



Disability Resource Mapping

Project Name: Livelihood Initiatives to Foster Employability and Entrepreneurship of IDPs and host populations in Georgia – LIFE Georgia



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The Disability Resource Mapping Report is one of the most important documents that guides WVG programming and operations towards effective planning and successful implementation of activities.

First and foremost, I would like to thank those who provided us support in the process of doing the assessment. The main credit for the successful completion of the assessment goes to the organizations “Atinati”, “RDFG” and EFD, two the beneficiaries, who shared their story and suggestions with external consultant. Special thanks goes to the WV Georgia staff members from the NO who provided input to the process.

I trust that this report will carefully reflect their views, opinions and perceptions and will serve primarily to them.

GLOSSARY

CBO	Community Based Organization
DPI/AP	Disabled People's International/Asia Pacific
ECDD	Ethiopian Center for Disability and Development
EfD	Education for Democracy
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
HR	Homan Resource
IDI	In depth Interview
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMS	Info Mind Solutions
KII	Key Informant Interview
MFO	Microfinance Organization
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NO	National Office
PWD	Person with DIsability
PEPDEL	Promoting the Employment and Employability of Persons with Disabilities through effective Legislation
RDFG	Association Rural Development for Future Georgia
USA	United States of America
VET	Vocational Education and Training
WVG	World Vision Georgia

I. SUMMARY DATA

Programme/Project	“Livelihood Initiatives to Foster Employability and Entrepreneurship of IDPs and host populations in Georgia – LIFE Georgia”
Research Type	Desk research and mapping
Research Purpose	Conducting disability resource mapping in regard to livelihood opportunities, identifying available services, best practices, resources and capacity internationally, countrywide and in target and host communities. Provide grassroots level and policy level recommendations
Primary Methodologies	Desk research, focus groups, surveys
Project Location	<p>Tbilisi</p> <p>ShidaKartli: (Gori, Kaspi, Kareli): Gori town, Khurvaleti, Shavshvebi, Skra, Karaleti, Berbuki, Mokhisi, Teliani, Metekhi, Akhalsopeli (villages along ABL) and 11 IDP adjacent settlements (incl. Sakasheti, Verkhvebi);</p> <p>Samegrelo: (Zugdidi, Tsalenjikha, Senaki): Zugdidi town, Orsantia, Koki, KaxaTi, Darcheli, Ingiri, Anaklia, Ganmuxuri, Zedaeweri, Chxoria, Chkaduashi, Odishi, Potsko-Etseri, Jvari, Rukhi</p>
Start date	May, 2015
End date	August, 2015

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The aim of the research was to conduct disability resource mapping in regard to livelihood opportunities; to identify available services, best practices, resources and capacity internationally, countrywide and in target and host communities.

Primary data collection included key informant interviews, in depth interviews, FGDs and observations. KIIs were held with project staff, field workers, representatives of MOLHSA, VET, HR representatives of business organizations; FGD and observation was used to assess attitudes of neighbors living close to project's direct beneficiaries; in depth interviews were used to assess attitudes of beneficiaries: PWD or parents of disabled kids. 12 disabled person was interviewed in total and two families having a disabled kid were visited.

International best practices were analyzed using desk research approach. Experiences from other countries show that the efficiency of working on employment of PWDS is facilitated by the following approaches:

- Cooperation with employment agencies; or organizing job fairs with the participation of PWDS.
- Working in cooperation with human resource professionals; Training business organizations and public sector. Increasing involvement of business companies, for example, through introducing monetary, or nonmonetary rewards.
- Showing the successful cases through media.
- Training the basic skills of PWDS; enhancing specific skills.
- Working on the legislative and normative acts with governmental systems; determining quotas at the legal level.

Attitudes of project implementers are positive; their perception regarding employment of PWD is quite realistic. They acknowledge that any improvement that can be achieved in terms of better socialization of a PWD, or their economic empowerment can be considered as a success. Project implementers know the beneficiaries quite well and try to adjust project activities to the needs of a particular beneficiary. They try to get maximum results while working with each disabled person and consider it very important to use individual approach with each beneficiary; to do the case management with deep professional supervision.

Attitudes of the neighbors are very friendly. In many cases, PWDS and their neighbourhood live as one big family, friendly and in harmony. But as the research showed, the attitudes within community vary. Some do not know how to act with a PWD and try to be extremely attentive that in most cases is harmful for a person. Community's attitudes depend upon whether they had direct contacts with PWDS, whether they are informed on the matter, and whether they "know" how to approach PWDS.

Assessment showed that for social integration the attitudes of PWDS have crucial importance. Personal attitudes are the primary factor that should be addressed while working with PWD.

As research showed, following internal/psychological factors are important for successfully integrating PWD within a society:

- To come to terms with one's disabilities, to overcome this fact emotionally and to continue life with the mindset that nothing is impossible and one can do as much as anyone else.
- Person's inclinations, wish to earn a little income on his own; distinguished motivation to realize oneself.
- Belief in that the improvement of one's condition depends, first of all, upon oneself, and on support from community, only afterwards

VET institutions are adapted for providing professional education to PWD. Business sector has taken some steps in terms of creating social projects. Large business companies seem to be more socially oriented and ready to offer employment or internship opportunity to a PWD and a lot depends on a mediating partner (NGO). As interviews with business companies revealed at this point there are no state programs that would simplify work of business companies and give them direction, model what kind of social projects to implement in regards to employing PWD, therefore companies act on their individual will, initiate ideas themselves and implement them. Some companies have willingness but still need more encouragement and sometimes enforcement from the outside/from the state.

Legislative analysis showed that the legal act, such as the Georgian Law on Social Protection of Persons with Disabilities has been passed in 1995 and still needs to be revised. Georgian Organic Law: the Labour Code defines general standards regarding employing PWDS. But the legislation does not recognize particular mechanisms in connection with the monitoring of PWDS employed at a private labour sector. Georgian law on public office does not at all recognize and distinguish between the specific norms regarding the strengthening of PWDS rights, such as the regulations on affirmative action as proposed by the Labour Code.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1. General background

“World Vision Georgia” is implementing disability integration and awareness-raising component, as a sub-grantee within the frames of the project “Livelihood Initiatives to Foster Employability and Entrepreneurship of IDPs and Host Populations in Georgia – LIFE Georgia” funded by European Commission.

The role and input of World Vision Georgia in this process is significant. In order to further foster inclusion across the different sectors and services related to livelihoods, *World Vision Georgia* as a sub-grantee, provides advice and guidance on disability mainstreaming and disability-accessible best practices. “World Vision Georgia” tries ensure disability mainstreaming through experts support to warrant that the project activities are carried out based on inclusion practices.

“World Vision Georgia” works in close collaboration with project implementing partners “Atinati” in Samegrelo region, RDFG in Shida Kartli region, as well as EFD that is in charge of building linkage with VET colleges and providing professional education to the program beneficiaries. The project is aimed to raise awareness on disability issues, to sensitize relevant stakeholders. Business and entrepreneurship skills trainings are provided to the beneficiaries. At the same time linkages are created with VET colleges and vocational trainings are provided to the beneficiaries based on their interests. Personal and professional development trainings are provided to job seekers and linkages are built with potential job or internship providers. In addition business financial support or start-up kits are provided to the beneficiaries who are being selected based on their business plan. All these activities are directed towards empowering disabled persons or their families economically.

Among mentioned key activities, it has been decided to conduct desk research and mapping of the available resources (on individual, societal, or state level), in order to initiate policy level and advocacy initiatives directed towards achieving more integrated disability inclusive livelihood approach.

3.2. Research Aim and Objectives

The main aim of the research is conducting disability resource mapping in regard to livelihood opportunities, identifying available services, best practices, resources and capacity internationally, countrywide and in target and host communities, specifically:

- Analyzing and summarizing international best practices, services and resources for inclusive livelihood programs
- Analyzing attitudes of local employers, business owners, VET institutions
- Analyzing attitudes of project implementers
- Analyzing attitudes of beneficiaries and their families regarding employment and livelihood initiatives
- Analyzing and summarizing existing employment and livelihood legislation and governmental programs, policies, initiatives and vision; Identifying responsible parties; assess referral system and level of collaboration between the mentioned parties.

3.3. Assessment Process and Methodology Overview

In order to address the research objectives several research methods have been used:

- Desk research, secondary data analysis
- Qualitative research methods:
 - In depth interviews
 - Focus group discussions
 - Key informant interviews

The desk review was done, secondary data has been reviewed and analysed at the initial stage to address the first research objective. Examples of several countries, among them a few developing (Ethiopia, Thailand) and developed (USA for example) countries have been included in the analysis.

Interviews with program and implementing partner organization staff was held to address the third objective (to study attitudes of the project implementers). Interviews were held with RDFG project manager, RDFG project assistant, field mobilisers of “Verkhvebi” and “Sakasheti” villages, “Atinati” project assistant, “Atinati” business trainer, employment officers both in “Atinati” and RDFG. Interview covered core questions indicating their attitudes and opinion about the contextual factors. At the same time information was gathered about the beneficiaries, before directly meeting with them and interviewing.

Attitudes of potential employers was identified using KIs. Key representatives of potential employers, three big business companies were identified and interviewed. Representative of one of the existing VET institutions has been interviewed as well as EFD representative.

Attitudes of beneficiaries and their families were studied using IDIs and FGDs. In depth interviews were held with direct beneficiaries (person with disability) and his/her family members; one mini FGD was held with indirect beneficiaries (neighbors living in the same village).

Two target villages were identified in Shida Kartli, one located near Gori (“Verkhvebi” settlement) and another located farther from Gori (“Sakasheti”). More than three villages were visited in Samegrelo. In total 14 beneficiaries have been visited and interviewed. Among them 12 were adults with disability, two families had a child with disability and parents/grandparent were interviewed.

Age, gender, type of disability and activeness vs passiveness was taken into consideration while choosing potential respondents for the IDI interviews. Interviews were held with potential beneficiaries who have not yet applied for a job, or the ones who have already applied.

FINDINGS

4.1. Analyzing and Summarizing International Best Practices

Analyzing international practices, sharing experiences from other countries allows choosing more efficient approaches in the process of working on employment or self-employment of persons with disabilities (PWDS). Analysis of international practices was one of the objectives of the research. After analyzing practices of several countries, major points have been summarized regarding the inclusive livelihood initiatives.

Experiences from other countries show that the efficiency of working on inclusive livelihood of PWDS is facilitated by the following approaches:

- Involving PWDS at the particular stages of planning or implementing the program.
- Cooperation with employment agencies.
- Organizing job fairs with the participation of PWDS.
- Introducing the issues of PWDS in the law curriculums at the universities.
- Working in cooperation with human resource professionals.
- Trainings for business organizations and public sector.
- Cooperation with microfinance organizations.
- Increasing involvement of business companies, for example, through introducing monetary, or nonmonetary benefits.
- Showing the successful cases through media.
- Training the basic skills of PWDS; enhancing specific skills.
- Working on the legislative and normative acts with governmental systems; determining quotas at the legal level.

A non-governmental organization – the Ethiopian Center for Disability and Development (ECDD) – has been undertaking the issues of PWDS in Ethiopia¹ since 2005. ECDD is focused on making PWDS involved at all stages of developmental programs.

Engaging PWDS at the planning stage of the program makes it possible to meet their wishes, needs and rights and to provide the infrastructure that can increase their social participation and economic welfare.

Experience from other countries indicates that the involvement of PWDS at the stage of program implementation, even in the form of training facilitators, makes the working process more effective. This fosters improvement of self-confidence of the participants with disabilities, while the low self-confidence can be viewed as one of the main obstacles to their social engagement in a number of cases.

Apart from the immediate engagement of PWDS, as noted above, cooperation with employment agencies is also effective.

The ECDD together with Info Mind Solutions PLC (IMS), a leading private employment agency, operating mainly as a web-based company, has been working in Addis Ababa to help PWDS seeking jobs have access to employment opportunities. IMS has tried to suit disabled job seekers, modifying its website (adding a few questions about the disabilities and job support needs) to encourage them to apply for vacancies. Also,

¹ Ethiopia is a developing country, with the population of 90,076,012 people, gross development product (GDP) per capita equals \$570, HDI 0.43, low (173rd), while Georgia's GDP is \$4433, HDI 0.74 (79th)

employers are recommended to hire PWDS. Furthermore, IMS occasionally includes a candidate with disabilities among its short-list consisting of five candidates. Since 2008, with the support of International Labour Organization (ILO) and ECDD, IMS has a special employee – the candidate relations officer – to help job seekers with disabilities in writing CVs and refining their interview skills. To increase the access to inclusive livelihood opportunities for people with visual impairment, the organization uses the following technique: the candidate relations officer reviews all relevant vacancies put out in newspapers and online sources and transcribes them into Braille. About 50 vacancies then are combined into a single Braille leaflet from which further five leaflets are prepared and distributed weekly to selected locations such as the blind association libraries; the leaflets are also available at various sites at Addis Ababa University where they can be easily accessed by visually impaired prospective graduates and campus community members.

Cooperation with the Human Resource Managers Association or with the Human Resource Club in order to change their attitudes and views is a commonplace practice in Ethiopia. The purpose of working with human resource (HR) professionals should not be solely to employ the PWDS. The trainings to improve the drawbacks revealed throughout the working process are also important. Workshops and trainings might be needed to foster awareness of PWDS among HR professionals, to influence them to be considerate toward the needs of job seekers with disabilities, to guide the HR professionals on how to work with PWDS and how to implement inclusive livelihood policies that, in turn, can create modern ways of working, and overall, bring greater efficiencies to their organizations.

In a number of cases, when job seekers with disabilities have higher education job fairs can be held to provide them with an opportunity to demonstrate their skills to potential employers. As the experience from other countries show, organizing job fairs where PWDS participate requires preliminary preparations. These includes orientation sessions and trainings in order to inform employers interested in employing workers with disabilities, to determine their labour market needs and PWDS awareness, to illustrate the advantages of hiring PWDS.

More efficient results regarding the PWDS employment and their engagement in business companies can be achieved if working with HR managers is combined with working with companies' management. Trainings for business organizations and public sector are common practices in the countries that are at their early stages of working on increasing PWDS engagement, employment and livelihood.

Cases of Business Companies

Representatives of various business companies share their experience of working with PWDS with the society. As a result of summarizing their experience, it can be said that it is necessary to show to the business companies, and to point out, the advantages of hiring PWDS.

Instead of focusing on a young person's disability, Susan Scott-Parker, the founder and chief executive of Business Disability Forum, the world's leading national employers' organisation focussed on disability as it affects business, emphasizes the importance of challenging questions that companies should be willing to pose to themselves: "What is wrong with our company? Why don't we know how to adapt the way we do things so that this person can do a great job for us?" She says it is important for a company to be disability-confident and for that to happen company should realize what it means to treat everyone fairly and on equal grounds. A disability-confident company encourages PWDS to grow as employees and individuals, and, as a result, company itself grows as a business and enjoys customer trust.

The representatives of the organizations who have some sorts of programs for PWDS give a high value to those programs and talk about their advantages. Cases vary from company to company. However, companies also talk about the difficulties or challenges that should be overcome along with hiring the PWDS.

The company Qualcomm, Telecommunications Company, having headquarter in California, USA, employing over 17,500 employees, has implemented the activities to raise the awareness, also the activities focused on training the professionals. The company cooperates with the university and is consistent in hiring young students with disabilities as interns or for full-time jobs. Qualcomm is also known for its growing engagement in and support for the annual San Diego carrier fair for PWDS.

Manpower is one of the largest employment company, American multinational firm that has employed more than 30,000 job seekers and is a world leader in innovative workforce solutions. The company is an illustrative case of how important can be the role of an employment agency in an effective participation of PWDS. In the words of Marta Artiles, Manpower's Chief Diversity Officer, "Bringing people into the workplace and connecting them to careers is Manpower's core mission, and we focus on people's capabilities, not disabilities, as a source for talent for our clients."²

Manpower launched a project, Ability, a collaborative program that mobilizes its own knowledge, skills and resources as well as those of local, reputed community-based organizations to understand PWDS talents and makes the best out of it. The program focuses on adjusting to the employment needs of local employers via a process that identifies disabled candidates with the required job skills. Project Ability, together with Community Based Organization (CBO), other CBOs and the State Department of Rehabilitation, becomes the medium for accumulating appropriate and qualified PWDS for employment purposes. Throughout many years, it has become Manpower's priority to encourage the access to meaningful job opportunities for the PWDS. Manpower has placed 115 PWDS into employment, with another 155 in talent pipeline.

This is an example of a company operating in the field of employment that has approached PWDS as a source of talent, fostered the same attitudes among potential employers and hence, played a part of an efficient solicitor between a job seeker and an employer.

As studies point out, despite many challenges, it has been possible to identify advantages of employing the PWDS. When asked about the positive experiences of working with PWDS, coworkers mentioned "contagious" excitement about their job (Ruggeri-Stevens & Goodwin, 2007). Some other benefits of hiring PWDS were as follows: dedication, stability, loyalty, and commitment. More palpable benefits may consist of state and federal assistance, tax credits, and funds for disability programs (Gen-qing & Qu, 2003; Ruggeri-Stevens & Goodwin, 2007; Stokes, 1990). Morgan and Alexander (2005) explored perceptions of employers with and without the experience of working with PWDS. More benefits were reported by employers with experience as compared to those without experience. The most common advantages were consistent attendance, workforce diversity, long-term employment and coworker partnerships.

Practices of various business or employment companies show that the preconditions of success lie in a proper communication with companies, conveying proper messages to them, illustrating the successful cases of other organizations and stressing the positive consequences of hiring PWDS for the company. Since employing PWDS in an open market is one of the primary objectives contrary to creating segregated work opportunities, a lot of effort is needed to identify and effectively collaborate with companies willing to give inclusive livelihood opportunities to PWDS.

There are business companies whose major business strategy is an inclusive workforce. Such companies have an in-depth approach toward the issue. Summarizing the principles of such companies enables to determine the major steps that are common practices when working with PWDS and, thus, can serve as certain guidelines for newbie organizations working in the field in question. As an international practice shows, the following are important factors for maximum engagement of PWDS in an organization:

2 Leading Practices on Disability Inclusion, *Business Leadership Network USBLN Disability at Work*

- Establishing inclusive business culture and communicating at every level of personnel.
- Hiring and retaining the best: emphasizing in the requisition form text that company encourages applications by qualified individuals with disabilities. Maintaining the policy of recruitment, hiring, or promotion that, in equal conditions, gives priority to a PWD. Offering trainings to employees with disabilities. Implementing internship programs for students with disabilities.
- Outreach and recruitment: a proactive action from a company to seek out the job candidates with disabilities themselves.
- Accessible information and communication technology: for full participation in the workforce, applicants and employees with disabilities must have access to and use of information and data that is comparable to those by applicants and employees without disabilities.
- Accountability and continuous improvement systems: providing training on disability-related matters to all personnel, especially to those engaged in recruitment, hiring, promotion, and retention procedures; establishing accountability measures, specific strategies and practices that a company can use to measure its progress toward creating an inclusive workplace; assigning and defining the scope of responsibility for implementation of inclusive workplace policies to specific responsible individuals.

Other Practices Supporting PWD Economically

Along with employment, self-employment of PWDS is equally important. “Self-employment is the act of generating one’s income directly from customers, clients or other organizations as opposed to being an employee of a business (or person).. Self-employed people generally find their own work rather than being provided with work by an employer, earning income from a trade or business that they operate.”³. As practices of various countries show, cooperation with microfinance organizations is of considerable significance. PWDS need assistance to increase their access to micro loans. Those who already have their businesses or are ready to launch one might lack self-confidence. Thus, certain medium is needed to promote their access to microfinance organizations. It is also desirable to communicate the main message to microfinance organizations. On the one hand, awareness of and information on disabilities is needed, but it is not sufficient to provide only physical rehabilitation to meet the needs of PWDS. Economic inclusion is a priority and this is the message MFOs should receive.

Promotional activities can be viewed as another aspect that is a prerequisite for a success. To make business companies more interested in the issue, the so called “Inclusive Employment Awards” can be held at initial stages (Ethiopia has such a practice). Award categories Can include: employer hiring the greatest number of disabled persons, employer with highest number of disabled persons in their personnel, small business employing disabled persons, and an achievement award to a human resources employer who has made a commitment to disability. The advantages of this international practice are as follows: increasing the general awareness of the issue, promoting PWDS employment and prompting business companies to carry out more initiatives.

Along with increasing external promotional factors, training of PWDS is of crucial importance. Basic skills training, business skills training, teaching to draw up a CV, exercising business communication skills are all important and necessary for them to get employed and then get efficiently engaged in the working process, whether it is a position of a call center operator, supermarket assistant, or a job in a small industry. Consequently, it is important to increase the access of PWDS to such trainings.

3 <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Self-employment>

In many countries, Bangkok being one such example, it is a common practice to integrate a disability perspective into a law curriculum at the universities. This helps to provide a basic education for all students and enhances understanding of diversity for both, faculty and students.

As international practice reveals, alongside all abovementioned aspects, it is important to work on legislative and normative acts with governmental organs. Leaning upon the experiences of certain countries, this approach can result in creating a single act, such as the “Right to Employment of Persons with Disability” (Proclamation No. 568/2008) created in Ethiopia.

Important legislative changes had taken place in Vietnam⁴ where only 30% of adult PWDS had a job and income. The changes encouraged more support for PWDS employment. As a result, on 17 June 2010, Vietnam enacted a national Law on Persons with Disabilities that came into effect on 1 January 2011. The new law is a mandate for equal social participation for PWDS through accommodation and access to health care, rehabilitation, education, employment, vocational training, cultural services, sports and entertainment, transportation.

Determining quotas at a legal level is one of the approaches adhered to by number of countries. „A quota system, in the employment context, is a hiring system that gives preference to protected group members. Quota systems are designed to correct adverse impact, resulting from employment practices that appear neutral but have a discriminatory effect on a protected group.“⁵ Several countries focus on enforcement of legislation where there is a quota for employment of PWDS. Quotas are as follows: 7% in Italy, 6% in France and Poland, 5% in Germany, 4% in Austria, 3% in Turkey⁶, 2% in Korea and Spain. Regulations are applied to those employers who have certain minimum number of workers; in Korea 300 workers are required, 50 in Spain and Turkey, and 15 to 25 elsewhere. Some countries have double or even triple requirements for people with severe disabilities. In case obligation is not met by the employer, predefined fee should be paid⁷. Some countries do not have any sanction (Spain for example), but most of the countries have small sanction (additional payroll tax of about 0.5%, Germany for example), while a few countries impose high sanction (1-4% of the payroll, for example France). Some countries even have bonuses for the employers who employ PWD more than required by predefined quotas. Lack of sanctions and enforcement instruments can be considered as an insufficiency of the system. It is more effective if a sanction is imposed and a special fee is paid to special funds (Germany, Hungary, Czech Republic) that distribute money to employees with disabilities, employers with PWD or service providers having special activities for PWD economic empowerment.

The Law for Employment Promotion of Persons with Disabilities had also been passed by the Japanese government, making it obligatory for companies to procure a certain percentage of PWDS at their workplaces.

Experiences from many countries show that the media coverage of successful cases of PWDS is an essential precondition for killing off the stereotypical attitudes toward the social participation of PWDS

.As can be demonstrated from international practice, such media coverage is a common and efficient means to improve PWDS issues. Informing huge audiences on a successful case, generally, promotes non-discriminatory climate that can be regarded as a prerequisite for creating equal opportunities. Information can spread quickly in small towns while in the cities the media – television, radio, newspapers, magazines, the internet, social media and yet another forms – are rather crucial in influencing public opinion and attitudes. In Bangkok, Thailand⁸, the ILO in partnership with Irish Aid, carries out the project – Promoting the Employment and Employability of Persons with Disabilities through effective Legislation (PEPDEL) – through Disabled People’s International/Asia Pacific (DPI/AP) to endorse positive images of PWDS in the media and to prompt a climate of non-

4 Ethiopia is a developing country, with the population of 90,630,000 people, gross development product (GDP) per capita equals \$2,233, HDI 0.64, medium (121st)

5 <http://definitions.uslegal.com/q/quota-system/>

6 Turkey, is a developing country, that has GDP per capita \$10,482 and HDI 0.759 (69rd),

7 http://www.euro.centre.org/data/1393943316_63424.pdf

8 Thailand, is a developing country, that has GDP per capita \$5,771 and HDI 0.722 (89rd),

discrimination and equal opportunity for PWDS at economical and social levels. A main aim of the project is to encourage the development of a media industry policy on disability, to develop the media guidelines that foster more positive, inclusive images of PWDS.

The way how the issue is being covered is equally important. There are cases when media tries to arouse pitiful feelings or to make a hero out of PWD. However, including PWDS in regular programs of television or radio along with other types of media is more efficient, providing fair and balanced representation and opposing commonplace negative stereotypes about PWDS.

To summarize, complex approach is needed; overcoming both, physical and psychological obstacles; changes in normative acts; increasing access to employment or grant acquisition. In any case, as practice shows, constant monitoring and quality evaluation are important.

4.2. Attitudes of Project Implementers

In frames of the research, interviews were carried out with the representatives of partner organizations in both, Semegrelo (“Atinati”) and Shida Kartli (RDFG) regions.

According to project implementers, lots of factors should be considered while working with PWDS:

- Adapted physical environment -adjusting environment to the needs of PWDS is regarded important by project executors. Thus, in a number of cases, project executors relocated their trainings in such environments that could easily be accessed by the participants who use wheelchairs. In single cases, partner organization’s trainers held trainings for participants with disabilities at their homes. This indicates that executors accommodated to the needs of PWDS as much as possible.
- Careful selection of individual approaches – At first glance, this might not be considered as a matter of high significance, however, as the work experience of partners show, this is rather crucial issue; according to one of the project executor (“Atinati”), working process can be really efficient if individual approaches are selected for every single case. Representatives of partner organization (“Atinati”) who are in direct contact with every beneficiary, put utmost effort when working with each person. In their view, preliminary assessment of person’s resources is necessary in order to offer the activities suited to each person’s resources. Project executors aspire to get maximum results while working with each PWD individually. Such are their perspectives while working with every PWD involved in the project.
- One of the main motivations of the project executors is to increase the participation of PWDS in the community, to integrate them in social environment. *“It is necessary to, at least, make them leave their homes; this can already be regarded as a positive outcome,”* says the representative of a partner organization who thinks that if a person with severe mental disabilities attends the training, even though they can not understand the training’s substance, it is still a positive thing and one step forward to person’s integration into society.
- Employment of PWDS is seen as a prerequisite of their families’ economic strengthening which is undoubtedly a highly valuable outcome. Besides, project executors talk about the so called psychological outcomes and they view them as quite important achievement even when employment is not followed by significant increase in income of the families. *“There will be positive psychological outcomes. When PWDS create something meaningful this will help them raise their self-esteem, procure belief in oneself.”*
- According to project implementers, even if one case of very successful employment or self-employment takes place as a result of their efforts, it will be such a distinguished case, such an encouragement for others that in future, it might reflect upon far more crucial outcomes. *“It will serve as a model for others. To those who are passive, the attitudes of passive people will change and become more optimistic.”*

Summing up, it can be said that according to the project implementers, each PWD should be self-realized in correspondence to their resources, competencies.

Basing upon subjective observation, it can be said that the attitudes of field workers, that is, of those who have immediate contacts with PWDS, are similar; they support PWDS employment, even the smallest attempt toward their socialization is highly valued. However, their working styles, general approaches differ. These approaches are different among partners working in Samegrelo and those working in Shida Kartli. Sharing their respective experiences with each other might prove useful.

4.3. Analyzing Attitudes of Beneficiaries and their Families Regarding Employment and Livelihood Initiatives

In frames of the research, fourteen PWDS had been visited and interviews carried out with them and with a member of their families. Furthermore, the attitudes of the neighbors toward PWDS employment and their social engagement had been assessed through observation, face-to-face interviews, or group conversations.

Attitudes of Society

According to field officers and trainers, there are good relationships between village residents. Negative attitudes to PWDS are not demonstrated by local population. Observing the interactions between the residents showed the same. In many cases, PWDS and their neighborhood live as one big family, friendly and in harmony.

To illustrate the attitudes of PWDS and of their community, the following cases might be considered.

Case #1. In the village of Kakhati, Zugdidi municipality, lives Zaza (optional name), a 45 years old man who has been using wheelchair for transportation for twelve years already. Currently, Zaza runs a café in front of his house. Café is located at a one-storey building. While constructing it, Zaza was assisted by his neighbors and family both, physically and financially. Café functions successfully and the visitors who by their visits help Zaza's business to function and to bring gain, are natural in perceiving the fact that the PWD runs his own business, is fully engaged in a community, and earns independently.

Case #2. In the village of Oktomberi, Zugdidi municipality, lives Badri (optional name), a 35 years old man who has an innate paralysis of one hand and one feet. Badri can move independently, can drive a car, but has difficulties in standing and performing physical work. His paralysis has never been an obstacle to him; as he recalls, he has been trying to do his best even in childhood and never stepped back from efforts. "During sports classes, I used to run around circles as much as other kids, although it was very hard for me. I remember getting the 8th place in a tournament at school," recalls Badri. Interactions with neighbors are so healthy and flawless that one can hardly tell there are disabilities in question. There is a mutual friendship between Badri and his neighbors. Whenever he can, he helps them, and during our visit, a group of neighbors were repairing the car parts for Badri, proving that there are no barriers between PWD and his immediate social circle. Moreover, Badri is employed, works at school as a teacher; he did not encounter any difficulties here either.

Case #3. In the village of Ingiri, Zugdidi municipality, lives Goga (optional name), 30 years old man who has been using wheelchair for transportation for eight years. It is difficult for Goga to move independently; currently, he needs more care and medical intervention as compared to Zaza, for according to doctors, Goga has a chance to stand on his feet. He can work on wood, is good at TV or car handicraft. Thus, he can earn for his small family. It should be noted that a neighbor often asks him to repair his technique; this indicates that PWDS self-employment is acceptable to the community. Goga wrote a project and awaits an answer regarding the grant. In his view, PWDS have the same employment opportunities as people with regular development. As others might need an acquaintance's recommendation at an early stages of job seeking, he might as well need a little "push" in terms of working materials and tools (he has asked for them in frames of the grant project, with

10% participation) to produce lots of things during the short period of time and to improve his life conditions.

Assessment showed that while in the past the members of PWDS families avoided the PWD to be seen in community (“*it was shameful, people did not let their kids go out*”), now the situation has changed. The attitudes of families and community have improved considerably. There is no fear of interacting with PWDS in a village community. Thus, on an attitudinal level, the climate is encouraging for PWDS employment or self-employment. Community is open to them.

However, it must be noted that basing upon indirect observation or upon the stories told by PWDS, the attitudes within community vary. “*One must not pity them, but perhaps there are people who do.*” Some get confused when they see a wheelchair or a person with obvious physical disabilities; they do not know how to act and try to be extremely attentive. But a PWD do not need this kind of attention, as explains one of the PWDS during our interview. Moreover, deep down they feel even hurt. This explanation was given by one of the PWDS who currently lives in a settlement for internally displaced persons (IDPS) near Gori (“Verkhvebi”, case #4). He neither feels any negative attitudes from the settlement dwellers, nor does he encounter any obstacles. But whenever he has to travel to Gori on his own about some business, he has encountered unhealthy, pitiful attitudes from several people which may stem from the lack of knowledge about the issues.

The cases reviewed here indicate that community’s attitudes depend upon whether they had direct contacts with PWDS, whether they are informed on the matter, and whether they “know” how to approach PWDS. Immediate contacts with PWDS change community’s attitudes. All of the abovementioned positive cases might well be the result of frequent interactions with a PWD.

An interview with one of the neighbor ladies living in an IDPS settlement can serve as some proof.

Meeting with a neighbor: The lady is an IDP, living in IDPS settlement “Verkhvebi”. Considering the frequent contacts with two PWDS living in the village, she finds everything that these persons do acceptable. The lady told us in details the achievements of her neighbor with disabilities – Givi (optional name), a 24 year old man; she told how good the relationships were between him and his neighborhood; how he could dispose everyone toward him. The lady herself spoke in positive terms about the young man and she seemed really happy to witness his progress. However, she could not answer the question whether Givi would be able to enjoy independent life in the future. She could not tell anything particular about what could be regarded as a success in the young man’s case. She could hardly imagine the life of a PWD, she did not know what to believe in. “*Well... I do not know what he can do... Well, he can try, he can repair shelves, help his mother.*”

The case indicates that a community, generally, does not have negative attitudes, does not exclude PWDS, but still has the stereotypical views: “*What they can do?*” In rare cases, some people think that the children with disabilities, even with slight mental impairments, should go to segregated, special schools and claim this with such self-confidence that listener can hardly have any doubts in its truth (neighbor from Sakasheti village). This suggests that there is still work do be done in regard to attitudes of community. Overcoming obstacles, improving attitudes can be done through immediate interactions with PWDS, getting acquainted with more successful cases; several examples from Zugdidi municipality can serve as some proof to this.

Further conclusions can be drawn from the comparisons of the communities living in the villages nearby Gori and nearby Zugdidi, albeit these conclusions are based more upon subjective observations. As a result of 20-25 or more years of cohabitation, the integration might be more obvious in Zugdidi municipality, whereas in villages near Gori, the IDP status acquired in 2008 is still a fresh trauma. More time has been needed for IDPS of Shida Kartli to adapt and to deal with this trauma, to meet their primary needs, and it can be said that they have just started to get along. Hence, the degree of integration is comparatively low in Shida Kartli and that is more apparent in the very case of PWDS families who might have more needs even if for only medical reasons. Accordingly, building a successful case among Shida Kartli’s beneficiaries, monitoring, management and good communication will play an important role in terms of improving attitudes.

Person's Attitudes

Assessment showed that for social integration the attitudes of PWDS have great, and in fact, crucial importance. As field work officers said, the reason behind the poor engagement of PWDS often lies in the person themselves or their families. On the one hand, there are individuals among PWDS who lead closed lives, do not even go out; however, on the other hand, there are individuals, whose inner strength, energy, and courage are so exceptional as to cause amazement. "I was amazed to see how superior he is with his mindset in comparison to other persons with regular development. He is very active," said RDFG project assistant.

A number of PWDS do not even consider themselves disabled. They said that the wheelchair had not changed anything for them. "This wheelchair is really a trifle, I do not care whether I need a wheelchair or not. The main thing is human mind, the main thing is that I have not changed," was said calmly by one of the persons who uses wheelchair. During the interviews, the PWDS who are already self-realized and socially integrated recall those early stages when their traumas had been fresh and they had to overcome initial difficulties. As Zaza, one of such persons recalls, the first year had been very hard psychologically. It was hard to adapt to sitting in a wheelchair, to care about oneself independently, but through personal strength and resolution the difficulties had been overcome.

As it became clear from the interview with Zaza (case #1), he could find his strength from getting to know and becoming friends with others, similarly or more severely disabled persons. *"I was in Ukraine, in rehabilitation center. At first I found it very hard. There was this young man, also in a wheelchair. When he noticed that I did not feel at ease, he started to talk to me. I told him how I happened to get there in my 33. He turned to me to say a very simple phrase that I still perfectly remember. He told me my problems were trifling; that I had lived 33 years like a man while he has been like this since his birth – sitting in a wheelchair. The young man had a cerebral palsy. This one phrase changed my mindset."*

Zaza – for whom the acquaintance with people in similar conditions as his and exchanging experience with them had been very encouraging – still keeps in touch and still has several friends with disabilities. In his view, these interactions and emotional support are of crucial importance.

If we try to distinguish the traits of character or attitudes that unite various self-realized PWDS, then we will come to the following internal factors:

- To come to terms with one's disabilities, to overcome this fact emotionally and to continue life with the mindset that nothing is impossible and one can do as much as anyone else.
- Person's inclinations, wish to earn a little income on his own; distinguished motivation to realize oneself.
- Belief in that the improvement of one's condition depends, first of all, upon oneself, and on support from community, only afterwards.

PWDS with such attitudes do exist and create the formula of success through their own success stories.

The case of a PWD displaced from Abkhazia, now settled in Zugdidi can serve as a perfect illustration.

Case #5. In compact settlement in Zugdidi, lives Koba (optional name), a 43 years old man, paralyzed below waist for 15 years and using wheelchair for transportation. Koba has a family, children and grandchildren. He had been living in a private rented house in a village for more than twenty years. There he ran a small shop since the very day of getting an injury. Apart from this shop, he had another source of income: he worked as a taxi-driver in a car with manual transmission. At this stage of his life, he has moved to compact settlement in Zugdidi and has not got a car anymore because of a road accident. Due to his character, belief, attitudes or the degree of adaptation, he devised an idea of a small business of a coffee machine, held negotiations with a grocery owner and is now waiting for an answer regarding the grant. Koba can be described as a well-disposed man full of energy; even a short communication with him can make anyone stronger and can fill anyone with

positive energy. It would be an understatement of his virtues not to mention that he represents an example of a person who has never fallen back, a man who tells his story with a smile, with an inner, almost cosmic, peace. As he himself said, “If I had stopped, who would have done the things that I was supposed to do? No one is safe from unfortunate accidents... Oh, I am just starting my life.”

It was inner belief, the dependence only on oneself that allowed Zaza to do impossible things: “life as a risk, sometimes you have to take risks, and those who do not take risks, do not drink champagne, as they say.” Zaza took risk when, relying only upon himself, he began to build a café, borrowed a loan from a bank. Only afterwards, several people came to help him. But it is apparent from his case, that initially, the inner strength and belief were crucial.

Zaza, Goga, and Koba, all three of them have come to terms with their situation, they do look for blame in anyone; emotionally, they have fully overcome their traumas. However, during the conversations, they recall the cases of other PWDS who are not self-realized and with whom they have troubles interacting. Unfortunately, there are people who have become selfish due to their situation, who, even after many years, are manipulating their family members, who have not coped with their traumas. “He is selfish, does not think about others, nothing makes him happy, is never satisfied. He did not overcome this tragedy. He is aggressive even toward me, ill-disposed, there is no sense in talking to him,” said one of the PWDS during the conversation.

The reality is as follows: a number of PWDS who have come to accept their situation believe in themselves, they are daring, and are struggling for life, and can achieve more in terms of employment/self-employment due to their inner strength than those PWDS who have similar physical or mental abilities but lack such strength.

The role of external factors should be mentioned here. In many cases, despite the personal readiness and efforts, external circumstances are not supportive. During the interview, one of the PWDS notes that unhealthy attitudes of community (1) and poor efficiency of the programs or procedures planned at the state level (2) can be regarded as the barriers that exist in the social environment.

A number of PWDS view the changes in social attitudes as a distant perspective, as an issue that can be solved only after some years: “*Only decades can change these attitudes. As long as we think we are the best... If we don't get more critical toward ourselves, there won't be any salvage; this is a global problem of Georgian nation that does not only reflect upon the situation of PWDS*”. Considering the current attitudes of society as well as the recommendations of the beneficiary and the practices of other countries, affirmative action might prove useful. “*I do not need pity, I need respect. I need the state system that in some cases will give preference to me. I need respect from the state when I have hard times: when I am standing in a queue in a bank and do not have time and energy to stand there; let them respect me only when I need it and when am in a hurry; let them prefer me in such cases,*” said one of the persons with physical disability (case #4, mentioned before) who thinks that given the present social mindset, the only effective approach at an initial stage is an affirmative action.

Assessment showed that relatively younger PWDS are at the different stage in terms of their attitudes, aspirations or self-realization. This suggests that different approaches – those that correspond to their age and needs – will be necessary while working with young PWDS.

Case #6. In IDPS settlement “Verkhkvebi”, near Gori, lives Givi, a 24 years old man with a slight mental impairment. He can communicate; his speech is intelligible, although his articulation is not coherent. In childhood, he used to go to school for the first nine years. He is socially active, open, sociable young man. He does not find difficulties in getting into contact with others. Neighbors describe him as a nice and sociable person. “He will say hello and greet you so nicely that you feel pleased and makes you want to greet him as well.” He is not mature emotionally compared to his age, although he is keen and diligent. He can talk about his prospects. He wants to work, to learn something new. He is an acolyte at the local church. During the conversation, he often mentioned a vicar who is concerned with his development, engages him in various activities, and plays a role of a solicitor between him and potential employer. Currently, Givi can work on wood. He was proud to show us the things, the shelves that he had made himself. He has an experience of a

year of working at a tool shop as an intern. He worked as an assistant at a furniture shop where, at the same time, he used to learn the handicraft. His recollections about the time when he used to work were quite pleasant. He proudly said that sometimes he earned 15 GEL a day for the job he performed. In the future, he intends to get a certificate and enter a vocational collage where he will learn beekeeping.

Givi's case is yet another proof that for PWDS employment, first of all, their aspiration toward getting a job is necessary. The aspiration to work is present in Givi's case; he is ready to try a new job. But considering that he has a slight mental impairment, a participation of an external individual and care are needed from time to time. In Givi's life, this part is played by the vicar who has frequent contacts with the young man. It was the vicar who made him work as an intern at a tool shop; an idea about and a wish to pursue beekeeping had evolved during the interactions with the vicar. The latter plays a role of a certain coach for him. Givi has been really lucky in that respect.

However, beside the keen and enthusiastic persons, such as GGivi, reside the PWDS who do not believe in their own capabilities, are ashamed of their appearances, encounter obstacles during interactions, and thus, do not have readiness to work.

In frames of the assessment, one of the beneficiaries with hearing impairment had been interviewed (case #7). Dali (optional name) is 23 years old, lives in a village of Orsantia, Zugdidi municipality. She had started to use hearing aid and had begun to speak since the age of 11. Currently, she can establish verbal communication in Georgian language, but in some cases, she has difficulties in understanding conversations and formulating ideas clearly. She used to go to school only from time to time; she had been rather reserved due to the hearing problems. As Dali said, she has friends in Tbilisi. There she is friends with other people with hearing impairment who can understand her. In Zugdidi, it is hard for her to interact with her peers. With the help of her mother's eagerness, she learned to be a stylist and worked in a beauty salon for a short period of time, but soon, gave up the job. As she said, it was sometimes hard for her to understand what kinds of hairdos the customers asked for. Dali wants to work, but at present she does not have any idea of what type of work she wants to do or what she can deal with. She is dissatisfied with herself, and thinks that a 23 year old person should already have a profession, a job. Such is the attitude of the PWD. She compared herself to her peers with hearing impairments living in Tbilisi, and disappointedly, said that she is very inferior to them thus far. She lacks self-confidence and courage to struggle for her life.

Self-esteem is the issue that should be worked on in the first place in case of Dali. She needs psychological preparation and a boost of self-confidence. Although she wants to work, due to the shortage of social interactions in childhood, she lacks experience, she does not believe in her abilities. The first obstacle that should be overcome by Dali and by PWDS in similar situation as hers is of psychological nature. After that, a young woman will need to work consistently on herself to figure out what she can do or what she can learn. She is interested in numerous things and during short conversation, several ideas had emerged. She needs someone to guide her, someone who can help her use her resources to the utmost.

Apart from external factors, family members also play a great role in forming the person's attitudes. Mother's role in developing Dali's skills, in fostering her aspiration to work, was crucial. At various stages, she had been living with her daughter in four different cities of Georgia; whenever they encountered some obstacles, she always sought for alternatives. During the assessment process, a meeting was planned with Phatman, a mother of Andria, a 6 year old boy with a down syndrome (case #8). Phatman's story is yet another example of how community and system are not ready to PWDS integration. Phatman also encountered an obstacle when she tried to take her child to the kindergarten. As she said, the head of a kindergarten located in the village was not against, but in kindergarten' union she encountered negative attitudes. However, as soon as they saw persistence and fearlessness of the parent, kindergarten union stepped back and enrolled Andria in the kindergarten. Currently, Andria is getting ready for school, and in the words of his mother, time spent at kindergarten had had a very favorable impact on his development.

Unfortunately, there are families where parents step back, and can not resist the obstacles that exist in a community and that can still be encountered at individual levels, though not systematically.

Case #9. In the settlement “Verkhvebi”, near Gori, lives Lika (optional name), 31 year old woman with a severe mental impairment. She does not get into contact with strangers. She does not talk, although she can make her relatives understand when she needs something. Lika lives with her parents. She leaves home very rarely; the number of her interests is rather limited. The only thing she loves is parceling the papers out and watching soap operas on TV. As her mother recalls, before becoming IDP, Lika’s lifestyle in her home village was quite different; she used to go out, to interact with neighbors. However, during last eight years, since the family has become internally displaced, she became very reserved, she almost never leaves her home, became more aggressive; health problems have broken out, but she does not even let her parents take her to a doctor. As it became clear from an interview, Lika did not go to school in her childhood, except for a very little while: on the grounds of very persistent suggestions made by the principal of school she was obliged to leave. *“The principal told me that Lika should go to a special school. Special school was in Tbilisi, so how could I take her there? So since that day, she did not go to any school. But she was such a pretty kid, not as remotely plain as now,”* says Lika’s mother.

Lika’s case illustrates the effects of negative consequences on the development of a PWD brought about by the barriers existing in a community. Comparing this case to others, it becomes clear how important are the roles played by a family and their attitudes. Attitudes of a community and a family are more crucial when it comes to the persons with mental disabilities, accordingly, persons with mental disability, or their family members are less courageous. But in case of the persons with only physical disabilities, society is less stigmatized and the attitudes of a PWD become far more important. However, this is only a subjective evaluation of the issue.

To sum up, it can be said that each person’s case is individual and different; each of them is distinguished in its own way and makes up an independent story. This indicates that individual approach to each case is necessary. *It would be better more to plan and actively manage single cases individually, rather than just trust, follow the beneficiary requirements.*

4.4. Analyzing attitudes of local employers, business owners, vocational education and training (VET) institutions.

Employment of the disabled persons is an alternative option for their economic empowerment, in addition to the self-employment. In order to get a job, PWD should first acquire some technical skills, or profession that can be ensured by VET institutions. Next to that a person should get a job in a company.

In order to evaluate available resources or barriers, attitudes of local employers were analyzed. At some point working experience and perceptions of the project’s employment coach was thoroughly analyzed. This gave quite good picture of general principles, attitudes and experience of the business sector in terms of employing disabled persons. On the next stage, randomly chosen business company HR representatives were interviewed, their existing practice on PWD employment was analyzed, future plans and general attitudes were discussed.

As interviews revealed, business companies are on various levels in terms of their readiness, commitment to PWD employment. It highly depends on a size of a company whether negotiations are successful or not. Large business companies seem to be more socially oriented and ready to offer employment or internship opportunity to a PWD, while it is more difficult to collaborate on this issue with smaller companies, who are less oriented towards building positive image, and chances are lower that negotiations will be successful. Next to that, large companies usually have some budget for adapting the space for PWD, therefore it is more reasonable to negotiate with bigger companies, such as Gulf, Wissol, Smart Supermarkets.

In case of small companies, a lot depends on subjective will of personnel (running a company) than on the social platform of a company. In both cases, in the case of small or big company, mediator (NGO who tries to build a partnership between PWD and Business Company) plays an important role.

As interviews with business companies revealed business companies would be more involved in employment of PWDS if a specific program existed that would direct businesses in a correct way. At this point companies initiate some social projects themselves. They build the idea, develop it, try to build relationship with MOLHSA, if needed, and in the end, implement the project. There are no state programs that would simplify work of business companies and give them direction, model, as stated by business company representatives.

HR representative of one of the largest Telecommunication companies, (Company 1) that employees more than 3000 employees through Georgia, has been interviewed. Corporate and social responsibility is among top business priorities of this company, therefore, company tries to run some social projects. One of the projects is specifically directed towards PWDs employment.

Until now company has taken some steps towards creating adaptive environment for PWDS: пандусы have been built in new service centers. Company has recruited few people with disability as well. Some of them work in Tbilisi, and they were given priority during recruitment in comparison to similar applicants without disability. Unfortunately, not all the PWD employment cases are successful. Sometimes it is difficult to predict in advance what can be the difficulties related to employing PWD, since the company doesn't have enough expertise of working with PWDS. Eventually, sometimes the employment of PWD is not successful, in a long run. But overall the company has a positive attitude towards employing PWDS and has at least one positive case of PWD employment.

As HR representative of large insurance company (Company 2) stated there have been some discussions and initiatives to recruit persons with disability in their company as well, but the attempts have not been successful yet. The physical environment in the head office is not adapted which is a huge barrier for disabled persons using wheelchair. Next to that, it should be mentioned that there are small initiatives on individual level but, overall company has not initiated any special project, or program, yet. It is not company's priority to give employment opportunities to PWDS. First some work should be done with company's management to include social projects as a business priority.

Interview with a representative of another insurance company (Company 3) showed that company is willing to provide employment opportunities to vulnerable persons. Company's HR department is implementing a project with a special group of vulnerable persons. Company initiated the project idea, planned the detailed activities and is implementing it now. Currently they have no project for disabled persons. As company representative states, in case of employing PWD, person's resources and needs have to be thoroughly evaluated first; company has to make sure that physical environment is appropriate and staff needs to be given some professional advice, guidance what can be possible difficulties, what should be taken into account while working with a disabled person.

Cases of these companies shows that most of large business companies have willingness to employ PWDS. Initiative can be coming from the outside, as it was a case with this particular company (1), but than, company has to put some human and material resources in the whole issue. As explained by HR representatives, sometimes company has high willingness to employ PWD but it is not their top priority; therefore company doesn't invest big money to create adaptive physical environment. For example, a Call center that is considered by HR to be a reasonable place for person with physical impairment to work (company 1), is not adapted, accessible for PWDS and a lot of money is needed to create adaptive environment. But at this point, company doesn't invest money in adapting environment and this physical barrier for employment of PWD remains, while general attitudes are positive. This is the issue where state's involvement would be beneficial.

There are cases when government needs to encourage/motivate a company to employ PWDS. This will work best for the companies (for example, company 2) that have some basic financial resources and employment

opportunities but do not consider social projects as a central priority; do not progress in terms of employing PWD without external guidance.

VET institution (Jvari VET) representative has been interviewed within the framework of the current study. As interview revealed there have been a few cases of involving a PWD in a study program. All of the cases were successful. Institution is fully prepared for inclusively educate a PWD. Environment is fully adapted, staff is trained. Personnel is well prepared for overcoming any difficult situation; the atmosphere and attitudes in the institution are very welcoming. The only shortcoming is the scarce option of courses provided by a particular VET institution. Sometimes existing opportunities do not meet the beneficiary's needs and it is not possible to send a PWD to the capital.

4.5. Existing employment and livelihood legislation and governmental programs, policies, responsible parties and referral system

Employment of Persons with Disabilities (PWDS) is the most effective tool to their social rehabilitation and integration into society. Engagement of PWDS into labour market through creating equal opportunities provides not only their full integration into community, but brings forth the increase of the country's labour potential, enhancement of economic growth and boost in the efficiency of social policies.

Supporting the employment of PWDS is a multifunctional and multifaceted problem; solving it, requires an in-depth analysis and complex and systematic approach. Throughout the process, as already mentioned above, it is of primary importance for a country to adjust its legislative/legal base to the requirements of international human rights documents; the legislation in question should exclude the discriminatory attitudes toward PWDS and should not create obstacles to their employment at the labour market.

In order to improve the situation regarding the PWDS rights, one of the objectives of the research was to analyze legislative base of Georgia, as well as the policy documents.

Reviewing the legislative/legal base and analyzing the status-quo in Georgia is focused on the goal that will encourage the state government, social partners and civil society in devising effective legislation that will serve as a ground to provide equal employment opportunities to PWDS; this will be a prerequisite to build up positive legislative changes, as well as a crucial support to create equal and fair employment conditions in the country so that that in the first place, discrimination of PWDS is prohibited, and secondly, equal access to employment of PWDS is encouraged and strengthened.

Major Legal Acts

The standing legislation of Georgia defines the rights of PWDS as to be employed at various job positions. However, it does not include legal guarantees and mechanisms that would make the current norms enforceable and effective. Hence, given that there are no other important documents – those that should provide the efficacy of the law, – the standing legislative regulations are only of formal nature. However, below we will discuss each of them and try to underline the current flaws and suggest the recommendations in regard to implementation of positive changes.

The legal rights of PWDS employment are defined by several acts in Georgia that will be discussed below in details. Those are as follows:

- **Georgian Law on Social Protection of Persons with Disabilities;**
- **Georgian Organic Law: Georgian Labour Code;**
- **Georgian Law on Public Office.**

Also, we should consider the legal documents, such as:

- **Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities** (13 December 2006, United Nations) – ratified by Georgian Parliament on 26 December, 2013.
- **Action Plan for Providing Equal Opportunities to Persons with Disabilities** (20 January 2014, Tbilisi)

Georgian Law on Social Protection of Persons with Disabilities

The Law on Social Protection of Persons with Disabilities enacted on 14 June 1995 provides the foundation for the state policy toward PWDS issues, and aims to fulfill their rights on equal grounds, to create favorable conditions for them to live accomplished lives, and to allow their social participation in economic or political activities.

Chapter 5 of the given law recognizes the labour rights and labour conditions of PWDS; specifically:

Article 21 – Fulfilling the Labour Rights of Persons with Disabilities:

“...It is inadmissible to refuse labour contract or job promotion to a person with disability, to dismiss them from the office without the consent of a person with disability on the grounds of administration’s initiative, or to move them to another job on the motives of disability...”

Article 22 – Work Conditions of Persons with Disabilities:

“In businesses, institutions, and organizations, proper work conditions should comply with the individual rehabilitation programs of persons with disabilities.”

Brief summery (1):

These legal regulations act as premises for the PWDS employment, and the inadmissibility of their discrimination at open and closed labour market. Law ensures that the labour conditions are adjusted to the individual programs of PWDS (Article 22). In practice though, the steps toward creating such programs are just being taken, albeit they still lack clear formulations in the legislation, and are still in the process of devising.

The two articles listed above ensure the individual conditions of work environment, but thus far, this is limited solely to the legal documents. Despite the declared political will to provide PWDS employment, and despite the document on inadmissibility of discrimination, the law cannot achieve its goals due to the absence of the relevant legal guarantees, practical support, and mechanisms for the effective enforcement. Accordingly, apart from the political will for PWDS to be employed on equal grounds, efficient guarantees should be established in legislative regulations; also, this should reflect on the major directions of the state policy.

As of today, undue legislative regulations, including outdated legal standards (that have not been revised since accepting it), unregulated issues in the legislation, and those left open to interpretation, cannot create relevant environment for PWDS engagement in the labour market. Thus, it is important that the legislative organ improves the “inactive” norms, on the one hand, and creates new legal regulations regarding mandatory employment of PWDS, on the other hand – regulations recognized in the main state document on social protection.

Georgian Organic Law: the Labour Code

According to the Article 30 of the Constitution of Georgia,

“Protection of labour rights, fair labour compensation, and safe, healthy work conditions of underage people and women are defined by the organic law.”

The abovementioned Organic Law represents the Labour Code of Georgia where the stated obligations are defined in more details. Specifically, according to the third paragraph of the Article 2 of the Code:

*“In labour and pre-contract interactions, any forms of discrimination are prohibited on the grounds of race, skin color, language, ethnic, and social belonging, nationality, origin, property and class, place of residence, age, gender, sexual orientation, **disability**, belonging to religious, societal, political, or other kinds of unions, including, labour unions, family status, political or other views.”*

Besides, the changes made in the Labour Code on 12 June 2013 provided more specified definition of discrimination in the fourth paragraph of the same article:

“Direct or indirect oppression of a person aimed at creating or provoking frightening, hostile, humiliating, or abusive climate for the person, or creating the conditions that can directly or indirectly worsen their situation in comparison to another person in similar circumstances, will be regarded as discrimination.”

Definition of discrimination as such fully complies with the definitions recognized by the United Nation’s (UN) declarations and the conventions of International Labour Organization (ILO).

Furthermore, the Labour Code considers the norms that can be regarded as affirmative action; integrating these norms into legislation serves the purpose of protecting PWDS rights. Specifically, Articles 17 (second paragraph) and 18 of the Code state the following:

“It is prohibited to employ a pregnant woman or a woman in postpartum period, and a person with disability at an overtime job without their assent.”

“It is prohibited to employ an underage, a pregnant woman, a woman in postpartum period, or a breastfeeding woman on a night shift (from 22 pm till 6 am), and it is prohibited to employ a person taking care of a child up to 3 years, and a person with disability on a night shift without their assent.”

Brief Summery (2):

Those are the scanty standards that are presented in the labour legislation regarding the PWDS. It should be noted that the legislation does not recognize particular mechanisms in connection with the monitoring of PWDS employed at a private labour sector that would have made the regulations efficient, and would have provided more guarantees for protection of their rights.

Mechanisms of stimulating private subjects in relation to improving PWDS employment had always been important to Georgia, and are still matters of concern. Unfortunately, there are no such financial or other kinds of incentives that would have prompted an interest in an employer to engage PWDS in the labour market where employment is not obligatory..The country can make some modifications in that respect in the Labour Code, as well as in other normative acts (e.g.: in Tax Code) in order to make their largest employer – the private sector – personally interested in employing PWDS. At an initial stage, stimulating mechanism might be of a mandatory nature. This, according to the international practice, is an approbated method; and when the state is taking its first steps, the method will have a positive impact on the successive steps or prospects. This will help PWDS integration in employment sector, and non-discriminatory attitudes toward them, and overall, such kinds of consistent actions will encourage the development of PWDS as full members of society.

Georgian Law on Public Office

Georgian law on public office does not at all recognize and distinguish between the specific norms regarding the strengthening of PWDS rights, such as the regulations on affirmative action as proposed by the Labour Code discussed above.

Disability, as a status, is mentioned in only one article (Article 49, paragraphs 2–4) in Georgian Law on Public Office; this norm regulates the state aid in cases when a public office worker becomes disabled as a result of performing job-related obligations, and it recognizes only one-time compensation.

Considering various recommendations, and as a result of using one of the models approbated on an international level, the rights of PWDS can be enhanced through including the norms in abovementioned law, such as: introducing mandatory quotas at public offices, subsidizing, implementing promotional schemes, etc. It is necessary to introduce the norms at an early stage, and to oblige the state to engage PWDS in public office. There is no such practice so far. This would be such obligation that, later on, would have a positive impact not only on public office, but on private sector as well. Finally, as a result of such regulations, the state would not need to use various enforcing mechanisms in order to follow, and to put into motion, the norms, because it would lead to such situation where everyone, regardless the degree of their abilities, would enjoy equal access to employment at open labour market, without being discriminated, and without restricting their rights. Such outcome should be the main goal of legislative changes or new regulations.

As of today, according to 2013/2014 report of the Bureau of Public Office, among more than 100,000 personnel employed at public office in Georgia, only 24 PWDS are employed, with 5 of them at ministries, 18 – at local governments, and 1 – at other state agency.⁹ “Experience from different countries shows the significance of the support at labour market and employment of PWDS which, in turn, is a prerequisite to provide PWDS self-realization, personal development, and engagement in social life. Therefore, one of the priorities of the state should indeed be employing PWDS and using their skills for common good. Unfortunately, the statistics noted above do not point out to this kind of policy.”¹⁰ Basing upon the statistics, the state will not be able to leverage its legal sources (even if such legislation does exist), and to make employment of PWDS mandatory for private sector. Even such outcome might be discriminatory toward PWDS; this should be consistent, voluntary process, supported, in the first place, and at an initial stage, by the state.

Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

On 26 December 2013, Parliament of Georgia ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) that was enacted on 12 April 2014. Government of Georgia named the Public Ombudsman’s Office as a responsible organ for monitoring UNCRPD.

Article 27 of UNCRPD is entirely about labour and employment. Paragraphs of the Article stated below are worth considering:

“(b) Protect the rights of persons with disabilities, on an equal basis with others, to just and favourable conditions of work, including equal opportunities and equal remuneration for work of equal value, safe and healthy;”

“(e) Promote employment opportunities and career advancement for persons with disabilities in the labour market, as well as assistance in finding, obtaining, maintaining and returning to employment;”

“(g) Employ persons with disabilities in the public sector”.

UNCRPD obliges the member states to recognize PWDS rights to work on equal grounds with others, which means an opportunity to have livelihood in an open, inclusive and accessible to PWDS work environment. The member states protect and support the realization of the right to work through implementing systematic approaches, and introducing legal or other mechanisms.

However, prior to achieving its goal, the document reviews temporary mechanisms of the state, including the needs for affirmative action, encouragement, promotional events and implementation of programs as a

⁹ <http://www.geostat.ge/>

¹⁰ <https://idfi.ge/ge/statistics-of-persons-with-disabilities>

necessary temporary intervention to achieve the intended goal.¹¹

There are some flaws regarding the compliance with UNCPRD that need to be improved. The flaws are as follows:

As of today, the legislation does not define mechanisms for identifying individual needs and resources of PWDS that would include the component of technical and professional orientation. This procedure should be defined and created by state organs.

Legislation does not directly define the state's obligation to financially support programs of professional development of PWDS.

Nevertheless, it should be noted that in order to fulfill the obligations imposed by UNCPRD in regard to employment, inter-organ coordination has been established, and joint initiatives had commenced to support PWDS employment; specifically, the Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Welfare of Georgia, as well as Social Service agency, the legal entity, in collaboration with local governments and various stakeholders, provide various vulnerable job seekers (including PWDS) with the employment support service. We will talk about the service in more details below while discussing the Action Plan. Also, Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia carries out important reform – Implementation of Inclusive Education in Professional Education and Training System of Georgia – that provides PWDS and persons with special educational needs with the skills necessary for employment, and together with partner ministries, it pilots PWD employment support services.

As much as education and employment are the fields that generally depend upon each other, given the above listed activities, we can claim that the state moves in a right direction. Inter-organ coordination is the most appropriate method in terms of the right approach, as much as the activities carried out through it yield less deficient results, problem is being viewed and discussed in numerous light, and consequently, the likelihood of making mistakes is negligible.

We hope that the activities listed above will serve only as the starting point on the way to achieving the greater goals that the state has set to itself, and is obliged to carry them out as a result of ratification of the UNCPRD.

Action Plan of the Government for Providing Equal Opportunities to Persons with Disabilities (2014–2016)

Action Plan of the Government is a document created on the premises of the concept of social integration that is based upon the priorities defined by the concept, and aims to carry them out successfully. The Action Plan of 2014–2016 was passed on 20 January 2014 by the order of the Georgian government.¹² Prior to undertaking the new Action Plan, the state programs and goals were subject to the old, 2010–2012, action plan. The major flaws of this plan included its general character, weak indicators for the performed objectives, and the vagueness of the source of material resources required for implementing the Plan.

Monitoring the implementation of the Plan was particularly problematic issue. Neither the concept, nor the Action Plan ensured the periodic control and evaluation of the objectives of the Action Plan.

The 2014-2016 Action Plan of the Government for Providing Equal Opportunities to Persons with Disabilities examines five objectives in the employment paragraph; specifically, the state aims to fulfill the following steps in regard to PWDS employment:

¹¹ <http://emc.org.ge/>

¹² http://www.government.gov.ge/files/381_40157_501181_76200114.pdf

- 1. Providing equal rights to work and employment to PWDS.**
- 2. Supporting PWDS employment.**
- 3. Increasing the ability to compete at the labour market among job seekers with disabilities.**
- 4. Supporting PWDS self-employment.**
- 5. Providing dignified, safe, and healthy work environment.**

Despite their flaws, the mechanisms for protection of the norms given in the legislation on PWDS employment rights are not leveraged on the legal level. However, it should be noted that a number of important advancements have already been made in order to improve the flaws that are currently present in relation to PWDS employment in general (beyond the legal frames). One of such illustrations is provided by the paragraph on Labour and Employment (Chapter IX) of the Action Plan that imposes to carry out its requirements in an agreed period of time; we will talk about it below. As for each process mentioned above, as their final outcome, the practical experience should then be represented in the legal documents.

In line with the action plan, working teams had been set up to facilitate PWDS employment and to implement the Action Plan in 2014. In the same year, the above mentioned team, together with the stakeholders, framed out the Action Plan to support the employment of PWDS (in line with the state strategy). At that stage, the stakeholders from the public sector included the following: Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Welfare of Georgia, Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia, and Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development of Georgia. After enacting the action plan, it is planned to be monitored by the expert team whose members consist also of the representatives of various public and private sectors, non-governmental organizations (NGOS), and civil society. The role of each stakeholder is significant during the process of carrying out various activities, and their high involvement provides the rationale to suppose that by and large, the process will be effective.

One of the important objectives of the part of the Action Plan that deals with the employment is to enhance the ability of job seeker PWDS to compete at the labour market, and to facilitate their employment.

The Action Plan includes indicators for outcomes in order to enhance PWDS ability to compete at the labour market. The plan provides professional orientation system for PWDS through which the job seekers with disabilities requiring development of professional skills are being trained¹³. This is a constant, recurring process.

As for the self-employment support plan, major emphasis is made in terms of developing the social businesses. The following is regarded as the indicator of evaluation of this objective: "Social businesses are created by or with participation of PWDS that are focused on PWDS employment." Supporting social businesses at a transient stage, prior to achieving the inclusiveness of the labour market, is an important mechanism for PWDS employment. Following the specific nature of social businesses, this mechanism needs a legal base that will be flexible and oriented at its specifics. Hence, while the process has already began, as a result of analysis of the international experiences and practices, it will be possible to create far more refined legal base that will be suited to the rights of PWDS, and to revise the existed one that will gain the function of monitoring the support and sustainability of such activities.

Efficiency of the Action Plan is affected *per se* by the general problem related to the incomplete statistical data, although discussing this question in this part will not be appropriate.

Following the analysis, we can conclude that the PWDS employment-related issues are viewed and comprehended quite extensively by the new Action Plan. It can be regarded as a positive event that the Action Plan is not limited to the enhancement of inclusiveness of an employment realm; rather it emphasizes the

13 Ensuring equal opportunities for persons with disability, 2014-2016 years action plan of the government

need for improvement of the PWDS ability to compete at the labour market which is undoubtedly one of the key challenges. However, similar to the previous Action Plan, the standing one is also not free from some flaws. In single cases, the tasks to be completed are quite broad, and act more like objectives, rather than the tasks, lacking the specificity. In several cases, the part concerned with the indicators is also vague so that it might complicate the relevant monitoring of the Action Plan and preparing fair and objective evaluation at the later stages.

Some other activities carried out by the Government of Georgia are also worth noting, such as online labour market information service – www.worknet.gov.ge; the web-service, managed by the Social Service Agency, one of the legal entities of the Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Welfare of Georgia, was created by the decision of the Government of Georgia, and according to the initiators, it serves the purposes of developing the labour market infrastructure, reducing unemployment rate, and revealing the major tendencies of the labour market requirements. More than 1000 PWDs have registered on the worknet, based on November 2015 data, out of those twelve got employed.

The activities undertaken by the Government of Georgia should also be underlined, such as ‘The State Strategy and 2013–2014 Action Plan of Formation of Labour Market of Georgia’ Passed on 2 August 2013 by the Order #199 of the Government of Georgia”, in frames of which the Employment Support Centers had been established on the grounds of regional departments of the Social Service Agencies. The main function of these centers is to inform, consult, register and support the employment of job seekers through organizing professional trainings along with other activities.¹⁴ Given that the abovementioned service is an online product and not everyone in Georgia has equal access to it, sixty-nine regional centers of the Social Service Agency have been engaged in the process. Consequently, the citizens have an opportunity to apply to Social Service Centers where the specially trained personnel will assist them in placing the information in the system.

This is a constant process – a live base which is concerned solely with the aspirations of job seekers.

As of today, a number of subdivisions and departments have been established at the Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Welfare that aim to solve the problems regarding labour and employment in Georgia that affect not only PWDS, but the country at large as much as the unemployment rate is high. Furthermore, additional problems are related to irregular and unsettled labour market that worsens the status-quo even more. Structural changes have taken place in the Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Welfare throughout recent years, new departments have been added, and the Ministry has decided to take a step by step approach toward preventing the existing flaws and problems. For example, the purpose of the newly established Department of Labour and Employment Policies is to support creating the employment programs and implementing them; Department of Labour and Employment Policies plays an active role in planning and coordinating implementation of all kinds of activities or governmental programs directed towards formulating and improving legislative framework and state’s politics related to work and labour of any subject.

Conclusions

To summarize, it can be said that the major changes regarding the legislative acts have not been carried out in Georgia thus far. The legal act, such as the Georgian Law on Social Protection of Persons with Disabilities passed in 1995 is still a standing law, and still needs to be revised. However, the activities that have already been undertaken to facilitate PWDS employment are equally important, albeit the reduction of employment rate is still a significant challenge for the country, requiring implementation of additional measures on the Government’s part.

As of today, Georgia has got challenges to overcome; it needs to provide consistent policy and systematic vision in order to improve the process of social and professional integration of PWDS, the employment

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being an integral part of the process. For that to happen, timely renewal of the main political document – the concept and the major legal act, – and making it comply with the modern tendencies are required.

While the Government is carrying out certain activities aimed at the integration of PWDS into society, while the evidence-based state policy is being devised, and the future legislative initiatives are being prepared, engagement of society and stakeholders are of primary importance. As noted above, similar processes are carried out through high involvement, although it is advisable that in the process are engaged not only stakeholders, but beneficiaries as well who might have more in-depth perspective toward the issue, and thus, provide the important recommendations to the Government to plan and implement their successive activities.

At a transitive stage, it is advisable that the state creates temporary stimulating and/or promotional mechanisms to support and sustain the facilitating initiatives. Such mechanisms might include the state subsidies, supportive employment model, as well as the quota system that depends upon the evaluation of the existing outcomes, decisions based on the practices and experiences of the developed countries, and the changes or initiatives that are fully grasped, and that should be introduced in the legislation.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the research findings some important notes and recommendations have been formulated, as provided below:

- Involving PWDS at the particular stages of planning or implementing the programs on employment of PWD is important. It is advisable to include beneficiaries (PWD) in state, nongovernmental, or private organization programs, since they might have more in-depth perspective toward the issue, and thus, provide the important recommendations to the stakeholders to plan and implement their successive activities.
- Cooperation with the Human Resource Managers Association or with the Human Resource Club in order to change their attitudes and views is highly recommended. This would make recruitment process more effective, but next to targeting the recruitment process it is necessary to do the trainings to improve the drawbacks revealed throughout the working process. This will give a chance to effectively avoid any challenges related to employing PWD.
- Analyzing practice of international organizations as well as interviews with Georgian business company representatives showed that more efficient results regarding the PWDS employment and their engagement in business companies can be achieved if working with HR managers is combined with working with companies' management. It is necessary and highly recommended to show to the business companies, and to point out, the advantages of hiring PWDS.
- Collaboration with MFOs is recommended to facilitate a linkage among PWD and a finance organization and to build a successful /model case of PWD taking a business loan
- Determining quotas at a legal level is one of the approaches adhered to by number of countries. It would be recommended to advocate on imposing quotas for hiring PWD at least by large business companies and state employers.
- Preliminary assessment of person's resources is necessary in order to offer the activities suited to each person's resources. Careful selection of individual approaches and individual case management and constant monitoring is recommended.
- Project implementers use slightly different approaches while working with PWD. Sharing their respective experiences with each other might prove useful. It would be recommended to share with each other the most successful as least successful cases.
- Study revealed that community's attitudes depend upon whether they had direct contacts with PWDS or not. This again indicates that showing PWD through Media is needed; media coverage of successful cases of PWDS is an essential precondition for killing off the stereotypical attitudes toward the social participation of PWDS.
- A lot depends on individual's capacities, attitudes. Some PWD, who are passive, pessimistic do not try to get involved in any program, activity and mainly stay inside their homes. In order to have better coverage it is highly recommended to acquire list of registered PWDS, to assess their needs and resources and plan program activities appropriately; direct project resources where mostly needed.
- Interactions and emotional support from persons with similar impairment proved to be of crucial importance for PWDS. Therefore it is advisable to organize/facilitate group meetings with people who have similar disability on a systematic bases.

- Interviews with young PWDS (younger than 30) are at different stage in terms of their attitudes, aspirations or self-realization. This suggests that different approaches – those that correspond to their age and needs – will be necessary while working with young PWDS. Training on psychological empowerment, on increasing self-esteem is needed while working with young people with disability.
- Empowering a disabled person psychologically does not seem to be an easily achievable matter. While PWD does not believe in his/her own capabilities constant work is needed to strengthen a person. In such cases family member encouragement would be beneficial. It is recommended to strengthen emotionally family members of PWDS.
- Interviews and observations with persons with mental impairment revealed that a participation of an external individual, somebody who acts as a personal coach is needed. Personal coach is needed to help a person identify his/her own resources, interests, motivation; to identify employment opportunities, or make plan for professional or socio/emotional development and facilitate implementing it.
- In terms of legislation it is important that the legislative organ improves the “inactive” norms, on the one hand, and to create new legal regulations regarding mandatory employment of PWDS. The country can make some modifications in that respect in the Labour Code, as well as in other normative acts (e.g.: in Tax Code) in order to make their largest employer – the private sector – personally interested in employing PWDS. At an initial stage, stimulating mechanism might be of a mandatory nature. This, according to the international practice, is an approbated method; and when the state is taking its first steps, the method will have a positive impact on the successive steps or prospects.