

family

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Abstract

These are two article on self directed employment. The first describes real situations where people with disabilities are taking control of their own employment situation. Examples are described in both economically developed and developing countries. The second article presents the result of a study looking at self directed employment. This is also an international study. The main conclusion is that self directed employment is a very valid option for many people with disabilities. **Keyword: Employment**

A road to economic independence

Self-directed employment is an option that is of increasing interest to people with disabilities in both economically developed and developing countries.

Alison L Albright and Aldred H Neufeldt explain.

Aminta lives in a poor village not far from Manila in the Philippines. A competent designer and seamstress, she decided to increase her independence by getting a loan from a local community development agency to buy a sewing machine and start her own business. She now employs nine production assistants, who do the sewing while Aminta markets the clothing produced.

Pat, a young woman from Kingston, Jamaica, operates an electric drill in an enterprise that produces wooden items, such as clocks, furniture and toys, which are in demand locally and for export.

Wanda was unemployed and living in Newfoundland, Canada, when she received assistance to start her own business. She now has a contract to operate a cafeteria in a local school, employing three full-time staff.

Supriyanti and **Anang** are both from Indonesia. Supriyanti manages a shoe-making business and Anang an egg production farm. The income they generate provides the main source of financial support for their families.

Nigel comes from a rural area in Kenya. He is 33 years old, married and has a family. He is the sole proprietor of a business that produces leatherwork items, such as shoes, belts, wallets and caps. Nigel has 10 employees and his income has increased by 75 per cent since he started his business.

Aminta, Pat, Wanda, Supriyanti, Anang and Nigel have more than one thing in common. All of them have succeeded in generating income in a region of the world characterised by high unemployment and illiteracy. All of them have a challenging disability - mobility, hearing, visual or cognitive impairment. And all of them are taking part in an enterprise where people with disabilities are directing their own employment.

Their stories are some of those that have come to light in an International Study of Income Generation Strategies by Persons with Disabilities, co-sponsored by Disabled Peoples' International, the International Labour Organisation and the Walter Dinsdale Centre for the Empowerment of Canadians with Disabilities. Co-ordinated from the University of Calgary, Canada, the study is focusing on self-directed employment where people with disabilities have chosen and direct their own work.

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Self-directed employment is employment where people with disabilities make the major decisions. It is an alternative to waged or sheltered employment. Self-directed employment options include running a small business and working in a co-operative or business subsidiary controlled by disabled people.

It has given particular attention to economically developing countries. Accurate statistics are difficult to obtain, but it is estimated that for each disabled person employed in the formal sector, at least four are generating an income as a result of their own initiatives, mostly in the informal sector. In the absence of waged employment options or income support from social security, a variety of innovative options have been pursued.

The study shows how experiences in developing countries can be transferred to economically developed countries. Until now, one of the main concerns in economically developed countries has been to increase the accessibility of waged employment. Despite these efforts, less than 50 per cent of all disabled people are employed. As a result, there is a growing interest in self-directed employment options.

Self-directed employment may be the preference of some people with disabilities for many reasons. Small enterprises can be home-based, which minimises transportation and work site adjustment problems. Family and community support can be maintained. Self-employment lends itself to flexible working schedules that can accommodate individual needs. And it has the benefit of allowing people to be their own boss, maintaining control from the start.

The main purpose of the study is to examine strategies that seem important in enabling people with disabilities to become successful entrepreneurs, through self-employment, co-operatives or other business arrangements. A number of different approaches have been identified.

Project in the Philippines

One example is a community development project in the Philippines begun in the early 1980s. It promotes CBR in a number of rural and urban areas. Local volunteers were recruited to identify people with disabilities. The volunteer assisted the individual and his/her family to determine their needs and to plan ways of enabling the disabled family member to participate more fully in the community.

By 1989, 400 volunteers had established relationships with about 1,500 people with disabilities. Of these, about 400 people, including Aminta, were assisted to engage in income generation activities, often participating with family or other local enterprises.

In some countries, organisations of people with disabilities create their own enterprises. DEEDS Industries Ltd, established in Jamaica in 1983 as a subsidiary of the Combined Disabilities Association (CDA), is a good example. It pursues three objectives: to demonstrate the potential of people with disabilities to work alongside those without disabilities, to provide employment

and income for those with disabilities, and to create a source of income for CDA, which is an organisation of disabled people.

The first two objectives have been achieved. DEEDS has 65 employees, 60 per cent of whom have a disability, and they receive competitive wages. Pat is one of DEEDS' employees. In the past two years, the industry has generated enough income from its sale of wooden products to meet all expenses. The quality of items produced has created not only a local demand but also an export market.

Supermarket in Bulawayo

Similar projects are in operation in other parts of the world. In Zimbabwe, for instance, the National Council of Disabled Persons operates a supermarket in Bulawayo.

People with challenging intellectual impairments are rarely considered to be potential entrepreneurs. However, the Bay St George Community Employment Corporation in Newfoundland, Canada, has assisted six individuals with intellectual impairments, including Wanda, to start their own businesses, ranging from operating a cafeteria to making lobster crates.

The corporation promotes human resource development and works to develop a vision for the community that encourages inclusion of disabled people at the local level. Individuals are enabled to identify their own interests and business skills. Once an idea is determined, a business plan is developed and a feasibility study carried out. The corporation aids individuals to gain access to funds, and training is provided in relevant skills and business management. A committee made up of community members offers advice and support to new entrepreneurs. The corporation is founded on the principle that 'if you want to gain something from the community, you must be willing to put something in'.

Yakkum Rehabilitation Centre is a non-profit organisation, which was established in Indonesia in 1982. It supports the principles of community based rehabilitation and works with government and non-government organisations to provide assistance to children and young adults with physical disabilities.

In many ways, the centre appears to be a traditional rehabilitation centre. Objectives include medical, social, educational and vocational support. Yakkum's focus on micro-enterprise development, however, is progressive.

Vocational training is offered in 25 subjects, ranging from agriculture and motor vehicle repair to literacy, computers and how to run a business. Training emphasises skills that enable the individual to work independently within their own homes. Upon completion of training, individuals are supplied with tools and/or necessary working capital.

Follow up is maintained by field workers. If the endeavour is not successful, additional or alternative training and support is available. The majority of people, including Supriyanti and Anang, have been successful.

In Kenya, the ILO and UNDP have been working with the government and non-government organisations to assist disabled men and women to earn income from the informal sector. Capital investment is essential in most businesses, yet people with disabilities generally have extremely limited access to funding. One of the innovative dimensions of the Kenyan project is the Disabled Persons Loans Fund Scheme, which is backed by the Ministry of Culture and Social Services.

Viable business plan

Barclays Bank provides funding for income generation activities that have met specific criteria and are owned and operated by people with disabilities. The project supports individuals to develop a viable business plan, including a feasibility study, market plan and capital budget. People with disabilities are enabled to get access to appropriate training in business management skills. To date, 638 individuals have benefited from the project, including Nigel.

These and other examples illustrate innovative ways of enabling people with disabilities to become economically independent.

The overall objective of the international study is to identify innovative, as well as traditional income generation strategies that lead to success. Information has been gathered by researchers from Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean. Comparative data is being collected from economically developed countries.

The project will be completed in mid-1993. A book will be published, summarising the status of self-directed employment by people with disabilities and strategies that appear to be successful. A database will provide information on the various projects examined; a video tape will introduce various strategic approaches; and a manual will give start-up information. They will be available later this year when copies may be obtained by writing to the authors.

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