

Trade Unions, Disability and Decent Work

A Global Overview

Research conducted for ILO

Surveys from PSI and ILO

1. **Disability and trade unions...**
2. **Initiatives around the world...**
3. **Realizing decent work...**
4. **Reflections and way forward...**

1. Disability and trade unions...

Disability = Impairment + Barriers

What do trade unions do? On disability

- Awareness raising
- Mobilization of workers
- Ensuring Decent Work
- Improving productivity
- Advocacy on labour standards

What do trade unions do? On disability

- Awareness raising
Attitude change and sensitization on disability
- Mobilization of workers
Raising the voice of workers with disabilities
- Ensuring Decent Work
Non-discrimination, accessibility, inclusion
- Improving productivity
Adaptations to work, services and products
- Advocacy on labour standards
Disability and labour-related legislation and policies

Challenges

- Social position of disabled people
- Attitudes and awareness
- Infrastructure and accessibility
- Employers and inclusive employment
- Many stakeholders involved

Challenges Opportunities

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2. Initiatives around the world...

International Frameworks

- UN Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities
- Sustainable Development Goals
- International Labour Standards
 - C159: Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment
 - Fundamental Conventions
 - C111, Discrimination in Employment and Occupation
 - R71, Employment (Transition from War to Peace)

All over the world

- Extensive national-level activities
 - Information from 50+ countries
 - Low, Middle and High Income; Conflict situations
- Some regional and global level activities
 - Europe and East Africa have regional-level activities
 - Some global unions taking action
 - Education International
 - Public Services International
 - UNI Global

Different national contexts

- Countries with established disability legislation and services
 - E.g. Canada, Ireland, France, United Kingdom
- Latin America: disability in transition
 - E.g. Brazil, Colombia, Peru, Uruguay
- Middle/low income and weaker disability services
 - E.g. Pakistan, Uganda, Tanzania, Vietnam,
- Crisis/Post-crisis
 - E.g. Iraq, Palestine

Good, but...

- Disability at the heart of what trade unions do
- Transformative, and achieving decent work

But...

- Actions fragmented at all levels
- International divide between workers' movement and disability sector

3. Realizing decent work...

Promoting Decent Work, or not?

- Are disabled people involved in design and decision-making?
- Increasing opportunity or capacity of disabled people for decent work?
- Breaking stereotyped ideas or positions of disabled people?

Pillars of Decent Work

- Employment
- Social Protection
- Social Dialogue
- Standards and Rights at Work

Promoting Employment

Trade Union for Industrial and Commercial Workers, Tanzania

- Partnership with CCBRT, a disability NGO.
- Trade union facilitated access to employers.
- Survey of 10,000+ workers.
- Created employer demand to hire disabled people.
- Over 150 persons with disabilities employed.

Rights-based Social Protection

Trade Union Congress, United Kingdom

- Extensive participation of workers with disabilities
- *Manifesto for Disability Equality* includes social protection:
 - Affirmation of right to work
 - Properly funded support for independent living
 - Resources for health services
 - Reform of disability assessment

Social Dialogue and Networks

Union of Metallurgists in Osasco and Region, São Paulo, Brazil.

- “Beyond the door of the factory”
- “Working with everyone”
 - Government agencies, employers, civil society, disabled people, disability experts, private sector.
- Research and advocacy

Standards and Rights

National Convention of Workers (PIT-CNT), Uruguay

- Actions in member unions as well as national confederation
- Inclusion in collective bargaining
- Establishing dialogue on disability
- Campaign for law on employment of persons with disabilities in private sector

Beyond Decent Work...

- Contributing to wider social change on disability
 - Attitudes, accessibility, inclusion
- Trade unions working with employers to make services and products accessible and inclusive.
For example:
 - Education inclusive of persons with disabilities.
 - Nursing responsive to rehabilitation needs.

Gender and Equality

- Gender and disability share many aspects
 - Crosscutting identity issue
- Some trade unions are integrating these issues
 - Intersectional work
 - Commitments to diversity and equality
- In many cases disability and gender initiatives appear to be separate
 - Risk for both sides

4. Reflections and way forward...

Lessons learned

- Understanding disability is a process
 - Starts from different places
 - Developed through relationship
- Disability is often deprioritized
 - Before its importance is assessed
- Many of these initiatives are fragmented
 - Not always connected even within the same country
- Disability is a different way of working for unions
 - Opportunity to expand union membership and action

“Important for the heart of our organization, in letting us share and develop in a more comprehensive and inclusive way.”

Union Obrera de la Construcción de la Republic Argentina.

“The presence of this element among other components offers a strong message to the world: aligned to the values of justice, equality and non-discrimination between people of any background.”

Palestine General Federation of Trade Unions.

“When there are disabled people in the trade union, the social climate improves, and the enterprise improves as well.”

Jose Ma Fernández de Villalta, specialist, Spain.

Trade Unions

- Check and deepen understanding of disability
 - Connect with organizations and disabled workers.
- Mainstreaming within union activities
 - Participation, accessibility.
- Opportunities for work on disability
 - At each level from worker to nation
- Strengthen coalitions and partnerships
 - Participate and facilitate

Global Actors

- Deepen our understanding
 - Awareness, assessment and dissemination.
- Strengthen coalitions
 - Bridging workers' movement and disability sector
- Build Capacity
 - Develop resources and forums
- Support workers' organizations
 - Tools and trainings
 - Mainstreaming disability

Thank you.

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