

Key Notes for the Department of Social Welfare for Persons with Disabilities

#2. ACCESS TO EMPLOYMENT FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Persons with disabilities are facing high rates of unemployment in Cambodia as compared to persons without disabilities due to many excluding mechanisms. This is a missed opportunity for society to as this is a large unutilized labour force.

Persons with disabilities are more likely to be unemployed than persons without disabilities. The employment to population ratio in Eastern and Southeast Asia is 71% for men and 51% for women without disabilities; for men and women with disabilities this is 48% and 29% respectively. Factors that play a role include discrimination, stigma, negative attitudes, lack of accessible transportation to get to work, and inaccessible workplaces with limited availability of accommodationsⁱ. Because of this, many persons who are capable of working cannot achieve employment – meaning that we are simply not using a large part of our potential labour force.

Why should the government invest in achieving employment for persons with disabilities?

1. Employment is beneficial for individuals and their families

- When persons with disabilities are in work, their individual and household earnings increase – thereby moving persons and households out of (extreme) poverty.
- Persons with disabilities that earn an income are more self-sufficient, therefore reducing the reliance on the state as well as on caregivers.
- Increased individual and household income means persons with disabilities are more resilient and are better able to cope with challenges.
- Work provides a sense of purpose, leads to increased self-esteem and greater autonomy. For families, having another adult contribute to family income decreases stress and relationship strainsⁱⁱⁱ.

2. Ensuring employment of persons with disabilities is better for the country's economy

- Excess unemployment and economic inactivity by persons with disabilities means the country will have a lower labour productivity and therefore a lower GDP. Loss of GDP due to inactivity of persons with disabilities is calculated to be between 1 and 7% in low and middle income countriesⁱⁱ.
- Excess unemployment also costs the government millions in lost tax revenue, particularly if persons with disabilities are not employed or setting up business within the formal economy.
- Employment contributes to a decrease in spending on social protection programmes as those earning an income will no longer be dependent on assistanceⁱⁱ.
- Employment of persons with disabilities also leads to larger disposable income and thus increased consumption and spending in the communityⁱⁱⁱ.

3. Inclusion in employment increases business profit

- People with disabilities, calculated to be 15% of the population, are a largely untapped consumer market. Without staff with disabilities on board, companies may not be making their products and services accessible, missing out on a large potential customer base.
- An inclusive working environment is good for morale of all employees and increases general attendance and productivity. This means less money is spent on absenteeism, hiring and training.
- Setting up provisions for reasonable accommodations facilitates retention and return to work of employees who develop impairments over timeⁱⁱⁱ.

4. Access to employment is embedded in legal frameworks

- Persons with disabilities have the right to employment as stated in multiple legal frameworks as well as the Cambodian constitution.
- Including persons with disabilities in employment will help the Royal Government of Cambodia to achieve their obligations as well as their development goals.

National and International Legislative and Frameworks / Provisions

Constitution of the Kingdom of Cambodia

The 1993 Constitution recognizes fundamental human rights, equal rights to employment, equal benefit from the same job, and assistance for persons with disabilities.

National Disability Strategic Plan

Strategic Objective One focuses on Increasing Work and Economic Security.

Law on the Protection and the Promotion of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Article 10 states that the state will promote livelihoods for persons with disabilities.

Sub-Decree 108 OrNKR.BK On Determination of Quota and Formality for Recruitment of Disabled Persons

This sub-decree determines that a quota of persons with disabilities (1% or 2% of staff depending on size of the departments / companies / organisations) that are to be employed by ministry and state institutions.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Article 27 of the UNCRPD says that “States Parties shall safeguard and promote the realization of the right to work, including for those who acquire a disability [...]”.

Sustainable Development Goals

The Sustainable Development Goals aim to, by 2030, “achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young persons and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value” (goal 8.5).

Addis Ababa Action Agenda

Article 16 states “We will encourage the full and equal participation of women and men, including persons with disabilities, in the formal labour market.”

Incheon Strategy “Make the Right Real”

Goal 1 is focused on reducing poverty and enhance work and employment prospects for persons with disabilities.

ⁱ United Nations. (2018). Disability and Development Report.

ⁱⁱ S. Buckup. (2009). The price of exclusion: The economic consequences of excluding persons with disabilities from the world of work. Geneva.

ⁱⁱⁱ L. Morgon Banks and S. Polack. (2014). The Economic Costs of Exclusion and Gains of Inclusion of People with Disabilities Evidence from Low and Middle Income Countries.