

Business Charter on Disability

FESF@UN supports the launch of the first comprehensive international Charter on Disability on Wednesday, October 28, 2015 at the ILO Global Business and Disability Network's high level global event in Geneva, Switzerland. The Charter on Disability asserts the common commitment to create inclusive workplaces for all people with disabilities around the world. The Charter signatories include 15 multinational companies and 15 national network members.

Introduction

The ILO Charter highlights concrete steps forward in securing inclusion for persons with disabilities (PWD). The international networks focus on the practical effects of principals and the Charter as more companies join the discussion on disability inclusion. Three main areas of interest include ensuring:

- More PWD employment in the private sector, specifically in the developing countries
- 2) PWD access to rights in the work places (combination of targeted policies and disability specific initiatives to incorporate principles of disability inclusion in mainstream programs) such as apprenticeship opportunities, etc.
- 3) Structural barriers are not used as a pretext by private sector. These include transportation, lack of education, architectural barriers, and cultural barriers

ILO Global Business and Disability Network works with a number of multinational companies and also national networks. National networks include China, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Zambia, Peru, and currently in process of working with Kenya and Nigeria. The organization hopes to expand the network to developing and emerging economies. The network focuses on disability knowledge training and the two network working groups (on mental health and job matching and placement services) focusing on practices in developing countries. It hopes to expand the network, continue outreach and training, and publish the work on the working groups.

Framework

The 10 principles of the ILO Charter include:

- Promote and respect the rights of persons with disabilities by raising awareness and combating stigma and stereotypes faced by persons with disabilities.
- Develop policies and practices that protect persons with disabilities from all types of discrimination.
- Promote equal treatment and equal opportunities for persons with disabilities by providing reasonable accommodation in the recruitment process, on-the-job, apprenticeships, training, job retention, career development and other relevant terms and conditions of employment.
- Progressively make the company premises and communication to staff accessible for all employees with disabilities.
- Undertake appropriate measures to enable current employees who acquire a disability to retain or return to their employment.
- Respect confidentiality of personal information regarding disability.
- Consider the needs of those persons with disabilities who face particular challenges accessing the labour market, including persons with intellectual and psychosocial disabilities.
- Promote employment of persons with disabilities among business partners and other companies and collaborate with national employer and business networks on disability as well as with organizations working to advance the rights of persons with disabilities.
- Review regularly the company disability inclusion policies and practices for their effectiveness.
- Report on company efforts to promote the employment of persons with disabilities to all relevant stakeholders and share information and experiences with the members of the ILO Global Business and Disability Network. The ILO will utilize the company reports and practices in its own communication, wherever relevant.

FESF in Pakistan

For over thirty years in Pakistan, FESF has dedicated its work to enhancing the quality of life for all members of the community, especially those who are disadvantaged. FESF invests in educational development, innovative training programs, development tools and services to enable recipients to gain competency and self-sufficiency, while empowering them to reach their full potential. As research indicates, integration and inclusion is best achieved through means of education and employment. An estimated nine million people in Pakistan have some form of hearing loss. Of these, 1.25 million children are deaf, yet less than 2% attend school.

FESF supports ILO Global Business and Disability Network's principles, and is dedicated to continue to make substantive gains in disability inclusion. Following are some of FESF's key activities that support the Charter goals:

- Promotion & advocacy on behalf of the Deaf community, helping to combat misconceptions, stereotypes and stigma. FESF achieves this through high visibility campaigns, traditional & online media channels, private enterprise engagement, and through advocacy at both provincial and national governmental levels. (Addresses Framework points 1 & 2).
- Comprehensive educational & vocational education for the Deaf, providing skills training, career development, and enabling them to compete on a more equal basis for employment opportunities. (Addresses Framework points 3 & 7)
- Job matching & placement services are a key outcome of FESF's activities, with over 500 Deaf youth having received employment in a wide array of private and public industries. Some highlights include: (Addresses Framework points 8, 9 & 10)
 - a.** KFC Restaurants: FESF and KFC joined hands in (2007) to create employment opportunities for the Deaf in Pakistan. At the time of this report, seven KFC restaurants are Deaf-run, and over 150 young people have achieved gainful employment.

- b.** Deaf Reach Schools, Colleges & Training Centers – FESF's flagship project – includes over 50% Deaf employment amongst its teaching and faculty staff. More than 70 Deaf teachers have been employed via FESF's Teacher Training Program.

- c.** Other large multinational and local firms have employed hundreds of Deaf young people. These organizations include Shell Pakistan, Allied Caterpillar, DHL, Pizza Hut, Burger King, Allied Bank, United Bank, Valet Parking Services, and more.

- FESF's award-winning Pakistan Sign Language (PSL) Digital Lexicon is an important catalyst for bridging the communication gap between the hearing and Deaf communities. The free-of-cost, multiple-platform PSL Lexicon of 5,000 words in 65 categories demonstrably improves education standards; increases home and community communication between the Deaf and their parents/community members; creates a pool of interpreters that can assist with provision of basic human rights to the Deaf community; and provides employers with a tool with which to effectively communicate with their Deaf employees. (Addresses Framework points 1 – 8)

Conclusion

FESF strongly believes in the importance of formalistic global frameworks, such as the Business Charter on Disability, and the need for regional collaborations between civil society, respective member states, and the private sector in ensuring access and opportunity for inclusion in the workforce. Further, FESF affirms the need for inclusive-based practices and policies that are a hallmark of the Charter.

References:

ILO Global Business and Disability Network Charter, <http://www.businessanddisability.org/index.php/en/about-the-network/charter>

According to the European Union (2004)'s Common Basic Principles for Integration Policy,

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