

What is the impact of inclusive employment for persons with disabilities?

The question and the problem

Inclusive employment across the globe has been prioritised by numerous institutions and governments. According to Handicap International, inclusive employment “refers to all activities which enable an individual to gain access to decent remunerated work.” Yet, in low-to-middle income countries, LMICs, more than 80% of persons with disabilities are unemployed. However, it is unclear what exactly the impact of inclusive employment is for Persons with Disabilities as there is very little information available in LMICs with the majority of the existing research focussing on the impact of inclusive employment for employers. This brief aims to synthesise the evidence available to answer the question as to what impact inclusive employment has on persons with disabilities and what can be done to overcome some of the core challenges.

Recommendations

- Recommendation #1: More focus is needed on the experiences of persons with disabilities in gaining access to employment
- Recommendation #2: Employment interventions can be integrated into health care settings.
- Recommendation #3: Individual adaptations for employees in the competitive labour market are needed.
- Recommendation #4: More focus is needed to address gender gaps.
- Recommendation #5: Greater collaboration is needed.

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Challenges

Challenge #1: There is a lack of research focussing on the benefits and impact that inclusive employment has on persons with disabilities.

- A large amount of studies focusses on the impact and benefits of inclusive employment for employers and the economy with very few noting the impact for Persons with Disabilities. Some studies refer to this as secondary benefits.
- There is a great need to focus more on the target group, the benefits and impact it has on Persons with Disabilities as this would give direction to interventions/programmes and employers as to the way forward to improve inclusive employment practices.

Challenge #2: Employment is a key social determinant of health, persons who are unemployed typically have worse health than employed persons.

- As many LMICs do not provide universal healthcare, inclusive employment provides Persons with Disabilities with an income that has a strong relationship with their access to healthcare services on the individual level. Furthermore, unemployment also affects a person's mental health negatively
- There is a need for the health sector to also play a role in helping Persons with Disabilities gain employment

Challenge #3: For some Persons with Disabilities, the competitive labour market led to an increase in levels of stress and anxiety.

- For some Persons with Disabilities, working in the competitive labour market created job stress related to performance pressure or environmental pressures at work.
- When persons with disabilities do work, they generally do so for longer hours and lower incomes, have fewer chances of promotion, and are at greater risk of becoming unemployed for longer periods. This job insecurity and environments greatly contribute to stress levels.

Challenge #4: the impact of inclusive employment vary between men and women on various levels as women are at a higher disadvantage compared to men.

- Men are three times more likely to be employed compared to women; a significant gender gap within the field of inclusive employment underscores the need to make opportunities more accessible to women
- Thus, there is a great need to place greater emphasis on employment for women to overcome poverty and improving their livelihoods.

Challenge #5: Inclusive employment improves the quality of life, increases self-esteem, sense of community and social status. Cite source? However, 80% of Persons with Disabilities in LMICs are unemployed which also leads to very little data being available and a dearth of research and reviews on the matter.

- More collaboration is needed to increase inclusive employment. The role of Disabled Peoples Organisations (DPOs) have proven to be effective in providing job placement and income generating activities. However, DPOs are highly resource constrained in low resource settings.
- Due to the low number of cases of inclusive employment, the vast majority of studies and reviews have noted that there is a great need for more and higher quality research to be done in LMICs

How did we find answers?

We conducted a review of reviews, examining systematic, scoping, critical and literature reviews and one study to review evidence on the topic of the impacts that inclusive employment has on persons with disabilities. All recommendations are based on reviews of literature from low- and middle-income countries, as well as some reviews of literature from high-income countries where the recommendations made, were transferable to low-resource settings. This evidence brief is based on the findings of 4 reviews from low- and middle-income country evidence, 3 reviews from high-income countries, 1 study from both high and low- and middle-income countries and the WHO World Report on Disability, Chapter 8: Work and Employment that is also based on literature from both high and low- and middle-income countries.

Evidence-informed Recommendations and Actions

Key Recommendations	Actions
More focus is needed on the experiences of persons with disabilities	<i>Inclusive employment programmes or interventions should document their outcomes and impact for persons with disabilities along with employers.</i>
Employment interventions can be integrated into health care settings.	<i>In order to prevent poor health and unemployment of persons with disabilities, employment programmes and interventions need an integrated team with health care workers/rehabilitation staff? and employment specialists who can help reduce barriers for Persons with Disabilities entering the workforce.</i>
Individual adaptations for employees in the competitive labour market are needed.	<i>Program directors and/or coordinators need to make sure that employees are properly supported in their work and provide assistance in the event that a person is not managing with job stress. Greater job security and regulation of wages and hours worked should be afforded to Persons with Disabilities</i>
More focus is needed to address gender gaps	<i>More initiatives are needed that specifically focus on assisting women, as well as greater emphasis can be placed on gender differences in existing initiatives by giving priority to women</i>
Greater collaboration is needed	<i>The role of and ability of DPOs need to be extended and acknowledged in order to achieve higher levels of collaboration with DPOs. More financial and human resource support can strengthen their abilities greatly. Further collaboration is also needed to achieve more and higher quality research.</i>

Policy priorities

There is a greater need to support women with disabilities in gaining employment. Women with disabilities face different challenges than men, which are often not included in the decision making process. Thus, policy-makers need to place greater emphasis on and address the differences between males and females with disabilities. More collaboration is needed between various stakeholders, such as governments, the ministries of health, DPOs, healthcare professionals, policy-makers, employers of Persons with Disabilities as well as organisations focussing on gender relations. This diverse approach and collaboration would help develop policies, programmes, and employment initiatives that would benefit all parties involved and increase levels of employment among persons with disabilities and for employers to hire them. It is highly recommended that policy-makers enact and enforce effective anti-discrimination

legislation to ensure that public policies provide incentives and support Persons with Disabilities to seek and maintain employment that provides job security and regulation of wages and working hours.

Conclusion

In high-income countries and especially low- and middle-income countries, there is a lack of literature that explicitly examines the impact and benefits of inclusive employment for persons with disabilities. Instead, the majority of literature available examines the benefits of inclusive employment for employers and economies. Although this is of great importance, it is essential to look at how it affects the target group in order to achieve successful implementation of inclusive employment practices. Moreover, the varying impacts on different groups of persons with disabilities also need to be addressed, such as women with disabilities and persons with different types of disabilities. With the current lack of evidence available, it is difficult to make good decisions that would benefit all parties involved.

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GAPS & RESEARCH NEEDS

There needs to be more and higher quality research as well as reviews done on the impact of inclusive employment in LMICs.

More studies need to also focus on the impact for persons with disabilities and not solely on the impact on employers and the economy in general.

In LMICs as well as HICs, research needs to go beyond simply persons with disabilities and address intersectionality such as gender, race, nationality, age, religion etc.