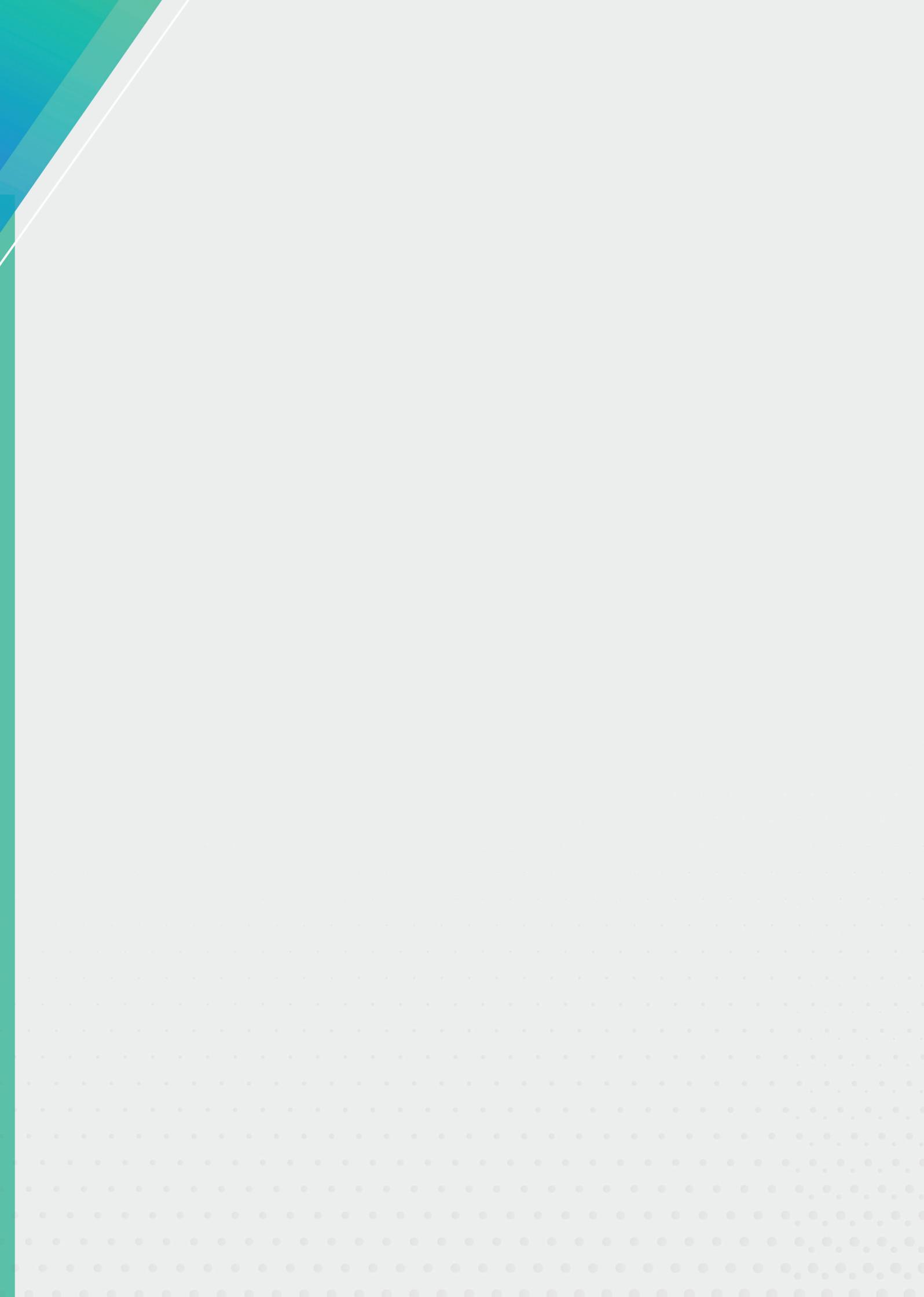


MOVING FROM THE MARGINS

Mainstreaming young persons with
disabilities in Pakistan



Abbreviations

BBSYDP

Benazir Bhutto Shaheed
Youth Development Programme

BISP

Benazir Income Support Programme

CPEC

China Pakistan Economic Corridor

CRPD

Convention on Rights of Persons
with Disabilities

DAE

Diploma of Associate Engineer

DPO

Disabled Persons' Organisation

EU

European Union

FATA

Federally Administered
Tribal Areas

ICT

Information and communication
technology

TEVTA

Technical Education & Vocational
Training Authority

TVET

Technical and vocational education
and training

UNESCO

United Nations Educational, Scientific
and Cultural Organisation

IT

Information technology

LCDDP

LC Disability and Development
Programme

NAVTTTC

National Vocational and Technical
Training Centre

NGO

Non-governmental organisation

NPA

National Plan of Action

NSERE

National Socio-Economic Registry

PPAF

Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund

PVTC

Punjab Vocational Training Council

SEN

Special education needs

TVE

Technical and vocational education

UNDP

United Nations Development Programme

UNICEF

United Nations Children's Fund

Foreword

The last decade has witnessed an increasing global commitment to mainstreaming persons with disabilities into education, employment and training. This has been underlined by the adoption of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) in 2006 as well as the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Pakistan ratified the UNCRPD in 2011, and there has been encouraging progress on inclusion and access. Given the size and scale of Pakistan, however, the difficulties in securing reliable data and the continued widespread stigma and discrimination of persons with disabilities, there is much that still needs to be done to enable Pakistan to fulfil its commitments to the UNCRPD and provide persons with disabilities with the opportunities they need to flourish.

In July 2018, the UK Department for International Development (DFID), International Disability Alliance (IDA) and the Government of Kenya hosted the world's first Global Disability Summit, bringing together policymakers, activists, changemakers and thought leaders to discuss how governments and organisations should hold themselves accountable for delivering the commitments of the UNCRPD and SDGs. Pakistan was recognised as one of the 13 priority countries at the Summit in recognition of its enormous potential to deliver impact in this area. As this report illustrates, there are over 30 million persons with disabilities in Pakistan – over 30 million

people with a stake in the future of the country whose voices need to be heard. The Pakistan economy loses approximately £15 billion year on year through the endemic exclusion of persons with disabilities from meaningful employment – inclusive policies and practices have the power to transform the lives of individuals while delivering emphatic benefits to society and the economy.

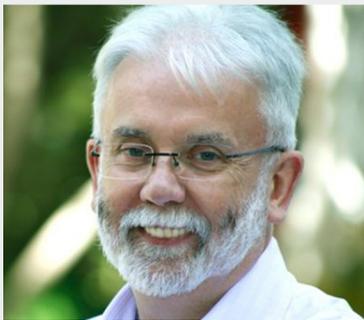
This report builds on the findings of the flagship British Council *Moving from the Margins: Mainstreaming Persons with Disabilities in Pakistan (2014)* report (co-created with the Economist Intelligence Unit). Reflecting the UK's continued commitment to working with Pakistan to support young people, the refocus on the needs and aspirations of young persons with disabilities provides us with the opportunity to address the current gaps in the system and further develop our support for disability rights and inclusion with the Government of Pakistan, the employment and education sectors and DPOs. This report aims to shed light on the needs and aspirations of young people in Pakistan with disabilities, their current barriers to access in education and employment and how these should be addressed.

This latest addition to our *Moving from the Margins* series provides policymakers and others with clear recommendations that can improve access for young persons with disabilities to education, employment and training. We recognise the difficult challenges ahead for achieving these goals in Pakistan, but the cost of inaction is too high. This piece of research aims to become a guiding source for decision makers to formulate a rights-based legal and policy framework breaking the physical, communication, legal and attitudinal barriers that people with disabilities face and leading Pakistan towards an inclusive society for all.



Rosemary Hilhorst OBE
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British Council

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Hilhorst'.



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Deputy Director South Asia
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Executive summary

With a lack of accurate statistics and data there are varying estimates for the number of disabled people in Pakistan. This has led to concerns that there is a severe underreporting of disability in country.

The 1998 national census, estimated the population of disabled people to be at 3.3 million (2.54 per cent of the population).¹

In the 19 years between the previous census and the recent 2017 data, various figures have been suggested as estimates for the population of persons with disabilities.²

While a detailed breakdown of the 2017 census data was not available in time to inform this report, fewer than one million persons with disabilities were registered as per the data in 6th Population and Housing Census 2017³. The census questions follow a medical impairments model (asking individuals to define themselves by 'the nature of' their disability) using language to describe particular disabilities which would not be acceptable by any international benchmark.

A 2014 British Council report suggested that if prevalence rates are in line with the global average of 15 per cent, the number of disabled people in Pakistan would exceed 27 million (in a population of 180 million people in 2014). The 2017 census gives the population of Pakistan at 207.7 million, a 15 per cent increase.

If we revise our figures accordingly, over 31 million people with disabilities could be living in Pakistan.

If this is the case, the government are underestimating the size of the community by a factor of ten.

Unemployment levels are also difficult to quantify reliably. Pakistan's Labour Force Participation Rate was estimated to be 54.4 per cent in December 2017, meaning that just under half of all adults of working age were unemployed or looking for work. However, this is at variance with the Pakistan Bureau for Statistics figures for 2015 which estimated the unemployment rate to be just 5.9 per cent.

There is no specific data on the employment status of persons with disabilities, but a World Bank report estimated that 71 per cent of disabled people in Pakistan are unemployed.

This is compounded when we take an intersectional approach – such as considering women with disabilities, who are one of the most vulnerable marginalised groups in Pakistani society. The labour participation rate for women is approximately 22.4 per cent, and while there are no statistics currently available on the labour participation of women with disabilities, we can deduce that this will constitute an even smaller percentage.⁴ The continued exclusion of disabled people from the workplace represents a lost opportunity for Pakistan's economy – estimated to be between £8.34 million and £10.70 billion a year, rising to almost £16 billion by the end of 2018.

There are both direct and indirect economic implications of the exclusion of persons with disabilities from employment.

1 1998 Census of Pakistan.

2 British Council (2014).

3 Disabled constitute just 0.48 percent of total population. <https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2017/09/16/disabled-constitute-just-0-48of-total-population>

4 Network of Organisations Working for Persons with Disabilities, Pakistan (2008); A report on the status of persons with disabilities and the way forward; page 8.

The immense positive contribution that people with disabilities could contribute to Pakistan, as demonstrated by the figures above, should be cause enough to reconsider how education, employment and wider society could be made more inclusive.

The Government of Pakistan does not offer a comprehensive welfare benefits system, leaving most persons with disabilities to rely on financial and emotional support from their families, resulting in further loss of productivity.

While efforts are being made to include persons with disabilities in Pakistani society and the workforce through different policies and approaches, there is a significant and persistent implementation gap and persons with disabilities continue to experience barriers. Pakistan has made positive policy steps in the last ten years: the government ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in 2011, which requires participating countries to establish anti-discrimination laws to protect and uphold the rights of persons with disabilities.

In addition, policies such as establishing a quota system for access to education, training and the workforce are also in place. However, progress on mainstreaming persons with disabilities into society is frustratingly slow.

The purpose of this report is to share findings about the experiences and perspectives of young persons with disabilities, and relevant stakeholders (across the education and employment) about the current situation and barriers in relation to young persons with disabilities access and engagement in education, training and employment in Pakistan.

The study highlights aspects of the current situation and offers recommendations, based on global trends to improve prospects of education, training and employment for persons with disabilities in order to bridge the supply–demand gap.

The research also examines the readiness and attitudes of employers and the suitability of workplace environments for inclusive employment.

Objectives and scope

There are two overarching research aims of this study:

1. Developing an understanding of the perceptions and experiences of and identifying key challenges faced by, young persons with disabilities in the areas of education, training and employability skills that allow access to work and self-employment.

2. Developing a preliminary perspective of the demand side by considering the views and inputs from stakeholders/key informants, and sector specialists including government representatives, employers and educationists.

In line with the social model and rights-based approach, persons with disabilities need to be included and part of the picture in shaping and bringing about change. The supply side sample of young persons with disabilities identified for this research were between the ages of 15 and 24 years old, were receiving education and/or have been educated (formal education including mainstream and SEN schools and/or vocational training), and/or were employed, self-employed, unemployed, or unemployed and looking for employment. For the purposes of the study, we asked our participants to specify the nature of their impairment so that we could critically analyse whether there were discrepancies in access, inclusion and perceptions – and if so, how the participants felt these could be addressed by employers, communities and DPOs.

Surveys and interviews were conducted, with 1,652 young persons with disabilities across 17 districts of Pakistan, in the provinces of Punjab, Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Balochistan and Islamabad (including federally administered regions). It is important to note that our sample comprised people in education, employment or training; the study does not include those without access to these opportunities and such is not fully representative of the picture in Pakistan. By engaging over 1,600 young people from 17 provinces, however, this report does provide an overview of the current opportunities available, who is able to take advantage of these opportunities and the barriers and constraints faced by this cohort. Employers, educators and members of the Skills sector - the demand side - were consulted to explore the readiness, attitudes and environment of the employment sector for young persons with disabilities in Pakistan. We also consulted representatives from relevant government departments working for persons with disabilities, disabled persons organisations (DPOs) and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) working for persons with disabilities. Stakeholders also included representatives from mainstream vocational training centres, organisations which have hired persons with disabilities, and potential employers.

We conducted desk research and a focused literature review on the current situation facing persons with disabilities - particularly young people - across Pakistan. Following this we gathered insights from stakeholders (employers, academic leaders and TVET/training specialists) through focus groups and interviews, and carried out in-depth interviews with young persons with disabilities.

Once the interviews were complete, a survey was designed to collect more widespread data from young persons with disabilities, to corroborate and validate findings from the qualitative analysis with quantitative data.

This report therefore presents the supply-side and demand-side perspective developed by conducting a literature review, and by taking into account the views of the key informants, gathered through a combination of stakeholder consultation workshops and interviews, along with interviews and surveys with young persons with disabilities.

The report provides a situational analysis of the challenges facing young persons with disabilities in Pakistan by approximating the prevalence of disabilities in the country, discussing existing programmes and opportunities of education, vocational training and livelihood generation for persons with disabilities.

It also includes market trends and trade skills suitable for young persons with disabilities, and policies and provisions made by the government for the welfare of persons with disabilities. The report also sheds light on the supply side, from the perspective of young persons with disabilities regarding available opportunities, the challenges they face in accessing these opportunities and their experience within society at large.

This report strives to gauge the existing gaps between supply and demand, and generate discussion on how these might be mitigated. The concept of 'learned helplessness' is also reviewed, in addition to the attitudinal, social, procedural and physical barriers faced by young persons with disabilities in Pakistan.

Core findings and recommendations

The core findings and recommendations are summarised below.

Quality of education

and how we can assess and benchmark the resources available to ensure that young persons with disabilities are able to fully participate from early years to further or higher education. While efforts have been made to improve Pakistan's SEN education system, the curriculum and resources need to be overhauled to ensure inclusion and equality of opportunity for young persons with disabilities. A logical step could be the standardisation of the curriculum in SEN education schooling in accordance to that taught in mainstream schooling, allowing for equal level of intellectual development for those with disabilities. Our findings also revealed the need to bolster the capacity of mainstream education to include persons with disabilities, remove barriers to access and ensure that reasonable adjustments are made.

An understanding and adoption of teaching aids and individual education plans would be of great benefit to improving the quality and design of instruction.

Developing pathways

for people with disabilities is crucial, and will require collaboration between different government sectors, international bodies, corporate support and national DPOs. To prevent people falling through gaps in the system between each stage of development (early years, primary and secondary education, higher/further education, employment and retirement), Pakistan needs to develop an ecosystem of access and inclusion that will smooth people's transition at each step.

Trained professionals

are needed in SEN education in inclusive education and vocational training to enable persons with disabilities to fully participate in the classroom. While this is offered as a training area in higher education and through NGOs, there is a significant shortage of teachers who are trained in

inclusive education techniques or those able to work with people with learning disabilities. Teachers with disabilities are also highly regarded given that their personal experience allows them to empathise and remove the barriers faced by persons with disabilities.

Unfortunately, teachers and trainers in mainstream education and training centres are not equipped to interact with young persons with disabilities.

The findings of this report underline the need for more trained professionals and teachers for students with disabilities in special and mainstream schooling.

Opportunities of education and training

for young persons with disabilities do not allow for the development of useful skills relevant to the labour market.

Opportunities for training are available in pockets, typically through special, time-bound projects. This report includes recommendations for more provisions and policies in favour of education and training of young persons with disabilities, along with more opportunities in formal education.

Proximity and accessibility of institutions

plays an important role in availability and access to opportunities for young persons with disabilities, due to accessibility and mobility barriers. Since proximity is such a determinant of whether or not a child with a disability receives an education, mobility services, relaxation of fees covering of transport costs, making buildings accessible, accessible learning resources, budget to cover costs of admission and capacity in neighbourhood schools were suggested, on top of the underlying presence of more schools in closer proximity.

Skills knowledge and experience

gaps are the biggest barrier for any young person entering the labour market. Young persons with disabilities are underqualified for work due to inadequate skills development. Employers willing to hire persons with disabilities believe that they cannot hire them on merit, due to lack of required skills or education. An overall improvement in the quality of education

is an urgent recommendation, together with increased access to TVET, supported learning and apprenticeship schemes.

Incentives and enforcement of quotas

established for employment and in some cases for education and vocational training is poor. The quotas were introduced to allow young persons with disabilities to enter sectors on the basis of reserved seats. However, due to lack of implementation and strict checks and balances, the quota system is ineffective. More pronounced incentive and penalty systems and strategies should be introduced for the fulfilment of set quotas. Increasing the visibility and voice of people with disabilities in the workplace should lead to more inclusive employment culture.

Data on persons with disabilities

is inaccurate and outdated. Accurate data is essential in order to draw up policies and allocate resources that fully satisfy the needs and aspirations of persons with disabilities. Government agencies and non-governmental actors need to develop, extrapolate and sample estimates to present a realistic and consensual picture, so that everyone can address the challenges at the appropriate scales of intervention.

A formal adoption of the Washington Group Statistics, and concerted efforts to follow the Charter for Change released at the 2018 Global Disability Summit, would ensure a commitment to data collection, monitoring and evaluation and 'evidence-led' interventions at the government level. Young persons with disabilities can lead self-advocacy movements and campaigns for awareness and understanding of the prevalence and rights of persons with disabilities.

Inclusion

of persons with disabilities in society is currently hampered by the lack of facilities, preparedness and accommodation which is available. A more educated discussion and understanding based on global literature and disability/minority rights movements would allow Pakistan's policymakers and DPO network to make a long-term plan of how to build an economy around meritocracy and equality of opportunity in all spheres. With equal access and opportunity to quality inclusive education in the social setup, young persons with disabilities can compete equally for job and livelihood opportunities.

Awareness and agency

regarding rights, provisions and government interventions are limited, therefore persons with disabilities are unable to take advantage of the opportunities offered. A simple recommendation to address this is to create campaigns, advocate and spread awareness of disability rights so that they reach all levels of society. Additionally, persons with disabilities throughout the country, regardless of location, socio-economic status, gender or any other variable, should be familiarised with the range of government provisions and programmes available to them through easily accessible channels. Disability confidence- and the ability to engage with disability from a rights-based perspective - is key to being able to influence and shape change to benefit persons with disabilities rather than exacerbating their marginalisation.

Division of responsibilities

among government departments and regulatory bodies makes it difficult to implement and to enforce laws and policies. Clearer lines of responsibility and division of tasks and roles would help to ensure that targets and reward systems are tied to achievement and fulfilment of duties.

Special education and social welfare departments either need to be restructured and renamed, or have responsibilities clearly demarcated and be closely monitored for functioning and servicing. Pakistan needs to move away from the ‘charity model’ of disability towards a rights-based and social outlook.

Technology and digital fluency

are powerful tools and levellers of experience, which the global community is still coming to terms with. Technology has the potential to transform the lives of persons with disabilities, improving their ability to communicate, participate and learn remotely. Government bodies, NGOs and corporate sector leaders should work together to harness the power of technology to improve outcomes in the classroom and the workplace.

Intersectionality:

the study clearly demonstrates that the challenges faced by people with disabilities are compounded by other factors: women with disabilities and those from very low socio-economic backgrounds are at increased risk of stigma, discrimination and violence. Women with disabilities are more likely to be dissuaded from integrating into society by their families and close communities and it is therefore likely that the existing data on the prevalence of disability among women is incorrect. More targeted programmes are needed to reach and empower women, particularly those in remote rural areas with limited access to education and employment opportunities.

Introduction

Moving from the Margins: Mainstreaming Young Persons with Disabilities in Pakistan is an attempt to understand the gap between opportunities to generate livelihoods for young persons with disabilities and skills/ education accessed and acquired by them. The first challenge faced during the creation of this report was the lack of baseline data and a troubling lack of consensus on the numbers of people with a disability in Pakistan. It is clear from UN international estimates that the global prevalence of disability is 15 per cent (approximately one billion people), 80 per cent of whom live in developing countries. The British Council’s 2014 *Moving from the Margins* report estimated that as many as 27 million people could be living with a disability in Pakistan – based on the 198 million people recorded in the 1998 census. (The census in 1998 suggested a population of 3.2 million persons with disabilities, based on a crude data collection tool and measure.)

Since Moving from the Margins was published, a fresh census has been conducted in Pakistan, which places the current population in excess of 207 million people.

With this in mind, our estimates for disability prevalence must also be adjusted. We will contend throughout this report that it is likely that approximately 31 million people in Pakistan are living with a disability. Unfortunately this estimate is difficult to quantify due to chronic issues for data collection tools and measures in Pakistan. This is evident in the varied prevalence rates provided by aid organisations, charities and indeed the government itself – all of which point to a trend of underreporting disability in Pakistan.

In the seven years since Pakistan ratified the CRPD, there has been progress towards the inclusion of persons with disabilities in education, employment and in wider society; however, much more needs to be done.

There is a deeply concerning scarcity of quality education, learning, training and employability in rural areas. Recent estimates by **UNESCO** suggest that as many as **1.4 million children** with disabilities are left without access to either inclusive or SEN schools. Just getting registered as a person with disabilities in Pakistan can be a disabling experience.

The report, however, examines the progress that has been undertaken on both national and provincial levels and the role of the private sector in fulfilling the CRPD and Sustainable Development Goals.

There are examples of good practice in Pakistan, such as **NOWPDP's** mainstream vocational education and skills training and disability inclusion programmes at large private sector organisations. Telenor's Open Mind project for equal opportunity training and employment enables a number of young persons with disabilities to find hope and purpose.

A project by **Mojaz Foundation** helping persons with disabilities through microfinance to become entrepreneurs and earn a livelihood for themselves is another example. The private sector is emerging as a disability inclusion advocate, recognising the benefits to business and society in unlocking the potential of young people with disabilities in the workplace. As this attitude shift gains momentum, the situation is likely to change further when young persons with disabilities begin to feel more independent and start generating learning, education and skills-based incomes to support themselves and their families.

The stark contrast between the global prevalence (**15 per cent of the population**), the 1998 census (**2.38 per cent**) and the 2017 census (**0.48 per cent**) is cause for concern.

A direct consequence of this lack of consensus and wide variance has been a chronic lack of attention, services, support and resource investment for persons with disabilities in Pakistan. According to the latest population estimates, there are less than one million persons with disabilities in the country. The initial results of the 2017 census suggest a further underrepresentation of numbers.

Considering how the prevalence of persons with disabilities in the country continues to be debated, there has been limited attention, if any, placed on the number of young people with disabilities in Pakistan. This research is a first of its kind, studying the supply side (experiences, aspirations, challenges and opportunities of young persons with disabilities in terms of acquiring skills, education and means of earning a living) as well as the demand side (stakeholder experiences and perceptions of young persons with disabilities in terms of their employability and education and employment opportunities).

This study is an attempt to understand the gap between the demand and supply side and recommends how to bridge it, based on findings, literature and global trends. The report also incorporates an understanding of the prevalence of young persons with disabilities and the legislative and government initiatives and programmes for education, employment and training.

The report provides policymakers, the public and private sectors, and others with recommendations that can improve access to, investment towards and awareness of opportunities for young persons with disabilities and clarify negative perceptions and myths surrounding them.

The report studies the special education and social welfare departments for persons with disabilities, delving into the difference between special and mainstream educational and training setups and how the quality of learning may be compromised. The report also questions the nature of support that is being provided to young persons with disabilities and their perceptions based on the same.

The concept of ‘learned helplessness’ is also reviewed, in addition to the attitudinal, social, procedural and physical barriers faced by young persons with disabilities in Pakistan.

Mainstreaming young persons with disabilities is an attempt to break the cycle of inequality and exclusion, increase agency and opportunities for young people and allow these persons with disabilities in turn to become advocates and leaders for more systemic and institutional change. Achieving these goals in Pakistan may seem to be a challenge, but the cost of inaction and loss to the economy are too high. Pakistan is a developing country with a lot of challenges: inequality of access, marginalisation of minority groups, energy shortages, persistent inflation, budget deficits, climate change and security issues. The millions of people living with a disability have an important stake in Pakistan’s future and should be provided with opportunities that will enable them to participate fully in policymaking, education, skills and employment programming.

Prevalence of disability

Definition of disability

The United Nations defines disability as ‘all persons who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments, which, in interaction with various attitudinal and environmental barriers, hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others’.⁵

In this research, we recognise that broad categories of impairment are used in policy and practice in many public policy areas. Impairments are sometimes grouped into the, which are physical impairment, intellectual impairment and sensory impairment, including hearing, speech and visual impairment, as classified by the International Classification of Impairment, Disability and Handicap (ICIDH)⁶ and International Classification of Functioning – Children and Youth version (ICF – CY).

⁵ United Nations. Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Optional Protocol.

⁶ World Health Organization and the World Bank Group (2011). World Report on Disability. Geneva: World Health Organization.

Impairment and disability

The term ‘Impairment’ refers to body structure and functions, involving an anomaly, defect, loss or other significant deviation in body structures, from the generally accepted standards. Impairment can be temporary or permanent, and can be present at birth or developed later due to injury or disease. Impairment may also be static in some cases, but it can also be progressive or regressive. The term ‘Disabilities’ reflects an individual’s personal factors in relation with societal factors. In other words, disability is used to describe the limitations an individual experiences due to impairment, ability and performance, with reference to the barriers present in society. Both these terms, earlier defined in ICIDH, were updated in the ICF, where ‘impairment’ is replaced by ‘Body Structures and Functions’, and ‘disability’ is used as an umbrella term including three factors, body: individual and societal. The term ‘Handicap’ has been removed from the ICF Manual.

Mental health and well-being

The study of mental health and young people in Pakistan would be extremely valuable and an enormous undertaking, worthy of its own research report. For this reason, mental health issues (e.g. depression and anxiety) have not been directly included in the scope of this study, which will instead focus on the areas of disability outlined above: sensory, physical and intellectual impairment.

Prevalence of disability in Pakistan

The global population of persons with disabilities is estimated to be more than one billion:⁷ approximately 15 per cent of the total world population, with an estimated 80 per cent of all persons with disabilities residing in the Global South.⁸ Applying the 15 per cent prevalence rate to Pakistan (with a current population of over 207 million), it is likely that there are at least 31 million people with disabilities living in the country.

A model disability survey carried out in Tehsil Pindi Gheb in Pakistan by the WHO of the general population provides detailed information on the lives of persons with disabilities. A pilot model disability survey took place in February and March 2015 in Tehsil Pindi Gheb – an administrative subdivision (tehsil) of Attock District in the Punjab, Pakistan – and a total of 3,977 households were included. The pilot was conducted by the WHO and the World Bank. The 3,977 households surveyed reported having at least one person with severe difficulties in any domain, namely 15.04 per cent, which can be used as a proxy estimate of the disability rate for the population.⁹ This further substantiates and reaffirms the global disability prevalence rate of 15 per cent. In 2014, the *Moving from the Margins* report estimated that there were between 3.3 million to 27 million persons with disabilities in Pakistan.¹⁰ This wide variance reflects the lack of clear and agreed data on the subject in Pakistan, with disparate figures quoted by DPOs, government bodies and think tanks. The 1998 census reported that only 3,286,630 persons with disabilities reside in Pakistan, which has become the benchmark figure guiding government interventions.¹¹

The 1998 population census provided a breakdown of the population of persons with disabilities according to the nature of impairment, province and urban/rural classification, providing valuable information for policymakers to allocate adequate resources.

The population of persons with disabilities, however, does not provide an age breakdown, and therefore the exact number of young persons with disabilities remains unknown.

Over the years, the results of the census have been contested by civil society and NGOs for the shortcomings in its survey methodology, described in the previous British Council *Moving the Margins* report as ‘an underestimation of the highest order’.¹² In the absence of a national census for nearly two decades, various estimates have also emerged pertaining to the population of persons with disabilities in Pakistan.

The 2011 World Report on Disability, which based its disability estimates from a World Health Survey from 2002 to 2004, found the disability prevalence rate of 13.4 per cent in Pakistan.¹³

7 World Health Organization and the World Bank Group (2011). World Report on Disability. Geneva: World Health Organization.

8 World Health Organization and the World Bank Group fact sheet (2018). <http://www.who.int/en/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/disability-and-health>

9 Disability Report (2015). Model Disability Survey, Tehsil Pindi Gheb. Pakistan: World Health Organization. Unpublished.

10 British Council (2014).

11 1998 Census of Pakistan

12 British Council (2014).

13 World Health Organization and the World Bank Group (2011). World Report on Disability. Geneva: World Health Organization.

Table 1: Population of persons with disabilities recorded in different research

Study	Population	Scope
1998 Population Census	3.2 million	Census included intellectual, mental and physical impairment
2011 National Socio-Economic Registry (NSER)	2.27 million	Data was collected through door-to-door surveys from 133 million people
2012 Helping Hands for Relief and Development	5 million	Based on projections from 1998 census across 119 districts from all four provinces
2014 British Council	27 million	Based on projections using 15 per cent global population of persons with disabilities
2017 Population Census	Nearly 1 million	Based on registrations from the 6th Population and Housing Census

In 2011, Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund undertook a comprehensive survey of 23 union councils in seven districts of Pakistan, comprising 78,939 households, and found the disability prevalence rate to be around 12 per cent, of which two per cent had severe disabilities.¹⁴

14. Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (2011). Documentation of Disability Data. Islamabad: PPAF.

*A piece of research by Helping Hand for Relief and Development (2012) estimated that 5.035 million (2.54 per cent of the population) people with disabilities lived in Pakistan. This was based on projections of district data for 119 districts in the four provinces of Pakistan. The prevalence rate, while higher than government estimates, would still be considered conservative.*¹⁵

*The National Socio-Economic Registry (NSER) conducted a door-to-door survey which suggested a disability prevalence rate of 1.7 per cent. The survey comprised 27 million wherein only 2.27 million people out of the 133 million participants had a disability.*¹⁶

Severity of disability

According to the ICF – CY, disability is classified using the following categories:

Mild – impairment in functioning, activity and participation is slight or low: between five and 24 per cent.

Moderate – impairment in functioning, activity and participation is medium: between 25 and 49 per cent.

Severe – impairment in functioning, activity and participation is high or extreme: between 50 and 95 per cent.

Profound – total or complete impairment in functioning, activity and participation of the individual.

¹⁵ Helping Hand for Relief and Development (2012). Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) Statistics in Pakistan 2012. Islamabad, Pakistan.

¹⁶ Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (2011). Population of Pakistan: An Analysis of NSER 2010-11 – Disable Population. Islamabad: Benazir Income Support Programme

Door-to-door surveys can be problematic, especially where more inaccessible or rural areas are not included, which will tend to present higher rates of disability. Disability is under-diagnosed and people may not wish to disclose information for fear of stigma and discrimination within their communities.

The 2017 census estimates for disability are significantly lower than any previous data set at just 0.48 per cent; fewer than one million people with disabilities are recorded in the 6th Population and Housing Census 2017.¹⁷ This figure emerged during the 'house-count' data, with the question on disability added after data collection had already begun – it is hoped that revisions will be made to these results – if left unchecked, this data could have serious implications for government, corporate and NGO intervention strategies.¹⁸

When we attempt to review the number of young people with disabilities in Pakistan, the data becomes even more scarce; prevalence rates more usually choose to break down their data by gender or administrative unit.

It is, however, important to note that the dearth of data and empirical research on prevalence of young people with disabilities is not an issue unique to Pakistan: according to the United Nations, there is a significant lack of empirical research in this area globally. Estimates suggest that there are between 180 and 220 million young persons with disabilities across the world, of whom 80 per cent are based in developing countries.¹⁹

Based on the 1998 census results, that majority of the total population of persons with disabilities in Pakistan resides in Punjab (around 56 per cent), which is followed by Sindh (around 28 per cent). The remaining 16 per cent of people with disabilities reside in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Balochistan and Islamabad.

The census results also indicate that while approximately two-thirds of the population of persons with disabilities resides in rural areas, the trend is not consistent across all four provinces. For instance, while in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa roughly 87 per cent of the population of persons with disabilities resides in rural areas, this falls to 42 per cent in Sindh.

¹⁷ Disabled constitute just 0.48 per cent of total population. Retrieved from: <https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2017/09/16/disabled-constitute-just-0-48of-total-population/>

¹⁸ 'Disabled will be counted, all data will be verified,' assures Asif Bajwa. Retrieved From: <https://www.dawn.com/news/1321074>

¹⁹ United Nations (2010). Factsheet: Youth with Disabilities.

Table 2: Regional overview of population of persons with disabilities in Pakistan, 1998 census

Administrative unit	Total population	Percentage	Rural/Urban breakdown	
Pakistan	3,286,630	100	Rural	2,173,999 (66.15%)
			Urban	1,112,631 (33.85%)
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	375,752	11.43	Rural	327,638 (87.20%)
			Urban	48,114 (12.80%)
Punjab	1,826,623	55.58	Rural	1,338,410 (73.27%)
			Urban	488,213 (26.73%)
Sindh	929,400	28.28	Rural	385,984 (41.53%)
			Urban	543,416 (58.47%)
Balochistan	146,421	4.45	Rural	117,971 (80.57%)
			Urban	28,450 (19.43%)
Islamabad	8,434	0.26	Rural	3,996 (47.38%)
			Urban	4,438 (52.62%)

A number of research studies have also analysed the prevalence of disability across the different provinces and regions. For example, according to a study undertaken by Helping Hand for Relief and Development, 55.9 per cent of the persons with disabilities live in Punjab, while 28.4 per cent reside in Sindh, corroborating the data from the 1998 census.

Additionally, the study also states that 65.7 per cent of the persons with disabilities reside in rural areas.²⁰ Moreover, as per the analysis of the NSER, the prevalence rate of disability is the highest in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (2.9 per cent), whereas Sindh has the lowest disability prevalence rate (1.1 per cent). The second highest rate of prevalence was recorded in the Federally Administered Tribal Area (FATA) (2.7 per cent), followed by Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (2.1 per cent), Balochistan (2 per cent) and Punjab (1.8 per cent).²¹

Table 3: Disability prevalence rate in Pakistan according to different research

Study	Prevalence rate	Scope
1998 Population Census	2.54%	Census included intellectual, mental and physical impairment
2011 World Report on Disability	13.4%	Based on prevalence from World Health Survey (2002–04)
2011 Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund	12%	Data was collected from 23 UCs in seven districts, comprising 78,939 households
2011 National Socio-Economic Registry (NSER)	1.7%	Data was collected through door-to-door surveys in 27 million households
2012 Helping Hands for Relief and Development	2.65%	Based on projections from 1998 Census across 119 districts from all four provinces
2014 Moving from the Margins British Council report	15 %	Based on global prevalence rates from UNDP and WHO (with understanding that 80 per cent of people with disabilities live in developing countries)
2017 population census	0.48%	Results emerged from the 6th Population and Housing Census, and not the head-count data

²⁰ Helping Hand for Relief and Development (2012). Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) Statistics in Pakistan 2012. Islamabad, Pakistan.

²¹ Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (2011). Population of Pakistan: An Analysis of NSER 2010-11 – Disable Population. Islamabad: Benazir Income Support Programme.

The Social Welfare Department of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa collected data of population of persons with disabilities in the province in 2017. The survey incorporated a wide range of disabilities and rural as well as urban areas. However, the reported 96,703 persons with disabilities in the province is significantly lower than that recorded in the 1998 census (prevalence rate 2.94 per cent as stated above). It is likely that the 1998 census had a more comprehensive reach – and, as has previously been stated, people with disabilities do not always self-report their needs due to pervasive stigma and discrimination.

While the scale of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Social Welfare Department in 2017 survey was smaller than the census, the data provides a good estimate to understand the prevalence and spread of the population, with regards to the nature of disability, across the province.

Gender and disability

‘There should be SEN schools for the girls as there are a lot of other opportunities for the men but not the women.’

– Zohra Bibi, 22 years old, physically impaired, Peshawar

Globally, women with disabilities are considered to be one of the most marginalised groups, facing discrimination on the basis of gender and disabilities, and often poverty. In Pakistan, where women in general have limited educational and employment opportunities, women with disabilities face egregious challenges. Women with disabilities are often not allowed by their families to freely access education, training or employment opportunities, primarily due to stigma surrounding disability.

As a result of this, families do not actively support or invest in academic or skill development for women with disabilities. Social norms and cultural factors also play a vital role in this, since women are expected to be engaged with tasks at home as opposed to seeking education or employment.

The overall dynamics of women’s role in society seem to be shifting towards independence and empowerment – at least in the higher echelons of society. However, for women with disabilities, progress has been hampered by barriers of mobility and accessibility at infrastructural and societal levels.

An overwhelming majority of the young women with disabilities (93 per cent) who participated in the overall research were unemployed. Just over half (53 per cent) of women with disabilities from the overall sample were receiving education at the time of research, while 37 per cent were receiving vocational training. Of our findings, there were 17 women with disabilities in the teaching profession, and 15 women with disabilities working as tailors from home. This reflects assumptions made about competence of women with disabilities and acceptable employment roles for women, rather than reflecting the needs in key skills and economic areas.

In order to create effective policies and plans, it is important to assess both the overall landscape for disability and intersectional areas, particularly where these lead to increased marginalisation and discrimination. A core component of this is the intersection of gender and disability. According to the 2011 World Report on Disability, the global female disability prevalence rate is 19.2 per cent, which is significantly higher than that of men (12 per cent).²² However, according to the 1998 population census of Pakistan, the female disability prevalence rate is just 2.16 per cent, while the male disability prevalence rate is 2.78 per cent. Approximately, 41.7 per cent of the total population of persons with disabilities are women, while men constitute 58.9 per cent of the population of persons with disabilities.²³ The labour force participation of women in Pakistan was recorded to be just 15.6 per cent in 2013–14.²⁴

Recent research studies have also analysed the differences in the prevalence of disabilities among males and females and their work aligns with the 1998 census: while the figures vary, they all suggest that disability is more prevalent in men than women.

The study by Helping Hand for Relief and Development reported the highest percentage difference (58.4 per cent of total population of people with disabilities were men).²⁵ The NSER reported a similar balance (57.8 per cent), and a prevalence rate of 1.9 per cent for men as compared with 1.77 per cent for women.²⁶

A Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund survey suggested more balance between the sexes, but still posited that over half of all people with disabilities in Pakistan were men (52.36 per cent and 47.36 per cent respectively).²⁷

It is important to critically interrogate this data: as has been mentioned, women with disabilities faced increased stigma and discrimination than their male counterparts and were more likely to conceal their disabilities from those beyond their family or close community. To gain an honest appraisal of the prevalence of disability among women, much more focused and sensitive data collection would need to be conducted, mindful of the barriers faced by this intersectional group in Pakistan, before this report could confidently confirm the disability percentages reflected in these cited studies.

A total of 63 men with disabilities were interviewed and 1,093 men with disabilities participated in the survey. Women with disabilities, on the other hand, had a 30 per cent representation in the sample: 40 women with disabilities were interviewed, and 459 participating in the survey from a total of 1,552 participants. Young persons with disabilities participating in this research were primarily approached through different educational and training institutions.

The limited participation of women with disabilities in this study is reflective of the myriad issues faced by women with disabilities in Pakistan seeking vocational training and education opportunities.

22 World Health Organization and the World Bank Group (2011). World Report on Disability. Geneva: World Health Organization.

23 Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (1998). Disabled Population by Nature of Disability. Population Census 1998. [online] Available at: <http://www.pbs.gov.pk/sites/default/files//tables/DISABLED%20POPULATION%20BY%20NATURE%20OF%20DISABILITY.pdf>

24 Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (2015).

25 Helping Hand for Relief and Development (2012). Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) Statistics in Pakistan 2012. Islamabad, Pakistan.

26 Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (2011). Population of Pakistan: An Analysis of NSER 2010-11 – Disable Population. Islamabad: Benazir Income Support Programme.

27 Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (2011). Documentation of Disability Data. Islamabad: PPAF.

The sample includes young people with disabilities across 17 provinces who identified as in education, employment or training (and those who were looking for employment and training opportunities). The sample does not include those who have no access to any of these resources, whose access is so constrained that they have been unable to avail any of these opportunities. While this cohort could not be a part of this study, the findings will clearly demonstrate the need for more concerted efforts from government, NGOs, DPOs and the information education sector to reach this vulnerable group, who constitute a significant proportion of young persons with disabilities in Pakistan.

Dare to dream

Tayyaba Arshi joined Telenor as a Corporate Responsibility Officer and has since proven her abilities and talent at the firm. Tayyaba has been physically impaired since a young age but was determined not to let her impairment compromise her aspirations. 'Dreams are like golden coins which need to be earned to reach your final destination. So keep dreaming!' However, the journey was not an easy one. Tayyaba felt excluded by her family since they felt embarrassed to take her out in a wheelchair. On her own, she found solace in a world of reading and fantasy. She also realised the harsh reality of society where she faced barriers of attitudes, accessibility and mobility.

Gaining an education was a key achievement, whereupon Tayyaba started to build her name in academically and professionally. 'Despite the negative attitude of my father, he was my biggest motivator. I wanted to achieve more to get his approval,' she recalls. Tayyaba completed her MSc degree and went on to do her MBA at COMSATS in Islamabad, where her thesis was recognised at the International South Asian Conference in 2014. After her MBA, she received a scholarship for the International Leadership Programme in the USA.

Tayyaba also gained professional experience at a number of competitive and renowned firms despite facing problems of accessibility. Returning from the USA, Tayyaba was determined to make her mark in the professional world. She joined Telenor, which gave her the opportunity to flourish. At Telenor, Tayyaba is also working with the Telenor Open Mind programme, which is an initiative to promote inclusion at the organisation. The annual programme has inducted around 64 candidates with disabilities for nine month on-job training programmes since 2013. The programme allows persons with disabilities to prove their merit and abilities in different areas of work, such as corporate social responsibility, finance, IT and marketing. The training programme also enhances the skills of the inducted candidates in social media marketing, MS Office, web-based programming and call centre activities.

Additionally, skills for inclusion and leadership, career development and CV building are provided for their personal and professional development. Tayyaba feels proud to be part of the Open Minds programme and provide a smooth platform to other persons with disabilities to become empowered, as well as break the stigma against disabilities in society by promoting their abilities. 'I am happy to be part of something that is proving the talents of persons with disabilities in society. Now that I have made my father proud, I feel I can achieve anything and everything!'

Prevalence of different types of disability

The population census of 1998 provided a breakdown of the total population of persons with disabilities, which also accounted for gender and regional variances. Table 4 describes the nature of disabilities prevalent according to gender, as per the 1998 census.²⁸

According to the 1998 census, the highest prevalence recorded is for physical impairment at 18.93 per cent.

This is followed by multiple disabilities (8.23 per cent), visual impairment (8.06 per cent), and hearing impairment (7.43 per cent). Intellectual impairment was recorded at a prevalence rate of 7.6 per cent, with mental disability at 6.39 per cent. The 'Others' category has the highest response (43.37 per cent).

The breakdown of the 'Others' category is unclear – it is notable that the categories used to define disability in the 1998 census use language which the disability community, and many international DPOs and governments, would find deeply problematic – there is a clear case for language education on disability at all levels of Pakistani society, which contribute to stigma, discrimination and alienation.

The language used in the census, which reflects traditional and exclusive disability models centred around rehabilitation, may have discouraged participants from disclosing the nature of their disability and instead opting for the less inflammatory 'Others' category. The ways in which the data is gathered and presented thus undermines Pakistan's ambitions to work towards a rights-based, UNCRPD and social model of disability.

Other research studies also analyse the prevalence of the different types of disabilities, all of which pose different prevalence rates. For example, the NSER 2011 reports lower limb as most prevalent (0.7 per cent),²⁹ whereas a survey undertaken by Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund recorded visual impairment at a far higher rate (4.6 per cent).³⁰ The study undertaken by Helping Hand for Relief and Development reports physical impairment and visual impairment as the highest prevailing impairments (19.2 per cent and 8.2 per cent respectively).³¹

The stark variation in the disability prevalence rates and figures for the population of persons with disabilities depicted by the different sources can be attributed to the differences in methodology, focus, coverage and sample sizes, as a result of which they cannot be considered comparable. However, in the absence of the results of an exhaustive national census, these studies do at least begin to paint a picture of the prevalence of disability in Pakistan.

In the research, physical impairment was the most prevalent (27 per cent), followed by hearing (26 per cent), visual (21 per cent) and intellectual (20 per cent) impairments. Only three per cent of the sample reported multiple disabilities.

28 Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (1998). Disabled Population by Nature of Disability. Population Census 1998. [online] Available at: <http://www.pbs.gov.pk/sites/default/files/tables/DISABLED%20POPULATION%20BY%20NATURE%20OF%20DISABILITY.pdf>

29 Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (2011). Population of Pakistan: An Analysis of NSER 2010-11 – Disable Population. Islamabad: Benazir Income Support Programme.

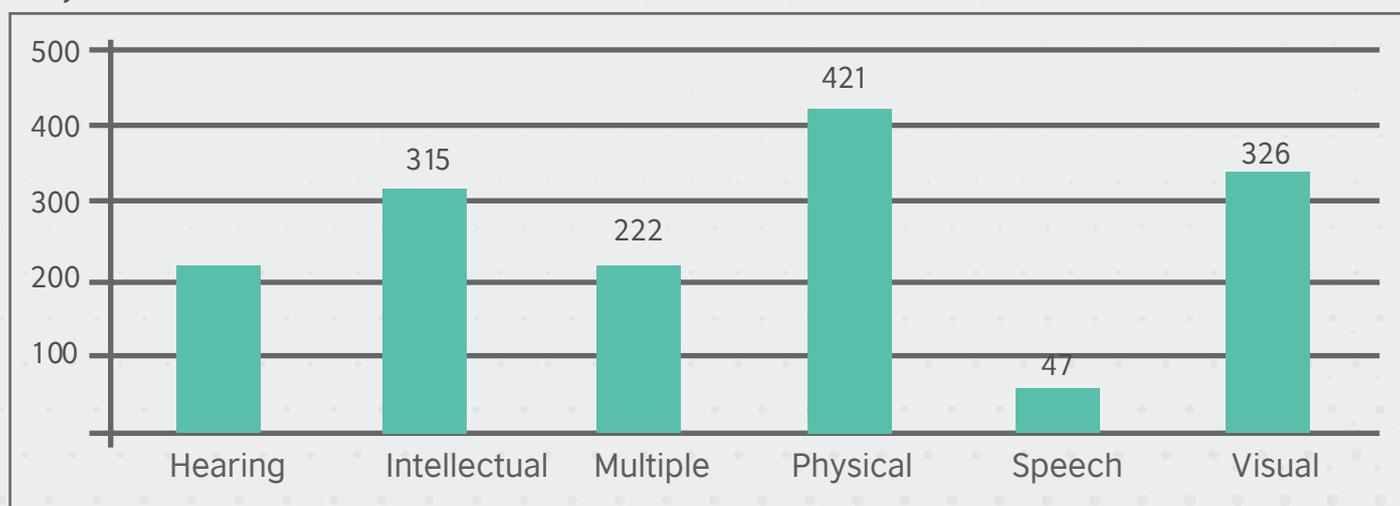
30 Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (2011). Documentation of Disability Data. Islamabad: PPAF.

31 Helping Hand for Relief and Development (2012). Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) Statistics in Pakistan 2012. Islamabad, Pakistan.

Table 4: Disability prevalence by types according to different research

Study	Physical impairment	Hearing/speech impairment	Visual impairment	Intellectual impairment
2011 National Socio-Economic Registry (NSER)	0.7% lower limb	0.1% hearing impaired 0.2% speech impaired	0.3%	0.3%
0.2% upper limb	0.1% hearing impaired	2%	4.6%	1% learning disabilities
0.2% speech impaired	0.3%	0.3%		
2011 Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund	2.8%	2%	4.6%	1% learning disabilities
2012 Helping Hands for Relief and Development	19.2%	7.5%	8.2%	7.6%
Pakistan National Blindness and Visual Impairment Survey, 2003	–	–	0.9%	–

Figure 1: Types of disability disclosed by study participants (15-24 years old)



Factors influencing disability prevalence

A number of factors influence disability prevalence. According to the WHO globally the population of persons with disabilities is growing due to ageing populations (where individuals tend to have a higher risk of disability).³³ Presently Pakistan is experiencing a working-age population bulge: almost 65 per cent of Pakistan's 207 million population is under the age of 30. This trend, coupled with an increasing life expectancy, will likely result in an older population in the coming years.

The patterns of disability in a country are influenced by health and environmental conditions as well as other factors, including road traffic crashes, natural disasters, wars, conflict, diet and substance abuse.³⁴ Additionally, there is a global increase in chronic health conditions.

Natural disasters and humanitarian crises, war and conflict can result in increase in persons with disabilities, and systematically, persons with disabilities are excluded, voiceless and left behind in humanitarian crises and in planning and acting on solutions.

Furthermore, a close relationship between disability and poverty has been identified by various research studies and development organisations around the world. The risk of impairment is much greater for those beneath the poverty line, and the converse is also true: the birth of an impaired child, or the occurrence of disability in a family, often places heavy demands on the limited resources of the family, pushing them deeper into poverty. *The cumulative effect is a higher proportion of persons with disabilities among the poorest strata of society.*³⁵

It was estimated that Pakistan's GDP incurred a loss of £8.34 billion to £10.79 billion due to the exclusion of persons with disability,³⁶ and estimates showed that the continued exclusion of persons with disabilities would lead to an increase of losses to be as high as £16.4 billion in 2018.³⁷ The GDP per capita income reached a record high of £939.87 in 2017. India, Uzbekistan, Vietnam and others appear to perform slightly better than Pakistan, with the highest-earning country being Qatar at £46,791.24 per capita. Iran, Iraq, South Korea and the UAE reported a GDP per capita of £3,500.³⁸

Research and development programmes have argued that a majority of persons with disabilities live in rural areas.³⁹ Rural areas are more isolated, with higher prevalence of disability combined with poorer provision for education and employment opportunities.

This is certainly true for Pakistan, as according to the 1998 population census, 66.15 per cent of persons with disabilities reside in rural areas.⁴⁰ Even in urban areas, the facilities available for catering to the varying education, employment and training needs of persons with disabilities are scarce owing to the limited resources allocated by the government.⁴¹

33 World Health Organization and the World Bank Group (2011). World Report on Disability. Geneva: World Health Organization.

34 Durr-e-Nayab. (2006). Demographic Dividend or Demographic Threat in Pakistan. Pakistan Institute of Development Economics.

35 Hughes, C. and Avoke, S. (2010). The Elephant in the Room: Poverty, Disability, and Employment. Research and Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities, 35(1), pp.5-14.

36 All monetary figures cited have been converted to reflect GBP according to the conversion rates in 2018

37 British Council (2014).

38 <https://tradingeconomics.com/country-list/gdp-per-capita?continent=asia>

39 Un.org. (2007). UN Enable - World Programme of Action, Page 4/10. [online] Available at: <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/enable/diswpa04.htm>.

40 1998 Census of Pakistan

41 Rathore, F., New, P. and Iftikhar, A. (2011). A Report on Disability and Rehabilitation Medicine in Pakistan: Past, Present, and Future Directions. Archives of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, 92(1), pp.161-166.

‘I was sitting on the lawn of my house when the Taliban threw a hand grenade that seriously injured my right leg.’

– A victim of terrorist activity

Former Federal Secretary Rukhsana Shah analysed the 2014–15 provincial budgets and calculated the annual government spending for persons with disabilities to be about 30 rupees (£0.19) per person, which includes the resources spent for treatment, rehabilitation, education, skills development and a range of other facilities that are provided for persons with disabilities.⁴²

A study by Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund found that for 40 per cent of the participants, the annual cost of treatment was more than 5,200 rupees (£30).⁴³ Given the limited support that persons with disabilities receive from the government, bills are often passed on to families, who are frequently unable to cover the costs.

In order to develop interventions that improve outcomes for young people with disabilities, it is important to understand the challenges we face in gathering accurate data.

As has been shown in this chapter, there is no consensus on the number of people with disabilities living in Pakistan, and even less clarity on the percentage of these who are young people (15–24 years old as defined by this study). With prevalence rates that may be underreported by a factor of ten, it can come as little surprise that national and provincial-level interventions have struggled to secure successful outcomes for people with disabilities, especially when compounded with high levels of stigma and discrimination.

We need to raise awareness about the different types of impairment (and the impact they may have on the individual), the link between poverty and disability and how geopolitical factors affect disability prevalence in different regions. Together with the challenges people with disabilities face with access to education and employment, we can see a clear case for bold, large-scale interventions in Pakistan that meaningfully include people with disabilities. The current scope and success of current inclusion policy and legislation will be reviewed in the next chapter.

⁴² Shah, R. (2015). Census & disability. [online] Dawn.com. Available at: <http://www.dawn.com/news/1170433/census-disability>.

⁴³ Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (2011). Documentation of Disability Data. Islamabad: PPAF.

Overview:

A history of disability legislation and provision in Pakistan

According to a recent United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) report, 64 per cent of Pakistan's population – approximately 133 million people – is aged 30 or below, with 29 per cent aged 15–29 years old.⁴⁴ Young people, therefore, have a critical stake in Pakistan's future. Youth unemployment, which is already high, looks set to rise due to economic instability, high illiteracy rates and a lack of skilled labour.

Recognising the potentially pivotal role of young people, government and private institutions are making efforts to tackle the problem by improving access to education and vocational training opportunities to increase employment opportunities. Unfortunately, despite positive strides forward for non-disabled young people, the opportunities for young people with disabilities are still limited. Private organisations and institutions are only reaching a small number of young people with disabilities; a substantial proportion of young people with disabilities are unable to benefit.

Excluding persons with disabilities makes neither moral, social or economic sense: Pakistan suffers a loss of an estimated £9.1 billion to £11.8 billion through the lack of economic empowerment. According to projections, this figure is expected to rise to £16.4 billion by the end of 2018.⁴⁵ This section examines the existing policies and legislative structure which applies to persons with disabilities in various spheres of life, including education and employment, as well an overview of the current policies, provisions and schemes in place for young people.

Policies for persons with disabilities

In 1981, the Government enacted The Disabled Persons' (Employment and Rehabilitation) Ordinance to coincide with the International Day of Persons with Disabilities (3 December) an affirmation of the importance of inclusion and providing support for persons with disabilities seeking employment and rehabilitation. The ordinance provided legal cover to all persons with disabilities and moved to recognise persons with disabilities through a Disability Registration Certificate, allowing them to avail special provisions for medical rehabilitation and treatment, employment and education.

⁴⁴ UNDP, National Human Development Report (2017) Unleashing the Potential of a Young Pakistan.

⁴⁵ British Council (2014).

The language and attitudes towards people with disabilities were, however, still problematic, as can be seen in the Ordinance's definition of disability: 'a disabled person means a person who, on account of injury, disease or congenital deformity, is handicapped for undertaking any gainful profession or employment in order to earn his livelihood, and includes a person who is blind, deaf, physically handicapped or mentally retarded'.⁴⁶

The ordinance established the government bodies of Ministry of Social Welfare and Special Education, National Council for the Rehabilitation of Disabled People and Provincial Council for the Rehabilitation of Disabled People to work specifically for the benefit of persons with disabilities.

The law also ensured access to one per cent quota for employment, for persons with disabilities, in government and private sectors, for every 100 employees without disabilities. The percentage was revised to two per cent after the 1998 census, due to the increasing population of persons with disabilities. The ordinance also introduced the Disabled Persons' Rehabilitation Fund to establish specialised training centres, provide scholarships and stipends, provide financial assistance to unemployed persons with disabilities and also provide financial support and artificial limbs for therapy and treatment of persons with disabilities.

The ordinance also penalises government and private sector establishments not abiding to the two per cent employment quota, for a compensation of a sum equivalent to the salary or wages of one person with disability, made to the Disabled Persons' Rehabilitation Fund, with additional arrears and fine added if an establishment fails to pay.⁴⁷

However, the ordinance does not specify a regulatory body to ensure the checks and balances for employment on disability and the payment of a fine if the establishment fails to employ. Hence, it can be argued that implementation of the employment quota is limited due to weak enforcement and monitoring.

The ordinance is the only existing legislation that addresses various areas important for the inclusion of persons with disabilities. While it does assume governmental responsibilities to ensure the inclusion of persons with disabilities, it does not comprehensively discuss implementation of the regulations outlined in the ordinance. 'Government policies provide legislative support to persons with disabilities to fight for their rights, despite little implementation of existing policies and legislature,' remarked Tahir Ali, a representative from Pakistan Foundation Fighting Blindness.

We are only given our rights verbally. In reality, there is nothing.'

– Raza Zafar, 24, physically impaired, Sialkot

Another important issue neglected in the ordinance was ensuring accessibility and reasonable adjustments made to promote the inclusion of persons with disabilities. Workplace accessibility is one of the major barriers faced by persons with disabilities. One-fifth of young persons with disabilities surveyed faced problems of accessibility when seeking employment opportunities, as well as retaining them. Negative attitudes and reluctance of employers to hire persons with disabilities also needs to be addressed to ensure equality for opportunities and in the workplace, as under Section 10.⁴⁸ However, weak enforcement and limited positive incentivisation of the ordinance undoubtedly leaves room for continued exclusion of persons with disabilities from employment.

⁴⁶ The Disabled Persons' (Employment & Rehabilitation) Ordinance, 1981.

⁴⁷ The Disabled Persons' (Employment & Rehabilitation) Ordinance, 1981.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

The ordinance laid out regulations to ensure the employment and rehabilitation of persons with disabilities, however it did so with a restrictive and disempowering, non-rights-based outlook. The paradigm for addressing the governance and citizenship of persons with disabilities in Pakistan was not one that saw them as marginalised citizens, instead treating persons with disabilities as a segment of the population which needed welfare-based assistance.

Thereby, the rights of persons with disabilities are overlooked and replaced by a ‘charity model’ approach towards addressing their issues. Ideally, the ordinance should have been preceded by legislation recognising the rights of persons with disabilities as citizens, and highlighting the discrimination against them, and succeeded by policies that comprehensively laid out the plan for the integration and mainstreaming of persons with disabilities.

For example, only 37 per cent of young people with disabilities surveyed are having or have had some form of training, which indicates the lack of institutional support within the professional mainstream.

The devolution of power in 2011 saw the dissolution of the ordinance, after which the ordinance was adopted and tailored by each of the provincial governments. In Punjab, the employment quota was increased to three per cent in 2012. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa also followed suit implementing the amendments for two per cent quota while increasing the fraction to 0.2 to calculate available employment posts in an establishment. In Balochistan, initially the ordinance was instated in its original context, but without any strict implementations.

Table 5: Employment quota according to province

Amendments	Province	Employment quota
The Disabled Persons’ (Employment & Rehabilitation) Ordinance, Amendments 2012	Punjab	3%
The Disabled Persons’ (Employment & Rehabilitation) Ordinance, Amendments 2012	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	2% Substitution of fraction 0.5 with 0.2 , to calculate available posts for persons with disabilities in an establishment
The Balochistan Persons with Disabilities Act, 2017	Balochistan	5%
Sindh Disabled Persons Welfare Act, 2014	Sindh	2% Revised to 5% in 2017

The Balochistan Persons with Disabilities Act, 2017 was passed in the Assembly to recognise persons with disabilities, providing five per cent reserved quota for employment of persons with disabilities. The Government of Sindh introduced a new policy for the welfare of persons with disabilities to replace the ordinance, in 2014. The policy was amended in 2017 to increase the employment quota to five per cent applicable in all of Sindh.

After the Ordinance of 1981, no further laws or policies were launched to work in the international support for implementation of the social model of disability until 2002. With the growing international support for the implementations of the social model of disability, the National Policy for Persons with Disabilities, 2002 was developed with a comprehensive focus on the empowerment of persons with disabilities at the socio-economic and political level, as well as their inclusion and mainstreaming in society.

The policy played a pivotal role in highlighting the rights of persons with disabilities, signifying a shift from welfare-based policies towards recognising the existence of marginalisation and discrimination in society. This shift from a charity model towards the social model of disability allowed for a sustainable approach to positive outcomes of persons with disabilities.

44 per cent of young persons with disabilities felt that government interventions and support have not been very helpful towards their education, training and employment opportunities.

The policy was based on themes of empowering persons with disabilities, and providing them with a sense of citizenship to ensure positive inclusion in society. Special emphasis was placed upon opening opportunities of education and SEN education of children with disabilities in mainstream public and private schools, as well as ensuring the training of teachers for special education.

The development of vocational training centres was also highlighted and, for example, incorporating the use of assistive technology and ICT in training programmes. Furthering laws preceding the policy, promotion of livelihood opportunities for persons with disabilities was made by providing incentives to the employers as well as facilitating sheltered or supported employment and self-employment opportunities. Within the sample of young persons with disabilities this appears to be relatively effective as 79 per cent of young people with disabilities felt that they were paid sufficiently.

Understanding the barriers faced by persons with disabilities, the policy addressed problems of physical inaccessibility in public places and buildings, as well as the provision of appropriately equipped facilities for sports and recreation of persons with disabilities. The policy also promoted the early detection and prevention of disabilities and introduced an outreach programme to mobilise communities to identify children with disabilities, assess their needs, and provide counselling and training to parents of children with disabilities.

The importance of raising awareness and advocating the rights of persons with disabilities was also highlighted, and emphasis was placed upon the development of research programmes that would demonstrate the importance of inclusion, and provide a roadmap to achieving this goal.⁴⁹

‘Before 2007, there was no focus on the chapter of disability in Balochistan. Even now there is little implementation of it.’

- An activist from Balochistan

It is important to note, however, the vagueness and qualitative nature of the policy with limited actionable time-bound quantitative outcomes and no clear agency assigned to its implementation. All of these factors have contributed to the ineffectiveness of and confusion surrounding implementation. This is supported by the fact that only 14 per cent of young people with disabilities felt improved government legislation had driven them to achieve their goals. The policy was devised after a thorough consultation with stakeholders from federal government ministries of Education, Health, Labour, Science and Technology, Housing and Works, and Planning and Development. Stakeholders from provincial government departments and prominent NGOs were also part of the planning for this policy. Therefore, the policy describes the roles of federal, provincial and district governments to improve the conditions of persons with disabilities and implement on the current and previous policies. It also recognises the efforts of NGOs towards the welfare of persons with disabilities. The policy was perhaps the right step towards the inclusion of persons with disabilities by recognising and upholding their true potential. However, the policy did not set realistic and quantifiable targets. For these reasons, the implementation of this policy followed previous trends in that it was ineffective and inconsistently applied. After four years of the National Policy for Persons with Disabilities, 2002, the National Plan of Action (NPA) was developed in 2006 for implementation of the policy. The NPA identified 17 critical intervention areas, into short-term steps, which were to be implemented by 2009, and long-term measures, which were to be completed by 2025.

The long-term measures envisioned an inclusive and barrier-free society for persons with disabilities through effective measures and establishment of programmes to provide social security to persons with disabilities.

The short-term measures included implementing medical and rehabilitation services, early detection and intervention services, and disability prevention to reduce the incidence of disabilities. Inclusive education and vocational training opportunities for persons with disabilities were promoted to facilitate employment and self-employment opportunities. The NPA also stated the development of legislative support for persons with disabilities, and advocacy and raising awareness for disabilities through promoting positive public opinion and increasing support provided to NGOs, in the short-term goals.⁵⁰

Despite exhorting measures taken by the government towards the welfare of persons with disabilities, implementation of the plan was limited.

In 2009, the National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) introduced the Special Computerised National Identity Card (Special CNIC) for addressing this issue of identification and recognition of persons with disabilities, and the Government of Pakistan even associated various benefits for persons with disabilities in the areas of health, education, employment, housing, access to finance, assistive devices, travelling, postal services and import of automobiles, with the Special CNIC. Moreover, financial remunerations, discounts and waivers presented in the policies and government schemes were made applicable to persons with disabilities with the Special CNIC.⁵¹

50 National Plan of Action for Persons with Disabilities, 2006

51 NOWPDP (2009). Know Your Rights Brochure. [online] NOWPDP.org. Available at: <http://www.nowpdp.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Know-Your-Rights-English-Brochure.pdf>.

NOWPDP Special CNIC Registration Drive

Registration of Special CNIC is important for identification of persons with disabilities so that they are recognised by the government for appropriate budget allocations for persons with disabilities. The government also allots certain benefits for registered persons with disabilities including:

- **Concession, discount and reservation of seats in government educational institutions**
- **Free treatment and health insurance in all health institutions and dispensaries, under the government or local government**
- **Concession for incremental housing on government allotted lands**
- **Provision of adaptive software and hardware for access to the knowledge of information technology**
- **Employment of persons with disabilities by an establishment of not less than two per cent of the total number of persons employed.**

The process of registration for Special CNIC is lengthy and requires persons with disabilities to visit multiple government departments to complete the process. Accessibility is a major concern during this process since government departments are seldom fully accessible by persons with disabilities independently.

NOWPDP's Special CNIC Registration Drive was organised in collaboration with the Social Welfare Department and Government of Sindh.

The camp brought together representatives of relevant government departments, namely Social Welfare Department, Labour Department, Health Department and NADRA, under the same roof at an accessible location to speed up the registration process. The objective of the campaign is not only to help persons with disabilities get an identity and have access to benefits provided by the government, but also use the data collected during it to reach out to various private sector firms and have them offer benefits to persons with disabilities, who have a Special CNIC.

As a result, NOWPDP has facilitated the issuance of Special CNICs, Disability Certificates and Employment Cards for over **1,100 persons** with disabilities across six districts of Sindh through its one-stop registration camps in **2012 and 2016**.

By 2011, however, only 600,000 persons with disabilities were issued a Special CNIC,⁵² and given that over 30 million in Pakistan may be living with a disability,⁵³ this reveals a major gap in provision. As a result, not only are persons with disabilities unable to avail the benefits that the government provides them, but also the government is unable to allocate resources for planning and delivering services necessary for treatment, intervention, training, education, employment and inclusion of persons with disabilities, such as medical care, developing special education materials and aids, training of teachers, ensuring prosthetics, physiotherapy, psychotherapy, opportunities for employment or

self-employment, etc. For example, in the 2014–15 provincial budgets, which assume persons with disabilities to be 2.4 per cent of the total population, the total outlay for special education was less than 1.5 billion rupees (£9.4 million). If we add another 1.5 billion rupees (£9.4 million), allocated from Social Welfare and Bait-ul-Maal grants, the total amount adds up to approximately three billion rupees (£18.8 million), which is woefully inadequate for approximately 30 million people. At three billion rupees (£18.8 million), the government is spending about 100 rupees (£0.63) per person with disability every year, and after we deduct the administrative costs, the spending amounts to 30 rupees (£0.19) per person with disability.⁵⁴

Figure 2: Timeline of national policies and legislations supporting persons with disabilities in Pakistan

1981	The Disabled Persons' (Employment and Rehabilitation) Ordinance
2002	National Policy for Persons with Disabilities
2006	National Plan of Action
2006	Accessibility Code of Pakistan
2008	Special Citizens' Act
2008	National Youth Policy
2009	National Education Policy of Pakistan
2010	Import of Duty-Free Car for Disabled Persons
2011	Ratification of UNCRPD
2014	Accessible Banking Infrastructure for Special Persons
2014	Guidelines for Banking Services to Visually Impaired/Blind Persons

52 Gishkori, Z. (2011). NADRA-registered: Physically challenged people top 639,096. [online] Express Tribune. Available at: <http://tribune.com.pk/story/100682/nadra-registeredphysically-challengedpeople-top-639096/>.

53 British Council (2014).

54 Shah, R. (2015). Census & disability. [online] Dawn.com. Available at: <http://www.dawn.com/news/1170433/census-disability>.

The implementation gap

Accessibility

Further Bills and Acts have been passed to ensure the implementation of previous policies, and access and mobility have started to be addressed. In 2006, the Accessibility Code of Pakistan was established, which requires the construction, renovation and alteration of any building to increase physical access to all public and private places. The code is applicable on newly constructed and existing buildings meant for public use.

The minimum infrastructural changes to facilitate an accessible environment are access for wheelchairs through corridors and doors, wheelchair ramps, height-adjusted switches, controls and handles, handrails, signage, levelled floors, ample lighting and accessible toilets.⁵⁵

The code provides specific guidance required to ensure the accessibility of all public building and places for all disabilities. The responsibility of ensuring compliance of the Accessibility Code is delegated to 'regulatory authorities' such as the Sindh Building Control Authority (SBCA), as assigned by the government. While the rules and regulations of building, zoning and development authorities outline the need for accessible infrastructure, the lack of a designated regulatory authority leaves room for weak execution of the standards.

Moreover, regulatory authorities approve building designs based on the information presented by the developers. Information which may delay or hinder the approvals is not presented to regulatory authorities. Usually, the approved building plan undergoes significant changes but is not reviewed by regulatory authorities to ensure that the approved plans are followed.⁵⁶

Facilitating accessibility

NOWPDP has been promoting and facilitating accessibility, at institutions, workplaces and public areas alike. In 2012, NOWPDP launched a survey and assessment campaign of existing infrastructure, called Making Karachi an Accessible City, in collaboration with Institute of Architects Pakistan (IAP) and Karachi Metropolitan Corporation (KMC), to improve and promote infrastructural accessibility in public and private spaces. NOWPDP also launched its model accessible workplace in 2015, which was planned according to the United Nation's Accessibility Design Manual, the Accessibility Code of Pakistan 2006 and recommendations made by the Institute of Architects Pakistan. The different interventions included paving accessible ramps; installing grab rails, tactical pathways, signage, safety features, and creating accessible washrooms and height-adjusted workstations. NOWPDP won the 'Innovative Practices' Award for 'Work Place Accessibility for Persons with Disabilities in Pakistan' by The Zero Project, which is an initiative of the Essl Foundation, focused on the rights of persons with disabilities globally. The practice has been featured in the Zero Project Report 2018 on Accessibility, and Omair Ahmad, Director, NOWPDP, and Samar Naqvi, Senior Manager Programs, NOWPDP, presented the practice and accepted the award at the Zero Project conference in February 2018 at the United Nations in Vienna, Austria.

⁵⁵ Accessibility Code of Pakistan, 2006

⁵⁶ Access Denied. Retrieved From: <http://labs.tribune.com.pk/access-denied>

Various NGOs and DPOs have protested the importance and necessity of accessible infrastructure to ensure the inclusion of persons with disabilities. In 2015, NOWPDP renovated its premises to be accessible for all persons with disabilities, following the Accessibility Code of Pakistan 2006. The premises serves as a model workplace to encourage other organisations to follow the example and become accessible to persons with disabilities.

The Special Citizens' Act, 2008 followed the other acts and policies for people with disabilities to exercise their rights, and ensure ease of access and mobility. The Act emphasises providing wheelchair access in all public and private buildings, particularly educational institutions, banks, hospitals, shopping malls, police stations, airports, railway stations, bus stops and hotels, facilitating ease of access to persons with visual impairment, and facilitating mobility for wheelchairs on footpaths. Seats were allocated for persons with disabilities on public transport.⁵⁷

Similar to the previous policies, the Act of 2008 was only partially implemented; access and mobility remain serious challenges today. Furthermore, the Accessibility Code of Pakistan 2006 and Special Citizens' Act 2008 do not focus on ease of access and mobility during emergency situations; inclusive disaster risk reduction practices have not been implemented. Similarly, accessible communications are not included or adequately addressed (and are not included in any current legislation), creating significant barriers persons with hearing and speech impairments and other persons with disabilities.

The Special Citizens' (Rights to Concessions in Movements) Act was passed in 2009 to provide concessions to persons with disabilities in all public and private transport. It is applicable on air, railway and other transport authorities suggesting a reduction in fares.⁵⁸

72 per cent of young persons with disabilities reported inaccessibility as a major barrier to access education, training and employment.

In 2010, under the context of the Trade Policy (2009–2012), the Ministry of Commerce promulgated the Notification No. 6 (1)/2009-Import-III which allows a person with physical impairment to import a new car, every five years, without payment of custom duties, given the individual is deemed fit to drive, with reasonable adjustments and holds a valid driving licence. Conditions applied also include that the individual must earn PKR 20,000–100,000 and the imported car should have an engine capacity of 1350cc to be utilised for personal use only.⁵⁹ The notification specifies that people with physical disabilities (excluding individuals with cognitive disabilities and impairments related to ageing) importing the new car must have a valid driving licence to avail the waiver of custom duties.⁶⁰ Paradoxically according to the Motor Vehicle Ordinance 1965, a licence shall not be issued, or cancelled, if the applicant has a chronic health condition or a disability, as per their medical certificate.

For others, applicants may take a test to prove their driving does not put the public in harm's way, however the same leeway is not extended to all persons with disabilities or chronic health condition.⁶¹ As such with being denied a valid driving licence, persons with physical impairments will be unable to import the vehicle without paying custom duties.

Pakistan ratified the CRPD on 5 July 2011, to show its support towards the inclusion of persons with disabilities in society.

The CRPD is primarily concerned with the creation of an inclusive, barrier-free society where persons with disabilities can freely access their rights in all aspects of life that is social, economic, political and cultural aspects.⁶²

57 Special Citizens' Act, 2008

58 The Special Citizens' (Rights to Concessions in Movements) Act, 2009.

59 Notification No. 6 (1)/2009-Import-III, 2010. Ministry of Commerce, Government of Pakistan.

60 Federal Board of Revenue Notification. Retrieved from:

<https://www.dawn.com/news/889860/the-disabled-allowed-duty-free-import-of-cars>

61 Motor Vehicle Ordinance, 1965. Retrieved from <http://www.ptfp.com.pk/Transport/Content/motor-vehicle-ordinance-1965-pt-1-of-4/wsindex.html>

62 United Nations Children's Fund (2011). The International Day of Persons with Disabilities. Media Centre. Retrieved from: https://www.unicef.org/pakistan/media_7439.html

For ease of access to financial services, the State Bank of Pakistan issued Circular No. 2 Accessible Banking Infrastructure for Special Persons, in 2014. This was meant to ensure that persons with disabilities can access bank branches and ATMs and be provided accessible and inclusive services, recommending out-of-queue assistance or preferential treatment to carry out their banking transactions.

Additionally it mentioned the construction of ramps at entrances and exits of new bank branches and wherever possible in existing branches.

Circular No. 6 Guidelines for Banking Services to Visually Impaired/Blind Persons was also issued in 2014 to ensure access for persons with visual impairment to banking facilities and financial services. Guidelines were applicable for all banks and microfinance banks and institutions, pertaining to the opening and operation of bank account, cash withdrawal/cheque book facility, Credit/Debit/ATM cards, phone/internet banking, lockers and extension of loans. The circular provided instructions to facilitate services for persons with visual impairment through stationery, forms and documents in Braille, made available in at least a branch in the region, city or vicinity, and ensure installation of at least one Talking ATM in an area or vicinity where banks and microfinance banks are operating. On a provincial level, the Notification S.O. (A-11) 1-83/2012 proposes accessibility for persons with disabilities in all public places in Punjab.

In 2018 the UK Department for International Development (DFID), the Government of Kenya and the International Disability Alliance hosted the Global Disability Summit in the UK. This provided an opportunity for the global community to come together and review current successes

and challenges facing interventions for the inclusion of persons with disabilities in employment and education, how to harness the potential of technology and how to reduce stigma and discrimination. Pakistan was recognised as one of the 13 priority countries at the Summit and provincial and federal government ministers (as well as DPO activists and young disabled leaders) attended the Summit on behalf of Pakistan. One main outcome of the Global Disability Summit was the global take up of the 'Charter for Change', asking governments and global stakeholders to sign up to ten key interventions to ensure that the UNCRPD was adhered to and championed in country. While the Government of Pakistan has expressed support for the Charter, it has yet to formally sign. To do so would send a powerful and eloquent message to the national and international community on Pakistan's commitment to empowering persons with disabilities and moving towards the successful implementation of the social model. All these acts, policies, legislation and legal working were developed for people with disabilities in general, aiming to provide benefits for all persons with disabilities without a special focus on young persons with disabilities.

Census data

The population of Pakistan is projected to be over 207 million. Statistics and data on youth with disabilities are scarce. Since detailed data on the 2017 census is not there yet, and the methodology and validity of the data is in question, this report has used UNDP statistics to calculate the number of people under 30 in Pakistan (65 per cent of the population – approximately 133 million people) and those aged 15–29 (29 per cent – approximately 60 million people).⁶³

Education

The government is attempting to make interventions to improve the quality of education in the country. However, mainstream public and private schools are not equipped to cater to persons with disabilities due to lack of reasonable adjustments and trained teachers, psychologists, therapists and other resources. Some of the key challenges identified hindering access to education are identified below.

One of the most significant and sustained challenges is the lack of inclusive education strategies in Pakistan, either at provincial or federal level. This is compounded by a lack of provision and professionalism of teachers and education professionals, and societal norms that seek to segregate, rather than include, young persons with disabilities, all of whom are included in the 'SEN' category regardless of the nature of their impairment. There is a great deal of advocacy work, research and policy engagement that needs to take place to persuade government and education stakeholders of the benefits of mainstream education over SEN schooling. This report discusses this in more detail in later chapters and recommendations on education provision.

Pakistan ratified the Education for All programme in 2000, however the goals set for it have not been achieved.⁶⁴ There have been a multitude of policies established by the government to tackle the problem of education addressing the need for inclusive education. For instance policies enacted in 1970 and 1978 have an emphasis on education and training of children with disabilities, and specifically the welfare of persons with disabilities. In recent years, much focus has been placed upon the development of youth through education and vocational training. In addition to the efforts made to improve the lives of persons with disabilities.

Yet there remains limited implementation and focus for persons with disabilities; government education and training could be improved by greater awareness and government intervention.

Key challenges in education

Limited proximity – Public-run schools for children with disabilities are usually situated in the bigger cities or in pockets in the rural areas. Due to the distances, children with disabilities in far-flung areas of the city and in rural areas are not able to attend school.

Insufficient, unstandardised curriculum – Curriculum is not standardised across the provinces, and is not at par with the level of education provided at mainstream schools. For instance, in special education schools in Sindh, the curriculum taught covers limited topics which are selected with consensus of professionals in the field. As a result scope of learning is also restrictive and subpar.

Untrained teachers – Teachers are not equipped with ample knowledge and understanding to cater to children with disabilities, understand their needs and harness their true potential. Teachers without proper training or knowledge can leave room for rote learning and poor transfer of knowledge.

Limited affordability – Private schools providing special or inclusive education systems are not affordable for persons with disabilities belonging to a low or middle-income background.

Inaccessibility – Schools catering to persons with disabilities are not fully accessible. The case is especially prominent in higher education where universities, despite enrolling young persons with disabilities, do not meet the infrastructure and accommodation standards for accessibility

⁶⁴ United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (2015). Education for All 2000-2015. Pakistan Report Card: Mixed results. EFA Report.

The National Policy for Special Education of 1999 recognised the importance of changing public attitudes towards disabilities to ensure their rehabilitation in society. The policy highlighted the importance of promoting successful stories of persons with disabilities, and proposed monetary compensation to be made for persons with disabilities.⁶⁵

The National Youth Policy, 2008, promotes the facilitation and provision of opportunities for education, training and employment for youth, while safeguarding their rights. Thematically, recent policies place a considerable emphasis on mainstreaming persons with disabilities, recognising and upholding their rights as citizens of the state. Similarly, the National Youth Policy protects the rights of young people with regards to access to education, training and employment opportunities, as well as sports and recreation.⁶⁶ Following the 18th Amendment, however, the policy was dissolved and no new policy was established in lieu of the previous one, except in Punjab. The Punjab Youth Policy 2012 provides strategies to tackle challenges faced by the youth of Punjab, but no specific focus is provided to young persons with disabilities and challenges faced by them.⁶⁷

In 2009, the National Education Policy of Pakistan was established to enhance the quality of education in public institutions. While the policy was developed for an overall education reform and improvement of literacy rates, this too expressed the importance of providing access to education through special facilities and undertaking measures to ensure inclusion of persons with disabilities in mainstream education. Realising the general need for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) to facilitate employment, the policy also focuses on provision of TVET opportunities for persons with disabilities through inclusive measures.⁶⁸

The Higher Education Commission devised a policy to uphold equal opportunities in higher education specific to persons with disabilities. Where other policies include persons with disabilities in limited sections, the 'Policy for Students with Disabilities for Higher Learning Institutes in Pakistan' covers all areas of inclusion, from removing physical and attitudinal barriers to making reasonable accommodations. The policy aims to achieve inclusion through a sustainable model such that higher education institutes and universities are 'flexible, sensitive and aware' of the needs of persons with disabilities, and duly incorporate them to provide equal opportunities. The policy ensures that students with disabilities feel equal by providing them continuing support and counselling for academics and career growth, Disabled Students' Allowance where approved and required, and establishing a Disability Services committee. Moreover, the academic curriculum, extra-curricular activities and examinations procedures should accommodate persons with disabilities along with staff development activities for awareness.⁶⁹

In provincial policies, the Sindh Act 2014 states a full concession of admission fees and 75 per cent reliefs on tuition fees, for persons with disabilities, at educational institutions run by the Government of Sindh, with reserved seats for education at every level. The notification issued by the Chief Minister of Punjab removes the age limit for admissions at all educational institutions, waives all institutional charges for persons with disabilities and reserves at least one seat for persons with disabilities in higher education that is MPhil or PhD. Since both the Act and Notification are relatively recent, there is limited evidence of their implementation and effectiveness, illustrated by a meagre four per cent of young persons with disabilities with a bachelor's- or master's-level qualification.

65 Ahmed, S., Yusuf, M. (2011). Special Education in Pakistan: In the Perspectives of Educational Policies and Plans. SAVAP International.

66 National Youth Policy, 2008

67 Punjab Youth policy, 2012. Youth Affairs, Sports, Tourism and Archaeology

Department. Government of Punjab.

68 National Education Policy, 2009.

69 Policy for Students with Disabilities for Higher Learning Institutes in Pakistan. Retrieved from: <http://hec.gov.pk/english/services/universities/Pages/Policy.aspx>

Technical and vocational education and training (TVET)

Given the lack of education, policymakers are shifting their attention to develop and improve programmes for TVET. The National Vocational and Technical Training Commission (NAVTTTC) Ordinance was passed in 2009 followed by NAVTTTC Act in 2011, which aims to increase access to TVET in urban and rural areas, improve existing TVET programmes and develop meaningful links between TVET and the employment sector.⁷⁰

The National Skills Strategy (NSS) 2009–2013 is concerned with implementing reforms in the existing programmes for TVET as well as developing improved programmes to cater to all population groups, keeping in view their specialised needs. The NSS recommends an action plan for disadvantaged groups, which includes the ‘physically challenged’, religious and ethnic minorities, widows, orphans and other marginalised groups. The action plan is focused on ensuring reserved seats for disadvantaged groups and devising training programmes specific to craftsmen and labour practices common in rural regions.⁷¹

The TVET Policy launched in 2015 included provisions for vulnerable groups and for those below the poverty line; however, it does not explicitly cover strategies to include persons with disabilities in TVET programmes.⁷² Policies formulated for the Technical Education and Vocational Training Authority (TEVTA) on the provincial levels are also not defined for persons with disabilities in their target population.

While the existing TVET programmes and policies do not categorically exclude the admission of persons with disabilities in the training programmes, no special measures are undertaken to cater to the needs of persons with disabilities.

The NSS does provide an outline to include disadvantaged groups, and implementation is still a challenge owing to the lack of expertise and capacity of the institutions. Hence TVET programmes cater to persons with disabilities through tailored projects, limiting their access to only a few trades and training institutes.

Employment

After the devolution of power, the Disabled Persons’ (Employment and Rehabilitation) Ordinance, 1981, was adopted by the Government of Punjab, with amendments made in Section 10 of the ordinance to increase two per cent employment quota to three per cent, for persons with disabilities registered with the Employment Exchange, and deemed “fit to work”. This approach, and the language used, goes against the rights-based values of the UNCRPD and social model and disempowers the individual.⁷³

Moreover, the Chief Minister of Punjab issued a notification in January 2016 calling for the immediate introduction of provisions and facilities for persons with disabilities across the Punjab. These included the removal of the ban on recruitment, or transfer and posting, of persons with disabilities along with a reservation three per cent quota for persons with disabilities in government departments, and special CNICs for all disabled persons. Although most provisions meant to ensure the assistance of all departments to help persons with disabilities overcome problems to become self-sufficient and empowered, there were also some that reinforced the need for additional support for all persons with disabilities, including Khidmat cards and stipend.

⁷⁰ Act No. XV of 2011. National Vocational and Technical Training Commission (NAVTTTC), Pakistan

⁷¹ National Skills Strategy 2009-2013. National Vocational and Technical Education Commission.

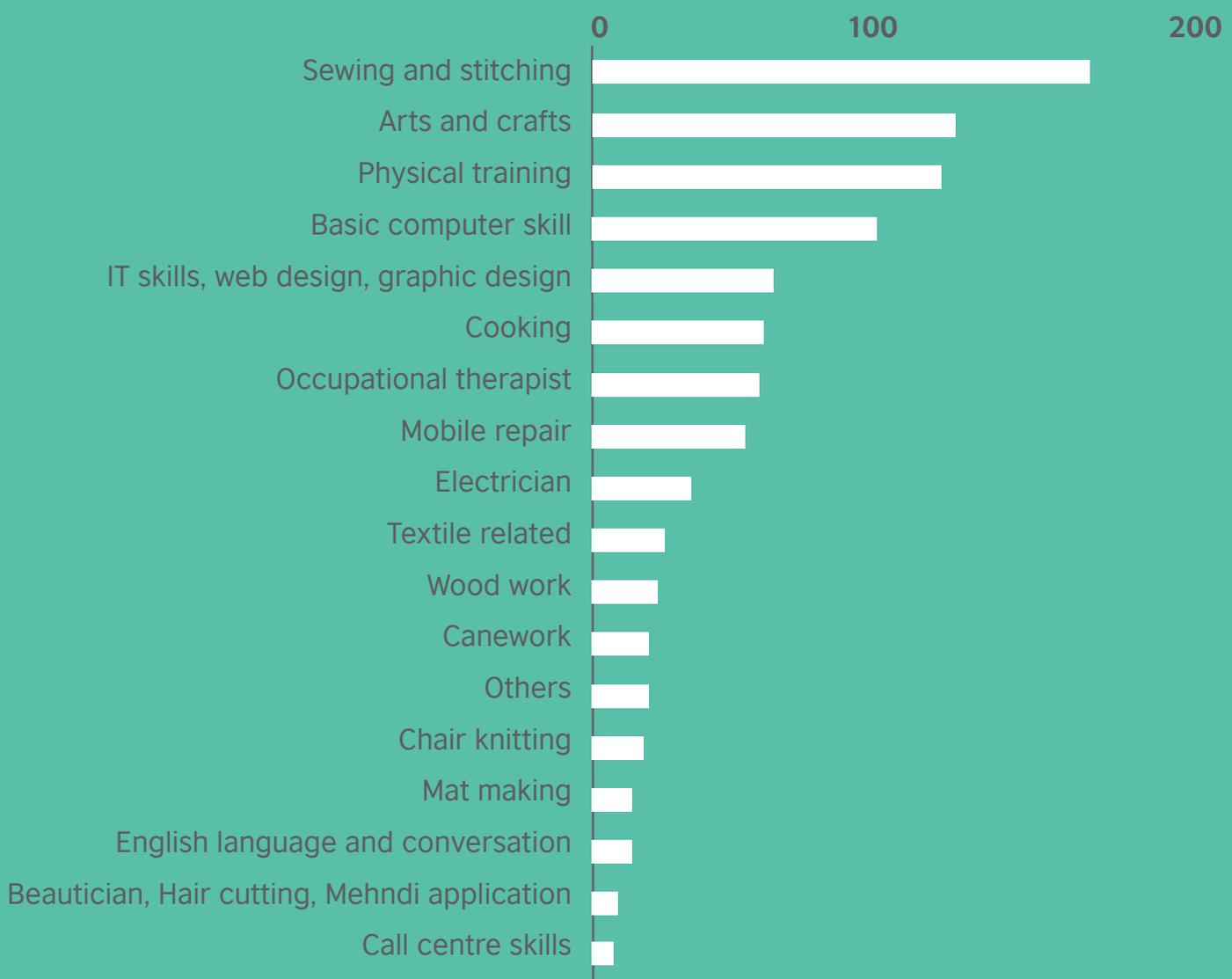
⁷² Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training. (2015). Skills for Growth & Development A Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Policy for Pakistan. German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)

⁷³ Disabled Persons (Employment and Rehabilitation) Amendment Act 2012 – Punjab

Skills offered to persons with disabilities

Although TVET is gaining importance in Pakistan, young persons with disabilities still have fewer opportunities to receive vocational training. The vocational training centres which are inclusive or especially designed for persons with disabilities offer a limited selection of trades. Figure 3 highlights the trade skills selected by 577 young persons with disabilities, who were being trained or had completed training. The skills mentioned below are based on the skills opted for training, and also shed light on the options of training open to them or those they are aware of. Some participants had completed training in more than one skill.

Figure 3: Trade skills offered



Bills currently in process

Health Insurance Scheme for Disabled Persons Act, 2016

The Bill was proposed for a health insurance scheme for persons with disabilities which would cover all insurance expenses, including consulting, in-patient and out-patient treatment, diagnostic and laboratory services, surgery and medicines. The Bill will be applicable to all government hospitals and private hospitals, as specified, in Islamabad territory, for free-of-cost treatment. The Bill was laid in the National Assembly in January 2017. Special Citizens' Bill, 2015

The Special Citizens' Bill

was presented in the National Assembly in January 2015; however, the Bill has not been passed. The bill was applicable across Pakistan to make provisions for persons with disabilities in accessibility for wheelchair in all public and private buildings, access to seats in public transport, maximum accessibility for persons with physical and visual impairment on footpaths and priority must be given for persons with disabilities to cross the road.

Pakistan Rights of Persons with Disability Bill, 2017

The bill has been pending since 2017 and was presented in the National Assembly in January 2018. The bill promotes and protects the rights of persons with disabilities within the Islamic provisions of the Constitution. Whereby a framework must be developed in line with the CRPD, to ensure ease of access, equity in education, employment and health, provision of facilities for social, economic and political participation in the society.

It was also observed how the notification suggested a change in referral terms from 'special persons' to 'disabled persons' all over Punjab as the first point, while referring to them as special persons throughout the remaining notification.⁷⁴

This draws us to the wider point of over-reliance by policymakers on percentage-based approaches such as quotas or reservations. If these initiatives are coupled with holistic integration and improvement in other key areas (education for example) it may prove more effective. The lack of impetus in education can be illustrated by the meagre 27 per cent post-secondary education rate within young persons with disabilities.⁷⁵

The Disabled Persons' Ordinance, 1981 was adopted by Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, and amendments were made in 2012, in Section 10 (subsection (3)) of the ordinance to substitute the fraction 0.5 with 0.2 when calculating percentages of the posts in an establishment for employment of persons with disabilities.⁷⁶ This means that a person with disability is hired for every 20 employees without disabilities in any organisation with 100 or more employees.

The Balochistan Persons with Disabilities Act, 2017 was passed in the Assembly to recognise persons with disabilities, providing five per cent reserved quota for employment of persons with disabilities at different posts in government departments and any government - owned establishments.

The Sindh Differently Able Persons (Employment, Rehabilitation and Welfare) Act was established in 2014 by the Government of Sindh. Functions under the Act were similar to that of the Disabled Persons' Ordinance, 1981 and stated a two per cent quota for employment of persons with disabilities, who are registered with the Employment Exchange and deemed fit to work. Any establishment failing to meet the quota would have to bear a penalty as per the Disabled Persons' Ordinance, 1981.

⁷⁴ Notification S.O. (A-11) 1-83/2012. Office of the Chief Minister, Government of Punjab.

⁷⁵ Notification S.O. (A-11) 1-83/2012. Office of the Chief Minister, Government of Punjab.

⁷⁶ Disabled Persons (Employment and Rehabilitation) Amendment Act 2012 – Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

The Act additionally covered health and medical treatment and insurance for persons with disabilities, financial loans to establishing their business, monthly grants, and concessions in cost of government-allotted plots, as well as increasing access to knowledge and education.⁷⁷

'The Council for the Rehabilitation of Differently Aabled Persons' is made responsible for the facilitation and implementation of the provisions of the act. In 2017, the Act was amended to increase the quota for employment to five per cent for persons with disabilities; however, implementation of the increase is still under way.⁷⁸

Financial support programmes

Prime Minister's Youth Programme

The Prime Minister's Youth Programme was established to provide financial support to people aged 21–45 years, ensuring their participation in the socio-economic development of the country, through various schemes and loans. While there are no specific schemes introduced solely for youth with disabilities, there is a dedicated five per cent quota for persons with disabilities in the Youth Business Loan Scheme.

Other schemes include interest-free loans, Skills Development Programme, Youth Training Scheme, Youth Laptop Programme and Fee Reimbursement Scheme.

Pakistan Bait-ul-Maal

The Pakistan Bait-ul-Maal was established after the Pakistan Bait-ul-Maal Act in 1992, as an effort to alleviate poverty and improve the socio-economic conditions in the country. The Pakistan Bait-ul-Maal has several programmes to provide financial and in-kind support, inclusive for all and some programmes have a special focus on persons with disabilities.

The Individual Financial Assistance programme provides support to persons with disabilities, alongside the poor, widows, destitute women and orphans, for education, medical treatment and rehabilitation and other assistance.

Furthermore, the Special Friends programme provides financial support to families of persons with disabilities, of PKR 10,000 to families with one person with disability, and PKR 25,000 to families with two or more persons with disabilities, per year. The programme also supports the procurement of assistive aids such as wheelchairs, hearing aids, white canes and prosthetic limbs.

Punjab Bait-ul-Maal

The Punjab Bait-ul-Maal provides one-time financial assistance to the poor and the needy, of PKR 10,000 maximum. People eligible are those below the poverty level (determined by the Bait ul Maal committee in the area of permanent residence), with preference given to young orphans, destitute, widows and persons with disabilities. The assistance will only be granted to those who are not currently receiving any financial assistance from Zakat or Pakistan Bait Ul Maal.⁷⁹

⁷⁷ The Sindh Differently Able Persons (Employment, Rehabilitation and Welfare) Act, 2014

⁷⁸ The Sindh Differently Able Persons (Employment, Rehabilitation and Welfare) (Amendment) Act, 2017

⁷⁹ Punjab Bait-ul-Maal Financial assistance policy. Retrieved from: https://baitulmaal.punjab.gov.pk/financial_assistance

Punjab Khidmat Card Scheme

The Punjab Khidmat Card Scheme was launched to provide financial assistance, free technical training and interest free loans for persons with disabilities. The Khidmat Card Scheme enables persons with disabilities to a stipend of PKR 1,200 per month or PKR 3,600 per quarter.

Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP)

The Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) provides financial support to under-privileged and marginalised groups in the country.

The BISP has four programmes for education (Waseela-e-Taleem), health (Waseela-e-Sehat), vocational training and skills development (Waseela-e-Rozgar) and self-employment (Waseela-e-Haq), along with Unconditional Cash Transfers.

It has also developed a National Socio-Economic Registry (NSER) to gauge the socio-economic status of households. The BISP does not have a specified programme for persons with disabilities but families eligible for financial support include families with physically or intellectually impaired individuals.

Benazir Bhutto Shaheed Youth Development Program (BBSYDP)

The BBSYDP was launched to provide opportunities for skills development and vocational training, which are helpful to enter the job market and also includes self-employment opportunities. There are no dedicated programmes for persons with disabilities, but the BBSYDP has collaborated with NGOs and DPOs to provide vocational training for persons with disabilities in the past.

Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF)

The PPAF provides funds to underprivileged people in the country. Established by the Government of Pakistan as an autonomous not-for-profit company, PPAF began its operations in 2000, PPAF initiated a project, in collaboration with the World Bank, for the welfare of persons with disabilities in the aftermath of the earthquake in 2005.

In 2010, the PPAF began a pilot project to provide support and assistance to persons with disabilities in Quetta, Multan, Swabi, Karachi, Khairpur and Swat with Rawalakot and Mansehra. The project was essentially a continuation of the earthquake disability project, with a few added components. The aim of this pilot project was to improve the quality of life of persons with disabilities through assistive devices, developing skills, increasing accessibility and social inclusion.

Over the years, PPAF has provided funds and programmes to support the inclusion and empowerment of persons with disabilities, through microfinance programmes, assistive devices and skills development to create opportunities of livelihood.

Table 6: Summary of benefits to persons with disabilities in government policies

EDUCATION	TRAINING	EMPLOYMENT	FINANCIAL SUPPORT
Youth laptop programme and fee reimbursement Scheme under the Prime Minister's Youth Programme	Skills development programme and youth training scheme under the Prime Minister's Youth Programme	Three per cent employment quota for persons with disabilities in Punjab	Five per cent quota on Youth Business Loan Scheme through the Prime Minister's Youth Programme
Support for education under the Individual Financial Assistance	Free technical training under the Punjab Khidmat Card Scheme	Two per cent employment quota, health, medical, insurance, grants and loans under the Sindh Differently Able Persons (Employment, Rehabilitation and Welfare) Act 2014. Revised to five per cent Other provinces have their own employment quotas after devolution, such as three per cent in Punjab.	Special Friends' programme of Pakistan Bait-ul-Maal provides PKR 10,000 to families with one person with disability, and PKR 25,000 to families with two or more persons with disabilities, per year.
Programme for education, Waseela-e-Taleem under Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP)	Programme for vocational training and skills development, Waseela-e-Rozgar under Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP)	Five per cent quota on Youth Business Loan Scheme through the Prime Minister's Youth Programme	Provide a one-time financial assistance of maximum of PKR 10,000 to the needy under Punjab Bait-ul-Maal
Full concession of admission fees, 75 per cent relief on tuition fee, and reserved seats in government run educational institutions through the Sindh Disability Act 2014	Skills development and vocational training in Sindh under the Benazir Bhutto Shaheed Youth Development Programme (BBSYDOP)	Programme for self-employment, Waseela-e-Haq under Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP)	The Khidmat Card Scheme enables persons with disabilities to PKR 1,200 per month or PKR 3,600 on a quarterly basis.
	TVET policy launched in 2015 is effectual for all vulnerable groups		For assistance of persons with disabilities under the Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund

Conclusions

Over the years, many efficient policies were established by the government on a national level to uphold and protect the rights of persons with disabilities. As per the analysis of these policies, most were rendered ineffective due to the 18th Amendment and dissolution of federal power. With confusion reigning over responsibilities for the development and implementation of policies divided between provincial and federal government bodies, much room is left for the actual execution of policies to fall through the cracks. Furthermore, national and provincial policies formed design strategies and penalisations to ensure that the law is followed; however, the vague framework does not appoint a defined regulatory body to carry out the checks and balances required, for example 44 per cent of respondents felt that the efficacy of government policy was 'very low' or 'low', with only a 23 per cent feeling satisfied with a 'very high' or 'high' rating. Without one specified body, it is easier for government officials to escape the scrutiny of the public.

Quota system

It can be argued that the provincial quota system, while providing a legislative support to persons with disabilities, is also contradictory to achieving inclusion in society. Moreover, the government quota does not always assure opportunities in higher education, training and employment. Of the 178 employed persons with disabilities who participated in the research, only six per cent of persons with disabilities reported securing employment through government quotas. Despite the quota being increased up to five per cent in certain provinces, young persons with disabilities were not satisfied with its implementation.

Aliyah Saif, a teacher at a government SEN school in Quetta commented: '300 people applied for the job and only 30 got in - I was the only one who was disabled. Our rights are suppressed.'

The provincial governments have also established quotas for persons with disabilities in training and education. However, most young persons with disabilities from our research were not aware of them. This points to the lack of awareness raised for the rights and provisions of persons with disabilities, evidenced by only 17 per cent of 'policy aware' persons with disabilities who pointed to media outlets as their source of information.

Additionally quotas limit groups in terms of their equal opportunity and merit and lead to feelings of profound disillusionment. There is a sense that sympathy-based welfare provision perpetuates the labelling of persons with disabilities as dependent charity cases, rather than acknowledging their skills and promoting education and opportunity to hone those skills.

Lack of accurate data

There is inaccurate data present on the prevalence of disabilities in Pakistan, by province. Accuracy of data is crucial to ensure efficient planning of policies. All policies, planning and implementation of provisions and facilities of persons with disabilities are based on the data presented in the 1998 census of Pakistan.

Due to inaccurate and outmoded data, the resource allocations and provisions made are not substantial to cater to all persons with disabilities in Pakistan. Additionally, the tools used to collect data on persons with disabilities have been questioned. Terminology used to refer to persons with disabilities in the survey tools were outdated and had serious negative connotations, which may have deterred participants from acknowledging the disability. Internationally recognised tools such as the Washington Group of questions were not utilised to inform data collection methodology.

The new census was criticised for its lack of recognition of persons with disabilities. Although the questions for disabilities were later added to the demographics, there is much that can be questioned regarding planning and implementation. While the results for head count from the census are still awaited, the data gathered during the house count is staggeringly low, presenting a picture contrary to the approximations calculated by NGOs and international organisations, during the 20-year gap. This too provokes speculation on the accuracy of the data collected in the 2017 census. The government established the Special

CNIC for persons with disabilities, in 2009, but there are not many registrations received for it. Through the dissemination of information by NOWPDP for the Special CNIC Registration camps, it was realised that persons with disabilities and their families were not aware of the Special CNICs and the benefits available through it.

Lack of publicising and awareness interventions

The young persons with disabilities who we consulted were unaware of their rights and government provisions and interventions (44 per cent), therefore they were unable to take advantage of them. Most young persons with disabilities were aware of the provincial employment quota but most were not aware of the provisions and relaxations provided by the provincial government for education, medical and health services and transport. NGOs working for persons with disabilities reported that government interventions and programmes are not openly broadcasted, and hence even organisations working for persons with disabilities are unable to disseminate the information in time. Most young persons with disabilities became aware of their rights and government interventions through their friends and family (75 per cent), their school (50 per cent), compared to just ten per cent for print media and eight per cent for electronic media. Additionally, only 22 per cent of young persons with disabilities felt increased awareness of opportunities had contributed to the attainment of their goals and objectives, signalling the need for the development of long-term awareness schemes.

Recommendations

The provincial governments need to develop a singular body to plan and implement policies for the welfare of persons with disabilities, within the provinces. An example of this is the creation of a Department for the Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities,⁸⁰ in Sindh that intends to consolidate interventions and support for persons with disabilities under one banner, thus avoiding conflict in direction and allowing for accountability.

Rights of persons with disabilities and provision made by the government should be promoted through district and taluka level mediums to ensure maximum outreach.

Attention should be paid to collecting accurate data on the prevalence of persons with disabilities so that it can be used effectively. This could be done through a collaborative private public exercise using internationally used tools to measure and collect data of persons with disabilities (e.g. the Washington Group of Questions).

Community-based interventions can be planned for breaking the stigma around disabilities and promoting inclusion in education, training and employment opportunities and the community.

Provincial quotas established for education, training and employment should be enforced with stricter punitive repercussions, to ensure that they are implemented.

Learnings from developed countries on policies and practices for inclusion for equal opportunity should be leveraged and an understanding of a more accessible inclusive environment needs to be developed.

Provincial and federal government could improve the situation of education and training by increasing the provision of mainstream schools to include persons with disabilities to move Pakistan towards an inclusive education model.

Provincial and federal governments should work on consistency in curriculums taught and focus on developing specialised educationists and assessors to mainstream people with disabilities.

Policies should be planned to have exclusive attention to SEN education and training and work towards quick and focused implementation. An understanding of what constitutes the special education student body and an assessment of capacity and capability to enter mainstream education should also be made.

Formal and informal education

‘Everyone (government departments) is working on their own priority. The National Policy for Persons with Disabilities has a lot of potential and research behind it, but it is yet to be fully implemented.’

- Tahir Ali, Pakistan Foundation Fighting Blindness (PFFB)

Education is the first step for any individual to become an active part of society. Schools generally provide children with a safe environment to begin their socialisation process and develop academic vocational and life skills.

Although measures were adopted to improve the situation of education in Pakistan, by promoting the private school system, Pakistan is still far from achieving the adequate standards for enrolment of children. According to Alif Ailaan’s Pakistan District Education Rankings Report (2017), Pakistan is plagued by insufficient budget and resources allocations and the lack of accountability by government bodies.

The lack of usable data regarding the quality of education, school infrastructure and enrolment makes the development of evidence-based education policies a cumbersome task. For every four primary schools, there is only one school available for education higher than the primary level. Therefore, children in Pakistan above Grade 5 have limited access to schools.⁸¹

Table 7: Alif Ailaan Pakistan District Education Ranking – 2017

REGION	EDUCATION SCORE
Azad Jammu and Kashmir	72.95
Islamabad Capital Territory	70.43
Punjab	70.01
Gilgit-Baltistan	63.18
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	57.69
Balochistan	54.16
Sindh	53.37
FATA	49.01
Azad Jammu and Kashmir	72.95

The weak enforcement of the 18th Amendment also plays a vital role in the current standard of the education system in Pakistan. While the federal system is responsible for developing policies for education, the onus of implementation falls on the provincial government. The lack of a centralised governing body and data management allows representatives to skirt around the major issues of ensuring access to and engagement in quality education.⁸²

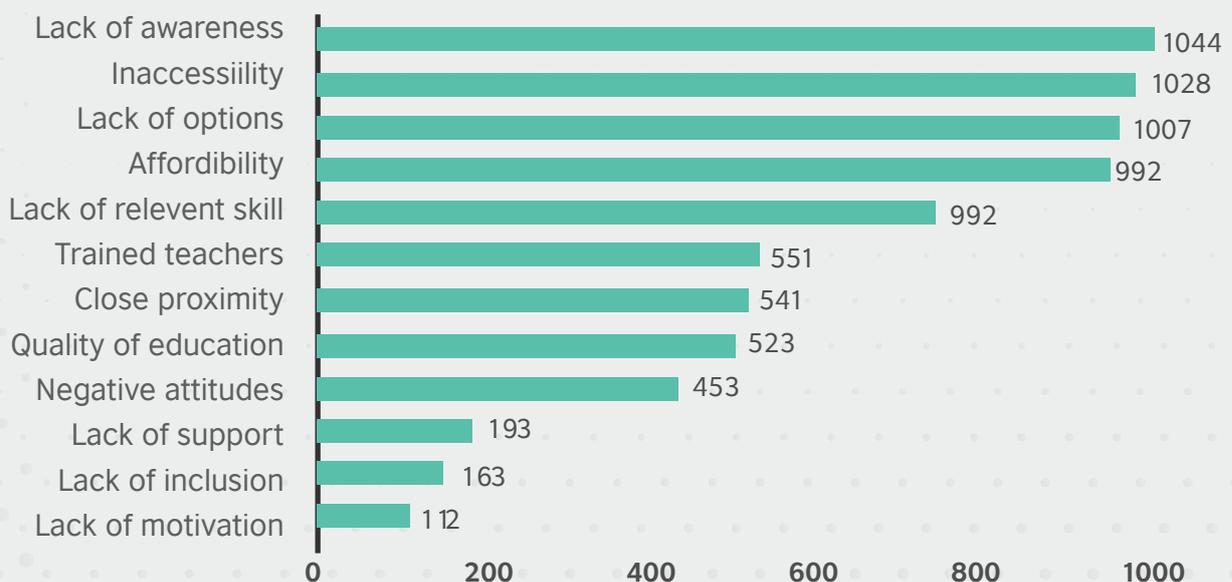
Besides being a fundamental human right, the need to ensure persons with disabilities are included in education was realised early on by the government, resulting in policies to educate and include persons with disabilities. The First Plan of National Development (1955–60) included the programme ‘Services for the Physically Handicapped’, but it was not fully implemented due to financial, administrative and personnel constraints. In the 1978–83 programme, with a budget of PKR 26 million, four special education institutions were established in Islamabad. The Commission on National Education (1959) included components for establishing special education schools, (with no reference to inclusive or mainstream schooling), however no action was undertaken to implement the same.

Further policies devised also lagged in acting on the promises of providing quality education for persons with disabilities. Most policies focused on establishing new special education schools and strengthening the existing special education schools.⁸³ Although public and private special education schools are established, most do not have the capacity of enrolment to include all children with disabilities.

There is also the problem of accountability that slows down the implementation of policies. Education on the whole is a provincial case, where federal government is only responsible for devising policies. Additionally, interventions for persons with disabilities are a shared responsibility between Special Education and Social Welfare departments on a provincial as well as a national level.

Since the government-owned SEN schools centres have a lack of resources, they can only accommodate a limited number of persons with disabilities in their respective regions. A majority of these centres are based in urban areas and thus persons with disabilities in rural areas are unable to access the opportunity.

Figure 4: Factors affecting education and training



⁸² Ibid.
⁸³ Ahmed, S., Yusuf, M. (2011). Special Education in Pakistan: In the Perspectives of Educational Policies and Plans. SAVAP International

Barriers to inclusion

Young persons with disabilities who took part in the research recognised the importance of raising awareness (63 per cent) and inaccessibility (52 per cent) as important factors affecting access to education. Lack of options (61 per cent) and affordability (60 per cent) were also noted by young persons with disabilities as the barriers to education.

The sample of young persons with disabilities regarded the availability of specially trained teachers (33 per cent) and proximity of the school from residence (33 per cent) as vital to access opportunities, affecting the selection of school, continued enrolment and completion of education. Young persons with disabilities belonging to or having some experience of studying at mainstream schools highlighted the important role that teachers played to create a safe and encouraging environment for them to flourish in. At the same time, quality of education was reported by 523 young persons with disabilities (32 per cent).

There also exists a shortage of schools providing opportunities for education above primary level.⁸⁴ The case is similar for young persons with disabilities who have limited opportunities to pursue higher education due to the primary focus being the education of children with disabilities. Additionally, the lack of opportunities in higher education can be attributed to the inaccessible infrastructure, negative perception and lack of acceptance of young persons with disabilities, coupled with the lack of reasonable adjustments, curriculum, professional development for educators, and examination systems.

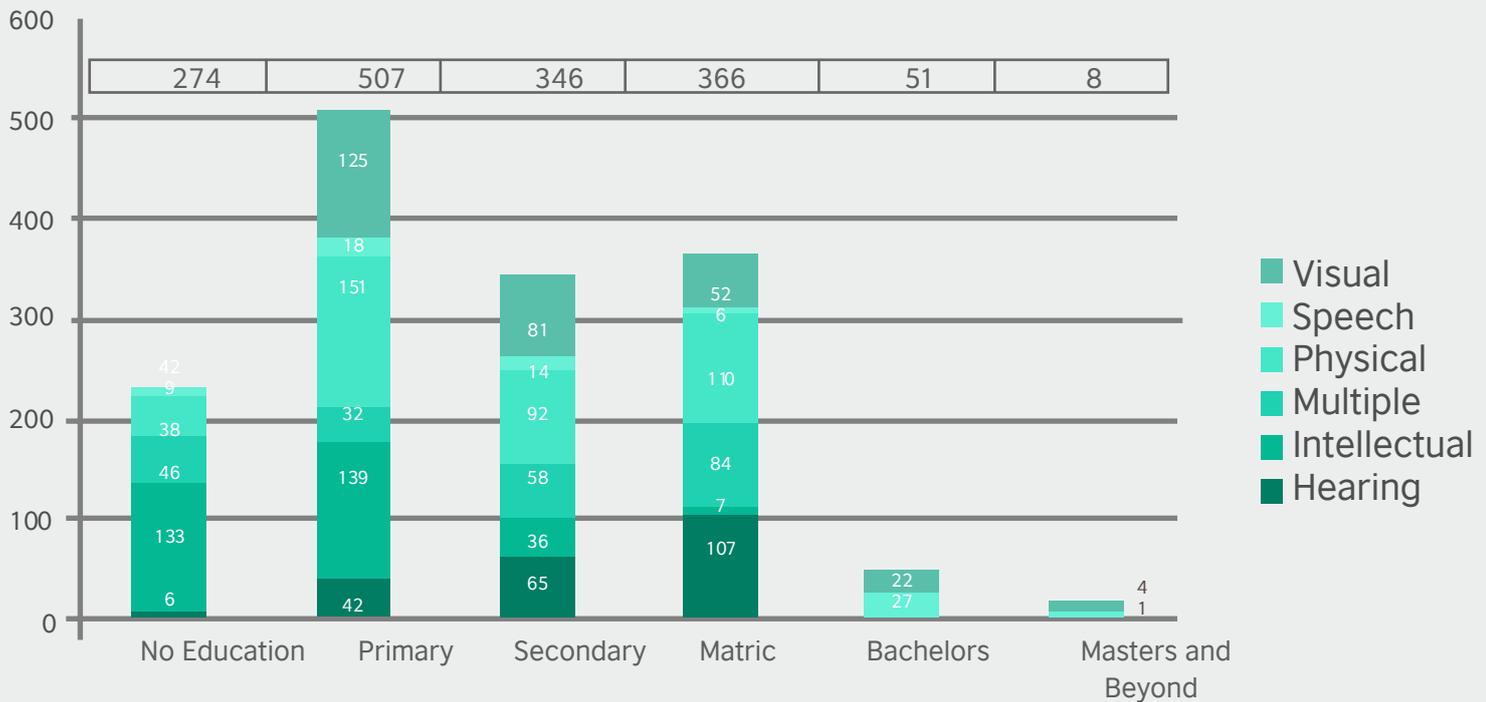
Inaccessible infrastructure Children with disabilities may experience problems of access due to the infrastructure at mainstream schools. Children with physical impairment require ramps and even surfaces to easily access all areas of the premises. Children with visual impairments also have difficulties of access without handrails, tactile surfaces or other facilities to guide the way.

Curricular exclusion Curriculums commonly used at mainstream schools often neglect the individual needs of children with disabilities. As a result, children with disabilities may be unable to achieve learning objectives and progress milestones at the same level as children without disabilities, and as such fail to be a part of the mainstream schooling experience.

Inadequate teaching methods Some children with disabilities require the attention of teachers to ensure that their needs are met. Children with learning difficulties may need some extra attention or alternative teaching methods to ensure their growth is on a par with the rest of their peers. Mainstream schools in Pakistan do not offer focused attention on individuals needs due to the number of children in each class.

Negative perceptions The general culture prevalent in Pakistan often rejects persons with disabilities due to religious beliefs, or views them through a charitable, sympathetic lense. Children with disabilities in mainstream schools may experience the negative attitudes of staff and their peers without disabilities. Moreover, teachers who do not fully understand the needs of children with disabilities displace emotions and develop negative perceptions and attitudes not conducive to learning.

Figure 5: Disability type and prevalence by level of education



507 of the 1,552 young persons with disabilities who participated in the survey had completed their primary education whereas only eight young persons with disabilities reported master's and further studies as their level of education. Figure 5 represents the level of education of young persons with disabilities who participated in the research. This includes young persons with disabilities who were studying at the time of the research, as well as those who had completed or abandoned their studies till the specified levels. Figure 5 indicates the type of disability at each level of education, which suggests that most of those young persons with disabilities who had received higher education were either visually or physically impaired. In addition, while physical, hearing and speech and visual impairments were all reported, there was a notable lack of young persons with intellectual impairments.

Provincial educational facilities/ services for persons with disabilities

Facilities for persons with disabilities also vary on a provincial level. There are only 60 special education centres registered with the federal government in all provinces, as reported by the British Council in 2014.⁸⁵ However, available facilities and provisions for persons with disabilities are not documented at the national level. In Punjab, the Special Education department was established in 2003–04, which currently manages around 273 institutes functioning in different tehsils and towns.

There are about 146 special education centres catering to different types of disabilities. Additionally, there are three colleges working for the welfare of people with disabilities.⁸⁶ The Special Education department in Sindh was established in 2011 and aims to deliver and maintain a comprehensive programme for persons with disabilities and ensure their inclusion into mainstream schools and workplaces.⁸⁷ However, there are only 50 special education institutions in the Sindh.⁸⁸

The Balochistan government is engaged in an effort to improve their already running widespread network of schools which cater to every disability.⁸⁹ The Special Education Department in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has multiple special co-education schools that also provide education to parents of persons with disabilities. Facilities such as books, uniforms, hearing aids, wheelchairs, rehabilitative services and so on are provided free of charge at some of the schools.⁹⁰

Mainstream education for persons with disabilities

International efforts such as the Salamanca Statement (1994), United Nations Convention of Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD, 2006) and the Sustainable Development Goals have recognised the right of education for all children. However, ensuring inclusive education for children with disabilities is a complex task. The debate begins with defining the concept of inclusive education. UNICEF defines inclusive education⁹¹ as learning opportunities for children, from excluded segments of society, as part of the mainstream school system. Children with disabilities experience marginalisation at a very young age due to the segmented education system.⁹²

Exclusion in education has also been linked to bullying and abuse.⁹³ Inclusive education makes a strong case for adequate social development of young persons with disabilities.

85 British Council (2014).

86 Special Education Department, Government of Punjab. Retrieved From: <http://sed.punjab.gov.pk/facilities>

87 Special Education Department, Government of Sindh. Retrieved From: http://www.sindh.gov.pk/dpt/special_education/index.htm

88 Ali, S. (2011). Policy analysis of education in Sindh. Pakistan: UNESCO.

89 Special Education Department, Government of Balochistan. Retrieved From: http://balochistan.gov.pk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=355&Itemid=481

90 Social Welfare, Special Education and Women Empowerment Department, Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Retrieved From: <http://www.swkpk.gov.pk/?cmd=mpph>

91 Cologon, K. (2013). Inclusion in education: Towards equality for students with disability.

92 United Nations Children's Fund. Inclusive Education. Retrieved From: https://www.unicef.org/education/bege_61717.html

93 Cologon, K. (2013). Inclusion in education: Towards equality for students with disability.

Syed Erril, a visually impaired student at Karachi University expressed his preference for inclusive education: 'I think inclusive schools are good for other people like me because we can learn how to conduct ourselves among others without disabilities.' At the same time, it is important to understand the barriers children with disabilities face in mainstream settings, and the confidence of young persons with disabilities about attending mainstream settings. For example, young persons with disabilities who participated in the research noted that special education was beneficial from their perspectives for children with disabilities, since SEN schools offered them adequate facilities as required. However, it was also argued that SEN schools followed a different curriculum which can leave young persons with disabilities facing challenges if they want to pursue higher education.

248 young persons with disabilities attended a mainstream school compared to 995 young persons with disabilities attending a SEN school. It is striking that 88 per cent (241) of visually impaired students attend a SEN school rather than mainstream education, alongside over 50 per cent (184) students with a physical disability – impairments which would usually not require a distinct curriculum or space, highlighting the perennial access and stigmatisation issues in Pakistan. The lack of available trained sign language interpreters is reflected here as well: of 371 participants with hearing impairments, only 25 attended mainstream education. Gauging from the responses gathered through in-depth interviews and the surveys for recommendations to improve education opportunities, young persons with disabilities preferred SEN education over mainstream or inclusive education.

Table 8: Disability breakdown for enrolment in mainstream and special education schools

MAINSTREAM EDUCATION		SEN EDUCATION	
IMPAIRMENT	FREQUENCY	IMPAIRMENT	FREQUENCY
Visual	30	Visual	241
Physical	130	Physical	184
Hearing	25	Hearing	346
Speech	9	Speech	23
Intellectual	48	Intellectual	190
Multiple	6	Multiple	11

Mainstream Education

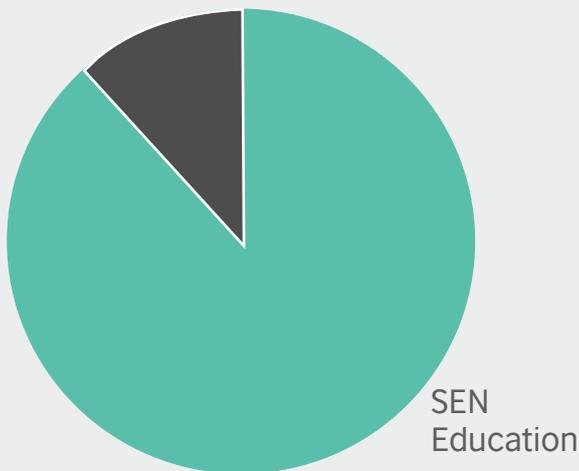


Figure 6: Preference of mainstream or inclusive education versus SEN education

Preference for government special education schools was 68 per cent, combined with 11 per cent for private special education schools, one per cent for rehabilitation schools and only 20 per cent for mainstream schools.

Young people with disabilities stressed the lack of facilities and adjustments for persons with disabilities in mainstream schools. The young people surveyed seemed to prefer SEN schooling to mainstream education, which was not surprising given the widespread social stigma and discrimination faced by persons with disabilities in Pakistan; a 'safe space' for study was how SEN schooling was perceived – the underlying causes for this need to be urgently addressed to enable young persons with disabilities be fully included in mainstream education – and to feel safe and confident in this environment. For example, persons with hearing impairments expressed the challenges they face in learning due to lack of communication; teachers at mainstream schools do not know sign language, communicating with young persons with hearing impairment becomes a difficult task.

However, inclusive education has the preferred global model, particularly by signatories to the UNCRPD. Inclusive education and vocational training opportunities for persons with disabilities have been promoted within mainstream settings to facilitate employment and self-employment opportunities.

Countries such as Australia and Armenia provide financial support to education authorities to allow them to meet the needs of persons with disabilities in education, including making reasonable adjustments, increasing physical access, modifying curriculums and examinations to meet the needs of students with disabilities.⁹⁴

Many schools in the UK employ teaching assistants who work with children with disabilities or difficulties to help them to adjust to mainstream classroom settings. Their duties range from lesson explanation to personal assistance depending on the type of individual. Teaching assistants record the performance of the students through observation and interaction with the child. Such inclusive care and attention creates a safe learning experience to students with disabilities and they learn required social skills.

This also provides a comprehensive approach to care for children with disabilities in school where they receive education, personal care, training for soft skills and inclusion into the mainstream from the start. The ACG School Jakarta embraces an inclusive learning environment where special needs students are catered to within the regular classroom. With experienced special education needs (SEN) teachers and support teaching assistants, the school is inclusive of children with disabilities.^{95,96}

94 Universal Design for Learning. Retrieved From: <http://www.dmu.ac.uk/dmu-staff/udi/universal-design-for-learning.aspx>. Richard Rieser (2013).

95 Teacher Education for Children with Disabilities. Literature Review. UNICEF REAP Project. Company, D. P. (1996). Occupational Outlook Handbook, 1996-1997.

96 DIANE Publishing. [Online] Available at: <https://books.google.com.pk>. BBC - Schools Parents - How to become a teaching assistant. Available at: http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/parents/teaching_assistant

Striving for Inclusion

Zahra Abbas, in her mid-20s, completed her MBA from Punjab University, and is now working at Possibilities, which is a management development and consultancy group, in Lahore. Seemingly a simple story, but life for Zahra was not so simple. Zahra was born with Tetra-Amelia Syndrome, a rare autosomal congenital disorder, characterised by absence of all four limbs. However, she had the courage and the passion to achieve big dreams. Getting an education was not an easy task. Zahra and her parents faced the disapproval of the society first because of her disability, and then because Zahra wanted to study. 'I went to a mainstream school. My parents did not want me to go to a SEN school because there is nothing wrong with me. I can learn like anyone else.' It was difficult for Zahra to get admission at a school because school administrations were reluctant about the outcome. Zahra completed her schooling from Lahore Lyceum School and was also awarded a Gold Medal by the Chief Minister Shahbaz Sharif to celebrate her achievements. At school, she faced multiple challenges in terms of infrastructural barriers and the prejudices of her peers. 'In our society, for girls it is difficult, for girls with disabilities it is even harder to get an education and become independent.'

Zahra continued her education journey at Kinnaird College and went on to Punjab University's IBA Department. 'Backing down was not an option. I had to prove myself. Institutions are not accessible for people like me.' Zahra is clear about some of the barriers she faced in getting an education: 'I have attended classes on the third floor because the institution was not built to facilitate people with disabilities. But I did not give up.' The biggest impediment faced by persons with disabilities are infrastructural barriers. Children with mild impairment or with physical impairment are capable of attending mainstream schools but are hampered by inaccessible infrastructure.

When the administration at Punjab University learned about Zahra's disability and the struggles she faced to attend classes, they relocated all their classes to the ground floor and slowly made changes in their infrastructure to become inclusive and accessible. 'The IBA Department were very helpful and created all the facilities for my ease.'

Entering into the professional world, Zahra again faced struggles to secure a job. It was even difficult to find an internship to build her professional experience. However, not all her struggles were attributed to her disability. 'I feel universities do not fully prepare us professionally, to practically apply learned theories.'

But Zahra did not give up and took the opportunity when it was presented to her at Possibilities. 'Meeting Mr Qaiser was a good experience. I felt no shock or apprehension from him when he first met me for an interview, as I have known to be true from my past experiences.' According to Zahra, organisations that celebrate diversity and inclusion are not so open-minded when it comes to actually interviewing persons with disabilities. The attitudes and questions of people on such occasions were derogatory and doubted her intellectual capabilities. Qaiser Abbas, the brains behind Possibilities, appraised Zahra's abilities and skills and thus offered her a job.

'It is the society that makes the person disabled.' Zahra feels the challenges faced by herself and her family stem primarily from the perceptions of society who are quick to label people as special or disabled, but are unwilling to make reasonable adjustments. 'I am capable of doing anything but mobility is still a major issue. I cannot travel on my own.' She feels that her mobility and independence are hampered by inaccessibility and lack of facilities in society. Zahra also underlined the benefits of an inclusive environment for persons with disabilities which helps them to be effectively communicate and interact and also breaks the stigma of disabilities. Despite her challenges, Zahra has managed to face every challenge head on and plans to continue her inspirational journey.

Barriers to education

Despite the efforts being made to improve special education, Pakistan still has a long way to go to fully achieve the goal. Table 9 indicates the barriers and challenges young persons with disabilities in the sample faced while receiving or having received an education/training.

Negative attitudes of society

Negative attitudes of society, others and sometimes the lack of support from family and friends are barriers mentioned by 24 per cent of young persons with disabilities in the sample. A significant number of young persons with disabilities face barriers to education and training based on the constant berating and patronising, sympathy-based, condescending and negative attitudes and a lack of support from society, peers and parents.

Table 9: Participants' views on the barriers faced by young people with disabilities in Pakistan

Barriers faced in education/training	Percentages
Inaccessible infrastructure and mobility issues	15%
Negative attitudes of others	19%
Lack of support from my family and friends	5%
Lack of trained teachers/staff	3%
Lack of available opportunities	21%
Lack of training provided for skills supporting access to employment/self-employment	3%
Inability to afford opportunities	5%
My own lack of awareness about my rights etc.	14%
My own lack of motivation and adjustment with my disability	5%
I do not face any challenges	10%

A lot of self-esteem issues come into play with lack of support and negativity preventing young persons with disabilities from accessing education and training opportunities.

Personal factors

A number of responses from young people with disabilities suggested a lack of awareness of their rights (14 per cent), own lack of motivation (five per cent) and not being provided adequate skills to support employment later on (three per cent) as challenges in receiving an education. A total of 22 per cent of responses suggested that a combination of these issues created roadblocks in the journey of young persons with disabilities to access education/training.

Exclusion of special education

At government level, the education system is shared between the mainstream education department and the SEN department. Policies and practices outlined for the mainstream education system are not extended to, or fully implemented in, the special education system. Moreover, there are no policies specifically designed for special education: the SEN system receives limited attention from policymakers and government interventions.

Inadequate resources and data

The availability of accurate data on persons with disabilities in the country is crucial to ensure the provision of facilities. The lack

thereof is a major barrier to improving SEN systems or the education experience of young persons with disabilities. Inaccurate and inadequate data results in insufficient resources allocated to their education and poor planning to reach and facilitate all young persons with disabilities.

Government mainstream schools are unable to fully accommodate young persons with disabilities due to the inaccessible infrastructure and pedagogical setting of the schools. There are significant gaps in the pedagogical approach to inclusive education; schools lack strategies, teachers lack training opportunities and resources and there is no particular body accountable for inclusive education. On the other hand, special education schools run by the government or other organisations are already catering to a large number of persons with disabilities. As a result, young persons with disabilities are unable to access existing education due to the limited enrolment capacity and lack of resources. It can be argued that the lack of adequate data on the numbers and needs of people with disabilities means that the government is unable to make adequate resource allocations to cater to this portion of the population.

‘I studied in a special education school, but after coming to university, I realised that special education was not up to the mark. I lack in many ways compared to my peers. I have to work very hard to get good marks and maintain my GPA.’

- Nukhba Khalid, 20, visually impaired, Lahore

Un-standardised curriculum

The curriculum taught at special education schools is not standardised. Young persons with disabilities entering higher education with a special education background are unable to perform on an equal footing with students without disabilities.

In addition, lessons are mostly unplanned and it is at the discretion of the teacher as to what each session will be. This is besides the limited curriculum taught and the convenience in studies created for children with disabilities, for they are often labelled and considered weaker in terms of intellectual and emotional capacity.

The continuous underestimation and care-based culture can make for a misplaced self-esteem and unrealistic expectations of mainstream society. Additionally, since work on intellectual growth is limited in most special education schools, it becomes difficult for persons with disabilities to compete on an equal merit basis in terms of employment opportunity.

At a provincial level, the Punjab special education department has developed a standard curriculum to be followed in all special education schools. While gathering information from the demand side, it was realised that special education schools do not offer a set curriculum for persons with disabilities in other provinces. In Sindh, teachers from special education schools

mutually select specific topics from the curriculum of the Sindh Textbook Board, according to disabilities.

The standard is therefore prepared each year. Without a standardised curriculum in place it is difficult to gauge the progress from year to year, or draw out comparisons with the systems practised in each province.

Under-resourced rural areas and lack of opportunity

While there was a rise in the establishment of special education schools throughout the country, young persons with disabilities in rural areas remain unable to fully access opportunities of education. Most private and public schools providing special education were established in urban areas. Hence young persons with disabilities living in rural areas are unable to easily attend schools, due to problems of mobility, accessibility and awareness.

The government-owned schools established in rural areas have limited resources and enrolment capacity. The information gathered from the demand side also indicated poor infrastructure and maintenance of the schools as well as lack of special educators and teachers willing to work in rural areas. These deficits result in a lack of opportunities among those in rural areas (21 per cent of the participants in this study).

Inaccessible Infrastructure

Lack of access due to infrastructure is a major barrier for persons with disabilities in all walks of life, identified as the most significant challenge to educational opportunities by 15 per cent of our participants. Mainstream educational institutions are not designed to cater to the needs of persons with disabilities. According to our interviews, SEN schools in rural or downtrodden areas of the country have poor infrastructure due to lack of funds and resources.

Untrained teachers

Attitudes of teachers play an important role in successfully imparting knowledge in both mainstream and SEN systems. Teachers in SEN schools are not fully trained to be special educators. Due to financial constraints, untrained or inexperienced teachers are hired. Additionally teachers sometimes are not sensitised and end up considering all children and young persons with disabilities limited in intellectual and emotional capability. This leads to students feeling patronised and prevented from achieving their goals.

Limited affordability

While the government has made some initiatives for SEN education and for persons with disabilities, there is a lack of resources, limited enrolment capacity and poor quality of education. Therefore, private SEN schools are preferred over government-run institutions. Unfortunately, since most persons with disabilities belong to poor socio-economic backgrounds, they are unable to afford an education or a training at private schools and vocational training centres,⁹⁷ as substantiated by five per cent of responses to the question on challenges posed to young persons with disabilities.

Conclusions

Untrained teachers

The importance of adequate academic skills of young persons with disabilities was reiterated by employers, teachers, trainers and persons with disabilities alike. 99 per cent of young persons with disabilities highlighted the importance of acquiring adequate and relevant academic skills to secure productive employment opportunities. Employers, teachers, trainers and NGO representatives reiterated the importance of academic skills for persons with disabilities to be hired for productive employment opportunities. Discussing the conditions of SEN schools, 27 per cent of young persons with disabilities urged the need for improving the conditions of SEN schools.

The infrastructure of schools and availability of resources (59 per cent) was accounted for as a factor to improve the education system. With unemployment and increasing competition in the labour market, a standardised curriculum should be developed to ensure that young persons with disabilities can compete with persons without disabilities. Language should also be kept in mind to ensure that knowledge sharing, education and assessment is correctly imparted.

Untrained teachers

Teachers trained specially to cater to the needs of persons with disabilities are essential to ascertain the learning of young persons with disabilities. Almost half (46 per cent) of the young persons with disabilities who participated in this study identified improved teacher training and sensitisation as the critical change needed to allow them to succeed academically.

Teachers with disabilities were also well regarded as their personal experience with disabilities allows them to better empathise with, and remove the barriers faced by, persons with disabilities.

Limited opportunities

Young persons with disabilities had selected their schools on the basis of close proximity (44 per cent) and accessibility (31 per cent). Some responses also indicated that schools were selected since there were no other options to explore (23 per cent). Therefore, it is safe to say that persons with disabilities are faced with limited options when it comes to education. A major factor of this is arguably the problems of mobility and accessibility. SEN schools or schools catering to persons with disabilities are even more scarce in rural areas. Due to limited opportunities, persons with disabilities belonging to far-flung areas of the cities and rural areas have to travel long distances to access education. Most of the time, they are not able to attain the opportunities at all due to these reasons. Moreover, SEN schools have limited enrolment capacity to cater to all children with disabilities.

Accessing opportunities of higher education is even more difficult for persons with disabilities, since there are very few higher education pathways offered at SEN schools. While public and private universities are liable to provide opportunities deserving persons with disabilities, they often lack in accessible infrastructure, reasonable accommodation and trained teachers to ensure their proper learning. Moreover, the curriculum and examination system in higher education are also not inclusive and thus persons with disabilities are unable to achieve the required milestones in their higher education.

Inclusive versus SEN schools

Following the recommendation for trained teachers, young persons with disabilities did not feel that inclusion in the mainstream caters to disabilities. Only 11 per cent of young persons with disabilities preferred inclusive education setups, while 88 per cent preferred SEN education. SEN schools provide appropriate resources, accessible infrastructure and trained teachers that can cater to persons with disabilities, whereas mainstream education is not inclusive for persons with disabilities due to lack of reasonable accommodations and trained teachers, and inaccessibility.

As discussed above, there are deep-rooted causes for this disenchantment: the system is built on SEN schooling, their own experience has been SEN schooling, and the pronounced social stigma and discrimination (and lack of provision for) facing young persons with disabilities in mainstream education. These factors all contribute to lower aspirations and a lack of confidence in the mainstream education system's ability to deliver for them – together with paternalistic social norms and attitudes towards persons with disabilities.

Furthermore, young persons with disabilities may experience some problems in understanding and effectively achieving learning objectives in sync with their peers without disabilities. Whereas SEN schools allow room for persons with disabilities to learn according to their disability, mainstream schools follow a strict curriculum and are thus unable to cater to children with disabilities. Difficulties in communication are also a big reason for not preferring mainstream schools, since teachers do not know sign language to be able to effectively communicate with persons with hearing impairment.

Nevertheless, some respondents highlighted the benefits of inclusion with regards to socialisation, communication and observational learning. Persons with disabilities can learn how to interact and conduct themselves in the mainstream.

Government interventions

The most essential step towards empowering persons with disabilities and ensuring inclusion in society is through effective government strategies and interventions. Given its influence, government interventions made through programmes, policies and provisions specially designed for persons with disabilities are more effective and have a greater radius of impact. 'Work needs to begin at the policy level. Nothing can be changed till that happens.' said Tabriz Shamsi, from Humanity and Inclusion (Pakistan).

Federal and provincial governments have developed policies supporting the education, training, employment, mobility and accessibility of persons with disabilities to promote and establish inclusion in society. However due to the lack of implementation of these policies, the situation remains unchanged for persons with disabilities.

As such the limited enforcement of education quotas for education coupled with the absence of accurate data or an understanding of educating people with disabilities in mainstream government education systems, most young persons with disabilities end up in SEN schools and face the subsequent challenges therein.

Recommendations

Resource allocation and intervention plans must be based on reliable prevalence data

The government needs to allocate more funds to SEN and social welfare departments to ensure that requirements for enrolment, resources personalised support and infrastructure are met.

However, these funds need to be carefully monitored and budgeted such that they are redirected to specific outcomes and time-bound, specific, measurable, actionable and realistic goals.

Responsibilities can be clearly divided and time-bound, quantitative targets set for each department, to ensure fair accountability. Budgets can be allocated keeping minimum wages per person with disability in mind, against the number of persons with disabilities in the country (over 30 million people according to this study), such that an outreach to all can be made to all, and redirected to those who need it most.

Accurate and adequate data of prevalence of disabilities is required to ensure allocation of sufficient resources and increased enrolment capacity at SEN schools. The government could work in collaboration with the private sector and research firms using internationally recognised tools.

Creativity and confidence building: a pathway for success

Creativity in children with disabilities needs to be enhanced by giving them exposure and out-of-the-box thinking exercises. All teachers must be assigned this for persons with disabilities to be eligible for later jobs and to reach their potential.

Several stakeholders mentioned how young persons with disabilities had limitations in their skills development, and young persons with disabilities wished to enhance their skillset too, with 523 of 1,552 participants suggesting the quality of their education was a major influencer in terms of their education level. Only 58 participants had a degree and a number of them were hindered and demotivated to receive education. As such, personal motivation and self-awareness of persons with disabilities along with them reaching their capacity needs to be worked on to promote a realistic and healthy self-esteem and to carve the ability to overcome obstacles in the way of their education.

Government interventions to increase quality of schools

The government should champion inclusive education, encouraging the inclusion of more persons with disabilities into mainstream education systems.

The government should improve the quality of SEN schools through partnerships with the private sector or using its resources to refurbish the existing infrastructure and ensure accessibility.

The government can also take initiative for awareness and access to SEN schools, which can cater to a larger population of children with disabilities. Considerations for bussing in children with disabilities residing close to the schools can be undertaken to increase outreach and cater to a larger population.

More analysis is needed of the needs of communities and number of young people in need of schooling in more remote and rural areas.

Community advocacy and awareness raising

Awareness at the community level, along with role models (young persons with disabilities) should be used to promote a benchmark and willingness to educate persons with disabilities and their families and for them to become aware of all the options available to them.

This can again be done through a combined civil society effort, and public private partnerships with community activists and government outreach methodology in play.

Awareness on the rights of persons with disabilities along with educating society and family, peer groups of people with disabilities is essential to allow for young persons with disabilities to freely access educational opportunities.

Teacher qualifications and training

Schools must hire SEN-qualified teachers.

Regular training should also be conducted for mainstream teachers on key skills. Certain stakeholders that we consulted talked about the importance of teaching sign language. In other settings, technology is seen as an enabler to address communication barriers.

Additionally, arrangements for a fully qualified batch of teachers in the educational framework need to be made, and their participation and continued efforts and contribution to the SEN setup should be incentivised by benefits and ensured through well-thought-out negative and positive reinforcement mechanisms (reward–punishment systems) at government schools.

Young persons with disabilities interested in teaching should also have the option to develop core skills in quality teacher training, so that they can contribute and teach others if they wish.

All teaching staff, in mainstream and SEN schools, should also receive disability sensitisation training.

Setting a curriculum gold standard in SEN schools

A standard SEN curriculum should be developed to update knowledge sharing, improve the skills imparted and allow persons with disabilities to compete with persons without disabilities in the mainstream.

The curriculum proposed should be in line with the standard board curriculum of non-disabled persons (at the federal or provincial level). However, striving for equality in terms of curriculum taught will need a change in the SEN system, such that teachers can promote full potential learning, instead of focusing on convenience.

For the development of a curriculum of that nature multiple stakeholders, including the government, experts, consultants, academics, researchers, teachers and people with disabilities, will need to contribute to standardise the curriculum to the mainstream curriculum, as best as possible. However, for cases with intellectual impairments, and under exceptional circumstances, the curriculum can be made flexible and teachers can prepare individual education plans.

Access and inclusion: the role of higher education

Higher education should be accessible and inclusive for persons with disabilities, with trained and equipped teachers and all sorts of accommodation for persons with disabilities.

If SEN education can match the quality and curriculum breadth provided by mainstream schools, then an inclusive examination and assessment processes will work. There needs to be a willing participation of both public and private sectors. It might also require additional investment in special and mainstream schooling such that people with disabilities are encouraged to and have the opportunity to achieve their full potential.

Informal education: technical and vocational education and training (TVET)

Vocational training equips people with the mastery of practical and manual skills. According to UNESCO, TVET comprises education, training and skills development related to multiple occupations. It is lifelong learning, which can take place at secondary, post-secondary and tertiary levels.

The education and training method is inclusive of work-based learning, continuing training and skills development that may lead to qualifications. Learning to learn, transferable skill, numeracy skills and such are significant components of TVET, as they better equip an individual with skills required for employment.⁹⁸ Historically, TVET providers, government and employers should ensure that the skills being taught match the skills need and gaps within critical sectors for Pakistan's economic development.

Globally, there is a certain reduction in the stigma with more and more people from the higher echelons partaking in mastering practical skills TVET is more frequently discussed as a credible, lucrative and respectable alternative to higher education. Having individuals equipped with suitable skills for a profession helps businesses in improving their profits, and also presents individuals with a better opportunity at securing employment. Both developed and developing countries have invested in programmes pertaining to TVET in hopes of economic progress.

For instance, Germany passed a law which regulates and unifies the vocational training system, and in 2001, two-thirds of its population aged under 22 had started apprenticeship.

In the USA, junior high schools, colleges and high schools offer vocational courses, and several states have their own institutes of technology that are on an equal accreditation footing with other state universities. India has also invested in TVET and is a pioneer in vocational training in film, television and information technology.⁹⁹

Unfortunately, Pakistani society still struggles with the stigma attached to vocational training as it is perceived that jobs requiring practical or manual labour are taken by the lower strata of society. Nevertheless, vocational training is gaining recognition on a global level and with the establishment of public and private training institutions in Pakistan, there is an initiation of developing skilled labour.

With global attention, interest and success, there seems to be a growing demand of specialised skills in the developing economies as well. Over the years the Government of Pakistan also realised the importance of vocational training to generate more employment opportunities, increase workforce productivity and provide skilled persons for the labour market in specific trades. An example of the government's efforts is the Decent Work Country Programme 2006–2009, which was developed with close consultation with the International Labour Organisation and in collaboration with the Employers Federation of Pakistan, the Pakistan Workers' Forum, as well as other stakeholders. The Importance of vocational training for persons with disabilities was also recognised in this regard and this was reflected in the National Policy for Person with Disabilities, 2006.¹⁰⁰

98 UNESCO (2015). General Conference, 38th; Proposal for the revision of if the 2001 Revised Recommendation concerning Technical and Vocational Education. Paris.
99 New World Encyclopaedia (2015). Vocational education. Retrieved from: http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Vocational_education
100 STEVTA (2013). Sindh Employment Trends 2013: Skills. International Labour Organisation. United Nations, Pakistan

National Vocational and Technical Training Commission (NAVTTTC)

In 2013 statistics from Pakistan indicated that the unemployment rate for those with less than one year of any education was three per cent while that of those with a degree and qualifications above was approximately ten per cent.¹⁰¹

However, with the decline of productive employment (meaning employment that yields sufficient returns to labour and permits them and their dependents a level of consumption above the poverty line),¹⁰² creating employment opportunities for persons with disabilities may be an even more challenging proposition.

Initiatives and opportunities for vocational training

Vocational training initiatives help persons with disabilities attain relevant skills and enter the job market. Not only does this allow persons with disabilities to be active members of society, but also to contribute to their families, the community and the economy. Vocational training centres are established by federal government, provincial governments and private organisations in many countries, as well as in Pakistan.

Technical education is included within the same framework comprising of short courses and diplomas that produce skilled workers. However, most initiatives for vocational training in Pakistan are not exclusively designed for persons with disabilities. Nevertheless, persons with disabilities tend to benefit from them at some level due to the overall focus on targeting marginalised groups in society.

Established in 2006, NAVTTTC plays a key role in research and relevant skills planning and training. It is also responsible for developing curricula, teacher training, skills testing and policies. Since 2006, the institution has developed around 105 competency-based training curricula alongside TEVTAs and other industries.¹⁰³ The Develop a Curriculum approach is used which starts off with a labour market analysis, is run through subject matter experts and ends with the delivery of relevant teaching and learning materials. The NAVTTTC has developed a plethora of exhaustive and detailed technical curriculums such as diplomas for glass ceramics, petroleum and the like and vocational trainings for ceramics, apparel and so on.¹⁰⁴

Skills development councils

Skills development councils are a set of small organisations run by the public-private sector established under the National Training Ordinance in Islamabad to deliver certificate-level and customised courses. Presently, it is conducting trainings for the CPEC project in order to meet the required demand for labour.¹⁰⁵

101 Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (2013). Pakistan Employment Trends.

102 Retrieved from: http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@ed_emp/documents/publication/wcms_177149.pdf

103 Sánchez-Triana, E., Biller, D., Nabi, I., & Ortolano, L. (2014). Revitalizing Industrial Growth in Pakistan: Trade, Infrastructure, and Environmental Performance. World Bank Publications. [Online]. Retrieved From: <https://books.google.com.pk>

104 National Vocational & Technical Training Commission (NAVTTTC), Pakistan. Retrieved From: <http://www.navttc.org/downloads.aspx?cat=1>

105 Skill Development Council, Islamabad. Retrieved From: <http://www.sdc.com.pk/>

Technical Education and Vocational Training Authority (TEVTA)

TEVTA has more than 350 institutes and is the largest training sector in Punjab. In 2016 63,005 trainees graduated from the programme, having acquired training for various skills.¹⁰⁶ TEVTA offers a range of different demand driven courses that promises to prepare the youth for upcoming and potential job opportunities. They also continually upgrade equipment and train staff and teachers to meet international standards.

TEVTA plays a dual role, where they provide support to service providers and develop plans and strategies for trainees as well.¹⁰⁷ TEVTA is established in all the provinces and operates under province-specific names, for example STEVTA (Sindh Technical Education and Vocational Training Authority).

Punjab Vocational Training Council (PVTC)

With over 326 institutes all over Punjab, PVTC has worked to alleviate poverty since 1998. For around 81 diverse trades, such as agriculture, industria and health, the council has developed curricula for its vocational trainings to ensure that those without the financial stimulus are still equipped with skill sets that could increase their employment opportunities. Driven by Zakat, they work with individuals from the lowest social standing and provide career counselling to graduates for local and overseas employment or entrepreneurial ventures.¹⁰⁸

National Training Bureau

Established before NAVTTC in 1976, the Bureau focuses mostly on training vocational educators and carrying out tests for affiliated institutes in order to gauge the viability of the training programmes and the syllabuses.¹⁰⁹ In addition, the National Training Bureau also runs testing for workers certified by different vocational training centres.¹¹⁰

National Institute of Science and Technical Education

With an aim of improving science and technical education, the National Institute is involved in training teachers and providing resources, thus enabling public and private sectors to implement vocational training. They have published books in both English and Urdu and also subject-specific and technical guides for teachers.¹¹¹

Benazir Bhutto Shaheed Youth Development Program (BBSYDP)

BBSYDP funds public and private sector projects in Sindh and has thus far trained around 100,000 people. The programme also aims at bridge the gap between existing skills and job market requirements. The government provides monetary support for vocational training for the people belonging to underprivileged backgrounds through programmes such as the BBSYDP and the PPAF.

¹⁰⁶ Technical Education & Vocational Training Authority (TEVTA), Online Portal. Retrieved From:

http://tdcc.tevta.gov.pk/Rpt_GradAndPlacTradeYearWise.aspx

¹⁰⁷ Technical Education & Vocational Training Authority (TEVTA), Punjab - Pakistan. Retrieved From: <http://www.tevta.gov.pk/about.php>

¹⁰⁸ Punjab Vocational Training Council. Retrieved From: <http://www.pvtc.gov.pk/Default.aspx>

¹⁰⁹ Sánchez-Triana, E., Biller, D., Nabi, I., & Ortolano, L. (2014). Revitalizing Industrial Growth in Pakistan: Trade, Infrastructure, and Environmental Performance. World Bank Publications. Retrieved From: <https://books.google.com.pk>

¹¹⁰ National Training Bureau, Ministry of Federal Education and Vocational Training. Retrieved from: <http://www.ntb.gov.pk/frmDetails.aspx?opt=misclinks&id=20>

¹¹¹ National Institute of Science and Technical Education. Retrieved From: from <http://www.niste.edu.pk/index.php>

Private vocational training institutions

While the government is promoting vocational training in the mainstream, government-run vocational training institutes such as NAVTTC and TEVTA do not provide specified seats or reasonable adjustments for training of persons with disabilities in all provinces. Private organisations such as Karachi Vocational Training Centre (KVTC) are working with persons with intellectual impairment for their rehabilitation, as well as increasing their employment prospects through training, internship programmes and equal opportunity employment creation. KVTC began their first on-job training programme with Mr Burger in 1992 and have also launched their women's apparel line 'Jiddat', which offers products developed by KVTC trainees for retail.¹¹⁴ LC Disability and Development Programme (LCDDP) promotes livelihood opportunities for persons with disabilities through developing the skills of persons with disabilities. The organisation provides technical and vocational training, accounts and finance, software and hardware applications, and information technology, and enhances the skills of persons with disabilities through on-job training, and training for self-employment and wage employment.¹¹⁵ Long-term initiatives have been taken by NOWPDP providing trainings since 2016 for young persons with disabilities. This training is in line with current market trends and presents opportunities for young persons with disabilities to be trained in inclusive mainstream vocational training centres such as Hunar Foundation, as well as at the accessible NOWPDP premises. Yet there still remains a need for regular specialised programmes devised to work specifically or in an inclusive capacity for persons with disabilities to cater to this large and diverse minority group.

Waseela-e-Rozgar

Waseela-e-Rozgar is an initiative by the Benazir Income Support Program (BISP) to tackle the dependency syndrome and empower its female beneficiaries or their nominees by acquiring employable skills. Training is available for around 52 different trades for both males and females between the age brackets of 18–45 years. There are around 322 training institutes throughout the country, with the highest number of training centres and beneficiaries located in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.¹¹²

Sindh Board of Technical Education Sindh Board of Technical Education

Sindh Board of Technical Education was established under Sindh Ordinance No. XVI of 1970 to replace the defunct West Pakistan Board of Technical Education. The board organises, develops and regulates technical, vocational, industrial and commercial education in the province of Sindh. To facilitate institutions and students from upper Sindh, a regional office was established at Sukkur in March 1990.¹¹³

¹¹² Waseela-e-Rozgar – Benazir Income Support Programme. Retrieved From: <http://bisp.gov.pk/waseela-e-rozgar/>

¹¹³ Sindh Board of Technical Education. Retrieved from <https://www.sbte.edu.pk/>

¹¹⁴ Karachi Vocational Training Centre (KVTC). Retrieved From: <http://www.kvvc.org.uk/>

¹¹⁵ LC Disability Development Programme, Pakistan. Retrieved from: <http://lcddp.org/index.php/what-we-do/skill-training-program/>

Role of the government

The responsibility of the welfare of persons with disabilities primarily rests with the Departments of Social Welfare and Special Education, and the Provincial Council of Rehabilitation of Persons with Disabilities, all of which operate on a provincial level.¹¹⁶ Responsibilities of persons with disabilities are divided among different departments within provinces, with no clear demarcation or accountability systems hampering the implementation of policies. Policies and their implementation is also affected due to constantly changing governments and the devolution of power.

Initiatives taken by the government inadequately cater to persons with disabilities, owing to the unreliable, understated statistics and population estimates of persons with disabilities. As can be gauged from these initiatives, vocational training institutes catering specifically to persons with disabilities are close to non-existent. Since vocational training is treated solely as skills development, it does not have adequate

training methodology to cater to the needs of persons with disabilities, who have limited opportunities to receive vocational training. Vocational training provided to persons with disabilities is usually offered in SEN schools, rehabilitation centres or through private NGOs and DPOs. The training offered is often not certified or recognised in the market and does not follow a specific curriculum, and therefore rarely results in employment opportunities. For instance, at the Government Special Education Complex, a dedicated vocational training centre is embedded in the school, where training for electricians, painting, fine arts, etc. are imparted. However, these programmes cover just a basic overview and are not designed to provide training that would help an individual gain skill-based work. Similarly, many other institutes that provide vocational training often do not have adequate accessibility or training methodology designed specifically for quality and holistic instruction for persons with disabilities.

There were 577 young persons with disabilities in the research who were receiving training in various skills or had in the past, of which 351 were male and 226 were female. The following table presents the disability breakup of the representative sample.

Table 10: Disabilities disclosed by participants enrolled in vocational training

Type of impairment	Number of persons with disabilities
Hearing	96
Speech	39
Intellectual	103
Physical	151
Visual	100
Multiple	88

As shown in Table 11, 265 young persons with disabilities received training at government training centres of which only 74 were at a mainstream/inclusive training centre, while 191 were at centres especially for persons with disabilities. By comparison, private vocational training opportunities were sought out by 317 young persons with disabilities, where 45 per cent of young persons with disabilities attended training in a mainstream/inclusive environment, and 55 per cent attended training especially for persons with disabilities.

Table 11: Vocational training opportunities availed by young persons with disabilities

Vocational training opportunities	Mainstream/ inclusive	SEN	
Government	265	74	191
Private	317	142	175
Total	216	366	

Demand and market trends for skills in Pakistan

Studying market trends is important to understand the economic landscape of the country to ensure sustainability of interventions. The focus of this research is on the employability of persons with disabilities, therefore identifying the skills in demand and the current market trends is crucial to our objective.

In the year of 2014–15, it was reported that 42.3 per cent of the labour force was employed in the agricultural sector. Though there has been a reduction in the employment rates of this sector due to changes in market trends and the onset of mechanisation, the sector still remains to be the largest employer in Pakistan.

On the other hand, the industrial sector, comprising the manufacturing, construction, distribution and mining sub-sectors, carries potential for economic growth and employment opportunities, contributing to a total of 22.6 per cent. An interest and investment in this sector is estimated to produce jobs catering to the unskilled, skilled and the semi-skilled. The services sector has shown significant increase in the year, as it comprised 35.1 per cent of the workforce. Despite the onset of technological development and machinery replacing manpower, the agricultural sector continues to be the largest employer.

Where the aforementioned opportunities do not highlight employment available for individuals with disabilities, it sheds light upon the general national employment trends.¹¹⁷ An elaboration of relevant employment opportunities in Punjab indicates that the textile sector, producing knitted and woven garments, carries the

highest potential for job opportunities in both Lahore and Faisalabad. In different areas, the services sector, defined by jobs in customer service, construction, plumbing, and carpentry, also carries the potential of high employability. Some specific employment opportunities such as the manufacture of surgical instruments or ceramics have growth potential in Sialkot and Gujranwala respectively. For all the aforementioned sectors, relevant training facilities have been made available. Additionally, competency based training and assessment programmes have been established as they focus on increasing the employability of trainees.¹¹⁸

Although Azad Jammu and Kashmir holds comparable opportunities with Punjab and Sindh, the construction sector specifically has seen an increase in employment potential. Multiple power projects and the CPEC programme have created an annual demand of about 1,500 skilled workers. Additionally, the tourism and hospitality sector contributes about three per cent to the economy. Increase in frequency of tourists to Azad Jammu and Kashmir has not only increased job opportunities in the tourism sector, but has also led to an interest in developing infrastructure and tourist sites. An increase in the demand for power and energy has led to the inception of about 22 different projects, likely to create employment opportunities for many. The manufacturing sector, producing food, beverages, auto and pharmaceuticals, appears limited but has the potential to annually hire around 2,700 individuals.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁷ Population, Labor Force and Employment. (2015). Retrieved From http://www.finance.gov.pk/survey/chapters_16/12_Population.pdf

¹¹⁸ Weidmann and Ali (2016).

¹¹⁹ Shah (2017).

Moving north, the trends and employment opportunities change. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa contributes about 10.5 per cent of the total GDP for the country, where livestock, tourism, energy and agriculture fuel economic growth. Being the third largest province, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa stands at a disadvantage as, like other parts of the country, it too has low literacy and high unemployment rates.

Even with multiple high-performing sectors within the province, there exists a gap between the supply and demand side as there are a number of trades in demand, such as in the pharmaceutical sub-sector and the hospitality sector, yet training facilities are focused primarily on maintenance and repair skills. Additionally young persons with disabilities preferred IT skills. Analysis shows construction, tourism and hospitality, manufacturing (pharmaceuticals and light engineering) and energy (micro-hydro and solar) as sectors with high employment opportunities for skilled workers.

Manufacturing estimates indicate a 27.06 per cent contribution to the job market, construction indicates a potential of 12.45 per cent, energy contribution shows 1.85 per cent, and tourism and hospitality indicates 1.82 per cent of the upcoming employment opportunities. With the assistance of chambers of commerce and trade associations, TVET intervention can successfully increase the employment rate.¹²⁰ At present, the key sectors for FATA are livestock, fisheries, construction, mining, agriculture and trade. However, three sectors, namely construction, mining and agriculture, have been shortlisted as carrying growth potential for the upcoming years.

Construction contributes 36 per cent of the labour market and with the sector in full swing, opportunities such as site supervisor, plant mechanic, pipefitter and water-proofer are likely to see an increase in demand. Agriculture constitutes to about 14 per cent of the labour market, inclusive of women, with large cultivations for pine nuts, apricots, apples, etc. With the aim of equipping locals with modern techniques, this sector has decent employment opportunities. Last, the mining sector seeks to employ locals and provide training for occupations such as marble purification, quality testing, designer, and material mixing, which also creates room for employment.¹²¹

Although no in-depth analysis of employment trends seems available for Balochistan, the lack of co-operation and access to information adds to the impediment. The progress and growth in Balochistan is directly proportional to overall economic growth and progress for the country. However, the local population of the province holds a great deal of resentment for the state of the province as they face a lack of employment opportunities. Even with excitement for CPEC and the development of energy plants and industrial estates, multiple doubts arise over improvement and progress of the province, with job opportunities available to locals in Balochistan under question.¹²²

In conclusion, visibility of market trends for Sindh, Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Azad Jammu and Kashmir, and FATA allow us to consider the employment opportunities available for the upcoming year. The aforementioned data does not distinguish opportunities for persons with disabilities, young or otherwise, but provides a parallel to gauge the future direction skills development and vocational training.

120 Kamal, Y. (2017). Sector Study on Demand Driven Competency Based Training in Potential Sectors of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. GIZ.

121 Kamal, Y. (2017). Sector Study on Demand Driven Competency Based Training in Potential Sectors of Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). GIZ.

122 Institute of Strategic Studies. (2017). CPEC: Preparing Human Resource for the Future.

Realising the gap between education systems for persons with disabilities and for those without disabilities, vocational training interventions serve as a substitute to develop relevant and useful skills. Vocational training is perhaps one of the most important factors affecting the welfare of persons with disabilities, by providing them with skills useful to access livelihood opportunities.¹²³

Persons with disabilities face multiple barriers, including access to education and access to vocational training due to limited availability of inclusive vocational training centres and inadequate capacity. Mainstream vocational training centres may not be equipped to cater to persons with disabilities due to a lack of reasonable accommodations and awareness about disability and ways to interact with persons with disabilities.

No matter where in the world they are used, all models of vocational training base their success on how appropriate they are to local needs. The dual model used in Germany is considered to be a very successful model for vocational training, but most countries have their reservations about it, owing to their local conditions and requirements. Lack of proper management of the co-ordination between theory and practice seems the most crucial in this regard.¹²⁴

On-the-job vocational training models have advantages of a practical nature but sometimes lack theory and understanding of the concept. Apprenticeship vocational models also face problems of infrastructure and lack of co-ordination between theory and practice. Persons with disabilities should work with vocational trainers to develop training models that respond to their diverse needs (depending on

location, gender, socio-economic status, etc.) and the priorities of the labour market. Locations/professions meant for/adaptable by persons with disabilities. ICT implementation in vocational training of persons with disabilities is considered remarkably beneficial, and perhaps the implementation of this may aid the creation of an inclusive space.

The problem also lies in affordability along with others mentioned earlier, since most private vocational training centres may be considered a luxury by parents and families of persons with disabilities belonging to a lower socio-economic class.¹²⁵ Table 12 provides an overview of trade skills in demand according to sectors, in each province. Despite the market trends for trade skills, young persons with disabilities are often unable to avail these opportunities.

Health and safety standards followed in industries are imparted during vocational training to ensure that trainees are aware of them. Employers are reluctant to hire young persons with disabilities contingent on endangering them or violating health and safety standards. Globally, organisations are adopting inclusive health and safety procedures and infrastructure. However, this is not the reality in Pakistan. Therefore, employers are reluctant to hire young persons with disabilities with hearing impairments and other mild impairments due to the restrictions of the practised health and safety standards.

Additionally, young people with visual impairments do not feature much in vocational trades and jobs as there is heavy reliance on sight in skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled labour work.

Young people with intellectual impairments are also not considered for skills training and jobs in mainstream settings as they are considered a risk to others and themselves, or having limited capacity. Table 13 shows trades commonly selected by young persons with disabilities.

123 Lee, G. K. (2010). Vocational Rehabilitation for People with Disabilities. Center for International Rehabilitation Research Information and Exchange.

124 Razzak, A., Khaki, M. Z. (2015). Designing A Model of Vocational Training Programs for Disabled in Pakistan. The Online Journal of New Horizons in Education, Vol. 5, Issue 1.

125 British Council (2014).

Table 12: Provincial breakdown of trades and skills in demand

Province	Sector	Trade Skills
Sindh	Textile/readymade garments (woven, knitted)	Industrial stitching, machine operator, apparel supervisor, etc.
	Textile/towels, linen, home textiles	Weaving operator, quality checkers, packaging, machine embroidery, etc.
	Manufacturing, light engineering/ auto assembly, auto parts supply	Tools dies and moulds, sheet metal, metal casting, assembly, store keeping, etc.
	Manufacturing/printing	Printing press operators, PLC technicians, graphic designers, materials handling, etc.
	Manufacturing/leather and leather goods	Leather processing, cutting techniques, grading, stitching, etc.
	Services/logistics, customer service	Loaders, drivers, custom house brokerage
	Services/hospitality industry: tourism	Hotel operations, professional cookery, customer services, etc.
	Services/banking and financial institutions	Customer services, marketing, account opening specialist, credit risk analysis, etc.
	Textile/readymade garments	Machine operator, apparel supervision, designing and pattern cutting, etc.
Punjab	Textile/readymade garments	Machine operator, apparel supervision, designing and pattern cutting, etc.
	Light engineering/auto parts	Blacksmith, welding, electricians, etc.
	Manufacturing/ceramics industry	Supervision, designing and moulding in-charge, etc.
	Light engineering/metal fabrication	Sheet metal worker, bench fitter, electrician, product design, etc.
	Light engineering/surgical instruments	Grinders, polishers, fitters, accountants, etc.
	Manufacturing/sports goods	Woodworkers, pattern maker, cutter, etc.
	Textile/leather sports goods, leather sports wear	Machine stitching, hand and machine embroidery, etc.
	Services/logistics, customer services	Loaders, drivers, sales agents, etc.
	Construction/housing	Masonry, carpentry, building electricians, etc.

Azad Jammu and Kashmir	Construction	Wood carving, masonry, heavy machine operator, carpentry, plumbing, etc.
	Tourism and hospitality	Baking, professional cook, housekeeping, receptionist, driving, etc.
	Energy and power	Welder, pipe fitting, solar technician, crane operator, turbine technician, etc.
	Manufacturing	Lab technician, mechanical technician, DAE food, DAE chemical, etc.
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	Construction	Designer, quality control, architecture, plumbing, technician, carpentry, etc.
	Tourism and hospitality	Hotel management, housekeeping, cooking, tour guide, computer operators, etc.
	Energy	Electric/mechanical engineers, oil and gas specialist, etc.
	Energy	IT experts, electricians, programmers, welders, pipefitters, etc.
	Manufacturing	Machine operator, welders, polishers, etc.
	Manufacturing	R&D associates, production operators, microbiologists, etc.
FATA	Construction	Quantity surveyor, designer, plumbing, sanitary workers, etc.
	Agriculture-based business	Picking, roasting, grading, peeling, etc.
Balochistan	Mining (marble)	Raw stone mixing, grinding, cleansing, glazing, polishing, etc.
	Data unavailable	Data unavailable

Table 13: Trade skills of young persons with disabilities (receiving/received training in)

Trade skills	Frequency of selection
Sewing and stitching	149
Arts and crafts	108
Physical training	104
Basic computer skills	85
IT skills, web design, graphic design	53
Cooking	51
Occupational therapy	49
Mobile repair	44
Electrician	28
Textile-related	21
Woodwork	18
Cane work	15
Others	15
Chair knitting	13
Mat making	10
English Language and conversation	10
Beautician, Hair dressing, mehndi application	6
Call centre skills	4

The 'Others' category included trade skills of flower making, paper work, manufacturing belts, photography, painting and sports.

The trades were grouped under 'others' due to the low individual frequency of selection. Also, some of these skills may not necessarily fall under the category of trade skills, such as occupational therapy (added by young persons with disabilities themselves under trade skills), for they may have a more formal education nature, or in the case of flower making, since it may not assist an individual in their sustained employment specifically based on that skill.

Young persons with disabilities also suggested trades that they preferred to receive training in. Some similar trends were observed when comparing with the trades selected by young persons with disabilities. For instance, training for computer-related skills, IT skills, graphic design, web design and web development were selected the most frequently with 479 participants, meaning 31 per cent of the sample preferred to acquire these skills.

By comparison, basic computer skills were selected by 28 per cent of the sample. Concurrently, skills that require manual labour were recorded at a comparatively lower frequency than computer-related skills. For instance, Industrial skills, like electrician, CAD, marble cutting, and carpentry were selected by only three per cent. Construction-related skills such as masonry and plumbing were chosen by one per cent of the participants and woodwork was selected by seven young persons with disabilities. Frequency of selection for textile-related skills, like stitching, weaving, knitting and tailoring, was recorded at 149, indicating that ten per cent of the sample preferred these skills.

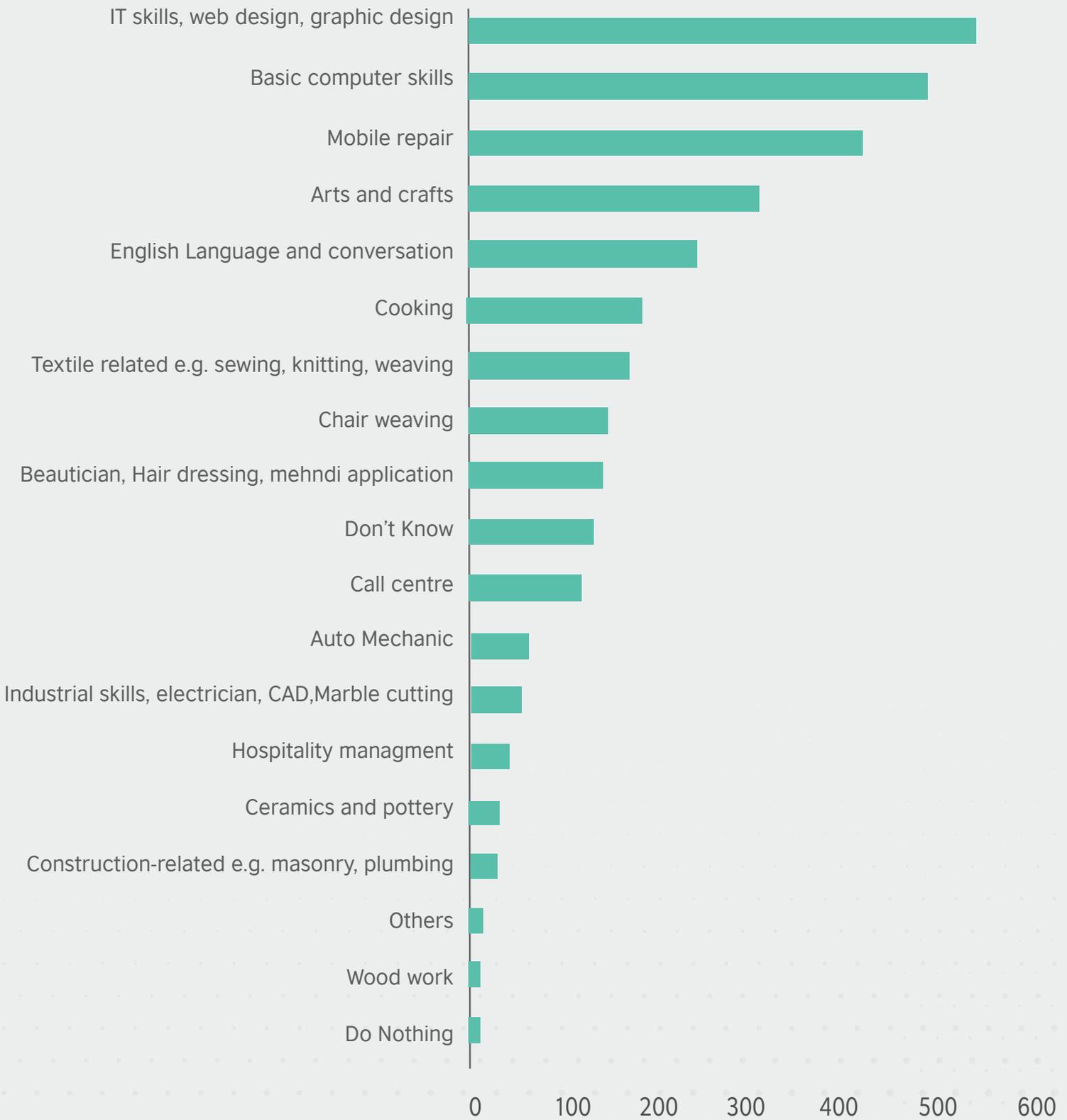
From the frequency of selection for manual labour trades, it can be understood that there exists a stigma surrounding skills that require physical work. While the stigma is considerably reduced for manual labour skills, young people do not hold much regard for technical and vocational education and training, especially for those who acquire higher education. A reason for this could be that after a degree, the expectation is to land a well-paid job with career prospects, which poses to be an issue due to intense competition in the labour market, and also the varying quality of degrees. Higher education in specialised subjects is increasing in Pakistan, but economic conditions in the country do not present ample opportunities for all graduates with higher education backgrounds, specifically if the quality of that education is limited.

Due to this, there are individuals employed at basic jobs and pay levels despite having acquired higher education.¹²⁶ Moreover, as evident from Figure 7, there is a demand for employment opportunities in the manual labour trades. However, due to lack of awareness or opportunities, young persons with disabilities do not hold these skills in high regard.

It is important to note that persons with disabilities are often disadvantaged because of the stigma. Due to the lack of quality education and skills, misconceptions and negative outlooks on disability, physical inaccessibility and lack of facilities available, persons with disabilities struggle to obtain and retain decent work opportunities.

Trade Skills Preferred

Figure 7: Trade skills preferred



Employability skills

An area of significance would be the development of employability skills for all persons with disabilities to enhance their ability to attain and retain employment. Employability is the ability to enter, retain and progress in a job. Employability skills can be described as fundamental skills, personal management skills and teamwork skills.¹²⁷

Persons with disabilities may not be familiar with these skills due to their social exclusion. This in turn hampers their communication and participation in society, and they may face challenges in accessing employment opportunities.

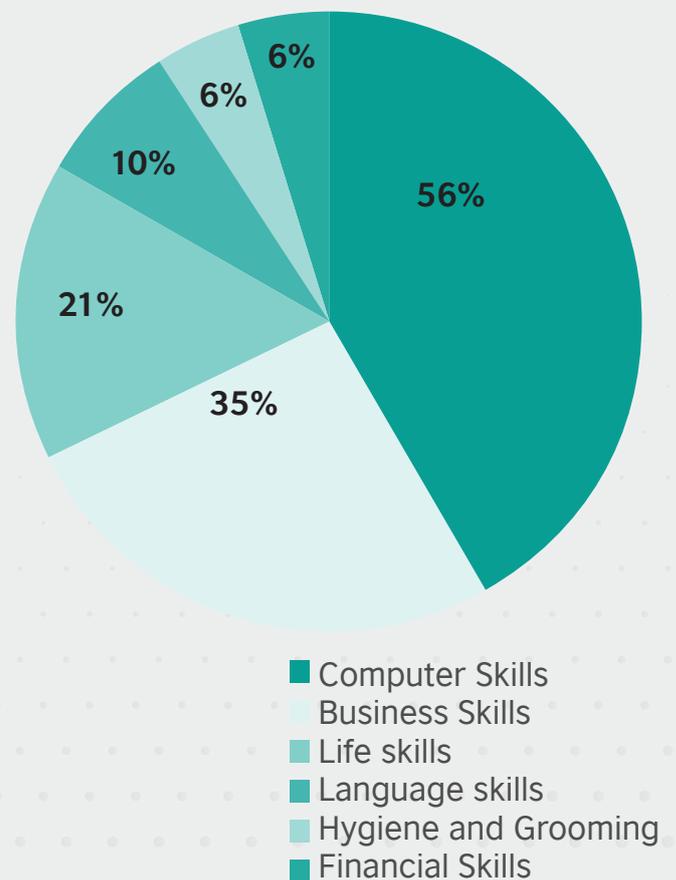
It is important for individuals to develop professional skills, communication skills and personal conduct to retain and progress in their respective job roles based on an understanding of the demand-side perspective.

The same is true for both white-collar and blue-collar jobs. Employment of persons with disabilities is already a difficult task based on the stigma that society holds. Many young persons with disabilities are so removed from society that they are unable to learn appropriateness of communication and interaction through socialisation. Hence, complimentary trainings to develop social and soft skills are beneficial.

Participants were asked to select the skills which they felt were the most important to enhance their employability (participants were able to choose more than one skill for this exercise).

Figure 8 indicates that young persons with disabilities recognised computer skills (56 per cent) as the most important skill to develop, followed by business skills at 39 per cent. Life skills were selected by 21 per cent of the respondents. Language skills, which includes written and spoken communication, were selected by 158 young persons with disabilities, whereas financial skills and personal hygiene skills were the least selected, at six per cent each.

Figure 7: Trade skills preferred



127 Turmusani, M. The Employability of Persons with Disabilities and Groups at Risk in Enterprises of Skills Development: International Perspective of Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRDP). Retrieved from <http://riphh.qc.ca/fr/node/48121>

Barriers to technical and vocational education and training (TVET)

Barriers to TVET can be understood as an extension of the exclusion faced by persons with disabilities in society. In addition, most of these barriers are similar to those faced while accessing education in general (formal or informal).

Lack of resources

One of the biggest barrier faced by vocational training centres and educational institutions face are the lack of resources. Meanwhile, young persons with disabilities who belong to lower socio-economic backgrounds are unable to afford expensive training opportunities at private institutions.¹²⁸

Exclusion due to type of disability

Private vocational training programmes also tend to offer places or market themselves to persons with intellectual impairments, and opportunities for them to become contributing members of society are scarce. Unfortunately persons with intellectual impairments face intense stigma and discrimination in Pakistan and assumptions are made about their inability to contribute to the workforce.

While exclusive training centres for persons with intellectual impairments such as Karachi Vocational Training Centre provide subsidised rates to trainees who are unable to afford the costs, through external donations and grants, the scale of the number of persons with intellectual impairments accommodated in the programme is limited.¹²⁹

Besides the efforts of vocational training centres towards the inclusion of individuals with intellectual impairment, culture and attitudes serve as barriers. Mehar Cawasji, from a school in Karachi called the Special Children Educational Institute, reported that in their three decades of work with children and youth with disabilities,

‘They (persons with intellectual impairment) would be able to do repetitive things, but under supervision... independently it’s not possible.’

– Mehar Cawasji, Special Children Educational Institute

Persons with intellectual impairments have experienced sustained stigma and discrimination within the workplace. Representatives from the Roshni Association and Rising Sun Education and Welfare Society in Lahore also commented on the lack of opportunities for persons with intellectual impairment in all walks of life.

Persons with visual impairments also face immense challenges as there are only a handful of private vocational training programmes that provide the technology and tools that remove the barriers to their participation in the workplace. Due to a lack of inclusion into society, there is limited awareness of the huge potential of persons with disabilities.

For example, young persons with visual impairments stated that there is a general assumption that they cannot learn computer skills. which leads to discrimination in the technical and vocational education sector, despite the fact this is not the case at accessibility software such as JAWS levels the experience and enables people to fully participate. Unfortunately, many training centres are not familiar with this software, and many training centres do not have other facilities- for example tactile flooring or books available in Braille, which only amplifies the struggles. Even when such facilities are made available to those with visual impairments, they find commuting a challenge as infrastructure and transport system are seldom accessible.

A closed and narrow-minded societal attitude excludes a number of persons with disabilities. As a result, they are either out of school or mostly referred to schools and vocational training centres which are specifically for rehabilitation and which institutionalise persons with disabilities.

Limited opportunities

There are limited opportunities of vocational training for young persons with disabilities. Most mainstream vocational training centres do not cater to disabilities due to infrastructural barriers and training methods.

Trainers and staff are not trained to fully cater to the needs of persons with disabilities. Moreover, curriculums and extra-curricular activities are not designed to include the needs of young persons with impairments.

Vocational training centres especially designed to be inclusive for persons with disabilities are located in bigger cities, therefore persons with disabilities in rural or far-flung areas are unable to access them. Moreover, government-owned SEN schools and rehabilitation centres providing vocational training have limited enrolment capacity due to insufficient resources.¹³⁰ Occasionally young persons with disabilities may get the opportunity for training through time-bound projects and programmes provided by the private sector and the public as well.

Lack of awareness regarding benefits and opportunities of vocational training

In most instances persons with disabilities are not aware of opportunities of vocational training and therefore most persons with disabilities are deprived of the same opportunities. Additionally, they may sometimes not actively seek opportunities, which our research suggests was the case for 32 per cent of our participants.

It was noted in research conducted across 13 European countries that benefits of vocational training varied across countries, levels of education but there was an observable change in the psychosocial and economic development of persons with disabilities who were receiving the training.¹³¹ Yet, not much importance is given to the benefits of vocational training for persons with disabilities in Pakistan. The trend is more prevalent in poorer families since persons with disabilities have fewer chances of finding employment after receiving training, and parents do not wish to invest in their education or training.¹³²

Negative attitudes and misconceived perceptions

Persons with disabilities are faced with the negative attitudes and misconceptions of society. It is generally believed that young persons with disabilities are unable to learn or perform work, and therefore families do not invest in their education and future. Moreover, due to the social stigma around disabilities, parents are often reluctant to reveal a child with disabilities in society.¹³³ The stigma and labelling take the shape of superstitions in many parts of the country. For example, the survey suggested that amongst some communities in Balochistan, individuals with disabilities are believed to bring bad luck and are hence ostracised from society.

While teachers and trainers may be guilty of discriminatory and prejudiced attitudes, young persons with disabilities are also excluded by their peers in the mainstream. For example, persons with hearing impairments communicating through sign language also receive negative attention due to the lack of awareness about sign language. Moreover, persons with disabilities are subjected to derogatory language used to address or ridicule them.

Many persons with disabilities are also viewed as special people who have abilities, such as a strong sixth sense or a closer connection to God. This results in idealisation and alienation, because they are not integrated into society and viewed as 'other'. People with disabilities are frequently viewed as a homogeneous group; variations in disability are disregarded and eventually, they are all treated in similar ways. The disability becomes the defining characteristic of the individual, leading them to feel anonymised and stereotyped.

'They make fun of my son when he tries to be a part of a group and communicate in sign language. He doesn't like sitting with them (people without disabilities). He only hangs out with his own group of hearing-speech impaired boys.'

– A mother of a hearing-speech impaired boy from Lahore.

131 European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (2011). The benefits of vocational education and training.

132 World Health Organization (2011). World Report on Disability. World Bank.

133 Leonard Cheshire Disability and Inclusive Development Centre (2009). Illiteracy among Adults with Disabilities in the Developing World: An Unexplored Area of Concern. Working Paper Series: No. 9. University College London.

While assessing a vocational training programme in Kenya for example, the lack of awareness and inclusive practices were observed. Persons with disabilities receiving vocational training experienced difficulties and since the teaching methods and curriculum were inflexible to their circumstances, they were unable to participate in extracurricular activities.¹³⁴

Absence of universal design

Universal design allows vocational training centres to cater to disparate populations without the need of adapting or modifying the programme to a specialised design.¹³⁵ Incorporating universal design at vocational training centres includes universality in physical infrastructure, teaching methodology, syllabus and resources which can easily cater to the needs of different groups including persons with disabilities.¹³⁶ The absence of universal design in many aspects of mainstream public vocational training institutions renders them inaccessible to the population with disabilities.

Lack of equipped trainers and teachers

Studies suggest that teachers' attitudes play an important role in successfully achieving the aims of vocational training, especially in their ability to create a nurturing, trusting relationship.¹³⁷ However in Pakistan, teachers who work in mainstream vocational institutes are not equipped with adequate skills to interact with persons with disabilities. Aside from the obvious challenges that come with teaching and working with persons with disabilities, the lack of a proper relationship where the trainers and teachers are skilled to cater to persons with disabilities, hinders the learning process and access to vocational training.

Nevertheless, there are organisations working towards the welfare of persons with disabilities. NOWPDP is an example of an organisation working towards the education, training and employment of persons with disabilities. NOWPDP's training programme facilitates opportunities of vocational training for persons with disabilities in mainstream institutions, as well as, training sessions for young persons with disabilities at the NOWPDP premises.

All trainers and staff involved at mainstream training centres, and trainers conducting sessions at NOWPDP, are sensitised for disability inclusion and are assisted throughout the training period to incorporate teaching methodologies helpful for young persons with disabilities. Moreover, a sign-language interpreter is appointed by NOWPDP for ease of communication with hearing-impaired individuals, to ensure complete and adequate transfer of knowledge.

Affordability

While the government has taken some initiatives for special education, rehabilitation and vocational training of persons with disabilities, there is a lack of resources, limited enrolment capacity and poor quality of education still prevalent. Therefore, private vocational training centres and special education schools are preferred over government run institutions. Unfortunately, since most persons with disabilities belong to poor socio-economic backgrounds, they are unable to afford training from private vocational training centres.¹³⁸

Not only is this a concern in Pakistan, issues with affordability are faced by other countries in Asia, such as Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka.

134 Murgor et al. (2014).

135 International Labour Office. (2008). ILO Vocational rehabilitation and employment (disabled persons) Convention (No. 159) and Recommendation (No. 168) – United Nations Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities.

136 International Labour Office (2013). Inclusion of People with Disabilities in Vocational Training: A Practical Guide.

137 Murgor et al. (2014).

138 British Council (2014)..

The prohibitive costs of long-term training, as well as the mismatch between available skills training and market demand, exclude the poorest communities. In addition the nature of disability is a factor that most training institutes and employers consider often being discriminatory in terms of disability selection and preference. Tracer studies show that TVET programmes fail to benefit the poorest segment of society because of financial and family issues and also because of high dropout rates, especially from the rural sector.¹³⁹

Difficulty in transitioning from training to employment

Persons with disabilities are often faced with a challenge when transitioning from training to employment. Vocational training programmes may not always provide knowledge and skills to young persons with disabilities for a successful transition to the mainstream.¹⁴⁰ The situation highlights disconnect between expectations of the employer and those with disabilities being considered for employment. It also indicates the lack of employability in persons with disabilities, manifested not only in the limited acquiring of market relevant skills but also in the difficulty experienced by persons with disabilities to adjust to the demands of mainstream of jobs.

Detailed interviews with employers highlighted that many would be willing and open to the idea of hiring an individual with disability; however, only a handful have worked with persons with disabilities. Employers hire their workforce calculating the possible outputs they may be able to achieve.

As such they seek the best contributors they can find, basing their decisions on merit, skill, capacity and employability of candidates.

Young persons with disabilities may need to build their professional skills alongside technical skills to ensure that the transition to employment is possible. Results were obtained through a pilot research conducted by NOWPDP to understand the perceptions and experiences of persons with disabilities regarding empathy, equality and inclusion at the workplace. It was established by some persons with disabilities that a sympathetic and co-operative approach was preferred as opposed to having equal attitudes. Additionally, in this research sample over 30 per cent of participants suggested that young persons with disabilities may have a preference for special treatment.

34 per cent suggested the need for sympathy or allowance-based interventions by the government. This may be a construct of how society treats persons with disabilities and a result of the overprotective, sheltered and exclusive (special) environments persons with disabilities in Pakistan are familiar with. Therefore, it may be argued that sometimes persons with disabilities may avoid competitive environments in favour of comfortable, advantageous, charitable environments. However, it can also be argued that due to lack of work opportunities and society's continued charitable outlook towards them, persons with disabilities acquire a 'learned helplessness'¹⁴¹ and therefore their perceptions reflect a similar non-competitive and sympathy - seeking approach.

139 <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/176571/tvet-hrd-south-asia-sri-lanka.pdf>

140 WSIS Knowledge Community (2015). Inclusive TVET in the Context of Lifelong Learning, Skills for Work and Life: Empowering People with Disabilities.

141 International Labour Organization (2013). Emerging good practices related to the training and job placement of persons with disabilities in Lebanon.

Conclusions

Market-relevant skills

Ninety-seven per cent of respondents felt that technical and vocational education and training increased their chances of securing employment.

Young persons with disabilities to develop technical and vocational training skills such that they are able persons with disabilities regarded skills as their strength (43 per cent) and expressed the need for improving their knowledge and skills (46 per cent) to ensure that they can take advantage of better and increased opportunities for employment. IT was the most preferred skill (31 per cent), which included IT, graphic design, and web design and development. By comparison, construction-related skills like plumbing and masonry (one per cent), hospitality management skills (two per cent), and industrial skills such as electrical work, CAD, marble cutting, carpentry, etc. (three per cent) were the least preferred skills.

This also highlights the lack of awareness young persons with disabilities have regarding the skills in demand in the market, as well as the stigma around blue-collar jobs. Representatives from vocational training centres and employers highlighted the importance of developing skills, but those which are relevant to the market. Due to the competition in employment settings, young persons with disabilities need to prove themselves as efficient and skilled workers to ensure their employment. Moreover, young persons with disabilities also expressed the need to develop employable skills and regarded training in computer skills as most advantageous at 84 per cent. Stakeholders from the demand side suggested developing liaisons between training institutes and the labour market to ascertain training in market-relevant skills to increase chances of employment.

Inclusion in training

Skill development is perhaps a good opportunity for persons with disabilities to begin their inclusion in the mainstream. There was not a marked difference between the preference of inclusive and specially designed training centres. Participants from the research had received training from specially designed centre (55 per cent) as well as inclusive training centres (45 per cent). Reasonable accommodations are also important to ensure inclusion of persons with disabilities. Vocational training centres accommodated the persons with disabilities attending training through sign language (46 per cent), wheelchairs and ramps (44 per cent) and Braille and speech reader software (34 per cent).

Trained trainers

Almost half (49 per cent) young persons with disabilities selected a particular training centre owing to the availability of specially trained trainer or trainers with disabilities. This notion reiterates the importance of specially trained staff to ensure adequate sharing of knowledge.

Career counselling

It was identified that young persons with disabilities were unable to obtain and retain employment due to limited knowledge of the labour market and lack of exposure in society. It is important to counsel young persons with disabilities and their families to pursue a career keeping in mind the interests, talents and functional limitations of an individual. Training in market-relevant skills should be chosen so that employment opportunities can be taken advantage of easily. Due to saturation of certain trades in the market, persons with disabilities may stand a lower chance of securing employment accordingly. It was also highlighted that career counselling can help instil a sense of confidence and motivate young persons with disabilities to become contributing members of society.

Recommendations

Develop networks for sharing research and innovation

Use forums and research that collate industry expert opinions and map these with vocational training opportunities in the country.

Intelligent mapping of employment opportunities to inform training programmes

Large-scale employers should be mapped against available vocations, which would inform the training programmes for in-demand trades.

Government-led vocational training institutes and those specifically for persons with disabilities must develop positive liaisons between them and the labour market to ensure relevance of training to market demands and creating a channel for placement opportunities. Some training programmes can be led to meet specific demands.

For example, a customised skills training programme at mainstream vocational training centres such as Hunar Foundation and AmanTech worked on producing graduates to fulfil a demand for auto mechanics at Indus Motors or tailors at Yunus Textile. A similar one can be initiated for persons with disabilities.

Vocational training and apprenticeships: an equal and dignified alternative to higher education

Championing vocational training as an equal and viable alternative to higher education would remove the stigma attached to it. This perception shift could play a significant role in redirecting young persons with disabilities towards quality market-driven training. For this community leaders and influencers could be engaged to communicate the need and benefits of training in market-relevant skills among persons with disabilities at each level.

Media attention in this field should be encouraged, and government incentive systems to allow for a supply to increase at vocational training institutions of persons with disabilities.

It is also important to raise awareness about manual labour job opportunities to break the stigma around it and generate more employment opportunities for the population overall- and equally for persons with disabilities.

Building confidence and connections

The personal motivation and self-awareness of persons with disabilities, along with them reaching their capacity, needs to be worked on to promote a realistic and healthy self-esteem and to enable them to overcome obstacles in the way of their education and training.

Awareness at the community level, along with role models (young persons with disabilities), should be used to promote a benchmark and willingness to educate persons with disabilities and their families and for them to become aware of options. This can again be done through a combined civil society effort, and public–private partnerships with community activists and government outreach methodology in play.

Leading by example: accessibility

All training centres should strictly adhere to the minimum standards of accessibility (as per the Accessibility Code of Pakistan 2006).

Training centres can learn to become inclusive and provide training in alternative formats, for example with the use of a sign language interpreter through basic sensitisation/understanding of disability.

Such sessions could be arranged through private sector advocates, government and non-governmental organisations – if made compulsory through policy, they could yield much benefit. Training centres can be incentivised and recognised for adopting a universal design to ensure automatic and easy inclusion of persons with disabilities to promote further training of persons with disabilities.

Preparing young people for the training – employment transition

It is important to develop an effective mechanism to ensure smooth transition of persons with disabilities from training to employment setting.

This could be done through transition training programmes and work-readiness or employability trainings through a mix of stakeholders, including role models, persons with disabilities, government and private training centre and organisational programmes.

It will also be important to involve employers and recruitment preparation and hiring firms to provide professional exposure to persons with disabilities during training so that they may learn employable skills.

Government support for technical and vocational training

The government needs to allocate and monitor budgeted funds with time-bound, specific, measurable, actionable and realistic goals for training centres to provide quality, demand-driven training to young persons with disabilities to enhance their skills and allow them to access mainstream employment.

Accurate and adequate data of prevalence of disabilities is required to ensure allocation of sufficient resources and increased enrolment capacity at special education schools.

The government could work in collaboration with the private sector and research firms using internationally recognised tools.

Employment and self-employment

Employment is a relationship between two parties, where one party hires and another seeks a job. Employees work in return for salary. Unemployment occurs when a person is actively seeking for a job but is unable to find one. The rate of unemployment is calculated by dividing the number of people unemployed but seeking employment with the total labour force.

There are between 785 and 975 million persons with disabilities of working age,¹⁴² yet they experience higher unemployment rates, often as high as 80 per cent in developing countries, compared to people without disabilities.¹⁴³

In developing countries, persons with disabilities are faced with a double disadvantage because of the decrease in employment opportunities and the stigma surrounding them. Pakistan's labour force participation rate is roughly **54.4 per cent**, while that of the sample of young persons with disabilities (in the absence of any other statistics specific to persons with disabilities in the country) came out to be just **20 per cent**.¹⁴⁴

Again this this could be for a variety of reasons, with a number of discouraged workers among those with disabilities based on society's continued neglect and inaction towards their inclusion. Entering the labour market is difficult for persons with disabilities given the economic situation of the country, and lack of adequate skills and education.

Persons with disabilities also face barriers such as physical inaccessibility and the negative attitudes against them that adversely affect their chances of gaining employment.

In Pakistan, the unemployment rate, for those actively seeking a job, is **5.9 per cent**. This rate can be an understatement due to inaccuracy of data reporting and the fact that economists suggest unemployment rates to be understated in most instances. In the sample, however, the unemployment rate of young people with disabilities was found to be **52 per cent**. The unemployment rate doesn't consider everyone who doesn't have a job, but those who are of working age and who are seeking, but unable to find, employment.^{145,146,147}

Problems including lack of education and skills, negative conceptions of employers, physical inaccessibility and lack of facilities have caused people with disabilities difficulties entering the labour force. While decent work opportunities for persons with disabilities mean the provision of equal opportunities and treatment in the workplace, it has also been discovered that many persons with disabilities may be more inclined towards sheltered or supported employment, with their choice differing on the basis of the prevailing culture, traditions, options available and socio-economic, labour market and political conditions.¹⁴⁸

In our research, 172 young persons with disabilities were employed or had been employed in the past. Young persons with disabilities of working age with some experience of employment provided insight on the struggles and experiences of their employment.

¹⁴² British Council (2014).

¹⁴³ United Nations Children's Fund (2013).

¹⁴⁴ <https://www.ceicdata.com/en/indicator/pakistan/labour-force-participation-rate>

¹⁴⁵ Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (2015).

¹⁴⁶ Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (2013). Pakistan Employment Trends.

¹⁴⁷ International Labour Organization (2013). Decent Work Country Programme II. Annual Report 2014. Pakistan

¹⁴⁸ International Labour Organisation (2015). Decent work for persons with disabilities: promoting rights in the global development agenda.

Education to employment

However, around ten per cent of young persons with disabilities were employed or had been employed in the past at the time of the research, and 528 young persons with disabilities (34 per cent) reported themselves as unemployed, whereas less than ten per cent of the participants reported to be actively seeking a job. This may be attributed to the fact that a majority of the participants were receiving education or training at the time of research.

Employment for young persons with disabilities is a difficult prospect, with multiple factors like academics, skills and opportunities in play. Of the 1,552 participants of the research, only 172 young persons with disabilities were employed or had been employed previously. When asked about how they were able to secure a job, 43 per cent of young persons with disabilities gave credit to their education and skills while 45 per cent reported that they had a source.

Only six per cent of young persons with disabilities were employed on the basis of employment quota. This indicates a need for employers to be more aware of disabilities and the challenges they face, making reasonable adjustments to become inclusive.

It may be a difficult task for persons with disabilities to move from vocational training and education to employment without adequate support.

Vocational training centres may not have effective links with employers to ensure that skills required for the job role are provided to persons with disabilities. Additionally, employers may be unwilling to accept persons with disabilities.

It is important that any training provided to persons with disabilities is demand-led so that they are matched with employment opportunities that are not only suited to their skills, interests and aptitudes, but also available to them after they finish training.¹⁴⁹ Supported and sheltered employment may also be effective in the cases of moderate to severe impairment, where persons with disabilities are unable to adjust to the working environment.¹⁵⁰

Internship and apprenticeship opportunities are often helpful for persons with disabilities to adapt to work environments.¹⁵¹ The British Association for Supported Employment is an example of training and assistance provided to people with significant disabilities to attain and sustain a paid job. Their main aim is to employ a diverse workforce and encourage participation through on-site training and development plans.¹⁵²

International practices are increasingly focused on working towards developing skills of persons with disabilities and promoting reasonable adjustments, as opposed to approaching the issue from the demand side by reserving employment quotas and other measures.¹⁵³

149 International Labour Organization (2008) Skills Development through Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR): A good practice guide.

150 European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education (2013) European Patterns of Successful Practice in Vocational Education and Training.

151 International Labour Organization (2008). Skills Development through Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR): A good practice guide.

152 British Association for Supported Employment. Retrieved from: <https://www.base-uk.org/about-british-association-supported-employment>

153 United States Agency for International Development (2009). Transitions Towards an Inclusive Future: Vocational Skills Development and Employment Options for Persons with Disabilities in Europe & Eurasia.

This approach ensures that education and vocational training programmes are centred on the capacity and interest of the learner. It also allows persons with disabilities the liberty to choose their preferred profession, thereby increasing their productivity in the job.¹⁵⁴ One such global practice, operating under the name of the Disability Resource Centre in the UK, works towards the empowerment of persons with disabilities through independent living.

The purpose of the organisation is assisting persons with disabilities to fulfil their own aspirations.¹⁵⁵ Other programmes such as Enham Trust UK work towards increasing the possibilities of employment and empowerment for persons with physical and intellectual impairments.¹⁵⁶

Employability is an individual's ability to obtain, retain and progress in a job role or earn a livelihood through self-employment. Persons with disabilities are presumably lacking in employability skills, which includes the development of fundamental skills, personal management skills and teamwork skills.¹⁵⁷

Life skills along with social interaction and personal skills are very important for persons with disabilities to excel at the workplace.¹⁵⁸ According to a good practice guide published by the International Labour Organisation, vocational training programmes must be privy to employable skills or 'core work skills', which are communication, problem solving and decision-making, planning and organising, self-management, teamwork skills and initiation.¹⁵⁹

A reference can be made to the Alleviating Poverty through Peer Training project in Cambodia (2002–07), which trained persons with disabilities living in remote villages or rural areas to develop technical and business skills to establish their own micro-enterprises or enhance existing businesses.

The training was provided by local Cambodians running micro-enterprises who served as role models, resulting in better skill development and encouragement for persons with disabilities.¹⁶⁰

Workplace exposure may even begin with internships to provide work experience to young persons with disabilities who may not have had previous opportunities to work.¹⁶¹ Tesco, which is one of the largest employers in the UK, took the initiative to furnish opportunities for persons with disabilities, in partnership with Remploy, through their two-week placement programme. Persons with disabilities placed in the programme get a first-hand experience of working at Tesco, after which they can secure employment at Tesco, in cases of vacancies, or can apply for opportunities with other employers.¹⁶² There have been instances and examples of similar employment initiatives taken up by organisations in Pakistan for the inclusion of persons with disabilities.

SHELL Pakistan in collaboration with NOWPDP hired over 16 persons with disabilities at various fuel sites for roles such as wipers, fuel fillers and stocking at the select stores. Meanwhile, HBL (one of Pakistan's largest banks), in collaboration with NOWPDP, took up the initiative to develop 30 accessible and inclusive branches across the country to facilitate people with disabilities by undergoing an extensive sensitisation training and identifying accessibility roadblocks.

154 International Labour Organization (2013). Emerging good practices related to the training and job placement of persons with disabilities in Lebanon.

155 Disability Resource Centre Bedfordshire. (n.d.). [Online]. Available at <http://drcbeds.org/>

156 Enham Trust UK. <https://www.enhamtrust.org.uk>

157 Turmusani, M. The Employability of Persons with Disabilities and Groups at Risk in Enterprises of Skills Development: International Perspective of Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRDP). Retrieved from <http://riiph.qc.ca/fr/node/48121>

158 Hussain, Y and Maarof, M (2017) Reorientation of Special Education in Improving Self-Help of Children with Special Needs. Journal of ICSAR. Volume 1, No.1. SEAMEO SEN, Regional Center for Special Education, Malaysia.

159 International Labour Organisation (2008). Skills Development through Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR). A good practice guide.

160 International Labour Office (2011). Empowering People with Disabilities for Rural Development.

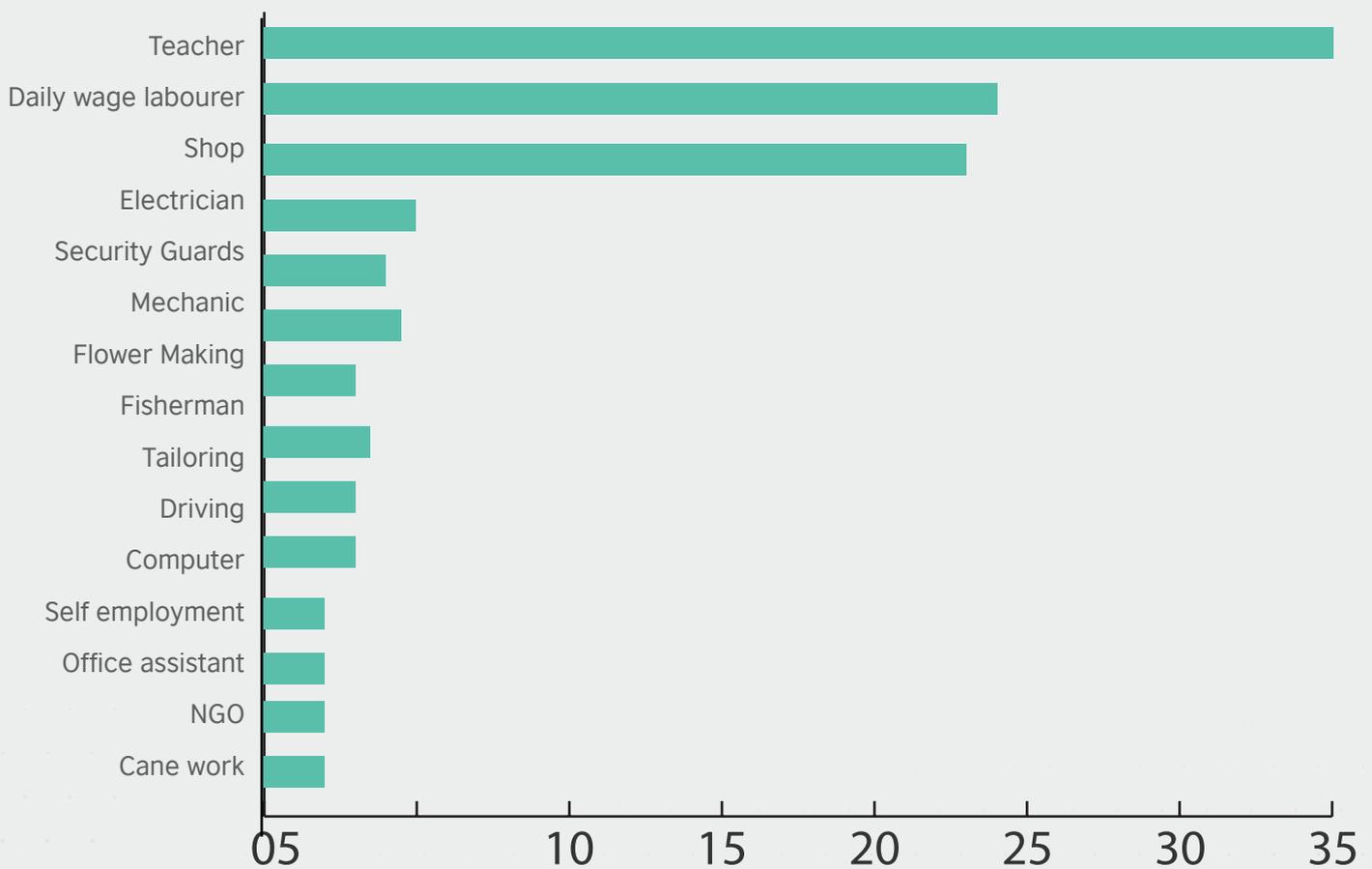
161 Frank, A. (2016). Vocational Rehabilitation: Supporting Ill or Disabled. Individuals in (to) Work: A UK Perspective. Healthcare, MDPI.

162 Remploy. Putting Ability First. Annual Review 2016.

Opportunities for employment and self-employment

Despite the barriers faced by people with disabilities, there are some employment opportunities available to them.

Figure 9: Employment roles of young persons with disabilities



From the survey sample, the majority of young persons with disabilities were employed as teachers (20 per cent), daily-wage labourers (14 per cent) and shopkeepers (13 per cent). Over 20 young persons with disabilities were self-employed.

Self-employment

Among employed females, the top three professions were: daily-wage labourers (48 per cent), teachers (32 per cent) and shop workers (16 per cent). Among the employed males, 31 per cent were employed as teachers, 15 per cent as shopkeepers and 11 per cent as daily-wage labourers.

Among employed persons with visual impairment, the top professions were daily-wage labourers (53 per cent), teachers (17 per cent) and flower-making (13 per cent). Among those with hearing impairment, 38 per cent were employed as daily-wage workers, 38 per cent were working at a shop and 23 per cent as teachers. Among those with speech impairment, 47 per cent worked as teachers, 29 per cent as shopkeepers and 18 per cent as daily-wage labourers. Among those with intellectual impairment, 29 per cent worked as electricians and 29 per cent as teachers. Among those with physical impairment, 39 per cent worked as teachers, 18 per cent as daily-wage labourers and 14 per cent as shopkeepers.

Employed persons with physical impairments also worked at occupations where persons with other disabilities were not working, such as drivers, tailors and at NGOs.

In the sample, ten per cent of those with physical impairment and nine per cent with speech impairment were employed, compared with only seven per cent with visual impairments, four per cent with hearing impairments and two per cent with intellectual impairments.

In addition to seeking salaried work, enterprise and self-employment opportunities for persons with disabilities are also limited. Moreover, they need to be aware of the present risks as well, be enterprising and have adequate business development and financial skills. In 2017, NOWPDP initiated Khud-Mukhtar, a self-employment initiative, to provide persons with disabilities a chance to set up their own business.

Eleven businesses were launched, and within six months their collected revenue exceeded the total amount of funds disbursed. Hence, self-employment may be a substantial option for people with disabilities given that they have a business idea, sense and an opportunity. There have been other micro-enterprise schemes and plans like those by Akhuwat, which has allowed for people to sustain their basic businesses – the model also caters to persons with disabilities, but is not specifically for them.

In some situations, persons with disabilities are provided with additional facilities, such as if a permanent disability is developed after the loan was disbursed, Akhuwat allows the loan to be waived, and a monetary support package is provided.¹⁶³ From 2010 to 2013, a project in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa resulted in employment opportunities for 1,907 people with disabilities (1,110 self-employment and 797 waged). The self-employment ventures that persons with disabilities set up included shops for cloth, grocery, cement, flowers, sweet, tailoring, mobile repair and local handicraft.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶³ A Decade of Hope: Journey of Akhuwat 2001–2010 [Online]. Available at: <http://www.akhuwat.org.pk/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/A-Decade-of-Hope.pdf>

¹⁶⁴ Grant Activity Completion Report - USAID/World Learning Special Programs to Aid the Needs of Survivors (SPANS) Grants Solicitation and Management (GSM), Improved livelihoods for people with disabilities through safe grant-making in the North West Frontier Province (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) of Pakistan, 2013

Barriers to employment

Young persons with disabilities with an adequate skillset and academic background may still not be able to enter the employment sector due to infrastructural barriers and the negative attitudes of employers. Persons with disabilities face many problems in a workplace. For instance, there is no one there to mentor them specifically, they are unable to find a job of their interest, and most of the times workplaces avoid hiring people with disabilities. Tables 14 and 15 suggest some of the reasons why young persons with disabilities in the sample were unable to find employment and some struggles they mentioned:

Table 14: Reasons cited for unemployment by participants

Unable to find employment because	Number	Percentage frequency
I do not have relevant or adequate education/training	312	60%
There are no employers in my vicinity who hire persons with disabilities	89	17%
Workplaces are/were inaccessible	52	10%
I was being offered really low pay	43	8%
I don't apply to organisations without inclusive practices and environment	11	2%
My field of interest is different from my education/training	8	2%
Did not try	1	0%

Table 15: Barriers faced by participants while looking for employment

Young persons with disabilities' barriers to employment	Number	Percentage frequency
Majority of the workplaces do not hire persons with disabilities	403	21%
There is/was no one there to guide/help me	315	17%
Workplaces are/were generally inaccessible	313	17%
Quality of education/training was not so high	247	13%
Don't know	189	10%
Do not work	182	10%
Mismatch of skills/knowledge with my job	159	8%
Didn't reply	44	2%
No jobs were of my interest	26	1%
Other	10	1%

Inaccessibility

Almost two thirds (63 per cent) of young persons with disabilities with employment experience reported accessibility as a key factor for employment. Some of the key reasons were: 26 per cent said that the majority of workplaces do not hire persons with disabilities, 20 per cent mentioned that there was no one to guide them and 20 per cent indicated that workplaces were generally inaccessible.

‘Persons with disabilities are not even allowed to enter into organisations to apply, let alone secure employment,’ said Uzma Sami, a sign language interpreter who is working for persons with disabilities in Lahore. Stakeholders mentioned accessibility being a huge barrier for employment of young persons with disabilities.

In one instance, the absence of accessible bathrooms created difficulties for a person with a disability in retaining the employment opportunity, mentioned during workshops conducted with employers, educationists, vocational training centres, schools and more.

In the survey it was found that out of 1,552 people, around 500 were unemployed or unemployed and seeking employment – the rest were below the age of 18 or already employed. The majority of the contribution to unemployment constituted people with physical disabilities. This could suggest that offices and workplaces lack the facilities required by people with physically disabilities, such as ramps for wheelchair users.

Organisations are reluctant to hire persons with disabilities given the adjustments that need to be made in order to accommodate them at the workplace.

Hence, inaccessible infrastructure and transportation systems inadvertently results in dependency on others to access, reducing autonomy and representing a major barrier for persons with disabilities to accessing opportunities.

The Accessibility Code of Pakistan 2006 and other policies were established to ensure that all buildings are made accessible. However, most public and private sector companies have inaccessible infrastructure. This may be due to the weak enforcement and absent regulatory bodies ensuring the approval and monitoring of a building’s accessibility as such, leading it to become one of the major barriers to entering employment for young persons with disabilities.

Misinformed perceptions, attitudes and fears of employers

Young persons with disabilities are unable to secure productive employment opportunities due to the negative attitudes and prejudices of employers. The reluctance of employers to hire persons with disabilities may be a product of unawareness and general ignorance in society. Persons with disabilities are unable to secure, retain and progress in employment due to negative attitudes and misconceptions of employers regarding their abilities.

Lack of awareness of opportunities (disconnect between employers and young persons with disabilities)

In the research, from the persons with disabilities with employment experience, 57 per cent mentioned that their colleagues had been friendly and supportive and 43 per cent stated that they were treated as an equal at their respective workplaces. Employers, have tended to believe that persons with disabilities can only take on routine tasks. ¹⁶⁵

In addition, employers believe persons with disabilities have inadequate levels of education and qualifications and require flexible employment options, which may result in higher costs of employment than persons without disabilities.¹⁶⁶ In cases where employment is secured by people with disabilities, prejudice against them among other employees often makes functioning in the work setup difficult.

Also, the general attitude of Pakistani society for persons with disabilities is one of sympathy. While on a societal and international level, stakeholders from both public and private sectors are trying to achieve inclusion of persons with disabilities in the mainstream, it is also important to work on the attitudes and perceptions of persons with disabilities. Detailed interviews with employers highlighted that many would be willing and open to the idea of hiring an individual with disability.

However, only a handful have worked with persons with disabilities. An employer stated that while hiring they would evaluate the candidate against their skill set and not their ability, they did not have any experience of working with persons with disabilities. Hence it can be stated that employers may be open to working with persons with disabilities, but a majority lack the direct experience and have not initiated efforts of being an inclusive workplace.

While the concept of dual sensitisation has been highlighted previously, it is also important to provide appropriate career counselling for persons with disabilities. In the current economic conditions, unemployment is a problem faced by most. In such conditions, persons with disabilities need to acquire skills that have a high demand and possess employable skills to make a business case of their employment. Trades that are employable are often looked down on by young persons with disabilities.

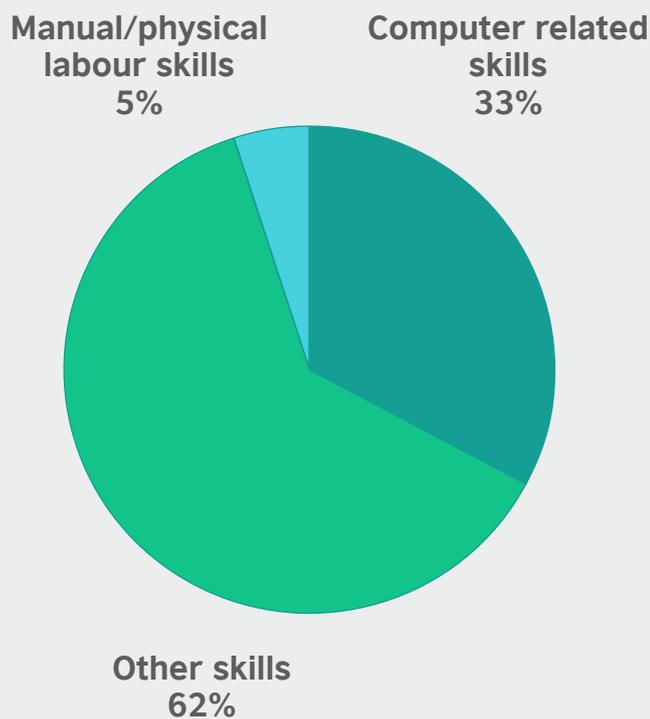
Manual labour trades were the least preferred skills, with only five per cent of skills preferences included skills such as industrial, auto mechanic, construction, masonry and plumbing. By comparison, the trades that were preferred most were computer-related skills, i.e. 33 per cent of all skills preferences, including basic computer skills, IT skills, web design and graphic design. Other skills included mobile repair, arts craft and textiles.

Professions with the highest amount of employment for people with disabilities included daily-wage labourers, teachers, shopkeepers and security guards.

¹⁶⁵ Leonard Cheshire Disability and Inclusive Development Centre (2009). Illiteracy among Adults with Disabilities in the Developing World: An Unexplored Area of Concern. Working Paper Series: No. 9. University College London.

¹⁶⁶ Shenoy, M (2011) Persons with Disability & the India Labour Market: Challenges and Opportunities. International Labour Organization, South Asia and India.

Figure 10: Skills preferences of young persons with disabilities



There were only three computer-related jobs out of 172 employment roles in the research.

Besides this, the demand side suggested computer training to be a supplementary skill rather than a standalone one to gain employment. Yet there is immense popularity of choice to learn computer-related skills possibly because young persons with disabilities associate computer skills expertise with managerial jobs without focusing on other important skills needed. This creates a gap in their employment prospects considering the market for those roles may be extremely competitive and that of certain hard skills is relatively open and relevant.

It is important to make young persons with disabilities aware of the right opportunities with reference to their skills, talent and market demand, keeping in mind their disability. When asked to state reasons why they struggle to find a job, ten per cent of young persons with disabilities also thought their skills/education were a mismatch with the market demand, and 42 per cent suggested relevance to the market for skills development to be increased in order to improve existing education and vocational training opportunities around them.

Vocational training programmes may not always provide knowledge and skills to persons with disabilities for a successful transition while fulfilling personal and occupational objectives.¹⁶⁷

This indicates a profound disconnect between expectations of the employer and potential employee. Additionally, employable skills are also important for persons with disabilities to obtain employment and progress in their careers. Among employable skills, 874 young persons with disabilities preferred computer literacy (56 per cent of sample), business skills (35 per cent) and life skills (21 per cent) and language and communication skills (ten per cent). Other skills such as finance and personal hygiene skills were only preferred by six per cent of the young persons with disabilities.

Lack of skills and education

Due to lack of quality education and training in employability skills, persons with disabilities are unable to obtain productive employment. Both education and vocational training institutes often struggle with effective links to the labour market. It was noted in research conducted across 13 European countries that the benefits of vocational training varied across countries and different levels of education and training prerequisites, but there was an observable change in the psychosocial and economic development of persons with disabilities who were receiving the training.¹⁶⁸

However, not much importance is placed on the benefits of vocational training for persons with disabilities in most countries.

¹⁶⁷ WSIS Knowledge Community (2015). Inclusive TVET in the Context of Lifelong Learning, Skills for Work and Life: Empowering People with Disabilities.

¹⁶⁸ European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (2011). The benefits of vocational education and training.

Difficulty in transitioning to the mainstream

From the survey, 60 per cent of young persons with disabilities directly attributed the reasons for not securing employment to their quality of education and level of skills and knowledge. Due to limitations in the standard of education in special education schools, persons with disabilities cannot compete in the labour market against persons without disabilities.

Employers who were part of the research reiterated the importance of hiring persons with disabilities on merit rather than sympathy to ensure their positive and sustained inclusion at the workplace. Some interventions in Pakistan that work on productive inclusion are the Telenor Open Mind project, which provides internship and employment opportunities for young persons with disabilities selected on merit, and the British Council's summer internships for young persons with disabilities.

Persons with disabilities are often faced with a challenge when transitioning from training or education into employment. It indicates a larger problem, which is that persons with disabilities lack employability, manifested not only in the lack of sought-after skills in the candidates, but also in the inability of persons with disabilities to adjust to the demands of their jobs. Organisations that have worked with persons with disabilities mostly have hired individuals with physical impairments as their ease of communication differentiate them from the rest of the individuals with impairments.

Results were obtained according to pilot research conducted by NOWPDP to understand the perceptions and experiences of persons with disabilities regarding empathy, equality and inclusion in employment.

It was established by some persons with disabilities that a sympathetic and co-operative approach was preferred as opposed to having equal attitudes. This may be a result of the exclusion and sheltered environment familiar to persons with disabilities in Pakistan, therefore they may be more inclined to avoid competitive environments. However, it can also be argued that due to a lack of work opportunities, persons with disabilities may acquire a 'learned helplessness'¹⁶⁹ and therefore their perceptions reflect a similar non-competitive and sympathy-seeking approach.

Affordability of quality education and skills for employment

A majority of persons with disabilities belong to the lower socio-economic class. In the research sample, 88 per cent of young persons with disabilities, i.e. 1,366 out of 1,552, fall in the lower socio-economic class.

It was seen that among the lower socio-economic group, 32 per cent were unemployed and currently seeking employment. In comparison, only nine per cent of those in the higher socio-economic group were unemployed and currently seeking employment. Additionally based on previously established affordability of skills and quality education, most young persons with disabilities remain stuck in the vicious cycle of poverty. Poverty may be treated as a lack of resources, including a lack of skills and literacy, therefore amplifying the disparity of income-generation capacity. Persons with disabilities in most cases lack the resources to enter mainstream spheres of education and work. Moreover, without consistent education or skill development, persons with disabilities are unable to meet the needs of the constantly evolving market.

Lack of sustainable initiatives

Most organisations that hire persons with disabilities do so as part of their corporate social responsibility or as compliance with quotas. While the initiative may yield employment of persons with disabilities and some assistance in earning livelihoods, in most cases organisations are unable to provide employees with disabilities a holistic experience, treating them like others and working on honing their abilities.

20 per cent of young persons with disabilities in the sample indicated no specific guidance or mentorship as a major struggle in employment. In effect most young persons with disabilities are also habitually helpless in the mainstream. Their lack of interaction with equal opportunity brings out their learned helplessness and at times may seek sympathy. Additionally, unrewarding roles and contractual positions create disgruntlement among persons with disabilities, and as such the duration of employment is terminated from one end or the other.

Employers do not benefit from a lack of performance and young persons with disabilities employed do not benefit from a charitable employment. As such because systems at organisations aren't set up to be sustainably inclusive, employment initiatives may not last too long. Sustainability becomes a key concern when discussing the inclusion of young persons with disabilities.

Silos and varying agenda of stakeholders

Initiatives that target people with disabilities exist across government departments as well as NGOs. A number of organisations working with persons with disabilities have varying agendas and do not normally work well together. Persons with disabilities are required to be members of certain organisations and then not allowed to receive opportunities or communicate with any other organisation working for a similar purpose.

Some organisations work solely on a charitable basis, providing financial and resource benefits to its members with disabilities, without developing in them the keenness to become independent earners. As such the confusion between welfare and empowerment of persons with disabilities stands, where they are mostly grouped under one area when their capacity might be more. This hinders the process of inclusion and young persons with disabilities to be seen and hired on an equal footing.

Contributing personal factors

A number of personal factors also affect the employment of young persons with disabilities and create a certain unwillingness and demotivation to work (explored in Table 16). Personal factors affecting employment could range from limited education to limited confidence and an altered sense of self, based on having a disability.

In the survey, out of those young persons with disabilities who identified themselves as unemployed or currently seeking employment, 39 per cent said they lack confidence, ten per cent mentioned that they do not feel adequate, six per cent said because they have a disability and 0.2 per cent said that they do not need to work.

It has also been noticed that when employment opportunities were created for young persons with disabilities, many were declined often due to 'distance from home', 'transport problems' and 'not looking to work any more'. Partly, this may be due to the fact that they are in sheltered and isolated environments keeping them far from the realities of the job market. Within six months, out of those offered employment opportunities via NOWPDP's job placements, only 58 per cent accepted the job offer and the rest either declined the job offer or never showed up to work.

Table 16: Reasons given by participants for lack of motivation to seek employment

Not motivated to seek employment	Number of young persons with disabilities	Percentage of young persons with disabilities	Frequency of choice (per cent)
I do not have the skill/ education to work	268	60%	40%
I lack confidence	175	39%	26%
Government does not encourage opportunities for young persons with disabilities	64	14%	10%
I do not agree with this statement	57	13%	9%
I do not feel adequate	44	10%	7%
I have a disability	28	6%	4%
Employers/colleagues will not be friendly/ supportive/treat equally	18	4%	3%
I am not interested in my field of education/training	6	1%	1%
My friends and family are not supportive	6	1%	1%
I do not need to work	1	0%	0%

Conclusions

Develop networks for sharing research and innovation

Table 17: Reasonable adjustments provided to study participants in the workplace

Workplace adjustments	Number of young persons with disabilities	Frequency of choice (per cent)
Workplace was easily accessible	102	31%
Colleagues were friendly and supportive	92	28%
I was treated as an equal in my workplace	70	21%
Workplace policies are/were inclusive	15	4%
Other persons with disabilities working at the office	26	8%
Self-employed	24	7%
Ran a shop	2	1%
Do a business	3	1%

Table 18: Factors that contributed to securing employment

Able to secure employment	Number of young persons with disabilities	Frequency of choice (per cent)
I had a source	70	43%
My education/training served as my strength	67	41%
The employer was open-minded	52	32%
Off the government quota	9	6%
Employer has a disability/has a family member with a disability	3	2%

Society, institutions, legislation and young people with disabilities

There is unpreparedness from many stakeholders in providing employment opportunities to people with disabilities. First, society, institutions and employers need to be sensitive and empathic and become aware of how to develop, train and hire young persons with disabilities and to help them grow. Many educational opportunities are not inclusive and there is a lack of equal employment opportunity, which is a factor that needs to be understood. Also, inaccessibility and negative attitude and discrimination towards people with disabilities hinder their development in society.

Second, gaps in required legislation and implementation further add to the problem. There is a lack of support systems for persons with disabilities and lack of co-ordination among those systems that exist. Additionally, government departments and other stakeholders supporting the process of young persons with disabilities' inclusion in society are working in silos on individual and varying agendas, when there are macro issues that need to be resolved and can only happen with working together on a productive, inclusive, empathic equal opportunity.

Third, young persons with disabilities often stay marginalised, looking for options based on sympathy, such as quotas, rather than ability. Combined with a low sense of self and unrealistic expectations, some young persons with disabilities themselves hinder their economic growth. With limited exposure to the realities of the job market due to isolated and often sheltered environments, young persons with disabilities have a gap to fill in

order to succeed in creating economic opportunities for themselves. Raising the awareness levels of all stakeholders may help in fixing this unpreparedness.

Awareness

Awareness in society can reduce negative perceptions of persons with disabilities. Society is also responsible for the inclusion of persons with disabilities by acting on the policies and reforms established by the government for persons with disabilities, in addition to taking initiatives for the inclusion of this large minority group. The mindset of society was highlighted as a major barrier for persons with disabilities to take opportunities, where 26 per cent of young persons with disabilities suggested that employers do not hire persons with disabilities and 20 per cent said there was no one to guide them at their office after being hired. Meanwhile, 80 per cent of young persons with disabilities suggested that workplace accommodations such as accessibility, friendly environment and attitudes along with inclusive policies are what they required. 32 of the young persons with disabilities securing employment suggested it was because their employers were open-minded. As such it is evident that societal attitudes and openness contribute to experiences of employment. All components of society, including like education, employment, healthcare, development and government sectors, needs to be more aware and accepting of persons with disabilities.

People often undermine the abilities of persons with disabilities and make them the object of sympathy. Understanding persons with disabilities can be the key to removing attitudinal barriers from society. Persons with disabilities can be equal, given that reasonable accommodations, physical access and awareness are ensured.

Recommendations

Participants were asked for their views on what would need to change to enable better disability inclusion within the workplace. Almost half of the people surveyed prioritised awareness raising among employers (49 per cent), followed closely by the need to improve skills and education provision for persons with disabilities (45 per cent). The full breakdown of results can be viewed in Table 19 below.

A sympathetic approach, be it of young persons with disabilities or employers, comes in contradiction with inclusive environments at the workplace, for they warrant an equal-rights, social rights approach. Hence, preparing persons with disabilities before entering employment is also of utmost importance. In addition, preparing employers is of extreme importance.

Table 19: Participants' recommendations on increasing disability inclusion in the workplace

Employment	Number of young persons with disabilities	Percentage of young persons with disabilities	Frequency of choice
Raising awareness with employers	763	49%	19%
Improving skills and education of persons with disabilities	709	46%	18%
Sympathy and allowances based on disability	527	34%	13%
Offering mentorship/ internship/ apprenticeship opportunities	510	33%	13%
Enforce legislations and policies, like employment quotas	486	31%	12%
Making reasonable accommodation and accessible infrastructure	475	31%	12%
Financial support	340	22%	9%
Don't know	108	7%	3%

Sensitising employers

Since persons with disabilities are a segmented part of society, many employers do not have direct experience of hiring or working with them. Therefore, it is important to raise awareness with employers regarding disability. Almost half (49 per cent) of young persons with disabilities identified the need to raise awareness of disability with employers. Positive results have been achieved by preparing the employers on disabilities and effective ways to cater to their needs. In Karachi, NOWPDP is working towards the employment of persons with disabilities by preparing organisations to become inclusive.

This ensures that the culture at an organisation is sensitised and the employees with disabilities enter in to a positive and accepting environment.

Mentorship and internship opportunities

Young persons with disabilities can benefit from gaining exposure to the professional world. Since the socialisation process of persons with disabilities happens in exclusion, persons with disabilities can therefore be ignorant of acceptable social conduct, professional skills and personal skills. Providing professional exposure through on-job training, internship or mentorship opportunities can tackle this problem by allowing persons with disabilities to experience the demands and advantages of productive employment.

Many young persons with disabilities are aware of the gap in their education, and when asked for suggestions for improving employment/self-employment opportunities, 26 per cent suggested that education should be improved.

Capacity-building of employers and young persons with disabilities

The growing interest in persons with disabilities puts employers under the spotlight, to be examined for their efforts to provide jobs for persons with disabilities. In such cases, employers may feel under pressure to hire persons with disabilities to meet the quota for employment, but without any actual intent. Therefore, persons with disabilities are often employed in jobs to fulfil routine, menial tasks, undermining their potential and interest in the process. It is vital for employers to appreciate the abilities of persons with disabilities and provide sustainable employment to ensure inclusion in the long run. Emerging best practices indicate that capacity building and support provided to employers is significant in promoting sustainable and inclusive employment for persons with disabilities.

The Information Technology Training Programme for persons with disabilities launched in Vietnam in 2012 worked on raising awareness and building the capacity of the employers to facilitate internships and permanent employment for persons with disabilities.¹⁷⁰ Vocational training programmes run in Egypt¹⁷¹ and Bangladesh¹⁷² also include building the capacity of vocational training centres, training providers and employers to ensure sustainable employment.

¹⁷⁰ Zhao, C., Rowe, W., Kamioka, N. Hegarty, B., (2012). Enhancing IT Vocational Training and Employment Opportunities for Young Vietnamese With Disabilities. Catholic Relief Services.

¹⁷¹ United Nations Development Programme, (2014). Jobs and Skills for Persons with Disabilities, Executive Summary. International Labour Organisation. Egypt ICT Trust Fund.

¹⁷² International Labour Organisation (2012). TVET Reform: Designing an Inclusive Skills Development Program. European Union. Government of Bangladesh.

A dual sensitisation is important to remove attitudinal barriers and stigma from society. Employers, vocational training centres, educational institutions, microfinance and banking institutions, healthcare providers and other stakeholders should be sensitised to understand the challenges and abilities of persons with disabilities allowing them to be more accommodating and accepting of them. Awareness can be raised through media platforms by highlighting the plight of persons with disabilities through TV shows and dramas. TV shows on social issues are effective to raise awareness on the issues faced by persons with disabilities. Stories about successful persons with disabilities can be shared through the media to break the stigma surrounding disabilities and encourage other persons with disabilities to advocate their rights in a less charitable and more equal-rights fashion.

Inclusion of persons with disabilities is made more convenient through technological advancements. Immense progress in this regard has been made on a global scale, to ensure inclusion through technology and assistive aids. Computer software and mobile devices are now equipped with accessibility features including SMS, speech-to-text and text-to-speech settings, word prediction, text size and colour, video calling services and video captioning, allowing users with visual or hearing impairment to use devices independently. Wheelchair ramps and elevators ease the movements of persons with physical impairment. Computer-based interventions can also be used for persons with learning disabilities and intellectual impairment in areas of learning, gross and fine motor movements, hand-eye co-ordination, etc.

Persons with disabilities, especially in the case of rural populations and otherwise excluded segments of the population, are unaware of their rights. Therefore they are unable to rightfully use the facilities and provisions made by the government. Yasir Hayat, representing the FATA Secretariat, remarked, 'To this day, persons with disabilities and their families do not register themselves as disabled. They are still hidden in their homes in some sections of the society.' It is important for persons with disabilities to actively take part in advocating and raising awareness of their rights by registering themselves with the government for disability certificate and Special CNICs. Persons with disabilities can take advantage of employment and training opportunities through a quota fixed by the government, effectual on all institutions. The benefits of the quota system are debatable in the context of promoting an inclusive society. Nevertheless, in the absence of the utopian inclusive society, the quota system serves as legislative support for persons with disabilities to fight for their rights. However, despite the quota system in effect throughout the country, the implementation is lacking to varying degrees in all the provinces.

The role of government:

baseline data collection, tailored interventions and enforcement of employment quotas

There is a dire need for accurate data and statistics of persons with disabilities in the country to ensure the establishment of data-driven and all-encompassing policies and programmes.

The lack of effective policies and action taken to alleviate the problems of persons with disabilities may be a consequence of the gaps in data and statistics available for use.

Policymakers need to be aware of the population of persons with disabilities living in all regions to ensure that policies, programmes and allocation of resources is representative of this population. Government-run programmes for specific skill development and vocational training need to be designed in order to reflect the market trends of the region as well. NAVTTC in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa ran a training programme exclusively for persons with physical impairment contracted as a result of polio. The training programme was designed to suit the available economic opportunities and market trends in the region as well as persons with physical impairment. Training on trades such as tailoring, dress designing, machine and hand embroidery, and mobile phone repairing was provided. The programme successfully trained 140 persons with physical impairments and generated employment and self employment opportunities.

As established earlier, poverty and inadequate resources play an important role in the amplification of issues faced by persons with disabilities.

The introduction and establishment of successful healthcare, including prenatal and maternal health programmes, are therefore important to reduce and contain the incidence of disabilities in the country. The government can also provide support for the rehabilitation of persons with disabilities through treatment, physiotherapy and provision of assistive aids.

Stricter adherence to government employment quotas in each province is urgently needed, with incentives and deterrents developed. The government under a department for the empowerment of persons with disabilities needs to develop regular checks and balances to monitor the progress of time-bound, specific, measurable, actionable and realistic targets set out. Continuous reporting of inclusion of persons with disabilities at organisations could lead to higher accountability.

Data on prevalence of disabilities is required to ensure allocation of sufficient resources to ensuring inclusion for persons with disabilities. The government could work in collaboration with the private sector and research firms using internationally recognised tools such as the Washington Group of Questions to objectively assess disability.

Balanced education of young persons with disabilities

Universal design and access

Employing persons with disabilities can seem to be a difficult and costly proposition, owing to the reasonable accommodations to ensure infrastructural accessibility. The International Labour Organization recommended universal design concept to accommodate persons with disabilities which prepares vocational training centres and employers before the induction of persons with disabilities. Inclusion of persons with disabilities at the workplace can be ensured by assigning meaningful duties, permitting leaves and provision to attend medical and physical treatment, and facilities such as, making infrastructural adjustments and providing assistive devices.¹⁷³

The Accessibility Code of Pakistan 2006 lists minimum requirements for accessibility in buildings and spaces. The International Labour Organization has given recommendations to organisations to incorporate universal design in planning and development, enabling employers to be inclusive without making any major alterations.¹⁷⁴ Implementation as such would require the awareness on part of employers and society in general.

Besides the skills development at vocational training centres, a holistic approach can be adopted during school years as well. As mentioned by Mather and Hulme (2013), a strengths-based practice can be used in schools for identification and development of strengths which in effect facilitate achievement. Schools using this approach tend to focus on abilities rather than deficits which result in capacity building, personality growth, mental well-being and better relationship. Hence students can gain exposure from the beginning and will be better able to understand and adjust to challenges at the workplace.¹⁷⁵

It is important that persons with disabilities receive a good quality education that prepares them for opportunities ahead. However, at the moment their experience that they have in education is linked to their disability, which is undermining their ability to truly flourish. With isolated and sheltered school environments, they lack exposure to studying and working alongside other groups. It is recommended that their education should have a holistic approach that focuses on their actual capacity.

Inclusion of young persons with disabilities in mainstream education and vocational training institutions is a must for them to become eligible for future jobs and to understand the functioning of the mainstream, its requirements and expectations. Transitioning to the mainstream employability and work-readiness programmes are useful too, specifically for those young persons with disabilities graduating from exclusive, SEN schooling. As such, recommendations for education both formal and informal are of extreme importance.

173 Supporting disabled people in the workplace: guidance for UCL managers. (n.d.). [Online]. Available at: http://www.ucl.ac.uk/hr/equalities/disability/disability_guidance_for_managers.pdf

174 International Labour Organization (2013). Inclusion of People with Disabilities in Vocational Training: A Practical Guide.

175 Hornby, G. (2014). Inclusive Special Education: Evidence-Based Practices for Children with Special Needs and Disabilities. Springer.

Digital innovation and employment

Initiatives such as the LCDDP Jobability portal should be rolled out nationally to provide digital access to opportunities for people with disabilities.

Jobability has served as a successful model for an online job portal in different countries and is also a source for accessing livelihood in Pakistan. However, most persons with disabilities in the country are either unaware of the existence of such portals and support or have limited means to access or understand a technology-based solution, based on their lack of education.

The web portal is a one-stop solution which provides assistance to persons with disabilities looking for wage employment and self-employment. Successful models for persons with disabilities practised in the UK contain services that can help enhance existing job portals in Pakistan. For instance, Enham Trust provides training in the shape of programmes and courses to help update skills and gain employment. They also assist jobseekers of all ages in CV building and interview preparation. Not only do their services cover jobseekers, young persons with disabilities seeking training- or education-related opportunities are also guided. Hence, updating the existing job portals in Pakistan could increase the depth of impact and outreach.¹⁷⁶

Online and social media portals have become hugely beneficial for employers seeking employees and vice versa. Additionally, the sample indicates that the preferences of young persons with disabilities lie with digital/IT and computer-based trainings as skills they would like to learn.

As such, huge opportunities can open up for young persons with disabilities, specifically women, who are normally dissuaded from leaving the house because their disability could be taken advantage of and the infrastructure is not conducive, nor the system supportive of it.

The digital world (including ecommerce platforms and freelance opportunities) has the potential to offer job opportunities for young people with disabilities in real time. Digital platforms connect users to the wider world and its expectations, with a high price on creativity. Further promotion and awareness of the same, at the community and social media campaign level, could encourage this cohort to interact with applications and software, and garner traction and success in the market for them to earn their livelihoods independently.

Matching supply and demand in the workforce

A ‘dual’ sensitisation needs to take place to sensitise employers about disability, and prepare young persons with disabilities to meet the expectations of the employer. Large-scale employers should map available vocations and areas of market demand – and train young people with disabilities to take these roles.

Government-led vocational training institutes and those specifically for persons with disabilities must develop positive relationships with the labour market to ensure relevance of training and to create a channel for placement opportunities. Customised skills training programme at mainstream vocational training centres for persons with disabilities should be increased.

Links between the labour market and vocational training centres should be strengthened to absorb skilled persons with disabilities with incentive and reward systems such awards, certifications, tax reliefs given to those employers leading the way. International support can be garnered for the same, for the landscape is tilting towards vocational training and the understanding of its benefits in terms of mapping skills onto employment.

As established in the analysis, young persons with disabilities have often had limited opportunities of socialisation and merging with the mainstream world, for they have been in special education systems or isolated environments. As such, for them to transition onto mainstream employment opportunity, they need to be made familiar with it and trained accordingly.

Some private organisations provide work-readiness training and specific programmes with some government support can be established for the preparation of young persons with disabilities to enter employment. Additionally, apprenticeships, acquainting/orientation training and internships for young persons with disabilities at organisations could allow for them to understand how the mainstream functions and its requirements and expectations, such that young persons with disabilities can realign theirs accordingly.

Mentorship and on-the-job training opportunities can also provide much-needed professional exposure after the isolated environment of schools.

Employers need to become more aware of how to engage with persons with disabilities. It has been observed that most employers are hesitant, over-accommodating, condescending or otherwise negative about hiring persons with disabilities.

Since employers are also unaware of how to align expectations, an understanding of persons with disabilities through training provided by private organisations and familiarising employers with experiences of persons with disabilities, led by them as role models, could play a huge role in the inclusion of persons with disabilities in mainstream employment.

Employers have to understand and act on the business case for employing persons with disabilities by looking at their abilities and strengths instead of their disabilities. Such an understanding could be instilled through awareness campaigns and media presence as well.

Developing inclusive workplace environments

Organisations need to be prepared to ensure sustainable employment and inclusion of persons with disabilities in the workplace.

This is done through holistic inclusion programmes that work with organisations in terms of preparing and training staff, sensitising the culture, hiring/recruitment and retention process, recommending accessibility, assistive aids and accommodations required, editing practices and policies for them to become more inclusive for persons with disabilities and providing a resource base of persons with disabilities who match job criteria.

Such disability inclusion consultancies such as the programmes run by disability advocates and organisations can be promoted further and made more accessible and compulsory for all, through government policies.

Information and support from forums (GiZ, Chambers of Commerce, etc.) should be sought out and formalised. Research should be undertaken that maps vocational educational training in the country (including skills deficits and gaps), employment opportunities and market needs.