

United Nations Human Rights Convention

The United Nations (UN) has set up an international human rights convention on the rights of disabled people.

The Convention has become into force since 20 states have ratified.

In co-operation with other international organisations the World Association for Supported Employment is preparing a project to create opportunities for people with disabilities for work.

The project is in line with article 27 of the UN Convention and shall focus on supported employment, customized employment and self employment.

It is the intention to start with small projects in different parts of the world. The countries where the projects can start still have to be decided. The projects must fulfil a multiplier role in the country or region.

Phases of an operational project

Phase 1 – Spreading the idea

The first phase involves contacting people who are attracted to the Supported Employment, Customized Employment and Self Employment approach. Those interested can form a committee or a task force. It is important that all relevant players are involved (persons with disabilities/ relatives, service providers, employers, public sector representatives).

This group of people can start e.g. by collecting and spreading information about Supported Employment. Through this more people can become involved and local, regional and national meetings can be organized.

Phase 2 – Forming associations

As a result of the first phase local, regional and national associations or groups for Supported Employment can be established.

These organizations spread information on the developments on Supported Employment, Customized Employment and Self Employment through conferences and workshops. The meetings also facilitate the exchange of practical information among persons who were involved in the implementation process.

Phase 3 – Start-up activities

The most important phase is starting activities by using the various steps of the Supported Employment model – assessment, job finding, job analysis, matching, job coaching, including systematic training/vocational training and ongoing support, and depending on the focus steps linked to Customized Employment and/or Self Employment.

Supported employment, Customized Employment and Self Employment usually begins on a small scale. It is best to start with one person and make for example Supported Employment a success story for this individual. This success becomes an example for others to follow. Through these small steps Supported Employment, Customized Employment and Self Employment can be implemented and extended.

In a developing country with a lack of service provision, Supported Employment, Customized Employment and Self Employment services can be started by volunteers. Family and friends can play an integral role, carrying out job finding and other activities to support the person with a disability.

Networks of family and friends can assist in identifying suitable jobs. The town or village can provide a meeting place for the organization. In concrete terms it means the use of all available resources in the local community, including employers.

Phase 4 – ‘Growing’ supported employment

When Supported Employment, Customized Employment and Self Employment is growing, there is also a need to look at the organizational structure of the organization itself. As numbers increase and more people with disabilities are successfully working in Supported Employment, Customized Employment and attention must be given to management aspects, administration and the development of the organization and its staff.

Evaluation is needed – of the Supported Employment, Customized Employment and Self Employment services and, linked to this, of the training and development needs of those providing these services.

Once the success of Supported Employment, Customized Employment and Self Employment is demonstrated, it will generate interest. All players will respond positively when they perceive how they can benefit. Employers will share their experiences with other employers. Parents will talk about their child’s personal growth and development through Supported Employment, Customized Employment and Self Employment. People in public administration will spread the word that the policy to promote Supported Employment, Customized Employment and Self Employment is a success. Most importantly, people with disabilities will gain from their independence and from their employment status, and will become powerful advocates.

Basic conditions

This includes the condition that projects can only start when basics are arranged, such as involvement of local and regional people and organization who can carry out the activities with support from the project coordination group. Funding for development of the project is available. This does not mean just sending money to a project. The money is only meant for additional costs. The implementation of supported employment must be arranged within the context of available resources (in kind or in money) of the country/region. Otherwise when the funding is finished the supported employment activities could be finished also.

Training

Training of professionals and others who are working with persons with disabilities is very important. The training is on the different aspects of supported employment and is practical. Existing training methods can be used and adapted to the specific situation on the country or region. It is important that persons from universities and other education sectors are involved, so that they can implement the training in their education programs.

The professionals and others who work with persons with disabilities shall receive a training how to train practical skills to persons with a disability.

Research

Involvement of researchers is also very important. At national and regional level reports can be produced about the outcomes of supported employment ca. For decisionmakers these reports are important.

The information of research must also become available for the international partners in the project.

Funding

At this stage the initiative group is looking for funding for the project, which includes coordination, operational project costs, dissemination cost, training costs.

Funding organisations are very welcome to give input and can contact WASE.