

Employment Possibilities For Persons With Disabilities In The Private Sector (Kosovo Case)

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Abstract

This research was conducted with the intention of understanding the opportunities for employment of persons with disabilities (PWDs) and the potential fields and sectors in which new enterprises will operate in the Peja region of Kosovo. In order to verify these hypotheses and answer the research question this paper is separated into two parts. The first part analyzes the profile of PWDs and was done through some steps. The second part involved analysis over the business environment of the Peja region in order to understand employment possibilities of PWDs in the private sector as well as potential fields and sectors for new enterprises as forms of self employment for PWDs. In this regard several steps were carried: Information gathering from Kosovo Agency of Statistics, Kosovo Tax Administration and Kosovo business registration agency, analysis of business environment, in-depth interviews with 70 registered businesses in the Peja region. These steps not only provided enough numbers, graphs and statistics they also provided qualitative argumentation with regards to PWDs employment in the private sector. The major obstacles faced were: The lack of concrete information on PWDs from employment agencies, non-updated information from KAS, KTA and KBRA and a high number of businesses operating in the informal economy. All findings will be reported in the following paragraphs with reasoning and explanations on the methodology as well.

Keywords: Persons with disabilities, business environment, private sector, Peja region of Kosovo

Methodology

This research will be both quantitative and qualitative. The Business environment of the Peja region has been quantitatively researched, specifically the number of active businesses, trends of new enterprises,

numbers of employed PWDs, departments that PWDs are mostly employed at, departments that they should focus training for in the future according to the private sector perspective; the problems that the PWD community faces when it comes to employment has been qualitatively research, specifically the barriers and obstacles that the private sector has in employing people from the PWD community.

Researching for employment possibilities of persons with disabilities has ethical implications. First the issues need to be understood from two points of view, one being the community and the second being the private sector. That is the reason why the research was done in two parallels, one the profile of the PWD community and two the opportunities of the private sector. Information gathered by Handikos and their respective offices in the municipalities of the Peja region, professional advancement centers and employment agencies provided enough numerical information about PWDs however only through focus group discussions with the members of the PWD community, have the problems that the community faces when it comes to employment possibilities been clear.

Similarly, the numerical information gathered by KAS, KTA and KBRA allowed for better understanding of the business environment and the trends of new enterprises however in order to understand the obstacles and barriers that enterprises of the private sector create for PWDs employment a more qualitative approach is necessary. Any topic that involves PWDs it is more sensitive and it is very important to be approached in the right method. Whether it is a survey or an interview, it will involve questioning about something the respondent doesn't feel comfortable answering for. The fact that they might be quoted or judged can influence their answers therefore decrease the credibility of the gathered information. This increases the possibility that the respondent might: (1) Answer quickly and leave a lot of information outside, (2) not give a fair answer and alter the outcome of a lot of important facts or (3) decide to withdraw from the research. The reason why in-depth interviews was chosen as an appropriate research method to approach businesses was because it allowed for better explanation as to why the information is needed, better understanding of the circumstances and allowed the interviewee to answer more freely; additionally, because in interviews questions may arise one after another, it creates opportunities for discovering qualitative arguments which will be explained in the following paragraphs.

The participants for the focus group discussions with the member of the PWD community were chosen in accordance with Handikos in Peja.

The sample size for in-depth interviews is 70. Enterprises chosen for interviewing are representative on economic activity, number of employees and are in accordance with the profile of the candidate.

Findings

According to Handikos's information on persons with disabilities, there are approximately 2797 member of the PWD community in the Peja region.

Professional advancement centers of Gjakova and Peja have had specific training programs designed for persons with disabilities. The main components of these programs are: (1) IT and computing, (2) Accounting and (3) Administration. There have been specific cases where one person from the PWD community has been professionally trained in welding however those cases are very specific. The most common professions from the professional advancements centers are similar with the information available from employment agencies of the respective municipalities. Employment agencies do not have specific disclosed information about the employment of members of PWD community, they only had general information about the whole citizens of that municipality. Considering both sources of information these professions remain as the most common ones, and the most favored by the community. All three of these professions are conducted in a working environment which does not attract a lot of attention and does not require a lot of movement. The focus group discussions further confirm these facts and also qualitatively provide answers as to why they happen.

The focus group discussions with members of the PWD community unveiled some interesting points. (1) 6 out of 8 participants in the discussion even though they have work experience have never applied for work on the private sector. This further proves the fact that members of the PWD community are less motivated to apply for work and compete with the rest of the society. (2) The discussion also confirms the fact that members of the PWD community feel more comfortable in work environments which does not require a lot of movement. They feel much more comfortable working somewhere that does not require them to move around or involves some sort of physical activity that emphasizes their disability and make them feel uncomfortable. They enjoy to complete their tasks without much social interaction in between. The professions mentioned in the previous paragraph are all included under these definitions deducted during the focus group discussions.

All of the participants shared similar back story. They had managed to complete elementary school without any problem, they were supported by the society and their respective mentors however it is during high school that most of the problems started to occur. They started to clearly understand the differences between them and the rest of the students. It is during high school that they distance themselves from the rest and see competition with them as a very difficult endeavor, social discrimination also negatively impacts in

that aspect. However for the majority of them employment is a form of independence. The discussion also confirmed the fact that successful stories of PWDs employment motivates them. It is through these cases that they understand that even members of their own community, with their own skills, are managing to compete with the rest of the society.

Some of the critical issues of vocational training to persons with disabilities are "Identification - Will vocational training programs reach all persons with disabilities? Compliance - Does the training reflect the needs of the labor market and does it lead towards employment? Standards - Are the standards of training acceptable? The institutional capacity - Are the institutions providing vocational training prepared to train people with disabilities? Human Capacity - Does the staff of the training institutions have the knowledge, skills and attitudes required to provide services to people with disabilities?" (Agune, 2003)

To implement successful practices of professional training for persons with disabilities, it is important to keep in mind that they have rights like everyone else and tend to be discovered and developed through training.

Business Environment and employment possibilities for persons with disabilities

According to KBRA there are 20294 registered businesses in the Peja region (including Gjakova). However the numbers of registered business does not indicate an accurate number of active businesses. Kosovo Tax Administration did not give an actual number of businesses that are active in the region however it did confirm that the number of registered business can be misleading. In order to confirm this, 50 randomly picked business out of the KBRA list were chosen and contacted. Only 33 out of the 50 randomly contacted businesses were still active, concluding the number of active businesses to be approximately 13394.

According to Kosovo Agency of Statistics the average number of closed businesses, since the first quarter of 2010 until the second quarter of 2015, is 322 business per quarter (in all of Kosovo). On the average number of new business registered per quarter of a year, the Peja region constitutes 17.5 % of Kosovo. The same percentage is used for business that close down per quarter making the number of business that close down on the Peja 56 businesses per quarter.

❖ Trends and new enterprises

There have been a total of 715 newly registered businesses in the Peja region on the first and second quarter of the year 2015. According to Kosovo Agency of Statistic there was a decrease by 11.3 % of new enterprises in the first quarter in comparison with the previous year however the second

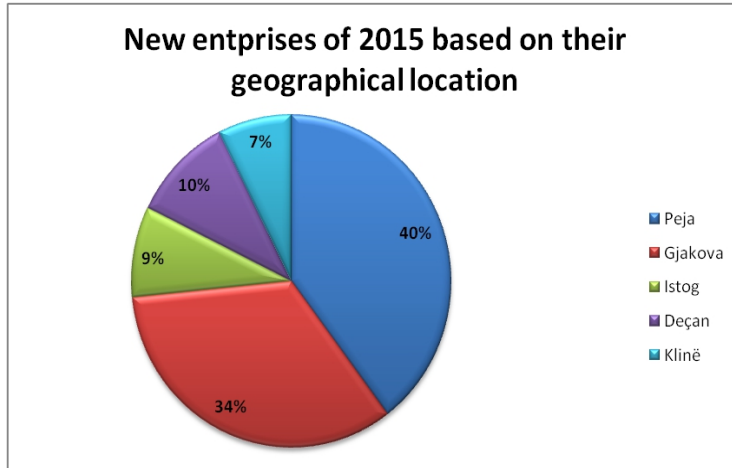
quarter shows an increase of 3.7% of new enterprises comparing with the same quarter of the previous year.

The most common economic activities of the new enterprises during the first and second quarter of 2015 were: retail and wholesale trade and motor vehicles repair with 215 new enterprises (30%), production with 84 new enterprises (12%), also with 84 new enterprises accommodation and food service activities (12%) and construction with 68 new enterprises (10%).

Table no.1.Economic activities on Peja Region/ Kosovo

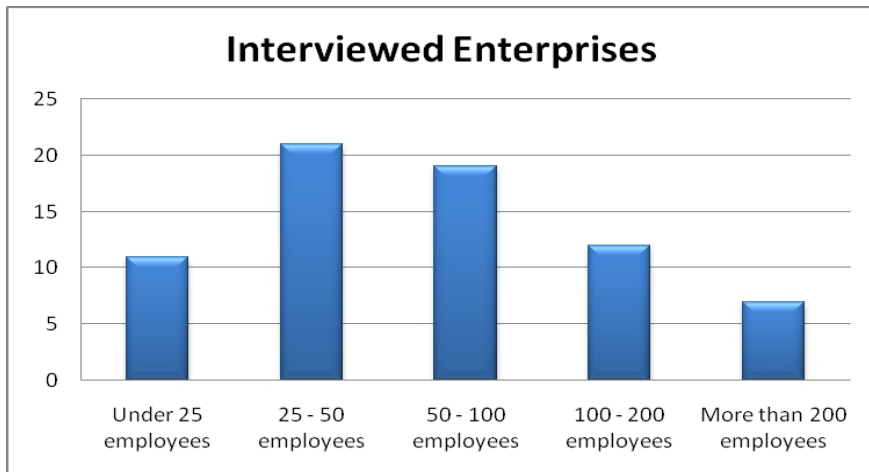
Municipalities	Agriculture, forestry and fishing	Mining and quarrying	Production	Supply of electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning	Water supply, sanitation, waste and land revitalization activities	Construction	Retail and wholesale trade and motor vehicles repair	Transport and storage	Accommodation and food service activities	Information and Communication	Financial activities and insurance	Real Estate	Professional scientific and technical activities	Administrative and support activities	Public administration and defense: compulsory social insurance	Education	Health and social labour activities	Arts, entertainment and recreation	Other services	TOTAL
Peja	17	1	28	0	1	25	93	17	34	5	1	1	8	10	0	3	12	4	24	284
Gjakova	7	2	30	0	0	18	69	5	31	7	2	1	9	7	0	3	5	19	26	241
Istog	7	0	10	0	0	9	13	5	7	1	0	0	3	2	0	1	1	3	1	63
Deçan	13	0	7	1	0	8	25	2	8	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	4	74
Klinë	9	0	9	0	0	8	15	5	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	53
TOTAL	53	3	84	1	1	68	215	34	84	15	3	2	20	19	0	7	20	29	57	715

Geographically the municipalities leading with the number of new enterprises in the first and second quarter of 2015 are Peja with 284 new enterprises (40%), Gjakova with 241 (34%), Deçan with 74 (10%), Istog with 64 (9%) and Klinë with 53 new enterprises (7%).

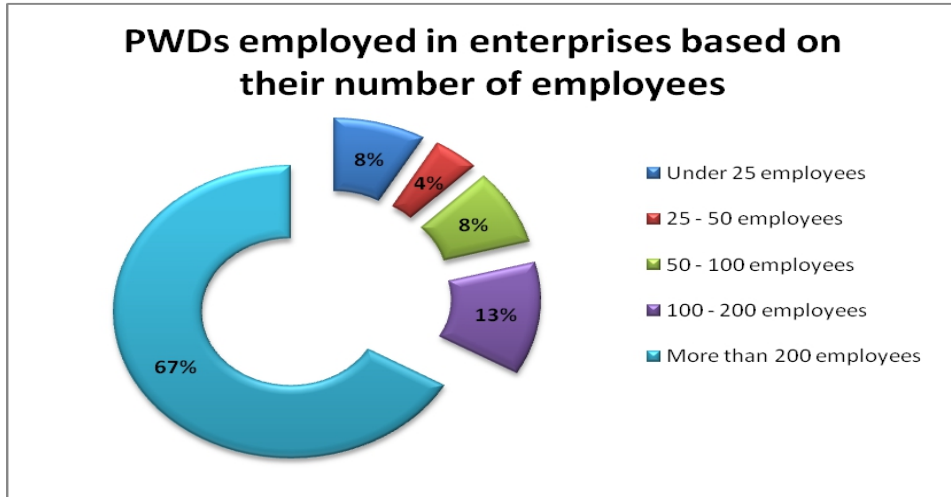


❖ **Findings**

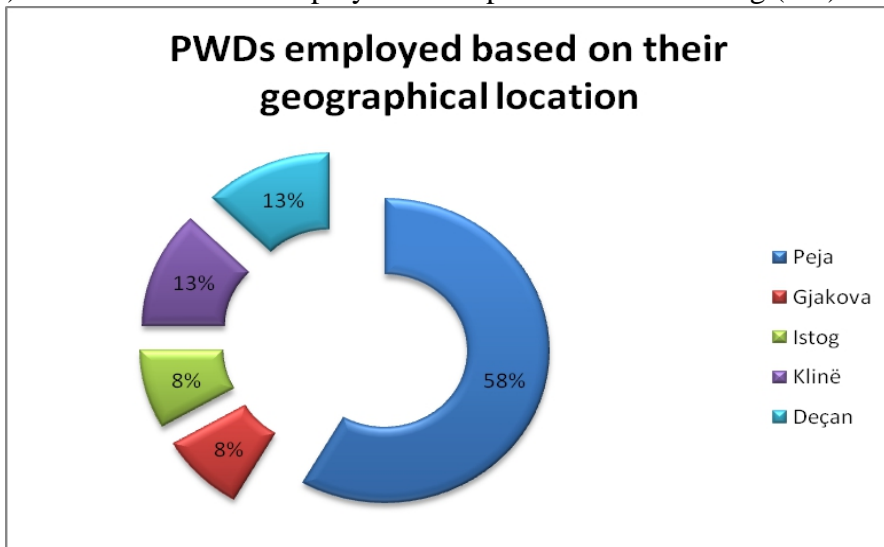
The conducted in-depth interviews targeted businesses in accordance with the profile of PWDs. Based on the number of the employees the interview enterprises ranged: 11 enterprises with less than 25 employees (16%), 21 enterprises with 25 - 50 employees (30%), 19 enterprises with 50 - 100 employees (27%), 12 enterprises with 100 - 200 employees (17%) and 7 enterprises with more than 200 employees (10%).



Out of 70 interviewed enterprises, 24 employees from the PWD community have been identified. The majority of them are employed in enterprises with more than 200 employees specifically 16 employees (67 %), 3 people from the PWD community employed in enterprises with 100 - 200 employees (13%), 2 of them employed in enterprises with 50 - 100 employees (8%), 1 employed in enterprises with 25-50 employees and 2 employed in enterprises with less than 25 employees.

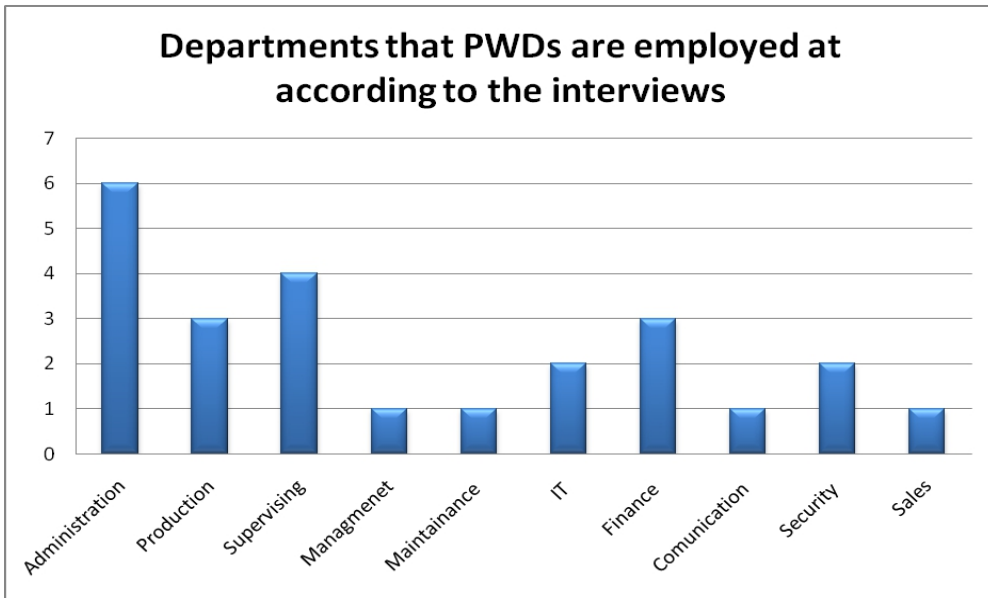


According to the interviews, geographically, Peja has the highest number of PWDs employed in its private sector. Out of 24 persons with disabilities, 14 are employed in the private sector of Peja (58%), 3 are employed in the private sector of Klinë (13%), 3 are employed in the private sector of Deçan (13%), 2 are employed in the private sector of Gjakova (8%) and the other 2 are employed in the private sector of Istog (8%).



According to the interviews, the departments that PWDs are most employed at are: Administration with 6 employees from the PWD community, supervising with 4 employees, production with 3 employees and finance also with 3 employees. Functional administration, supervising and finance sectors are signs of business with more than 50 employees that is an

explanation as to why the businesses that had the highest number of employees from PWD community also had the highest number of employees over all.



The research was also focused in understanding the potential requests that the private sector would have for the PWD community in order to increase their employment. The interviewed enterprises gave their own potential fields where they would employ future applicants from the PWD community. The most common answers with no particular order were: (1) administration, (2) finance - accounting, (3) supervising - camera, (4) IT and online communication, (5) security and (6) production. Enterprises operating in retail and whole sale trade, which was the highest grossing type of business in 2015, that had more than 50 employees underwent sales operations to create online platforms for their products and services. This provided opportunities for designing and managing online platforms as a profitable type of business activity in the future. This was also supported by respondents who suggested that it can be a suitable work environment for member of PWD community. Respondents of the same business category also suggested that supervising with cameras can be a desirable work environment given that all retail and whole sale businesses need such supervision.

What the majority of respondents had in common is the fact that they did not have any applicants from the PWD community for a job. Out of all respondents, 96 % answered that they had never had a case where a member of the PWD community had applied for a job, leaving only 4 % of the enterprises that dealt with PWDs job applications before. This further

confirms the fact that members of the PWD community do not feel comfortable applying and competing for a working position and also urges the need for increasing awareness and motivating the PWD community to apply in the private sector.

On the other hand, only 39% of the respondents had previously known that they are legally obliged to employ members of PWD community after meeting certain quotas consequently 61% of the respondents had never heard of such legal obligations. This does not seem to be a motivational factor for PWDs employment of any kind. Many of the respondents would suggest that these kind of obligations should be initially fulfilled by public institutions before they can enforce them in the private sector. Although it does prove the need for awareness raising on the law for training and employment of persons with disabilities.

Obstacles and barriers to employment

The respondents were faced with the question of 'whom would they prioritize if a member of the PWD community and another person would apply for the same job and would have the same qualification'. 47 % of the respondents answered that they would prioritize the member of the PWD community because: (1) better corporate social responsibility, CSR, for their company (67%), (2) it is more humane (18%) and (3) they are more trustworthy (15%). However the majority, 53 % of the respondents, answered that they would prioritize the other applicant. And 100% of the reasoning for all respondents was due to the nature of their company. They would much more comfortably use the other applicant for more than just his job description. For example an accountant might be required to visit the TAK maybe even on daily basis and sometimes even engage in activities outside of his job description. For entrepreneurs, asking PWDs to complete such tasks is quite difficult and they consider employing a member of the PWD community an economic loss because the opportunity cost of hiring the other applicant is higher. This is a concern about cost and productivity. All 100 % of the respondents who said they would choose the other applicant, agree that when cost is the problem, any sort of financial incentivizing would overcome this obstacle and would result in more members of the PWD community employed.

During the research it is found that 84 % of respondent would not want to employ a member of the PWD community in a position which requires daily contact with the customer. The reasoning behind was: (1) PWDs are more suited in a working environment which does not require a lot of movement, (2) it is bad for members of the PWD community if they are put under that much stress, however the reason which was said by very few respondents but understood through the discussion with many others was

that (3) they did not want to create 'unexpressed customer dissatisfaction'. Respondent #49: "We would not want under any scenario create unexpressed customer dissatisfaction. No customer would complain by being served from a member of PWD community however if the process is delicate and it is dependent on time even if the employee manages to complete the task just as quick as anyone else, to the customer it would seem as though he is being delayed and there would come a time where they would start expressing that dissatisfaction". Respondents #62: "We would not recruit members of the PWD community in time delicate operations. Customers might believe that they are being delayed, even if they are not, and complain which would backfire even at the member of the PWD community".

The discrimination and prejudices can be fought with successful examples of employment. This fact would also motivate passive members of the PWD community to be more active in the labor market. Many respondents that had members of the PWD community employed, even though the reason they were kept in the work force is because of better CSR of the company, they soon understood the capabilities that they possessed and their importance to the company. Respondent #66: "They are very trustworthy and efficient in their work place, they are very focused, most of the time they will not even use their launch breaks. If I could, I would employ 2 or 3 more of them in the finance sector". Successful stories of employment can change the perception that entrepreneur have for PWDs while at the same time serve as a catalyst for motivating the rest of the PWD community as explained in the first part of the research where member of the PWD community will feel more motivated when they have examples of their counterparts competing with the rest of the society on equal ground.

Conclusion and recommendations

Persons with disabilities face discrimination and stereotypes in their daily lives and the intensity of those occurrences are higher in a more conservative country like Kosovo. These negative attitudes reflect even on their interest to participate in the labor market. It is during their education that they understand the differences that they have with the rest of the society especially during high school where these differences are made much clearer. Without proper governmental practices, negative attitudes influence the PWD community especially during their education period. They feel much more reluctant to engage in competition with the rest of the society and this is true even in the labor market. There are many member of the PWD community that are employed in different NGO's, public sector and even in the private sector however the majority of them have never applied for work proving the reluctance mentioned above. The research also concludes that PWDs: (1) enjoy to work in an environment which does not require a lot of

movements and (2) does not attract a lot of attention towards their disability since that would make them less comfortable and decrease their productivity. Through special programs for PWDs in professional advancements centers, through information gathering from local employment agencies and through information gathered from focus group discussions these are the most common professions: (1) IT and computing, (2) Accounting and (3) Administration.

The lack of concrete and updated statistics for professional training of persons with disabilities by type of disability, age, gender, final certification as a result of the lack of a unified system of collecting and updating information on the national level is quite problematic. People with disabilities also have difficulty in obtaining information about the courses of professional training suitable for them.

There are many barriers to employing PWDs in the private sector. (1) Some enterprises, due to the nature of their businesses, would not prioritize the member of the PWD community. The job descriptions are not clear in these enterprises and employees are often charged with different tasks outside their description. This would be harder for members of the PWD community since they want to work under different environments. This is a cost and productivity problem, where the entrepreneur sees employing a member of the PWD community as an economic loss. In these cases, financial incentivizing proves to be effective in increasing the numbers of employed PWDs. (2) Many entrepreneurs feel that employing members of the PWD community in working positions that deal with the customer in a daily basis would work against them. Due to prejudices and stereotypes that the society has towards PWDs, they would not want to cause unexpressed customer dissatisfaction and (3) only 21% of the enterprises in the Peja region fulfill the basic conditions for accessible work environment for the PWD community. Even the municipality of Peja with the highest percentage of 41% is still a low percentage considering that not even half of the enterprises would be able to recruit PWDs in specific departments.

The research also concludes that the professions most required by the private sector of the Peja region for members of the PWD community are: (1) administration, (2) finance - accounting, (3) supervising - camera, (4) IT and online communication, (5) security and (6) production.

Based on this research we may have some recommendations as follow:

❖ **Fight discrimination and stigmas of PWDs.**

During the research, the discrimination, stereotypes and stigmas towards PWDs have proven to be a de-motivational factor towards their employment. Working towards fighting discrimination and stigmas for

members of the PWD will also work towards their motivation to join the labor market and compete for working positions.

❖ **Special focus on education .**

During education, especially high school, PWDs start to feel the difference between them and the rest of the society. It is during this time that they find competition in the labor market with them as a difficult endeavor and choose not to opt in it. Focusing on good practices used by other countries like the Nordic countries, would allow to fight these stigmatization during education and ensure better motivation for member of the PWD community.

❖ **Capitalize on success stories**

Another way to motivate PWDs to join the competition in the labor market is to capitalize on previous success stories. There are examples of members of the PWD community working as Executive Directors of different NGOs and different managerial positions in different private enterprises and even owners of major corporations, which can motivate members of the PWD community to understand that even members of their own community are managing to compete with the rest of the society on equal grounds.

❖ **A unified national database**

It is recommended to cooperate with the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare on measures for the design of indicators and the definition of instruments for collecting data for including PWDs in vocational training. Data should be collected even on the number of persons with disabilities who are certified as well as those who engage in the labor market upon completion of the training

❖ **Information systems**

It is recommended to strengthen the PWDs information system about the possibilities of including them in the system of vocational training through: (1) Strengthening the cooperation with the local government for sending the information to the recipient, (2) Strengthening the cooperation with civil society organizations and (3) Raising awareness through information campaigns.

❖ **Requirements of the private sector**

It is recommended to focus the trainings in the sectors most required by the private sector. As mentioned previously those sectors are:

(1) administrative assistant (2) finance - specifically accounting, (3) supervising - specifically camera, (4) IT and online communication, (5) Security and (6) Production. There is a need for closer cooperation with professional advancement centers in adding these professions as training curriculums as well as keeping track on the success of employment for participants who complete these courses.

❖ **Practice work**

It has been found that, (1) enterprises do take stereotypes and discrimination into account when 84% of the respondents answered that they would not want to employ a member of the PWD community in a position that requires daily contact with the customer and (2) that entrepreneurs even though they had employed PWDs due to good will and for better CSR of their company, because they had given a chance to PWDs to prove their capabilities, they understood that they have the capabilities needed for the job and even required more of them. Encouraging businesses to accept practitioners from the PWD community would positively influence in solving these problems. (1) PWDs would have a chance to prove their capabilities, (2) Entrepreneurs would understand the capabilities and the value of these members and (3) It would work towards reducing the stereotypes that the entrepreneurs of the private sector have towards PWDs.

❖ **Accessible environments for members of the PWD community**

For many enterprises that financial incentivizing would solve the problem of productivity and cost it is important to imply that they should be also be conditioned into providing basic environmental changes to provide accessibility for PWDs. If enterprises at least have accessible environments it would provide equal opportunities for employment. With 79% of enterprises not fulfilling the basic conditions for accessible work environment for PWDs, it creates inequality and further de-motivates the community to join the labor market.

❖ **Legal obligations on PWD employment**

Even though they have legal obligations, for most of the entrepreneurs that was not a reason enough to employ them. Most of them were even unaware that such a law exists and for the rest who were aware of its existence, the importance of it was undermined by the poor implementation of the law by the public sector. It is important to raise awareness on the existence of the legal obligations and lobby towards its implementation. It is recommended to organize round table discussions with all stake holders. Representative of the PWD community, representatives of the private sectors and representatives of the Ministry of Labor and Social

Welfare in order to ensure the implementation of the labor law as well as promote employment of PWDs.

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