

Développement Humain, Handicap et Changement Social Human Development, Disability, and Social Change



Editorial

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Emploi et approches inclusives : le droit des personnes ayant des incapacités à participer, par un travail décent, au développement économique

Work and Inclusive Approaches: The Right of People with Disabilities to Participate, by Way of Decent Work, to Economic Development

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Every day we experience that for each person, work is an element determining of human existence. It is the way to keep us alive and meet basic needs. But it is also an activity through which people affirm their identity in relation to themselves and in relation to those who surround them. Work is crucial to individual choice, the well-being of families and the stability of societies.

Juan Somavia, CEO on the ILO, June 2001

Editorial

This special issue of "WORK AND INCLUSIVE APPROACHES" opens avenues for reflection on the difficulties faced by almost 470 million people of working age, with disabilities worldwide. Despite the lack of statistics for international comparison, it seems clear that they are hardest hit by the lack of decent work inasmuch as the consecutive economic crises are weakening social cohesion.

Discouraged by discriminatory barriers and preconceived notions about their skills and productivity levels, many people with disabilities are likely to give up looking for a job to rely on social benefits, if they exist, accept employment that requires little skill or perform work with little added value in an informal circuit.

No wonder there is a strong link between disability and poverty. According to UN statistics, 82 percent of people with disabilities live below the poverty line in developing countries. They are among the most vulnerable and marginalized; estimated to represent 15 to 20 percent of the poor in these countries.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD – UN, December, 2006) recognizes the right of persons with disabilities, on an equal basis with others (Article 27), to earn a living through freely chosen or accepted employment, the right to equal treatment and non-discrimination as well as the protection of this right through legislation, including the right to join a union. All forms of discrimination based on disability must be ban-

ned in all that relates to employment; workers who developed disabilities in the labor market must be protected by measures of job retention. Provisions must also be made for vocational rehabilitation and return to work.

It is legitimate to expect that the 144 countries that have approved the CRPD will adopt in their national legislation measures prohibiting discrimination, promote self-employment and entrepreneurship, hire people with disabilities in the public sector, encourage the private sector to do the same, and ensure the implementation of reasonable accommodations in the workplace.

In this issue, two articles discuss the extent of the advances brought about by the application of the Convention as well as some obstacles in its implementation. In particular, they mention that the definition of disability, for the majority of the countries studied, is still based on a bio-medical model and that people with disabilities are often absent from discussions surrounding the implementation of programs concerning them. The other articles deal with diverse issues, such as:

- How should the right to self-determination for people with intellectual disabilities be advocated?
- What are the personal experiences of people with visual impairments in the workplace?
- What are the social representations of employers with regards to people with disabilities in workforce? What is employers' experience with young workers who have disabilities?
- How is the difference between workers with or without impairments or disabilities into the workplace?
- The reality of a person with or without impairments or disabilities is not static, how can we follow the evolution so as to adopt adequate measures?
- How should the effects of public policy on diversity inclusion of people with or without impairments or disabilities in the workplace be evaluated?

- Education is an asset to professional inclusion, how can academic success, from primary to university education, be promoted?

These articles illustrate that people with disabilities in the workforce are too often considered in terms of the nature of their deficiencies and their disabilities rather than their skills, the cost they represent rather than their productivity and as the objects of a charitable cause and not as agents of change.

Happy reading and be convinced that we can all help to break down the prejudices that limit their access to working life.

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