagement as project leaders
- Buy-in from all staff
- Good and effective communication.

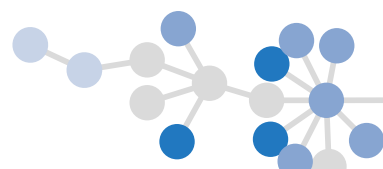
Key Messages

Tips to other organizations looking to enhance the inclusion of people with disabilities:

- Try to provide tailored assistance to companies according to each client’s strategic needs, objectives and organizational structure. The FIR aim is to support companies in finding the best candidate with disabilities for each position while highlighting diversity as a source of competitive advantage. We encourage companies to develop an inclusive culture, stimulating them to employ people with disabilities.
- Aim at defining a unique and individualized plan based on each candidate expectations, professional profile and soft skills.

References

Communication with Virginia Carcedo, General Director and Secretary FSC Inserta, and Edurne Alvarez de Mon Gonzalez, Foro Inserta Responsable





Employers' Federation of Ceylon, Sri Lanka

www.employers.lk

Introduction

The Employers' Federation of Ceylon (EFC) is an employers' organization established in 1929 with the vision of promoting social harmony through productive employment. As the largest employers' organization in Sri Lanka, the EFC comprises a membership of close to 600 companies and represents an employee base of over 1 million people.

In 2000, the EFC set up the Employers' Network on Disability with the support of the International Labour Organization in order to enhance the employment opportunities for people with disabilities. The Network is open to all employers, and today has over 35 members, among them multinationals as well as large and small Sri Lankan companies.

The Network on Disability evolved from a loosely organized group of business leaders, government representatives and NGOs that were interested in promoting the employment of people with disabilities in the 1990s. When the EFC started leading the effort, the new Network established its current shape as a collaborative effort of employers, public administration and NGOs.

Services of the Network to members include: organizing job fairs, workshops and training for people with disabilities, raising awareness about disability through coordinating events and developing publicity materials, and promoting business development programmes and disability sensitization and etiquette training for employers, etc.

Structure and partners

In 2000, before the launch of the Network, the EFC brought together 14 of its member companies to serve as the founders of the Network on Disability. A Steering Committee comprised of 12 of the EFC's member companies was formed, and this committee is now referred to as the Governing Council. The Council represents companies from the hotel, plantation, manufacturing and banking sectors. With a membership of 39 companies as of December 2014, the Network's membership has nearly tripled since its inception.

The Employers' Network on Disability was formalised by a constitution in 2005. The constitution recognises the original 14 companies as the founding members of the Network, and stipulates its goals and rules of membership. The Governing Council oversees the activities of the Network and is elected by membership. The Council is composed of the EFC Director-General and eight member representatives. The Network may appoint a maximum of three additional member representatives who have experience in disability issues. A team of EFC staff members are responsible for developing and implementing the projects and initiatives of the Network with its members. Network members and other collaborators occasionally provide human resource assistance for the Network's activities.

The EFC and its Network on Disability has developed formal partnerships regarding its work and activities around disability inclusion. The Network collaborates closely with government agencies, NGOs and the ILO, regarding joint activities, campaigns, and knowledge-sharing initiatives. The Network has partnered with the ILO in northern regions of Sri Lanka such as Jaffna, particularly as part of the Local Empowerment through Economic Development (LEED) project. In addition, the EFC has partnered with Handicap International, Leonard Cheshire Disability, and Colombo University regarding disability initiatives.

The Network has also found it important to collaborate with Disabled People's Organizations (DPOs) since its beginning. The Governing Council includes a representative from a major umbrella organization of people with disabilities in Sri Lanka, while other DPOs are also invited to participate. People with disabilities are also included in Network activities in roles as advisors, job-search instructors and seminar presenters.

Key activities

Raising awareness and promoting inclusion through publicity tools

One of the first initiatives of the EFC Network on Disability was the formation of a database of jobseekers with disabilities. This was created after contracting a consultancy firm to research the status of people with disabilities in the workplace, determine labour market needs and compare those to skills held by jobseekers with disabilities. After its launch in 2002, the database was known to have been responsible for the hiring of at least 179 people with disabilities. Although the database is still not maintained by the Network, its initial success has created opportunities for further usage of publicity tools to promote inclusion.

In 2003 and 2004, the Network in collaboration with its member Nestlé Lanka Limited sponsored a series of advertisements designed to promote opportunities for people with disabilities in the labour market. Designed by a top advertising company, the advertisements were featured several times in the Sri Lankan press.

In 2006, the *Code on Managing Disability Issues in the Workplace* was launched to serve as a guideline for the Network members. The Code provides practical guidance on the management of disability issues at the workplace with an emphasis on recruitment, selection, training and development, occupational health and safety, etc. It has also served to build awareness on the positive aspects of extending equal opportunities in employment to disabled persons. The launch of the Code received much media attention and was attended by more than 200 employers, government officials and persons with disabilities.

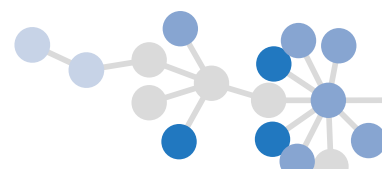
In 2008, Network member Standard Chartered Bank collaborated with the EFC to create the *Barriers Free Access Handbook* which covers legal factors regarding accessibility in public buildings and conducting proper interactions with people who have disabilities in the workplace. The handbook is endorsed by the Sri Lanka Institute of Architects. The handbook is soon to be translated into Sinhala and Tamil. In the same year, the Network continued with its awareness initiatives by launching six video success stories of disabled persons gainfully employed in the private sector. The project was supported by Handicap International.

In September of 2013, the Network launched a monthly online magazine referred to as the *Disability Network E-Zine* which provides members with the latest news and updates on disability issues and profiles of disabled jobseekers. The newsletter has been successful in leading to new hires and promoting interest among employers regarding certain candidates.

Organizing job placement fairs

The first job fair organized by the EFC was a consequence of the realization by the Network that a proactive approach was necessary to link employers to jobseekers with disabilities. The Network prepared for the fair by collaborating with Motivation Charitable Trust, an NGO with expertise in working with the disabled. Motivation helped interview jobseekers and provide training in effective job-seeking techniques. The Ministry of Social Services provided human resource assistance, and the ILO provided guidance and technical assistance, including job-searching skills materials. The Network drew from its members to assist with training in job-searching skills and to provide mock interviews so that participants could practice their skills in realistic settings. By the time the job fair took place in 2003, the jobseekers were primed, and some recruiters already had good impressions of the candidates they met during the practice interviews.

The job fair was a success with more than half of those participants with disabilities finding jobs, and also generating subsequent interests by employers. For example, on the day following the job fair, one employer requested 50 women to work on a sewing project on a temporary basis. Others wanted to make donations so that people with disabilities could gain access to further skills training. Encouraged by the success of the first fair, the collaborators have continued organizing job fairs. Five of them have taken place in the capital Colombo, one in Kandy, and another in Vavuniya. In total, over 400 persons with disabilities have been placed in formal employment by the Network.



Improving vocational education through training programmes

As employers become more willing to employ people with disabilities in Sri Lanka, it becomes more critical to ensure these individuals have the necessary skills to perform on the job. As a result, the EFC began taking an active role in training the disabled by working with the Ministry of Labour Relations and Manpower to facilitate the educational development of people with disabilities.

Since July of 2009, the EFC has offered information and communication technology training courses for visually impaired persons at a specially equipped facility on the EFC premises. The course is conducted by Ms. Manique Gunaratne, who is herself visually impaired, and had begun her career as a receptionist with the EFC, rising up to her role as the Senior ICT Trainer at the Visually Impaired Training Centre. Ms. Gunaratne has continuously been recognised for her contribution to promoting the rights of those with disabilities, and serves a strong example of the effectiveness of employees with disabilities. In 2011 and 2012, the Network took its ICT training model to the North of Sri Lanka and has successfully conducted two nine month training programmes in Vavuniya. In addition to the ICT training, the Network is soon to serve as the centre of excellence for an IT Excellence course, which has been developed and is to be launched by Cisco.

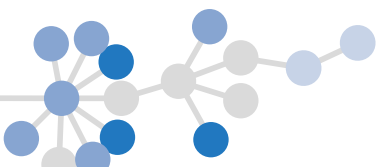
English courses have also been conducted by the Network to maximise the chances of disabled jobseekers being successfully placed in suitable jobs. English conversational skills are taught as well as how to answer interview questions in English. To date, 135 people have successfully completed the certified course which maintains a large interest among people with disabilities.

The EFC has also participated in a training fellowship with Korea Employment Agency for the Disabled (KEAD). The Sri Lankan delegation visited Korea in 2008 to learn more about employer approaches to promote the training and hiring of disabled persons, and representatives from KEAD visited Sri Lankan training institutes in 2010. The collaboration has included forging a sister-school relationship between Korean and Sri Lankan training institutions to facilitate the vocational training of people with disabilities.

Achievements

Some of the EFC's most notable achievements through its Network on Disability include:

- Realizing the direct hiring of over 400 people with disabilities through seven job placement fairs (5 in Colombo, 1 in Kandy and 1 in Vavuniya) and likely a much larger number through awareness raising activities. Additionally, over 500 disabled jobseekers were trained in partnership with Motivation Charitable Trust;
- Facilitating hiring of disabled people by establishing a database of jobseekers with disabilities, matching people to jobs and providing human resource personnel on disability issues;
- Raising the profile of workers with disabilities throughout the country via publicity tools such as advertisements, the *Code on Managing Disability Issues in the Workplace*, the *Barrier Free Access Handbook*, the *Disability Network E-Zine* and the considerable media coverage of its activities;
- Enhancing the employment prospects of the visually impaired through ICT training and English language courses; and
- Participating in the Steering Committee of the Ministry of Labour Relations and Manpower that is specifically looking into the educational development and employment of disabled people. As part of such collaboration, the Network members took part in the special job fair in February 2009, carried out by the Career Guidance Division of the Ministry



Lessons learned

Awareness building is not enough. The EFC realized that it had to develop both a knowledge base and community linkages, as well as “value-added” services that went beyond the database.

Practice what you preach. In 2001, the EFC set itself as an example to other employers when it hired a receptionist with a visual impairment and secured the appropriate assistive technology to enable her to perform her job duties. Additionally, the EFC helped develop her career and she is now a senior trainer in Information and Communications Technology at EFC as well as an advisor to companies on disability sensitization and etiquette in the workplace. As a result, the EFC has enhanced its credibility vis-à-vis its members when encouraging them to employ people with disabilities, which the EFC benefitted from in the form of a productive and loyal employee leader.

There is strength in collaboration. The Network has learned the importance of developing partnerships and relationships with government agencies, NGOs, donors and international partners that offer human, information and institutional resources.

Human resources are critical. The Network is a special project of the EFC that started with a small grant (USD 15,000). The Network would not have succeeded without the EFC employee who serves as the Network’s coordinator, and without the considerable human resource contributions of the Government, NGO partners and business leaders.

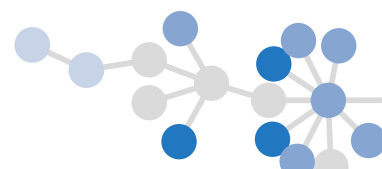
Involve people with disabilities and their organizations. The Network relies on the participation and expertise of disabled individuals and their organizations as members of the Steering Committee, advisors and instructors.

Key Message

A key message expressed by the EFC and its Network on Disability is the importance of scrapping traditional perceptions of disability, which tend to solely emphasize one’s disability without recognizing one’s many abilities. Additionally, the Network has found the usage of employee champions to be advantageous in promoting inclusion among employers. Employee champions in this case refer to people with disabilities who have been successfully employed and have performed well on the job, and as a result, can serve as credible advocates for the employment of others with disabilities.

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- ‘Sometimes a Good Idea Takes Time to Develop – Employers Encouraging Employers to Give People with Disabilities a Fair Chance in Sri Lanka’ in *Moving Forward: Toward decent work for people with disabilities – Examples of good practices in vocational training and employment from Asia and the Pacific*. ILO / Perry, Debra A. Bangkok: ILO, 2003.
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Business Disability Forum, United Kingdom

www.businessdisabilityforum.org.uk

Introduction

The Business Disability Forum (BDF) is one of the world's leading membership bodies bringing together business and the public sector to build disability-smart organizations. Formerly known as the Employers' Forum on Disability, BDF has more than 25 years of experience promoting, shaping and celebrating better business performance for disabled people. BDF has a membership with close to 400 large corporate and public sector organizations that, together, account for close to 20 per cent of the UK workforce. This includes 140 companies which are multinational including some of the UK and world's best known brands in energy, financial services, telecommunications, professional services, IT, outsourcing, retail, manufacturing and recruitment companies.

The organization was created in 1986 when its founder, Susan Scott-Parker OBE, proposed to business leaders that companies should jointly fund a central expert resource which would allow employer members to benefit from best practice and disabled people to benefit from economic and social inclusion. Many of these business leaders had personal contact with disability through connections with disability NGOs and/or family members.

The work of BDF demonstrates that disability-smart organizations are those that have a comprehensive organizational approach to improving disability performance. These are organizations that strive towards best practice across all components of their business. These components include recruitment, retention, adjustments, premises, information and communication technology, suppliers and partners, customers, communications, learning and development, and senior sponsorship.

Key activities

Advice

BDF provides a free and confidential Advice Service for partners and members. Expert disability consultants address any query by any staff member about how disability affects organizations from a one-off ad hoc item to a review of an organization's policies. In 2014, the primary queries relate to performance and absence management, adjustments for disabled customers and employees that acquire disabilities, and support for individual staff members experiencing mental ill health or with non-visible disabilities such as autism and dyslexia. 80 per cent of queries are responded to within one working day. The Advice Service includes access to specialist legal and recruitment advice.

Consultancy

BDF's expertise means it is often asked by governments, employer networks, businesses and intergovernmental organizations to provide strategic advice about improving business disability confidence in the UK and internationally.

BDF regularly works with clients outside the UK and this includes developing country-specific strategies and tools for improving business disability confidence, speaking at conferences and capacity building local business networks. This includes a current assignment working with the Ministry of Labour, Qaderoon and private sector businesses in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to design, test and contribute to the roll-out of a national certification system for business disability confidence.

BDF provides specialist advisory services for partners, members and other clients in the UK and internationally. Our approach is tailored to individual requirements. Current work includes reviews and action planning on all 10 criteria areas of the Disability Standard, providing legal opinions on disability related law, improving accessibility of recruitment processes with an innovative candidate-led approach and developing training and e-learning resources.

Disabled Employee Networks

BDF can help establish disabled employee networks to bring together an organization's employees with disabilities so that they can provide mutual support, insights into accessibility and act as a formal consultative group.

Publications, toolkits and e-learning tools

BDF's library is a unique source of accurate, authoritative and up-to-date information on business and disability.

The briefings, e-learning modules, toolkits and line manager guides cover every aspect of bringing organizations and disabled people together from recruitment and retention to reasonable adjustments to effectively engaging with staff and customers with mental health and non-visible disabilities and Disabled Employee Networks. These provide practical guidance to help organizations recruit and retain people with disabilities and serve customers with disabilities.

More than eight million copies of our publications are in circulation across the UK and internationally, used by forward-thinking organizations across the private and public sectors. A new and exciting series of e-learning modules about how mental health affects business and providing guidance to line managers about how to have difficult conversations has just become available.

Training and events

BDF offers a wide range of training courses, networking and learning exchange events to help your organization's employees and leadership become more disability-smart. BDF's network of speakers and trainers are experts in their field. They play a key role in building colleagues' confidence, skills and understanding of how disability affects your business.

Training courses and master-classes on specific subjects such as mental health, disabled customers and non-visible disabilities can be accessed through a regular programme or designed on a tailored basis to meet the needs of an individual organization.

Partners and members also benefit from access to BDF's programme of events. BDF hold more than 40 events each year for members and partners. These include an Annual Partner Group Reception, panel debates, webinars and learning exchanges.

Disabled associates

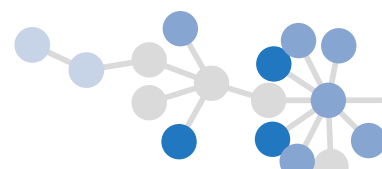
BDF disabled associates act as advisors and ambassadors and contribute to BDF's events and publications. BDF helps build relationships between our members and our disabled associates and we encourage our members to draw on their wealth of expertise.

All the associates are outstanding disabled individuals from a variety of professions, appointed because of their business experience and desire to work with organizations to deliver real improvement in the way they engage with disabled customers and employees.

Wider work contributing to government policy development

BDF works with our members and partners to set and influence policy so that it benefits organizations and disabled people. This includes working closely with Government to inform policy development. In 2013/2014, this included:

- A member of the national steering group for the Government's Disability Confident campaign. Disability Confident is a national campaign to increase opportunities for employment of disabled people. In addition to assisting the overall planning, BDF provided expert speakers to all national and regional conferences across UK.
- BDF is championing improvement of the Government's flagship Access to Work programme – a labour market intervention that provides extra assistance to meet the extraordinary costs of recruiting disabled talent. The programme has enabled over 100,000 disabled people to work and remain in work since its inception transforming a potential benefit recipient into a tax paying citizen. BDF has facilitated high level



consultations with deaf and hard of hearing service users, employers, technology companies and government officials and provided policy papers to inform programme improvement as well as presented evidence to a Parliamentary Inquiry into the programme. BDF has increasingly been asked to comment publicly on the scheme.

- BDF is a member of the Department of Work and Pensions Employer Strategy Steering Group and is chair of the Retention Subgroup that is working with business and public sector members to identify and promote effective practices for retaining disabled talent. This work is scheduled to conclude in 2016.

Achievements

Some of the BDF's major accomplishments in over 25 years of experience include:

- Engaging over 1,000 employers in improving their disability confidence;
- Mobilising leading UK corporations, alongside the disability movement, to actively support both the abolition of the 1944 UK Quota and the introduction of modern anti-discrimination legislation, the Disability Discrimination Act, in 1995;
- Through the Disability Standard, setting the corporate standard for performance on disability as it affects a business and defining what best practice on disability actually means with regard to recruitment, employment, customer care and stakeholder engagement;
- Disseminating over eight million best practice guides throughout the UK and internationally to raise awareness of disability as a business priority and to make it easier to deliver business improvement;
- Increasing the capacity of hundreds of organizations and thousands of managers to employ and retain disabled employees and to do business with disabled customers. Through its disability confidence training build relationships between individual business leaders and individual persons with disabilities; and
- Creating a global advisory group of multinational partners now setting out to establish similar networks in other countries.

Lessons learned

Employers should lead the organization. An organization for employers must be owned and led by employers who create a platform to engage with disabled people's organizations and other stakeholders. The platform must position employers as its key customers and then offer employer relevant services and toolkits.

Bring business leaders and people with disabilities together. An employers' network like BDF can only challenge deep-rooted misconceptions regarding disability by bringing business leaders together with those who have disabilities including disability leaders, politicians, experts, advisors, entrepreneurs, advocates, graduates, colleagues, customers, shareholders or jobseekers. This face to face contact, reinforced by the message that employers should treat people with disabilities fairly and employ them on the basis of capability is crucial. The problem solving skills of both business and persons with disabilities can also generate creative solutions that may bypass the traditional way of doing things.

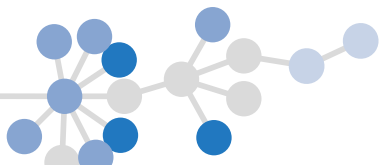
Establish a clear organizational role. BDF realised that it should establish a clear role that is separate from the role of the agencies that help people with disabilities to find work or who advocate on their behalf. BDF does not provide services to people with disabilities directly; it loses its capacity to influence its employer members if it is seen to be part of the traditional disability services field. BDF's job is to make it easier for employers to say "yes" when approached by disabled jobseekers for work opportunities and to create productive partnerships with services that promote economic and social inclusion.

Use the language that business understands and recognises. It is important to watch the jargon and avoid terms and tone that reinforce the view that disability is "owned" by government, doctors or charities.

Value added services require resources. According to BDF experiences, it is key to have the resources to employ a small team to energize, communicate, and deliver a package of messages, services and innovation which provide added value to the business community.

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Communication with George Selvanera, Director of Policy, Services & Communications, Business Disability Forum





Blue Ribbon Employer Council, Viet Nam

www.brec.vn
www.vnah-hev.org

Introduction

The Blue Ribbon Employer Council (BREC) is an initiative of employers established in 2007 to promote the employment of Vietnamese with disabilities, an estimated 7 million people, 60 per cent of which are of working age. BREC provides a platform for employers to share experiences and examples of good practice related to employment and vocational training of people with disabilities. It aims to raise employers' awareness on disability, provide technical assistance to employers on disability-related matters, and assist them in recruiting employees with disabilities. It also supports disabled people's career development by providing training in job-seeking skills and organizing job fairs. The BREC is a result of collaboration between two organizations: Vietnam Chamber of Commerce and Industry (VCCI) and Vietnam Assistance for the Handicapped (VNAH).

The Vietnam Chamber of Commerce and Industry (VCCI) is an employers' organization founded in 1995 to represent and promote the interests of the Vietnamese business community. The VCCI has over 10,000 members, both companies and business associations.

The Vietnam Assistance for the Handicapped (VNAH) is a US-based NGO that has been operating in Viet Nam since 1992. With an overall aim to assist Vietnamese with disabilities to lead richer and fuller lives, the VNAH runs a range of programmes, including national activities related to socio-economic inclusion of disabled people and technical assistance to regional prosthetics clinics, wheelchair factories, and vocational training centres.

The VCCI and VNAH teamed up to create the BREC when VNAH secured funding from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) as part of the Inclusion of Vietnamese with Disabilities project. The partnership proved to be a good match: while VNAH had expertise of disability issues in Viet Nam, VCCI had access to the business community and was involved in supporting disability and corporate social responsibility issues.

At the time of its launch in 2007, the BREC had 25 members, consisting of local and international companies and organizations, both large and small. In 2015, over 250 employers are members of the BREC, representing various industries such as health, hospitality, IT, manufacturing, and food and beverage.

Structure and partners

Both the VCCI and VNAH are involved in managing and running the BREC initiative. The VCCI houses the BREC office in Hanoi and, with funding support from VNAH and USAID, employs the BREC staff. Members of the VNAH staff are part of the BREC team as technical advisors.

The BREC is governed by an 11-person Board that consists of representatives from member companies and chaired by the General Director of VCCI's Bureau of Employers' Activities.

However, the BREC does not have an official status within VCCI. At the moment, BREC is not yet a formal association managed by membership fees. Rather, its operation costs are covered by the VNAH-USAID project. One of the major objectives of the VCCI-VNAH-USAID partnership has been the sustainability of BREC beyond the project period from 2012-2014. Recognizing the success of BREC in promoting the employment of Vietnamese with disabilities, USAID is urging such sustainability be established by turning BREC into a legal independent structure within Viet Nam. To achieve this, it is recommended that BREC takes on the form of a social enterprise having legal status within Vietnamese laws

and being able to have a bank account and a stamp for official documents. This would be a social enterprise model that applies commercial strategies to maximize improvements for humanity rather than only maximizing profits. VNAH and VCCI are now continuing the effort to develop BREC to become an independent legal entity in 2015 that charges fees for its services.

Regarding partners, the BREC collaborates closely with the National Coordinating Council on Disability (NCCD), which monitors the implementation of disability-related legislation and coordinates governmental programmes on disability, and the American Chamber of Commerce (AMCHAM). The BREC also works with other organizations such as Employment Services Centres in Hanoi, Danang and Ho Chi Minh City by exchanging labour market information, information about the experiences of employers in hiring disabled employees, and by organizing inclusive job fairs for job seekers with disabilities.

Key activities

Needs assessment survey

As one of the first activities of the BREC, VNAH and VCCI carried out an employer needs assessment survey in 2007. The assessment survey questioned 70 employers, including BREC members, to find out about disability awareness among the business community and current practice related to employing disabled people. The findings highlighted that those employers who already had experience with disabled employees were positive about hiring disabled people. On the other hand, many employers who had no experience with disabled employees upheld negative, stereotypical attitudes about their capabilities.

In 2014, from June to August, BREC conducted a survey on the retention rate of workers with disabilities at their workplaces in three regions (Hanoi, Da Nang and Dong Nai). The job retention rate among employees with disabilities was higher than those without disabilities (nearly 100 and 97 per cent respectively). Accordingly, average annual job leaving rates in 2013 were 0.1 per cent for employees with disabilities and 3 per cent for employees without disabilities. Companies report that the retention rate trend in 2013-2014 was stable due to the difficult economic situation and fewer employees leaving jobs, generally.

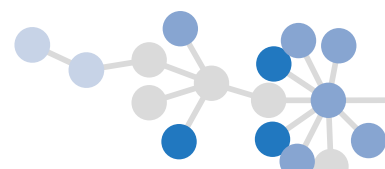
The survey has indicated that because employees with disabilities have better retention rates they reduce the high cost of turnover. Many reasons for workers with disabilities to leave jobs were mentioned; most mentioned were: salaries (44 per cent), unfriendly working environments and discrimination (40 per cent) and inappropriate working condition (30 per cent). Although dissatisfied salaries were mentioned more often, unfriendly working environment was the underlying cause. Low pay would make workers move jobs when possible but an unfriendly working environment and conditions made them leave jobs more quickly.

Organizing job fairs to match disabled people to job opportunities

To facilitate the hiring of persons with disabilities, the BREC partners collaborated with the Department of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs, to hold a two-day job fair in Ho Chi Minh City in November 2007. The event attracted about 1,600 people with disabilities and 40 employers, including the BREC members. In addition, five training centres and five employment centres joined the fair, along with representatives of the media that widely publicized the event. The job fair proved to be an effective vehicle for introducing persons with disabilities to employers and, as a result of the fair, 225 jobseekers with disabilities were offered jobs.

Following the success of the fair in Ho Chi Minh City, a second job fair was organized in Hanoi in December 2007. Here, over 600 persons with disabilities, 40 employers, as well as training and employment centres and organizations working on disability issues participated in the event. By the end of the day, 185 disabled persons found jobs. The media coverage of the fair was extensive with three major TV channels and several newspapers reporting the event. Since 2008 BREC has also organized yearly exchange forums for job seekers with disabilities to encourage them to join the labour market and contribute to promoting employment opportunities for people with disabilities.

Since its launch, the BREC has partnered with various organizations to organize six job fairs in DaNang, Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City. Most of the fairs have exclusively targeted disabled jobseekers with considerable success. Together, the fairs and other BREC activities have generated job opportunities for an estimated 1,700 people with disabilities. In addition, because training centres have taken part in the fairs, about 600 disabled persons have been linked to vocational training opportunities.



Developing a website with an employment database

In 2008, BREC launched its website – developed by FPT a BREC member company. In addition to introducing the BREC members and activities, the website includes a specific section where employers post job advertisements and jobseekers upload their CVs. By the end of 2008, the website contained advertisements for about 900 jobs and 80 CVs. BREC estimates that more than 200 people have been hired through the website.

The BREC has been upgrading the website periodically to make it more user-friendly and accessible to people with disabilities.

Increasing disability awareness amongst employers

One of BREC's goals is to increase the awareness of employers regarding the benefits of hiring and retaining employees with disabilities. BREC has done so by organizing awareness raising sessions for employers, both members and non-members. These programmes typically highlight the benefits of hiring persons with disabilities and include presentations by BREC members who have successfully hired disabled employees.

In addition to specific programmes, BREC has facilitated employer meetings and networking events throughout the country. The meetings provide BREC members an opportunity to share experiences and exchange information related to employing disabled people and to learn about forthcoming BREC activities. The events also offer an opportunity to acknowledge the most recent BREC members and provide them with a certificate of membership.

Recognizing exemplary efforts in disability inclusion

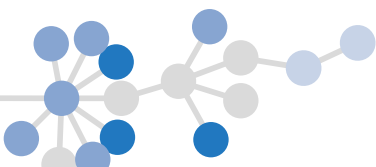
In 2008, VCCI and VNAH organized a BREC awards event, Blue Ribbon Awards, for employers, organizations and individuals who have been exemplary in hiring and retaining disabled employees and promoting employment of disabled people. BREC members were involved in award nominations and it was decided that the Blue Ribbon Awards would be given out in six categories, including categories for enterprises of different sizes, government organizations and employees with disabilities.

In 2013, the Blue Ribbon Award was held for the third time. This event has become a regular activity to encourage the promotion of employment opportunities for persons with disabilities.

Achievements

In its eight years of operation, BREC's accomplishments include:

- Placing the issue of disability on the agenda of its membership, which has grown from 25 to more than 250;
- Realizing the employment of about 1,700 persons with disabilities through job fairs and other activities;
- Linking about 600 persons with disabilities to vocational training opportunities;
- Providing input on national policies relating to disability and employment, such as the Labour Code and the National Law on Disability as well as on the United Nation Convention on Right of Person with Disabilities;
- Providing assistance to employment service centres in Da Nang, Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City to make their services more accessible for and inclusive of disabled people. Additionally, providing them with training on vocational rehabilitation techniques and tools (including on vocational evaluation, work adjustment, reasonable accommodation); and
- Raising the profile of disabled employees in Viet Nam by attracting media attention to its activities.



Lessons learned

Employers are open to hiring disabled employees – but they may need support first. When starting the BREC activities, the BREC partners quickly realized that many businesses wanted to hire people with disabilities but did not know how to begin. Therefore, BREC started providing technical support by, for example, identifying qualified persons with disabilities and linking them with prospective employers.

Plan for sustainability. Although the BREC started as a temporary project, the VCCI and VNAH are currently continuing their efforts to restructure BREC into an independent employer-run organization with a fee structure.

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