An Inclusive Community

# SYNTHESISING THE INCLUSIVE WORKPLACE: THAILAND

## NWRC x Steps

This white paper examines the experience of People With Disabilities, including neurodivergence, as they seek educational, vocational and professional opportunities in addition to employer, advocacy, and policy level recommendations to increase accessibility and inclusion in workplaces in Thailand.


NEURODIVERSITY AT WORK RESEARCH CENTRE

Sasin School of Management
Chulalongkorn University
Bangkok, THAILAND
sasin.edu/nwrc

Steps

29/8 Charonmit,
Ekkamai Soi 10,
Sukhumvit 63,
Bangkok, THAILAND
www.stepscommunity.com

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The Neurodiversity At Work Research Centre is a partnership between Steps and Sasin School of Management. The first research centre in Southeast Asia dedicated to understanding neurodiversity in the workplace, NWRC is dedicated to conducting evidence-based research on the benefits of inclusion for employees and organisational outcomes.

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Neurodiversity at Work Research Centre
Sasin University
Sasa Patasala Building Soi Chula 12, Phyathai Road
Bangkok, 10330, Thailand

Steps
29/8 Charonmit,
Ekkamai Soi 10,
Sukhumvit 63,
Bangkok, 10110, Thailand
Email: nwrc@stepscommunity.com
Tel: +66 (0) 81-819-6967

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We acknowledge the diversity in how disability, mental health and emotional well-being are understood around the world due to cultural, perspective, and experiential differences. We want to emphasise that we have made every effort to employ language and terminology that are appropriate, positive, and respect various regions and cultures. Our intention is for this document to be accessible and appreciated by a wide audience and, in doing so, contribute to promoting positive change.

Thank you for your commitment to fostering inclusive workplaces and communities.

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# Glossary

**Accessibility:** ensuring that facilities, information, and opportunities are available and usable by all individuals, including people with disabilities.

**Accommodation:** reactive and strives to remove barriers caused by inaccessible design. This ensures people with disabilities have the same access as people without disabilities.

**Awareness:** knowledge and understanding of disabilities and neurodiversity to promote empathy and inclusion.

**Diversity:** the presence of a variety of individuals with different backgrounds, abilities, and perspectives in a workplace or community.

**Ecosystem:** in this context, it refers to a collaborative network involving government bodies, public and nonprofit organisations, academics, the private sector, social enterprises, and individuals with disabilities, working together to support disability employment and inclusivity.

**Inclusive Workplace:** a work environment that values and supports diversity, including individuals with disabilities and neurodiversity, and provides equitable opportunities and accommodations.

**Inclusive Environment:** a setting or community that welcomes and accommodates individuals with diverse abilities and backgrounds.

**Inclusivity:** the practice of including individuals with diverse abilities, backgrounds, and experiences in all aspects of society, particularly in employment.

**Minimum Wage**: the legally mandated lowest wage that employers can pay to employees.

**ND:** abbreviation for Neurodiversity, encompassing a range of neurological conditions, such as autism, ADHD, and dyslexia, highlighting the natural variation in human brain function.

**Neurodiversity:** a term that encompasses a wide range of neurological differences leading to distinct cognitive characteristics.

**Paradigm Shift:** a fundamental change in the way something is perceived or done, often involving a shift in attitude, practice, or perspective.

**PWDs:** abbreviation for Persons with Disabilities, include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory variations which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.

**Reasonable Accommodation:** necessary and appropriate modification and adjustments not imposing a disproportionate or undue burden, where needed in a particular case, to ensure to people with disabilities the enjoyment or exercise on an equal basis with others of all human rights and fundamental freedoms.

**Stereotyping:** making assumptions or generalisations about individuals based on their disability, which can lead to bias and discrimination.

# Executive Summary

This white paper issues a compelling call to action for expanding employment opportunities for people with disabilities (PWDs) and neurodiversity (ND). Its main focus is on highlighting the critical significance of inclusive workplaces. The core issues addressed include the widespread unawareness regarding PWDs and ND, the prevalence of limiting stereotypes, and the absence of an effective ecosystem that supports employment and inclusivity for PWDs and ND.

Our research was conducted to unveil these critical issues. Our approach involved an extensive examination of both secondary data from research papers, articles, and other sources and primary data gathered from interviews with employers. However, it is worth noting that limitations were encountered, primarily due to the limited data specifically on neurodiversity in Thailand. We aimed to gather insights from Western practices regarding ND inclusivity and adapt these recommendations to the Asian context as applicable. Therefore, the references predominantly derive from studies conducted within Western contexts. As a result, findings regarding PWDs were drawn upon for general insights, while the focus shifted more towards ND in the latter part for strategies and recommendations.

A pivotal revelation emerged from our research: Thailand lacks a precise disability definition. Inclusivity efforts predominantly target gender, age, and physical disabilities, leaving out the diverse spectrum of ND. Furthermore, initiatives to create inclusive environments remain fragmented, largely due to the absence of an effective ecosystem that supports PWDs and ND employment and inclusion. In this endeavour, we recognise the crucial role that each stakeholder plays in nurturing an inclusive environment for PWDs and ND.

Our recommendations emphasise the necessity of a cohesive ecosystem wherein government bodies, public and nonprofit organisations, academics, and individuals with disabilities collaborate to bridge the identified gaps.

Drawing insights from international case studies in Singapore, Japan, Germany, the United States, and Switzerland, our research highlights a consistent theme: the paramount importance of a resilient ecosystem. These global examples reinforce the core findings of our white paper and underscore the critical role such an ecosystem plays in fostering inclusive workplaces and communities. A resilient ecosystem encourages collaboration among various stakeholders, including government bodies, nonprofit organisations, academia, and PWDs themselves. It adapts to new research findings and insights, facilitating continuous improvement.

In conclusion, unlocking potential advocates is required for a paradigm shift in our understanding and support of PWDs and ND. By embracing a comprehensive, multifaceted approach, we can create a world where inclusivity flourishes, ensuring that every individual finds their rightful place in the workforce and society.

# Foreword



Increased geopolitical tensions, the threat of natural disasters arising from environmental damage and climate change are causing significant risk to ASEAN's post-pandemic recovery and development trajectory. As already highlighted by government and corporate leaders since the beginning of the post-pandemic phase, inclusive economic growth must be at the centre of ASEAN's development paradigm. Meaningful participation of under-represented groups of society in ASEAN economies must be a key building block of these strategies, and this cannot happen without representation and inclusion of people with disabilities (PWDs), who, according to the World Health Organisation, represent 15% of the world's population and 690 million people across the Asia Pacific region alone.

The benefits of inclusive employment are sizable: they represent a still untapped economic opportunity and a mechanism to equip PWDs with new skills to make them productive economic citizens, able to support their households and contribute to making our societies better. This is why it is time to build a new narrative around disability and neurodivergence: a narrative that is about innovation, empowerment of individuals, learning of new capabilities and deployment of different abilities.

Both in ASEAN and in Thailand, the examples showing us how this can happen in practice are numerous and varied. We just need to look for them. At the Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia (ERIA), we began our research to better understand the opportunities and contributions that PWDs have to offer to the fast-growing digital economies in the region and we have been excited to collaborate with the Neurodiversity at Work Research Centre (NWRC) since its inception. Our research shows that a number of startups are developing business models that include and empower people with disabilities to thrive in the new and fast-changing digital tech environment and offer innovative solutions and services. We have also observed how larger corporations have an important role to play to support training, promoting mutual understanding and tackling problems from different perspectives by harnessing the power of diversity. This results in better outcomes for their own companies and the community at large. Within these ecosystems of inclusive innovation and entrepreneurship, government, research and education institutions are all key actors, contributing to the development of ecosystems that work for everyone by developing policies, standards and regulation conducive to inclusion; support innovative training and education and conducting research to understand current trends, challenges and opportunities to real and meaningful inclusion.

As we set a direction for ASEAN's sustainable and inclusive future, the role of local partners, with their profound understanding of regional dynamics, becomes indispensable. ERIA, with its strategic emphasis on policy dialogue and partnerships, invites relevant ecosystem players to join hands. By supporting initiatives like the NWRC, we not only foster service delivery aligned with local contexts but also bolster research that sparks innovation and drives systemic change.

Let us unite in this endeavour to harness our collective insights and create pathways that uplift all members of society, especially those with disabilities, ensuring their voices shape the narrative of ASEAN's prosperous tomorrow.

**Giulia Ajmone Marsan**
*Director, Strategy and Partnership*
Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia

Chapter 1

# Understanding People with Disabilities (PWDs)

"Persons with Disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others."[1] PWDs are a diverse group, covering a wide range of conditions, including:

- People who are blind: individuals with sight-related challenges.
- People who are deaf or hard of hearing: people with hearing variance.
- Mental Health Conditions: those experiencing various mental health challenges.
- Intellectual Disabilities: individuals with certain limitations in cognitive functioning and skills.[2]
- Acquired Brain Injuries: people who have suffered brain injuries.
- Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD): those within the autism spectrum.
- Physical Disabilities: individuals with mobility or physical limitations.

In this discussion, our primary focus will be on mental health conditions, intellectual disabilities, and autism spectrum disorders, collectively referred to as neurodiversity.

## Challenges Faced by PWDs

PWDs often confront a series of common challenges,[3] including:

- Health Issues: managing health conditions can be complex.
- Employment Barriers: many face difficulties finding suitable employment.
- Societal Exclusion: they may experience isolation from society.
- Need for Extra Support: many require additional assistance.
- Equal Access: access to essential services and opportunities can be unequal.

One significant challenge is the presence of prejudice, skepticism, and mistreatment directed towards PWDs, impacting their public treatment and opportunities for full participation in society, including employment.

## Asian Perceptions of PWDs

According to the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), 690 million people are estimated to live with disability in Asia and the Pacific[4] including 472 million working-age persons.[5] In contrast to a Western context, prevailing family and community attitudes towards PWDs in many Asian and Pacific societies often revolve around pity. This perspective, particularly prominent in rural areas, tends to view PWDs as helpless individuals with limited potential for physical, intellectual, and spiritual growth.

Additionally, it's important to note that cultural and religious perspectives influence how PWDs are perceived. For instance, in Thailand, where Buddhism is predominant, some might associate disabilities with the consequences of actions in past lives. Unfortunately, this perspective can result in stigmatisation and limited opportunities for people with disabilities, who are often seen as incapable and in need of constant care from their families. The concept of karma or guilt is prevalent in some Asian communities, where disabilities may sometimes be considered a form of punishment for family misconduct.[6]

1 United Nations, Convention on The Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2007, 4.

2 Special Olympics, "What is Intellectual Disability?" 2023. Available from: https://www.specialolympics.org/about/intellectual-disabilities/what-is-intellectual-disability

3 Calvert, S., "Challenges for People with Disabilities".Ballard Brief, 2021. Available from: https://ballardbrief.byu.edu/ issue-briefs/challenges-for-people-with-disabilities

4 United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asian and the Pacific (UNESCAP) (2018), Building Disability-Inclusive Societies in Asia and the Pacific, 2018, 2. Available from: https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/publications/SDD%20BDIS%20report%20A4%20v14-5-E.pdf

5 UNESCAP (2021), The Shaping of Disability-Inclusive Employment in Asia and the Pacific, 2021, Preface ii. Available from: https://www.unescap.org/kp/2021/disability-glance-2021-shaping-disability-inclusive-employment-asia-and-pacific

6 Takamine, Y. (2003). Disability Issues in East Asia: Review and Ways Forward, July 2003, 21. Available from: https://hpod.law.harvard.edu/pdf/DisabilityIssuesTakamine.pdf

This belief can lead to the hiding of PWDs at home and overprotection in order to prevent them from taking risks.

Low expectations from PWDs in terms of participation in education, training, and employment contribute to low self-esteem and self-reliance in many Asian contexts. Children with disabilities encounter obstacles that hinder their participation in education, leading to a significant 52.7% decline in enrollment rates as they progress from primary school to secondary school.[7] The alarmingly low rate of access to education for children and youth with disabilities remains a persistent challenge.

The increasing awareness and acknowledgment of the role, contributions, and future potential of PWDs in society stem from a shift in perspective, moving away from a charity approach to a human rights approach.[8, 9] Despite the challenges, there are positive changes in the region, such as increased funding, improved perceptions of PWDs' capacity, advancements in accessibility, and adoption of frameworks for PWDs' rights. However, there are still barriers to be addressed, including limited participation in decision-making processes and gaps in funding and capacities of disability organisations.

Recognising these differences, it becomes evident that efforts to promote understanding and inclusion of PWDs in Asia require context-specific approaches that consider cultural norms and beliefs whilst advocating for broader societal change. Western models can provide valuable insights but must be adapted to align with the unique dynamics of each Asian country.

## Understanding ND

ND is a concept that recognises and celebrates the diversity of human neurological differences. It emphasises that neurological variations, such as found in autism, ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder), and other conditions, are a natural facet of the human experience. Unlike traditional medical models that often pathologise these differences, the ND perspective views them as variations within the normal spectrum of human diversity. This discussion aims to illuminate the distinct characteristics, strengths, and accommodation needs of neurodivergent individuals, providing a holistic understanding of diversity within the workforce.

Neuro refers to the brain, and diversity signifies differences. It underscores the fact that no two brains function identically; each has its unique way of processing information. ND encompasses conditions where brain functioning deviates from what is considered typical. Unlike more widely recognised disabilities, neurodiverse conditions are still in the process of gaining full recognition and awareness.

In the context of ND, proponents of this perspective suggest that many people with neurodivergence possess unique talents and are capable of functioning productively in organisations. However, they are often excluded from job opportunities due to being perceived as 'at the edges of the bell curve,' representing human variation.[10]

According to this view, the issue lies not with people with neurodivergence themselves, but rather with hiring processes that define talent too narrowly. This perspective particularly criticises the reliance on job interviews, which tend to be biassed against individuals with atypical manners of interaction. This aligns with early criticisms of employment perspectives that framed diversity as 'the problem,' rather than recognising the problem as the inappropriate management of diversity.[11]

7 UNESCAP, Building Disability Inclusive Societies in Asia and the Pacific, 2018, 37.

8 International Labour Organization (ILO) (2011), Moving Towards Disability Inclusion, 2011, 55. Available from: https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@ed_emp/@ifp_skills/documents/ publication/wcms _160776.pdf

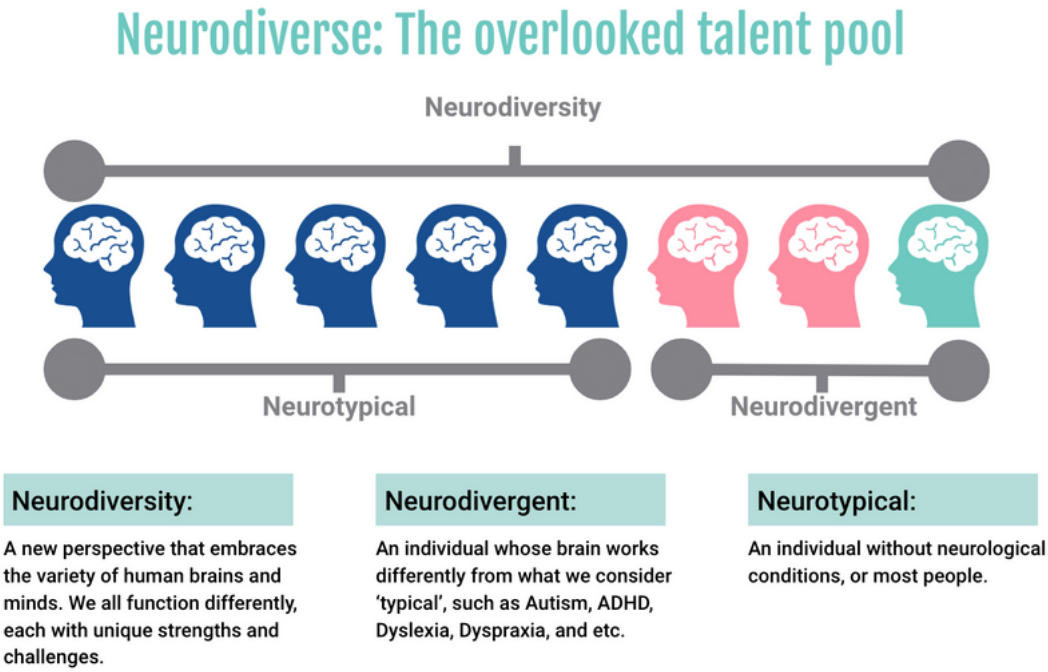
9 United Nations Human Rights, Monitoring the Convention on The Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2010, 9. Available from: https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Publications/Disabilities _training_17EN.pdf

10 Robison, J. E. 2013. "What is Neurodiversity?" Psychology Today. Available from: https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/my-life-aspergers/201310/what-is-neurodiversity

11 Härtel, C. E. J., and Fujimoto, Y. 2000. "Diversity is Not the Problem – Openness to Perceived Dissimilarity is". Journal of Management and Organization, 6(1), 14-27. doi:10.1017/S1833367200005484

## Types of ND

Neurodiversity represents a wide range of human experiences. Understanding ND in relation to PWDs who have vision, hearing, mobility, and mental health considerations provides a common language for inclusion. This language allows potential or current employees to self-advocate and helps employers understand which accommodations are key to inclusion in different circumstances.




## Putting People First

All stakeholders within the supply chain ecosystem are empowered to communicate clearly and advocate for appropriate accommodations by using people-first language. In both corporate as well as academic settings, people-first language centres the experience and needs of the individual and demonstrates that the values of the organisation are inclusive.

Click the button on the left or scan the QR code above to learn more about neurodiversity at work at Steps, a social enterprise in Thailand.

Chapter 2

# Landscape of PWDs and Neurodiverse Individuals

The global population is diverse, and within it exists a significant portion of individuals living with various disabilities. An estimated one billion people, approximately 15% of the world's population, live with some form of disability.[12] It is noteworthy that the prevalence of disabilities tends to be higher in developing countries. However, many PWDs are still not counted. Considering Thailand's context, in 2017, according to data from the National Statistics Office, Thailand had a total of 3.69 million PWDs.[13] Surprisingly, only 1.64 million individuals, or 44.4%, had disability cards, making them eligible for state assistance. Another significant segment, approximately 45.1%, revealed that their applications for disability cards were rejected on the grounds that they did not meet the specific disability categories defined by the government, therefore excluding them from receiving disability benefits.

The United Nations fact sheets on PWDs[14] reveal that globally, there are approximately 386 million working-age individuals with disabilities. In some countries, unemployment rates among PWDs can reach as high as 80%.[15] This highlights a profound challenge faced by this demographic group on a global scale.

In Europe, one in four adults, equivalent to about 87 million Europeans, have some form of disability. Among the working-age population with disabilities, 17.7% are reported to be unemployed, significantly higher when compared to the 8.6% unemployment rate for individuals without disabilities.[16]

The situation is more pronounced in Asia, where an estimated 690 million individuals live with disabilities. Among this vast population, approximately 472 million are of working age.[17] However, the median employment-to-population ratio among PWDs is a mere 28%, in stark contrast to the 51% employment rate among individuals without disabilities.

Focusing on Thailand, official records indicate that around 2.1 million individuals have disability cards.[18] Regrettably, 63.5% of these PWDs are unemployed, leaving only 36.5% formally employed, primarily in the agricultural (53.63%) and unskilled labour sectors.

It is essential to acknowledge that counting the exact number of PWDs and ND individuals can vary widely between regions and countries. These disparities often arise from differing definitions of disability, variations in data collection methodologies, and other factors.

Thailand faces unique challenges in this context. The Persons with Disabilities Empowerment Act B.E. 2550 defines people with disabilities as: 'individuals who have limitations to perform their daily activities or to fully participate in society due to visual, hearing, mobility, communication, mental, emotional, behavioural, intellectual, learning and/or other impairments, resulting in different types of barriers, and have special needs in order to perform their daily activities and fully participate in society according to the types and criteria of

12 World Health Organization & World Bank (2011). World Report on Disability, 2011. World Health Organization, 261.Available from: https://iris.who.int/handle/10665/44575

13 Jatupitpornchan, P., "Disability Benefit System Needs Revamp". TDRi Insights, 18 July 2022. Available from: https://tdri.or.th/en/2022/07/disability-benefits-system-needs-revamp

14 United Nations, "Factsheet on Persons with Disabilities". Department of Economic and Social Affairs. Available from https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/resources/factsheet-on-persons- with-disabilities.html

15 ILO (2007), Facts on Disability in the World of Bank, November 2007. Available from: https://www.ilo. org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/documents/publication/wcms_087707.pdf

16 Eurostat, "Infographic – Disability in the EU: Facts and Figures". European Council, 2022. Available from: https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/infographics/disability-eu-facts-figures/

17 UNESCAP. Disability at a Glance 2021: The Shaping of Disability-Inclusive Employment in Asia and the Pacific, 2021, ii. Available from: https://www.unescap.org/kp/2021/ disability-glance-2021-shaping -disability-inclusive-employment-asia-and-pacific

18 National Association of the Deaf in Thailand (NADT), "Report on Disability Situation in Thailand 2565". Available from: https://nadt.or.th/en/stat65.html

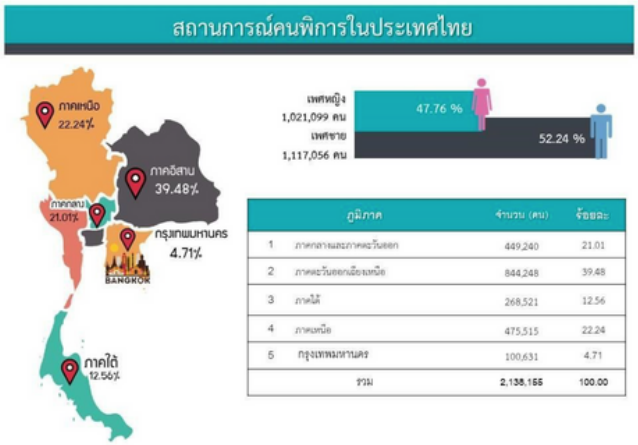



*Diagram: Situation of PWDs in Thailand*
*Source: NADT, 2022* [19]

*Diagram: Occupations of working age PWDs in Thailand*
*Source: NADT, 2022* [20]

disabilities prescribed by the Minister of Social Development and Human Security'.[21] Despite this definition, determination of disability is mostly based on medical diagnosis and not the needs of individuals, which in itself does not align with the provision of the law.[22] Because of this high dependence on medical evaluation, only those with severe intellectual challenges qualify for the activity and participation assessment.[23] However, there exists a spectrum of intellectual challenges with varying degrees. Most individuals are evaluated solely for impairments and fundamental functions like walking and speaking, and consequently, they may not meet the government's criteria. This situation results in an incomplete and inaccurate identification of the needs of PWDs.

Furthermore, there is a significant lack of open data on ND individuals in the Thai context, primarily due to the pervasive lack of awareness and understanding regarding ND within the general public. The term neurodiversity is relatively new to the Thai vocabulary, and there is a dearth of specific terminology to distinguish various types of disabilities.

## Factors Contributing to the Unemployment Rate among PWDs in Thailand

These factors play a pivotal role in shaping the employment landscape for PWDs in Thailand. Understanding these underlying causes is essential for crafting effective strategies and solutions aimed at fostering a more inclusive society, particularly within the context of the workplace. By addressing these challenges, we can pave the way for a more equitable and accessible environment where PWDs and ND individuals can thrive professionally. To address these issues, strategies and policies should focus on raising awareness, combating stereotypes, promoting inclusive hiring practices, and providing the necessary support and infrastructure for PWDs to access education and employment opportunities. Additionally, efforts to change negative cultural perceptions and promote diversity and inclusion can be instrumental in reducing the unemployment rate among PWDs in Thailand.

### Lack of Awareness

One significant factor is the lack of awareness among employers and the general public about the capabilities and potential contributions of PWDs.

### Stereotype Prevalence

Pervasive stereotypes and misconceptions about PWDs can hinder their employment prospects. These stereotypes often lead to biassed hiring decisions, where employers may assume that individuals with disabilities are less capable or productive. Stereotypes are frequently reinforced by negative media representation and/or not challenged due to limited media representation.[24]

19 NADT, "Report on Disability Situation in Thailand 2565".

20 NADT, "Report on Disability Situation in Thailand 2565".

21 National Office for Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (NEP), Persons with Disabilities Empowerment Act B.E.2550. 2550, 1. Available from: http://web1.dep.go.th/sites/default/files/files/news/2.pdf

22 Jatupitpornchan, P., "Disability Benefit System Needs Revamp".

23 Jatupitpornchan, P., "Disability Benefit System Needs Revamp".

24 Burton, M., "Disability and Poverty in Thailand". The Borgen Project, 9 February 2021. Available from: https://borgenproject.org/disability-and-poverty-in-thailand/

**Misinterpretation of Charitable Intentions**
Charitable activities often perpetuate a misguided perception that individuals with disabilities are inherently incapable or possess restricted abilities compared to those without disabilities. This misconception may lead to underestimating the diverse talents and potential contributions that individuals with disabilities can offer in various aspects of life and work. According to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Training Guide:[25]

> *"The charity approach treats persons with disabilities as passive objects of kind acts or of welfare payments rather than as empowered individuals with rights to participate in political and cultural life and in their development. What characterises this approach is that persons with disabilities are not considered able to provide for themselves because of their impairment. Consequently, society provides for them. From this perspective, persons with disabilities are the target of pity and they depend on the goodwill of society" (United Nations, 2014, p. 8).*[26]

**Policy-Making Methods and Reach**
Government policies and initiatives aimed at supporting PWDs may not be effectively reaching all segments of the disabled population, particularly in Thailand, which has limited experience with PWDs and still lacks an understanding of the nuanced spectrum of PWDs. There might be challenges in implementing and enforcing disability-related policies.

**Poor Supporting Infrastructure**
Insufficient infrastructure to support PWDs in terms of transportation, accessibility, and assistive technologies can make it challenging for people who want to work to access education and employment opportunities.

**Lack of Availability of Disabled Talent**
Employers may not be aware of or connected to networks that can help them find suitable disabled talent. This lack of a talent pipeline can contribute to high unemployment rates.

**Limited Access to Education**
A lack of education and vocational skills is highlighted as one of the significant determinants of unemployment status.[27] Education, in general, can have a beneficial influence on employability, equipping individuals with essential skills, knowledge, and self-assurance necessary for success in the professional world. Additionally, education can serve as a gateway to higher-paying employment and increased prospects for career progression.

In 2022, 57.61% of PWDs did not receive education.[28] This statistic indicates that 57.61% of PWDs in Thailand lack the proper knowledge and skills necessary for employment. Cheausuwantavee and Keeratiphantawong (2021) also highlight low qualifications and education as one of the challenges faced by PWDs in transitioning from unemployed to an employed state.[29]

**57.61%**
In 2022, 57.61% of PWDs in Thailand did not receive education.

25 United Nations (2014), The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities: Training Guide, 2014. Available from: https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/772770

26 United Nations, The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities: Training Guide. 2014, 8.

27 Van Zon, S. K. R., Reijneveld, S. A., Mendes de Leon, C. F., and Bültmann, U. 2017. "The Impact of Low Education and Poor Health on Unemployment Varies by Work Life Stage". International Journal of Public Health, 62(9): 997-1006. doi:10.1007/s00038-017-0972-7

28 NADT, "Report on Disability Situation in Thailand 2565".

29 Keeratiphanthawong, S., and Cheausuwantave, T. 2021. "Employment for Persons with Disabilities in Thailand: Opportunities and Challenges in the Labor Market". Journal of Population and Social Studies, 29: 384-400.

Navigating Differences:

# Perspectives of Employees with Disabilities and Employers

In our quest to foster more inclusive workplaces for PWDs, it is essential to recognise the diversity of experiences and viewpoints that exist within the employment landscape. The journey towards inclusion is not a one-sided endeavour. It involves understanding the distinct challenges and perspectives of both employees with disabilities as well as employers. By delving into these differing viewpoints, we aim to shed light on the factors that can contribute to the obstacles faced by PWDs in the workplace. These varying perspectives underscore the importance of open dialogue and informed strategies to bridge the gap between employees with disabilities and employers, ultimately creating more equitable and accessible work environments.

## Challenges from Employee Perspectives [30]

Individuals with disabilities often face unique challenges in the workplace. These challenges can vary depending on the type of disability they have. Here are some of the expressed challenges from the perspectives of employees with disabilities:

1. **People Who Are Blind**
   Individuals with visual challenges often encounter negative stereotypes and discrimination in the workplace. These misconceptions can hinder their professional growth and opportunities.[31]

2. **People Who Are Deaf/Hard of Hearing**
   Employees with hearing variance may wish to have co-workers who also share their deafness. Sometimes, they face difficulties in understanding tasks assigned to them, which can be related to workplace regulations and policies that do not adequately accommodate their needs.[32]

3. **Physical Mobility**
   Some employees with physical mobility limitations have reported that their potential employers hesitated to hire them due to concerns about their return on investment (ROI). These concerns may stem from uncertainties about the costs associated with accommodating their specific needs.[33]

4. **Autism**
   It has been observed that the overprotective tendencies of caregivers or parents toward their autistic children can influence the employment prospects of the autistic individuals. Caregivers of individuals with autism are concerned with limitations in workplace regulation and issues related to transportation; for example, inaccessible and unsafe transportation to and from work is a challenge for some individuals with autism. Autistic individuals may struggle with sensory adjustments, the necessity for social interaction, and the expectation for rapid learning.[34]

5. **Underemployment**
   Underemployment for individuals with disabilities is defined by their involvement in jobs that do not meet specific criteria, such as insufficient working hours, lower compensation, or limited opportunities for career growth. Employers often view PWDs as most suitable for unskilled work.[35]

30 Calvert, S., “Challenges for People with Disabilities”.

31 Velhinho, P., “Navigating the Employment Maze: The Challenges Faced by Visually Impaired Individuals in Overcoming Discrimination”. LinkedIn, 25 May 2023. Available from: https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/navigating-employment-maze-challenges-faced-visually-pedro-velhinho/

32 Diversio Blog, “Supporting the Deaf & Hard of Hearing Community in the Workplace". 12 April 2023. Available from: https://diversio.com/supporting-the-deaf-hard-of-hearing-community-in-the-workplace

33 Nagtegaal, R., de Boer, N., van Berkel, R., Derks, B., and Tummers, L. 2023. “Why Do Employers (Fail to) Hire People with Disabilities? A Systematic Review of Capabilities, Opportunities and Motivations.” Journal of Occupational Rehabilitation, 33(2): 329-340. doi:10.1007/s10926-022-10076-1

34 Tathgur, M. K., and Kang, H. K. 2021. “Challenges of the Caregivers in Managing a Child with Autism Spectrum Disorder- A Qualitative Analysis”. Indian Journal of Psychological Medicine, 43(5): 416–421. doi:10.1177/02537176211000769

35 Keeratiphanthawong, S., and Cheausuwantave, T. 2021. “Employment for Persons with Disabilities in Thailand: Opportunities and Challenges in the Labor Market.”

Navigating Differences:

# Perspectives of Employees with Disabilities and Employers

## Challenges from Employer's Perspectives

From the employers' perspective, there are challenges and concerns related to hiring PWDs. Employers may have reservations and doubts about the skills, education, and performance of employees with disabilities. Here are some common challenges from the employers' perspective as identified in the context of Thailand: [36]

1. **Doubts About PWDs' Work Skills**
   Some employers may express doubts about the work skills and capabilities of employees with disabilities. These doubts can be rooted in misconceptions and a lack of understanding of the potential and abilities of individuals with disabilities.

2. **Limited Resources in Small-Scale Businesses**
   Small-scale businesses, in particular, may face challenges in providing appropriate accommodations for employees with disabilities. Limited resources, combined with inadequate legal enforcement and a lack of government support, can make it difficult for these businesses to create an inclusive workplace in appropriate and accessible ways. This lack of appropriate accommodations restrains the inflow of talent into these businesses, further exacerbating the challenge in building a robust talent pool.

3. **Concerns about the Cost of Accommodations**
   While many employers express an interest in hiring PWDs, they may be concerned about the potential costs associated with providing necessary accommodations. Organisations of all sizes need to overcome the unsupported fear that accommodating employees with disabilities will require additional investment. Numerous studies indicate that most accommodations are either free or low-cost.

By exploring these perspectives from both employees with disabilities and employers, we gain a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and concerns that exist in the workplace, helping us formulate effective strategies for inclusion and diversity.

60% of workplace accommodations can be made for free and the average remaining cost is $500 per employee.

World Economic Forum (2019)

36 Keeratiphanthawong, S., and Cheausuwantave, T. 2021. "Employment for Persons with Disabilities in Thailand: Opportunities and Challenges in the Labor Market."

# A Comparative Analysis of Disability Support Policies Globally

In an increasingly interconnected world, the pursuit of equitable and inclusive workplaces has become a global endeavour. Recognising the importance of fostering an environment where individuals with disabilities can thrive, countries around the world have developed various policies and initiatives. These policies aim to provide support to individuals with disabilities, empower employers to create inclusive workplaces, and encourage employers to actively participate in this transformative journey. This chapter provides on a comprehensive exploration of disability support policies globally.

## Comparison of Disability Inclusion Policies by Country and Categories

| | Direct Support to PWDs | Direct Support to the Employer | Encouraging the Employer |
|---|---|---|---|
| **United States** [37, 38] | | ● | ● |
| **United Kingdom** [39] | | ● | |
| **Canada** [40] | ● | | |
| **Germany** [41, 42] | | | ● |
| **Switzerland** [43] | ● | ● | ● |
| **New Zealand** [44] | ● | ● | ● |
| **Australia** [45] | ● | | |
| **Singapore** [46] | | ● | ● |
| **Thailand** [47, 48, 49] | ● | | ● |
| **India** [50] | ● | | |
| **Japan** [51] | ● | | |
| **Indonesia** [52] | | ● | |

37 U.S. Department of Labor, Policy Development and Technical Assistance Resource. Available from: https://www.dol.gov/agencies/odep

38 U.S. Department of Labor, Hiring People with Disabilities. Available from: https://www.dol.gov/general/topic/disability/hiring

39 Office of the Secretary of State for Scotland, "£6.4 million boost for Employers to Support Disabled People". 17 October 2022. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/news/64-million-boost-for-employers-to-support-disabled-people

40 Government of Canada, "Canada Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2022". 2022. Available from: https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/disability-inclusion-action-plan/action-plan-2022.html#h3.3

41 United Nations, Convention on The Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Consideration of Reports Submitted by States Parties under Article 35 on the Convention: Germany.

42 Hirschberg, M. (2021), European Semester 2020-2021 Country Fiche on Disability Equality: Germany, February 2021. Available from: https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/6a5726b5-a70a -11eb-9585-01aa75ed71a1

43 The Voice of Blind and Partially Sighted People in Europe (EBU), "United Convention of People with Disabilities (CRPD): Article 27: Work and Employment - Country Information: Switzerland". Available from: https://www.euroblind.org/convention/article-27/switzerland

44 Employment New Zealand, "About Employment New Zealand". 2023. Available from: https://www.employment.govt.nz/about/about-employment-new-zealand/#:~:text=and%20harmonious%20workplaces.-,Employment%20New%20Zealand%20is%20part%20of%20the%20Ministry%20of%20Business,how%20they%20should%20do%20it

45 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), "Reporting on Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-2031". 2021. Available from: https://www.aihw.gov.au/australias-disability-strategy

46 Disability:IN, "Singapore".Available from: https://disabilityin.org/country/singapore/

47 Asean Disability Forum, "Advocacy Rights of Person of Disabilities". Available from: https://aseandisabilityforum.com/thailand/

48 Namsiripongphan, P., and Thapwong, D. (2011). International Labour Organization (ILO), Policy critique and practical facts regarding people with disabilities in Thailand. 2011. Available from: https://www.ilo.or g/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/---sro-bangkok/documents/publication/wcms_162885.pdf

49 UNESCAP, "Thailand's Disability Allowance". 2019. Available from: https://www.socialprotection-tool box.org/practice/thailands-disability-allowance

50 Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (2008), National Policy: The National Policy for Persons with Disabilities, 2006. Available from: https://cdnbbsr.s3waas.gov.in/s3e58aea67b01fa 747687f038dfde066f6/uploads/2023/10/20231013248779923.pdf

51 National Institute of Population and Social Security Research (2014), Social Security in Japan 2014. Available from: https://www.ipss.go.jp/s-info/e/ssj2014/pdf/08_ssj2014.pdf

52 ILO (2019), Promoting Employment Opportunities for People with Disabilities, Quota Schemes, Volume 1. 2019, 9.

## Comparative Analysis of Disability Employment Policies in the Global North

In the international context, Switzerland is recognised as a leader in disability employment. According to 2010 data from the International Labour Organization (ILO), Switzerland has the highest employment rate for PWDs among the examined countries, reflecting its commitment to fostering a more inclusive workforce.[53]

In contrast, the United States,[54] despite a robust framework of policies and initiatives, faces a significant employment gap for PWDs when comparing PWDs to their counterparts without disabilities, as indicated by ILO data.[55] This disparity underscores the ongoing challenges and opportunities for improvement within the US disability employment landscape.

Considering Switzerland's status as a leader in employment for PWDs, it serves as an excellent example of a healthy inclusive ecosystem.

## What Are the Policies and Initiatives Taken in Thailand[56]?

In Thailand, there are supplementary provisions alongside the quota system in Section 33 to encourage organisations to hire individuals with disabilities. Section 33 establishes the foundational requirement, stating that for every 100 employees with no disabilities, one must have a disability. Organisations adhering to this provision become eligible for tax reductions, with double incentives for hiring one PWD and triple incentives for employing more than 60% PWDs, even if the organisation has fewer than 100 employees.

Section 33 also mandates employers to hire full-time disabled workers who receive welfare benefits similar to other employees, with contracts typically lasting over a year. It also outlines accessibility regulations for workplaces. Non-compliance generally leads to renovation recommendations based on facilities rather than fines.

Section 34 introduces penalties for non-compliance. Employers not meeting Section 33 quotas and failing to promote disability employment under Section 35 face fines. These fines are calculated based on the minimum wage, multiplied by 365 days, and then by the number of disabled employees required by the quota system.

Section 35 presents a contract service mechanism allowing organisations to engage individuals with disabilities or their supporters for various roles within the organisation. Contracts typically last a year and are remunerated based on the minimum wage. While these individuals are considered company employees, they might not receive the same welfare benefits as those under Section 33. However, companies have the option to provide additional welfare.

These provisions illustrate Thailand's strategy for encouraging disability employment, creating inclusivity, and providing tangible incentives for both employers and individuals with disabilities. In Thailand, there are various tax benefits related to PWDs. These tax benefits aim to incentivise support and inclusion of PWDs in various aspects of life, including employment and accessibility.

## Gaps in Thailand's Disability Employment Policies and Initiatives

While Thailand has implemented a range of policies and initiatives aimed at promoting disability employment, several gaps and challenges persist within the system. One notable challenge is the unclear definition of disability within Thai policies, which can lead to confusion and inconsistent implementation. Furthermore, individuals frequently face challenges in obtaining the required medical certificates to qualify for disability benefits and access employment opportunities. It is noteworthy that countries with

53 Banning-Lover, R. 2016. "Russia and the US Have the Worst Employment Gaps for Disabled People". 23 June 2016. Available from: https://www.theguardian.com/global-development-professionals-network /2016/jun/23/russia-and-the-us-have-the-worst-employment-gaps-for-disabled-people

54 Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) (2022), Persons with a Disability: Labor Force Characteristics - 2022, 23 February 2023. Available from: https://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/disabl.pdf

55 Banning-Lover, R., 2016. "Russia and the US Have the Worst Employment Gaps for Disabled People".

56 Acclime Thailand, "Employment Of Disabled Persons". 2023.

# Persons with Disabilities Employment Act B.E.2550 and the Amendment (2nd Edition) B.E. 2556

**>100 employees**

**Companies with more than 100 employees, should follow at least one section (33, 34 or 35)**

## Section 33
**Employ**
**person with disabilities**

- Employ 1 person with disabilities (with disability card) for every 100 employees
- Work in the positions suitable for their skills and abilities
- Minimum requirement 1 year work contract
- Tax exemption
  Example;
  PWD salary per year = 120,000 Baht
  Claim expense (salary x 2) = 240,000 Baht

PWD : Persons with disabilities

## Section 35
**Grant concessions**
**& other support**

- Grant concessions
  Give PWD or their caregiver the right to possess or make use of the property for their occupation.
- Arrange a place to supply goods or services provided by PWD
- Provide equipment, facilities or a sign language interpreter
- Employ under a temporary employment contract
- Provide training or any other assistance to PWD or their caregivers

## Section 34
**Pay money into the Fund**

Make contributions to the Fund
(Fund for Promotion and Development of Life Quality of Disabled Persons)

How much per year?
Minimum wage per day x 365
(per one PWD position that a company should hire)

7.5% interest rates/year
(on the amount that has not been sent to the fund)

PWD : Persons with disabilities

Source: Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities/2023

restricted access, where fewer than 10% of eligible individuals or families received any form of government benefits, are mainly concentrated in the Southeast Asian region, accounting for about 80% of these cases.[57] Moreover, the implementation of the quota system in Thailand has raised concerns. While quota systems can be effective for promoting disability inclusion, in some cases, they may inadvertently act as limitations or enforcement measures, not achieving the intended effect of encouragement and education.[58] Quota systems may create a sense of obligation for employers to hire PWDs without effectively promoting an understanding of the capabilities of PWDs and encouraging inclusive employment practices. These identified gaps indicate areas for potential enhancement and refinement in Thailand's disability employment policies.

## Conclusion

To strengthen disability employment initiatives globally, it's crucial to focus on sustainability and flexibility, allowing each initiative to be adapted to the unique context of the region or country. This approach acknowledges the diverse needs and challenges faced by different communities, enabling tailored solutions that can yield more effective results. Recognising the importance of every stakeholder within these initiatives is essential for creating an ecosystem that fosters inclusivity. Whether it's government bodies, employers, or advocacy groups, each plays a pivotal role in driving positive change.

**10%**

Fewer than 10% of eligible individuals or families received any form of government benefits in countries with restricted access.

**80%**

Countries with restricted access to support for inclusion are mainly concentrated in Southeast Asia, accounting for about 80% of cases.

57 World Health Organization (2007), Atlas: Global Resources For Persons With Intellectual Disabilities 2007, 71. Available from: https://iris.who.int/bitstream/handle/10665/96353/9789241563505_eng.pdf? sequence=1&isAllowed=y

58 Tongwaranan, T. (2016), Bangkok Post, "Employment quotas for the disabled don't always work". 18 July 2016. Available from: https://www.bangkokpost.com/business/1038277/employment-quotas -for-the-disabled-dont-always-work

Chapter 4

# Introduction to the Inclusive Workplace

An inclusive workplace is more than just a buzzword. It is a philosophy and practice that fosters a work environment where every individual, regardless of their background or identity, feels valued, respected, and empowered. It is a place where diversity is not merely acknowledged but celebrated, where differences are viewed as assets contributing to the collective success of the organisation.

Inclusive workplaces recognise that diversity goes far beyond visible attributes like gender, race, or age. It encompasses a broad spectrum of characteristics, including but not limited to neurodiversity (ND), disabilities, sexual orientation, gender identity, religious beliefs, and cultural backgrounds. Embracing this diversity is not just a matter of social responsibility. As reported by the Forbes Human Resources Council, it is a strategic necessity that has been shown to drive innovation, enhance employee engagement, and improve overall organisational performance.[59]

Organisations in Thailand should initially prioritise compliance with the law, ensuring they meet the necessary accommodations as mandated. However, they should not limit their efforts solely to legal obligations. It is crucial for these organisations to go above and beyond what the law demands. Unfortunately, a prevailing confusion exists among many Thai organisations regarding whether they are allowed to provide benefits or services exceeding legal requirements. This confusion is especially pronounced in accommodating ND individuals. Notably, many accommodations for ND are cost-effective or even free, which presents a persuasive case for organisations to take further steps in providing these accommodations. By recognizing that going beyond legal requirements is not just a choice but a strategic decision that can foster a more inclusive and supportive environment, organisations can profoundly impact their workforce and society.

## Recommended Steps Towards Inclusive Work Practices[60]

Creating an inclusive workplace is a journey that demands a concerted effort from every member of an organisation. Whilst the principles of inclusivity are fundamental, putting them into practice requires specific actions and strategies. Drawing from research and best practices, here are essential steps that organisations can consider for inclusive work practices:

1. **Strong Leadership Commitment**
   The commitment to inclusivity should start at the top, with a strong and ongoing commitment by top management. This commitment not only sets the tone for inclusion but also reinforces corporate norms and managerial/employee behaviours that improve treatment and opportunities for employees with disabilities and diverse backgrounds.

2. **Training Programmes**
   Implement training programmes for employees that provide information about disabilities. These programmes help modify expectations, combat stereotypes, and

59 Hamill, L. 2019. “What an Inclusive Workplace Actually Looks Like, and Seven Ways to Achieve It”. Forbes, 4 February 2019. Available from: https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbeshumanresourcescouncil/2019/02/04/what-an-inclusive-workplace-actually-looks-like-and-seven-ways-to-achieve-it/

60 Schur L, Kruse D, and Blanck P. 2005. “Corporate Culture and the Employment of Persons with Disabilities”. Behavioral Sciences & the Law, 23(1): 3-20. doi:10.1002/bsl.624

and equip employees with the skills needed to interact with people with disabilities, reducing discomfort and anxiety.

3. **Selecting Inclusive Managers**
Choose managers and supervisors committed to incorporating people with disabilities into the workforce and ensuring they have adequate opportunities to advance. Inclusive managers play a pivotal role in creating a welcoming environment.

Meanwhile, non-inclusive leaders are characterised by their inability to recognise employees' unique strengths, treating them uniformly regardless of their efforts or training needs. They discourage open communication and foster division within the team. These leaders often behave in a manner inconsistent with their stated values, making employees perceive them as dishonest and unclear in their communication. This lack of transparency can lead to reduced productivity and a sense of mistrust among employees who desire honesty and real transparency from their managers, especially in evaluations and promotion decisions.[61] With non-inclusive managers, growth, productivity, and innovation will be stifled in the company regardless of whether employees are neurodiverse or neurotypical. The situation is exacerbated for neurodiverse employees, who may not receive empathetic treatment.

4. **Incentives for Inclusivity**
Incorporate the treatment of PWDs into the evaluation and reward systems for managers. Provide resources and incentives for mentoring, training, and efforts to accommodate employees with disabilities.

5. **Collaboration with Unions**
Work with unions to ensure that collective bargaining agreements allow for accommodating workers and job applicants with disabilities.

6. **Broadened Recruitment Strategies**
Broaden the company's recruitment strategies to include working with disability organisations and rehabilitation facilities to identify qualified candidates for employment positions.

7. **Corporate Internships and Training**
Collaborate with disability organisations, rehabilitation facilities, and educational institutions to develop paid corporate internships for people with disabilities. Sponsor training programmes that increase the skills and employability of individuals with disabilities, expanding the organisation's pool of qualified job candidates.

8. **Recognition of Achievements**
Ensure that the achievements of employees with disabilities are recognised throughout the organisation. This recognition helps combat negative stereotypes whilst not reinforcing unrealistic images.

9. **Employee Networks**
Encourage employees with disabilities to form their own networks within the company. These groups can provide information, support, and a platform to address the concerns of employees with disabilities to management.

10. **Emphasising Flexibility**
Place emphasis on flexibility and personalised attention to the needs of employees. This decreases the saliency of accommodations and allows managers to modify job assignments and utilise non-standard work arrangements.

11. **Increasing Autonomy**
Provide employees with increased autonomy to modify how they perform their jobs, taking advantage of their unique skills and abilities. This can be achieved through universal workplace design strategies and accessible technologies.

61 Woods, J., "How Does a Non-inclusive Leader Look?" Woods Kovalova Group, 19 September 2020. Available from: https://woodskovalovagroup.com/disrupting-leadership-blog-1/2020/9/19/how-does-a -non-inclusive-leader-look

12. **Review Human Resource Policies**
    Review human resource policies, including job analysis methods and interviewing techniques, to ensure they do not limit individuals' ability to demonstrate their qualifications for a job.

13. **Promoting Interactions**
    Ensure that colleagues have meaningful interactions with employees with disabilities in various contexts, both formal and informal. This aids in dispelling stereotypes and fostering stronger working relationships. Examples include assigning a coach to new neurodivergent employees and facilitating teamwork that includes at least one neurodivergent team member, offering training on communication through role-play activities and guidance on interacting and collaborating with neurodivergent employees, among others.

Implementing these steps can significantly contribute to creating a workplace that celebrates diversity and fosters inclusivity, benefiting employees and the organisation as a whole.

Chapter 5

# Field Research on Inclusivity in the Workplace

In this chapter, we explore outcomes from seven interviews with employers dedicated to creating inclusive workplaces for individuals with disabilities and people who identify as neurodiverse in Thailand and Asia. The interviewees, representing diverse nationalities and industries, share a common commitment to fostering inclusion. Six of the seven employers interviewed are actively integrating PWD and ND employees into their workplaces.

## Key Themes from Interviews

### Embracing Differences

- Diversity is valued for innovation and varied perspectives
- Diverse teams consistently demonstrate enhanced creativity and innovation.
- Inclusive cultures contribute to business profitability.

### Discovering Potential

- Shifting focus from disabilities to abilities is transformative.
- Recognizing and harnessing unique strengths lead to remarkable outcomes.
- Focusing on strengths fosters a more dynamic and results-driven workplace.

### Challenges and Solutions

- Challenges focus on engaging with the talent pool.
- Proactive workplace preparation and inclusivity culture address challenges.
- Education and awareness campaigns change public perspectives.

### Stakeholder Engagement

- Employers and business leaders play a pivotal role in championing diversity.
- Collaboration with educational institutions establishes a direct talent pipeline.
- Government, NGOs, and educational institutions should actively engage in fostering inclusion.

### Policy Perspectives - Voluntary Inclusion

- Move beyond rigid quota systems.
- Policies should encourage voluntary inclusion.
- Awareness campaigns to highlight diversity benefits.

## Recommendations

### Celebrate Diversity:

- Actively cultivate diversity in teams.
- Celebrate unique abilities of individuals with disabilities and ND traits.

### Focus on Strengths:

- Emphasise strengths over weaknesses.
- Assess and recognize unique strengths of each employee.

### Proactive Workplace Culture:

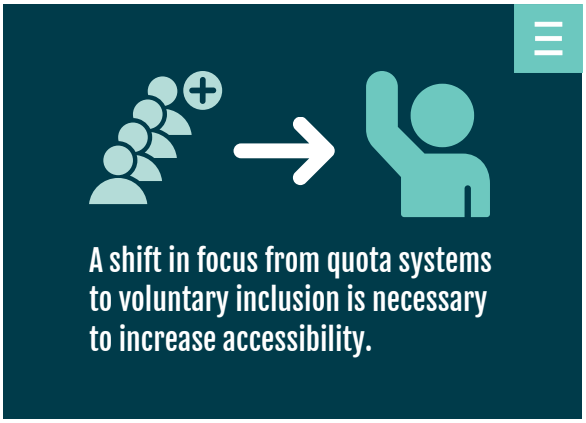
- Proactively create an inclusive workplace culture.
- Adopt a flexible approach for accommodation.

### Stakeholder Collaboration:

- Engage employers, leaders, government, NGOs, and educational institutions.
- Establish partnerships for talent acquisition and support networks.

### Voluntary Inclusion Policies:

- Shift focus from quota systems to voluntary inclusion.
- Encourage awareness campaigns and provide accessible resources.



# Interviewee Demographics

## Country of Origin

Spain
Germany

Belgium
Slovakia

Thailand (2)
Australia

‘We have innovation because different abilities, different minds create innovation and different ideas which help to make the company grow as well’.

T. Hotrakitya
Steps

Kate Gerits
**Crowne Plaza Hotel**

Patrick Both
**Kimpton Maa Lai Bangkok**

Phuree Smittinet
**PTT Group**

Griselda Gras
**El Mercado**

Theeta Hotrakitya
**Steps**

M. Gautron Fillova
**Annabel’s Early Years International Kindergarten**

Christian Dassonville
**IKEA**

Five out of seven interviewees reported heightened creativity, leading to innovative solutions.

A remarkable four out of seven interviewees witnessed improved employee morale and job satisfaction.

‘From our experience, what we find is that our store will get around 15% more revenue’.

P. Smittinet
PTT Group

Chapter 6

# Conclusion and Further Recommendations

By implementing these further recommendations, stakeholders across the spectrum can work together to build more inclusive communities, policies, and workplaces. These efforts are essential for promoting the full participation and economic inclusion of individuals with disabilities in society.

## 1 Ecosystem Chain with Roles of Stakeholders

Disability employment initiatives should be viewed as an interconnected ecosystem where every stakeholder has a crucial role to play. This includes government entities, public organisations, not-for-profit organisations, academic institutions, and individuals with disabilities themselves. Recognising the interdependence of these stakeholders is fundamental to creating a truly inclusive community. PWDs, in particular, should be actively involved in shaping these initiatives, providing insights into their unique needs and experiences.

## 2 Policy Recommendations

Policymakers should consider the identified gaps in disability employment policies and initiatives, tailoring their recommendations to address the specific needs of PWDs. Policies should be dynamic, responsive, and regularly updated to reflect evolving societal needs and ensure inclusivity.

## 3 Employer Engagement

Employers play a pivotal role in fostering an inclusive workplace. They should be encouraged to take proactive steps at each phase of the hiring process, from recruitment to onboarding and beyond. This includes creating job postings that appeal to a diverse pool of candidates, providing reasonable accommodations, offering ongoing training and mentorship programmes, and ensuring equitable opportunities for career advancement.

## 4 Enhancing Accessibility of Empowerment Funds

Accessibility to funds aimed at supporting PWDs in the workplace should be improved. This can include streamlining the process for accessing funds to cover workplace accommodations, consultancy services, job design, and mentoring programmes. Simplifying the application process and providing clear guidelines can encourage more companies to leverage these resources to create inclusive workplaces.

## 5 Connecting Companies with Job-Seeking PWDs

Mechanisms to connect companies seeking to hire PWDs looking for employment should be established or enhanced. This can involve the development of dedicated job boards, recruitment fairs, or online platforms that facilitate these connections. Ensuring ease of access and user-friendliness will encourage greater participation.

Steps at Sasin
RETHINKING INCLUSION

NWRC
neuroDIVERSITY at work research centre

STEPS
An Inclusive Community

29/8 Charonmit,
Ekkamai Soi 10,
Sukhumvit 63,
Bangkok, 10110, Thailand
nwrc@stepscommunity.com
Tel: +66 (0) 81-819-6967